

The Social Impact of Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills in Mitigating Youth Restiveness for Sustainable Development in Nigeria's Oil-Producing States

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Abstract

The Niger Delta has been a site of youth restiveness in the form of militancy and pipeline vandalism and poses a clear danger to national security and development interests. The conflict arises from systemic youth unemployment and economically inequitable and politically marginalised relationships. This research shifts the conventional and expected focus of study from military response to the consideration of development potential. The EVS (Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills) training paradigm was specifically designed to reduce the potential for violent conflict along the continuum of economic engagement and social reintegration. This research is based on Human Capital Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. This quantitative research used a cross-sectional survey research design. Data was collected from 400 youth in the oil-producing states of Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom. The restiveness, self-empowerment, and perceptions of the variables related to the EVS programmes were intertwined. Regression and mediation analysis were employed in the study. The analysis recorded one of the more interesting findings in the relational analysis, which stated, "The perceived quality of the EVS programmes considerably reduces youth restiveness ($\beta = -0.51$, $p < .001$)". Economic empowerment and social inclusion were parallel significant mediators. Well-designed and correctly implemented EVS systems will directly address youth restiveness by economically engaging and psychosocially assisting them. It presents primary theoretical contributions by incorporating human development frameworks into conflict resolution, along with evidence-based practical implications for policymakers, corporate social responsibility, and development partners on the path to sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

Keywords: entrepreneurship vocational skills, youth restiveness, sustainable development, Niger delta, economic empowerment, social inclusion, human capital theory, theory of planned behaviour

1. Introduction

The Niger Delta is a region in Nigeria that is described as the "golden goose" of the Nigerian economy. However, this region is a prime example of the "resource curse" phenomenon. "The resource curse" phenomenon is a situation where a rich resource region is simultaneously experiencing extreme socio-economic neglect, environmental degradation, and resource-wealth entangled community grievances, as in the case of the Niger Delta (Odoemene & Eke, 2021). The Niger Delta is experiencing "socio-economic neglect" and environmental degradation and resource-wealth entangled community grievances, as in the case of the Niger Delta, which is an extreme case of the "resource curse" phenomenon (Odoemene & Eke, 2021).

The legacies of military rule in violently "quelling" socio-economic neglect and environmental degradation, as in the case of the Niger Delta (Ukiwo, 2020). They do so, leaving a population of youths with an overwhelming deficit in legitimate economic opportunity and extreme socio-economic and political exclusion. Unfortunately, this deeply seated reality is an underlying trigger from a neoliberal development approach that desperately needs attention.

In this context, EVS has been described as valuable. EVS is aimed at training the young population in pragmatic, market-oriented technical competencies, as well as entrepreneurial skills for forming and running self-

sustaining businesses (Nwankwo, Eze & Okeke, 2022). It is believed that self-employment opportunities offered by EVS would promote economic self-sufficiency and alleviate economic desperation. Conflicts rarely generate positive feelings, but even more damaging are the psychosocial consequences, such as diminished self-worth and social isolation, that these programmes attempt to address (Ibrahim & Umar, 2023). Certainly, the positive returns are the reason these programmes are implemented. As of now, the literature lacks conclusive evidence to substantiate the claim that EVS is the most effective approach to peacebuilding for the restless youth in the Niger Delta. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a thorough and quantitative examination of EVS in peacebuilding.

This paper evaluates how Economic and Valued Services (EVS) frameworks affect the restiveness of youth in Nigeria's oil-producing states, especially in the West African region. The specific objectives of the study are as follows: (1) The direct impact of EVS provision on youth restiveness, (2) The impact of economic empowerment on the effect of EVS provision on youth restiveness, and (3) The impact of social integration on the effect of EVS provision on youth restiveness. The study aims to theoretically combine human capital development with theories of peace and conflict. The findings are intended to be a practical resource for policymakers, international oil

companies, and development NGOs when designing impactful youth initiatives. The study is confined to a sample of the four southern geo-political oil states: Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom, and uses a cross-sectional design focused on youth aged 18 to 35.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

This paper draws on two theories: Human Capital Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The two combined help in explaining the relationships outlined in the research. Human Capital Theory was proposed by Becker in 1964 and is among the foundational works in development economics. It justifies the returns to private and public spending on education, training, and health. Higher spending in these areas relative to what is outputted in the economy increases innovations and lifetime earnings. Within the context of the study, the EVS programmes are an investment in the Niger Delta youths. By providing them with fundamental skills and business training, these programmes enhance human capital, thus increasing employability in the formal sector and self-employment potential. This theory justifies the rationale for economic empowerment, arguing that acquiring skills and human capital will improve economic outcomes. Increased opportunity cost of restive activities will follow (Nwankwo et al., 2022). When there is a viable, legitimate, and accessible path to achieving financial success and respect, the appeal of high-risk and destructive illicit activities will diminish.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) is a social-psychological framework developed to understand how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control variables influence behaviours and intentions. This framework best explains the psychosocial influence of EVS on the complex behaviour of restiveness.

Attitudes towards the behaviour: Restiveness can be motivated by a negative, hostile attitude towards the state and multinational oil companies, perceived as exploitative and neglectful actors. EVS, especially when promoted as an avenue for self-actualisation and community development, can help instil more positive, constructive attitudes by making palpable investments in the youth's future and help them pivot from mindsets of confrontation and resentment to more cooperative, hopeful stances.

Subjective Norms: These fit within the broader framework of social influence regarding the expectation of family members, peers, and other community members concerning the performance or nonperformance of a behaviour. In the propagandised and economically challenged regions of the Niger Delta, passive aggression has often been ritualised and, at times, romanticised to serve routine propaganda as a form of resistance or culture. Economic Violence and Enterprise Development (EVS) programs can establish new, positive peer and social networks that are economically centred around productivity, social support, and enterprise, thereby transforming subjective and social violence-related norms. It then becomes socially and economically rewarding violence (Ibrahim & Umar, 2023).

Perceived Behavioural Control: This is defined as the self-assessment people make regarding the situation, along

with the self-efficacy and controllability of a given action. A young person with no skills to offer in the market, no job, and no capital to acquire will likely conclude that they have no control over the economic situation. Thus, restiveness will likely be one of the very few options available in the search for survival or respect. With self-efficacy being the confidence EVS instils, and controllability being the resources provided to quit a job or integrate a business, EVS directly and strongly increases perceived behavioural control. This sense of agency and control is crucial for motivating people to desist from restive behaviours (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2022).

Integrating the two, a comprehensive picture that explains the restiveness of youth in economic terms is Human Capital Theory, while in psychosocial terms, the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

2.2 Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta

Restive youth in the Niger Delta is not an isolated phenomenon or an incidental occurrence, but the expression of long-standing grievances, systematic neglect, and the region's political economy. Their roots are complex and multifaceted:

Economic Exploitation and Unemployment: The Niger Delta region contributes a significant share of the country's wealth, yet poverty and a critical lack of basic social infrastructures (safe drinking water, electricity, healthcare) persist. Unemployment is extremely high, particularly among the youth. Idleness and frustration magnify a sense of restiveness. A large pool of individuals in this condition is prone to recruitment by militant factions and criminal organisations (Ukiwo, 2020). Rendering unproductive by the formal economy, the unclaimed illicit economy is a pulling alternative.

Environmental Destruction: The extractive industry continues to engage in practices such as oil spills and gas flaring. These practices destroy subsistence fishing and farming activities, which are the traditional occupations of the local economy. The socio-economic status of many youths has resulted in them being ecologically displaced, the source of income and culturally significant livestock farming has been taken from their family, and their identity has been stripped away, generating disproportionately high levels of anger and existential despair (Odoemene & Eke, 2021).

Political exclusion and grievances: Local communities continue to feel political marginalisation and exclusion from the oil wealth extracted from their territories. They lack political representation and feel the state has failed to provide fundamental socio-economic rural developments and services with the oil revenues. This generates a feeling of injustice, pervasive neglect, and resentment against the oil corporations and the federal state, which can serve as an ideological basis for restiveness (Brown & Green, 2023).

Conflict and Economics of Violence: The proliferation of small arms, the establishment of an illegal parallel oil economy (bunkering), and the unfulfilled promise of previous amnesty and development initiatives have consolidated the conflict economy, rendering violence for some as a lucrative option (Watts, 2020).

Youth restiveness, therefore, can be explained as a complex coping mechanism, a type of violent protest, an

economically rational decision in a context of injustice, and a severely restricted opportunity.

2.3 Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills (EVS) as an Intervention

The EVS programmes respond directly to the scenarios that lead to restiveness. They focus on changing the mindset from dependency to self-agency. Generally, comprehensive EVS interventions typically entail the following aspects:

Technical and Vocational Skills Training: This involves practical, hands-on training in sectors that are locally in demand and have the potential to grow, such as aquaculture and agribusiness (reviving livelihoods destroyed by pollution), renewable energy technologies (solar power installation), information and communication technologies (ICT), construction, and creative sectors.

Entrepreneurship Training and Business Development Services: This builds on the technical skills to include training on how to generate business ideas, articulate plans, and perform financial literacy functions, record-keeping, marketing, and customer service. This helps to ensure the business sustains and grows beyond the initial stages.

Soft Skills and Life Skills Development: This involves developing essential and transferable skills in individuals, including communication, problem identification and solving, critical thinking, teamwork and constructive participation, leadership, constructive social order, conflict resolution, and resilience. These skills constitute the foundational blocks of businesses and also foster positive, constructive social interaction and conflict resolution (Nwankwo et al., 2022). The ultimate goal is to foster a generation of "job creators" and "solution providers" rather than "job seekers". This promotes self-sustaining, resilient local economic development and reduces the region's pathological economic dependence on the oil industry and its associated illicit economies.

2.4 The Relationship Between EVS, Mediating Variables and Youth Restiveness

The proposed relationship of EVS on decreased restiveness is indirect and is assumed to operate through two main mediating variables: economic empowerment and social inclusion. Economic empowerment is the ability of individuals to make certain economic decisions, take actions, and attain targeted goals. In this case, it is the young people's ability to earn a decent income and to sustain and grow their skills through employment or self-employment. Empirical evidence outlines a strong correlation between elevated levels of unemployment among the youth and increased engagement in violence and crime. For example, in their study of the Niger Delta communities, Adeola and Oluyemi (2022) showed the correlation between local government areas of higher youth unemployment and the more frequent vandalism of pipelines and kidnappings. EVS directly addresses this economic "push" factor by offering a legitimate and, economically speaking, reasonable alternative source of income. The more someone is self-employed or running a successful business, the more likely they are to ignore the economic incentives offered by militant groups for participating in violent attacks or the unstable income from illegal bunkering. The more empowerment a militant group

possesses, the more likely they are to stake their economic interests on peace and stability.

Social inclusion pertains to the feeling of being valued, respected, and acknowledged and to the individual being woven into the social, economic, and political framework of society. Restive youths are often marginalised, drifting on the fringe, and are socially and structurally alienated by mainstream society and stigmatised by their communities and lack of achievements. EVS programmes can promote social inclusion in many ways. EVS programmes offer social recognition and the valued identity of "entrepreneur," "skilled artisan," and "business owner," counteracting the socially negative labels of "militant," "dropout," and "failure" (Ibrahim & Umar, 2023). EVS programmes are also the source of positive social support networks with mentors, peer cohorts, and social market relations with suppliers and customers and integrate youth into pro-social communities with positive social norms. By promoting economically effective citizenship and participation in local economic initiatives as contributors to the community economy, successful EVS graduates are recognised and respected as legitimate members of their community. The higher social status, belonging, and dignity are powerful rewards that counter alienation, grievance, and invisibility (Eweje, 2021). The World Bank (2021) also highlighted social inclusion as an often neglected but crucial element in successful post-conflict reconstruction and development.

This study proposes that participation in and perceived benefit from EVS training increases economic empowerment and social inclusion, which together significantly decrease the likelihood of young people becoming involved in or supporting violent activities. This conceptual framework is empirically tested in the subsequent sections.

3. Methodology

To capture the major variables and their interconnections, this study utilised a cross-sectional survey method. This method's practicality and effectiveness in establishing connections among Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills (EVS), Economic Empowerment, Social Inclusion, and Youth Restiveness influenced this decision. Combined, all 4 states provided data on the study's target population—the Youth, aged 18-35, and oil-producing states of Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom. A multi-stage sampling process involved purposively selecting states, randomly choosing two local government areas from each state, and then using convenience and snowball sampling techniques to reach out to community members and EVS beneficiaries. G* Power software estimated a sample size of 119 for detecting a target of medium effect size. Collecting 400 valid responses exceeds this sample size and, therefore, significantly increases the study's reliability.

Data collection utilised a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections, including demographic information and study constructs. These sections utilised a 5-point Likert scale for measurement. The 12-item EVS scale evaluated the quality and relevance of training (Nwankwo et al., 2022; Chukwuma & Adekola, 2020). The 6-item Economic Empowerment scale measured perceptions around the financial independence construct

(Ibrahim & Umar, 2023; World Bank, 2021). The 7-item Social Inclusion scale was designed around community belonging and respect (Eweje, 2021; Brown & Green, 2023). The Youth Restiveness scale, composed of 8 items, measured attitudes towards violent protests and illegal activities (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2022; Ukiwo, 2020). The pilot study (N=30) confirmed reliability with Cronbach's Alpha scores all exceeding 0.78. For data analysis, SPSS 28 and Hayes' PROCESS macro were used, including descriptive statistics, tests of reliability/validity, correlation, and regression analyses. For tests of mediation, 5000 bootstrap samples were used to assess direct and indirect effects through the proposed mediators.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Demographics

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=400)

Demographic Variable	Category	Freq.	%
Gender	Male	270	67.5
	Female	130	32.5
Age	18-25 years	250	62.5
	26-35 years	150	37.5
Highest Education	SSCE/GCE	181	45.3
	OND/NCE	122	30.5
	HND/BSc and above	97	24.2
State	Rivers	105	26.3
	Delta	110	27.5
	Bayelsa	90	22.5
	Akwa Ibom	95	23.7

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2025

A total of 400 completed and analysed questionnaires. The sample demographic profile is shown in Table 1. The sample included mostly males (67.5%). This inflates the sample due to the gendered nature of active restiveness and access to certain types of vocational training within the region. Most respondents (62.5%) were in the 18-25 years age group, the demographic most vulnerable to recruitment into restive activities. Regarding education, a sizeable number of respondents (45.3%) had a Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) or its equivalent as their highest qualification. This exposes a sizeable population of youth with basic education, limited access to recreational activities, and high potential unemployment.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Entrepreneurship Voc. Skills (EVS)	3.48	0.78
2. Economic Empowerment (EE)	3.25	0.85
3. Social Inclusion (SI)	3.4	0.8
4. Youth Restiveness (YR)	2.65	0.91

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2025

Table 2 presents the main study variables' descriptive statistics. The average score for Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills (EVS) was 3.48 (SD=0.78), which is above the scale midpoint of 3, demonstrating a generally positive perception towards the quality and relevance of the

training received by the respondents. The proposed mediators, Economic Empowerment (EE) and Social Inclusion (SI), also achieved moderately high scores with means of 3.25 (SD=0.85) and 3.40 (SD=0.80), respectively. The average for Youth Restiveness (YR) was 2.65 (SD=0.91), which is below the midpoint, indicating a low overall propensity for restiveness within the sample. The high standard deviation for YR also suggests that the YR attitudes taken overall were divergent, with some responding far more restively than the majority.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Assessment

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Entrepreneurship Voc. Skills	0.89	0.91	0.59
Economic Empowerment	0.87	0.89	0.58
Social Inclusion	0.9	0.92	0.61
Youth Restiveness	0.88	0.9	0.55

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2025

The accuracy model went through thorough assessments for both reliability and validity. As indicated in Table 3, every Cronbach's Alpha value surpassed the minimum 0.70 benchmark, with the lowest value recorded at 0.87, thereby affirming strong internal consistency reliability for all constructions. Additionally, all values for Composite Reliability (CR), a more advanced construct of reliability, were above 0.89, further consolidating the reliability of the measurements. Each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which surpassed the minimum 0.50 required, demonstrated adequate convergent validity, illustrating that the items explained most of the variance associated with their respective constructs on average.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix and Discriminant Validity

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. EVS	0.77			
2. EE	.56**	0.76		
3. SI	.60**	.52**	0.78	
4. YR	-.49**	-.55**	-.58**	0.74

*Note: * $p < .01$; Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square roots of the AVE.

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2025

The Fornell-Larcker criterion has been used to determine the absence of overlap with other constructs. For each construct, the square root of the average variance extracted (the values in bold in Table 4) must exceed that construct's strongest correlation with any other construct. This requirement is satisfied, as shown, by all the constructs in the Table. This case is particularly compelling for the EVS construct, where the square root of the average variance extracted (0.77) exceeded all counts during the

comparisons with the other constructs, even where EE (0.56), SI (0.60), and YR (-0.49) had stronger associations.

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4.3 Hypotheses Testing

Table 5: Regression Analysis for Direct Effect (H₁)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p-value
(Constant)	4.41	0.19		23.21	<.001
Entrepreneurship Voc. Skills (EVS)	-0.51	0.05	-0.49	-9.87	<.001

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.24$, $F(1, 398) = 97.41$, $p < .001$

Direct Effect (H₁): A simple linear regression was conducted to test the first hypothesis (H₁), which proposed a direct negative influence of Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills on Youth Restiveness. The result, summarized in Table 5, was statistically significant ($\beta = -0.51$, $p < .001$). The model indicates that for every one-unit increase in the perceived quality of EVS, there is a corresponding 0.51 unit decrease in the propensity for youth restiveness. Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills explained 24% of the variance in Youth Restiveness ($R^2 = 0.24$). Therefore, H₁ was supported.

Table 6: Results of Mediation Analysis (H₂ & H₃)

Effect Type	Path	B	Boot SE	95% Boot CI	Conclusion
Total Effect	EVS → YR	-0.51	0.05	[-0.610, -0.410]	
Direct Effect	EVS → YR (controlling for MVs)	-0.18	0.06	[-0.300, -0.060]	
Indirect Effects	EVS → EE → YR	-0.15	0.04	[-0.225, -0.085]	H2 Supported
	EVS → SI → YR	-0.18	0.04	[-0.255, -0.112]	H3 Supported

Note: EVS=Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills; EE=Economic Empowerment; SI=Social Inclusion; YR=Youth Restiveness. Boot CI = Bias-Corrected Bootstrap Confidence Interval based on 5000 samples.

Mediation Effects (H₂ & H₃): For the second and third hypotheses regarding mediation, a parallel mediation analysis was performed using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with 5000 bootstrap samples. The results are summarised in Table 6. The total effect of EVS on YR (the effect without any mediators) was significant ($B = -0.51$, $p < .001$). After mediators (Economic Empowerment and Social Inclusion) were added to the model, the direct effect of EVS on YR remained significant. Still, it was diminished

in magnitude ($B = -0.18$, $p < .01$), indicating partial mediation.

For mediation, the key finding is in the significance of the indirect effects. The indirect effect of EVS on YR via Economic Empowerment was significant ($B = -0.15$), where the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval also did not include zero [-0.225, -0.085]. This result supports H₂ in that economic empowerment mediates the relationship. The indirect effect via Social Inclusion was also significant ($B = -0.18$) with a 95% CI of [-0.255, -0.112]. This supports H₃ in that social inclusion also mediates the relationship.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study aimed to investigate the social impact of Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills on youth restiveness, specifically in the oil-producing states of Nigeria. The findings attested to the plausibility of the conceptual model. First, a notable and meaningful negative direct nexus between EVS and the propensity for restiveness was established, attesting to the fact that the acquisition of skills vis-a-vis agitation is an important variable. Second, and most importantly, this restiveness correlation was found to be limited by two psychological and social constructs, Economic Empowerment and Social Inclusion, which confirms that EVS reduces restiveness through a twofold system. Skills empowerment economically modifies mindsets and prospects, while social integration into the hostile social structure mitigates agitation.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The robust evidence supporting H₁ suggests that relevant, high-quality EVS training diminishes the level of restiveness exhibited by the youth. This support is in complete alignment with the Theory of Planned Behaviour. When the youth are provided training with relevant skills and advanced business concepts, there is an increase in their perceived behavioral control. Their state of helplessness and dependency gets transformed into agency and self-efficacy. The self-discipline, concentration, and long-term orientation that EVS training inculcates, is incompatible with the nihilism, frustration, and short-termism that is restive behaviour. The indirect effect also suggests that EVS programmes are a potent counter-narrative to the militancy of the restive youth, offering an alternative respectable identity and life path.

The mediation effect outlined in H₂ is critical for understanding the economic leg of the pathway. It rests on the premise of the Human Capital Theory of Becker (1964). Most fundamentally, EVS programmes represent an investment in human capital. For the first time, this study shows that this investment yields a 'peace dividend' in the form of increased economic empowerment. Economic empowerment, in this case, refers to the belief and the reality that one's economic independence and higher living standards are attainable through simple hard work. The economic desperation that fuels high risk criminal undertakings like oil bunkering and kidnapping is greatly diminished (Nwankwo et al., 2022). Young people, after acquiring skills that enable them to be gainfully employed, start earning a net sustainable income as entrepreneurs. The

belief “idle hands are the devil’s workshop” is confirmed by the significant indirect effect predicated on economic empowerment. Meaningful employment that is also profitable, is one of the key factors in the reduction of the economic incentives for violence.

In turn, the high esteem surrounding H3 explains the potential, yet overlooked, psychosocial impacts of EVS. Restiveness is a crisis of psychology, sociality, and dignity, not simply a matter of economics. The substantial mediating effect of social inclusion indicates that EVS is not simply a monetary transaction; it also, on an emotional level, restores place and value. The social identity that youth gain through the programmes is, in most cases, a positive and transformative one. The additional “entrepreneur,” “skilled professional,” or “community provider” labels, and with them new social identity, are gained at the onset of community recognition and respect, and full social and economic integration and inclusion (Ibrahim & Umar, 2023). The professional and social networks constructed with the EH Program through training and mentoring relationships, peers, and later on, business associates, satisfy social capital and the psychological need for connection and support.

A research focus is assessing the social impacts which graduates from the program tend to have on their families and the rest of the community. Recognition and social esteem go a long way to alleviate alienation, grievance, and invisibility (Eweje, 2021). It is striking that, in this case, the social inclusion sideline effect ($B=-0.18$) is more pronounced than the economic empowerment sideline effect ($B=-0.15$). This suggests that, in the Niger Delta, apart from economic considerations, social belonging is, and probably more, critical in determining the direction of the youth, away from violent disruption, anger, and identity social issues. This resonates with the wider peacebuilding discourse, especially the work of Brown and Green (2023), on the importance of recognition and the need for symbolic restoration.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

This work offers many theoretical advancements. First, it incorporates elements of Human Capital Theory in economics to conflict resolution and peace studies, suggesting that investments in human capital will pay off significantly in terms of economic growth, social safety, social value, and lasting peace. Second, it deepens empirical research and the use of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in a complex, real-life, intractable conflict situation, demonstrating how skills (a component of perceived behavioural control) and social network shifts (subjective norms) predictively and attitudinally modify restive behaviour. It provides a quantitative, practical framework for psychosocial peacebuilding.

5.4 Practical Implications

This research presents proof, rationale, and recommendations to decision makers and practitioners, including development agencies and IOCs, particularly in the Niger Delta and other geopolitical contexts.

(a) Prioritise Allocation of Resources Towards Increasing the Value Support of Employment (EVS) Programs: This means the political and financing support

towards targeted EVS programs should be significantly increased. Equally important, however, is the quality of the training. The training provided should be market-responsive to avoid being tokenistic. Training should be incorporated into a supply-driven program aimed at generating significant income.

(b) Design for Holistic Impact: Within an angled program system designed to achieve social inclusion, empower all components and elements to stimulate economic growth (e.g., access to scaled microfinance, business incubation, and mentorship), social inclusion, leadership and daycare program certifications to the participants of the program. The ultimate goal is to improve the young people’s economic and social levels.

(c) Target the Most Strategically Vulnerable: Members of the population most at risk of being recruited into insurgent activities should be targeted. Within the scope of this analysis, the group identified is economically inactive and uneducated male youths aged 18-25 in the border region of conflict.

(d) Developing Mutually Beneficial Public-Private-Community Partnerships: IOCs should undertake strategic peripheral CSR and integrate well-planned, impactful, long-lasting EVS programmes as core business activities within their host communities. That will require robust partnerships with public sector institutions, trusted grassroots community-level NGOs, and, for relevance, ownership, and sustainability, with the youths.

(e) Undertake Thorough Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Design and apply more robust M&E processes that extend beyond superficial outputs, such as the number of graduates, and focus on critical mediating outcomes, including business startup and survival rates, income level changes, and validated modifications in social attitudes and inclusion perceptions. These analyses will aid in learning and adapting, as well as help prove accountability.

6. Conclusion

The finding of the study reveals that Entrepreneurship Vocational Skills EVS is an effective and portable sustainable means for addressing the issue of youth restiveness in Nigeria’s oil-producing states. Helping youth acquire practical and entrepreneurial skills geared toward the market has been shown to greatly reduce the chances of engaging in violent agitations. More so, the influence is both economic and psychological in nature. It provides a means of economic self-sufficiency that is legitimate and dignified, and it is also an important element of social self-worth, dignity, and inclusion, which are greatly needed. EVS programs in the oil-producing states of Nigeria are significantly affected because of social and economic fragmentation. The greatest value of this research is the evidence, which articulates that in the Niger Delta, peace and sustainable development should focus solely on the human capital investment and economic agency of the youth, coupled with strategic social empathy. Military and political means should not form the basis for economic planning in the Niger Delta.

There has also been a societal and economic shift in which EVS reframes and consistently reconstructs the narrative of “agitators” as “empowered innovators” and relevant stakeholders in the region. This, as with the UN,

seeks to “bring stability, prosperity, equity, and sustainability” to the region.

7. Recommendations

In light of the firm conclusions drawn from the study, the following suggestions considering policy, implementation, and further studies could be offered to the stakeholders concerned.

(a) Policy and Practice: Integrating EVS into Regional Development and Security Frameworks: In collaboration with the NDDC, subnational governments in the Niger Delta, and the Federal Ministry of Youth Development, EVS should be adequately funded, purposefully aligned, and systematically integrated into the area's security and development frameworks.

(b) Developing Integrated Youth Enterprise Hubs and Clusters: EVS graduates can improve their social inclusion and social network by participating in Resource Sustainability Workshops, advanced training, business mentorship, and financial access, funded by integrated Youth Enterprise Clusters spread across and within local government areas (LGAs).

(c) Deepening CSR Requirements for IOCs: Authorities should develop more robust CSR regulations for IOCs and their supply chain partners to EVS graduates, impact-centered and transparent programs, and prioritize the provisioning of goods and services from EVS graduates to create a sustainable market for their services.

Suggestions for Future Research:

(a) Longitudinal and Cohort Studies: There is a case for longitudinal and cohort designs in future studies to evaluate the impact of EVS on economics, social reintegration, and sustained desistance from restive activities of participants over a span of 5-10 years to make more robust causal inferences.

(b) Moderating and Conditional Variables: Investigate the moderating variables of 1) gender; 2) type of skill acquired (technical versus trades); 3) mentorship; and 4) social conflict within the context of EVS to whom and under what conditions the EVS strategies are most effective.

(c) Mixed-Methods Approaches: There is a need for future studies in the area to employ a mixed methods approach to combine the scope of quantitative surveys with the depth of qualitative interviews and focus groups to gain insight into the most prominent shifts in motivation and the unanticipated challenges encountered by youth participants.

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