In Search of Normalcy: Unearthing the Phenomenon of Students' Unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia-Nigeria.

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Abstract
The phenomenon of students' unrest is an ugly trend. The situation has resulted in loss of lives as well as destruction of properties. This study examined students' unrest in Nigeria with particular focus on Nasarawa State Polytechnic Lafia. The objectives of the study include to: find out the factors that account for students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic Lafia, find out ways students' unrest affects students, and ascertain the pattern of operation that students adopt during unrest. The Relative Deprivation theory was used for theoretical framework. Survey research design was used. A sample size of 165 respondents were sampled and given copies of questionnaire, however only 150 were retrieved for analysis. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The method of data analysis was through the use of pie and bar charts. This is for easy comprehension by readers. Findings revealed that absence and deplorable nature of infrastructure in schools, marginalization of students' bodies in decision making by managements, poor state of amenities and others are factors that account for students' unrest. Findings also revealed that students' unrest affects students through ways like poor academic performance, formation of criminal gangs, and exposure to culture of violence. Findings equally revealed that the pattern adopted by students during unrest include violent protest, peaceful demonstration, barricade of access roads, arson, threatening of people and vandalization. The study recommended that the welfare of students should be the priority of government and schools' management so as to discourage the wide students agitations which mostly later result to students' unrest. The study also recommended that the information units of schools should be saddled with the responsibility of always giving orientation to students on the consequences of students' unrest.
Keywords: Students, Unrest, Management, School.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, students' unrest has become a recurrent phenomenon in most tertiary institutions in the country. The phenomenon is not peculiar to the universities alone but it cuts across most tertiary institutions ranging from the colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics and sometimes even secondary schools.

The frequent occurrence has almost paralyzed the educational sector as most times educational activities are distracted and academic calendar distorted. It is believed that unrest itself could be said to be a situation when individuals or groups of people are in difficulty, danger, and anxiety about something which an important decision must be made to resolve the issues (Horby, 1963: 276). Students' unrest most times has to do with a situation where the students of a particular institution spearheaded by the students union leaders stand in opposition to school management's policies and or position on a particular issue pertaining to the day to day running of the school.

The scenario of students' unrest is as old as the birth of formal education in the country. This can be traced down to the colonial era when the knowledge acquired were not only used for elite benefit but also as a part of the struggle against colonialism (Masin, 1984). The students of the tertiary institutions are allowed certain rights and they are not just to be seen but their voices heard by the school administration. This is the reason behind the existence of students' union government (SUG) or in some cases Students' Representative Council (SRC). The school authority has to respect the rights and privileges of students to address the popular aphorism that says "respect is reciprocal". When there is violation of these rights there is the possibility to experience incidence of students' unrest leading to disruption of academic activities.

Students' unrest has negative effects on students' academic performances because, most times, it results to the closing down of schools for a period of time. Most times, when students' unrest happens the precursors include vandalization, arson, violent protest and other criminal activities. Often times, students' unrest result in deadly confrontations with the law enforcement officers. This, sometimes, results to death and maiming of students. The frequent unrest in institutions of learning has become an issue of concern to the government and law enforcement agencies, parents and guardians and educational planners are not left out. The negative effect in terms of disruption of academic programmes, vandalization of public properties and additional financial burden on parents and guardians is also a case in point.

The findings of Magagula (2007) singled out aggressive nature of students as a major cause of students' unrest, however, the study failed to dig deeper to uncover the core reasons behind students' unrest. There was also no empirical connection as to the reasons behind the aggression. This study seeks to fill the gap by empirically finding out the factors that account for students' unrest.

Previous studies on students' unrest by Adeyemi (2009) and Sanda (1992) tend to place emphasis on the effect students' unrest has on academic activities. The present study will extend studies on the effect of students' unrest to find out the effect on academic performance and ways in which students' unrest affects students from criminal perspective,

On the pattern of students' unrest, studies carried out by Aluede (1995) and Babatope (1994) only revealed that students' unrest can be violent and nonviolent. However, their separate studies did not uncover ways in which students go about with unrest. This study will uncover the various pattern of students' unrest.

Research Questions
The following research questions are put in place to guide the study.
i.   What factors account for students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia?
ii. In what ways does students' unrest affect students in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia?
iii. What pattern of operation do students adopt during students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia?

Research Objectives
The main objective of this study is to examine students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia. The specific objectives are:
i.   To find out the factors that account for students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia.
ii. To find out ways which students' unrest affects students in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia.
iii. To ascertain the pattern of operation that students adopt during students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia.

The Concept of Unrest / Etiology of Students' Unrest in Nigerian Higher Institutions
Unrest literally means the state of trouble, turbulence and misunderstanding. Scholars have perceived the concept of unrest differently from different theoretical understandings. Fajana (1990) views unrest as the art of violence from dissatisfaction or a situation of disagreement between two or more parties. Close to Fajana's position, Rayeshi& Bryant (1994) view unrest to mean the state of disharmony that is brought about by differences of impulses, desire, or tendencies. Unrest normally happens when there is tension or when people are not comfortable with the status quo and desire to change the status quo. It is most times targeted at certain social ills, irregularities, injusticeand bias.

Writing on the reasons behind unrest, Denga (1998) listed the reasons behind student unrest in schools to include non-participation of students in decision making process, welfare problems, lack of amenities, lack of social facilities amongst others. This, most times, results in students showing their displeasure which, most times, is through agitation, protest, demonstrations. Students' unrest usually pertains to disagreement involving school authority and the students. The aftermath is most times followed by abrupt closure of schools to ensure normalcy is restored before resumption when the situation is under control.

Students' unrest sometimes are rational in the sense that it is targeted at achieving a positive aim and it can also be irrational when initiated and championed by hoodlums and rascals who use studentship as garment to perpetrate criminal activities. Students' unrest is a deviation from normal and appropriate procedures and channels for channeling grievances. It is a departure from approved procedures and that is why most often it has criminal outcomes. Students' unrest comes in form of peaceful protest and most times turn violent if not properly handled especially by school management and law enforcement agents.

The phenomenon of students' unrest dates back to the emergence and commencement of formal education in Nigeria. Some literatures precisely point to the fact that cases of students' unrest are reported as far back as 1945. Since then cases of students' unrest have been occurring in Nigeria higher institutions. The cankerworm keeps occurring from time to time and spreading like wild fire. Ezera (1960) posits that between 1940 and 1945, the West Africa Students Union (WASU) had agitated in pamphlets and public lectures for

political reforms in all British West African territories. That stimulated fairly the enthusiastic audience of the British public opinion in favour of Africa freedom. Campaigns have also been embarked upon to foster national consciousness. The major target was to inspire a strong sense of militancy in the Nigeria people's liberation struggle (Aluede, 1995; Babatope, 1994). Babatope (1974) and Onwuejeogwu (1991) noted that the students union was born and nurtured in the womb of colonial protest. Hence, students' unionism in the past was synonymous to students' unrest.

In 1960 there was an incident of students' unrest because of government's insensitivity to national issues. Dissatisfied with that, the unrest took place to express student's dissatisfaction with government's position on certain issues and failure of the government to address the students.

According to Denga (1998), a historical students' unrest that happened in the country is the protest staged to protest against the proposed Anglo-Nigerian Defence in Lagos on September 14, 1960. Aluede (1995) feels the perceived intention was to perpetuate a neo-colonial state. That triggered the protest.

Factors That Account for Students' Unrest

Several reasons and factors are behind the prevalence of students' unrest in the country. The reasons most often are synonymous and have to do with the welfare of students. A lot of factors are responsible for students' unrest in Nigeria. Lack of seriousness on the part of government as well as school management has been pointed out. Philip (1990) noted that absence or deplorable nature of social amenities which include pipe borne water, electricity, medical clinic and deplorable classroom blocks have pushed students to engage in unrest. Similarly, Denga (1982) listed the causes of students' unrest in tertiary institutions to include non-involvement of students in decision making process, academic stress, welfare problems. The leadership styles of some school management have also resulted in students' unrest. School management with dictatorial leadership styles tends to stimulate students to embark on violent protests, whereas management with good leadership style quickly calms students when intelligent information about unrest is gotten. Demers (2007) outlined three strategies of peaceful unrest resolution between fending parties. This, according to him, include, mediation, arbitration and reconciliation. Corroborating the above Magagula (2007) is of the opinion that each of the aforementioned approaches could be used by school management authorities to arrest the phenomenon of students' unrest. According to Aluede (2001), students' unrest is caused by dictatorial tendencies of the school authorities, he further stated that if students can be carried along in decision making in tertiary institutions students' unrest will wither away. Similar to Aluede's position, Ladipo (1997) feels students' unrest is present in the country because of ineffective leadership among school authorities. Falua (2004) pointed out several factors behind students' unrest which, according to him, include increase in tuition fees, cultism, failure of institution authorities to listen to students, and poor campus transportation system. Adeyemi (2009), on his part, outlined changing value system, contemporary national issues and welfareproblem. According to Sanda (1992), students' unrest is caused by certain factors that are manifest and some that are latent. To him, the manifest causes are infrastructural inadequacies on campus, national economic and political issues. The latent causes, according to him, include military authoritarianism, national economic decline, centralization of higher education management, age of students and lackadaisical attitudes of the state to responding to issues relating to students. It is worthy of mention that the influence of the ideology of radical revolutionists like Chi Guevera, Malcom X, V I Lenin and the influence of the critical ideology of Marxism championed by Karl Marx as students get to tertiary institutions also can be a factor for students' unrest. More factors responsible for students' unrest are discussed under the following thematic headings.

Social and moral decadence: Students' unrest appears to be the symptoms of the social and moral decadence of the Nigerian society in general. This decay manifests itself in the form of various social vices and ills epitomized by corruption, indiscipline, moral laxity and many other ills in the society (Okeowo, 2007). Therefore, since youth in Nigeria, who do not exist in a vacuum, observe this unhealthy social environment and the breakdown in societal values and norms, it is from what they observe and the signals they perceive that they, in order to achieve what they perceive as societal goals, emulate the behavior of the society. Thus, the society in this way can be seen as the source of violence, for the youths merely reflecting societal behavior. In a society where persons who have achieved success through corruption are lauded, the signal sent to the youth is that corruption is an acceptable means of achieving success (Ifaturoti, 2013). This is of course reflected in the violent behavior of the youth.

Influence of peer group: Peer group pressure and the age factor play an important role in determining youth involvement in violence and unrest. Many youths of school age are at their most impressionistic and they tend to imitate easily. Thus, they are more easily manipulated and influenced by their peers, who encourage them to commit delinquent acts on the grounds that it enhances their status and commitment in the society (Tamuno, 1991).

Culture of drug abuse: The prevailing culture of drug abuse has, in no small way, contributed to the upsurge in youth violence, students' unrest inclusive. Hard drugs such as heroin, marijuana and cocaine are often found in the possession of students and youths generally. Violent clashes often occur under the influence of alcohol and other mind disturbing drugs. Ifaturoti (1994) attests to the fact that abuse of drugs, such as cocaine, and over-indulgence in alcoholic drinks, such as gin and whisky, alter the state of the user's mind and predispose it to violence. There is a massive scale of drug problem in Nigeria. Kazeem (2019) revealed that nearly 15% of the adult population use psychoactive drug substances. The findings of Kazeem (2019) reveal that the highest level of drug use was among people aged between 25-39. This falls within students' age. The study further revealed that the most used drug is cannabis. He further argued that sedatives, heroin, cocaine, codeine, tramadol are other drugs used by youths. Others, according to him, include sniffing of glue and sewage.

Economic factors: According to Obateru (1994), poverty apparently accounts for the bulk of violence due to such problems as inadequate physical and social infrastructures. The current depression in the Nigerian economy must have worsened the situation of youths; this has rendered the youths idle and almost hopeless, hence they have become instruments of manipulation by the elites for ethno-religious and political insurrections and students' unrest. Iheriohanma (2010) posits that Nigerian economy heavily depend on the economies of the developed nations through the production of cash crops or raw materials for export. He further stated that such system of production leads to importation of wide range of foreign manufactured goods and neglecting local made production with its socio-economic consequence. Poverty and unemployment occasioned by poor economy have contributed to making young men vulnerable to radicalization. The youths who are confronted with this strain, join radical groups as a platform to get succour. Majority of these youths join the dreaded Boko Haram, militia groups and unleash terror attacks on citizens.

Family influence: Family influence plays an undeniable role in shaping the characters of youths. The quality of their family life is reflected in their behaviour. Iheriohanma (2009) observed that the pervading circumstances are attributed to the ineptitude of leadership in democratic governance and in ensuring equal opportunities for all to pursue descent livelihood. Moreover, poverty and crime have been identified as having twin relationship (Iheriohanma, 2009). In families where violence is a way of life, a reflection of it is seen in the violent behaviour of the youth of the family (Ifam, 2001). Elaborating on this fact, Madu (2008), Owolabi (2001), and Livi (2005) observed that children living in violent homes are themselves more likely to become agents of violence as they grow up. These children naturally see violence as an instrument of inter-group relations.

It is also possible for the frequently battered mother to transfer her suffering to her children in the form of harsh punishments for minor offences. Such children soon become resistant to even dangerous battering and gladly participate in street/public fight (Albert &Filian, 2015). They become threats to peace and harmony in the society as they are recruited into gangster organizations, students violent protests etc. Moreover, because many parents do not pay enough attention to the children, youths disturbed by such family situation may indulge in students' unrest and delinquent acts as a way of either seeking the parents' attention to rebelling against such parents (Ifaturoti, Banbilo and Walter, 2013). Iheriohanma (2009) advised that the pressures of the social structure on crime committal can be curtailed if the role of the state is aggressively pursued with the necessary structures for democratic governance.

Effects of Students' Unrest

Students' unrest no doubt affects students negatively in different ways. Unrest results in breakdown of facilities in schools, vandalization, loss of lives and disturbance of peace. Students' unrest also negatively results in distortion of academic calendars of institutions. Aluede, Jimoh, Agwinede&Omorege (2005) pointed out the effects of students' unrest to include closure of schools that are affected, dissolution of school management among others.

Students unrest have negative effect on the academic performance of students, this is because after unrest students are forced to stay at home for a while pending resolution of the problem. During this waiting period, students engage in activities far from educational and upon resumption, they begin and start all over as though they are learners or freshers. Egbegi, &Iheriohanma (2018) are of the opinion that when students are kept away from school for a long time or frequently, most of them are completely cut off from academics. This, according to them, is because the condition of home may not favour productive and rigorous academic exercise. They may rather divert students' attention and make them easy prey to evils (Egbegi&Iheriohanma, 2018).

Students' unrest also results in low level of infrastructural development in schools. This is because most times unrest leads to destruction of existing infrastructures. Students' unrest also negatively affects students' psychological thinking leading them into joining unholy groups in the school. The students and their parents become frustrated because of long expectation of school resumption that sometimes is far from sight (Egbegi&Iheriohanma, 2018). Sometimes parents and guardians are asked to pay certain damages which as well affect the economy of parents. In the instance of death, affected parents are left bereaved.

Theoretical Justification: **Relative Deprivation Theory**

This theory was developed by Walter Runciman (1966) who drew his inspirations from the works of Robert K. Merton. The basic argument of the theory is that people who are deprived of things they deem valuable either money, justice, status or opportunity and privileges in society may join social movement with the hope of redressing their grievances. Runciman (1966), further argued that there is egoistic and fraternalistic relative deprivation in human society. Egoistic deprivation is caused by unfavorable social position when compared to others while fraternalistic deprivation is caused by unfavorable comparison to other better off group. That is to say, the former is concerned with individual subjective evaluation of their financial and political position or measurement of social variables such as poverty, unemployment and inequality in society (Davis, 1959). The later deals with a group of people who feels frustrated and aggressive when they compare their condition with other group members. Both egoistic and fraternalistic deprivation explain reasons why individual and group engage in anti-social behavior. Lee and Young (1994) opined that deprived youths are usually pushed to the edges in any given society. In response to their social, monetary and political deprivations, greater number of these youth momentarily entered the world of violence and created violence sub-culture that consequently wreak destruction on the security of lives and properties, and result in criminal activities.

Also, Gurr (1970) maintained that the perception of deprivation, marginalization and persecution of individuals in a given community may lead to frustration and anger. He argued that people rebel because they are frustrated and angered by the enormity of the socio-economic and structural inequalities, which are inextricably entrenched in the fabrics of society. The assumptions of RDT are relevant to the understanding of students' unrest in Nigeria and Nasarawa State Polytechnic in particular. From the theory, It can be argued that the major actors of students' unrest usually seem to lack valuable things in school such as amenities, enabling environment for studies. These kinds of students feel frustrated and angered when contrasting their condition with other people who are in other places.

Since they tend to feel deprived, ignored and dejected, they may subsequently set out to engage in unrest to make the management and government aware of their plight. Crossby (1976) and Chen (2015) posited that the disenchantment people feel when they compare their position to others may lead to frustration, stress and aggression which may result to unrest. From the theory, it is obvious that students' unrest occurs because of feelings of deprivation, neglect and frustration on the side of the students.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey research design which allows for representative samples in the collection of data and allows for generation of certain primary information from their original sources. A sample size of 165 respondents were drawn from students of the Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia using multi stage sampling method and given questionnaires to fill, however, only 150 questionnaires were retrieved for analysis. The choice of the institution is because the institution is always infested with students' unrest. Analysis of data was done   through the use of pie chart and bar charts.
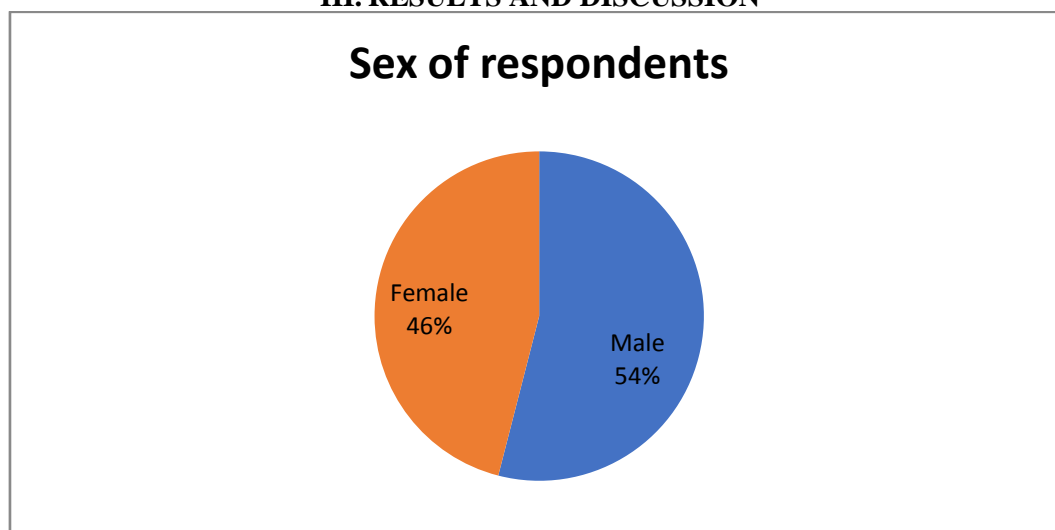
III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: Sex of Respondents

Source: Field survey, 2020**.**

The figure above is an analysis of the sex of respondents in the study. With the total of 150 questionnaires retrieved and correctly filled out of the 165 sent out, a greater percentage of the respondents are male,specifically 54% while the remaining are female specifically 46%.
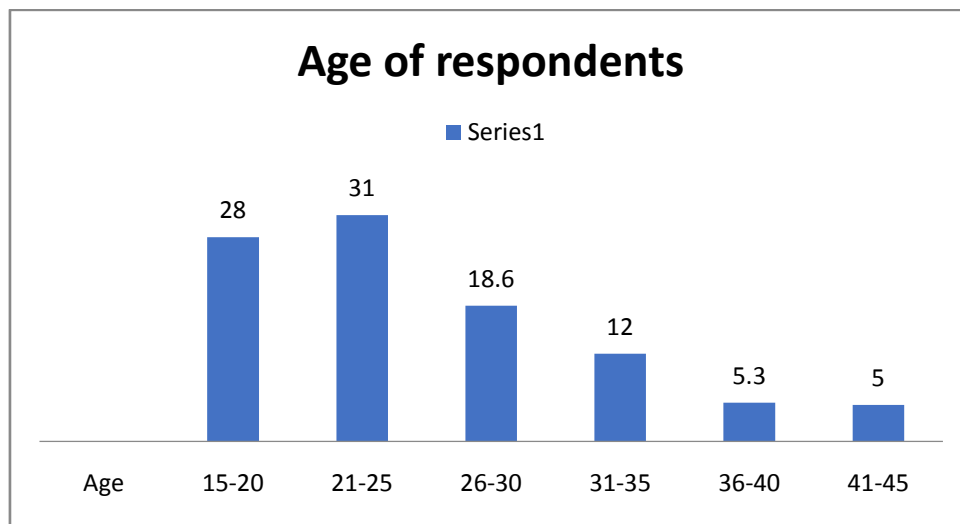

Figure 2: Age of Respondents

Source: Field survey, 2020

The figure above is an analysis of the age of respondents in the study. With the total of 150 copies of questionnaire retrieved and correctly filled out of the 165 sent out, a greater percentage of the respondents are within the age of 21-25 specifically 31% while the lowest age category was respondents within the age of 41-45 specifically 5%.
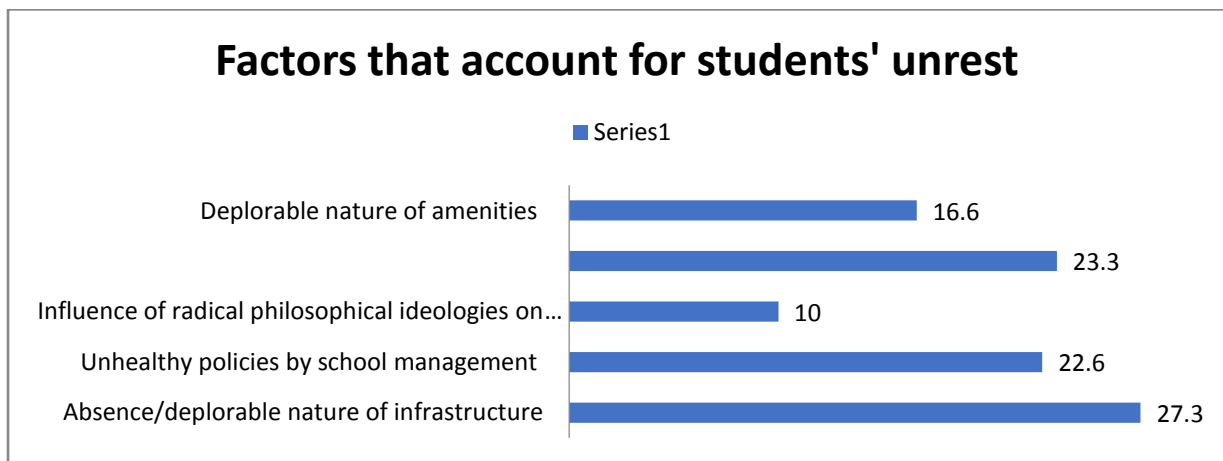

Figure 3: Factors That Account for Students' Unrest

Source: Field survey, 2020

Figure 3 is an analysis of data on the factors that account for students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia. Analysis of data shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents specifically 27.3% indicated that absence/deplorable nature of infrastructure is a factor that accounts for students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia. Only an insignificant few specifically 10% indicated that the influence of radical philosophical ideologies on students is a factor that accounts for students' unrest.
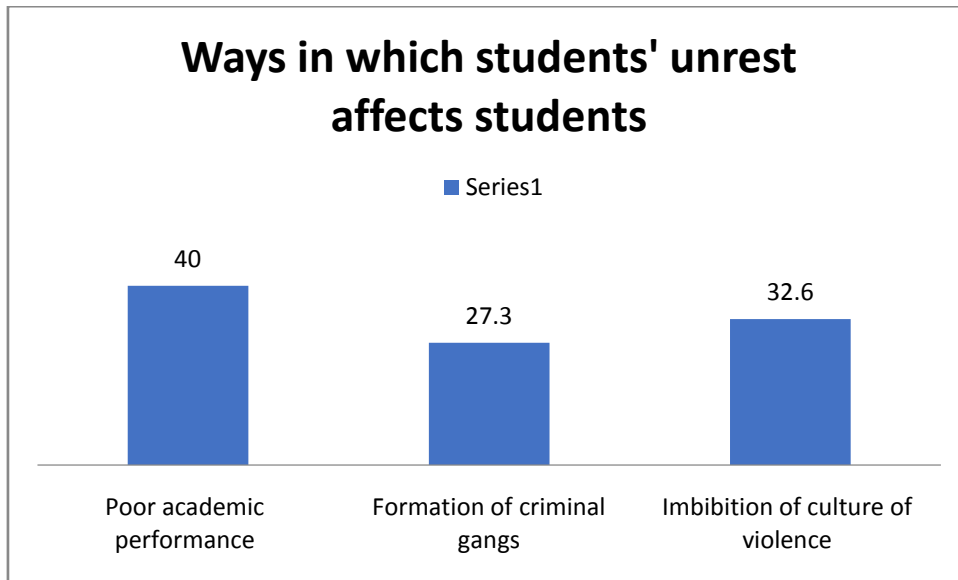
Figure 4: Ways in Which Students' Unrest Affects Students
Source: Field survey, 2020

Figure 4 is an analysis of data on ways in which students' unrest affects students. Data show that an overwhelming majority of the respondents, 40%, indicated that students' unrest affects students through poor academic performance. Only an insignificant few, 27.3%, are respondents who indicated that formation of criminal gangs is a way in which students' unrest affects students.
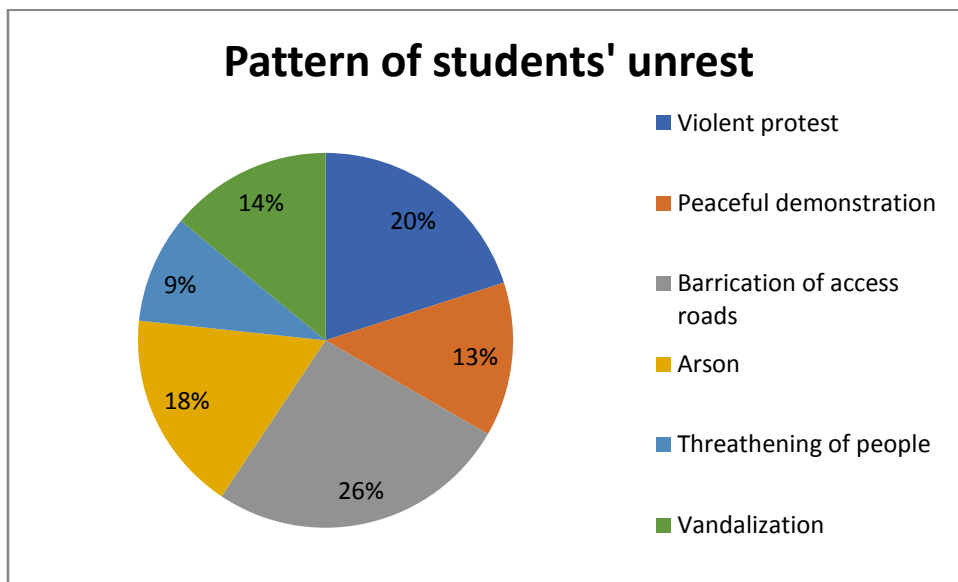

Figure 5: Pattern of Students' Unrest
Source: Field survey, 2020

Figure 5 is an analysis of data on the pattern of students' unrest. The analysis of data shows that majority of respondents, 26%, indicated that the pattern of students' unrest is barricade of access roads while insignificant percentage of respondents, 9%, indicated threatening of people.

IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

❖ The study found that the main factor that accounts for students' unrest in the study area is absence and deplorable nature of infrastructures in schools. This is in line with the findings of Philip (1990) which noted that absence or deplorable nature of social amenities which include pipe borne water, electricity, medical clinic and deplorable classroom blocks have pushed students to engage in unrest. It is also in agreement with the basic

tenet of the Relative Deprivation Theory which states that people who are deprived of things they deem valuable may join social movement with the hope of redressing their grievances

❖ The study found that majority of the respondents maintained that students' unrest affects students through poor academic performance. This is closely in line with the findings of Egbegi, &Iheriohanma (2018) that when students are kept away from school for a long time or frequently, most of them are completely cut off from academics. This, according to them, is because the condition of home may not favour productive and rigorous academic exercise. Egbegi&Iheriohanma (2018) however did not specifically reveal that students' unrest affects students through poor academic performance but that students are cut off from academics when they are kept away from school for a long time. This study found that students' unrest affects students through poor academic performance.

❖ Again, the study found that the major pattern of students' unrest is barricade of access roads. This diverge from the findings of Aluede (2005) that unrest results in breakdown of facilities in schools, vandalization and loss of lives. The findings of Aluede (2005) did not mention that students barricade access roads during unrest. This study however discovered that students barricade access roads during unrest. The finding is however in line with the tenet of the Relative Deprivation Theory which opined that deprived youths are usually pushed to the edges in any given society. In response to their social, monetary and political deprivations, greater number of these youth momentarily enters the world of violence. Violence in this regard may include barricade of access roads.

V. CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of students' unrest is an ugly situation. The situation should therefore be checked and the factors that account for the occurrences addressed so as to prevent the emergence or resurgence of further cases of students' unrest in Nasarawa State Polytechnic in particular and Nigeria in general.

The findings of this study has revealed negative effects of students' unrest on students, it is important therefore to take the issue of students' unrest seriously, root causes be addressed so as to avert the negative effects on students. The security of the nation will totally collapse if students who are trained to be vehicles of positive change are affected by students' unrest negatively.

Findings also revealed the pattern adopted by students during unrest to include barricade of access roads. Such pattern adopted is uncalled for. It is therefore pertinent to address this so that such acclaimed minor acts do not degenerate to more serious crimes. School managements and government need to explore viable mechanisms of controlling students' unrest so as to put to rest various forms of students agitations which most times result to students' unrest. Most importantly is that government should prioritize the issue of students' welfare.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

i. The welfare of students should be the priority of government and schools management so as to discourage the wide students' agitations which mostly later result to students' unrest.
ii. Government and schools managements should modify the various mechanisms adopted in addressing students' activism to cover some lapses and as well explore more mechanisms.
iii. The information units of schools should be saddled with the responsibility of always giving orientation to students on the consequences of students' unrest.
iv. Individuals with charisma should be the ones appointed as management in order for cases of students' unrest to be addressed with diplomacy when it occurs.

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