



Value Deficiency, Employment Generation and Crime among Youths in Nigeria: An Overview

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors designed the study, wrote the protocol and the first draft of the manuscript. Both authors managed the analyses of the study and the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Value deficiency and crime among the youths reflects the plethora of contemporary societal challenges that appear to inhibit social progress and national development. This paper therefore discusses value deficiency, employment generation and crime among youths in Nigeria. It examines the relationship between value deficiency and crime among youths in Nigeria despite several government efforts at employment generation. This paper argues that, although employment is a critical requirement for youths to realize their potentialities and release their contributory efforts to national development, the burden of value deficiency appears to vitiate such efforts and propel youth towards increasing crime. The paper identifies factors such as degradation and relegation of values as the causes of value deficiency in the Nigeria society. This paper adopted the Social Impact Theory [1] to emphasize its points. Secondary data collected from previous researches and analysis of scholars to demonstrate the facts stated here were analyzed using the descriptive method. The study finds that value deficiency increases the incidence of crime among youths and vitiates the efforts at employment generation in Nigeria. It recommends among others that youth development strategies must necessarily include value re-orientation and further re-orientation programmes and this requires the active support of the family, the community and the government.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Diverse social challenges of different magnitudes are being encountered daily in Nigeria. These diverse social challenges have adversely affected the effort at sustainable development in the country. Among the most topical of these are social issues relating to value deficiency, employment generation and a rising crime rate among the youth population. While these social issues, and the associated challenges and problems they continuously constitute, are a global phenomena, they appear noticeably ubiquitous and on the rise in Nigeria. Hence, crimes such as kidnapping, yahoo-yahoo, yahoo plus, credit cards and internet robbery and theft, drug abuse, armed robbery, cheating and exam malpractice, cultism, prostitution, militancy, etc, that are found to occur among the youths appear to have better appeal than the various employment generation programmes that have been formulated by various governments to harness the advantages that reside in the youth. This is against the backdrop that the various employment generation programmes arose out of the predominant belief that “the level of national development in any given country is largely dependent on the extent to which the enormous potentials of its youth are harnessed and utilized by the government to promote and sustain economic growth and social progress [2].

However, despite the effort that has been invested in ensuring that youths, through various youth empowerment and employment generation programmes, realize their potentialities and release their contributory efforts to national development, such effort appears to be vitiated by the propensity to take to crime among a large section of the youths in Nigeria. Thus, it is believed in many quarters that “Nigeria is currently caught in the web of crime dilemma, manifesting in the convulsive upsurge of both violent and non-violent crimes [3]. The menace of crime has therefore, become a source of concern to the Nigerian society. This becomes critical considering that despite the creation of several schemes (such as National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Subsidy Re-Investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)), youths in Nigeria, variously identified as hardworking, enterprising and innovative [4], are becoming increasingly prone to deviant behaviors which culminate in

various forms of crime. There appears to exist a reluctance to translate these positive attributes to gainful, honest employment and thriving businesses for wealth generation and sustainable development.

In recent times, the incidence and menace of crime among the youth in Nigeria has become an issue of worry and concern to parents, businesses, citizens, governments, and international organizations. This worry and concern arose from the perception that crime constitutes:

A threat to the economic, political and social security of a nation and a major factor associated with underdevelopment, discourages both local and foreign investments, reduces the quality of life, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states, undermines democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to promote development [5].

The import of the above could be gleaned from Imhonopi, [6] assertion that:

The number of violent crimes such as kidnappings, ritual killings, carjacking, suicide bombings, religious killings, politically-motivated killing and violence, ethnic clashes, armed banditry and others has increasingly become the regular signature that characterizes life in Nigeria since 2009.

Various authors have identified that it is the youth that are primarily involved in the commission of crimes in Nigeria. According to Nwogu [7], “violent crimes committed in Nigerian societies of contemporary times involve the youth in most cases”. This is also affirmed by Ogbekor [8] when he opined that over 70 percent of Nigerian prisoners these days are young people and majority of these persons are youths. However, while numerous studies conclude that youth unemployment is a factor in youth participation in crime [9,10,11], few studies have considered value deficiency in the society as fundamentally underlining youths’ propensity to take to crime despite government’s efforts at youth empowerment and employment. To this end, this study is therefore necessary to investigate the relationship between value deficiency and crime among youths in Nigeria despite several government efforts at employment generation.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Crime among the youths is turning the youths from their enviable and respected position as important assets for innovation and creativity and vanguards of societal development in the society into sources of threat to the security of persons and property, as well as threat to the social order and solidarity that underlines social existence. The social order and character of the traditional society, which guarantees honest living and maximum security of life and property, have dwindled and given rise to a situation of suspicion and distrust [12] for the youth in Nigeria. The problem is becoming more complex each passing day in Nigeria especially as “the crisis of value system in Nigeria suggests that the growth and progress of the society is being retarded in many aspects through outburst of materialistic tendencies of our youth” [13]. This has raised a consciousness of serious concern for parents, businesses, citizens, governments, and international organizations.

Furthermore, despite the reliance on employment generation by various governments as a panacea to criminal tendencies, the Nigerian youth appears to be caught in a web of deepening poverty, hopelessness and missed opportunities. The Hobbesian realities of the Nigerian socio-economic and political environment have reduced the youth's access to opportunities for economic growth which has continuously served to increase the excruciating vacuum in the youths' stomach and minds [14,15]. Thus, the youth continues to be plagued by the challenges of disenchantment, negativity, inadequacy, poor value orientations and exposure to corrupt influences which appear to lead them to participate in violent crimes. This paper therefore examines the reasons why several employment programmes have failed to reduce the growing crime wave among youths in Nigeria.

1.2 Objective of the Paper

The objective of the paper is to examine value deficiency among youths and its connection to growing crime wave in Nigeria despite government's efforts at employment generation. Specifically, this paper:

- i. Scrutinizes value deficiency among youths in Nigeria.
- ii. Investigate value deficiency and growing crime among youths in Nigeria.

- iii. Establish reasons why several employment schemes have failed to reduce crime among the youth.

2. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research method was adopted in this study. Secondary sources constitute the bulk of data collected and these were derived from texts found in libraries, archives, periodicals and internet in the form of government documents and gazettes, newspapers, books, journal articles, unpublished theses and papers.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Focus

The theoretical ideas of Latané, [1] on the contributions of the society in the formation of mindsets among the youth would be relied upon. The Social Impact Theory posits that amount of influence others have in a given situation is a function of three factors which include: Strength, immediacy and number. Francoi, [16] borrowing from Latané, [1] avers that peer influence constitutes the dynamic social impact propelling the youths to identify with their counterparts in their environment. Youths within this reality form a bond within which their aspirations are articulated, exercised, reinforced and sustained in the atmosphere of similarly held attitudes, group values and their perception of their world.

As an emphasis, the youth stage is a development stage usually characterized by personality conflicts. Young people at this point experience a combination of rapid physiological changes and character building [17]. It is also that period when a number of anti-social and disruptive behaviours [begin to] manifest [18] in the youth. Thus, at this developmental stage, the society exerts a pivotal influence on the youths' decision to identify with certain beliefs, attitudes, practices subject to the prevailing strength, immediacy and number. Where and when the society fails to adequately perform this role, where the actions and lives of those they regard as role models tend to depict living in inexplicable material wealth and affluence and glitz, and where the value system within such society has become degraded, desperation becomes a spur on which these critical and creative youthful minds behavioural patterns can be modified.

3.2 Youth in Nigeria

Federal Government of Nigeria, [19] states that youth are the foundation of a society. It adds that their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation. Bello-Kano, [20] avers that youth has been variously classified into such age brackets by World Bank and United Nations as 15-24 years, Commonwealth Youth Programmes as 15-29 years, and that for many countries, the figure varies from 13-18 years, 20-25 years, and 12-20 years. The [21] classified the youths as people aged between 18 and 35 years, constituted of all young males and females which are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This age bracket was later reviewed from the existing 18-35 years to 15 to 29 years [22]. This paper adopts the age classification of 15 to 29 years of the National Youth Policy of 2019.

In Nigeria, the youths constitute the foundation of the society whose energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of the nation's development and security. Through their creative talents and labour power, it is expected that the Nigeria would make giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. This assertion derives from the belief that in the dreams and hopes of the youth, a nation finds motivation; on their energies, she builds her vitality and purpose; and because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a nation is assured [21,23]. This may have prompted [11] to assert that "as the intermediate

population group in any country, the youths are the basic resource for nation building and the significant means and ends of socio-economic development". To emphasize their importance to any country, [11] adds that "youths also represent an important stakeholder in the society and constitute a major part of the labour force".

Generally, youths are one of the greatest assets that Nigeria has and therefore, need to be developed and empowered. This is because they serve as a good measure of the extent to which the country can reproduce as well as sustain itself [24]. They are also most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population in terms of social-economic, emotion and other aspects [23]. Therefore, youth is used to describe young people in the prime of life, endowed with creative and innovative capacities that could be harnessed into requisite positive skills and capabilities that form the fulcrum of social order and progress in society. Presently, the youth population in Nigeria is undergoing massive growth. The impact of this massive growth is that in Nigeria, "apart from being the leaders of tomorrow, youths out-number the middle aged and the aged" [25] and as such, when their inherent creative and innovative capacities are harvested, it can become an instrument of development and progress for the country to leverage on. However, in the absence of proper values, their inherent creative and innovative capacities could be transformed into criminality in the society as is presently being experienced in Nigeria [26,27].

Table 1. Youth population in Nigeria

| S/No | AGE | NUMBER | % |
|-------|----------|------------|-----|
| 1 | 18 years | 3,777,608 | 8 |
| 2 | 19 years | 2,087,073 | 5 |
| 3 | 20 years | 5,825,512 | 13 |
| 4 | 21 years | 1,692,905 | 4 |
| 5 | 22 years | 2,372,385 | 5 |
| 6 | 23 years | 1,878,601 | 4 |
| 7 | 24 years | 1,665,676 | 4 |
| 8 | 25 years | 4,950,958 | 11 |
| 9 | 26 years | 1,685,645 | 4 |
| 10 | 27 years | 1,891,707 | 4 |
| 11 | 28 years | 2,348,975 | 5 |
| 12 | 29 years | 1,334,141 | 3 |
| 13 | 30 years | 5,538,220 | 12 |
| 14 | 31 years | 807,082 | 2 |
| 15 | 32 years | 1,561,540 | 4 |
| 16 | 33 years | 817,720 | 2 |
| 17 | 34 years | 742,976 | 2 |
| 18 | 35 years | 3,538,869 | 8 |
| Total | | 44,517,593 | 100 |

Source: National Population Commission, Nigeria 2010

Nigeria is reputed to be the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populated country in the world [28]. By inference, a large part of this population is made up of youths. It may have been with the benefit of this hindsight that [29] averred thus:

Since youths represent the most tangible investment that any nation can have, as well as its most vital source of manpower for present and future development, it is expected that the youths in Nigeria would be cherished, motivated and provided with all available skills, tools and enabling environment to ensure the full development and attainment of their potentials and promises. In other words, youth development should be doggedly pursued in Nigeria.

As a result of the above, several governments in Nigeria have keyed into running Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) to reduce unemployment and promote employment for young people and hopefully, reduce the rising wave of crime among the youths. This will be briefly explored in the next section of this paper.

3.3 Employment Generation in Nigeria

Employment generation is critical for utilizing the human capital that inheres in young people. It empowers them to avoid poverty, and possibly, have a more fulfilling life devoid of reliance on crime as an alternative. The human capital formed in young people is an important determinant of long term growth that a nation can invest on through the generation of employment opportunities. Without employment, young people become confronted with the fundamental challenge of how to protect and provide for themselves and their society in the future. Hence, over the years, various regimes came up with programmes for youth for self-reliance and sustainable livelihood. Some of the employment programmes that have been initiated by the governments in Nigeria include:

- Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)
- Green Revolution (GR)
- Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) 1986
- Better Life for Rural Women 1987
- Family Support Programme
- Agric Development Programme
- The Nomadic and Adult Education Programme
- National Directorate of Employment 1989.

- Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) 1993
- National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2004,
- State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS)
- Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS)
- Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) 1999
- National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)
- Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) 2012
- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2012
- Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN) 2012
- National Social Investment Programme (NSIP)
- National Enterprises Development Programme (NEDEP)

While these schemes have contributed much in developing and utilizing the energies and skills of youth, it cannot be said to have adequately led to noticeable reduction in the incidence of crime among the youth. On this same note, [27] posits that “skills acquisition as a veritable vehicle to promote employment generation has been a part of the policy thrust of past Nigerian governments. However, most intervention programmes have been poorly coordinated and in some cases either overlap or contradict one another”. He adds that “most of the past intervention programmes were implemented as ad-hoc, poorly coordinated and marred by corruption and inefficiency. Consequently, rather than reduce unemployment, the reverse seems to be the case”. Hence, the Nigerian youth finds self swimming against a gradual and overwhelming tide of widespread joblessness, extreme disconnection from the mainstream of the society, misdemeanor verging on criminality, militancy, youth restiveness, increasing level of drug addiction and usage, general breakdown in moral values and norms, pervasive culture of get rich quick syndrome and a host of other negative dimensions. The question therefore arises as to why these employment programmes seem to have failed to adequately promote employment for young people and reduced the rising crime wave.

According to Salami, [27], “any meaningful effort aimed at addressing the problem of youth

unemployment in Nigeria must have value re-orientation as its foundation. He goes on to add that:

Any discerning observer would have noticed that the core values such as honesty, dignity in labour and hard work have long evaporated from the radar of the Nigeria culture. It is very common to find government officials flaunting their ill-gotten wealth thereby making them the envy of the youths. The youths want to make quick and easy money and generally want to live on the fast lane. Increasingly, youths are being dis-oriented by the get rich-quick syndrome of politics and engendered corruption in the last two decades. Many of them are beginning to share the view that hard work does not pay in Nigeria. Some of them even believe that the N18,000 minimum wage cannot sustain them. Therefore, they keep hoping that one day they will “make it big” like the politicians and other corrupt government officials [27].

Thus, the Nigerian youth, low on self confidence, agonized by poverty, threatened by lack amidst obvious plenty and suffocated by a deficiency of critical values becomes driven towards the welcoming arms of crime that may be non violent some of the times but violent most of the times. The values associated with hard-work, honesty and patriotism become easily replaceable with greed largely driven by an ill conceived get-rich-quick mentality among these youths.

3.4 Value Deficiency among Nigerian Youths

Values are fundamental in all human societies and in human actions and activities [12]. To emphasize the importance of values, [30] asserts that “values refer to activities in human character, conduct, social intercourse, etc, that can be judged as being good, wrong and the like. On his part, Bodunrin, [31] noted that values are basic beliefs and attitude in a society whether of individual or groups which are considered worthwhile and which serve as guide to choices and behaviour in daily life. Esu, [32] avers that values are ideals that guide or qualify personal conduct, interaction with others. Along the same line, Bolarin, [33] defines values as trait, practices, acts, ideals, beliefs, attitudes, and principles that a group or society considers of merit, worthwhile, dear, acceptable and right. Deriving from the above is the consensus that values are the guiding principles of life that can

contribute to the all round development of an individual.

Families throughout the world are believed to be custodians of socio-cultural, economic and political values which sustain societies as they evolve through time [34]. In Nigeria, certain factors, which appear to erode the influence of families as custodians of values, as opined by Ganyi and Deakaa [34] have been identified as catalysts of value deficiency among youths. These are (i) lack of adequate parental care (ii) negative peer group influence (iii) poverty resulting in under-feeding and inadequate provision of necessary basic of needs, (iv) lack of proper guidance and counseling services which usually help individuals to overcome obstacles [35]. Thus, even where the family tries to impart critical positive values on their offspring, such effort is confronted by these debilitating influences.

Core values are being eroded every day. Being that the Nigerian society places great emphasis on material wealth, its youths are becoming more prone to deviant behavior which is the first step away from the accepted norms of any society or group. Sanni, [30] observes that “such woeful lack of values is most noticeable among the youths at the home and educational levels with the politicians/leaders and even parents acting as bad models”. This has increased the rate of social vices like robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, human trafficking, destitution, political thuggery etc being experienced among youths in Nigeria. The worship of money rather than honour and achievement, has been named amongst the causes of crime in Nigeria [36]. It does not end there. There is also the nascent and prevailing factor of lack of parental supervision as enunciated by Sanni, [30] above. Due to job demands, etc, most parents have very limited time to inculcate critical values in their children while others find it difficult to make out time to be with these bundles of surging energies they have birthed. These youths become exposed to and quickly take to unfiltered influences from peers and self-identified models in their society. Today therefore, it is quite common to observe many parents covertly and overtly transmit negative values that encourage commission of crime to their wards via socialization as if they are prime socio-cultural values which ought to be transmitted to the younger generation.

Oyedepo, [37] opines that “perhaps the greatest problem facing the nation today is the problem of

identification of value. We have lost our value for duty. We no longer regard work and duty as value. We put no value on clean environment stealing and frauds are often seen as normal. Worst of all, we have taught our children to develop wrong values and a bad habit of consumption". In this prevailing atmosphere, and although the youth accept that wealth is preferable to poverty, the drive for such wealth reverses certain cardinal values as highlighted by Iherue, [12] and as such, chaos becomes preferable to order, falsehood is used to cover up truth, iniquity becomes adopted while virtue is orphaned and ugliness is made to wear the make-up of seeming beauty. Hence, in an era in which value deficiency is becoming the rule rather than an exception, a closer observation reveals that a large percentage of the youths are simply following the prevailing value foot prints of the larger society.

In present day Nigeria, "youth delinquency, unemployment, immorality, religious crises, intolerance and fanaticism, personal family stress and instability, preference to get rich quick and peer culture confusion seem to be at their peak" [38]. The Nigerian society has become plagued by examination malpractices, armed robbery, secret-cult practices, sexualism, materialism, greed, selfishness, double standards of living, idleness, cheating or duping, immodest and disgraceful craze in dressing or fashion, militancy, disregard for human life, extreme violent cultism, immoral living, unwholesome media content etc, all of which question seriously the moral future of the Nigerian society. In such environment, it is not a surprise when Sanni, [30] concludes that apart from insecurity, that is, the inability to adequately protect the lives and properties of the people, occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency, abject poverty, a serious decline in health care services, dilapidated infrastructure that has bedeviled Nigeria just to mention but a few, another very visible and painful problem in Nigeria today among the youths is the depreciation of moral values.

3.5 Crime among Youths in Nigerian

According to Scott and Marshall [39], "a crime is held to be an offence, which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority". Crime is often perceived to be threatening the fabric of society or as a symptom

of a breakdown of the social order; it is dysfunctional as it threatens the stability of society and it is therefore, a social problem [5]. Clinard, [40] wrote that crime refers to those activities which break the law of the land and are subject to official punishment after conviction. Dambazau, [41] defined crime as an act or omission against public interest and which is prescribed by law enacted by the legislature in the overall interests of the society, and to which prescribed punishment is attached in the event of violation and it involves four major principles which are public wrong, moral wrong, law and punishment for the criminal. Crime is also seen as a violation of the rules agreed to be respected by all members of the society, and upon which the rest members of the society mete sanction upon those guilty of the violation.

Crime has become a major problem, a burning issue that confronts the Nigerian nation. Though it is not peculiar to Nigeria, its occurrence in the country is relatively gaining momentum daily. These crimes range from petty thefts to violent crimes such as assault, kidnapping, murder and terrorism, etc. Presently, kidnapping is a major criminal enterprise for the youths across the country irrespective of ethnic origins, religious inclinations, social class, etc. This, according to Enu and Esu [42] is because "the decay in the Nigerian society has affected the standard of values and moral character formation". They assert further that:

This has manifested in so many anti-social vices. Anti-social behaviour exhibited include corruption, dishonesty, greed, violent crimes, lack of accountability, indiscipline, disrespect to constituted authorities, laziness, low moral courage among many others. All these have constituted a serious moral problem for the Nigerian State and have constrained all sincere efforts targeted at achieving national development.

Adedoyin [43] summarized characteristics of youths as including innovation proneness, minimal risk aversion, faster reaction time, less fear of failure, less conservatism and greater physical strength. Others are greater knowledge acquisition propensity, social propensity, and faster rate of learning and faster relation building. In other words, just as the youth possess the capacity and capabilities to become fulcrums of progress, they can also channel such energies for personal survival through crime in any social environment where the value orientation is poor

and where their survival is being threatened continuously without let.

Thus, despite all the efforts at youth empowerment and employment creation, the Nigerian youth has come to command an inglorious high position in the statistics of crime. This has placed Nigeria on the global crime map since 1980s [44]. The nature of these crimes includes armed robbery, murder, rape, car theft, burglary, fraud, bribery and corruption, food and drug adulteration, gambling, smuggling, human trafficking, kidnapping, drug trafficking, money laundering, internet scam, advanced fee fraud (419) and other illegal activities [5]. They are driven by the selfish desire to own exotic cars, wear expensive clothes, while away time in idleness, clubbing, indulging in extreme quantities alcoholic beverages without let, and other countless non self development or business investment ventures.

The youth have also become notorious for their involvement in political violence. Politicians employ them during elections as political thugs to foment electoral violence, attack perceived opposition members, intimidate and maim voters, commit all sorts of electoral fraud and malpractices, as well as assassinate political opponents of their employers. Many youths are also involved in the use and trafficking of various hard drugs as a means of making quick money. The list does not end there as the rapid growth of ethnic militias, vigilantes and criminal gangs in Nigeria is also associated with the youth. This is the primary reason for their involvement in all the many ethno-communal conflicts that have erupted in recent years. Among the militias utilizing the energies of these youths are the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Odua People Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Boko Haram, Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), etc. According to Nwankwo, [45], the existence of these groups continues to threaten public order, peace and security in Nigeria.

3.6 Employment Generation, Value Deficiency and Crime among Youths in Nigeria

It has been proposed that there is a linkage between unemployment, poverty and crime. Alabi, [46] posits that “when people cannot earn

an income from legal, legitimate and socially acceptable work/means, they turn to illegal activities”. On their part, [14,47] contend that poverty, unemployment, frustration, hopelessness, and the total lack of commitment of the leaders to the plight of the struggling Nigerian youths are some of the consequences of youth idleness. A closer look shows that these authors, in their analysis, failed to take into account the influence which value deficiency exerts on the youths in the society and how this constitutes a fundamental factor for youths.

Successive governments in Nigeria have initiated myriads of policies and programmes specifically designed to benefit the youth. As lofty and laudable as these policies and programmes had seemed, their inability to affect the youth, reflects not just “the lacuna between policy formulation and implementation” [48] but also a crisis of value system among the youth in Nigeria. These attempts have not made the desired impact on youth. The overwhelming emphasis on materialism, rebellion, corruption, impatience, and other general acts of indiscipline, which has almost completely eroded the old cherished traditional values, has made the youth lose its’ sense of purpose and direction (Amaele, [49]. Hence, rather than increased employment, a happier life and the desired reduction in crime rates, what has been obtained is a continuous, debilitating increase in crime rates among the youth occasioned by lack of definite lifestyle and a charge toward negative attitude [49]. In simpler terms, although these youth desire to meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe and valued, they are not adequately encultured in the values associated with hard work, honesty, patriotism, etc.

Furthermore, the youths’ desire for qualitative and functional education, challenging but fulfilling employment and general wellbeing became mortgaged as social and cultural values steepened in decline [50]. It should be noted that by this period, the Nigerian youth had become disenchanted with his self and his environment. According to Ukachukwu and Iheriohanma [29]:

The emerging negative realities of their environment weighing down on their mind, it didn’t take much more for youths to develop and tenaciously hold the idea that Nigeria had become a jungle of which only the toughest, the meanest could hope to survive. This perceived hostile atmosphere in the country resulted in massive emigration of youths to Europe,

increasing delinquency, restiveness, hard-drug merchandising and usage, violence and crime, poor social orientations and attitudes and an overwhelmingly furious urge to 'get rich' by all means. This saw the era of insurgent fraudsters (419s), ritual killers and emergent praise singers (Oti nkpu) to the gallery.

Ukachukwu and Iheriohanma [29] observe further that:

Added to these was the sharp upsurge in pre-marital sex and teenage pregnancy which increased alongside school drop-out rates just as school enrolment decreased. Sadly but truthfully, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) became status symbols among the youth and those youth who survived one or more of such diseases usually basked in the misguided belief of their invincibility as manifest in their narrative of their exploits and survival to their peers. At this point, it was blatantly evident that the Nigerian nation had left its youth behind.

Today, the Nigerian youth is confronted by widespread, debilitating joblessness, extreme disconnection from the mainstream of the society, misdemeanor verging on criminality, militancy, youth restiveness, increasing level of drug addiction and usage, general breakdown in moral values and norms, a pervasive culture of get rich quick syndrome and a host of other negative dimensions. Modernization trends copied from the Western countries have destroyed family cohesion and increasing growth of modern cities is forcing a great number of juveniles out of the traditional in which existing values and norms were steeped in cultural control. Finally, a get-rich-quick syndrome has engrossed the Nigerian society in chasing the shadow of money to the detriment of the traditional values of honesty, hard-work, fairness, and uprightness. From the landscape of the immediate family to the large societal environment, little is comparatively being done to educate the youth to differentiate the ethos of fairness, impeccable character, patience and self-contentment, and other standards of good behaviour from greed, loose morals and the attitude of becoming rich in any way possible before they become adults.

4. CONCLUSION

Youths in Nigeria today are better educated than ever before. Just as they represent a great opportunity, they also pose enormous

challenges. Nigeria is undergoing what may be referred to as the crisis of value deficiency among the youths. This has placed Nigeria in a dilemma. The values that serve as guiding principles of life that contribute to the all round development of an individual have become largely eroded and replaced by such that promote the drive for acquisition of wealth and riches by any means. Although corruption, lack of political will, poor policy implementation, etc limit government's efforts at employment generation for the youth, and despite the fact that the government has not been able to properly conceptualise and prioritize youth development, most of the employment instruments deployed over the years have failed to incorporate value re-orientation for the youths. In instances where they have been incorporated, little has been done to ensure that they are adequately deployed and made effective.

Beginning from the late 80's, what has been witnessed is the progressive deterioration of morals and values in every sphere of the Nigerian society. Hence, at this point in the history of this country, the evidence has become glaring that value deficiency among the youth has quickly become the rule rather than an exception, an indication that the level of morality has sunk to an all-time low. "Unfortunately, rather than a happier life, there seems to be a steady and alarming increase in crime rate and insecurity, occasioned by lack of definite lifestyle and a change toward negative attitude. The spirit of materialism, rebellion, corruption, impatience, and other general acts of indiscipline has almost completely eroded our old cherished traditional values. Like most adults, the Nigerian youth appear to have lost the sense of purpose and direction" [49].

The rate at which existing values are being eroded in every sphere of the Nigerian society can be said to be alarming presently. The high rate of poverty and unemployment being experienced among a majority of its population has not helped in checking this decline. Thus, "the insecurity challenge in Nigeria has assumed a formidable dimension that not only requires a multi-stakeholder approach, as it is being touted in various quarters, in quelling this conflagration threatening Nigeria's statehood, but also necessitates a revival and reinforcement of moral values and virtues"[51]. They continued that "the thirst for blood and the preference for violence in expressing pent-up frustration and disenchantment with the state, its citizens and national totems may be a pointer to the need to

revive moral values and virtues within the socioeconomic, political, religious and educational institutions in the country”.

There is evidence that young people are enthusiastic about starting business. However, it is clear that few young people actually start business relative to those who express an interest. This reflects a number of barriers affecting youth entrepreneurship in this area including skills, networks and financing; barriers that are often particular to youth or more severe for youth than for adults. In a period when Nigeria faces an economic crisis that has increased levels of youth unemployment and reduced youth participation in the labour market beyond the already harsh long run trends, public policies and programmes for entrepreneurship can play a role in addressing the challenges.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Onifade et al. [50] aver that “the thirst for blood and the preference for violence in expressing pent-up frustration and disenchantment with the state, its citizens and national totems may be a pointer to the need to revive moral values and virtues within the socio-economic, political, religious and educational institutions in the country”. In this sense therefore, youth development and empowerment are vital stages in life for building the human capital that allows young people to avoid poverty and lead better, and possibly have a more fulfilling life. The human capital formed in youth is thus an important determinant of long term growth that a nation can invest on. Hence, making sure that youths are well prepared for their future is enormously important to inculcating positive values in youths to achieve poverty reduction and growth.

Families must begin to make out time from work and other social engagements to teach their children the traditional values of honesty, hard-work, fairness, uprightness right at home. This is to enable parents inculcate the proper values into their children right from their early childhood and put an end to the ongoing and deleterious effects of the degradation of very critical foundational values. Furthermore, social structures should be strengthened to support societal values in our various societies. Hence, there is an urgent need to re-institute the pristine social networks which promoted genuine concern for others within the kinship structure of the extended family system, re-emphasize the moral forms and modes that constituted the fulcrum of the communal living

and tenaciously propagate the overall pristine vision that projected the aura of the sacred and promoted honesty of life and sincerity of purpose. This will encourage formation of socially accepted definite lifestyles and feelings of abhorrence toward negative attitudes such as materialism, rebellion, corruption, impatience, and other general acts of delinquency among the youth. In addition, this will further instill in the youths a sense of purpose and direction.

Youth development strategies must necessarily include value re-orientation, value based education and further re-orientation programmes and this requires the active support of the family, the community and the government. Religious organizations, civil society, traditional institutions and non-governmental organizations are not to be left out in this effort to re-orientate the youths in the values of honesty and hard work.

DISCLAIMER

The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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