

SOCIAL VICES: AN INHIBITOR TO SUSTAINABLE YOUTH'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

As the Nigerian population continues to increase, so too does the number of youth. The population of youth (18-35 years) in Nigeria is 52.2 million. Despite the prospects presented by this number, young people in Nigeria are largely excluded from governance, leaving them helpless to confront their continued exclusion. This is evidenced by the lower percentage of youth holding political and leadership positions in the country. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between youth economic inclusion and social vices in Nigeria. Using a quantitative approach, 100 adolescents aged 18 to 35 selected from 20 states across the nation participated in the study. The data collected were analysed using Spearman's correlation coefficient and the result showed a significant positive association between youth economic inclusion and social vices in Nigeria ($r_s/N(100)=0.65$, $p<0.001$) and that there was a significant positive correlation between young people's socio-economic inclusion and the reduction of social vices. It was recommended that the government should ensure youth participation in governance and the need for adequate skill acquisition centre to help equip the youths.

Keywords: Economic Inclusion, Financial Inclusion, Social Inclusion.

Introduction

The world today has the greatest number of young people in history, with half of the world's population being under the age of 35. It is interesting to note that 90 per cent of these young people who are reaching billions live in the developing world. This underscores the importance of engaging young people in personal and societal development in response to pressing global challenges (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2013). Nigeria is a country where a large percentage of her population are young, energetic and hard-working youth. As Nigeria's population continues to increase, so too does the number of youth continue to grow in what has been termed the youth spurt. While the rise in the youth population places a strain on education systems and labour markets, it also has economic value, provided these youths are meaningfully engaged.

Therefore, it is incumbent on any government to use the teeming population of youth to create a demographic dividend (a declining dependency ratio) and use such dividend for higher productivity and a growing workforce. More specifically, the youth (18-35 years) population in Nigeria is 52.2 million (i.e. about 28% of the total population) with a female to male ratio of 52.8:48.2 (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2018). Allahmagani (2005) report shows that almost 70 per cent of Nigerian population are youth and children. It is worth noting that youth in Nigeria especially young people often feel that traditional political discourse, spheres and mechanisms do not represent them. Although calls for equity and social justice, environmental protection and cultural diversity resonate with young people, they participate little in decision-making or in discussions on

key socio-economic and political issues. Nonetheless, a number of prominent youth movements have emerged at the global level in the past few years, representing a wake-up call regarding their need to be heard and play an active part in developing the societies in which they live (ECLAC, 2014a). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) released a report in 2016 that revealed devastating unemployment rates in Nigeria. The report notes that: In the first quarter of 2016, the labour force (i.e. those within the working-age population who are willing, able and actively looking for work) increased from 76.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2015 to 78.4 million which corresponds to a 1.99% increase in the number of people in employment. This means that between January 1st and March 31st, 2016, another 1,528,647 persons were employed within 15-64 years, i. H. able to work, willing to work and active.

Youth Conceptualisation

Youth is generally conceptualised as a period of vitality, strength and vigour in the life of a person. The stages of human growth are childhood, teenage, youth, adulthood and old age (Mukherjee, 1978). The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports categorizes youths as people aged between 18 and 35 years while the African Union defines youth as people aged 15 to 34 years and Africa is reported to have a youth population of between 300 and 345 million youth by 2015 (Abubakar, 2011). On his part, Alanana (2006) stated that, youth as a concept has no precise definition. In nearly all traditional African societies, those who fall between 40 and 50 years of age are still considered youths. This is in contrast, to Europe and America where at age of 18, a child is granted freedom and independence.

It is worth noting that ageing societies in the West know that young people are key to growth. According to young entrepreneurs like Sam Immanuel, founder and CEO of Semicolon Africa, a training ground for young techpreneurs in the Lagos Yabacon Valley, Nigeria's army of young job seekers could easily be transformed into an army of job creators. A growing youth population can lead to a large active labour force, it can also lead to catastrophe with a rise in crime rates, a rise in dependency rates and worrying widespread poverty. It is all the more important for the government to actively involve youth in order to create an integrated and inclusive society (NBS, 2018). This goes hand in hand with the exclusion of young people, e.g. lower voter turnout, a loss of several per cent of GDP, violence, extremism, crime and instability. Most youth efforts treat youth not as partners or agents of governance, but as mere recipients of the dividends of governance. In contrast, Galstyan (2019) suggests that young people are not interested in politics because politics does not represent the issues that matter to them.

Literature Review

Social Inclusion

The term social inclusion is “the process of improving the terms for individuals”. Inclusion may be used to refer specifically to the integration of traditionally marginalized, under-represented and/or at-risk subgroups in broader populations (Zohdy, 2017). According to the United Nations (2016), social inclusion is defined as “the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for groups to take part in the society and the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in the society.

Economic Inclusion

Economic inclusion is a key enabler in development. It supports people's economic empowerment and helps them to better manage their business and their lives. It is more than just access to finance.

Every financial product lives in an ecosystem where inequalities influence whether different groups of people – including women – can benefit from it. People may end up with very different opportunities, even if they have the same access to finance. Our approach to Economic inclusion seeks to transform these underlying inequalities. We aim to generate both sustainable impact in the lives of people and in the financial performance of the service provider. To do so, we place equal emphasis on grounding our clients' financial services and investments in a sound business case with an in-depth understanding of the specific needs and preferences of different customer segments. Our customer-centric approach allows us to find solutions that address these specific needs and preferences through financial, non-financial and digital services. In the words of Sida (2010), youth political or economic participation refers to the involvement of young people in political and economic activities, civic life, active citizenship, and policy making. This could take several forms, including serving on a local government council, voting in an election, or participating in the budget process of a local government.

Financial Inclusion

Young people, regardless of their socio-economic, demographic or geographical situations, face some degree of difficulty or uncertainty as they transition to adulthood. However, the situation that youth experience in developing countries - some 87 per cent of the global youth population - is one of the most difficult in many respects, and the picture is particularly grave for adolescent girls and young women. Youth are disproportionately affected by high unemployment rates. The AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa has already orphaned a generation of youth, and it is expected that 15 to 25 per cent of children in a dozen sub-Saharan African countries will have been orphaned by AIDS by 2020. This generation faces a very difficult transition from childhood to adulthood as they become, in the majority of cases, heads of household at a much younger age than other less vulnerable youth. The number of young people will peak in the next 20 years.

This unprecedented demographic growth could be seen as an opportunity but, given the baseline in terms of poverty and lack of opportunities for youth, it could represent a major threat to the future of these youth if their needs are not addressed. The failure to acquire marketable skills or capabilities for lifelong learning may consign them to persistent, deepening poverty. New approaches that support vulnerable youth to proactively realise their full economic potential are gaining attention. Access to financial and social assets is a key contributing factor to help youth make their own economic decisions and escape poverty. Providing young people with financial services - whether a safe place to save or an appropriately structured loan for investment in an enterprise or education.

Credible Governance

Credible governance submits that governance “involves the dynamics of transforming societal needs into concrete programmes”. Governance means the development of governing styles in which boundaries between public and private sectors have become blurred and the needs of society increasingly met (Udeh, 2017). According to Adegbami and Adepoju (2017), governance refers to acquiring political power so as to direct a state's economic power towards development. It is concerned about utilizing a state's resources for the development of that state. Hence, the concept “good governance” involves public officers managing public resources judiciously and in a “good” way. To the UNDP (2002), good governance involves maintaining transparency, accountability, probity and upholding the rule of law in the exercise of power. Udeh (2017) adds that good governance connotes an array of activities such as improved service delivery, citizens' participation in decision making, democracy, the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, electoral integrity, freedom of the press, and equality before the law and inclusion of the maligned groups in the political process. Udeh further argues that good governance also guarantees gender equality as well

as accountable and transparent governance.

Prospects of the Nigerian Youth

Without highly educated, highly literate, intellectually, brilliant and self-confident youth, a nation is toying with its future and undermining its existential capacity (Gaskiya, 2016). Youths aged 35 years and below are estimated to constitute about 70 % of the population of Nigeria. This is a huge advantage for a nation that is seriously and furiously pursuing national development, one that is determined not only to build an advanced human civilization, but that it is also ambitious of leading the way in the march towards further humanising the human condition globally. The youth are assets to a nation not liabilities. They are usually the athletes that bring medals home, soldiers and security agents that ensure peace and security, the vital energy in the democratic process, and the future entrepreneurs and employment labour. The youths if well-educated, trained and motivated, can utilize their mental, technical and visionary power to develop the Nigerian economy. It is an established fact that our past-independence leaders were youth and there were able to manage Nigeria successfully. There were able to fight and win a civil war and kept Nigeria as a country between 1967 and 1970. This happened at a time when youths have less educational opportunities and training. Today's youth in Nigeria are more educated and exposed therefore, can do more than the past leaders if given opportunity and training to serve their fatherland (Alanana, 2006).

Youths and Political Development

While discussing the role of youths in contemporary political participation and development, there are certain underpinning assumptions (Suleiman, 2006). Firstly, we are assuming a political system that is endowed with a significant proportion of its youthful population who are highly informed and conscientised. Secondly, we are also assuming an organized youth with clearly defined objectives and a variety of legitimate methods to make input in the political process. Thirdly, we are assuming a political system with sufficient public space that allows for unfettered citizens participation and robust engagement in the governance process. Meanwhile, the degree of these variables in the Nigerian political system is at best measured and sometimes highly debatable, it has been observed generally that over twelve years of democratic experiment has created opportunity for actors in the civil society, or what social entrepreneurial scholars now call 'citizens sector' to take on their role in the political participation process (Bornstein, 2005).

In a recent research on government – civil society partnership in Nigeria, it was observed that: “Civil society groups are reaching out and trying to work with various government agencies and parastatals in efforts to build their capacity for service delivery and be accountable to citizen” (Chukwuma, 2005). Given this opportunity, the Nigerian youths is currently faced with the task of redefining its role in the democratization process. The mission statement of the National Youth Policy is treated here as a point of departure in articulating the role expectation of Nigerian youth in the political participation process. The document stated as follows: The present administration, having given due consideration to the significance of the youths in socio-political, economic and sustainable development, has found it most desirable, necessary and urgent to initiate this National Youths Development Policy so that there will be a purposeful, focused, well-articulated and well-directed effort aimed at tapping the energy and resourcefulness of the youths and harnessing them for vitality, growth and development of the country well into the 21st century (National Youths Political Reform Conference, 2005).

In the light of the foregoing, the crucial issue of creating an enabling environment for the youths to bring their productive capacity and resourcefulness to bear on the political and developmental process should be accorded priority attention. Given the right climate therefore, the following are

considered as the role-expectation of Nigerian youths in the political and developmental process (Suleiman, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the social learning theory of Bandura which was made prominent in the work of Bandura (1977, 1986). The social learning theory posits that individuals gain knowledge through observation of the actions and inactions of others and witnessing the consequences as they happen to others. According to Leff and Posner (2009), the social learning theory suggest that children and youths learn to exhibit aggressive behaviours because they observe others acting aggressively and can see how these behaviours are reinforced over time. The original conception of the theory as stated by Bandura (1977) holds that young adults imitate adults' aggressive actions that they witness in contrived social settings as a result of the reinforcement of the aggressive behaviour.

In relation to this study, the specific ages between 18 and 35 years are categorised as the youthful age group. This creates ample room for the youths to gain knowledge and insight into the actions they witness either in the schools or at the home. The social learning theory emphasizes the fact that youths in Nigeria witness the consequences of their exclusion from social, economic and financial affairs of the country and this makes them to turn to social vices in order to feel among in the society. The broad issue of credible governance emanates from the social values instilled in the youths. As such, the interplay of the social learning theory and the negative effects of their cognitive learning pave way for a cycle of never-ending social vices which comes in many forms. Therefore, this study argues that when the positive aspect of the social learning theory is instilled in the youths, it creates room for a life-long positive values and retrogressive rate of social vices in Nigeria.

Empirical Literature

Nigeria is a country that has a large percentage of its population as youth who are energetic and industrious. Allahmagani (2005) reported that nearly 70 per cent of Nigeria's population are youth and children. Youth in Nigeria include citizens aged between 18 and 35 years (Nigerian Youth Policy, NYP, 2009). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2016 released are port which revealed critical figures regarding the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. The report indicated that: In Q12016, the labour force population (i.e. those within the working age population willing, able and actively looking for work) increased to 78.4 million from 76.9 million in Q4 2015, representing an increase in the labour by 1.99 %. This means an additional 1,528,647 economically active persons within 15–64years, that is, were able, willing and actively looking for work between January 1 and March 31, 2016.

Research also suggests that the new millennium has witnessed a withdrawal of citizens from democratic participation across a range of democracies. Viewed in isolation, statistics on the Nigerian economy paint a bleak picture. Having emerged from the 2017 recession, Nigeria is growing at an anemic 1.5 to 1.9 per cent per year—against population growth of 2.6 per cent. The economic and political engagement of young people has been generally lower in comparison to the general population (Pontes, Henn & Griffiths, 2019). Badmus (2018) avers that Nigerian youth are ready to be actively involved in economic development and politics, especially as the world is beginning to beam their light on youth activities in Nigeria, while Olufowobi (2018) opines that all that is needed to improve youth participation in social-economic development and politics in an enabling environment. Obi and Nweke (2010) asserted that sustainable development in its actual meaning denotes the actions and initiatives taken to improve the socio – economic conditions of the people.

The picture would be clearer if conceptualised by bridging the problem of population increase with bad leadership and unequal access to limited resources available to Nigerians. Increase in population has been identified by several scholars as a major problem to the impoverishment state of Nigerian youth. To this end, measures to improve the social and economic status of Nigerian youths have been taken through policies to addressing existing inequity; thus introducing various youth empowerment programmes. Nnachi, Nwigwe and Nkoma., (2013); Idaka (2013), Odoh and Innocent (2014) had earlier indicated that about 60% of Nigerian population consisted of youths and children and that it has been recognised globally that the involvement of youths is the key to achieving sustainable growth and development. In the same vein, Koripamo-Agary, (2010) and United Nations (2015) asserted that the issue of youth empowerment is a global phenomenon and it is the greatest challenge in this dispensation so much so that discussions and debates on it are on-going as old convictions and ideologies have failed to yield the desired results

Methodology

To examine the youth economic inclusion, quantitative data was gathered for this study. The study adopted an online survey design in its data gathering process from a convenience sampling of youth. The sample (n=100) comprised more male (52.9%) than female participants, and the majority (68.3) of the participants were between 18 years and 30 years of age. An overwhelming majority (70%) reportedly have their university/higher education qualification, while slightly more than half of the participants (51.2%) are unemployed. A well-structured questionnaire was used to gather the needed data. The statistical analyses involved spearman correlation coefficient using SPSS statistical tool and adopted a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Youth Inclusion and Social Vices

| Correlations | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Youth Economic Inclusion | | Social Vices | | |
| Spearman's rho | Youth | Corr. Coefficient | 1.000 | .650* |
| | Eco Dev | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.001 |
| | | N | 100 | 100 |
| Social Corr. Coefficient | | | .650* | 1.000 |
| Vices Sig. (2-tailed) | | | 0.001 | |
| | | N | 100 | 100 |

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 2: Youth Inclusion and Economic growth

| Correlations | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Youth Economic Inclusion | | Economic Growth | | |
| Spearman's rho | Youth | Corr. Coefficient | 1.000 | .465* |
| | Eco Dev | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.000 |
| | | N | 100 | 100 |
| Eco Growth | | Corr. Coefficient | .465* | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.000 |
| | | N | 100 | 100 |

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The result supports the finding that there is a relationship between youth social/economic inclusion and good governance in Nigeria. To ensure that good governance is engendered, youth inclusion in governance will improve transparency and accountability in the system, promote economic and political development, curb corruption, and provide the impetus to combat multidimensional poverty in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study presented in this paper supports the argument that youth social and economic inclusion will reduce social vices in Nigeria. The findings of this study are consistent with the view of several other authors. According to Tekindal (2017), youth political and social participation can positively impact a society, and even an organization. Arches & Fleming (2006) also opine that political participation will grant youth the skills to become active citizens and contribute meaningfully to governance and development. Of course, when socially included, youth have the potential to bring about entrepreneurship, innovation, and advancement, which is particularly needed in economic development. This is the main tenet of the social learning theory of Bandura (1986). Therefore, the consistency of the findings with the social learning proves that social inclusion will reinforce positive behaviours which will have a long term developmental effect on the environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found out that social vices are an inhibitor to sustainable youth social and economic inclusion in Nigeria and thus has a positive correlation with good governance in Nigeria. The study revealed that the majority of Nigeria youths are unemployed even though a larger percentage of them have attained post-secondary school certificate. It is therefore important that attention be paid to youth involvement in economic inclusion, because as this study indicates, their involvement will promote good governance, especially in the areas of transparency, accountability and development. In light of these findings, the study hereby recommends that the Nigeria should:

1. Reaffirm her commitment to the Not Too Young legislation. More specifically, the government should establish Leadership and Democratic Institutes (LDI) in all states of the Federation to educate youth in the art of governance and prepare them for leadership. When young people realise that their opinion counts and that the government cares about their political future, they are encouraged to become more actively involved in politics.
2. In addition, under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the government should harness the technological skills of youth by establishing an Online Leadership Orientation Agency (OLOA), which will use various social networking sites to offer free leadership courses, webinars and guidance on the arts of governance and promoting social inclusion among young people.

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