

Pitfalls of Youth Dislocations in Nigeria's National Development: The Imperatives of Responsive Leadership

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Abstract

The importance of leadership flows into the quality of life youths experience in any society at any point in time. Tripped into the pits of dislocation due to poor leadership and good governance deficits Nigeria has consistently produced youths who are increasingly disillusioned and thereby often adopt the option of unconventionality. This in-depth analysis shows that youths' social helplessness derives essentially from bad leadership and that the only way out is in adopting proactive measures base on models, such as the positive youth development, creation of youth-friendly policies, consistent employment generation and overall responsive leadership that identifies and solves problems associated with dislocations.

Key words: dislocators, drug abuse, nature of man, pitfalls, positive youth development

Les pièges de bouleversement des jeunes dans le développement national: Les impératifs de l'élite dirigeante sensible

Résumé

L'importance de l'élite dirigeante se déroule dans la qualité de la vie des jeunes expérimentent dans une société à un moment donné dans le temps. Disjoncté dans les fosses de bouleversement en raison de la pauvreélite dirigeanteet des déficits de la bonne gouvernance pauvres le Nigeria a toujours produit des jeunes qui sont de plus en plus désillusionnés et, partant, adoptent souvent l'option d'anticonformisme. Cette analyse en profondeur montre que l'impuissance sociale des jeunes provient essentiellement de la mauvaise conduite et que la seule issue est dans l'adoption de mesures proactives sur la base de modèles, tels que le développement positif des jeunes, la création de politiques favorables aux jeunes, la création cohérente et globale d'emplois, le l'élite dirigeante réactive qui identifie et résout les problèmes associés aux bouleversements.

Mots clés:Disjoncté, abus de drogues, Nature de l'homme, Pièges, le développement positif des jeunes

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Introduction

Contemporary themes of academic discourses on the leadership question in Nigeria and its implications for national development always draw attention to urgent reminders to several clarion calls for positioning leadership for the stability, peace and development of the country. Such discourses recognise the fact that leadership plays an important role in addressing the challenges to youth development, albeit the unity, progress and oneness of the various ethnicities in the country. In achieving this, leadership must be seen as a cardinal cornerstone in the conscientisation of children, adolescents and youths as well as one of the front liners in the growth and development of society. Leadership values must therefore, be intermediated as one of the strongest factors in the stability of institutions and communities across all sections of the country.

The importance of leadership in national development cannot be overemphasised bearing in mind that through strong leadership, like other institutions of socialisation, the virtues and values of being one another's keeper; respect for the rights of others; upholding the dignity of labour; abhorrence of indolence and laziness; understanding citizens' obligations and duties to the country and neighbours; protecting lives and property as well as conservation of the environment are imbibed. This will enable citizens enjoy living in a country free from fear and intimidation, which occur in the first place from desperation and anxiety that corruption, impunity, exclusion and bad governance breed among the youths who are often the cannon fodder for all conflicts.

Of late, too, it is observed that the cherished traditions of citizen equality, equity and justice that leaders in Nigeria should bequeath on all and sundry, irrespective of religious, ethnic, political or other group affiliations have declined in importance. Rather, intolerance between and among religious adherents, lingering crisis leading to physical explosions of conflict in communities and in the process deaths, destruction of property, degrading and denigrating environment and places of worship occur; segregation of residential areas and towns along religious lines; and employing the use of hate language ensue. This makes it difficult for citizens of different social and economic classes to trust each other, especially when it comes to providing access to employment/job or placement in schools, staff training and other opportunities for personal advancement. Also, refugee situations have emerged in the forms of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which create more emergency situations due to these social and ethnic reasons. The cumulative living realities of these socially anomalous situations are apprehension and mutual suspicion of each other in the country. Today, widespread killings, abductions, kidnappings, assassinations and other forms of violent criminality all of which have their pedigree in bad leadership, bad governance and manipulation of youths to achieve established selfish interests, are witnessed.

The question is what has really gone wrong, and what needs to be done to arrest the ugly trend, if we have to ensure the integration and development of the country's youths? This is one of the core reasons for this contribution, which should cement already established common grounds and chart new pathways for national unity and peace for the continued corporate existence of the country. The issues that speak from this contribution locate youths who are more than 60% of Nigeria's current estimated population of 178million in desperate situations of lack of moral, spiritual and professional models from which to guide their lives and chart new pathways for their future. It is akin to the proverbial sheep without shepherds, the fallouts of which include youths' involvement in anti-social activities and behaviours. The contribution centres on the nature of man,

pitfalls into which youths have fallen (drugs, bad peer influence, indolence, etc) and pathways to sustainable youths development in Nigeria.

About the Nature of Man (or Woman)

Why have Nigerians been unable to apply the message of equity? Why are citizens increasingly losing the milk of humanity when it comes to issues of representative and collective justice? Are Nigerians unable to help themselves adjust to the realities of mutual coexistence in a pluralistic society and in a geographic entity called Nigeria? Or, is anything fundamentally wrong with human nature that their predispositions as Nigerians fuel their lack of capacity to 'make room' for others, 'bear' with one another and or even 'tolerate' others, for the purposes of equality, drives for development and mutual national stability?

Answers to the above questions could be as simple as they could be complex, depending on the platform one stands on to view life generally. Let me share briefly a few thoughts on human nature, which understanding I hope holds the key to what is needed to create better social space for all citizens. Human nature refers to the distinguishing characteristics, including ways of [thinking](#), [feeling](#) and [acting](#), which [humans](#) tend to have [naturally](#), independently of the influence of [culture](#). It is these feelings, ways of thinking and acting that shape what is culture. The questions of what these characteristics are, what causes them, and how fixed human nature is, are amongst the oldest and most important questions in mankind's search for understanding. These questions have particularly important implications in [ethics](#), [politics](#), and [theology](#). This is partly because human nature can be regarded as both a source of norms of conduct or ways of life, as well as presenting obstacles or constraints on living a good life. The complex implications of such questions are also dealt with in [art](#) and [literature](#), while the multiple branches of the [Humanities](#) together form an important domain of inquiry into human nature, and the question of what it is to be human.

Also, it is believed that many branches of contemporary science are associated with the study of human nature. They include such fields as [anthropology](#), [sociology](#), [socio-biology](#), and [psychology](#), in particular [evolutionary psychology](#), and [developmental psychology](#). The "[nature versus nurture](#)" debate is a broadly inclusive and well-known instance of a discussion about human nature in [natural sciences](#). But the concept of nature as a standard by which to make judgments was a basic presupposition in Greek philosophy. Specifically, "almost all" classical philosophers accepted that a good human life is a life in accordance with nature (Straus, 1953).

By this account, human nature really causes humans to become what they become, and so it exists somehow independently of individual humans. This in turn has sometimes been understood as also showing a special connection between human nature and divinity. The existence of this invariable human nature is, however, a subject of much historical debate, continuing into modern times. Against this idea of a fixed human nature, the relative changeability of man has been argued especially strongly in recent centuries—firstly by early modernists such as Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau and postmodernists who sometimes argue against a fixed or innate human nature. Still more recent scientific perspectives such as behaviourism, determinism, and the chemical model within modern psychiatry and psychology, claim to be neutral regarding human nature.

It was Aristotle who made some of the most famous and influential statements about human nature. In his works, apart from using a similar scheme of a divided human soul, some clear statements about human nature are made (Locke, 1996; Rousseau, 1968, p. 65):

- a. *Man is a conjugal animal*, meaning an animal which is born to couple with an adult, thus building a household (*oikos*) and in more successful cases, a clan or small village still run upon patriarchal lines.
- b. *Man is a political animal*, meaning an animal with an innate propensity to develop more complex communities the size of a city or town, with a division of labour and law-making. This type of community is different in kind from a large family, and requires the special use of human reason.
- c. *Man is a mimetic animal*. Man loves to use his imagination (not only to make laws and run town councils).

Part (c) immediately preceding above suggests that man has capacity to use his imagination to create and enforce rules, laws and regulations for the betterment of society by achieving a stable, balanced and just communities where leaders are required to lead by established good norms. In a comparative storyline Baldwin (2001) told of a *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with *Frankenstein*, Frankenstein was created innocent and good, but turned evil after he was mistreated. The monster Frankenstein is quoted as saying, “I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.” On the other hand, Jekyll was a privileged, rich, upper class, doctor with an evil nature that he could not control and which eventually totally took over him. Jekyll reportedly said, “It was the curse of mankind these incongruous personalities—the good and the bad were thus bound together—that in the agonized womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling.” According to Baldwin (2001) we all identify with one of those main characters. We either think we are like Frankenstein or like Jekyll/Hyde. The way we answer this question forms the foundation for our beliefs about all of reality, namely our leadership, governance, religion, our worldview.

The main issue in the discourse of the nature of man is whether or not man is basically good or basically bad. If man is basically good, why does every world view some redemptive mechanisms, such as enlightenment, social reform, social control, etc.? The views writers and scholars hold about human nature distils into two mainly contending assumptions- pantheism and naturalism.

In an exciting expose that begins with our assumptions about the nature of man, Baldwin (2001) writing in *The Deadliest Monster* explores the impact that such assumptions can have on our beliefs about God, truth, morality, psychology and politics. The two main summary points are:

1. Pantheism. It says, **not only is man good, man is god**. According to this view of human nature, we just need to recognise the fact that man is basically good. We forgot our oneness, so the solution is education. We need to be enlightened. We need to have our spiritual eyes opened so we can visualise world peace and justice, without which there can be no development. Here, leadership is key in the kind of reform and education provided.

2. Naturalism. It has two main branches; **(a) Man is the product of his environment**. As the product of evolution, man is just a more highly evolved animal. He is the product of his environment. Man simply responds to his environment. As such, man does not have free will. Therefore, if you find yourself committing a crime, it is not your fault. It is because of the way you were raised or because of your present circumstances. Therefore, you should not be punished. So, naturalism relieves man of guilt and responsibility for their actions. He is just the product of his environment. This justifies failure and bad governance. **(b) There is a tendency towards improvement**. Naturalism and evolution teach that there is in Nature an inherent tendency towards

improvement. People do not just apply this principle to the physical world. How do they apply this premise to their view of human nature? They propose that we should be good and keep getting better.

The meeting point between pantheism and naturalism is that the nature of man is basically faulty and so society has had to devise mechanisms to mediate in the coexistence of people from different backgrounds to achieve the set objectives of society. As it can be realised above, the problem with both pantheism and naturalism is that in reality, things tend to fall apart without an external force maintaining it in the moral and spiritual realm. Despite what the rationalists say, we cannot just teach morality and expect man to follow the rules. Naturally, people do not usually do what they know is right. They do what they love to do. They do what makes them feel good, what gives them power, etc. Education does not necessarily make people to be good. It just makes smarter law breakers. And Nigerians are no better than people in other countries. It requires attitudinal change, mediated by exemplary leadership.

It is imperative to state that on the basis of the two conflicting perspectives on human nature, a common position could be arrived at in the following: most people can progressively adjust to conditions of existence if guided by rules and regulations created not to enslave them but to ensure that the exercise of one person's rights stops with the rights of others. This forms a good justification for the formulation of policies, rules and regulations or laws to aid in the development of humans. This is so because, man, left to his whims can at best destroy himself and other spheres of existence. As we can all recall, 'Bad' people in government make bad laws and do not produce good people. 'Good' people in government make good laws and produce some good people.

Each and every member of the society brings into it their instincts, beliefs and values. So, society is a complex phenomenon and is viewed differently by different people. The way of looking at society is called sociological perspective. Sociological perspectives consider social behaviours of people, relationships and roles of various social organisations, communities, social institutions, and interaction of all these things. Society is therefore, not a mere collection of people; it also includes various ideas, values, perceptions, and their transmission through various mediums, such as good leadership. This is why drug abuse, indolence and other social problems are products of the society in which they take place- and are results of perception, ideas and values about the world in which we live.

Modelling youth development: Positive youth development initiatives

Let me state my identification with what is here referred to as Positive Youth Development or PYD (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005), an alternative to the victim-blaming approach to youth development. PYD is a strengths-based view of adolescence that finds its origins in ecological systems theory (Damon, 2004; Smah, 2004). It does not deny human weakness but rather it emphasises more on human strengths than their weaknesses. Central to its philosophy, PYD suggests that if young people have mutually beneficial relations with the people and institutions of their social world, they will be on the way to a hopeful future marked by positive contributions to self, family, community and civil society (Pittman, 1991).

To that extent, PYD refers to intentional efforts of other youths, adults, communities, government agencies, leaders, and schools to provide opportunities for youths to enhance their interests, skills, and abilities. The positive youth development approach aims at understanding, educating and engaging children in productive activities rather than at curing or treating them for maladaptive tendencies or so-called disabilities. In the United States of America, PYD was created as a response to the negative and punitive approaches of traditional youth development approaches.

Addressing the positive development of young people can decrease social problems by facilitating the adoption of healthy behaviours and helping to ensure a healthy transition into adulthood (USA, 2014). The concept and practice of PYD grew from the dissatisfaction with a predominant view that underestimated the true capacities of young people by focusing on their deficits rather than their development potential (Damon, 2004). PYD proponents often contend that problem-free youths are not necessarily fully prepared (Lerner, Lerner, Phelps and Colleagues, 2012). This agrees with a convergence perspective drawn from pantheism and naturalism.

Positive youth development programmes typically recognise contextual variability in youths' experience and in what is considered 'healthy' or 'optimal' development for youths in different settings or cultures (Breinbauer & Maddaleno, 2005). This cultural sensitivity reflects the influence of ecological systems theory (also see Smah, 2007, Smah, 2004). The influence of ecological systems theory is also seen on the emphasis many youth development programmes place on the interrelationship of different social contexts through which the developing person moves (e.g. family, peers, school, work and leisure).

In the United States of America, the University of Minnesota's **Keys to Quality Youth Development** summarises eight key elements of programmes that successfully promote youths' development generally and have one or more of the following features:

- i. promoting **bonding**
- ii. fostering **resilience**
- iii. promoting social, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and moral **competence**
- iv. fostering **self-determination**
- v. fostering **spirituality and self-efficacy**
- vi. fostering clear and positive **identity**
- vii. fostering **belief in the future**, and
- viii. providing recognition for positive behaviour and opportunities for **pro-social involvement and pro-social norms**.

In addition, for such programmes to succeed, youths must be in physically and emotionally safe- emphasizing family raising environment/parenting styles, leaders must give youths a sense of belonging and ownership and foster their self-worth, allow them to discover their 'self' (identity, interests, strengths); foster in them high quality and supportive relations with peers and adults, help youths recognise conflicting values and develop their own; foster the development of new skills, to have fun, and have hope for the future.

Dislocations and pitfalls in youth development

In a recent summary of national youth policies across the globe, youths in Nigeria's National Reproductive Policy, for example, were recognised as a diverse group and defined as individuals between 18 and 35 years of age. The policy states that this group represents the most active and most vulnerable sector of the population- socially, emotionally, and in terms of socio-economic indicators.

Indeed, Nigeria's youth development policy thrust hinges on the importance of the youth in national development. It is indicative of the readiness of the Federal Government to meet the needs and aspirations of the youths as well as seek solutions to their problems. It sets guidelines for all stakeholders to empower the youths to realise their potentialities and take advantage of the opportunities available to make positive contributions to the well-beings of their communities and the entire society.

On a practical, realistic note, the Policy takes into account a range of problems faced by the youths, anticipates the challenges that they are likely to confront and outlines appropriate objectives, policies, programmes and implementation plans put in place so as to empower them to take charge of their own destiny as well as make them active participants in the shaping of the political and economic destiny of the nation. The Policy also recognises that youths are not a homogeneous category and that differences exist among them. Therefore, the Policy contains provisions that will address the specific and special needs of each of several identified target groups, including youths with disabilities.

It is on record that one out of every four Nigerian is a youth and they were estimated to be around 28 million in 2000. This represents over 70% of all youths and adolescents of ages 15-34. Forty-four percent (44%) of these are males while fifty-six percent (56%) are females. About 17 million of these, or 61 %, live in the rural areas, while 11 million (or 39%) live in the urban areas, defined as settlements with a population over 20,000. Of these who live in the rural areas, 62% are females while 38% are males.

With respect to youth socialisation, education and training, Policy programmes are designed to address among others, the following issues:

- i. Moral and ethical instructions by religious and community leaders in schools and at community/village gatherings
- ii. Role-modelling in all aspects of human endeavour and support for youth organisations, schools, organised communities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in this regard
- iii. Reproductive education and premarital orientation
- iv. Community youth development clubs, village and cultural festivals
- v. Inculcation of the values and norms of democratic culture, respect for human rights, civility, selflessness, patriotism, transparency and accountability, and environmental friendliness

The problems identified with youths in Nigeria place most youths as vulnerable groups, with peculiar but un-met needs and aspirations. These problems, faced by a majority of them constitute major dislocators for youth development. The highlights of the dislocators, identified by the Policy include the following:

- a. Inadequate parental care
- b. Non-availability of suitable sports and recreational facilities
- c. Moral decadence in the society
- d. Lack of appropriate role models
- e. Religious fanaticism
- f. Cult activities
- g. Political manipulation of youth organisations
- h. Unemployment and under-employment
- i. Poor education
- j. Breakdown of family values
- k. Indiscipline, etc

The Policy also outlines obligations of youths (to promote healthy, responsible, respectable lifestyles free of alcohol, drugs), as well as government, parents, and guardians.

Furthermore, the Second National Youth Policy document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2009 puts the development and participation of young people at the centre of national

development efforts. It sets guidelines and provides the framework for all stakeholders to empower youths to realise their potential and take advantage of the opportunities available to make positive contributions to the well-beings of their communities. However, experience shows that we are far from meaningfully mainstreaming youth matters and concerns in national development. Our leaders have shown that the youths should fathom what they feel is good for themselves and find ways of addressing them.

Given the plethora of problems associated with youths in our society as outlined above, it is incumbent on me to distil problems with excruciating impacts on youth development in Nigeria, arising from the arrangements and structures of educational, labour and advancement opportunities, quality of socialisation, attitude of parents and guardians, policy thresholds on youth and national development as well as the negative roles of law enforcement and fundamental human rights regulators.

Indolence from lack of jobs

Unemployment has become a global concern and of more dire consequence is youth unemployment. Global youth unemployment rate was projected at 12.7 per cent in 2012. In Africa, youth unemployment has become even a more threat to national socio-economic peace and stability than many other social vices. Nigeria, for example, is Africa's most populous country. Its unemployment rate for the year 2011 stood at 23.9 percent with youth unemployment rate standing at over 50 percent of this. The youth unemployment growth rate has been at 16% annually.

In terms of effects, unemployment has served as a direct and indirect indicator of various crimes and social vices in Nigeria. The situation has been on the increase since the 1990s. They include prostitution, internet scamming, political violence, thuggery, kidnapping, militancy, insurgency, drug trafficking and abuse, armed robbery, examination malpractice, corruption, etc. (Smah, 2014). The continued existence of these vices has been provisionally linked to the scarcity and paucity of jobs in Nigeria. Prostitution and human trafficking, for instance, became widespread during the mid-1990s with female Nigerian youths being trafficked to Italy and other locations in Europe and the Americas. Internet scamming also has increased in recent years. Political violence, kidnapping and other vices have also been increasing recently. These vices have a negative effect on the country because they have been the fear and nightmare of most foreign investors and they are also giving the country a bad reputation abroad.

Youths with little or without any previous work experiences suffer lack in recruitment selection and placements. For example, most graduate youths who have nothing more than what they have learned in lecture halls, it is always an impossible race with experienced adults. Some youths even choose to pursue post graduate studies while on job hunts, but they still do not get a job in the end. Also, unskilled youths who are mostly migrants from rural areas are more affected by this situation. However, while this is sadly true, yet it is just a part of the problem: many so-called 'trained' young people do not have the patience to undertake tasks assigned to them. They may either lack the intellectual capacity or even the ability to work on an assignment. Youths execute their jobs shoddily in most organisations, raising serious concerns by employers of labour about the employability of Nigerian graduates. So, how natural is the youth that he/she would not sway into crime in the face of all this 'rejection'?

Youths and drug abuse

Research shows that the impact of drug abuse among Nigerian youths has been a stigma of a morally bankrupt, decadent and wasted generation that must be revitalised and collectively salvaged in order to prevent the total degeneration and loss of societal values and ideals (Odejide, 2007; Dashe, 2007). Drug abuse has eaten deep into the fabrics of society and is responsible for the rottenness in society- at personal, group, family and societal levels. Drug abuse among the youths exacerbates political/election violence, thuggery, banditry, cultism, insurgency and – is at the heart of workplace indiscipline and collapse of community spirit.

Drug abuse among youths is a demonstration of earlier submission that man left alone, cannot help himself. He is capable of destroying himself-and others. Drugs create a social helplessness (Smah, 2007), that only so-called ‘tough’ policy and practical measures can reverse their impact on individuals, families, societies and communities. As the "arbitrary" use of or dependence on one particular drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health practitioners, drug abuse is a common experience of most young persons in society. Majority of Nigerian youths ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities - social, economic, educational, political, moral, only to realise that they could not stop what they started.

A combination of factors contributes to and aggravates the influence of drug abuse or drug addiction among Nigerian youths. These include, negative peer group pressure, parental background (broken home and use of drug substances by either one or both parents/guardians), emotional stress, among other factors. These are dangerous drugs: cocaine, Indian hemp (marijuana), morphine, heroine, tobacco (e-cigarette), ephedrine etc., which are easily abused because they can be easily obtained by the youths. Some of these dangerous drugs are both re(de)pressants and stimulants, making the users either to feel high or low. Youths need to be fully re-oriented with respect to this social evil.

According to an online news item¹, more Nigerian youths are becoming drug addicts, while Nigeria gradually graduates to a drug consuming nation from a drug producing one. Despite efforts being put in place by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) operatives towards fighting the menace of illicit drugs production, circulation, marketing and consumption, more people are being recruited daily by drug barons to serve as couriers just as many more, especially youths are increasingly becoming addicted to assorted drugs. In Abuja, the nation’s capital, many youths, mainly from well-to-do homes are increasingly joining the ‘big boys club’ that abuse drugs, such as heroin and cocaine. Other forms of drugs like Indian hemp, which are commonly produced in Nigeria and others like methamphetamine, syrups and tablets with codeine capable of intoxication, are mostly found in barracks, schools, and motor parks and even with local traders that sell provisions in kiosks. Assorted illicit drugs that include mainly Indian hemp and amphetamine have been recovered from suspects arrested within the FCT by the NDLEA. Other drugs like cocaine, heroin and some pharmaceutical products on the restricted list found in custody of unauthorized or wrong persons are also being reportedly recovered.

The report quoted a source as saying:

Majority of drug consumers in Abuja are young men and women who are mostly from well-to-do families. They sometimes come to a place near Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja to buy 3 or 4 wraps of cocaine that cost N2, 500 each. You cannot count the

¹<http://news2.onlinenigeria.com/news/top-stories/144286-drug-use-on-the-rise-among-nigerian-youths.html#ixzz39hZbano1>. Retrieved 7th August 2014. The original report cited in the online source was first published by Weekly Trust

number of teens that come around to buy cocaine. *There are a few advanced men and women (sic) but majority of the customers are the young ones. Some agents even hawk drugs. The mobile agents sell on commission.* The International Narcotic Control Board (INCB) has identified smuggling of amphetamine-type stimulants as a new threat in Africa...most methamphetamine intercepted on illicit markets in East Asia was found to have originated from West Africa with Nigeria standing the risk of becoming a hub for methamphetamine smuggling...*over 6million bottles of codeine are sold on a daily basis in the North-West part of the country. National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) report of 2010 also shows that over 11% of people in the North-West zone use drugs...*due to the rise in drug addiction, young people make use of cough syrups to make themselves high...We have had few newspaper reports where people kill owners of pharmacy shops or chemists because they refused to sell codeine to them...*There is a huge cost in social, health and economic terms if we do not bring a halt to these activities of our youths in the society* (emphases added by me)

The sociological implications of drug abuse among Nigerian youths are dire. For example, it is a known fact that drugs have been a major threat to the peaceful co-existence of all and sundry in our contemporary society, thereby destroying the socio-cultural dignity, personality and integrity of those dependent on drug substances and of their immediate families as well as societies' institutions. In all, youth problem of drug abuse is the direct fallout of leadership at family, society and national level.

Good boys/girls, bad peers?

Good peers are the ones who make people better persons. They are the ones who help them to achieve their dreams and the things they want in their life. Good peers make every little thing easier. For example, they are the ones we enjoy to be with and complimenting us with every step we take. They are the ones who never take considerations of the differences. They are the ones who accept us for who we are. And they are the ones, especially who influence us to do better.

Unfortunately, bad peers are people who pressure an individual to do illegal things and to cause harm to others or themselves. This scenario exists and it is up to the youths whether they want such peers in their life. If youths are wise they won't give them the chance to influence them to be in the bad side. Youths are the only ones who can decide. They hold their life; they are the ones walking in the direction they want to be. They are the ones who are making a way. If they pursue the things that can make their life better, they do not have to consider the temptation of life. All they have to do is to ignore the things that will make their life a lot more complicated. That sounds like a usual rhythm, right? Should youths be solely held for their destiny? May be yes, may be no.

People are aware of the teenagers that involve in drug addictions, and different kinds of vices. Most of the youths choose to be in this path. But, does life require them to have these "pleasures"? If they really have the ability to do what is right, they will never choose to be with this kind of people. Addiction can never help them to take a direction and the path of making their life better. Bad health is all they can give. Health is wealth, if they have the guts to be healthy individuals they are able to do everything.

We are back to the question of the 'good' and the 'bad' in people. For example, youths should be able to act in a good way because it is their credibility that they should value. People should see them making their own way to have their dreams of their own and not just see them

with people who are doing nothing but involve themselves in troubles just to prove that they are superior. Superiority is all about respect and not just about defeating other people. Maybe defeating the bad things is superiority because we can see youths pursue laudable objectives in life. Leadership becomes a vehicle to achieving society's goals.

It is known that when we do not like a particular idea or when we have no inclination towards a particular thing, it is obvious that we would not like to go by it. For sure, we would not like to go that way. But it is our peer group, which may compel us on doing something we dislike. It is obvious that we would not be happy doing what we do. And we would not succeed. Succumbing to peer pressure in taking important decisions of our life can only give us sorrow. For example, taking up a field of study or choosing a career just because friends did so, without much thought to where personal interest lies, can only make people unhappy.

Of course, bad habits are cultivated, just as the good ones. Peer pressure forces people to do things they are not comfortable doing. It can even lead them to adopt a certain kind of lifestyle, even if they do not really want to. They may not like partying every weekend, or they may not be smoking. But peer pressure is powerful. It can turn an always-at-home boy/girl to a complete party person. It can turn a total non-smoker to a chain-smoker. There are so many teenagers who take to drinking against their will, just because their peers force them to. In many cases, peer pressure has been the culprit in creating drug addicts. At that vulnerable age, teenagers do not understand that they are actually ruining their life by giving in to pressure from peers.

Peer pressure also leads to identity loss. Peer pressure can lead to loss of individuality. Extreme peer pressure may lead one to follow what peers feel right. Their pressure may compel them to go by everything they think is right. They follow them blindly; adopt their tastes of fashion, clothing, hair, music and living at large. Peer pressure can actually lead one to lose his/her own taste. They feel forced to like what others like and do what they do. Peer pressure is the tendency to join the bandwagon and lose your originality of thought and conduct. Youths may forget the way they wanted to live and thereby lose their identity².

Pursuing pre-conditions for sustained development of the youths in Nigeria: the imperatives of responsive leadership

The question is who would come to the help of Nigerian youths, and how? There are pre-conditions to be pursued by all major stakeholders (religious leaders, parents, groups, governmental authorities, etc.) to avoid pitfalls in youth development:

a). Engaging in policy impact assessment research on youth and national development

The importance of research, monitoring, evaluation and reporting/documentation can never be over emphasised when it comes to the subject of development, be it of youths or of the nation at large. As a systematised organisation of procedures for the generation of knowledge needed for planning, which leads ultimately to purposeful resource allocation and corresponding change in the status quo of living conditions, research is normally the basis of any social policy crafting and drafting. With the plethora of policies addressing national as well as sectoral development of the country, there is fear that little of practical worth may result in terms of concrete, visible youth development. Development strategies that work are by-products of consistent research and policy

² See <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/negative-and-positive-effects-of-peer-pressure.html>, accessed on 6th August 2014

reviews. Unless we keep experimenting such policies in varieties of ways, social contexts and cultural settings, we cannot be sure what works best.

A nation that underestimates the power of research, or stifles efforts at mainstreaming research is often certain to repeat policy formulations and operate wastefully within the vicious chess pool of policy discontinuities. If development planners abhor research and evaluation/monitoring activities, which necessarily generate hard facts, how would they prevent waste and avoid recycling in one place? We must learn to document works and replicate them if they want to develop the present and the unborn generations of youths. It is my firm belief that research and research institutions and policymakers must necessarily partner in the preparation, adoption and implementation of development blueprints and frameworks within youth-friendly milieus.

b). Establishment of unemployed welfare scheme for youths

There have been attempts in the past to create a financial scheme to alleviate the sufferings of the unemployed and the elderly. This has failed to materialise, just as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), created in our very recent past to address unemployment particularly in the youth population have recorded only marginal achievements in reducing the burgeoning youth unemployment problems in the country. This means that a lot still needs to be done.

Do we have adequate database on the unemployed youths? If we do, the Ministry of Employment and Productivity in collaboration with relevant intervention initiatives, such as the now discontinued Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), should synergise, prepare and get National Assembly to legalise and appropriate funding resources to temporarily ameliorate the sufferings of the unemployed, vulnerable youths in the society.

Cash needs to enter the pockets of young people directly- as the saying goes: “one for all one for ones” should not apply. It should be, “one for one and one for self”- since humans do not let anything good to trickle pass them to others. The sustenance of such bailouts or handouts will reduce restiveness in the population, while lasting measures through sustainable job creation are put in place. This is because governments are not for the strong but for the weak and vulnerable. I do not even see how the government can employ all the teeming unemployed youths. Governments should continue to create the enabling policy framework and operational environment for private businesses to thrive. Adequate entry and exit employment status data are necessary for this not to be abused or politicised.

Conclusion/Lessons Learned

From the fore-going discussion, we can adduce the following conclusions:

The youths of any nation constitute the social fibre of that nation- linking one generation with another; as such development planning must take into cognisance the preconditions for their welfare, attainment of innateness, wishes and aspirations. Youths need to be part of decisions that affect them.

It is similarly instructive that irrespective of the environments and cultural milieu within which youths grow or live, there are higher national values and demands that are over and above their immediate localities. They are required to place higher national callings at heart. In this regard, authorities are to devote sufficient time and resources to the development or sustenance of national spirit and human charter. Since humans could be as good as they could be bad, regulations,

laws and policies are to be tailored towards enabling individual youths and their communities to moderate the expression of their rights, needs and wants in recognition of the rights of others.

Governments, communities and all stakeholders are to pursue positive development strategies based on research, system monitoring and evaluation. Adequate recordkeeping and reporting constitute essential requirements of all organisations under section 2 of Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act 2011.

Youths must be assisted by their parents and guardians to form positive opinions about themselves, their country and neighbours. Failure here has trigger-effects on the choices made by youths, particularly their inability to resist bad peer pressures, drug dependence and laziness in school, neighbourhood, church and mosque and in the country at large.

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