

YOUTH CHALLENGES AND FAILURES OF STAKEHOLDER'S INTERVENTIONS IN AFRICA: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NIGERIAN 'LAZY' YOUTHS

THOMPSON O.O¹, AINA O S² OBI M A³, PHOBE D AWANGE⁴

¹Lecturer, History and International Studies Unit, Dept of Comm. and General Studies, F.U.A., Abeokuta, Ogun State, NIGERIA

²Peace and Strategic Studies Unit, Department of Communication and General Studies, F.U.A., Abeokuta, Ogun State, NIGERIA

³Language Unit, Department of Communication and General Studies, F.U.A., Abeokuta, Ogun State, NIGERIA

⁴Graduate Student, University of Lagos, NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

Youth in Africa makes up most of the population of the Continent. Ideally, this demography should be an advantage to the continent in terms of human resources. However, this has not been the case. This study examined the challenges of youth in Africa, in general, and Nigeria, in particular; as well as efforts made by stakeholders, including governments to tackle these challenges. Qualitative method was adopted for the study. This included both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source relied on observations. The secondary source relied on a critical analysis of extant literature, media reports and desktop publications. The data was analysed using descriptive approach and result presented thematically. The study revealed among other things that the challenges confronting the youth is multifaceted ranging from poor health and non-inclusiveness to lack of opportunities. It further revealed that interventions to address the challenges have fallen short as a result of corruption, non-inclusiveness, among others. It recommended that, the major stakeholders, especially governments across the continent, should appropriate policies that will ameliorate these challenges by creating an enabling environment, involve the youth in policy making, good governance, and inclusiveness among others.

KEYWORDS: Youth, Unemployment, Crimes, Africa, Nigeria, Not too young to run

INTRODUCTION

Africa is a continent rich in both natural and human resources. Hence, it is a land of opportunities. Mill (2010) described it as a treasure-trove (Mills 2010). However, these resources, which ought to serve as an overall benefit to its entire population, has provided this group with little, or nothing to show for. Paradoxically, the continent has not only overtaken south Asia as the poorest continent in the world, but also accounts for more than 278 million in 1990 to 3 million in 2015 living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2018). One of the groups affected by this conditions is its teeming youth population.

Ordinarily, the concept, 'youth' vary across cultures and societies, with various yardsticks (SNBYA, 2010; UNDESA, nd). For Africa, a youth is any person within the age range of 15 and 35. (UNFPA, 2011:2; Africa Youth Charter, 2006). This age range has also been adopted by Nigeria based on its cultural and historical antecedent (NYP, 2009). Conceptually, it appears simple, yet complicated and fluid. Another scholar see it from a sociological perspective. This he

defined as, "transitions from adolescence to adulthood, from dependence to independence, and from being recipients of society's services to becoming contributors to national, economic, political and cultural life" (Curtain, 2003; UNFPA 2011). There is a controversy on the age range of what constitutes a youth though (Ayele, Khan and Sumberg 2017). However, some view, youthfulness as a thing of the mind, and not with age. Asides, the youth has not fulfilled its potentials (Mills, 2010; Siyum, 2018) and this poses serious challenge for government and policy makers on the continent (Odo and Eme 2014). This growing challenge is not particular to youth on the continent (ECOSOC, 2017) but Africa, remains the worst hit by the youth crisis due to its youth demography (UNECA, 2016; Knowles and Behrman, 2005; AFIDEP, nd). It was reported in 2016 that while Europe was the region with lowest youth age under 25 (27%), Africa was the highest with (60%) (UN, 2017). Ideally, such youthful demographics, should be an advantage to the continent in terms of human and capital development. Paradoxically, it has become a burden. A condition, which some pundits and scholars call a ticking time bomb (UN World Youth Report, 2013:65; Ighobor, 2013). Kweitsu (2017) aver

that a youthful population is like a double edged-sword which could either be channeled into a dividend for economic and social transformation with the right investment or impugned into violent conflict with devastating consequences.

Though, studies abound on youth challenges and opportunities globally (Muruiki 1981; Oduwole, 2015; Jalata, 2014; Belfield, Levin & Rosen 2012; Trucco & Ullmann 2016), most of these studies have often tilted towards national development, democratization, and economy, health, among others (Oloruntoba 2008; Ahmed and Ezzeddine 2014). More so, very few have examined the efforts of governments and other stakeholders at addressing these numerous challenges faced by the youth and the responses of the youth to these interventions.

This paper examines the challenges of youth in Africa in general, but Nigeria, in particular. It will further examine, the opportunities provided at addressing these challenges and evaluation of some of these opportunities, whether, they have achieved their aims. The study adopted the qualitative approach. Primary and Secondary sources of data were deployed for the study. The primary source was through observations while the secondary data relied on newspaper, journals, desktop media reports, and desktop publications.

CHALLENGES OF THE YOUTH IN AFRICA

Youth today, face a lot of challenges. The challenges vary across countries, societies, ethnics, ages, and sexes. The situation of this group continues to decline across the globe as a result of so many variables, not excluding inadequate progress to poverty eradication, and shared prosperity in a globalizing world (ECOSOC Youth Forum, 2017; UNFPA 2011). It was reported that, when the issue of youth challenges came up at a World Bank meeting, it was revealed that the continent faces a huge unemployment challenge (Onno, nd). These many challenges faced by the youth, may also be used as a major conduit of discontent. Onno argued that the precarious conditions of youth may spring a destabilizing factor, especially in fragile societies, such as, it did in Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, the Niger-Delta in Nigeria and even Middle East and North East Nigeria.

Historically, Muruiki (1981), posited that the youth on the continent were affected by many challenges ranging from psychological to social challenges as a result of Modernisation. He further stated that these challenges range from drug abuse, school drop outs, teenage pregnancies, illegal abortions and other nefarious crimes. Hence, this study examines, the socio-economic and political challenges confronted by youth in Africa, with emphasis on Nigeria,

though few instances may be taken from other countries on the continent.

In terms of socio-economic conditions, issues of unemployment, poverty, moral decadence, harmful cultural practices and religiosity, corruption, and youth involvement in social vices among others persists. The youth in Africa or sub-Saharan Africa are confronted with unemployment challenges. Though, some studies have pointed out some of the factors responsible for this state of youth unemployment (Uddin & Uddin 2013). In Zimbabwe, it was observed that 80% -95% of the youth may be unemployed, and this has made them depend so much on parents, politicians, donor agents, which inadvertently, denies them the opportunity to national development (Karombo nd; Onno, nd). This is not however, different from even mid-income country like South Africa, where it has been reported that the country is itself battling with low employment rate, as a result of the inability of private investors to absorb the teeming school leavers entering the labour market (Senbet and Simbanegavi, 2016). To be specific, Nigeria with a youth population of about 60 percent of the 198million is confronted with similar situation. (NPC 2018). More so, the number of graduates being churned out from the secondary and post-secondary institutions annually finds it difficult to get full employment. For instance, the National Bureau of Statistics revealed that 67 percent of the nation's youth are either underemployed or unemployed in 2017 (NBS, 2017), while this may have reduced to about 52.65% in 2018 (NBS 2018). A former minister of finance Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala stated that one of the reasons for youth unemployment was that Nigerian Graduates were unemployable (Amaechi, 2016)

There is no doubt, that one of the problems of today's youth is moral decadence. Indeed, change is constant. Yet, some youth have succumbed to foreign culture to an extent that, this has led to identity crises, and eroded traditional values (Muriuki, 1981). This phenomenon, has no doubt amounted to some of the 'get rich or die trying' mentalities of some youth, disorientated sexuality, divorce rate, prostitution, drug abuses, kidnapping, and other social vices inherent in the society. Culture is the total sum of a people's way of life. Yet, one of the traits of culture is that it is not static, hence it is dynamic and subjected to change. Despite this, some culture and custodians of culture have not understood the need to jettison some old ways. Examples are gender violence, witchcraft accusations, female genital mutilation, and scarifications, among other things. Religiosity, on the other hand, is when issues are attached to spiritualism or when one devotes most of his/her time to religious issues, at the detriment of other life issues. Little wonder, Campbell (2013), stated that causation of events, big or small, public or private, is routinely ascribed to divine

intervention or the willful lack thereof. For Example, students mostly partake in ‘Exam prayers’ on University campuses during examinations, than on normal school days.¹

Another issue is corruption. This is unarguably the most significant issue in the global world (UNODC and NBC, 2017). It is regarded as one of the hallmarks of the problems affecting the African society and development (Mbaku 1996; Njomen 2015; Nduku and Tenamwenye 2014). A studies in South Africa (SA) revealed how fraud and corruption cost the South Africa economy billions annually and how it is felt beyond the fiscus (Tracey 2015). Although, the political elites have always been identified in this phenomenon, very few studies have identified the youth in this ugly deed, especially through their unions and associations (Thompson, Nwaorgu & Raheem 2016). In fact, in an unpublished study on voter apathy in a tertiary institution in the south west area of the Nigeria, it revealed that, majority of the students/electorates in university elections show apathy because, they believe that their students’ elected officials vie for positions to enrich themselves (Thompson, et al, 2016). To further substantiate these salient points, a lecturer shared how some students in his department approached him to approve the appropriation of more than 70% of the budget of the Students’ Association for the executive’s welfare.² There have been so many media reported cases of misappropriations by these bodies in Nigerian higher institutions. A limpid example was in 2015 when it was reported that the student union government (SUG) president of a University in south west region of the country appropriated about ₦ N1, 837, 550 for making official calls (Isaac and Kabir, 2017).

Poverty is another challenge of African youth. This refers to complete lack of the means necessary to meet basic personal needs such as food, shelter, clothing and the pursuit of happiness. Poverty also has a multiple or ripple effect on the youth. The socio-economic conditions of youth as well as their decisions on certain issues have continued to hinder the youth from contributing to the national treasury or economic development (World Bank, 2006 in Fox et al, 2012; UN, 1995; Oduwole, 2015). In 2016, Nigeria entered into recession. The country also became the world poverty capital of the world. The Brookings International (2018) revealed that Nigeria had overtaken India as the poverty headquarter of the world. The Report stated that 86.9 million people are extremely poor, while India has 73 million. The report further revealed that while Nigeria was growing by six people every minute, it continued to fall in India (Adebayo, 2018).

Health challenges is another issue for African youth. The youth has also been at the receiving end, in terms of health.

Aside from, not getting access to health facilities, they are also one of the most volatile to Venereal Diseases and dreaded sexually transmitted diseases, malaria, tuberculosis, mental instability, tuberculosis, abortion and other diseases. This is because, the continent of Africa has been prevalent with diseases. One of the major causes of diseases and public health challenges is as a result of lack of sanitation (Kamara, et al, 2017:2). These diseases reduces productivity, labor productivity, growth, and household incomes (Knowles and Behran 2005: ix). HIV and AIDS pandemic pose another major challenge for young people today (Population Council, nd).

Figure 1: Global Statistics of People Living With HIV/AIDS

| Region | People living with HIV 2017 | New HIV Infections 2017 | | AIDS related deaths 2017 | People accessing treatment 2017 |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Total | April 1-14 | | |
| Eastern and Southern Africa | 19.6 million [17.3 million-22.9 million] | 800,000 [1.1 billion] | 710,000 [590,000-890,000] | 32,000 [16,000-130,000] | 340,000 [300,000-510,000] |
| Western and Central Africa | 6.1 million [4.4 million-8.1 million] | 370,000 [226,000-570,000] | 310,000 [180,000-470,000] | 67,000 [36,000-100,000] | 280,000 [180,000-410,000] |
| Total | 25.7 million [21.9 million-30.3 million] | 1,170,000 [879,000-1.37 billion] | 1.02 million [760,000-1.36 million] | 379,000 [210,000-570,000] | 620,000 [480,000-920,000] |

Source: Except from UNAIDS (2018) Factsheet July, p4.

Though, some of these health challenges could also be as a result of break down in family values and structures, peer pressure, influence of the media, youthful exuberance, and political economy, among others; there is no doubt, that the youth engage more in social vices than any other groups. In recent times, the abuse of substances or drugs, kidnapping, cultism, armed robbery and internet fraud among others are few of some crimes that have also hindered the youth from participatory roles in national development. Studies on internet fraud or yahoo-yahoo or *Sakawa* in Ghana reveal that, they are mostly perpetrated by the youth (Tade and Aliyu 2011; Tade 2013; Tetey 2008). A strange and peculiar occurrence is the application of diabolical or ritual into this crime (yahoo plus). In fact, a Vice Chancellor in a Federal University had to declare war on their activities as a result of their diabolical ways and blood shedding (FUNAAB Bulletin, 2019:3-4),

A particular challenge of youth, which appears to be prevalent in all regions, is drug abuse. Undoubtedly there is a dysfunctional use of addictive substances globally, Africa and West Africa, in particular, which is becoming a new hub (Obot nd). Globally, the types and use of drugs and other substances vary. Cannabis (192 million); Opioids (34 million);

Amphetamines and Prescription Stimulants (34 million); Ecstasy (21 million); Opiates (19 million); and Cocaine (18 million) (UNODC 2018a). Similarly, across the world, there is a peak in drug use among the young people, than the older people, especially 18-25 years (UNODC, 2018b). A report revealed that youth remain the highest casualty of death relating to drug abuse (UNODC, 2018a). The harmful abuse of substances and drugs have a multiplier effect on adolescents and young (UNODC, 2018b:4). Although there are no full proof statistics of drug abuse by African youth, available records across few countries suggest that it is prevalent. Furthermore, there has been some linkage between, drug abuse, alcohol, suicide and mental illnesses among youth (Fairbanks, 2018; McQuaid, 2017). Media reports from Nigeria revealed that in 2016, about 158 young Nigerians were awaiting execution for drug related offences in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (UNODC, 2018b), it rose to about 600 in 2017 in Asia (*This Day Live*, 2017). Though, abuse in substance may have been caused by so many factors, including unemployment, family issues, peer pressure and other agents of socialization, this has undoubtedly affected the youth. Some of the abused substances are, alcohol, cannabis, cocaine and heroin, methamphetamine and other stimulants, tramadol and other controlled substances, volatile substances, injection drug use (IDU), among others (UNODC, 2018b).

Politics is simply how power and resources are actualised and shared. Leadership is not a matter of age, but competence and requisite skills. While a good number of youths possess both requirements, few who show interest in politics have been denied for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, it is a misnomer to appropriate every elective positions to the youth, as it must be competed for. However, this group has not been given a level play ground or out-played in the spate of decision making, policy formulation, and implementation, among others. Except for a very few country that has given the youth same level play-ground with other groups, majority have unintentionally or intentionally played the youth against themselves or schemed them out. This has mostly thrived due to the lack of political will and constitutional deficiency in African countries. These breeds sit-tightism syndrome experienced in some parts of Africa. Hence, the youth have to choose in between establishing an order to pursue their goals for working for the established order instigated to usurp the political system through violence (Go Africa Go Germany, 2010: 8). For example some youth in Senegal, successfully raised their voices against the then president, Abdoulaye Wade when he wanted to change the country's constitution, so that he could rule for another term. The movement comprising, mostly of youth had

to use the power of the ballot box to effect a change, which led to the election of President Macky Sall (Yarwood, 2015).

Albeit, the youth provides the manpower requirements for general elections (Odoh and Eme, 2014: 174), they are still marginalized and excluded from governance and decision making processes (Abdullahi, 2017:3). For instance, a lesson from Nigeria, reveal that the legal age for seeking election into governorship and House of Senate is 35 years, and that of the president is 40 years, while that of House of Representative is 30 years (FRN, 1999). With these, it limits the youth to only participate in being elected as members of State/Federal House of Representatives, but could not be elected into Senatorial or Presidential positions. Although, a member of the youth could be picked as aides, advisers, assistants, among others, their inputs are not binding and subjected to their employer or at times, the legislature, which often than not, make up a sizable number of the adults or elderly. Against this backdrop, a movement comprising of youths, launched a campaign known as the 'not too young to rule.'³

Eventually, the National Assembly amended the not too young to rule bill and it was subsequently assented to by the then President, Muhammadu Buhari. Paradoxically, the presidential slot of the All Progressives Congress (APC) was exclusively reserved for President Muhammadu Buhari in 2018. Aside, this, most of the political parties made their nomination and expression of interests forms for the highest bidder. In fact, President Buhari had to confess, that he would not have been able to afford the ₦45 million for the APC presidential nomination form. Mallam El-Rufai made similar remark concerning the ₦22.5 million cost of governorship nomination and expression of interests forms. Other prices of the forms were, ₦3.8million for House of Representative; ₦7million for Senate. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has its expression of interests and nomination forms for ₦12million for presidential aspirants, N6 million for governorship forms, ₦3.5 for Senate; ₦1.5 million for House of Representative; ₦600,000 for State of Assembly and National delegates and ad-hoc delegates are to pay ₦20,000 and ₦5,000 respectively. How can a youth afford this? Is this not a way of stifling the youth from vying for these elective positions? In fact, by the time the ruling party, the APC, announced the amount it generated from the sales of forms,⁴ many critic wondered if the amount had not exceeded the fund stipulated by the Electoral act. Other political challenges facing the youth are the problem facing the generality of the Nigerian State. These are ethnicity, unhealthy political culture that breeds violence, and monetization of politics, prebendalism, among others. Sometimes in 2016, a young University post-graduate student, who wanted to vie for an electoral position at the local government council level was

told to prepare about two million naira, which will be taken to a particular Party chieftain for his endorsement. He puts it succinctly: *When I got to my uncle's place and I told him of my intentions, he told me to get two million naira but the money itself was not a guarantee that, I will get the local government councillorship ticket, I was shocked.*⁵

This sums up the issue of Godfatherism/patrimonialism and money politics, which has hindered the youth from achieving their political ambitions and make meaningful contributions. Amidst these potpourri of challenges, the youths in Africa, have struggled to contribute to national development and nation building, so as to sustain Africa's fragile democracies.

One of the problems of the youths in Africa is ethnicity. This often happen when the youth identify with one another based on similarities such as common ancestry, language, history, culture or nation. It is a parochial way of thinking. Jenkins (2012) in her studies on Ethnic territorialities in Kenya, revealed among other things that ethnicity was one of the factors that led to the post-election violence in the country in 2007. Nnoli (1978, 1995), has made so many observations on the attendant challenges of ethnicity and how it has affected Nigeria's development. It has also affected the youth from uniting and forging a common ground to change the status quo. For example, most of the political parties, recently floated by some youths, lacks a national base, which ought to integrate the entire regions in its folds. Olaiya (2014) contends that, unlike in developed countries where political parties are core agents of political socialization and supreme; they are built on ethno-religious tenets in West Africa and the youths have always been used as their foot-soldiers. Evidently, posts on social media reveals the gory tales of name-calling and ethnic polarization of the internet space. Appellations like, '*brown roof, flatino, almajiri, skull miners, ipobs, zombies, zoo,*' and so on are used to address one another's ethnic group when fundamental issues about a particular group or nationhood is put to the bare⁶

STAKEHOLDERS INTERVENTION TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES

The plight of the youth has gained international recognition since 1969 when the United Nations (UN) recommended that every state must initiate a programme that would address the challenges of its youth (cited in Angel and Hiltmann-Richter 2005). With a very low compliance from across the world, especially Africa, as a result of the cold war and African conflicts and self-determination issue, it again followed it up with a National Youth Programme in 1971, through a publication by the General Assembly, known as 'New Trends in Service by 1985 (2005).

Without resting on its oars, the UN reiterated this commitment when it emphasized that every State should provide its young people with opportunities for obtaining education, for acquiring skills and for participating fully in all aspects of society in 1995 (World Youth Report, 2007). This was initiated so as to enable the youth to contribute to a more macro social-economic concerns, since it was observed that many of the youth related issues were synonymous with state's actions and inactions.

About the last quarter of the twentieth century, the United Nations reiterated its commitment to support States in order to achieve youth sustainability at its Lisbon Declaration (UNESCO, 1998). It also emphasis that policies and resources must be mooted to incorporate Youth in national development by strengthening capacity building through partnership with major stakeholders especially non-governmental youth institutions among others (1998, pp.3-10). These efforts were replicated even at the wake of the new millennium and even at the regional levels by emphasizing that government should elaborate their National Youth Policies within the national development framework (United Nations, 2002).

AFRICA

The United Nations also mandated other regional bodies including Africa to emulate these policies at improving the lot of its teeming youth at a conference in June 1983 The conference adopted a continental Plan of Action on Youth, where it recommended a mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing it's the effectiveness of its youth policies over time. (ECA 1983, par 25-26, Cited in Angel and Hiltmann-Richter, 2005:24). This policy was further incorporated through the passage of the Africa Youth Charter in 2011. By this, Africa continent was supposed to implement policies and programmes that would engage stakeholders towards the achievement of the Africa Youth Charter (AU, 2011).

Significantly, the National Youth Policies have been borne by governments to toll the lines of international stakeholders, particularly the UN and other regional bodies across Africa continent, such as the Africa Union (AU). For example, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, Nigeria, among others have developed their different national Youth Policies to address these challenges facing the youth in their respective domains. Thus, States across the continent made policies and implemented programmes to tackle different youth challenges such as HIV/AIDS, unemployment through youth empowerment skills, incorporating more people to its youth age range. Some strategies were also instituted to help achieve the objectives. They range from, education and skill development,

data research, youth migration, youth health, youth and environment, national youth service, among others (Republic of Zambia, 2015; Republic of South, Africa, 2015).

Sub-regional Organisations such as the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) is not also left out. Sequel to the UN’s mandate, the ECOWAS youth policy include mobilizing the sub-regional youth to contribute towards effectively to social, economic and cultural development as well as the integration of the region since 1983. It held a forum in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja to promote women, youth organisations and professional bodies in ensuring mass involvement in the activities of the Community (ECOWAS, nd). It further held a Youth Development and Empowerment Strategy Communique in Abuja, Nigeria’s capital between 10th and 16th August 2003. It has continued this developmental strides, using sports, eradicating drug abuse, youth empowerment and development paradigms through the implementation of social and agricultural, technological and economic programmes to stem the challenges confronting its youth (ECOWAS, 2016: 16, 36, 91-97).

NIGERIA

Though national youth policies had been introduced from colonial times through post-colonial era, they were not adequate. Thus, the Nigeria Civil War of 1967-1970 necessitated the Federal Military Government to initiate a programme so as to achieve its post-War programme of reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The country embarked on the Second Development Plan (1970-1974) with the aim of postwar reconstruction, restoring productive capacity, achieving self-reliance (FRN, 1970:3-5). Consequent upon which the National Youth Service Scheme was introduced in May, 1973 (FRN, 2009:6).

However, the first attempt to initiate a Policy that nationally carries the Youth along was in 1981, but a more encompassing inclusive policy was developed in 1989 during the Ibrahim Babangida regime (pp.6-7). It could not succeed as a result of the political economy hindered by the austerity measure. This austerity measure was as a result of the Structural Adjustment Programme necessitated by the World Bank to restructure the economy, achieve fiscal balance and balance of payments, act as a foundation for a sustainable and non-inflationary growth, intensifying private sector among others (World Bank, 1994; Philips, 1987; Anyawu, 1992).

During the 1990s, the country participated in some sporting events across the globe and the Youth delivered so many laurels for the country. One of such was the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, where the country emerged victorious against all odds. It was expected that, this period would trigger the Youth

into national prominence, yet, the government of General Sanni Abacha did not seize the day. Rather the laws establishing the Sports Ministry was repealed. However, the emergence of President Olusegun Obasanjo in as the civilian leader after so many years of military rule revived the ministry in 1999.

By 2009, another National Youth Policy was formulated. The key principles and guiding values were based on existing international, regional and national youth policies (FRN, 2009). Its main objectives was to provide the fundamental human rights and a holistic inclusive polices for Youth, its specific objectives were to approach youth problems holistically, reduce youth unemployment through self-employment enterprises, promote collaborations between different tiers of government, civil societies, NGOs, among others. For example, below are some of the interventions introduced to tackle youth challenges in Nigeria.

Figure 2: Interventions at addressing Unemployment Challenges in Nigeria, 2009-2019

| Ministry/Department/ Agency | Project Description | Parent Ministry | Published Data on Job created via its initiatives | Government Review of Past Government Activities |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agencies of Nigeria (SMEDAN) | To stimulate and coordinate the MSME sectors | Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investment | No datasets of activities | No evidence by ministry |
| National Directorate of Employment (NDE) | To design and implement programmes to combat mass unemployment | Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment | No datasets of activities | No evidence by ministry |
| Industrial Training Fund (ITF) or SIWES | To set and regulate standards and offer direct training interventions in industrial and commercial skills training and development, using highly competent professional staff, modern techniques and technology. | Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investment | No datasets of activities | No evidence by ministry |
| Federal Ministry of Youth Development | To provide a sustainable framework for youth development | Federal Ministry of Youth Development | No datasets of activities | No evidences by ministry |
| Savings Retirement & Empowerment Programme (SREP) | To manage Government share of savings from removal of fuel subsidy | Ministry of Labour and Productivity | No datasets of activities | No evidences by Ministry |
| Youth@ | A multimedia programme for young professionals | Federal Ministry of Finance | More than 11 billion disbursed, yet, allegations of fraud and nepotism | No evidences by Ministry |
| N-Power | A National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) that is designed to create jobs and empower Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 35. | Office of the Vice President | Empowered 174,160 youths out of 200,000 selected for 2016. This represents an 88% success rate | Constant engagement of stakeholders on the activities and achievement of the initiatives. |
| Federal Ministry of Finance | To manage the Nation's finance for sustainable development. The ministry has several interventions to create jobs. | There exists datasets supplying evidence on jobs created by the ministry through its various interventions | No datasets of activities | No evidences by Ministry. |
| Central Bank of Nigeria | To deliver price and financial system stability and promote sustainable economic development. The CBN has several job creation initiatives. | Nil. | No datasets of activities | The bank has no evidence of any review of the activities of the bank with respect to job creation schemes. |
| MarketMoov/TinderMoov | A social intervention programme aimed at reinvigorating the economy | Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investment | Reports that about 350,000 has benefited so far | Constant engagement of stakeholders on the activities and achievement of the initiatives. |

Sources: Review of activities of listed agencies by MSME-ASI in BPSR, (2017: pp. 8-10); Compilations from the researchers.

CAUSES OF FAILURES OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVENTIONS

Though these programmes were properly well-thought out to achieve its aim and objectives, it seemed inadequate, politicised and questionable. To be sure, the former wife of the president, Aisha Buhari, condemned the implementation of the programme in some parts of the country lately (Ameh 2019). It was also reported that some supporters of a former Governor of Ogun state, Ibikunle Amosun disrupted the disbursement of the Tradermonni in Abeokuta, because of its perceived politicisation, when the permanent Voters' Card of beneficiaries were being collected prior to the 2019 general elections (Bosun, 2019). Aside, some international organisations, including the Transparency International also raised alarm over the ideology behind the Tradermonni before elections (Aworinde, 2019)

Lack of political will remains the chief factor inhibiting African youth from achieving their potentials. Glaringly, most African countries still appropriate very low allocations for health, social welfare, housing, health, budgets. More so, there are doubts whether Africa could achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although, South Africa and Kenya, stand out in terms of achieving the Africa Youth Charter, the existential issues in Africa, such as corruption, leadership challenges, resource wars, cultural practices, poverty, political instability, ethnicity, identity crisis, among other things, still hinder the attainment of these policies. To be sure, South Africa and Kenya which were given pass marks, were embroiled in some of these Africa's existential crisis in recent times. While South Africa's higher education students, engaged in a violent protest from 2015 to October 2016, which accounted for loss of property and human injuries; Kenya's post-election crisis claimed lives of so many people, including youth in 2007.

In Nigeria for instance, despite some of these initiatives at addressing the unemployment challenges, these problems persists; defying all forms of interventions. In recent times, attempts are also being made to make health available for all including the youth, through the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). However, the coverage has only been pegged at staff of public parastatals or private firms, who have a stable source of income. However, the unemployed, the poor, or aged and other groups including the unemployed youth who are regarded as the vulnerable group are not yet considered to enroll.

Corruption, lack of focus and lack of prioritisation of youth policy are also some of the reasons why interventions have failed. In many cases, projects that are meant to address the issues confronting the youths are corruptly executed. Aside, they also lack clear cut focus or plan of action. In some cases they are not well thought out and prioritised. Priorities are given

to infrastructures where illicit monies can be generated from rather than human capital projects that will address youth issue.

Also the impotence of youth movement and its alliance with the ruling and political class. Gone are the days when youth movements and associations fight for the youth cause. In recent times, the youth association apart from being politicised have also become a constituency project where elective officers are recruited by the corrupt heads that they were supposed to fight. This has led to the violent nature of its elections. For example, the last NANS elections in the State capital, Abuja apart from being reportedly hijacked by the son of the new president was marred with violence (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki3vrND3VYA>; Erunke, 2023)

Being facetious or being contemptuous about youth issue by the political class. It was amidst this unemployment situation of the youth that the then president made his infamous statement which was corrupted for 'Lazy Nigerian Youth, at a commonwealth Business Forum in Westminster, London, in April 2018,' (Awojuyigbe, 2018; The Cable, 2018 for Video⁷). A year later Muhammadu Buhari stated that obtaining a University Degree no longer guaranteed paid employment (Okafor 2019). Such statement show that the political or ruling class are not unaware of these challenges but rather than tackle the issue head on; they not only joke with it. Though many of the youths reacted negated negatively to the president's statement. A cursory look at comments from the social media can also add to the narratives. First, a hashtag was launched #LazyNigerianYouth to express their anger. One Adeniyi Oluwasanmi G notes: *I will keep saying this, put infrastructure in place, especially ELECTRICITY, and u will be amazed by what this your Nigerians youth that are not ready to work in your opinion will accomplish. You blame previous government, you blame youth. Stop this blaming game Mr President (Punch, 2018).*

Put differently, if the needed opportunities are provided, the youth, be it in Africa in general, and Nigeria in particular, will achieve their potentials and help contribute to national development.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

The Study revealed that some of the socio-economic challenges of the youth were, unemployment, poverty, moral decadence, harmful cultural practices and religiosity, corruption, health challenges and social vices. Politically, the study revealed that African youth are faced with same existential problems that affects the continent. These are: lack of political will to turn their conditions around and

constitutional deficiency, political challenges facing the youth are the problem facing the generality of the Nigerian State. These are ethnicity, monetization of politics, Godfatherism or patrimonialism, and unhealthy political culture that breeds violence, among others. These challenges, among others contribute to non-participatory roles of African youth in decision making, policy formulation and national development.

In tackling these issues, stakeholders, such as international, regional and national governments and organisations have initiated some policies. Acknowledging the differences and peculiarities of youth challenges across the continent, these policies stem from the UN World Youth Policy to National Youth Policies across some African States, including Nigeria. By these policies, the development and contributions of youth was supposed to be more visible and achievable. Unfortunately, some of these interventions also have their own loopholes. These loopholes are, lack of data on youth, lack of political will, corruption, and politicisation of policies, political instability and the existential problems of the African State. Thus, these challenges have not turned rhetoric into reality, hence, the challenges of the youth continues. How then can these rhetoric turn reality?

Having understood the loopholes of the interventions of these international, regional and national organisations and governments, then it seems, the problems is halved solved. To totally solve the challenges of the youth in Africa in general, and Nigeria in particular, certain things must be done. These range from more political will to address youth challenges, making the constitutions more youth-friendly, making policies and legislations that will facilitate youth development, good governance, providing enabling environment for youth initiatives and business survival, developing healthcare system in Africa, by looking inwards and synthesizing Africa Traditional Medicine, more budgetary allocations and commitments to youth and vulnerable development, provision of sustainable intervention programmes, promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), so as to assist innovative and a technologically-driven environment, among others.

At the same time, the youth in Africa, in general and Nigeria in particular, must understand that there is 'no free lunch in Freetown'. The youths must take the bull by the horn and develop themselves intellectually, morally and otherwise. By this, they may not have to depend on government, but rather what they can do for their country. The youth must also acquire and develop skills required for modern day businesses. This is necessary, so that by the time the opportunities are opened from government or other stakeholders, then, they will not be found

wanting. Politically, the youth must understand, that the older ones cannot be blackmailed or forced to leave the space, as such will be undemocratic. Rather, the youth must participate, mobilise, equip and educate themselves in the political tools to effect the needed change to drive home a sustainable and an inclusive society for them and the future.

NOTES

¹This is popularly called 'success prayers' in most universities in southern part of Nigeria.

²Personal discussion with Mr Abiodun Raheem, of COLMAS, FUNAAB, June 2016.

³This has been effected in Turkey

⁴The Party generated over 6.9 billion naira from the sales.

⁵Personal discussion with Niyi, in Lagos, August 2016

⁶This is a personal observation of one of the authors on activities of youth on social media.

⁷The Cable (2018) "FULL SPEECH: Buhari at CHOGM 2018." <https://www.thecable.ng/video-many-nigerian-youth-dont-want-anything-says-buhari>

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