
Nigerian Youths: The Endangered Specie

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Abstract

The youth of Nigeria, who were previously vital to the nation's potential, are now facing a crucial turning point. They encounter numerous obstacles that classify them as an endangered species. This research aims to investigate the factors endangering the future of our nation's youth, who are its hope and lifeblood, as well as how youth endangerment can be mitigated. A qualitative research design was used in this study to understand better the nature and character of youth endangerment in Nigeria. This theoretical study relied on secondary data from books, journal articles, and other publications to back up its claims. Multiple secondary sources were used to reduce the possibility of error and improve the study's reliability and validity. The study concludes that the most frustrating situation for Nigerian youth has been a lack of employment, which has pushed many youths to seek alternatives to salvage their economic situation, and concrete recommendations to reduce youth endangerment in Nigeria were made

Keywords: Nigerian youth, endangerment, frustration, discontent

Introduction

The issue of youth endangerment has become a major concern around the world in the last decade, particularly in Africa and Nigeria. This has created a more difficult phenomenon for both developing and advanced economies around the world. The youth are frequently viewed as both a source of utility in any country's economic development and a source of danger when exposed to the abyss of social challenges, as Bursick and Grasmick put it, that the combination of poverty with instability and family disruption is predictive of violence among the youth (Bursick & Grasmick, 1993 in Awotedu, 2015). According to the 2012 State of the Youth Report, which provides the most comprehensive situation update on youth employment, education, well-being, and participation in the development process, it is unequivocally clear that Nigeria ranks among the highest in terms of youth endangerment because our youth are highly affected by issues of unemployment, illiteracy, and low standard of living, putting our youth at a greater risk (State of the Youth Report, 2012). According to the youth in development 2012 report, it is clearly lamented that throughout history, young people have actively sought to bring social, political, and economic change to their countries; it is also emphasized that they are frequently portrayed as rebellious, destructive, reckless, or violent. However, young people are today's and tomorrow's wage earners and entrepreneurs, educators and innovators, health professionals, political and civic leaders, vital to economic growth and well-being (Youth in development, October 2012). Using, misusing and dumping youth by government and those with financial powers have been the order of the day in most African governments. Youth are faced with different challenges ranging from unemployment, mis-education and prostitution, illiteracy, substance abuse and misuse, political misdirection and a host of other challenges, which have hindered and endangered the future of the youth in a volatile economy and an era of recurrent economic crisis. Young people are positive instrument of change in society. They are central to social movements, technological advances, and globalization. Most political changes, revolutions, violence, and wars are also centered on youth (Abbink & van Kessel 2005 in Status of Youth Report 2012).

Youth discontent is frequently associated with the risk of youth violence in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Relative deprivation, grievance, and youth bulge arguments fueled widespread belief that young people endanger social stability, and that violence is a youth problem. In contrast to this widely held belief, the purpose of this research is to (1) understand youth as endangered species and (2) investigate the factors that contribute to youth endangerment. The World Bank suggested in its 2007 World Development Report that developing countries that invest in better education, healthcare, and job training for their record numbers of young people aged 12-24 could use their demographic dividend to accelerate economic growth and sharply reduce poverty. This clearly shows that youth are valuable assets, as stated in the same report, that engaging youth in neighborhood, community, and national development yields an opportunity to harness their energy, enthusiasm, skills, and innovative ideas to increase economic growth, foster social stability, improve civic participation, and ensure healthier, more educated, and productive societies (Youth in Development, October 2012).

According to the National Youth Policy and the National Youth Commission Act 2010, youth are defined as young people between the ages of 15 and 35, and the group constitutes approximately 34% of Nigerians, or approximately 2 million of the estimated 5.9 million people. The total population under the age of 35 years is approximately 73 percent (Review of the Nigeria National Youth Policy, 20th November 2012), constituting one-third of

Nigeria's citizens, indicating that Nigeria is a country dominated by young people and can only move forward by utilizing the collective energy of the youth. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of Nigeria, stated emphatically, we know that a nation can only rise with its youth, while launching the report on International Youth Day in the presence of country development colleagues, including UN Secretary-General Jens Anders Tinberg-Frandzen. This demonstrates that our youth are critical to our country's growth and economic development, and their plight puts our country and economy in jeopardy (Status of the Youth Report, 2012). Despite the establishment of a youth ministry, youth commission, and presidential youth aid to design and champion youth affairs and programs across the country, this has not yielded much positive impact in promoting youth economic development because they are not serving the interests of the youths but the whims and caprices of the authorities in power. In 2015, there were 1.2 billion youths aged 15 to 24, accounting for one out of every six people on the planet. The number of youths is expected to increase by 7% to nearly 1.3 billion by 2030, the target date for the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations Population Facts, 2015).

When given the necessary knowledge and opportunities, youth can be a positive force for development. Young people should obtain the education and skills required to contribute to a productive economy, and they must have access to a job market that can absorb them into its labor force, as more than half of the world's population is under the age of 30, with the vast majority living in developing countries. As Secretary Clinton stated in Tunisia in February 2012, responding to the needs and aspirations of young people is a critical challenge for the future in every region (Clinton in Youth in development, October 2012). Unfortunately, our youth in Nigeria, and particularly in Aberdeen, are denied such opportunities. Our children will never be promised a rose garden. Inadequate human capital investment and high youth unemployment rates are two of the most pressing issues confronting many countries today. Despite the challenges, the 2016 Global Youth and Development Index and Report stated that the world has an unprecedented opportunity today to lay the foundations of a better future for young people. Governments must recognize the barriers to youth development, address them with policies and programs that prioritize young people, and promote progressive youth development (Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2016).

This clearly shows that the youth have the potential to grow, but marginalization has left the youth less empowered, endangering their future. Some countries are currently struggling to educate and employ young people. At least one-third of the world's young people live in fragile and conflict-affected states, and thus bear a disproportionate share of the brunt of war and violence. Young people, particularly men, are far more frequently victims of homicide than older people (global youth development index and report, 2016). According to the bank, this has weakened the continent's social fabric. This widespread phenomenon has greatly hampered the youth. As clearly illustrated in the government paper of 2003, youth are regarded as the lifeblood of this nation, and their endangerment exposes our country to significant danger. As demonstrated by Nigeria's ten-year civil war, youth were both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations. Youth are used as thugs to influence elections in one way, but they are also used as an instrument of change. In this period of transition, Nigerian youth, like all youth around the world, are struggling to find a place in society. According to the youth violence report, Nigeria faces the difficult task of reclaiming a lost generation of youth. With such youth status, the central paradox for any progressive nation now and in the future will be the development of youth empowerment skills as well as the complete erasure of cultural and marginalization in the life of a generation that has been endangered and destroyed by political misrule, Miseducation, substance abuse, and a variety of other factors. Factors like illiteracy especially among the rural population exposes the youth to a lot of danger and as a result they are at the mercy of politicians who can easily exploit the situation of such youths, by giving them harmful substances like alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and other drugs that are capable of pushing the youth in all soothe of violent crimes and oppressions. Little studies have existed on factors responsible for youth endangerment, which has left a big gap over the decades in addressing youth problems. The drive to fill that gap necessitated this research-oriented study.

Literature Review

Definition of Youth and Endangerment

The problem of defining a youth has become a major concern in various countries around the world, as youth cannot be defined in a single way. Many countries have different definitions of what constitutes youth. Youth is the period of life when one is young, but it is frequently used to refer to the period between childhood and adulthood (maturity). It is also defined as the appearance of youth, such as freshness, vigor, spirit, and so on. Simply put, youth is a period of transition in which children and adolescents gradually become recognized as adults. The United Nations defines youth as people aged 15 to 24. The UN also acknowledges that this varies without regard for other age groups listed by member countries, such as 18-30. Furthermore, to define who a youth is, Sub-Saharan Africa defines the term "youth" as young men aged 15 to 30 or 35 years old. All members of the Federal Republic of Nigeria aged 18 to 35 are considered youth in Nigeria. Many African girls view adolescence as a brief period between the onsets of puberty. In Brazil, the term "youth" refers to people between the ages of 15 and 29.

In Nigeria, youth are defined as being between the ages of 15 and 35. The Nigeria National Youth Policy defines youth as any Nigerian (male or female) between the ages of 15 and 35. This does not preclude any young Nigerian from experiencing youth-related needs, concerns, and influences (Nigeria National Youth Policy, 2013 page 1). Endangering someone, on the other hand, is putting them in a situation where something bad could happen. So, in the context of youth, when our youth are exposed to situations in which they may be exposed to danger, their future is jeopardized.

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Endangerment is a type of crime that involves wrongful, reckless, or wanton behavior that is likely to result in the death or serious bodily harm of another person. Endangerment can be classified into several types, each of which is a crime that can be prosecuted in court. Significantly similar language is used in some U.S. states, such as Florida, for the crime of culpable negligence.

Youth Definitions in Seven West African Countries

Country	Definition of Youth (in terms of period)
Ghana	15 to 35 years (20 years period)
Guinea	15 to 35 years (20 years period)
Liberia	15 to 35 years (20 years period)
Mali	15 to 40 years (25 years)
Niger	14 to 30 years (26 years period)
Nigeria	18 to 35 years (17 years period)
Nigeria	15 to 35 years (20 years period)

Source: International Labour Organization (2010)

This chart above depicts the definition of youth in various countries and time periods. The majority of countries have roughly the same age group. The majority are between the ages of 15 and 35.

The Age Definition for Youth of Various International Organizations

Organization	Age Group considered to be youth
The Commonwealth	15-29
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	15-24
International Labour Office (ILO)	15-24
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	15-32
UN Population Fund	10-24
World Health Organization (WHO)	10-29
World Bank	15-34
Africa Union	15-35
European Union (EU)	15-29

Source (Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2016).

Today's youth face a high level of economic and social uncertainty and volatility. Young people face extreme inequalities in terms of food, health, education, employment, and social security. During the 1990s, there was a significant increase in income inequality, polarization, poverty, and social exclusion around the world. These issues are even more prevalent among young people, and the problem is of significant proportions, given that four out of every five people under the age of 20 live in developing countries. Almost all young people are confronted with the uncertainties and risks brought about by economic and cultural globalization, but those with a competitive advantage are better able to deal with the challenges. The adult world's frequent and widespread failure to act effectively to promote the welfare of young people indicates the need for a paradigm shift. A compelling case can be made for listening to young people as part of a strategy for strengthening participatory democracy and advancing the realization of their human rights. Youth involvement leads to better decisions and outcomes. Many of the profound challenges confronting young people around the world, such as illiteracy, poverty, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, discrimination,

and forced military service, are topics of widespread concern at the national and international levels. Young people around the world are facing increased unemployment and job insecurity, increased family instability, and cuts to social welfare programs.

The number of young people has risen dramatically in recent decades. According to population statistics, there were 1.2 billion youths aged 15-24 in the world in 2015, accounting for one out of every six people on the planet (Population Fact, 2015). This increase in youth population was also noted in the 2016 Global Youth Development Index and Report, which stated that with 1.8 billion people between the ages of 15 and 29, the world now has more young people than ever before. Nearly 87% of them live in developing countries. Young people account for roughly one-quarter of humanity, but in many countries, particularly in South Asia and Africa, one in every three people is a young person (Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2016). Maeve Powick also saw Development and Youth as a challenge, for better or worse. While many economic models of inter-temporal change exist, the development literature lacks an understanding of youth in development. Any society that wishes to develop must prioritize the youth, because development in most places entails youth empowerment, growth, and development (Kristen Maeve cowlick, Youth and Economic Development, September 2011). Youth development can be defined in several ways. It was initially perceived and understood from a psychological standpoint, which focuses on how young people grow emotionally and construct identities. A broader view of development, often linked to sociological insights, focuses on young people's experiences and how these experiences provide opportunities for life management and distinct, culturally shaped perspectives on the world and their place within it. Importantly, this 'asset-based approach' to youth development recognizes young people's ability and agency to influence development outcomes (Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2016).

Today's youth are playing important roles in enhancing and promoting development all over the world. Today's youth grow up in a society that provides numerous opportunities and challenges during the formative years of adolescence. The presence or absence of many different factors, such as family resources, community services, educational and employment opportunities, has a profound impact on the adolescent's environment. According to the report in Youth Development Policy, failure to address adversity now leads to lifelong deficiencies and jeopardizes future youth development opportunities. Youth in Development Policy, USAID, October 2012. Kristen Maeve Powick examined development as involving change in both individual preferences and behaviors as well as in institutions in his work Youth and Economic Development (Kristen Maeve Powick, Youth and Economic Development, 2011). Youth endangerment is inextricably linked to youth employment and unemployment. The global phenomenon of youth unemployment has been a major challenge, particularly for developing countries in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), over 75 million young people worldwide are unemployed, and over a billion jobs must be created to accommodate new workers and reduce unemployment (Youth in Development, October 2012).

As stated in the 2016, Global Youth Development Index and Report, opportunities to gain employment in secure and meaningful jobs, as well as pursue financial independence, are key features of a well-functioning society. Without access to decent work, young people are unable to develop skills, establish themselves as independent citizens, or maintain an adequate standard of living and quality of life (Global Youth Development Index and report, 2016). This study chooses to look at youth employment against this backdrop because it is strongly linked to youth endangerment. Donald Felix Itam argued in his recommendation that, as global attention remains focused on youth, the global economic crisis worsens youth unemployment, and the African Union is correct in accelerating their goal to reduce youth unemployment to avoid the negative consequences of the youth bulge. The world signed up to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, an ambitious set of targets to be met by 2030. Whether it's ending poverty or slowing climate change, getting close to these goals will rely heavily on today's youth's ability to rise to the occasion. *This report also contends that the wide range of challenges that young people face continues to undermine their ability to be agents of social and economic progress. These difficulties include, but are not limited to, a lack of suitable employment and opportunities (Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2016).*

African Perspective on Youth Endangerment and Unemployment

In Africa, youth employment is dissatisfied, which is frequently associated with the risk of youth endangerment. Understanding youth grievances and economic expectations in relation to community decision-making, community participation, and access to employment opportunities are major challenges for almost all African countries. According to the youth in development policy, in Sub-Saharan and North Africa, approximately 40% of the population is under 15, and nearly 70% is under 30, indicating a pre-transition age structure (youth in development policy October 2012 page 5 and 6). Given the alarming youth growth, this youth unemployment rate is cause for concern. According to the Human Sciences Research Council's Youth Policy Initiative, 90 percent of this youth population lives in developing countries, according to Grace Mania. Between 2010 and 2015, the number of youths in Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to rise by 19.4 million, accounting for 75 percent of the continent's total population (ILO, 2010).

Furthermore, youth account for 64% of the total unemployed population in the United States (Saunders School of Business, 2009). Governments and donors around the world try to address youth issues by doing their best to meet the needs of young people and help them integrate better into their societies. Some of the more traditional programs for youth include education, skill development, job creation, and civic participation. These programs are based on the hypothesis that if young people fully participate in a community's social, cultural, political, and economic life, they will have fewer grievances. Youth, on the other hand, are frequently critical of these initiatives; they question governments' ability to meet their demands and understand their perspectives. According to the ILO, the primary challenge in emerging and developing countries remains improving the quality of work available to many young people who are already working but are underemployed or working in informal jobs. Certain skills determine whether young people

can find work, contribute to their local and national economies, and live up to their individual developmental and earning potentials (ILO, 2008 Page 3). Many questions arise when attempting to find solutions to youth unemployment problems because most African youth are viewed as perpetrators of violence, as many seek illegal means of addressing their economic problems. According to the 2011 Joint youth unemployment and inclusive growth report, the incidence of poverty among young people in Nigeria, Uganda, Burundi, and Zambia is more than 80%. Although youth represent the means and assets that societies require to build prosperous futures, societies will only reap these benefits if they invest in youth development (Youth in Development Policy October 2012).

A variety of factors, the most prominent of which is a lack of employment, motivate most youth to engage in violent activities and illegal acts of criminality. Youth endangerment and unemployment in this context reflect competition for valuable resources and a desire to gain control of these resources. Paul Collier's work (1999, 2002) had a significant impact on advancing economic arguments in explaining the causes of civil wars and other types of violence in general. Collier and Hoeffler (2002) refine the "youth bulge" argument in his seminal work by emphasizing that a large youth population combined with economic stagnation and a lack of migration opportunities makes a country prone to violence. The lack of suitable employment opportunities for African youth kills their future dreams, and as a result, many youths' resort to violence as a means of expressing their discontent. Not only have the lives of the youth been jeopardized, but the African continent's fabric has been destroyed. As stated in the African Youth Charter in 2006, Africa's renaissance cannot be realized unless adequate investment is made in the youth, who account for approximately 40% of the African population (African Youth Charter, 2003). Africa, the world's youngest region, continues to face high levels of unemployment, vulnerable employment, and working poverty in 2017, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) (ILO, 2008).

Global Perspective on Youth Endangerment and Unemployment

According to the International Labor Organization's (ILO) 2008 global unemployment trend for youth, youth account for approximately 40% of all unemployed people worldwide. Between 1997 and 2007, global youth unemployment rose from 10.9 percent to 11.9 percent, while the global adult unemployment ratio remained constant at 4.2 percent (ILO 2008). Youth are roughly three times more likely than adults to be unemployed. The youth-to-adult ratio is 2.8 in 2007, up from 2.6 in 1997 (ILO, 2008). Youth unemployment is particularly acute in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the effects of the recent recession are still being felt in 2017, as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is also experiencing its lowest level of growth in over two decades. Both regions are seeing a significant increase in the number of young people entering the labor force (International Labor Organization, 2008). The increased youth population has not been matched by the creation of youth employment opportunities. Youth have suffered greatly in terms of finding better jobs. This frequently pushes the youth to seek alternative means of resolving their economic crisis. According to the 2016 Youth Development Index and Report, between 2015 and 2030, 600-800 million more young people will enter the labor force, which equates to nearly one million people in India and one million in Sub-Saharan Africa each month. To maintain employment rates, the global economy will need to create millions of jobs each month (Global Youth Development Index: Results and Analysis, 2016).

The global youth employment and unemployment rate has become so intense that Gay Ryder, the director of the International Labor Organization, stated that we are faced with the twin partners of repairing the damage caused by the global economic and social crisis and creating quality jobs for tens of millions of new labor market entrants each year (ILO, 2008). The majority of these new labor entrants are young people who have recently graduated but are having difficulty finding work. This effect is most severe in southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The 2008 global economic crisis had a greater negative impact on youth. Many of the factors influencing youth development are affected by a country's income level, and there is a graduated relationship between YDI and income (2016 Global Youth Development Index: Results and Analysis page 57). According to Kristen Maeve Powlick, long-term economic development is intergenerational and inextricably linked to childrearing. From the standpoint of capabilities, development is when people improve their ability to do and be what they want (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002), and it entails a long-term co-evolutionary process of individual and institutional change. However, the economic literature's understanding of youth as actors in the development process is lacking (Kristen Maeve powlick, Youth and Economic Development, September 2011).

Even though youth are endangered due to a lack of employment opportunities, there is still hope because youth represent the future. While youth face enormous challenges, particularly in terms of employment and livelihoods, they nonetheless represent the opportunity of today and tomorrow as educators and innovators, entrepreneurs and investors, health professionals and scientists, politicians, and peacemakers, as stated in the 2016 youth development policy report. This makes it even more critical to invest in them now so that future generations can not only survive but also thrive, and so that countries that invest in their youth can reap the vital 'demographic dividend' that these youth represent (Youth in Development Policy October 2012). This report emphasizes the importance of accelerating youth employment status. To realize the demographic dividend, more young people must be engaged in productive employment and income-generating activities, making the current level of youth underemployment and unemployment a global concern. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), over 75 million young people worldwide are unemployed, and over a billion jobs must be created to accommodate new workers and reduce unemployment (youth in Development Policy October 2012).

Youth's Involvement in Violence, Substance Abuse, Politics and Endangerment

There have been various perceptions in Africa and around the world. According to Abbink and Van Kessel, young people are the source of radical change in society. They are central to social movements, technological advances,

and globalization. Most political changes, revolutions, violence, and wars are also centered on youth. In response, youths frequently express their dissatisfaction in terms of generational opposition (Sanneh, 2009). Indeed, 86 percent of all countries experiencing civil conflict have a population with many people under the age of 30. However, studies on population trends and civil conflict incidences indicate that youth security concerns are more nuanced, and that a large youth population is only one of many risk factors involved in civil conflict, crime, and violence (Youth in Development Policy October 2012). Collier and Hoeffler (2002) ethnography of rebels in Nigeria and Liberia depicts violence as "work" and a source of income. Young men looking for work serve as contractors, carrying out wartime tasks for a fee. Large youth cohorts are frequently used to confront deeper social grievances, but they are not the source of violence. Many of today's youth are gravely endangered by acts of violence, substance, and the type of politics that are being practiced. For the time being, dividing politics is framed as a two-sided dispute between political parties, but there is a risk that the division will become a two-sided dispute between the youth and the elderly. This also conveyed the message that violence and criminality were legitimate paths to political power, undermining the credibility of post-settlement authorities (Sanneh, 2009). Youth discontent is frequently associated with the risk of youth violence in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Relative deprivation, grievance, and youth bulge arguments fueled widespread belief that young people endanger social stability, and that violence is a youth problem.

Youth are supposed to be a source of strength, but as argued by Agamben (1998) while elections are central to the work of peace building, they have not proven to be the panacea they were expected to be. They actually polarized identities and exacerbated ethnic conflict in countries such as Rwanda and Angola. According to the Human Rights Report, the Arab Spring in North Africa has shown that where young people feel or are politically and economically marginalized, their proclivity to revolt cannot be contained by any measure of tough state response (Human Right Watch, 2005). Utas (2008) echoed the idea that certain social structures can lead to youth violence by arguing that youth marginalization and lack of participation in political processes (at both the local and national levels) reinforces youth's sense of betrayal and exclusion. Greene and Kramer argue that the intersection of economic, social, and political exclusion, along with other factors, creates conditions in which young people are more likely to resort to violence or join gangs or rebel groups. Inequality, exposure to violence, poverty, and social exclusion are all discussed by Sanneh (2009) as predictors of youth violence in the United States. Since 2009, almost every region of the world has been gripped by social unrest and protest movements, with some leading to radical political transformation and others to violence. The message is clear, if they can avoid it, young people will not accept an inadequate status quo (Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2016).

Factors Responsible for Youth Endangerment

Many factors can be blamed for youth endangerment, which is a serious problem in Nigeria, Africa, and the world at large. There are underlying dynamics affecting young people worldwide - changes in demographics and technology, economics and politics that are bringing this unique moment in history together. Young people are at the center of today's most important strategic opportunities and challenges, from rebuilding the global economy to combating violent extremism to establishing long-term democracies. The number of illiterates, unemployed, and underemployed youth, as well as those involved in violence and substance abuse is a clear indicator of youth vulnerability. However, the following factors are highlighted as contributing to youth endangerment:

Poverty

It is also vividly established that another clear factor endangering the youth has been the poverty status of the youth. In a 2005 Human Rights Watch interview of some sixty former West African combatants, crippling poverty and hopelessness were identified as the fundamental factors, Bryant and Kappaz (2005 in Sanneh, 2009) point to the fact that 97 percent of conflicts between 1989 and 1992 occurred in states that were poor. Persistent poverty, the argument goes, reinforces inequality and a sense of injustice, which further increases the chances for violence and radicalization (Sanneh, 2009; Orhero, 2019). The link between poverty and violence is also related to fewer opportunities for youth and failing safety nets, especially in the context of rapid political, social, and economic change. This is most likely the case in low-income countries with a "youth bulge," or where more than half of the population is under thirty. Many people in these contexts lack opportunities, but young people, who often have fewer skills and connections, are even less likely to benefit from the few opportunities that exist. This can be interpreted as youth exclusion, which can result in grievances and, as a result, violence (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002; Okereka, 2016).

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is one of the major causes of youth endangerment all over the world. Today's youth are more interested in substance abuse, primarily as a means of escaping the harsh economic and political environment. With the influx of illegal drugs from South America into West Africa, particularly cocaine into Guinea Bissau, the UN advocated for an 'unorthodox' strategy, such as spending on major infrastructure projects to provide large-scale employment to disaffected youth (Sanneh, 2009). According to the 2010 youth development report, young people aged 15 to 24 account for 45 percent of all new HIV infections, with at least 95 percent of all new infections occurring in less developed countries, harmful behaviors such as smoking and alcohol use that begin during adolescence can be linked to 70 percent of premature deaths among adults. Investing more in youth will amplify and sustain important health and social gains from childhood interventions (Youth in Development, October 2012).

Illiteracy

Illiteracy is another significant factor contributing to youth endangerment. In Nigeria, illiteracy is widespread:

approximately 53% of men and 30% of women are literate. Many of the country's youth were unable to complete or even begin their education because of wartime disruptions, and while employment opportunities do exist, they are generally reserved for those who are highly skilled and educated (ILO, 2010). Between 1990 and 2010, the global literacy rate for youth (aged 15 to 24) increased from 83 to 90 percent. Nonetheless, youth literacy rates remain low in many USAID footprint countries, particularly among rural youth and girls, despite global gender gaps narrowing (Youth in Development October 2012 page 7). Youth in Nigeria lack high-quality skills that the labor market requires, and there is sometimes a skill mismatch. Nigeria's educational system was in disarray as a result of the civil war, with universities and colleges being attacked, buildings being destroyed, and lecturers being kidnapped and killed (Henry Berrian Youth, Unemployment and Social Discontent in Africa; The case of Nigeria page 5). People have few employable skills, and the skills they do have are in short supply (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002; Orhero, 2021). The challenge is particularly acute in cities, where urban youth frequently face greater labor market barriers due to a lack of prior job experience and links to professional networks and contacts, or because their education and training did not prepare them for the world of work or is not aligned with growth sectors (Youth in Development October 2012). Overcoming inequity necessitates an informed, educated, and skilled population (Youth in Development, October 2012).

Unemployment and Underemployment

Unemployment and underemployment are another major issue being considered as a factor contributing to youth endangerment. Most youth today struggle to find better employment, which has been a motivating factor for youth involvement in most crimes; most of the youth are motivated to engage in violent activities and criminality by a variety of factors, the most important of which are a lack of employment opportunities and poverty (Dale, Kristen, Denis & Angie, 2010). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), over 75 million young people worldwide are unemployed (Youth in development October 2012 page 6). Pia Peeters and colleagues emphasized the importance of youth employment in a 2009 World Bank publication. Sanneh (2009) critically evaluates youth employment programs in West African countries and provides an insightful analysis of their challenges and differences in needs between rural and urban youth. Even though the latest PRSP paper, Agenda for Prosperity, makes it a central tenet, job creation and employment were not clearly identified in the second generation of Nigeria Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (SLPRSP).

Youth Cultism

Youth involvement in cultism and click movements is another major threat and motivator for youth endangerment. In terms of urban violence, Nigeria's post-conflict security landscape is under threat from a wave of generalized lawlessness, indiscipline, and violence, particularly among urban youth (Sanneh, 2009). According to participants at a workshop in Freetown, the capital, many Nigerians have lost respect for the rule of law in an environment characterized by high rates of unemployment, particularly among violent-prone, poor, and unskilled youth, as well as the development of cliques, gangs, and cults in schools, colleges, and communities. New forms of urban violence have been linked to competing music artists, particularly in the east and central parts of Freetown (Sierra Express Media, 2010), resulting in the development of a new gang war culture as well as the formation of gangs or cults in secondary schools, universities, and colleges (Utas, 2009). In April 2013, rival music label fan clubs clashed in Freetown, using stones, bottles, knives, and sharpened sticks. In universities and colleges (such as Fourah Bay College or the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology in Freetown's Western Area), these gangs begin as sororities and fraternities and evolve into cults known as "black man" and "white man". Violence does, however, occasionally erupt at universities and tertiary institutions, due in part to their division into camps aligned along national political lines (Dale et al., 2010; Orhero, 2020). This act endangers the youth by preventing them from obtaining the quality education they need to become better members of society.

Creation of Functional Illiterate

Another major factor in youth endangerment is the creation of functional illiterates, or youth who appear to be educated but receive no benefit from their education. According to the ILO report, while some new jobs have been created as a result of foreign direct investment (FDI) and development projects in the country, locals are not qualified to fill them (ILO, 2010). For example, London Mining, which recently restarted its iron ore operations in the country's north, is hiring skilled Ghanaians. The government and civil service do not have a program for training new recruits, and there are significant capacity issues. Graduating students need to put their skills to use but are frustrated by the lack of opportunities. Those who have completed a university education are simply unemployed. They are born with the wrong skills or with inadequate or underdeveloped skills. Illiteracy is a major issue that is exacerbated by difficulties in skill training (ILO, 2010).

Corruption and Youth Marginalization

The youth have been severely marginalized because of widespread corruption. Conflict research in West Africa has also concentrated on issues of youth exclusion and marginalization. According to Paul Richards' influential work (1996, 1998 with Peters), the conflict in Nigeria was the manifestation of a crisis of exclusion of youth who were alienated and lacked opportunities (Peeters, Cunningham, Acharya & Adams, 2009; Orhero, Okereka & Ogbe, 2021). Youth exclusion and the weakening of agrarian social structures, according to Peters (2006), fueled civil wars in Nigeria and Liberia. According to Dale et al. (2010), exclusion can take many forms, including economic, political, social, and cultural exclusion. Conflict research in West Africa has also concentrated on issues of youth exclusion and marginalization. According to Paul Richards' influential work (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002), the conflict in Nigeria was the manifestation of a crisis of exclusion of youth who were alienated and lacked opportunities. The resentment youth feel as a result of corruption and marginalization is emphasized further, with political and civic marginalization fueling discontent. It has

been suggested that a youth bulge (particularly one composed of many unemployed or idle young men) could lead to social unrest, war, or violent extremism (Youth in Development October 2012).

Conclusions

This study aims to better understand youth endangerment and the factors that contribute to it in Nigeria, with a particular emphasis on identifying the major causes of youth endangerment and how they can be mitigated. According to the research, the factors that endanger today's youth include unemployment, poverty, cultism, gangs, and youth camps. Another prominent factor of youth endangerment is illiteracy, which is a cankerworm destroying a legitimate generation regarded as the nation's hope. The most frustrating situation for the youth has been a lack of employment, which has pushed many young people to seek alternatives to improve their economic situation. Most of the acts that young people see as alternatives endanger their future. It has been established that poverty has ravaged the condition of the youth, rendering them unable to take on the ultimate challenge of changing their circumstances. The issue that today's youth are facing is a difficult one. The information gathered from this research provides insight into the perilous situation that the youth are in. This was triggered by youth policies in Nigeria, Africa, and around the world. The Nigeria youth policy of 2014 is critical in understanding the lives of the youth. Analysis revealed that the youth's situation has yet to improve, despite the prospect of a brighter future. They can effect change with their population if they work hard enough, but they are also considered endangered species when exposed to the abyss of social and economic injustice.

Youth empowerment is the best solution to youth endangerment. Youth unemployment can be alleviated with a concerted effort from everyone. It is believed that if youth are given the right skills and education, there is hope for a positive outcome in their lives in the coming years. Understanding choices and why youth engage in cultism, gang movement, and camps clearly demonstrate the extreme to which some youth can push themselves into acts of endangerment that often lead to most of them destroying their future. To begin, defining youth is not solely dependent on age group, but rather on the individual's status. According to the findings, even respondents aged 40 and up see themselves as young due to their status. Understanding local definitions of youth can help to shift the focus of youth initiatives and improve policy formulation to improve the status and lives of young people. The main reasons for the youth's inability to find work are illiteracy and a lack of skills. Also, youth are gravitating toward education and youth skill programs that do not provide them with the opportunity to secure jobs, making them functional illiterates and, as a result, increasing their grievances over unrealistic expectations; this puts the youth in danger.

The youth also felt extremely marginalized by those in positions of authority. Such exclusion frequently leads to negative grievances among the youth. According to the study, getting a job is the top priority for most young people, and they all want to advance in their societies. However, given most of the the youth's level of education, they are now seeking positive alternatives to violence and illegal measures to effect the changes they expected. As uneducated youth are easily carried away by selfish politicians who use most of this youth as an instrument of oppression, youth now see education as a great opportunity to enhance their status in their communities. Addressing youth issues requires more than obeisance. The youth population is expanding at an alarming rate. As a result, youth should be given special attention. Many policies have been drafted all over the world to address the situation of the youth, and Nigeria is no exception. Despite all of these great efforts, more needs to be done because the challenges remain. There are also opportunities available for the youth, provided they have the necessary skills.

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