

YOUTHS AND NEGATIVE STEPS IN A DEPRESSED ECONOMY: X-RAYING TONI DURUAKU'S A MIRAGE FOR A DREAM

Kelechi Stellamaris OGBONNA, PhD

Department of Theatre Arts
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education
Owerri, Imo State
Email: kellyogbonna@yahoo.com

Abstract

*The trending word in Nigeria today is “recession”. This national condition affects the educational, political, religio-cultural, and social institutions. Global recessions have occurred since World War II; in 1975, 1982, 1991 and 2009. During these recession periods, many Asian countries did not suffer greatly because they had robust economies and gained from the falling prices in goods and services; while the most affected were countries with chronic financial liquidity issues and commodity imports dependency. However, the collapse of the Nigerian economy, both the real GDP and the nominal GDP, is somewhat engaging, because diverse survival strategies have been adopted by the masses. The fact is that, though a majority of Nigerian youths believes in ‘migrating to Europe, a handful of the youths engage themselves in one menial job or the other. The system presents us with humorous, disturbing and illuminating characters; hence, creative artists would have to “think out of the box”, by pointing ways forward even under difficult situations. This paper examines Toni Duruaku’s **A Mirage for a Dream**, a play that problematises emigration from Africa. The method of research is content analysis the play text, aided by library research and observation. Furthermore, Lee MaGaan’s persuasion theory is adopted for the conceptual framework. The paper concludes that a greater number of youths fail in their quest for survival because of unhealthy competition, assumptions and other people’s perceptions. The finding is that crime has become a recurring decimal in the conquest against economic depression. The researcher recommends that survival in a depressed economy requires a robust and deliberate re-orientation of the youths.*

Introduction

The youth occupy a prominent place in the Nigerian society. They are the leaders of tomorrow; and they outnumber the middle-aged and the aged. If their energies and ideas are allowed to spring up, they remain society’s greatest potentials. In spite of being the foundation of a society, the youth “through socialisation ... learn gradually the rules and regulations of what is expected of them” (Akpa 237). Thus, if their labour power, creative talents, dreams and aspirations are well harnessed, they will define the pace of development, sustainable peace and security architecture of any nation. Since peace is a

precursor of development, the youths can contribute meaningfully to the sustenance of peaceful coexistence of their nation if they are gainfully employed. Their inclusive participation in the nation's economy and polity is bound to boost socio-political and economic development for the country to attain higher heights. This underpins the view that, any nation that neglects the dreams and aspirations of her youth is bound to reap chaos and a depleted economy.

But the indices of human development in Nigeria show that there has been a neglect towards children, adult literacy, girl-child education/training, infant and maternal mortality. However, the erosion of family values in Nigeria constitutes some of the delinquent behaviours found among the youths. Whereas the youth are not empowered, the tendency to resort to crime is rife. A greater number of youths that struggled through self-sponsorship in school are not gainfully employed. There is no functioning scheme for loan or support for small scale entrepreneurship to empower the youth. Again, where these schemes exist, the processes are over-demanding. However, Charles Ofoche stresses that:

The problems and weaknesses arise from a history of flawed elections, the dominance of the ruling party, and scant evidence of political accountability. These have undermined the legitimacy of democratic rule. For democracy to thrive it requires strong institutions such as the legislature, courts, police, armed forces and civil service for good governance; but unfortunately many of these institutions are weak due to poor leadership and corruption; and have fostered problems of governance. The weak political structures in Nigeria have also had a negative impact on the economy (Ofoche 7).

Nigeria's industrial base and financial institutions are weak. Recent statistics reveal that Nigeria's economy falls short of the government's expectation to hit more than the yearly 7 percent growth rate but has failed to optimise a 15 percent growth rate. This is consequent upon the consumptive nature and imports dependency. Before the advent of urbanisation and globalization, "life was governed by well-known morals and ethics that had been passed down through the generations. Deviancy was punished, conformity praised and difference discouraged" (Gyuse 5). The argument therefore is that the erosion of values has led to the breeding of uncultured children that are lazy and are easily co-opted into crime for its material benefits. The outcome is a harvest of misguided youths roaming the streets with guns ready to maim and kill at the slightest provocation. The privilege for their action was granted to them by the weak institutions of government and Nigeria's dysfunctional political culture; hence, economic recession was therefore imminent in Nigeria:

about 80% of the country's income comes from oil and a meagre 15% from other sources. Before the discovery of oil, Nigeria was an agrarian economy which promoted free enterprise. The regions retained half of their locally derived revenues, which were based on exports (Ofoche 8).

Nigeria's economy is yet to recover from the "Dutch Disease" since the economy is dependent on the performance of the oil sector". The Dutch Disease pushes out local manufacturing and negatively affects the social contract, because the government no longer relies on local revenues, such as taxes, but on foreign revenue" (Ofoche 8). The country's overly reliance on oil and the failure of the power corporations to meet local demand thereby manufacturers are left with no choice but to depend heavily on power generating sets for power has adverse effect on cost of production. Therefore, a nation that turns blind eye to corruption will definitely enjoy a bad economy.

Conceptual and Theoretical Backings

For theoretical backings, Toni Duruaku's *A Mirage for a Dream* may have unconsciously applied Lee McGaan's persuasion theory in its tone of dialogue. The persuasion theory is "a process by which people use messages to influence others. While persuasion typically uses information, the emphasis in a persuasive message is on influencing the receiver (rather than merely providing information and letting the receiver make up his/her own mind). Persuasion attempts to change minds or get people to act" (McGaan 1). Hence, in the line of dialogue between Charlie and Chimdi, several persuasive terms were used such as belief, which establishes a fact, as exemplified in Charlie's dialogue; "good life indeed! Taxi driving can't give you the good life. And with your wife expecting, you need something really solid" (Duruaku 29). This illustrates McGaan's persuasive term of *belief*, which "refers to what people think is true or false, that is, the facts" (1). Again, the persuasive term of *value*, which "refers to what we think is good or bad, right or wrong" (1), is evidenced in Berna's point of view:

Berna: What you want to do is dangerous. Through the desert to God-knows-where; then cross the sea. Have you forgotten you can't swim, even in a pond, not to talk of the ocean... (Duruaku 48).

Other persuasive terms, such as, *motive*, *attitude* and *behaviour*, are exhaustively appropriated in *A Mirage for a Dream*. Hence, the play underscores the social psychology of the youth and their misguided steps. Therefore, some negative steps taken by the characters in the play are reflections of their socio-political environment.

Also, the concept of poverty is a factor in Nigeria's depleting economy. This is because from the family level, parents lose control of their children, and when such children become breadwinners, they unleash mayhem on the society. What would you expect from a child that started fending for himself at age eight or 12; through odd and unethical means such as armed robbery, drug trafficking, prostitution, political thuggery and rape? Akpa emphasises that:

Poverty has "incapacitated parents in the exercise of their roles in the family. This is because, most parents are unable to feed, educate and clothe their children, thus allowing them to fend for themselves at a tender age. In most families, such children are breadwinners and the parents cannot control them again (242).

The absence of basic amenities contributes to poverty. Again, in *A Mirage for a Dream*, Toni Duruaku highlights poverty as a basic factor through the dialogue between Mike and Chimdi. The action code reveals the capitalists and the bourgeois. The play therefore is polarised between the 'Haves' and the 'Have-not' in the following lines:

Mike: Really! Yes, I left in the first term of primary five when my dad was transferred and we moved to Aba. You know, he was in the Federal Civil Service. Later, we came back here.

Chimdi: When my papa die, senior wives gang up, seize everything my mama get, chase am commot. Them children big pass me. No money dey for me again. So, every weekend I begin follow my mother him brother wey be bus conductor (Duruaku 12).

Language has not only defined the characters, but Chimdi's lines are laced with imageries of poverty, polygamy, family instability and maltreatment as reasons for his misguided steps. What affects Chimdi affects millions of Nigerian youths due to weak government institutions and lack of humanitarian and social welfare, lack of quality education and inadequate training programmes. These are contributory factors to youth restiveness and emigration from Africa. Thus, the youths react indiscriminately, whereby these and many more are not attended to, the Nigerian youth will continue to express his/her dissatisfaction through different channels of crime.

The economic recession and its orchestrated hard times have adverse effects on the young people's life chances, thereby opening the floodgates of crime and insecurity. The youth represents the driving force for national development. A nation that is striving towards sustainable development must make sure that crime is reduced to the barest minimum. Ideally, if the youths are gainfully employed, the economic and socio-political life of the nation would be sustainable. But whereby the youths are unemployed, their energies will be misdirected. This has a serious implication because youths are volatile and as such by the power of peer pressure, misdirected energies are channelled towards crimes and the breakdown of the social order. Also, the recession period has heightened the dangers of unemployment, incessant armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, youth restiveness and delinquent behaviour have created a social problem that is threatening the stability of the society.

Psychological and economically, a depressed economy devastate both the old and young life. Youths all over the world are a vital and promising segment of the society. Focused, disciplined, and law-abiding youths create bright future for their nation. All the same, Violent, indulgent and lawless youths are of great threat to the nation's peace and security. For instance, from the angle of the Nigerian political culture, with its feathers of ethnicity and tribalism fanning, the country is enveloped into a bombshell called corruption. In every facet of the Nigerian life and economy, you will see the embers of corruption fanning. Adebayo expresses his disgust when he says that:

The fundamental reason why corruption is prevalent is that the generality of Nigerians worship material success, no matter by what means the success is achieved. This goes to the roots of our sense of values. A Nigerian socialite was once jailed in Britain on charges of very serious crimes. On returning home after his jail term, he called an all-night party at his residence, and the place was packed full of the top socialites in Lagos. In a civilised society where the sense of values is not misplaced, such an ex-convict would hardly dare show his face in the public, let alone call a party. And if he did, no decent person would turn up as a guest (24).

The above is a replica of what former governor of Delta State, Chief James Ibori did on his return to the country. It has become notorious with Nigerians to welcome 'Our Thieves'. Why then should the society expect the opposite from the youths? Lee McGaan's theory is apt here because the action code from Nigerian leaders/politicians is persuasive enough to indoctrinate the youths into a corruptive culture. Whereas the hospitals, roads, water and light are in a critical state, public functionaries are busy abusing their offices by ways of fraud, bribery, straight forward theft and hegemony. Therefore, violence erupting from the youths in the guise of kidnapping, rape, restiveness, and armed robbery are to some extent reactionary. Again, when the environment is saturated with the get-rich-quick syndrome, corrupt practices and materialism, what else can one expect from the youths? Surely, environmental factors will set in because standards copied from the society/parents are bound to influence the children/youths. This scourge has for a while been around. What is the future of the Nigerian youth? Is the government adamant as their destinies are being raped day-in, day-out? Perhaps, the right question should be; is it part of the Nigerian culture for the youths to be restive or what is truly responsible for their expression of dissatisfaction via violence? Is the Nigerian government adamant to their complaints over the years? Are the youths reacting to the rots in politics – the decline of African values- the materialistic expectations of them by the society/parents and the inability of the government to meet up with their responsibilities?

About *A Mirage for a Dream*

Toni Duruaku explores the predicament of the Nigerian youths, their inordinate desires and misguided steps in a depressed economy. *A Mirage for a Dream* is a 2016 statement on materialism, greed and the prevailing challenge of emigration from Africa. The playwright weaves together the drop-out-of-school, the get-rich-quick and the 'jetting' out of Nigeria syndrome into a social drama that is meant to educate as well as entertain. The parable of Chimdi Nwachukwu, a primary five school drop-out and motor park tout, with Mike Abimbola, an old classmate sets the stage for an expose on the cause and effect of delinquency, youth restiveness, greed, materialism and insatiability. While the play interrogates the dependence on government for employment and basic amenities, it maintains that education is the key for sustainable development. The storyline starts with the protagonist, Chimdi Nwachukwu, whose educational training truncates at primary five. By association with his uncle, Chimdi becomes a motor park tout and in a chance-meeting at the park, reunites with his classmate, Mike Abimbola, a renowned politician. By Mike's

benevolence, Chimdi acquires a taxi and completes his education through the adult-education programme. But, Chimdi's association with Charlie and Ginger lures him into traveling to Europe for greener pasture. The play frowns at vital organ harvesting and exposes the dangers of racketeering as exemplified in Chimdi's dangerous journey through the Sahara and the Mediterranean Sea – the lure of Europe – during which he meets his tragic end.

X-raying *A Mirage for a Dream*

The play starts with a PRESET and ends in a POST-SET. It has Transitions A-H, and Nine Episodes. The playwright appropriates the total theatre elements laced with a masquerade dance, songs and ritualised dance. The characters engage in a conflict of survival, hence the Motor Park scene exposes the squalor and despair of the motor park touts, while Episode six unveils the harm and damage youths bring on themselves in their quest for survival and greed for material things. The play delineates the world of the 'Haves' and the 'Have-nots' as well as the emerging world that is replete with greed, crime, violence and unethical standards. Charlie's sudden wealth and riches mesmerises Chimdi. Hence, Charlie relates his business conquest to Chimdi saying: "But I have the toothpick business. And I will soon go into importation of canned tomato" (*A Mirage* 42). McGaan's theory of persuasion triggers Chimdi's interest. Charlie graphically explains his travel route to Chimdi:

Charlie: ...I went through Morocco, then I was smuggled across the Mediterranean at Gibraltar on a boat for 15 kilometres that felt like 100. Terrible risk, but I made it. Holed up in Malaga for two months, then got a job in the vineyard of Andalucia, I worked in a wine factory for one year. Slave labour, but good Euros. Then I went to Palermo Italy when something more profitable came up, I was there for six terrible months then bolted when the Carabinieri came after some of us. I lived dangerously in Italy, but I made my money (*A Mirage* 43).

The phrase 'I lived dangerously in Italy, but I made my money' is juiced and therefore persuasive. It corroborates with Lee McGaan's introduction to *Persuasion*, Maral Caverner explains that,

Not only does she discuss and define the terms belief, attitude, and value, but she also discusses and defines motive and behaviour in relation to persuasion theory ... which suggests that people think and behave in ways based on reasons and are relatively predictable (para. 4).

Charlie's motive here is to lure Chimdi into their business syndicate. The play's preoccupation is on the psychological leanings of the period. The playwright's idiom is existential. It captures the day to day existence of a greater number of Nigerian youths. For

instance, the Park Scene is not merely a metaphor for ‘the journey of life’ but a deliberate picture of a segment of the society and their psyche as exemplified in the following:

Man: I thought you said that you are full and ready to leave. One chance you said. Means one vacant seat.

Chimdi: Oga, na one chance after you. Siddon that front seat before person take am. We dey move in five minutes. No shaking. (*Leaves yelling.*) Aba! Aba!! One chances.

Man: (*Sighs.*) These people! (*Opens the door and sits.*)

John: (*Calls*) Lagos! Lagos! One chances! (*A Mirage 7*)

Man II/Mike: Touts like you get on the bus as if they are passengers, to give the impression that the bus is getting filled up, and ready to depart. As genuine passengers get on, the fake ones get down and drift away. That way, the bus appears perpetually short of one or two persons, till it actually fills up (*A Mirage 11*).

Chimdi: ... You be Mike? Mike Abimbola?

Man/Mike: Yes! Have we met before?

Chimdi: Chai! Mike! Na Chimdi, your classmate for primary school. Chimdi

Nwachukwu! (*A Mirage 9*)

Mike: How did you end up here?

Chimdi: I stopped school at primary five

Mike: Why? Your father was rich, and you were smart.

Chimdi: Yes. But my father marry many wives. My mother na the youngest and I be her only child. For school I dey spend good money... yes o! My papa die as your parents transfer go Aba

Mike: Really! Yes, I left in the first term of primary five.... But you are now a tout. That’s going backwards. Surely, a driver’s mate is a fair job (*A Mirage 12*).

Chimdi: That na another story. Anyway, na here I dey. No certificate, no job, no training. No money. Nothing! But I manage marry one fine girl so (*A Mirage 13*).

Obviously, the psychological and environmental factor that affects Chimdi can be traced to what Paulina Akpa describes as family socialisation when she says that,

in the family, through socialisation, children learn gradually the rules and regulations of what is expected of them. They are taught through everyday situation to be responsible members of the family as well as the general society (237)

This also concurs with Babs Fafunwa’s position that, “character training is the cornerstone of African traditional education” (Cited in Akpa 237). Chimdi’s polygamous background; the psychology of his mother thrown out and the fact that he started fending for himself

from primary five shows that he lacks ethical socialisation. This familiar treatment of happenings in the society reveals recognisable characters in both slums and citified locations within the reach of government. Albeit, critical attention has not been tabled to strategise on how these youths can be rescued and empowered. Although, they are struggling to survive, the playwright typifies in Chimdi the fate of many Nigerian youths whose family background and socialisation have crippled their future and by extension the society.

Unfolding the characters' socio-economic status, the audience becomes familiar with Chimdi's semi-literate background and the positive effect of Chimdi's chance meeting with Mike. The role and importance of education and its inherent powers are here re-emphasised. The class difference between Mike and Chimdi is highlighted through language, costume and demeanour. Aroused by the encounter with Mike, Chimdi begins to appreciate that education refines a man. His dissatisfaction with his touting-job is taken out on Berna:

Berna: Last night you were tossing around in your sleep like a fish out of water ... speak to me.... Did you lose your job?

Chimdi: What job? Is that a job? It's a job alright. But, there is something wrong with it... I mean, the way I do it. No dignity.

Berna: Well, someone has t do it. It's better than stealing.

Chimdi: That's the point. The way we do it. That's why anytime the police is searching for a criminal, they come to the motor park *fiamm!* The home of thieves (Duruaku 16).

The scene hints on the crude and careless ways the-not-so-literate conduct their businesses as well as conduct themselves. It points towards job hazards, crude practices and backwardness. Bitter about the situation, Chimdi worries about dignity and job satisfaction as he informs that, "...Rowdiness, filth and rudeness can't be the mark of any profession. But they mark out the *Ocho passenger*. No respectability; very bad conduct" (Duruaku 17). Inadvertently, these are one of the many reasons youths consider certain jobs in Nigeria as degrading while they travel out to Europe and do worse jobs; reasons being that such jobs are situated in organised and clean environments with more remuneration.

The rising action builds up as Mike sponsors Chimdi through the adult education programme and engages him with taxi driving. Through Mike's benevolence, Chimdi's life gets better, his responsibilities are met and his pregnant wife is optimistic until Charlie's success engrosses Chimdi. Greed is another factor that misguides the youths, and as it has become incumbent on Nigerians to worship material success, Charlie captures Chimdi's interest. But Berna warns that:

Berna: What you want to do is dangerous. Through the desert to God-knows-where; then cross the sea. Have you forgotten you can't swim, even in a pond, not to talk of the ocean...

Chimdi: Not Ocean. Sea! ...Mediterranean Sea. Only twenty-three kilometres at the crossing point. And we will be in a sip. We're not swimming across.

Berna: Oh! I now know why Charlie gave you that map.... Still.... What happens if you fail. The money you are borrowing, your savings, plus your miserable share of the family land you've sold? You will come back to nothing if you fail (Duruaku 48).

It is obvious that the socio-political and economic climates of Nigeria is frightening and very disheartening, but the playwright's message hinges on the danger of running away from known problems to unknown horizons.

Impact Factor

The playwright's message will no doubt engage the mind of the reader with the interrogation of vital organ exportation as well as the hideous crimes. However, the play's thesis on the relevance of education and self-employment are areas that government, philanthropists and Non-governmental organisations need to emphasise. Since drama points the way forward, Duruaku has outlined not only the environmental factors that influence the youths, but reasons for their dissatisfaction. Technically, the playwright emphasised self-help rather than the masses waiting for the government to come to their aid on employment, education, and housing. The example of Mike Abimbola's encouragements for Chimdi Nwachukwu to complete his education are laudable. Below are excerpts:

Mike: The problem is your lack of education. No training in any trade either. *Ocho passenger*. That's not a job, is it? After I saw you at the motor park that day, I couldn't eat when I got home. I said: how can Chimdi, the brilliant Chimdi, who used to even help me with my home-work become a nobody? I nearly wept. You could have learned a trade or finished primary six, at least (Duruaku 26).

Chimdi: I dey regret everything. I thin say when I marry wife wey go school well well, e go help. But that one no dey enough. Okay, see now. I come your office come disgrace myself. Your people come dey laugh me as I no fit write (Duruaku 26)

Mike: Indeed, it's somewhat absurd not to be able to write in this present age. You can still do something about it though. Extramural classes, for instance. Private lessons. You will always be better at anything you do if you have basic education. Ambition without education is like an adventure without a map (Duruaku 26).

Chimdi: True

Mike: Get some education and I will buy you a taxi to drive for me. (*Pause*.) In fact, I will let you have it as dash at some point; my gift to an old friend. But you must become literate first. In a year

or two, you will get your certificate, but more importantly, you'll be literate. I'll pay the fees (Duruaku 27).

It is obvious that Mike is aware of the effect of Chimdi's dysfunctional family on him, but he sees un-tapped greatness in Chimdi which could be encouraged. Mike's example is another angle the playwright is developing in the mind of the reader/audience. The playwright's appropriation of migration as a contemporary socio-economic problem reveals the obvious; a consumer nation that imports what it produces and something as minute as toothpick. The familiar treatment of the above relates to the audience the economic and political situation in Nigeria; the squalor and abject poverty which have thrown the youth into unending search for 'green pastures' outside the African soil. The shocking reality is that out of every ten Nigerian youths, the ambition of eight is to travel overseas. Chimdi is no exception, hence he inquires:

Chimdi: So how did you go?

Chimdi: What business were you doing in Italy?

Charlie: Never mind. I don't want to remember that one. With 150,000 Euros in my back pocket, I vamoosed to Nigeria. convert the sweet Euros to Naira...

Chimdi: I've always been good with math... Over 45, million Naira... (*Slowly, but firmly.*) I have to go to Europe... (*A Mirage... 44*).

The playwright appropriates dialectically the treatment of the social conditions that produced the greed in the character of Chimdi. The hazard of traveling to Europe is juxtaposed with Berna's caution: "what happens if you fail. The money you are borrowing, your savings, plus your miserable share of the family land you've sold? You will come back to nothing if you fail" (*A Mirage 48*). Interwoven with songs and dance, the argument allows the reader/audience digests the hard facts presented. In Transition D, the salient issue of organ harvesters is appropriated. The playwright focuses on this menace and cautions the youth through a vivid and graphic illustration of the harvesting of Chimdi's vital organs. It is surreal, empathic and painful. Chimdi's associates panics:

Ginger: They tracked back from Waddan. Midway at Zawilah, the hospital admitted that two bodies had been found on a road track a few kilometres away. One of them was...Chimdi...

Mike: Exhaustion or what?

Obinali: Worse...His kidneys were missing!

Charlie/Mike: What's that?

Obinali: There's a huge demand for certain human parts in Asia, they can't get enough donors or accident victims with undamaged organs, so they force the matter. Their agents ambush vulnerable desert crossers and rip off their organs, especially the kidneys. It's a syndicated business.

Charlie: Terrible! I shouldn't have encouraged him to make this journey.

Ginger: He was determined to get to Europe... (*A Mirage...* 67).

A Mirage for a Dream demonstrates how youths carelessly endanger their lives in pursuit of material gains. Abysmally, most Nigerian youths have remained unperturbed about the socio-political and economic issues on-going in this country. They are oblivious of the fact that the consequences of today's corruptive leadership will rupture their tomorrow. Hence, the youths are preoccupied with frivolities, materialism and the quest for greener pastures in Europe. This I-don't-care-attitude is a sad development and does not augur well for Nigeria and sustainable development. It must be noted that without any form of scheme or support from the government, the struggling youth becomes a weapon in the hands of misguided politicians, which, accounts for an upsurge in crime and youth restiveness. Though Nigeria is in a recession now, but monies (loots) recovered from misguided politicians (Names withheld), can be channelled into engaging the youths meaningfully.

Therefore, the onus lies on the youths to equip and empower themselves by acquiring sound and functional education, because an informed youth is self-made. Their attention on frivolities, games and money-making can be redirected by engaging the youths in meaningful schemes and projects that will benefit the nation as well as empower them. The need to redirect the youth is uptime. Examples are that; if youths are involved in critical public issues such as the national conference, budget committees/budget planning, constitution amendment committees, and so on, their opinion will not only count, but their involvement becomes experiential and a patriotic commitment.

Conclusion

Ideally, it will benefit Nigerians if a viable and robust grass root re-orientation is launched through the family, the custodians of culture and churches to begin to re-focus the children/youths with the right values and expectations. Most especially, in this era where the emphasis is on certificates and most parents want their children to become "office staff", an orientation in the lines of self-employment will be applauded. Hence, Toni Duruaku's *A Mirage for a Dream* is timely, as it x-rays survival options, precisely education and self-employment specific. Nigerian youths to a large extent constitute a huge part of the nation's population. It is on this premise that policy makers and governments are advised to consider youths as the beacon of light and trustees of tomorrow. Unfortunately, many resources are yearly expended on projects that have in no way directly benefited the youths. Thus, Nigerian youths suffer from lack of direction as a result of non-provision of functional and inclusive policies that will enhance the wellbeing of the Nigerian youths. Consequent upon this neglect and the nation's economic stagnation, unemployment and now recession, the interest of the youths is somewhat diverted to materialistic impulse. The fun-seeking gallivanting youths are deliberately exposed to crime, inordinate desires and get-rich-quick syndrome at the expense of commitment towards sustainable development. These trustees of tomorrow are therefore ill-prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

Although, government has approved some programmes for youth development and, there also exist a ministry for youth development, but, paucity of funds and lack of

proper implementation has stalled such projects. Be that as it may, adequate attention has not been given to youth empowerment and development in Nigeria. On the misguided interest of the youths, Akido Agenro points out that,

most Nigerian young men's preoccupation with soccer and their excitement with the fabulous earnings of major players in the teams competing in Europe to the neglect, if not outright disdain for events that occur at the home front (1).

In this era of recession, the expectation is that the federal government would address the interest of the masses as a priority and invest in the youths by empowering them with projects that will create wealth for self-reliance of the individual and the nation. Though, where basic amenities are the exclusive preserve of the rich, the masses become incapacitated. Again, a faulty curriculum, non-conducive learning environment, and inadequate funding of the educational sector contribute to eroding values and misinformation amongst the youths. Also, the absence of these creates room for misguided minds to misdirect the youths and lure them into one crime or the other.

Works Cited

- Adebayo, A. *Power in Politics*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1999.
- Akpa, Paulina A. "The Family and Corruption in Nigeria". In Tsuwa, John T. (Ed.), *Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria*. Makurdi: Bookworks Publishers, 2011.
- Cavner, Maral. "Persuasion Theory – The Belief Hierarchy Theory" (2015). Accessed on 27 Aug. 2017 from <https://maralcavner.wordpress.com/2015/02/20/persuasion-theory-the-belief-hierarchy-theory-by-maral-cavner>
- Duruaku, Toni. *A Mirage for a Dream*. Owerri: Chery Bren Publishing, 2016.
- Dworkin, Jodi. "Adolescents' Negative Experiences in Organized Youth Activities". Accessed 1 July, 2017 from <http://youthdev.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Dworkin-Larson-2006-Adolescents-Negative-Experiences-in-Organized-Youth-Activities.pdf>.
- Gyuse, T. T. "Impact of Urbanisation on Families and Family." *Journal of Family Development*, Vol.1, No.2. 2004.
- McGaan, Lee. "The Persuasion Theory". Accessed 11 July, 2017 from https://department.monm.edu/cata/saved_files/Handouts/PERS.FSC.html
- Ofoche, Charles O. "Socio-Economic Problems in Nigeria: Causes and Remedy". Accessed 9 July, 2017 from <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA561627>

Ogunbiyi, Tayo. "Addressing Nigeria's Infrastructure Deficit". Accessed 9 July, 2017
from [https://www.businessdayonline.com/addressing-nigerias-
infrastructure-deficit](https://www.businessdayonline.com/addressing-nigerias-infrastructure-deficit)