



International Youth Journal

For Next Generation Experts and Leaders

THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE YOUTH POPULATION AND YOUTH ORGANIZING (Analysis of the North eastern Nigeria)

Abednego Ishaya Wakili ^{1,2,3}

1 Leadtots and Human Development Services

2 Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi

3 International Youth Journal (IYJ)

Email; abednegowakili6@gmail.com

Link to author profile

<https://youth-journal.org/abednego.ishaya>

The International Youth Journal offers interested youths the unique possibility to publish articles online on an international level! Most articles are written by high-class students who are specialists and have successfully proven their knowledge in a given discipline.

© 2020

1. Background

It is no doubt that the world is already battling another global pandemic with the massive outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic. This outbreak had come with numerous challenges on the poor health infrastructure in some nations, with Nigeria included. This outbreak has further posed survival challenges, to the low income Nigerians. In the midst of these challenges, is the misinformation and rumors multiplied across various media platforms which undermine the efforts that are being made to help combat the dreaded Coronavirus (COVID-19).

This is particularly challenging for youth groups who seek to counter the effects of the outbreak on their own local contexts.

This, then necessitated the Leadtots and Human Development Services to launch a rapid response funds, with support from **National Endowment for Democracy (USA)**, to help young people who were beneficiaries of the Leadtots projects (inclusive of the Youth Civic Engagement Trainings, DE-Watson Leadership Academy or members of the Youth Political Hotspots in Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Taraba and Adamawa states) to lead projects that addresses community impacts of COVID-19.

And in line with its objectives, was the necessity for this research analysis on the “The Effect of COVID-19 on the Youth Population and Youth Organizing – with research focus on the North eastern region of Nigeria”.

2. Introduction

Recently, the whole world has been bedeviled by the dreaded coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). The coronavirus has caused the dead of not only humans, but also businesses (both small scale and large scale), companies halting there operations and having to change from the normal, to working from home, families struggling for survival, loss of jobs, and many more. Nigeria is one of the most populated countries in Africa, with approximately 200 million people... and is also the country with the largest population in Africa and the seventh largest population in the world.^[1] This will depict the fears that followed the problems of a higher chance of the pandemic affecting Africans mostly, with considerations made on the high population, low economic balance and high poverty rate which has characterized nations within the continent; with Nigeria not being excluded.

Nations all over the globe have had to draw out measures to follow (in line with that stipulated by the World Health Organization), in order to curtail the further spread of this dreaded diseases. And, Nigeria as an independent country is not left out in the duty towards ensuring the safety of its human population, and also the maintenance and sustenance of the environment.

The safety measures issued out include:

- Restrictions on public gatherings of any sort (mostly for gatherings of more than 50 persons)
- Effecting travel ban into and out of the country
- Total/partial lockdown orders (which most of the states followed suit)
- Close down of learning institutions and unnecessitated work demands
- Use of safety materials such as the nose mask, and regular hand washing/sanitizing
- Observing of physical – otherwise referred to as the social distancing measures to avoid continual spread. And, many more.

The caption of it all remains that; our individual and collective safety matters. And, to ensure that, we all must ensure observance to the outlined guidelines issued by both the federal and state governments in line with recommendations by the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), and other relevant health agencies.

3. The North Eastern Nigeria

The North eastern part of Nigeria is not left out in the fight against the pandemic; as all the six states in the region have had a record of infected and suspected cases. And, these have had to put the region in a state of concern, so as to assure safety of lives.

The states that comprise the North east region are: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe; with all states having more than half of its population being the youths.

The region, before now has been faced with so many ethno/religious crisis which has further weakened its socio-economic strength. The region, as it is with other regions suffers from low income rate of its teeming youths as there are less percentage of employed youths to the employed ones. This further leaves us with great concerns.

Health wise, the region has also suffered from various ravaging health situations, some of which the Lassa fever is part of.



4. The Youth Population

In the midst of these all, the younger populations are much of at the very receiving end, as they are the most affected. Nevertheless, youth are also among the most active in global responses: Not only are they on the frontlines as health workers, but they are also advancing health and safety in their roles as researchers, activists, innovators, and communicators. As such, decision-

makers must commit to ensuring youth voices are part of the solutions for a healthier, safer, and gender-equal world.^[2]

Youth in Nigeria includes citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria aged 18–29 years, according to the new youth policy. However, the African youth charter recognizes youth as people between 18-35.^[3] Notwithstanding, Variance in chronologies are used in defining youth and are addressed by members of the state in accordance to their particular society.^[4] This would mean the perspective of what age category one could view a youth from, will be of a varying concern, for the particular society one will be considering.

5. Youths and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The 2009 National Youth Policy recognizes 5 priority areas that need to be addressed to enhance youth lives. These include the impact of globalization, access and use of communication technology, the impact of STDs and HIV/AIDS, intergenerational issues in an aging society, and youth perpetrators and victims of armed conflict.^[3]

The 2009 National Youth Policy is guided by several national and international policy initiatives, including National Policies for education, gender, health, population for sustainable development, and the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS).^[1]

As the world grapples with unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are demonstrating their continued leadership in their communities and countries. According to a new UN plan to address COVID-19, young people are some of the most affected by the pandemic’s socio-economic impacts. Nevertheless, youth are also among the most active in global responses: Not only are they on the frontlines as health workers, but they are also advancing health and safety in their roles as researchers, activists, innovators, and communicators. As such, decision-makers must commit to ensuring youth voices are part of the solutions for a healthier, safer, and gender-equal world.^[2]

Methodology

And, in order to project the youth voice on the scorching effect caused by the pandemic, **online and print survey forms** were drafted out to acquire responses from majorly youths resident in the North eastern states. There were 71 online responses and 50 print copy responses. Of the variance in responses; the responses had the male gender topping the higher percentage of responses both online and of the print copy, with most responses documented from those of age category 21 –25 years (31.8%), 26 – 30 years (31.9%), and 31 – 35 years (14.7%).



Though, with research focus of analyzing the North east, online responses were also received from non-residents of the northeast.

The survey outlined the pre-occupational state of most of the region's youth population. The northeastern youths - even though might be into various skills training, and business/entrepreneurial development; a high percentage of the youth population, are students, undergoing various levels of studies. An appreciable number of its youth are also gainfully employed, others are engaged in business/entrepreneurial ventures; while still having others on the job haunt. The research also did idealize the various self-developmental fields the youths have been into, in the area of education.

6. Youths and Their Communities

Following the experience which the pandemic has put most of our communities in, most youths that are in the business environment have experienced setbacks/drawbacks in their business activities; 37.9% of responses affirmed. More so, 36% print copy responses, whom were employed before the current situation, have been affected in loss of jobs and gainful means of employability. Youths who were involved in menial jobs have not been doing great, ever since the pandemic, as there are no jobs forth coming. This will speak of the idle state which the pandemic have rendered most of the youths to; with great fears rising.

As a means of having to change alongside prevailing situation, a number of the youths have had to also change in their mode of dealings to online platforms, which was not as much as it is, now, in percentage usage, before the pandemic. And, the traditional means of engaging the youths in the region have been adversely affected, with a 64% print copy responses and 71.8% online responses "strongly agreeing" to the effects the COVID-19 pandemic has rendered youth activities in their individual communities.

7. Youth Activities Affected

Though, with consequent effects upon sporting activities, business ventures, community youth forums, skill acquisition avenues etc., major aspect which the youths are directly involved with, which has greatly affected the region's youth populace is in the field of education.

Schools of all levels (both public and private owned) have had to be closed down, pending when situations will allow for its reopening and consequent lift up on the school closure orders issued by the federal government and the state governments.

Community Concerns

In relation to its communities, the youths are very much concerned with the sudden rise in the price of goods, commodities and services inclusive, prevalent in their communities.

This has rendered the host communities onto the scourge of an increase in criminal activities over time. While taking responses for the print copy survey forms, youths align such cases to the

problems of the struggles for survival (which has not been experienced on such a high note as it is now).

8. Observance of Safety Regulations

Sequel to the pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO), National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), and the Federal government issued various safety measures to be observed towards curtailing the COVID-19, for health officials, and the general public. Part of which their effectiveness as observed by the public (youths as key contributors), will be looked into below:

Safety regulation on physical distancing

The safety regulation on physical distancing, on necessitated gatherings as opined to various respondents, showed less observance or adherence to the distancing order given out by the government. This (as related with, from engaging with youths upon responding to print copy forms), wouldn't be far-fetched from the singular reason of a majority of the region's populace being dependent upon its daily gaining. And, a number of the population, are short of food stuffs, and house needed groceries, which necessitated many to go out in search for livelihood, further congesting market places and the likes.

Safety regulation on use of nose mask

The use of nose mask was also a safety rule issued out for public observance, which mandated the covering of especially the nose and mouth, towards mitigating chances of its further spread. The youths, are of an appreciable extent (compared to that of physical distancing), okay with the public action so far, in the use of the nose mask, with much room for improvements.

Safety regulation on hand washing/sanitizing

There seems to be a real variance in the observance rate between the washing/sanitizing of hands to the other safety measures, by the public.

A higher observance rate was evident in complete adherence to the safety of persons by regular disinfecting of hands. Running water taps and sanitizers have been adopted as a mandated entry requirement to most offices, shops, banks, religious assemblies, and business ventures. Great achievements have been recorded in the fight against the pandemic with the public responding positively in continual sanitizing of hands. The fight against the dreaded disease is that of a collective duty!

Lockdown orders

On the lockdown orders; though with various orders issued out by each of the North eastern states, this research have been able to profoundly outline the less obedience to the lockdown orders, with 56% print copy responses and 43.7% online responses affirming to such state of conclusion. Probably, the government can shift its focus to how best its populace can fit in to such orders. In Bauchi for instances, use of motorbikes have been banned, which rendered a number of youths resident in the state, jobless while still weakening the state's active youthful

engagement (though with provisions made by state government in making alternatives available – but great concerns lies on who the direct beneficiaries would be).

Some states within the region were on partial lockdown, before going into total lockdown. It is however pertinent, the variance in economic balance which the North eastern region currently is, with its counterpart regions in the country. Majority of the region's populace are persons of daily livelihood means. This would again depict the slow pace at which the region is moving, in terms of economic development.

9. Youths and Virtual Engagements

The pandemic has caused a re-shift and rethink in possible alternatives to the normal that has been prevailing, in ensuring continual youth engagement; in business, learning, skill development, and in community engagements. And, the best and fitting will be in having to re-shift our minds to the possibilities in the virtual world.

Various youth led organizations have been taking steps towards continual engagements of the youths within the region particularly, through virtual means. Organizations such as Leadtots, held two online webinars addressing issues of ***“Youth Unemployment, Political Stability, and Financing Youth Development in Post-Pandemic Era”***. The Young Leaders Network (YLN), also an NGO based in Bauchi recently held an online session on ***“The Future of SDG Goal No.3 and 4 (Health and Education respectively) in the Post Pandemic Era”***.

The alternative is now in the virtual world!

Notwithstanding, despite the current normal, less proportion of youths in the region have or are really maximizing the virtual mediums. This would only leave youth led organizations with an area to turn partly in its duty towards further youth development in a digitalized world. The current normal has brought about an era in digitalization (via virtual activities) which likely has come to stay, even upon change of situations in regards to the pandemic.

Though, with less youths participating in virtual platforms, a number of youths within the region are partaking and changing alongside changing situations by opting for the alternative platforms, which they believe is helping in bridging the gap of having to stay idly, with no fruitful and engaging ventures. A number of youths are also currently giving in to the virtual business world, virtual learning and conferences etc.

The region's populace, are of great optimism, in the greater development the online platforms would proffer in the continual development of the youths.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

It is of a fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has so changed our world. It has also shown the needed reality we as a people (particularly the North eastern region of Nigeria) need to focus on. The research has helped put together responses, which all submits to the fact that the youth population remains the most affected category of persons, caused by the pandemic. And, the state governments of the North eastern states have a much demanding role towards improvement in the economic state which the region has been characterized with (owing to the frequent crises that the region has been faced with). And, to do this, government must step up its security strategies, so as to bring normalcy to the region.

In the midst of it all, the pandemic has also proffered the region with an alternative in the area of virtual engagements, which when maximized, will help add up to the strategies followed by youth led organizations in youth allied developmental goals. It is therefore of immense importance I recommend that organizations give a look up into the opportunities that lies in there, within the virtual platforms, and proffer necessary trainings and engaging avenues for youths within the region in such sense.

Additional Sources

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_in_Nigeria

² <https://womendeliver.org/2020/10-ways-young-people-are-leading-the-way-against-covid-19/>

³ <https://www.k4health.org/toolkits/youthpolicy/nigeria-national-youth-policy-and-strategic-plan-action>

⁴ Furlong, Andy (2013). *Youth Studies An Introduction*. Routledge. ISBN 9780415564793.



About Leadtots

At Leadtots and Human Development Services, we believe that empowering young people starts by promoting the right-thinking pattern. That is why we are committed to the capacity development of youth, women, students, government, and Community Based Organizations. We promote the engagement of intergenerational leadership development between young and seasoned political leaders, coach and mentor strong leadership qualities to support governance of societies at all government levels and community structures. Leadtots exists to ensure an inclusive and sustainable development with a clear mandate to develop a world of great leaders with potentials of human development.

We Lead The Thinking That Leads!

Website @ <https://leadtots.org/>