

# **Youth Exclusion and Empowerment in the Contemporary Global Order**

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Youth Exclusion and Empowerment in the Contemporary Global Order: Existentialities in Migrations, Identity and the Digital Space

EDITED BY

**ỌLÁYÍNKÁ ÀKÀNLE**

*University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

*University of Johannesburg, South Africa*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Editorial matter and selection © 2022 Oláyinká Àkànlé.  
Individual chapters © 2022 the authors.  
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

**Reprints and permissions service**

Contact: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80382-778-0 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-777-3 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-779-7 (Epub)



**ISOQAR**  
REGISTERED

Certificate Number 1985  
ISO 14001

ISOQAR certified  
Management System,  
awarded to Emerald  
for adherence to  
Environmental  
standard  
ISO 14001:2004.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To all organizations, groups, institutions and individuals committed to achievement of youth inclusion, empowerment and sustainable development across the world.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms	<i>ix</i>
About the Contributors	<i>xi</i>
<b>Introduction</b>	
<i>Oláyinká Àkànle</i>	<i>1</i>
<b>Chapter One Youths in Global Context: The Anatomy of Exclusion and Processes</b>	
<i>Oláyinká Àkànle, Ewajesu Opeyemi Okewumi and Demilade Ifeoluwa Kayode</i>	<i>3</i>
<b>Chapter Two Youth and Desperate Migration: A Historical and Cultural Perspective</b>	
<i>Terngu Sylvanus Nomishan</i>	<i>17</i>
<b>Chapter Three Youth Digital Exclusion, Big Data Divide and the Future of Work</b>	
<i>Damilola Adegoke</i>	<i>33</i>
<b>Chapter Four Re-imagining Violence Against Africa's Youth Within the Framework of the 2008 Hunger Riots</b>	
<i>Christophe Dongmo</i>	<i>49</i>
<b>Chapter Five Rural Youth Migration and Development in Zimbabwe</b>	
<i>Tatenda Goodman Nhapi</i>	<i>65</i>

<b>Chapter Six All-purpose Medicine: An Autoethnographic Reflection on Urban Market Solidarity and Dangerous Self-Integrative Medication in Child and Adolescent Care in Nigeria</b> <i>Mofeyisara Oluwatoyin Omobowale and Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale</i>	85
<b>Chapter Seven Us and Them and After All – Cosmopolitanism in Identity-making and Integration of Muslim Migrant Youth</b> <i>Shreya Bhardwaj</i>	97
<b>Chapter Eight Youth Migration After the Arab Spring: Single Women Migrants as Agents of Change</b> <i>Amani El Naggare</i>	113
<b>Chapter Nine Youthful Sexuality and Human Rights in the Era of Social Media in Nigeria: Emerging Themes and Insights</b> <i>Kafayat Aminu and Jimoh Amzat</i>	131
<b>Chapter Ten Youth Exclusion and Empowerment in China and the United States of America</b> <i>Oláyínká Àkànle and Damola Toyosi Olaniyi</i>	147
<b>Conclusion</b> <i>Oláyínká Àkànle</i>	159
Index	161

# Abbreviations and acronyms

AU	African Union
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CSO	Civil society organization
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FMF	Fees Must Fall (#FMF)
FTLRP	Fast-track Land Reform Programme
ICT	Information and communications technologies
ILO	International Labour Organization
MOOCs	Massive open online courses
MYD	Ministry of Youth Development
NDP	National Development Plan
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NYP	National Youth Policy
NYC	National Youth Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
RMF	Rhodes Must Fall (#RMF)
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad (Nigeria)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRC	Student representative council
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
SU	Stellenbosch University
TMT	Temporal motivational theory
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UKZN	University of Kwazulu Natal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Population Funds
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
Wits	University of Witwatersrand
YDI	Youth Development Index

*This page intentionally left blank*

## About the Contributors

**Damilola Adegoke** is a Research Associate and a Peter da Costa Post-Doctoral Fellow (Future Peace and the State in Africa research cluster) with the African Leadership Centre (ALC), King's College London. His PhD thesis explored the roles and place of big data in security leadership decision-making in crisis situations. He has a BA in Philosophy and an MSc in Sociology of Development from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He also holds an MSc in Security, Leadership and Society from King's College London. He is the Head and Chief Data Analyst of the Data Lab (ALC). He is a steering committee member and board member of the Digital Sociology Group of the International Sociology Association. He was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Department of Political Science and Public Policy, University of Buea, Republic of Cameroon. His research interests include artificial intelligence and big data security decision-making, social network analysis and computational sociology.

**Ọláyínká Àkànlẹ** is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is also a Research Associate in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the South African Research Chair Initiative in Social Policy, College of Graduate Studies, University of South Africa, South Africa. He has won other scholarly awards such as being a World Social Science Fellow of the International Social Science Council, Paris, France; Laureate of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, Dakar, Senegal; and received the Postgraduate School Prize for scholarly publication from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is a recipient of the Certificate of Achievement from Folke Bernadotte Academy, Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development, Sweden. He is a thorough-bred and an internationally affirmed academic, scholar and expert on international development, migration and diaspora studies, social policy, sociological practice and sustainable development. He is a member of funded research groups including Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Funded Research in DRC, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, as well as Arts and Humanities Research Council Funded Research on data and displacement in Nigeria and Sudan. He is a widely published scholar, the author of *Kinship Networks and International Migration in Nigeria* (Cambridge Scholar Publishers, UK, 2015), and has co-edited, among other books, *The Development of Africa: Issues, Diagnosis and Prognosis* (Springer Publishing, Germany, 2018) and *Corruption and Development in Nigeria* (Routledge, UK, 2022).

**Kafayat Aminu** is a Medical Sociologist who hails from the ancient city of Ibadan. She commenced her higher education at the University of Ilorin where she obtained her Diploma in Social Administration. She later proceeded to the University of Ibadan where she obtained her BSc, MSc and PhD degrees in Sociology. She has special interests in health inequalities, infectious diseases, research methods and ethics, disability studies, virtual communication and others. For her doctoral thesis, she explored the experience of hospital care and social construction of disability in a spinal-cord-injury population. She is a multidisciplinary researcher who has co-authored book chapters and several scientific papers in reputable journals. Her mentors include neurosurgeons and medical sociologists and anthropologists who have influenced her research interests to a great extent. She hopes to reconnoitre other remarkable subjects as she journeys through her career.

**Jimoh Amzat** is a Full Professor in the Department of Sociology, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria, and a Senior Research Associate in the Department of Sociology, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He was a recipient of Erasmus Mundus scholarships (both as a graduate student and a visiting scholar) and an Alexander von Humboldt postdoctoral fellowship (Germany). He has previously served as a Guest Lecturer to the University of Bielefeld, Germany and EHESP School of Public Health, Rennes, France. He is a scholar of extraordinary insight, with a versatile academic charm and zeal, framed around the tetrad of medical sociology, bioethics, global health and social problems. He has published numerous books and papers in peer-reviewed journals.

**Shreya Bhardwaj** is a Sociology Doctoral Researcher in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in the Czech Republic. After working with Tibetan musicians in Dharamshala, India, for her Master's degree in Psychology from the University of Delhi, she has been working with Muslim migrant youth in the Czech Republic under the supervision of Dr Zdenek Uherek (ISS FSV Director, UK), taking a feminist and decolonial approach. She is also involved in a two-year multidisciplinary EU-funded START project aiming to understand how patient advocacy can influence patients' access to justice.

**Christophe Dongmo** is the Programme Quality and Development Director at Sonna Etienne Foundation, and a non-resident Senior Research Fellow at Leiden University African Studies Centre. He previously served as Senior Regional Executive Officer (Central Africa) of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Country Representative (Cameroon) of Denis and Lenora Foretia Foundation. He holds advanced degrees in international human rights law, American diplomatic history and political science from the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), Vanderbilt University (USA) and Johns Hopkins University (USA).

**Demilade Ifeoluwa Kayode** has degrees in Sociology from Bowen University, Nigeria, and the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Her research interests include but are not limited to urbanization and migration, social policy, sustainable

development, environmental sustainability, qualitative and quantitative methods and entrepreneurship. She has passion for teaching and academic writing.

**Amani El Naggare** is a PhD candidate at the Graduate School of Sociology at Münster University in Germany. Her PhD thesis examines emotions and political trajectories of youth protesters during the political transition in Egypt from 2011 to the present. Further research interests are youth migrations and activism in exile after the Arab Spring. She has conducted intensive field research in Morocco and Egypt, focusing on youth political participation prior to, and in the aftermath of, the uprisings of 2011. She has participated in several academic conferences during the last decade.

**Tatenda Goodman Nhapi** holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work (University of Zimbabwe) and is a graduate of the Erasmus Mundus MA Advanced Development in Social Work joint programme among the University of Lincoln (England), Aalborg University (Denmark), Technical University of Lisbon (Portugal), University of Paris Ouest Nanterre La Defense (France) and Warsaw University (Poland). He started his career in Zimbabwe (2008–2013) working in relief and development and social research, focusing on child welfare and gender issues. While employed in Zimbabwe's Department of Social Services, his work focused on policies and protocols implementation pertaining to care and protection of children, older persons, persons with disabilities, disadvantaged persons and households in distress. He is a Research Associate with the University of Johannesburg, and the South African Department of Social Work and Community Development. His research agenda revolves around social policy and implementation of developmental programmes in their attempt to address issues such as poverty, inequality, HIV/AIDS and poverty traps of vulnerable groups such as women, children, older people and youths. He has high academic standing with a growing reputation in research, evidenced by an emerging portfolio of internationally recognised publications.

**Terngu Sylvanus Nomishan** holds Bachelor and Master's degrees in Archaeology and is presently preparing to commence his PhD programme. He also completed a certificate course in Tourism Management at UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Université Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne. He lectures in the Department of Archaeology and Museum Studies, Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria. His research areas include Cultural Anthropology, Ethnoarchaeology, Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies and Cultural Resource Management CRM. He has published quality articles in both local and international renowned journals. He is an Inaugural Council Member of the Pan African Scientific Research Council.

**Ewajesu Opeyemi Okewumi** is a Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She is a fellow of the Lagos Studies Association. She has attended conferences both locally and internationally and has published articles and book chapters on childhood studies, development studies and sociological theories.

**Damola Toyosi Olaniyi** holds a Master of Science degree in Sociology and Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology And Security Studies from the University of Lagos and the National Open University of Nigeria, respectively. His areas of interest include sociology of development, crime and delinquency and social issues. Currently, he works as an independent social researcher and has to his credits academic research publications on suicide terrorism, substance abuse and criminality, social supports and widowhood in Nigeria, global issues and African perspectives in sociological theories among others. He has taken part in research studies sponsored by both local and international donors on HIV prevention interventions for female sex worker in Nigeria, Quite Corruption in Lagos State Educational System, among others. Currently, he is an MPhil/PhD student of the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan.

**Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale** (PhD) is a professor of Sociology at the University of Ibadan. He has won the University of Ibadan Postgraduate School Award for scholarly publication, 2007; the Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique Research Fellowship, 2009; the American Council of Learned Societies – African Humanities Programme Post-Doctoral Fellowship, 2010; and the African Studies Association (USA) Presidential Award for 2014. He was also a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for African Studies, Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA, in November 2014. His works have appeared in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes locally and internationally. He served on the board of editors of *International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest* (2009), and he is the author of *The Tokunbo Phenomenon and the Second-Hand Economy in Nigeria* (2013). He is the editor of *Ibadan Journal of Sociology*, and he is also an international partner and participant in the International Network on Women on the Move COST Action (CA19112) 2020-2022.

**Mofeyisara Oluwatoyin Omobowale** holds a PhD in Anthropology. Her doctoral research was on space, sexuality and power at Bodija Market, Ibadan, Nigeria. She is a recipient of the American Council of Learned Societies – African Humanities Programme (ACLS-AHP) Doctoral Fellowship 2012, the Cadbury Fellowship (Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Birmingham University) 2014 and ACLS-AHP Post-Doctoral Fellowship 2016. Her interests lie in medical anthropology, public health anthropology, cultural studies, sexuality issues and maternal, child and adolescent studies. She is a Research Fellow and Lecturer at the Institute of Child Health, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She is a co-investigator on the Global Grand Challenges (Round 23) project on Immunization Strategies for Working Mothers 2019–2021.

# Introduction

*Ọláyínká Àkànlẹ*

There is no other time in human history that this book is relevant than now and into the future. This book is very important in aiding reliable and useful understanding of youth exclusion across the world. Relying strategically on real issues and experiences across many countries and issues, this book adds to existing body of knowledge on the realities of youths as they struggle to survive in contexts of the current systemic societal quagmire prevalent across the world. From poor to rich countries, common experiences of the youths suggest difficult livelihoods driven by widespread exclusion and dis/empowerment. This book therefore intentionally and carefully examines the ramifications and trajectories of youth exclusion across many social systems to x-ray the scenarios common across contexts through objective case studies and global outlooks. This book is practical, pragmatic, scientific and objective yet subjective to sufficiently capture important angles and nuances of the exclusionary and empowerment situations of the youths in spaces and times.

This book is not empty theoretical and academic. It is both scholarly and pragmatic in manners that are useful for policy and practice. Issues of youth exclusion and empowerment are complex, dynamic, multidimensional, deep-rooted, complicated and formidable. With these in mind, authors in the book adopt a tool kit approach and problem-solving strategies by not only throwing up and engaging the problems but by also providing legitimate and workable solutions. All authors relied on a mix of secondary data, primary data and autoethnography. The methodological triangulation strengthens this book and makes it very strong as a major relevant addition to knowledge. This book is inter/trans/multidisciplinary in orientation and approach. Contributors are from diverse background and countries, and every author contributed something new and innovative in preparing this book. Readers of this book will certainly find this very interesting and relevant to their works and practices. This book is empirical, theoretical, philosophical, historical, scholarly and policy oriented. While this book is specific and contextual, it is also global so as to be relevant to everyone interested in the current realities in which youths exist across the world.

All authors in this book are scholars and stakeholders in youth studies and practices. They are all motivated by passion and desire to make change, thus

---

**Youth Exclusion and Empowerment in the Contemporary Global Order:**

**Existentialities in Migrations, Identity and the Digital Space, 1–2**

**Copyright © 2022 by Ọláyínká Àkànlẹ**

**Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited**

**doi:10.1108/978-1-80382-777-320221001**

their contributions to this book. All authors were very committed throughout the process of writing this book, and they decidedly contributed because they all realized the youths need this scholarly and practice epistemic intervention – this book – for their exclusion to be addressed and better understood globally. Serious work, painstaking commitments and preparations went into writing this book. This book is a very important intervention in a very big problem of youth exclusion. This book has emancipating and liberating objectives to deliver the youths from global exclusion and entrapment. Issues covered include global contextualization and operationalization of youths, youth exclusion and empowerment, historicization, cultural backgrounding and engagement, migration, digital exclusion, riots and violence, identity, health, integration, social media and human rights, among others.

This book has wide application and appeal. It will be useful across many settings and over many years. Issues addressed in this book crosscut with many other issues and are addressed in manners that give this book cutting-edge advantages on the subject of interest – youth exclusion and empowerment. Development partners, governments, practitioners and scholars interested in youths' development, exclusion, inclusion and empowerment will find this book very important and useful. The contributors to this book are well appreciated for seeing this book to publication. All the contributors were very intentional in writing this book knowing fully well this book is to drive change in the right direction for sustainable youth and global development and inclusion. The whole world needs this book even as the world struggles with myriads of development challenges including youth exclusion and sustainable development. It is certain that everyone that reads this book will find it very interesting and useful. We strongly recommend this book for you, and we wish you a fantastic time of reading and experience.

## Chapter One

# Youths in Global Context: The Anatomy of Exclusion and Processes

*Oláyínká Àkànle, Ewajesu Opeyemi Okewumi and Demilade Ifeoluwa Kayode*

### Introduction

“Youth are the leaders and hope of tomorrow” is a common old phrase in the mouth of almost every citizen of any country. It is often used as an assurance by the old and a reassurance for the youth to believe that one day, they will get the opportunity to develop the nation and make it better. However, no one really knows when tomorrow is and neither has it come. This phrase of hope now sounds like a broken record. Nations are of the opinion that youths carry the prowess, intellect, exposure and agility to ensure that a nation’s wealth does not crumble, yet global situations and facts have shown that the youths are not well represented and not on a par with the adults in various facets of life.

The conceptualization and measurement of youth is complex and vague, but by mere looking at their composure and line of thought, it becomes easier to identify who the youths are. It becomes complex when one needs to analyse the components, issues and anatomical description of youths, especially when a holistic approach is needed. Taking a holistic approach to understand youth or youthhood requires researchers, writers and readers to inquire about the concept from a global perspective that is not Eurocentric about the social anatomy of youth. In studies, different societies and countries define youth differently, based on their unique social characteristics and attributes. More often than not, measuring or defining youthhood using numbers has proved to be the most generalized way of defining youths. However, within this, definitions still vary ([Heywood, 2001](#); [World Health Organization, 2014](#)).

The conceptualization of youth has gone far beyond numbers. Rather, it is socially constructed, which in turn is determined by different factors such as the

agents of socialization, institutions and the society at large. The age of youthhood has now developed to represent a group of people who are affected positively or negatively by the same situation and who have developed a subculture which then guides their behaviour and activities with other members of their group as well as with society at large (Oparina et al., 2020). The youths exist within a complex social system with elements such as norms, traditions, history, demands from society and an individual's future prospects all adding up to form the lives of youths. Consciously or unconsciously, they are wired to accept new roles and ways of life, which are some of the attributes that differentiate adults from youths or adolescents from youths.

It is important to note that within society, a symbiotic relationship exists between the society as an independent entity and its people. The structure of the society (polity, economic state) directly or indirectly influences its citizens while individual activity also plays an indispensable role in structural formation of the society. With respect to exclusion of youths within society, it is prerogative to understand that the structural composition of a country helps to include the youth or exclude them from institutions depending on how these structures have been institutionalized. Guilia (2013) defined exclusion as a state of been deprived. This deprivation could come in different forms, such as material or non-material deprivation, and social, political and economic deprivation of a group of people who have been regarded as subordinate or subjected to those in power, who are marginalized.

For instance, African countries are well known for high levels of corrupt practices, neglect of citizens' fundamental human right, unfair remuneration and election issues. Youth vying for political positions within Africa countries is a situation that might never see the light of day because the structure of society has given much power to adults and the political elite. Moreover, issues such as job opportunities and education for all cannot be excluded from what youths are experiencing in Africa as a continent (UNDP, 2007). Social exclusion of youths or any marginalized group does not happen independently of external catalysts or factors. One of the major catalysts of social exclusion of youths from institutions has to do with the high level of inequality, including unequal access to job opportunities or wealth creation and the political composition of most countries, which has contributed immensely to exclusion of youths from the system and even marginalized within the system.

More often than not, youths are only recognized when it comes to negative happenings within the society. For instance, drug abuse, prostitution, gangsters, violence and protest are issues often related as the doings of the youths, neglecting that these issues are a product of what society throws at this particular group of people (youths). Regardless of how society might have constructed the youth to be of great concern to the society at large, it is important to point out that within this same cohort, some youths have been impacting their society positively in economic and political sectors. However, compared to the totals of those involved in those sectors, the youths are less well represented. This chapter will give an insight into how much the youths have been excluded, the causes of their exclusion and the way forward for a sustainable society by ensuring youth inclusiveness.

## **The Age of Youths: Issues in Conceptualization and Measurements**

To affirm or assert that there is a universal definition of the term “youth” or “youthhood” is trying to constrain or limit the usage of the term. Unlike pure sciences, where a singular term or word means the same in all situations and events, discussions and terminologies in social sciences do not enjoy that privilege. With regard to conceptualizing and measuring youth, there has been no acceptable definition by different scholars or disciplines as to what should be the central definition of youth. For [Bourdieu \(1993\)](#), the concept “youth” has evolved over time and is still evolving, and it is now viewed as a term that came to be as a result of social construction. A virtue of [Bourdieu’s \(1993\)](#) orientation is that a socially constructed term varies among societies, countries and continents, and therefore a universal yardstick cannot be applied as who should be regarded as a youth.

The youthhood stage is that phase of life that is shortly after childhood or adolescence and shortly before adulthood. This period or phase might not be given much cognisance simply because of conceptualizations in which they are regarded as adolescent for some countries and adult for others. Nevertheless, organizational bodies, researchers and scholars have come up with various definitions and yardsticks for ascertaining that an individual is in their youthful stage. For the United Nations (UN), youths are determined by an age range: a youth is expected to be 15–24 years old. This had to be ascertained in this manner for data collection, census purposes and statistical purposes. It should, however, be noted that the definition of youth by the UN is without prejudice of other forms of definitions propounded by nation-states ([UNDP, 2010](#)). By merely making use of age to define youths, there arises a contradicting notion because the age that is regarded as youth in some definitions is defined as a period of adolescence in others. [World Health Organization \(2014\)](#), for instance, defined the youth as those between the ages of 10 and 24, while in the United States, the [Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion \(2018\)](#) sees youth as those aged 18–25. The African Youth Charter explained that only those within the ages 15–35 should be regarded as youths while the National Policy on Youth Development consider only those whose age falls within 18–35. To this end, one can deduce that there is usually a misconception of youth as adolescent and adolescent as youth. Beyond using numeric explanation to define who a youth is, subjectively, some of these definitions that assume an adolescent or child as a youth can as well be right from their own lenses, such that a child that is five or seven is regarded as a youth as far as they are independent and can survive without their mothers ([Heywood, 2001](#), p. 11).

In Western societies, youthhood is the period characterized by independence that proceeds from adolescence but precedes adulthood ([Kehily, 2007](#)). Moreover, [Frith \(2005\)](#) explained youthhood as more of a social construction than a biological one. For Firth, the biological transition of a child into a young adult or youth occurs at the adolescent stage, which is characterized by puberty or the hormonal or psychological changes. The definition of youth can be culturally inclined as well. From a social anthropologist’s perspective, issues such as family pattern,

beliefs, behaviour, norms and the political and social organization of a particular community can determine who the youth are (Kehily, 2007, p. 47). The environment, the culture, religion and economy of a particular society determines how the youths of that society are defined.

For social anthropologists, an individual can only be regarded as a youth if they have passed through all the necessary procedures known as the “rites of passage.” For instance, in Nigeria, the Igbos are popularly known for a passage rite known as the Iwa Akwa, which is a ritual that allows the little ones to transit into a much-matured group. An individual is affirmed to be ready for the rite when he shows some level of independence as well as physical attributes. This Iwa Akwa is solely for the male gender and until he passes through the rite, such individual cannot be regarded as a man. In European countries, the rite of passage can be characterized as becoming employed, entering college and becoming self-sufficient and even getting married. Honwana and De Boeck (2005) defined the age of youth as a period that is characterized by expectations and responsibilities and only those that have the resources and capability to shoulder those responsibilities are referred to as youth. To this end, the age of youth is defined by cultural markers in which the group is characterized by distinct social status, specific social roles, rituals and relationships.

In conceptualizing youth, it is important to understand it from quantitative perspective, a socially constructed orientation, a psychological opinion and socio-culturally, so that the definition of youth is holistic. One could go further to describe the age of youthhood as a period of experimentation with roles and identities, and that, although they are not pressurized into the norms of the society, they are steadily preparing for that phase of life of becoming burdened with societal expectation or obligation.

## **Theorizing Youthhood**

In theorizing the youth as a group of people, it is first of all important to understand these groups of individuals as humans before categorizing them into youths or those who make up the youthhood cohort. Since it has been established that all youths are humans but not all humans are youths, when theorizing youth, it simply means understanding the totality of youths from a theoretical perspective. It should also be brought to bear that societies construct what youths are termed to be, and prior to individuals attaining the youthhood state, there has been a transition – a metamorphosis from the childhood state, or the adolescent state, all through to the youthhood state. It should also be noted that each of these stages are characterized by different activities, different levels of self-identification and different facets to the socialization process, and they are opportune to face, experience, learn and unlearn different aspects of life just by merely growing. Moreover, the total make-up of human nature is the synthesis of nature and nurture. Therefore, irrespective of what the youths have become or been structured to be based on external and internal factors, they are formed by the composition of biological and environmental conditioning. Hence, in theorizing youthhood, one is theoretically explaining human beings of a particular group of people (Erikson, 1968).

As it was earlier claimed that human nature is as a result of the synthesis of nature and nurture. This claim however falls under the psychosocial theory. This theory opined that the composition of human life is as a result of the interaction of three elements; the biological system, psychological system and the societal system (Erikson, 1968; Coulshed and Orme, 2006, p. 109). Sensory capacities, circulatory and motor responses, and genetic composition make up the biological system while mental processes, personality traits, emotions, and cognitive reasoning are the component of the psychological system. The last element, which is the societal system, has to do with family, the socialization process, societal expectations, and the social and cultural environment. Moreover, all the systems are in continuous interaction with one another with and among every individual.

One of the psychosocial theorists is Erikson, who identified the different stages of human development with respect to the age group that falls within each stage (Austrian, 2008; Higley, 2019). Stage one to stage four cover the childhood and adolescent groups, which are characterized by being needful, having a sense of dependence and separate identity, experimentation and role playing. Stages five and six cover the youth, which is the central concern of this chapter. In stage five, individuals are in a state of identity formation, independent from societal demands, parents' opinion and peer pressure, while stage six has to do with forming relationships and intimacy. The adequate development of each of the stages is an essential prerequisite for the succeeding stage. This means that if stages one to four are not adequately managed by the various agents of socialization, the youthhood stage can be negatively altered, which will become detrimental to the society. It is therefore important that before reaching the age of youths, children and adolescents should be helped to deal with barriers that can be detrimental at their youthful age (Austrian, 2008; Higley, 2019).

Still theorizing youthhood, it is necessary to understand the nature of their needs during their youthful period. Judging from Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs," humans' needs develop in a progressive manner, in which a particular need of the lower level needs to meet before the succeeding need can be met. Abraham Maslow was able to point out the five-step hierarchy of needs of human starting from physiological needs such as clothing, food and shelter. Following the physiological need are safety and security needs, social needs, the need for self-esteem and, lastly, self-actualization. According to Maslow, every individual is expected to pass through the needs from the lowest to the highest needs, and until the preceding needs are satisfied, the succeeding needs cannot be attained. Judging from the assumption of Maslow's theory, all youths are expected to satisfy their needs in a progressive manner, starting from the physiological needs; hence the reason a graduate who has been unable to get their desired job settles for lesser employment, in a bid to satisfy physiological needs rather than being concerned about their social status.

In explaining youthhood as a fraction of a larger society, social system theory gives a vivid theoretical lens on youths as a subsystem of the larger system. The social system theory postulated that "the whole is more than the sum of the parts." The basic assumption of social system theory is that, in every society or system, there exists a smaller fraction of elements known as the subsystem.

From this theory, one gets to understand that youths are part of society and they are indispensable. More importantly, although they form their own cohort group, they are as well found within the various systems or institutions that make up the whole. They form their own subculture and way of life as an entity and in turn infuse their subculture into other systems of society. According to Davies (2004, p. 380), the youths impact the system and they are impacted by it. Just as the youths get to influence or affect the society in which they live, the environment – be it the political or economic system or religion or social media – also influences their composition, mindset and way of life; hence the reason youths differ among societies or countries.

Take as examples the #EndSARS situation in Nigeria, which was a hash tag that was started by Nigerian youth through social media or the Black Lives Matter movement in United States. Each situation occurred as a result of the larger system (polity, unemployment, discrimination) being incapable of protecting the lives of their citizens, especially youths, from the hands of the armed forces and the whites, respectively, hence a subculture among the youths was created. This subculture (peaceful protest, use of social media for awareness) was a response from the youths to actions from the larger society (police brutality, colour discrimination), which, for some, was termed a positive reaction while negative for others. From social system theory, it is important that both the subsystem (youthhood) and the system at large (society) should be understood in order to be able to understand how the youths act, what influences their actions and how their actions influence society at large.

Further explaining youthhood as a subsystem of the larger system, advocacy theory explains how this group of people have been marginalized, discriminated against, incapacitated by the larger society and how their rights have been trampled upon. This is as a result of the unequal distribution of resources and power within a society, in which a group of people who are not the youth have been able to acquire both power and resources overtime. From the standpoint of advocacy theory, the youths are involved in ensuring these resources and power are equally distributed among all groups (Peteru, 2008, p. 26). These struggles are evidently seen in the clamour of youths wanting to be involved in politics not just as a voter or political campaigner but holding relevant positions within the system. Apart from wanting to be involved in politics, there has been agitation about the failure of society to safeguard their rights and lives as well. Other theoretical orientations that can be used to explain youthhood are the functionalist theory, the looking glass self by Cooley (1902), who opined that individuals are a reflection of how the society in which they live views them – hence if a society expects positive behaviour from youths, according to Cooley, the individuals (youths) will exhibit positive behaviour and vice versa.

## **The State of Youths: Currents and Perspectives**

The UN estimates that 41% of the world's population is under the age of 24 (UNDP, 2010). However, regardless of this proportion which some have termed the “youth bulge,” youths have not been well represented in decision-making in