



## The effects of pastoral counseling on Youth Development in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Youths constitute an important segment of society in all cultures youths symbolize continuity, not only in physical existence but also in the transmission of traditional values and ethos of the society, The study investigated the youths and their problems in Nigeria, covering the pervasive economic, psychological, and social poverty. It is believed that this malady emanates from bad leadership, corruption, ineptitude, and ineffectiveness of the nation's leaders. Although religious leaders admonish while evangelizing, the effects of these pastoral admonishments have not been fully exhausted. The study adopted a qualitative method, interviews were conducted with selected church leaders and youths to seek how Nigerian youths can experience salvation from self-imposed poverty and emotional problems that adversely affect their growth and development. The results were qualitatively analysed. The Findings reveal the government needs to give youth development a priority. Youths as future leaders have not received adequate encouragement to grow. It identifies pastoral counseling as the ideal tool that enhances the all-round development of our youth. The study concluded that the nation's future would be secured through government developmental programmes to complement the efforts of pastoral counseling which provides the much-needed psychotherapy to foster growth. The study, therefore, recommends that the government at all levels embrace this call.*

**Keywords:** Youth, Youth development, Pastoral Counseling, Therapy, Psychotherapy

### Introduction

The youth need holistic development to be useful to God, the nation, their parents, friends, and themselves. Their development must be total for a meaningful living and better future, that is, spirit, soul and body. Due to this crucial point, all hands should be on deck for their physical, social, moral, mental, spiritual, educational, psychological, vocational, emotional and personality development (Remdex, 2018). In reality, it is impossible to separate

one facet of development or growth from another; so interrelated and interdependent are they within the complexity of human development and behaviour. Development is highly needed among the youths since they are the strength, workforce, and future of any nation. Development is needed to foster a sense of nationhood and promote national development, to ensure adaptability to promote social equality and remove divisions of race, tribe, and religion; to respect the cultural traditions of the nation, both as expressed in social institutions and relationships, etc. (Abogunrin,1994).

Development involves positive change, and this change refers to a change in structure such as thought or behavior. It is not only concerned with changes in physical characteristics but has to do with how various abilities like intelligence, emotions, and morals progress and become better refined in functioning, complexity, and in quality. It is also a process that prepares a young person to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood and achieve his or her full potential. It promotes activities and experiences that help youth develop social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies. It supports the young person in growing the ability to analyze his or her own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and abilities to carry them out. It includes the ability to establish support networks in order to fully participate in community life and effect positive social change. It also involves the ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinions and behaviors of others, and serve as a role model (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2019).

In addition, conditions that promote healthy youth development are supported through programs and activities in schools and communities. Youth development includes effective programs and interventions that recognize youths' strengths and seek to promote positive development rather than addressing risks in isolation. Youth who are constructively involved in learning and doing and who are connected to positive adults and peers are less likely to engage in risky or self-defeating behaviors. Providing the conditions for positive youth development is a responsibility shared by families, schools, and communities. The conditions for healthy youth development reside in families, schools, and communities.

### **Youth**

Youth is a stage in development in which children experience a transformation in their physique, emotions, cognition, and social interaction. It is called a period of transformation because the child experiences what is called the "growth spurts" where he changes from a child to a miniature adult. It is of immense importance that the period of youth is studied because they are everywhere. They are children, students, brothers, sisters, nephews, or nieces as the situation may demand. Parents, teachers, institutions of authority, and society as a whole have had to cope with all sorts of frustrations, threats, and conflicts exhibited by the youth as he or she tries to adjust psychologically. An

adage says “The child is the father of the man”, and youths symbolise the future of society (Ademola, 2011).

Also, the term youth is used to describe a young person, especially between the ages of adolescence and maturity. Adolescence, puberty, pubescence, and youths are frequently used interchangeably to refer to the period between childhood and adulthood. Youth is the transitory period an individual inevitably passes through in his or her growth from childhood to adulthood or maturity i.e., that period of metamorphosis when an adult is created out of a child (Ademola, 1999).

Youth is one of the most fascinating and complex transitions in the life of any individual. It is a time of accelerated growth and changes second only to infancy; a time of expanding horizons, self-discovery, and emerging independence, and a time of metamorphosis from childhood to adulthood. Its beginning is associated with the profound biological, physical, behavioural and social transformation that roughly corresponds with the secondary education period and sometimes, the first few years of most persons in the university. In these years, a young person experiences much growth and joy, as well as doubt and confusion. Relationships with peers and family take on new meaning. Some young people consider their prospects and find little to hope for. Others have no more than a vague image of the future as they embark on a prolonged search for the pathways to promising adulthood. A youth who develops in the Nigerian environment is faced with a lot of inconsistencies in society. The adults who are supposed to be role models often fail to present a consistent model. This leaves the youth more confused and makes him or her seek refuge in his or her peers. (Adeboye, 1984).

### **Youth Development**

Some areas of youths’ growth and development include physical, mental, and social development. Physical Development characterises the youthful stage which is the years of good health and energy. It is especially a period of better muscular strength and manual dexterity. Physical development involves physical growth, maturation, and learning. It refers to the emergence and advancement of an individual’s various capacities as the person grows, matures, and learns. Physical developmental changes can be measured in both quantitative and qualitative terms. At this stage, growth in height ceases, and metabolism changes, but consolidation increases weight slightly in both sexes. The youth become increasingly adult in appearance and all skills are now within their range. Training in skills like games and athletics can result in rapid improvement and the achievement of high standards (Ademola, 2005).

Mental development is heightened during this period when compared with childhood and old age. It refers to the maturing of the mind, that is, intellectual growth. Physical development occurs side by side with mental development. Thus, the brain and the whole nervous system grow as the body grows. For example, the brain cells change in size (usually becoming larger); they also change in chemical composition and in structural complexity. Consequently, the

brain becomes more mature and more active. The power of the mind which is believed to be rooted in the brain is dependent upon the whole body for its expression. Mental development during this stage accelerates on many intellectual fronts. Mainly, it is characterized by the development of increasingly mature attitudes and behavior. The high degree of co-ordination makes possible high performance in skills. Further, an increase in knowledge, understanding, and intellectual activity is made possible (Adegoke, 2019).

Social Development is another important area of youthful development because man is basically a social animal. His existence without a social set-up can hardly be imagined. He is born in society, develops, works, and progresses in society. Social development, like emotional development, is the story of the learning of attitudes and the formation of habits of response. The youth at this stage becomes self-conscious of his place in society, socially adjusted to members of the opposite sex, the adult community, and the school environment. Youth adjustment is greatly influenced by a community, close friends, etc. Games, debates, seminars, excursions, trips, etc. foster youth social development (Rokeach, 1968). Other co-curricular activities through which the youth can discover and learn his ideals, values, and interests include formal youth groups such as youth societies, missionary volunteers, Boys Brigade, Girl's guide, Boys Scouts, WAI Brigade, sports clubs, young farmers club, etc. These activities will provide further opportunities for youths to discuss and have close contacts. By this, they develop skills, and abilities, increase self-confidence, mutual trust, and tolerance, feel needed and acceptable to the adult world, and gain a feeling of accomplishment and fulfillment (Ademola, 2000).

#### **Factors That Affect Youth Development**

Nigerian youths were active throughout the country in the anti-colonial struggle. Some of them formed the famous Nigerian Youth Movement and were active journalists and writers in patriotic newspapers during the anti-colonial agitation. The patriotic tradition of Nigerian youth has been continuing since then unabated. The activities of such patriotic youths remind us that youth is a social force of great importance to the development of any Nation. No national development can take place without the skills, energy, and ideas of the youth which they display in their labour as well as social and cultural activities. It is also a well-known fact that Nigeria's educated youth still serve the Nation in various capacities under the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme. To ensure that Nigerian Youths continue to be the backbone of our Nation, the factors that affect their development must be critically analyzed and addressed. Their survival and cultural development must be guaranteed to enable them realize their full potential in the service of the Nation (Adegoke, 1992). Having evaluated some of the contributions of Nigerian youth to national development above, the paper at this point, interrogates some of the factors affecting youth's development in Nigeria.

The environment is an important factor for youth's development because man is made or marred mostly by the environment. It contributes to the effect of training, trial and error learning, the influence of the home, schools,

neighbourhood, hospital, Church, playground, climate, geographical location, socio-economic factors, and anything else that stimulates the senses in any way. The youths develop according to these environmental factors. An environment can be conducive or un- conducive, favourable, good, or poor for youths' development. A good environment should have adequate educational and social facilities (schools, colleges, cinemas, the T.V, light, water, roads and transport facilities, hospital, etc.), food supply, and comfortable shelter. The physical, intellectual, social, and moral developments of youths are the function of the environment in which they are brought up (Ademola, 2000).

Heredity as a factor affecting youths' development refers to the transmission of potentialities or traits of physical, mental, and other characteristics from parents to offspring at conception- the nature of the individual's make-up as contained in the genes. People (youths) of the same parents may be tall or short, fat or thin, dark in complexion or light, clever or dull, extroverted or introverted (Aremu, 2014). Peer- group is one of the major determinant factors of youths' development. A group consists of individuals who share common goals, are somehow interdependent, have a stable relationship, and recognize the group's existence. Individuals are often strongly affected by group membership. Such effects often take place through the influence of roles, norms, and cohesiveness. Youths develop according to the peer- group they belong to (Adeyemi, 2019).

The government determines the youths' development through their educational, economic, social, health, etc. policies and programmes. For example, the unstable political situation of the Nigerian government had and is affecting the educational, economic, social, political, etc. development of youths adversely. Many youths have resulted in violence, assassinations, armed robbery, kidnapping, etc. because of un-promising government policies. Many could not pursue their studies and depended on drugs and occultism (Akinboye, 2016).

### **Pastoral Counselling**

The pastoral counselor, through a spiritual leader, should utilize a number of psychological experiential, and academic strategies to rehabilitate the church member with a problem. The pastoral counselor may begin by observing certain behavior and attributes such as: (1) how the youth behave, (2) why they behave that way; (3) how to handle them; (4) how to counsel them. The implication of the above approach is that the pastoral counselor should conduct a psychological assessment of the behaviour he is observing. This means that the pastoral counselor should know much more than the Bible. He needs adequate knowledge of psychology and other subjects such as Biology, Sociology, medicine, etc. (Akinboye, 2015).

The pastoral counselor may be guided by a number of studies Baumrind (2012), Biehler (2008). Akinboye (2009), has important information for the pastoral counselor attempting to develop systematic programmes of pastoral counseling. The works of Thornburg and Walsh essentially outlined the basic principles of counseling in the West, ranging from the strictly psychodynamic to the bad

behavioural. The studies of Nigerian young steps by Akinboye include concerns about self (including physical appearance, peoples' perceptions, health, etc.), Morality (drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, drugs, and breaking societal rules). Also, Peers and friends are concerned about being popular, utopian perfectionist beliefs, and fault-finding. God-how to know what he wants them to do, does he listen to me, how to talk to him. What is he like? National and world issues- hunger, money, war (Petersen, 2007).

Effective pastoral counseling includes programmes directed toward solving personal-social problems- preaching teaching sermons- modeling talking etc. Any form of communication with the church member leads to trust and consequently relieves his problem. At every stage, the guiding questions include how and why he behaves, how to handle him, and how to help him out. Prevention of the development of maladaptive behaviours such as drug abuse, alcoholism, smoking, conflicts, frustrations, depression, low self-concept and anxieties Furthermore, establishing adequate vocational adjustment decisions, which include making skills maturity, employment seeking, and occupational adaptation competence. In addition, developing adequate work habits, creativity, and evolving pre-marital and marital Counselling programmes (Uba, 2018).

#### **Pastoral Counselling and Psychotherapy**

The distinction between counseling and psychotherapy is more of a fine-line distinction. Albert (2016) found no general differentiation between the two terms, Brook & Petersen (2013). conceded that "a fine-line distinction between counseling and psychotherapy is admittedly difficult if not impossible to draw. Bryne (2005). also saw the terms as being almost synonymous, separated in meaning only by a slight shade of connotation, "the main difference perhaps now being almost counseling tends to refer to an educational, family or pastoral setting and psychotherapy has a more clinical tone. Erpenback (2017), while agreeing with this position though from a different context, made the important point that if a client has a problem and has come to treatment to deal with the problem, it makes no practical difference whether the treatment is called counseling or psychotherapy. Feldman & Elliot (2018) went further to say: When we perceive the helping process from the point of view of the counselee, the differentiation between counseling and psychotherapy becomes meaningless. We take from each helping relationship what it has to offer though we may have hoped for more. We give in each helping relationship what we are able regardless of the definition of the role. This is as far as authors have gone to show that the two terms are synonymous.

There are, however, some authors who maintain that counseling differs from psychotherapy in the seriousness of the patient's problems and the emotional depth or intensity of the treatment and that counseling also differs from psychotherapy in its theoretical foundation, practical concerns, and discrepant historical origins. Gaddis & Brooks-Gunn (2018), for example, both assert that what distinguishes "counseling from psychotherapy is the degree of the client's disturbances; that in counseling, the client is an "adequate functioning

individual” while in psychotherapy, the patient is “neurotic and pathological”. Hein (1999) views counseling and psychotherapy along a continuum thus, in examining this situation, let us concede that indeed there is a continuum between counseling and psychotherapy. While they appear at opposite ends of the continuum, they are neither dichotomous nor mutually exclusive ways of helping people in need. Nevertheless, the counselor and psychotherapist generally operate at different ends of that somewhat mystical continuum (Papalia, and Olds, 2021).

A summary of these positions seems to suggest that counseling and psychotherapy are closely related in terms of their definitions and theories. Both of them are processes that involve a special kind of relationship between the helper and helped (Icrech, Crutchfield and. Ballachey, 2009). The techniques of group or individual counseling and psychotherapy are also similar. However, generally in terms of differences:

- 1) The setting of counseling is usually in schools or educational settings while psychotherapy is in a hospital or clinic;
- 2) The clientele from which the counselor draws is the student body while the psychotherapist’s clientele is the patients in the student body while the psychotherapist’s clientele is the patients in the hospital or some outpatients in the community;
- 3) Counseling is usually focused on educational and vocational concerns and ordinary developmental problems while psychotherapy is focused on acute personality problems, an attempt to change the personality or remove physical and mental handicaps;
- 4) Counseling deals with the present concerns of clients, while psychotherapy deals with stresses related to the past; and
- 5) Counselling emphasises reality-related problems while psychotherapy involves personality-restructuring problems (Kalish, 1998).

#### **Place of Pastoral Counselling in the Development of Youth**

Available literature reveals that there is ample evidence to show that the willingness of adolescents to engage in risk-taking behaviours (sexually active, school dropout, substance abuse, violence, alcohol and cigarettes etc.) is normative. However, because risk-taking behaviours are common to youth culture does not excuse those behaviours, nor does such knowledge reduce the danger that those behaviours present (Lovell, 1986). The profile of problem adolescents includes; repeated lying or cheating, stealing, running away, (away from home), excessive obscene language, and associating with others who are regularly in trouble, etc. (Murch, 2019).

Pastoral counseling is a clinical practice that integrates both psychological and theological concepts into its framework, is not unlike other modes of therapy when it comes to the therapeutic process. What sets it apart is the way faith, spirituality, and theology is incorporated into the model. Pastoral counselors posited that this incorporation of spiritual exploration and support can foster wholeness, healing, and growth in youth who are seeking help. Beyond providing psychotherapy, pastoral counselors utilize resources such as prayer,

scripture study, and participation in the congregation community to help guide people on their journey toward transcendence, transformation, and greater connection to others (Mabogunje, 2018).

In addition, as pastoral counseling can provide specialized treatment to youths seeking such, and also meet more general counseling needs; it can be considered a versatile mode of therapy. Pastoral counselors are uniquely positioned to offer a professional level of mental health treatment, while also providing spiritual guidance from a faith-based perspective (McDonald, 2017). It can offer support to those seeking family, relationship, premarital, career, and individual counseling. More specifically, it may be helpful to youths working through the challenges of life. Pastoral counselors are uniquely positioned to offer a professional level of mental health treatment, which provide spiritual guidance from a faith-based perspective (Malier, Marshall and Tarnier, 2019).

Pastoral counselors can range from ordained religious figures like priests, chaplains, and rabbis to practicing psychotherapists who provide what some call pastoral psychotherapy. They might come from any religious background and can be found in multiple settings such as congregations, counseling centers, inpatient programs, and private practice, among others. Cooperatively much can be done for the proper definition of the counselor role. But counselors must be willing to stand up and be counted. Counselors, because they are "facilitators" and are warm human beings, are too often conflict-avoidant in their behaviour. Confrontation, at times, maybe what is most needed (Westerhof, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, whatever the counseling intervention employed by counselors in attempting to address youth problems, it must be matched with the youth's developmental needs. Mismatching the intervention environment and developmental traits will result in treatment failure and further diminish the already low feelings of personal adequacy in problem youths. Understanding the interventions needed by children and youth with problems require that one clearly recognize the environmental issues that youngsters face (Mukherjee, 2011). The counselor is in a good position to consult with parents and guidance about implementing life skills programmes, counsellors have the training to apply cognitive behavioural approaches, group processes, and other developmental strategies in an effort to improve the youth's ability to adjust properly.

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