

# **YOUTHS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: FACTS, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

**By**

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## **Introduction:**

The word youth is a controversial word, and hence has received controversial and diverse definitions from different authorities and bodies. For instance, *Wikipedia* defined youth as the time of life when one is young, and often means the time between childhood and adulthood. It is also defined as “the appearance, freshness, vigour, spirit, etc., characteristic of one who is young”. For statistical consistency across regions, UN (United Nation) defines youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. This is without prejudice to other definitions of Member state. For instance, youth in Nigeria includes citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria aged 18-35 years. All in all, youth is best understood as **a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group.** However, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment. Therefore, youth is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she may leave compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment. This latter age limit has been increasing, as high levels of unemployment and the cost of setting up

an independent household put many young people into a prolonged period of dependency. In the light of the above, we shall look at the youth from the perspective of its inevitable natural realities, challenges and successes.

### **Youthful Inevitable Natural Realities**

There are inevitable realities about youths. The understanding of which will help to harness the full potentials of the youths and possibly fix their challenges. These *inevitables* are inalienable characteristics of the youths. Some of those inevitable realities include the following:

- i. **Always wanting to be with peers:** Naturally, young people flock and feel happy when they are in the midst of their colleagues. This can be done well with the recognition of the Golden Rule in Matt. 7:12 “*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you ...*” In order to achieve this, you must “*...love your neighbor as you love yourself ...*” Matt. 22:39. This implies that it takes good behaviour for you to attract good company of your colleagues. No wonder Sirach 6:5-6 says “If you are polite and courteous, you will enjoy the friendship of many people, but take advice from only one person out of a thousand” So choose your friends by the way you behave.
- ii. **Anxious of the future (Curiosity):** Youths are naturally anxious of the future. They want to know what is happening and why it is happening. Youths view the future with anxiety. Why? Because
  - There is present problem with crime, violence and drug abuse.
  - They worry about getting steady employment in a highly competitive society.
  - There is this pressure for good grades and pressure to be a higher achiever in school or at work.

***NB: To be assured of the future, one needs to follow the word of God.***

- iii. **Perfect vessel of information:** Youths naturally have receptive minds. This makes them susceptible to learn everything both good and bad, if not properly guided. They can access information easier than any other group.
- iv. **They desire independence and authority:** This accounts for the conflicts between them and all constituted authorities – parents, teachers, masters, seniors, government officials and even among peers. They often say, “Aburozikwam umuaka” (I am no longer a kid). They tend to forget this very definition of a youth as a person between the age where he/she may leave compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment.
- v. **They are more energetic:** In view of this, they are porous to violence, thuggery, strenuous work and if properly channeled, will yield numerous fruits.

### **Challenges of the Youths in a Contemporary Society**

In spite of the above realities of the youths, there are challenges associated with youthful life. Some of these challenges are as a result of the inherent realities of the youths. That is to say, they are unavoidable but can be managed and directed aright. Some of these challenges include:

- i. **Peer influence:** Youths are influenced both positively and negatively by their peers. Of course, what do you expect, birds of the same feather, flock together.
- ii. **Fear of the unknown:** Youths always look at the future with fear and this makes them feel insecure. Since the society is sick and non-futuristic, the

- youths tend to take the bull by the horns, hence, trying to bring down tomorrow's event to today.
- iii. **Social media and internet distractions:** Many youths are dead and buried in social media in such a way that they feel there is no life without social media activities. Many tweet, Facebook, WhatsApp, ping, and do all sorts of things with internet. Well, there is fundamentally nothing wrong with social media, but its wrong use is a big challenge to the present youths.
  - iv. **Unemployment:** This has become a global phenomenon. This actually has prolonged the period one is regarded as a youth. Many are now perpetual dependents on their parents even after long years of graduation. This is not entirely their fault. It is a conglomeration of many factors which are not the focal point here.
  - v. **Ignorance:** This seems to be most devastating of all. Many youths mistake stupidity for bravery; rascality for modernity; insanity for style; and nudity for fashion. These are arrays of display of ignorance at various degrees. For instance, men sag with the intention to *“belong”* but failed to know that sagging originated from prisoners, thereby making themselves prisoners ignorantly. Many women on the other hand, dress half naked with utmost ignorance of the difference between stage costumes and reality wears. In all, youths are ignorant that one is addressed the way one is dressed.
  - vi. **The three W's (WWW):** The three W's represent Weewee, Wine and Women. The most killing of all is the third W i.e. women. If you trace the history of any fallen man, you will discover that poor management of the female folk around was the bane of the situation. The word of God in Sirach 9:1-9 says it all. Let us read it from the source... To crown it all, Sirach 25:13 and 15, said “...No troubles are as serious as the troubles

women cause” “... no anger is as deadlier than the anger of a woman” So beware!

### **Successes:**

God is the bedrock of every success. So, for one to be successful in life, then one has to go to God. The word of God says, seek first the kingdom of God, and every other thing will be added unto you. Nevertheless, one has to pray as well as work, because faith without good action is a dead one as St. James declares. In view of this, for a successful youthful life that is anchored on God, let us look at some of the tips given by successful individuals. For instance, Lamasta has this to say: “To be successful as a youth in your career, you must observe the following:

- i. Do not depend on your parents’ wealth
- ii. Discover your talent, pray for it and work on it.
- iii. Reduce your involvement in social media
- iv. Appreciation is good, but learn to appreciate wisely and stop arguing football and players. When will others argue about you?
- v. Don’t rate yourself by the number of ladies or men you had sex with. Many of them have bad luck.
- vi. Maintain a healthy relationship with the opposite sex
- vii. Stop too much drinking and smoking i.e. the first two W’s
- viii. Learn to solve problems on your own
- ix. Learn to have a good heart/good will
- x. Think about the impossible things and try to make them possible.

To achieve all these, you must abide by the code given by an athlete Igna Stasiulionyte on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2016. According to him, every youth must as a matter of importance:

- i. Be at peace with God by avoiding sin, for sin is a reproach
- ii. Focus on commitment, not motivation
- iii. Seek knowledge, not result
- iv. Make the journey fun, i.e. the journey to successful life
- v. Get rid of stagnating thoughts
- vi. Use your imaginations
- vii. Stop being nice to yourself, i.e. leave your comfort zone.
- viii. Get rid of distractions, especially from bad friends and social media
- ix. Plan, for failure to plan is to play to fail.
- x. Protect yourself from burnout, that is, always find time to rest.

Finally, youths must realize themselves and push their goals in life with all seriousness and vigour. Remember, no one fails until you fail to try again. Furthermore, if you are not failing, you are not succeeding. All in all, a man is measured by the height of his ideas, the length of his endurance, the breadth of his compassion and the depth of his conviction. So compare yourself with your goals and not with other people's achievement.

I wish you all a prosperous new year and I pray God to give us the grace to abide by these words as they concern each of us.

*Thank you for listening.*