The Challenges of Tiv Youths' Development in Contemporary Society: A Socio-Political-Cum-Economic Analysis

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*Abstract— This paper examines the challenges of Tiv Youths'development in contemporary society and attempts a socio-political-cum-economic analysis of the way forward. The paper made use of secondary sources of data to get the required information for its analysis. Thus, content analysis of existing literature relevant to the issues under consideration was employed to get the findings. Meanwhile, **David Easton's Systems Theory** was used as a theoretical framework of analysis. The major findings of this paper are that the youths of any society are often referred to as future leaders of that society; the society therefore is bound to have challenges in a nearest future if the youths of that society are faced with challenges that are not carefully solved. It also means that a society is not properly secured if the welfare of the youths who are considered the bedrock of that society is not properly taken into consideration. Among the challenges facing the development of Tiv youths in contemporary society have been pointed out to include political violence and disempowerment of the youths in Tiv land; refusal to help the younger ones by the Tiv Elites; traditional practices and the "Iyuhe" syndrome amongst the Tivs; emergence of 'house-help' phenomenon and the resultant challenges; lack of interest in education on the part of the youths in modern day Tiv society; materialism and the challenges of Tiv youths' development in contemporary society; laziness and lack of entrepreneur skills as challenges; early marriage and the challenges of Tiv youths' development; lack of interest in Girl-child education among the Tiv and the challenges; bad company or relations and the challenges of Tiv youths, etc.We recommend here, amongst other things, that the reverse of the problems identified as challenges of youths' development in contemporary Tiv society be the case for enhanced progress and development of not only the Tiv youths but Tivethnic nationality and Nigeria at large.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Any society that has no problems to be solved is not likely to develop; any society that fails to solve its problems would continue to be backward; problem shared is said to be problem solved; problem shared and solved is tantamount to development in a society and vice-versa. One major cause of poverty and underdevelopment in Tivethnic nationality is bad leadership (Shaapera, 2013a). Leadership or governance, if conducted in a bad and selfish manner, breeds not only poverty, insecurity of lives and property, conflicts, but also underdevelopment in a society (Oyatomi, 2003). No one cares about the poor, destitute nor what happens to the growing rate of unemployment amongst the youths in Tiv land. The decaying level of infrastructural facilities in the Tiv-speaking areas of Benue State is actually disheartening! According to Okoye (2006:112), citing one chief Awoga, 'bad leadership has been identified as the bane of this country'; it is the country's biggest problem. The whole idea of government is to give people their best, but this is not happening in some parts of Nigeria, Tiv land inclusive.

It is a sincere assessment to state that lack of truthfulness in the allocation of societal resources by our leaders in Tiv land overtime, like lack of good management of the resources and the wealth of Nigeria, contributes so much to poverty and politics of underdevelopment instead of development in our great Tiv nationality (Shaapera, 2013a). More so, as Jibo (1993:3) notes, since the 1959 general elections in Nigeria, Tiv people had suffered so much marginalization in the political landscape of Nigeria. This scenario led to the resultant opposition meted by the Tiv race to the NPC-led regional government, a course

championed by the late Chief J.S Tarka. Apart from the deprivation of basic amenities in Tiv speaking communities of Benue State and ministerial appointments to the Tiv people during the NPC-led regional government (in northern Nigeria) and other succeeding governments in the present day Nigeria, the Tiv people also lost their reputation as an ethnic group in northern Nigeria's politics. It is generally believed, and rightly so, that "sadly, disunity among some Tiv elites detracted" the Tiv race from the benefits that could have accrued to them in Nigeria's politics"(Jibo, 1993:3).

II.   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This paper examines the challenges of Tiv Youths' development in contemporary society and attempts a socio-political-cum-economic analysis of the way forward. The problematic of the paper hinges on some basic research questions such as: (i) What are the key challenges of Tiv Youths' development in contemporary society? (ii) What theoretical explanations could be given to the challenges of Tiv Youths' development in contemporary society? (iii) What relates poverty, unemployment and inequality amongst the Youths in Tiv land with the level of underdevelopment in the area? (iv)What could be the way forward for the challenges of Tiv Youths' development in Contemporary Society?

III.   OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

(i) To assess the key challenges of Tiv Youths' development in contemporary society;
(ii) To evaluate theoretical explanations that could be given to the challenges of Tiv Youths' development in contemporary society;
(iii) To examine what relates poverty, unemployment and inequality amongst the Youths in Tiv land with the level of underdevelopment in the area;
(iv)To indicate policy measures that could be the way forward for the challenges of Tiv Youths' development in Contemporary Society.
Systematically, the paper is subdivided into seven different parts. In addition to the on-going introduction, the subsequent parts of this paper deal with statement of the problem; objectives of the paper; conceptual clarification; theoretical framework for analyzing the issues under consideration; the challenges of Tiv Youth development in contemporary society; conclusion and the way forward.

IV.   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

1.4.1   *Conceptualizing Youths*

Many authors define youths in their different ways, so, there is no single, all-inclusive definition of the concept of youth that is universally accepted. For instance, Iorkegh (2013:25) explains that:

> When the concept "youth" is mentioned, people view it differently, just like people have different views to everything. Some people look at youths as merely children of under twenty. To some, youths are seen as teenagers who are growing up. While others take them for only young males and females, others say they are unmarried people exhibiting similar characteristics…youth signifies the time of life when a person is young, especially the time before a child becomes an adult. It simply denotes the quality of being young irrespective of the gender. It is a common belief that the youths are bedrock of any given society. This belief is based on the fact that their (youths') energetic vibrancy will transmogrify the entire society…with the youths…society is secured. This could not be limited to their strength, as even their ideas are assumed to be fresher, if not more current.

What could be easily deduced from Iorkegh's (2013) submissions on the concept of youth is the ability of a society to make proper use of the young and energetic people who serve as the bedrock of that society to achieve positive or progressive changes in the living standards of the generality of the people of that society. The youths of any society are often referred to as future leaders of that society; the society therefore is bound to have challenges in a nearest future if the youths of that society are faced with challenges that are not carefully solved. It also means that a society is not properly secured if the welfare of the youths who are considered the bedrock of that society is not properly taken into consideration.

1.4.2   *The Concept of Development*

Development has to do with the creation of opportunity for the realization of human potentials which implies a directed and widely participatory process of deep and accelerated socio-political changes in the economy, the technology, the ecology and the overall culture of a nation, such that the moral and material advancement of the majority of its population can be obtained within conditions of generalized equality, dignity, justice and liberty (Rodney, 1972). Development involves positive transformation in the economy of a nation. Thus, emphasis in the analysis of development is always placed on the economy: "It is used in an exclusive economic sense-the justification being that the type of economy is itself an index of other social

features … A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organized".

Implicitly, Rodney (1972) further asserts that development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. Rodney's analysis of development is relevant to our work in the sense that it also emphasizes improved living conditions of the individuals (such as the Tiv Youths) in the society in the areas of increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing.

V.   FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

This paper adopts **David Easton's Political Systems theory** as a framework in the analysis of the challenges of Tiv Youths' development in contemporary society. According to Easton (1965), political system refers to a system of interaction or inter-relationship in any given society through which binding decisions and authoritative allocation of resources of that society are made. A political system of any nation may either be favorable or unfavorable to the different groups who continue to make inputs into the system in form of 'demands' and 'support': When a nation's political system is favorable to the groups in the environment (such as the Tiv Youths in the Tiv Political System), their demands are always taken into consideration in a conversion process and the groups also try to show some acceptance or support in the running of their affairs by those concerned; there is general acceptability of leadership and its policies; there is absence of legitimacy crisis, therefore, there are demands and support from the environment of the system in form of "inputs". These inputs are fed into the system as they undergo a conversion process through leadership initiatives and policies whose outcome may better the lots of the contending groups in the environment (the wellbeing of Tiv Youths in our case in this paper). Conversely, when there is unfavorable political system in any nationality (such as the Tiv nationality), even when the demands of the people from the environment (such as the concerns of the Tiv Youths) are fed into a conversion process and the groups also try to show some acceptance or support in the running of their affairs by those

concerned, there exists alongside inadequate acceptability of leadership and some of its policies; there is legitimacy crisis where leaders try to force or false their ways into power even when they become unpopular or rejected by the people, hence, the demands and support from the environment of the system in form of "inputs" into the system undergo a conversion process through leadership initiatives and policies whose outcome hardly better the lots of the contending groups in the environment (the wellbeing of Tiv Youths in our case in this paper).

Implicitly, in understanding the challenges of Tiv Youths in contemporary society, one needs to clearly study the Tiv political system at different organizational levels as to understand the level of concern of those in positions of responsibility amongst the Tiv people with the wellbeing and development of the Tiv Youths who are acclaimed the future leaders of Tiv nationality. Such questions as what has been happening to poverty among the Tiv Youths? What has been happening to unemployment among the Tiv Youths? What has been happening to inequality between the youths and other contending groups in the Tiv society? (also see Seers, 1969) would help us understand more of the challenges mostly faced by Tiv Youths in contemporary Society.

VI.   SOME CHALLENGES OF TIV YOUTHS' DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

The youths in contemporary age, in almost all organized societies, have been bedeviled with numerous challenges which have been said to debar them of the concept of 'development', turning them to be the problem of the society, instead of its solution. In Tiv nationality in particular, some common challenges of development among the youths in contemporary society include but not limited to the following:

1.6.1 Political Violence and Disempowerment of the Youths in Tiv land

A thorough examination of the Tiv political history has shown that the nation's sons and daughters have always been used as political thugs to engender violence in politics; at the end of the day, the same youths are abandoned by the political elites who often used them to achieve their selfish political motives: No one cares to empower the youths (Educationally, Economically, Politically or other areas) in Tiv ethnic nationality. No wonder, at a point in the political life of the people in the Tiv-speaking areas of Benue State, the weapons used by some youths to engender political violence were soon turned to be used against people who

were perceived to be wealthy; armed rubbery went wide because those used as thugs were not adequately 'settled' after the electioneering processes nor were the weapons given to them adequately retrieved. The danger had been the fact that most youths in Tivland soon perceived that involvement in armed robbery, political thuggery or violence becomes more profitable than any serious efforts to train themselves educationally or other business endeavors which has been a big source of disempowerment of the Tiv youths in contemporary society.

1.6.2 Refusal to help the Younger ones by the Tiv Elites
One worst attitude of people in Tiv ethnic nationality is that they are not ready, except a few, to help their fellow Tiv younger ones to succeed in their individual endeavors:

> If you meet a Tiv man who succeeds today with NCE to help find a teaching appointment in government for you, he or she will need a B.Sc, B. Ed or its equivalence from you; when you pursue and get one, the needed certificate will be higher than the one you have at the moment; but this is anti-development in Tiv land. This is not only found among politicians but most successful Tiv men, apart from a few. We must give kudos to a few Tiv sons who had used their official positions to help their fellow Tiv sons and daughters to either secure employment opportunities or rise in their career, such as Wantaregh Paul IorpuuUnongoAnule, who used his position as minister more than any other Tiv minister before or after him to bring the Tiv into the economic centre stage of Nigeria. Next to Unongo as Tiv minister to help fellow Tiv people, whether employment wise or other spheres, is chief Michael KaaseAondoakaa as minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Federal Republic of Nigeria. Another Tiv man to have helped, silently, is Professor James Ortese I. Ayatse, who did it when he was the Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi-Nigeria and as Vice-Chancellor, Federal University, Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria. In fact, if the Tiv land could produce as equal three or four of the kinds of Professor James Ayatse …Tiv people's welfare and economic status would change for better, because the records are there for those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear. Mention must also be made of Professor Daniel IorkeghSaror, who seriously helped when he too was the Vice-Chancellor of the Prestigious Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria-Nigeria. Apart from these few, available records show that the Tiv people do not help their fellow younger ones (See Shaapera, 2013a; Shaapera, 2017).

However, in most cases and instances, some of the Tiv elites who may be willing to help their younger ones decline to do so because of the general negative experiences most others (amongst the Tivs) got when they tried to help their fellow Tiv men or women which specific issues need not delay us here.It has been argued, therefore, that:

> In Nigeria, there is no big ministerial or political position an Idoma man, for instance, occupies which a Tiv man did not occupy before. But there is no positive impact on Tiv land compared to the impact the Idoma politicians make on socio-economic-cum-political lives of their people. Is it Senate Presidency? Compare the impact of Senator David Bonaventure Mark on the Idoma race to that of Senator DrIyorchiaAyu on the Tiv race; there is even no basis for comparison. Is it minister of interior or internal affairs? Compare the impact of DrIyorchiaAyu as Former Minister of internal affairs (interior) on the Tiv race to that of Hon Abba Morro on the Idoma race. Is it national chairman of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party in Nigeria? Compare the impact of Hon AuduOgbe on the Idoma race to that of Engr Barnabas AndyarGemade on Tiv nation. These questions are not examination questions for WAEC nor NECO, NO! They are rather rhetorical questions to ponder on and help understand [the challenges of Tiv youths' development in contemporary society] (Shaapera, 2013a; Shaapera, 2017).

1.6.3 Traditional Practices and the *"Iyuhe"* Syndrome amongst the Tiv People
Many Tiv people do not celebrate the progress and prosperity of the individual Tiv man-especially the younger ones. In the instance, parents who found it difficult to train their children to be meaningful in life hate the progress of others whose parents had the opportunity to make them meaningful in life or they themselves have been opportune in one way or the other to make a progressive living. Thus, tradition makes it difficult for our Tiv elderly ones to feel free at the progress and developmental opportunities of our youths in contemporary society, especially if such younger ones making progress are not directly their offspring. In this case, in most instances, some difficulties faced by the Tiv youths in contemporary society are directly or indirectly tied to traditional practices and the '*Iyuhe*' syndrome in their immediate or extended families…which most people do not know is a big challenge to development in the entire Tiv nationality today!.

1.6.4 Emergence of 'house-help' phenomenon and the resultant Challenges

There is no gain denying the fact that the emergence of 'house-help' phenomenon has grossly contributed to underdevelopment in most families in Tiv land just as it has contributed in enhancing the economic fortunes and wellbeing of few other families in the nationality. Where the house-help phenomenon has contributed to backwardness, the elites in most Tiv families paid no attention in training their cousins or nephews whom they went to interior villages in the Tiv localities and begged, convincingly, to bring them to the cities as helpers, some not really only house-helps. While they often push their children to go to school, they also happily engage their cousins or nephews in other business endeavors that benefit only their selfish economic fortunes at the detriment of the brighter future of those young men or women. Some who try to train their house-help segregate by sending them to training grounds they know nothing positive could come out of it to build the future of the young men or women: where they could never allow their biological children to train. This has been a long-standing challenge to Tiv youths' development in contemporaryTiv society.

1.6.5 Lack of interest in Education on the part of the youths in modern day Tiv Society

Many young men and women in our society today have refused to go to school or embrace education as a panacea to most of the challenges they face in life. On the contrary, they choose to drink around, smoke around, sleep around with opposite sex partners even when they are not legally married, etc. However, we have to note here that there are some youths who seem to have no interest in education and do the kind of unscrupulous things they do because there is actually no hope due to several other intervening factors that could not easily be explained here! They have to humble themselves and do what can make them go to school for a better future. What follows, therefore, is that **there is so much of illiteracy among the Tiv youths** in contemporary society:

> Most of the youths today hardly read and write. While others cannot read and write completely, others hardly read and write. These are two different things. The former dove-tails the person who does not go to school at all, while the later means the person who goes to school but cannot read nor write. We should not forget that when you read, you are expected to interpret the printed symbols correctly and respond to the message. When one is a reader, one is likely to become a writer.

But the reverse is the case in these days. The youths, today, do not read nor write. Even little people that claim to read do not read, following the concept of reading (see Iorkegh, 2013:25).

1.6.6 Materialism as a Challenge to Tiv Youths" Development

One major challenge that militates against the desire to develop Tiv nation in general and Tiv youths in particular is the overwhelmingly high interest in material possessions by our youths which is detrimental to the focus needed by the youths to deal with vital issues in life that would lead them to progress or development. This expresses itself in what a writer calls "**Flamboyant Fixity**":

> This occurs when an individual is concerned about material possessions before his/her time. The youths in contemporary times are focused on materialism rather than their future. These material things are … against the youths' future especially when they are acquired or pursued at the wrong time (Iorkegh, 2013:25).

Implicitly, the youths in our society often fail to plan their future because of unnecessary interest in material things at a wrong time in the history of their existence (ie too early). An adage says "what you **do today** determines what you will **be tomorrow".** So,the youthsmust shun materialism today and face hard work, endure suffering to do the right thing so as to be meaningful people in life tomorrow!

1.6.7 Laziness and Lack of Entrepreneur Skills as Challenges

I totally agree with Iorkegh (2013) that there is non-challant attitude to hard work among the youths in Tivethnic nationality these days. For instance, an educated tailor can no longer sow cloths; an educated hair dresser today undermines hair dressing, etc. These compound problems to youths as the search for white-collar jobs have become the order of the day. These lead to corruption, crimes and atrocities in the contemporary century facing the youths. These challenges could be subdued if the youths in our society develop interest in entrepreneurial skills and related activities.

1.6.8 Early Marriage and the Challenges of Tiv Youths' Development

Early marriage is no doubt a challenge to successive future of the youths in Tiv nation. Some of our young ladies are forced by their parents into such early marriages while some choose to do so due to relative circumstances surrounding

their actions or inactions. Whatever be the case, early marriages are detrimental to future successes of the youths in contemporary Tiv society. Others argue, however, that early marriages help the youths to avoid fornication and also reduce the rate of unwanted pregnancies and subsequent abortions by the youths, but the challenges faced by the youths in early marriages against their future development overwhelm the gains that might be there!

1.6.9 Lack of interest in Girl-child Education among the Tiv and the Challenges

Most young girls in our society face problems in life because their parents refused to train them in school or give them quality education. Some parents prefer to train their male children than the female ones. Some argue that let their husbands give them the training, so when such ladies are not fortunate to marry people that would have the interest nor economic capacity to train them in school, their future is permanently buried in the kitchen or the farm. When you educate a girl-child, you educate and develop a group of people, not one person: Train a mother and you would have trained a whole community!

1.6.10 Bad Company or relations and the Challenges of Tiv Youths' Development

It is commonly said that 'show me your friend and I will tell you who you are'. Some of our younger ones become bad because they follow bad boys/girls. Sometimes, it is the bad boys/girls that struggle to follow and spoil the good ones. Incidentally, the friendship our youths make today determines the nature, character and level or quality of life of our youths in contemporary society.

1.7 Conclusions and Policy Recommendations on the Way Forward

We argue in this write-up that any society that has no problems to be solved is not likely to develop; any society that fails to solve its problems would continue to be backward; problem shared is said to be problem solved; problem shared and solved is tantamount to development in a society and vice-versa. The youths of any society are often referred to as future leaders of that society; the society therefore is bound to have challenges in a nearest future if the youths of that society are faced with challenges that are not carefully solved. It also means that a society is not properly secured if the welfare of the youths who are considered the bedrock of that society is not properly taken into consideration. Among the challenges facing the development of Tiv youths in contemporary society have

been pointed out to include political violence and disempowerment of the youths in Tiv land; refusal to help the younger ones by the Tiv Elites; traditional practices and the *"Iyuhe"* syndrome amongst the Tiv; emergence of 'house-help' phenomenon and the resultant challenges; lack of interest in education on the part of the youths in modern day Tiv society; materialism and the challenges; laziness and lack of entrepreneur skills; early marriage and the challenges; lack of interest in Girl-child education among the Tivand the challenges; bad company or relations and the challenges of Tiv youths' development in contemporary society, amongst others.

Due to shortage of time, we recommend here, amongst other things, that the reverse of the problems identified as challenges of youths' development in contemporary Tiv society be the case for enhanced progress and development of not only the Tiv youths but Tiv ethnic nationality and Nigeria at large. As Iorkegh (2013:26) rightly suggests:

> Youths should pursue education and wisdom. There is an adage that says "wisdom is profitable to direct". This implies that the appropriate wisdom used will direct one to appropriate solutions. Education should be seen as a means of making oneself uncheap in the society and a means of unvailing oneself for opportunities. Primarily, it should be seen as a positive change to an individual and the society rather than a means of making money. Similarly, the youths should inculcate the habit of reading in order to debunk ignorant. This qualifies the popular adage that says "readers are leaders". If truly youths are leaders of tomorrow, then, they must be readers today. More so, priority should not be given to material things rather than the future. The person who has no electronics in the room now, yet, he/she is pursuing education is better off than he/she who acquires them without education. Just like a lady who has no boyfriend now with education, is better than a prostitute on the street without education. Also, youths should imbibe the spirit of tolerance in the society. Tolerance cuts across religious and individual beliefs/views. When youths tolerate one another, they will surely appreciate one another. This implies that they will appreciate the present for the future. Moreover, there is need for creativity among the youths. In other words, youth should incorporate hard work in addition to their profession. This could help to supplement their monthly income. Above all, there is an urgent need to put God first before any

other thing … with prayers; after all, poverty starts from spiritual realm and so is success.

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