journals.unizik.edu.ng/jcpl/index ISSN: 2736-0342
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA
JOURNAL OF COMMERCIAL AND PROPERTY LAW Vol. 12(4), September, 2025

HARNESSING IGBO YOUTHS' HUNGER FOR SUCCESS: ADVOCATING FOR YOUTHS LEADERSHIP AS HUMAN CAPITAL

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Abstract
Leadership as human capital entails investing in youths through education, vocational studies, apprenticeship and mentoring for the purpose of development. While Igbo's intrinsic hunger for success can be traced to their rich cultural heritage that propels them to work hard, create wealth and enjoy financial freedom. Hence, their entrepreneurial spirit and drive to make wealth is often interpreted as 'love for money'. The study aims to strike a balance between Igbo youths' materialistic quest and the need to invest in human capital. The work investigates the economic, social and cultural rights that provides for the investment in human capital and examined factors that hinder same. The work found that investment in human capital is jeopardised by the non justiciability of Chapter (ii) of the 1999 Constitution which is very critical for achievement of human capital. The work found that unemployment and poverty is the greatest challenge of Nigerian youths, hence this condition has driven thousands of Nigerian youths to engage in criminal activities. Further, the work discovers that the inability of the government to provide enabling conditions for development of human capital is a serious gap that makes youths susceptible to nefarious activities. The study observed that, investment in human capital is precedent to national development and recommends for urgent review of Chapter (ii) of the 1999 Constitution.

Key Words: Investment, Human Capital, 1999 Constitution, Youths.

1. Introduction

The Igbos constitute one of the three major ethno-linguistic groups in Nigeria. They are domiciled in what is today known and referred to as the South East geo-political zone, which is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria[1].The South East geo-political zone consists of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states. These five states are the traditional home of the Igbo in present day Nigeria[2]. Apart from these five states, there are large populations of the Igbo in Delta and Rivers states of Nigeria.

Igbo's love for money is linked to their rich cultural heritage which promotes economic inclusion and social stability. Hence, the average Igbo man is an ardent trader or business man that creates wealth and makes investment for continuity and sustainability. Thus, the Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria is widely recognized for its entrepreneurial spirit and relentless pursuit of financial success. Hence, this deep rooted drive, often labelled as "love for money" is both a cultural strength and social challenge[3].

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[1] E U M Igbo and C O Ugwoke, 'Crime and Crime Control in Traditional Igbo Society of Nigeria', (2013) 3(3) *Developing Country Studies*

[2] ibid.

[3] J C Iwoha, E E Uzodimma and K C Njoku, 'Combating Unemployment and Youth Criminality in Ala Igbo Using Akuruoulo Principle: A Focus on Imo State Okobi' (2025) 10(1) *Journal of Economics and Allied Research*, 103-114.

However, where this drive is not channelled in positive direction their youths often engage in negative means to make money. In recent times, the economic realities in Nigeria caused by diverse factors such as unemployment [4]and insecurity have negative impacts on Nigeria youths, particularly Igbo youths who have strong inclination for wealth. Many are trapped in social vices and crimes such as practice of *oke ite*, human ritual, organ harvesting, trafficking, cybercrime, kidnapping, robbery and armed robbery. According to Nigerian Bureau of Statistics Crime Experience and Security Perception Report, 2024, Nigeria recorded a total of 2.23 million kidnapping incidents in Nigeria[5].Hence, instead of working hard by engaging in trade or apprenticeship like their antecedents they engage in social vices. Unfortunately, Igbos that are admired for their entrepreneurial skill, resilience and tenacity are now being overshadowed by acts of violence. Accordingly, this study advocates that the drive for materialism inherent in Igbo youths should be properly harnessed and developed into leadership by investing in human capital. Hence, engaging them in education, skill acquisition and generally providing them with enabling environment like their counterparts in other jurisdictions will enable them make positive impact in every sphere. However, the work observed that the greatest problem that must be tackled for attainment of human capital in Nigeria is urgent review of section 6(6) (c) of 1999 Constitution which ousts the jurisdiction of the court from entertaining any matters in Chapter (ii) of the Constitution. This is apposite because the non justifiability of chapter (ii) of the 1999 Constitution makes it practically difficult for the citizens of Nigeria to enjoy their rights. The study makes some proposal such as, whether the review of chapter (ii) of the 1999 Constitution is sacrosanct for investment in human capital. Secondly,whether the government of Nigeria has provided the enabling environment for investing in human capital. Thirdly, whether there are encumbrances that hinder investment in human capital. Fourthly, whether there is need for collaboration between the civil society and the government to achieve investment in human capital. Finally, whether investment in our youths will positively impact the Igbo community and Nigeria.

2. The Need for Youth Leadership as Human Capital

Human capital refers to the value that individuals bring to a society through their skills, knowledge, creativity and leadership.[6] Hence, it refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and health that people possess, which contribute to their productivity and economic value. It's a way of viewing people not just as labour but as valuable assets who can generate economic output through their capabilities.[7]Accordingly, education and training, experience, health, social and communication skills, innovation and creativity are hall marks of human capital.

Igbo land is blessed with vibrant youths that are full of energy, brilliance and ambition, hence, the need to channel their drive for money into developing thinkers, that make positive impact in every sphere. Invariably, investing in human capital will have tremendous change in Nigeria because they will abhor social vices and embrace political reform, technological innovation, education renewal and cultural preservation. Hence, the need to change the narrative by providing them enabling environment and eradicating numerous factors that impede their growth and development. However, to achieve this, the government shall intentionally curb factors that impede investment in human capital and enhance youth empowerment. In fact, to invest in human capital the government should be intentional about their empowerment. Empowerment should be directed to the youths, being acknowledged as formidable social force and the most active of any society imbued with relentless energy, vigour and drive. This is critical because youths are agents of social reform and transformation, the major catalyst for development in any society[8].

[4] J Oluwaleye, 'Youth Unemployment, Rising Criminality and the Challenge of Sustainable Security in Nigeria's South West Region', <https://onlineacademicpress.com>, accessed 25 May 2025.
[5] Punch Newspapers, 'A Fresh Look at NBS Data on Kidnapping in Nigeria', <punchng.com> accessed 25 May 2025.
[6] G S Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, (National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc, 1964)
[7] T.W. Schultz, 'Investment in Human Capital.' (1961) 51 (1) *The American Economic Review*, 1-17
[8] J T,Nwanakwere, 'Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research NISER, Nigeria'. Vol15, No6 (2019)

3. The Rights of Youths to Human Capital

The law has provided copiously for the enhancement of human capital under the 1999 Constitution. The Constitution is the grundnorm that provides validity for other laws in the Nigerian Legal system, hence, the ultimate source of legal authority, shaping the framework of the country's laws and governance. These rights are captured as the social, economic and cultural rights under chapter (ii) of the 1999 Constitution. It is critical to note that human rights are categorized as civil and political rights known as first generation rights, while the economic, social and cultural rights are known as second generational rights. The second generational rights are critical for the enjoyment of the first generational rights. These rights include, rights to education, rights to health, rights to quality environment, rights to good standard of living.[9]However, these rights are enfeebled by virtue of Sec 6 (6) (c) of the 1999 Constitution, which bars the court from entertaining any matter within the purview of chapter (ii) of the1999 Constitution. These rights are known as fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy. It is argued that they are mere objectives that will be fulfilled by the Government depending on the availability of resources, hence they are not enforceable.

Internationally, they are recognized and referred to as economic, social and cultural rights (ECOSOC).Some of these rights include : the right to work, the right to safe, healthy, decent, just and satisfactory working condition, the right to equal pay for work, the right to organize, form and join trade union, the rights of children and young persons to protection, the rights to protection of health, the rights to social security, the right to social and medical assistance and the right to adequate nutrition. Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), these rights have been defined as rights that protect the necessities of life by providing the foundation upon which human development can occur and human freedom can flourish. Similarly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) outlines several provisions related to economic, social and cultural rights. With respect to economic rights, everyone has the right to work, free choice of employment, and protection against unemployment[10], rights to adequate standard of living, adequate for their health and well- being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care[11]. While, article 26 provides that everyone has the right to education, which shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights.[12]Further, with respect to cultural rights, it provides for rights to participation in cultural life of the community, enjoy the cultural life of the community, enjoy the arts, and share in scientific advancement[13]. It provides for rights to protection of moral and material interest resulting from any scientific, literary, or artistic production.[14]Additionally, it provides for right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holiday with pay. Accordingly, these rights are critical for investment in human capital. The question that comes to fore is, if these rights are critical for human development, why are they denied to majority of citizens making it impracticable difficult for them to be developed like their counterparts in other jurisdictions. One wonders how investment will be made in human capital and developed to make positive impact without proper backing from the Government. Accordingly, under the Nigerian Constitution, developmental rights are non-justiciable that is, they cannot be enforced in the law courts. As the name suggests they are mere principles and objectives and are not considered as rights, they do not have any binding status under the Constitution. In fact, section 6(6)(c) of the Constitution provides that:

> *there shall not extend to any issue or question as to whether any act or omission by any authority or person or as to whether any law or any judicial decision is in*

[9] J K,Mapulanga -Hulston, 'The International Journal of Human Rights, Vol.6(4), pp 29 -48.
[10] Universal Declaration of Human Right (UDHR), article 23
[11] ibid, article 25.
[12] ibid, article 26
[13] ibid, article 27
[14] ibid.

> *conformity with the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy set out in chapter (ii) of this Constitution.*

What this means in essence is that ECOSOC rights are not rights in Nigeria. They are merely advisory and have no force of law for the judicial powers vested by the Constitution. Hence, it only be a misnomer to call any of them a right when it does not confer any claim on the citizen and no corresponding duty on the state. It is therefore non-fundamental, non-justifiable and unenforceable. However, the only justifiable right that recognized by the Constitution are only civil and political rights that are enshrined in chapter (iv) of the Constitution. Accordingly, it is worthy of note that, human rights are interdependent, interrelated and indivisible. This means that they cannot work independently, for instance the civil and political rights cannot operate without the economic, social and cultural rights. One cannot enjoy the right to life without enjoying the rights to health, the right to healthy environment free from pollution, the right to a good standard of living such as food, water, shelter etc. Accordingly, if that is the true position, there is no justification for the discriminatory enforcement of human rights as more fundamental than the other to insist that one is more fundamental than the other is a misconception. It is critical to note that economic, social and cultural right (ECOSOC) is precedent for the enjoyment of other rights stipulated in chapter (iv) of the Constitution. Accordingly, investment in human capital can never be realized without the guarantee of economic, social and cultural rights because they are pivotal to man's existence. One cannot talk about investment in human capital without rights to education, knowledge and skill acquisition, where the government has cunningly withdrawn the rights to education from her citizens making it practicable impossible for the poor to access education which is very critical for investment in human capital. Accordingly, the work makes serious advocacy for urgent intervention by the court. It is apposite to note that the court being the last hope of the common man should proactively step in to ameliorate the plight of Nigerian youths by enforcing those rights. Hence, the position of the court is apposite in enjoying and accessing the economic, social, cultural rights. It is pertinent to note that many jurisdictions like South Africa and India have made their economic and sociocultural rights justiciable, so that their citizens will enjoy social justice. A few instances will show the approach of the Indian Court. In *Deo Singh Tomer v State of Bihar,*[15]it was held that a person's rights to hearing was intrinsic to his right to life. Similarly, in *Mohim Jain v State of Katamaka*[16], the Indian Supreme Court invalidated a state law which permitted medical colleges to charge exorbitant admission fees on the ground that it discriminated against the poor, and in effect curtailed the right to education which is essential to the right to life. Also, in *UPSE Board v Harri Shanker*[17], the court re-affirmed that the right to education is an intrinsic part of the right to life. The court observed that though it cannot enforce the observance of the principles, they are nevertheless bound to evolve, affirm and adjust principles of interpretation which will further and not hinder the goals set out in the Directive Principles.[18]

Accordingly, the paper suggests that we borrow a leaf from them by giving liberal interpretation to Chapter (ii) of the Constitution to enable us invest in youth development in every sphere. After all, the plenary powers vested in the Courts under the 1999 Constitution is a clear indication that the Courts under the 1999 Constitution have been positively assigned a role for setting an agenda for public policy. Thus, the Nigerian Courts have a constitutional leeway to make public policy choices and programmes depending on the needs of society[19]. As Justice Oputa rightly observed:

> *…although the Courts are creatures of the Constitution yet their interpretative jurisdiction (their power to interpret the Constitution) does not seem to place them above the Constitution. The Constitution is a mere skeleton. It is interpretation by*

[15] (1988) AIR SC 1782.
[16] (1992) AIR SC 1964
[17] (1999) AIR SC 65
[18] S.I. Nwatu, Legal Framework for the Protection of Socio-Economic Rights in Nigeria, (2011-12) 10 *Nigerian Juridical Review*, 23
[19] ibid

> *the courts that adds flesh and infuses blood into the skeleton to make it a living organism. It is therefore not an idle boast to say that the Constitution is what the judge say it is.*[20]

Every society, and more especially every democratic society is often confronted with certain critical questions which relates to issues of social justice, protection of human rights, curbing executive lawlessness, checking corruption, etc. To grapple with these issues, the courts must, therefore, consciously engage in judicial law making, so as to exemplify the interrelatedness of law and social change. Thus, in a developing society, such as ours, there is nothing in law to conserve when the citizens are suffering from poverty, hunger and unemployment[21].It is gratifying to note that Nigerian courts seem to be waking up from slumber. Hence, the attitude of the Supreme Court in *Atake v Afejuku*[22] is quite commendable. In that case one of the issues was whether the appellant, a retired judge could represent himself as a legal practitioner, in view of section 256 of the 1979 Constitution which provides that a judicial officer on ceasing to hold office cannot appear or act as a Legal Practitioner. In holding that the appellant could represent himself, the court had recourse to the non-justiciable section of 17(2)(a) in Chapter (ii) of the 1979 Constitution and Section 33(1) of the justiciable Chapter (iv) of the same Constitution. Similarly, in *Adamu v A.G. Borno State*, it was held that where in the implementation of Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, say on ground of religion, a breach of a citizen's fundamental right of freedom of religion and freedom from discrimination occurs, that breach of fundamental right is justiciable.[23] The study is of the view that the courts have a critical role to play with respect to justiciability of Chapter (ii) of the Constitution. In fact, what we expect of our Courts is to demonstrate preparedness as the Courts in India have done, through progressive interpretation, utilize and enforce provisions of Chapter (iv), to make Chapter (ii) justiciable.

Interestingly, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights where Nigeria ratified and domesticated as part of its municipal law makes no distinction between civil and political rights and ECOSOC rights. The Charter gives equal priority and importance to both sets of rights. Apart, from the above, Nigeria is also a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC) and as a state party, it has an obligation to ensure the realization and implementation of economic, social and cultural right.

4. Factors That Impede Investment in Human capital and Youth Empowerment Programmes In Nigeria

Many challenges hinder Igbo Youths from harnessing their natural talents and gifts towards the right direction and they include: social, economic and legal factors.

(a) Economic Factor:

(i)Poverty: One of the factors that hinder Igbo youth from focussing on great future thereby adding value to their lives is poverty. The current hash economic reality in Nigeria has negatively affected the youths, making them susceptible to crime. Additionally, economic instability has greatly impacted our economy due to inflation which has drastically affected the job market.

(b)Social Factors:

(i) Socio-economic Status: Family background, income level and social status affect the value of individual and what he can contribute to the society. Hence, those from wealthy families can readily access education, skill and knowledge while those from low income families may not be able to access them.

[20] J C Oputa, 'The Independence of the Judiciary, Myth or Reality' in Amuheazi and Olatawura(eds.), The Judiciary and Democracy in Nigeria (Abuja: National Orientation Agency, 1998), p110
[21] Oputa, JSC'S Valeddictory Address, October 1989.
[22] (1994)9NWLR(Pt.368)399.
[23] Nwatu (n18).

(ii) Cultural and social norms: Cultural values and social norms that influence investment in human capital include gender inequality which can be attributed to our patriarchal system, for instance male preference, early marriage is discriminatory against the girl child and makes her susceptible to violence. Many women are poor today because they were denied access to basic education which is pivotal for human capital. The paper argues that, that Nigeria should promote women and girl child investment in human capital because their role in growth and developments of nation cannot be compromised. It should be noted that Nigeria has ratified agreements upholding and protective of women and the rights of the girl child, such as the CEDAW and African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights[24]. Despite the endorsement of CEDAW and the protocols in Nigerian law, the global agreements are not inclusive of the general law except tame by the Constitution. Nevertheless, the protocol is yet to be tamed in Nigerian law which invariably impedes the implementation of the law in the Nigerian society[25].

Apart from education, several social factors like insecurity, access to opportunities, cultural and social norms, corruption have hampered the growth and development of our youths. With respect to corruption, the government and every strata of the society is affected with the menace of corruption. A society where the government is not answerable to anybody and public fund is embezzled with impunity, **for** instance with respective to education, the universal Basic Education (UBE) Act 2004 provides for free, compulsory and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age. It provides that every government in Nigeria shall provide free compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age. [2]It is critical to know that the Act establishes the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to coordinate and monitor implementation across the country. Furthermore, it provided a funding structure including federal allocations to states conditions on compliance with implementation standard. However, these rights are rarely enjoyed by Nigerian youths and children because our leaders lack the political will to channel the funds to facilitate development in human capital. In fact, many of our leaders use the public funds to train their children in the best schools in abroad while the populace wallow in abject poverty. Till date, these laudable provisions of funding structure to facilitate compulsory education is a mirage and not tangible to majority of children in Nigeria. In fact, it is laughable to say that Nigerian Government cannot enforce economic rights, the truth is that if they do they may not have enough funds to loot, for example if they use the money stipulated for education and health to enhance the lives of Nigerians, where will they get the money to sponsor their children abroad. Hence, corruption is always the cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the society. Corruption is a serious challenge to the success of investment and development programmes. Due to corruption, laudable programme have been stunted in both high and low places, which means that there is no proper management and accountability[26].

One of these programme is National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which incorporates Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES). Social Welfare Services(SWS), among others was set up in 2001 during Obasanjo tenure to addressing poverty in Nigeria and other related issues.[27] This programme was set up to coordinate and oversee various institutions ministries, parastatals like National Directorate was set up to coordinate and oversee various institution , ministries, parastatals like National Directorate of Employment(NDE) that are having related function to poverty eradication, empowerment, etc NAPEP produced guidelines and plans for these institutions to actualize their objectives, which encompasses vocational training of youths to youths to acquire basic entrepreneurial skills granting of micro-loans, supporting internship by giving stipends

[24] TBC, Omorogiuwa, 'Rights of Women in a Challenging Nigerian Society', National Technical University of Ukraine Journal, Political Science, Sociology Law, <https://doi org/10.20535/2308.20223 (55). 269533> accessed on 10/6/2023.
[25] ibid.
[26] J B,Undie and S.D, Edinyang, Youths Empowerment as a Panacea for Social Problems in Nigeria, (2015) 17(5) *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*
[27] ie.youth empowerment. Ibid.

throughout the duration of the training, creating employment in the automobile industry, and helping visco virgina fistula (WF)[28] .This programme is seen as an improvement over the previous Nigeria governments poverty reduction programmes. According to a 2008 analysis, the programme has been able to train 130,000 youths and engage 216,000 persons, but most of the beneficiaries were non-poor.[29] The poor youths need empowerment would not be given the opportunity but for their relations and the significant others of those managing the programme[30].

In 2012, President Jonathan Goodluck, launched the public works and women/youths empowerment (PW/WYE) project targeted at generating about 370,000 jobs across the country[31]. In that programme emphasis was placed on youth empowerment and seeks to target the largest population of unskilled, unemployed poor women and youths as well as other vulnerable groups in our society by presenting them with opportunities in the public works programmes and internships in firms for the skilled and educated. Given the experiences gotten from the challenges that have been crippling the previous programmes, one is left in a deep doubt, if subsequent ones will not be an abysmal fiasco. Hence, the need for the Government to be proactive in tackling social challenges by mounting surveillance structures that will act as supervise programmes for youth's empowerment[32].

5. Youths and ICT-A Powerful Combination for Promoting Leadership

The information and communication technology (ICT) revolution has radically changed the world we live in. Young people in particular have demonstrated an aptitude in developing, adopting and disseminating such technologies, and their leadership role in this sphere is evident throughout both the industrialized and developing world. In fact, ICT adoption can be used both as a tool to promote youths as leaders in the ICT sector and to foster broader youth leadership. With an impact that is cross -cutting, ICT can, therefore contribute to youth participation in a wide range of economic, social and political activities, for instance new technologies can be used for improving access to and quality of education for African youth[33]. With the necessary infrastructure, technologies like online learning can bring a high standard of education to remote, rural communities. Moreover, in a global economy characterized by skill -intensity, young Africans increasingly require a range of ICT skills in order to get a decent job. Equipping youths with such skills can also have a catalytic effect on innovation and entrepreneurship, contributing to economic development[34].ICT also facilitates youths participation in civic discussions, providing young people with a voice on a range of topics. Electronic for a involving African youths have been successfully undertaken by international agencies like the United Nations[35] .Such initiative not only assist young people to exchange and develop ideas, but also help inform policy makers and practitioners. The success of the struggle for leadership change in Egypt and other places by the youth can be attributed to one of the effects of ICT[36]. However, despite its advantages, ICT adoption in much of African remains low, for instance, there are only 0.75 computer users per 100 inhabitants-this is to say small proportions of young Africans have access to the Internet. Moreover, due to differences in income and access to infrastructure, the digital-divide on the continent is demarcated not only by national boundaries but also with countries[37].Fortunately, decreasing prices and recent advances, particularly in mobile telephony, have helped expand access to ICT on the continent, especially amongst the

[28] ibid.
[29] ibid.
[30] ibid.
[31] ibid.
[32] ibid.
[33] I D, Ikerionwu, Youth and Economic Development in the 21st Century Africa
[34] ibid.
[35] ibid.
[36] ibid.
[37] ibid.

youths. Nonetheless, government and partners have a lot more to do to eliminate disparities in ICT adoption[38].

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study strikes a balance between materialism and the need to invest in human capital because investment in human capital is a sine qua non for impact in every sphere of the society. Hence, the importance of investment in Igbo youths can never be over emphasized because it is critical for sustainability and development.

The work discovered that there are many factors that curtail and hinder investment in human capital, such as legal, social, economic and cultural factors. With respect to legal factors, the work found that, so many legal frameworks that protects the sociocultural rights are laced with lapses that make it impracticable for the implementation and enjoyment of these rights. Hence, jeopardising the rights to development such as education, training, vocational studies and health. Accordingly, the drive for materialism which is inherent in Igbo youths should be properly harnessed and developed into leadership by investing in human capital.

Recommendations

(1) The study calls for urgent review of Chapter (ii) of 1999 Constitution, particularly Section 6(6)(c) of the 1999 Constitution which ousts the jurisdiction of the court from entertaining any matter in chapter (ii) of the 1999 Constitution.
(2) To curb corruption to the barest minimum and make policies that will encourage investment in human capital such as ICT policy.
(3) Collaboration between the Government and Non Governmental Organization is very critical for youth development and investment in human capital.
(4) The Government should encourage financial and strategic support of ICT youth led enterprises.
(5) The Government should encourage financial and strategic support for Nigerian youth to enhance investment in human capital.
(6) Career counselling for youths is critical and such structures should be handy for investment in human capital.
(7) Factors that hinder investment in human capital particularly, cultural practices that are inimical to the girl child should be truncated.

[38] ibid.