

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Voices: Socio-economic Implication of Adolescent Challenges and Prospects in Rural and Urban Areas in Adamawa State, Nigeria, a Qualitative Approach

Amos Nuhu Sunday

Postgraduate Student, Department of Economics,
Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa, Nigeria

Abstract:

Young people are the leaders of tomorrow. What happens to them now should concern every responsible adult and is worth scholarly attention. The study captured the voices of adolescents in rural and urban areas in Adamawa state in a bid to understand the socio-economic challenges and opportunities that young adolescents are exposed to in their formative years. The Focus Group Discussion technique was used to interview and generate responses from 325 rural and urban adolescents in Dumne, Lainde, Yola town, and Demsa areas. Their responses were recorded in a notepad and later typed into MS word. Results revealed the challenges of adolescents in rural and urban areas, which include:

- Lack of sporting facilities,
- Inadequate science teachers,
- Inability to pay school fees,
- Inadequate classes and facilities,
- Overpopulated classes,
- Lack of employment opportunities for out-of-school adolescents,
- Lack of social amenities and unplanned marriage

Urban adolescents unanimously respond that lack of self-esteem, stress, and being overworked are their major challenges. High poverty rates among young people and discrimination have also been stated as the challenges that young people face in urban areas. The study concludes that the challenges faced by young adolescents pose a huge threat to the well-being of young people and their productivity, thus affecting the future prospects that the labour force is expected to contribute to the economic growth of the State. However, available opportunities in the State, such as education, healthcare, and parental support, provide concrete means for which adolescents' challenges can be neutralized to guarantee healthy and productive individuals. The study, therefore, recommends practical steps that would ensure the rights of the child are guaranteed to protect the well-being of adolescents through the provision of accessible and quality education, shelter, and healthy nutrition. For out-of-school adolescents, practical steps to assist young adolescents in acquiring entrepreneurial skills are required to help them become economically self-reliant. Efforts should also be made to purposefully engage young people in speaking up about issues that hurt them without fear of being resented or intimidated in their immediate environment.

Keywords: Voices, socio-economic, adolescents, challenges, opportunities, rural, urban, Adamawa state, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The adage that 'children are the leaders of tomorrow' has always been true because future leaders always emerge from them. A nation without young people will soon disappear, and that nation has no future. It was in 1959 that the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which defines children's rights to protection, education, health care, shelter, and good nutrition. The Declaration is to ensure that young people all over the world grow up and grow up well. However, despite the noble objectives of the Rights of the child, young people still face difficulties accessing quality education, protection, quality health care, shelter, and healthy nutrition. Amos (2022) reported in his study on adolescent challenges in Karalugwe that young people have enormous difficulty in accessing education, social amenities, health care services, clean water, and security. The challenges adolescents face can be detrimental to their overall well-being, hampering their future productivity even while they are still young. Young people need to grow up well so that the nation's future stock of human resources will be optimally efficient and serve the needs of the nation. Therefore, the efficacy of a nation's human capital depends on how well young people develop without problems hindering their progress. Whether the challenges facing young people are known and allowed to hinder the growth of their individual potentials or are surmounted through deliberate policies and programmes that allow young people to blossom in their respective endeavours in school or at home should be worth scholarly investigation.

Like young people elsewhere, adolescents in Adamawa state also face difficult challenges that can be detrimental to their progress at school and participation at the community level. These challenges caused by differences in social and economic developments around the State, culture, and religion determine the extent and dimension those challenges pose to adolescents in the State. Consequently, urban adolescents may be facing different socio-economic challenges compared with their counterparts in rural areas because of the problems posed by the high level of socio-economic progress in urban centers in relation to low-level socio-economic progress prevalent in rural communities (Amos, 2022). These challenges that adolescents face have enormous social and economic implications for the development of human capital, policy, programmes of the government, and remedial interventions for mitigating the effect of low-level socio-economic progress in rural areas and also for solving adolescent challenges arising from the complex life of urban centers. Furthermore, if adolescent challenges in the State are allowed to fester, the implication for the State's future socio-economic development plans may be jeopardized. Whether it is that of human capital, which is an essential factor for determining a nation's stock of labour resources, or that of a safe and secure society, adolescent challenges should be given utmost priority. Thus, capturing the voices of adolescents becomes absolutely necessary for understanding the dimension of adolescent needs, challenges, and opportunities to have solutions to their problems. The study, therefore, is an attempt to capture the voices of adolescents, analyze and discuss the economic implication of the challenges facing them and explore relevant opportunities that can benefit young adolescents in rural and urban areas in Adamawa state. Therefore, the voices of adolescents should enable us to understand what adolescents in rural and urban areas think about themselves, feel, want, and expect about their living conditions and future aspirations.

2. Empirical Literature

Amos (2022) studied the socio-economic challenges of adolescents in Karalugwe, Adamawa state, Nigeria: A qualitative approach. The study explored the socio-economic challenges that adolescents in Karalugwe face as they grow up. These challenges form a significant aspect of adolescents' social progression and healthy development in the pursuit of their life's ambitions and goals. The Focus Group Discussion technique was used to generate responses from 33 adolescents (15 males and 18 females) who were randomly selected for discussion. Responses were recorded in a notebook and analyzed, revealing the challenges faced by adolescents, both in-school and out-of-school, in rural areas. The results revealed that adolescents in Karalugwe have enormous difficulty in accessing education, social amenities, health care services, clean water, and security. The study concludes that rural adolescents face stiff resistance on the path to fulfilling their life's ambition. In order to have equal opportunities for all, the study recommended that it is important to close the gap arising from low-level socio-economic conditions of adolescents in rural areas by providing means and facilities for accessing quality education, efficient and affordable health care, social amenities, road infrastructure, and security. Infrastructural development, such as roads and the provision of social amenities, would be required to improve the lives of adolescents in rural areas.

Scott, Rivera, Rushing, Manczak, Rozek & Doom (2021) opined that the COVID-19 pandemic presents unique challenges for adolescents because of school and social life disruptions. The researchers compiled a diverse group (36.8% non-white or multi-racial) of high schoolers' open-ended responses to the question: "What are your three biggest challenges right now?" (N = 719 adolescents). Using open and axial coding, the researchers identified N = 1,902 thematic units (M = 2.64, SD = .701) and 14 thematic categories, including mental health, physical health, family, friends, social connection and community, academics, missing important events, socio-economic issues, routine, COVID rules and adjustment, contraction/exposure to COVID, technology, and future plans. The study reported that adolescents most commonly reported challenges related to academics (23.7%) but also cited high numbers of challenges in mental (14.8%) and physical (13.2%) health and friend (11.4%) domains. Therefore, the study concluded that efforts should be made to focus on helping adolescents cultivate academic skills needed during school closures, providing mental/physical health resources, and helping them navigate peer relationships, especially given ongoing remote education and social distancing due to the pandemic.

Knaappila, Marttunen, Fröjd, Lindberg & Kaltiala-Heino (2018) opined that bullying at school has far-reaching impacts on adolescent well-being and health. The study aimed to examine trends in bullying at school according to socio-economic adversities among Finnish adolescents from 2000 to 2015. A population-based school survey was conducted biennially among 14-16-year-old Finns between 2000 and 2015 (n = 761,278). Distributions for bullying, being bullied, and socio-economic adversities were calculated. Associations between bullying involvement, time, and socio-economic adversities were studied using binomial logistic regression, with results shown by odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals. At the population level, the likelihood of bullying and being bullied varied only slightly between 2000 and 2015. Bullying and being bullied were associated with socio-economic adversities (low parental education, not living with both parents, and parental unemployment in the past year). Unlike in the general population, the likelihood of bullying and being bullied increased markedly among adolescents with the most socio-economic adversities. The increased socio-economic difference in bullying involvement observed in this study adds to the mounting evidence of polarization of adolescent health and well-being. Socio-economic adversities should be considered in the prevention of bullying at school. In addition, socio-political measures are needed to decrease socio-economic inequalities among Finnish adolescents.

Miller, Baptist & Johannes (2018) opined that barriers to developmental health care and health information that all adolescents need are necessary but compounded by the unique rural socio-environment and the involvement of multiple systems - family, school, peers, and healthcare providers - rooted within communities that may hinder adolescents from becoming thriving, contributing citizens. It is crucial that adults in rural communities seek to hear, strengthen, and empower young people through education, sharing of personal experiences and struggles,

focusing adolescents' time and energies on positive, pro-health activities, and providing positive role models. Attaining and maintaining good health is a lifelong process. Learning how to be healthy takes time and effort. Communities that lack recreational resources for adolescents to have positive 'downtime to unwind,' engage with others in the community, and re-energize do a disservice to adolescents who want to be active and thriving. The lack of healthy forms of recreation and community engagement can lead to boredom and engagement in activities that may not be the safest or healthiest.

Yeresyan & Lohaus (2014), in a study, focused on stress experiences and the psychological well-being of adolescents from rural and urban areas of Turkey and Germany. It also analyzed the role of social support, family problem-solving, and self-construals (independent vs. interdependent) for stress and well-being in the different sub-samples. The sample included a total of 1,850 high school students (500 Turkish urban, 771 Turkish rural, 268 German urban, and 311 German rural). The participants filled in questionnaires related to coping, self-construal, stress, and well-being. The results indicated that the perception of stress is higher for Turkish adolescents than for German adolescents. Moreover, it was found that adolescents who live in rural parts experience more stress than their urban counterparts in both countries. In line with this, adolescents in rural regions report lower well-being than adolescents in urban regions. However, the latter difference between urban and rural regions is only salient for adolescents who live in Turkey. The search for possible factors associated with stress and well-being showed that coping variables related to social support and solving family problems and variables related to the interdependent-independent distinction might be relevant as predictors. Most of the predicting variables showed non-moderated associations. There were only a few moderations related to nation (Turkey vs. Germany), location (urban vs. rural), or sex. The current study leads to a better understanding of stress experiences and the well-being of adolescents living in rural and urban areas. Consequently, improving social systems, especially in developing countries, may support youths to cope with stress effectively and improve their psychological well-being.

Humensky, Kuwabara, Fogel, Wells, Goodwin & Van Voorhees (2010) examined school performance among 83 adolescents at risk for major depression. Negative mood interfered with subjective measures of school performance, including the ability to do well in school, complete homework, concentrate in class, interact with peers, and attend class. No significant relationships were found between mood and objective measures of school performance (school attendance, English, and Math grades). Students with a college-educated parent had stronger performance in objective measures (school attendance and Math grades), whereas males had lower English grades. In qualitative interviews, adolescents reported that negative thinking led to procrastination, which led to poor school performance and more negative thinking. Adolescents with depressive symptoms that do not meet the threshold for referral report struggles in school. Understanding the specific challenges faced by adolescents with even low levels of depressive symptoms can help school nurses, teachers, and parents identify appropriate interventions to help adolescents succeed in school.

Torre, Masala, Vito, Langiano, Capelli & Ricciardi (2006) opined that the relationship between physical activity and the health status of adolescents has been thoroughly investigated in several studies, while the relation between physical activity and socio-economic status (SES) is less investigated. The study aimed to measure the extra-curricular physical activity of adolescents related to the socio-economic status (SES) of their families. The survey was carried out by submitting an anonymous questionnaire to junior high school students in the regions of Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, and Puglia during the school year 2002–2003. Extra-curriculum physical activity was evaluated by considering whether or not present and hours of weekly activity conducted. 2411 students agreed to participate in the study. Results indicate that participants were 1121 males (46.5%) and 1290 females (53.5%), aged between 11 and 17 years (median age: 12 years). 71.1% of the students reported practicing extra-curricular physical activity. Parents' educational levels and work activities play an essential role in predicting students' physical activity, with the more remunerative activities and higher educational levels being more predictive. The study concluded that the outcome confirmed the relationship between adolescents' physical activity and their families' SES. In particular, a positive relationship between participation in extra-curricular physical activity and their families' high SES was found. These data will be useful for school administrators and politicians to reduce the gap between adolescents from the least and the most disadvantaged families.

3. Research Methodology

The study made use of primary data only. The data were generated from Focused Group Discussions with adolescents in Dumne, Girei (Lainde), Yola metropolis, Demsa metropolis, and Numan metropolis in Adamawa state. Dumne and Lainde (Girei) represent a rural community, while Yola, Demsa, and Numan represent urban communities. A total of 325 adolescents comprising 200 adolescent boys aged between 10-19 and 125 girls aged between 10-19, were interviewed with the same set of questions which were used to generate responses. These responses were recorded in a notepad and later typed into a computer using Microsoft word. Purposive sampling technique was used to select adolescents from the communities representing rural and urban centers in Adamawa state. The population comprised adolescents in-school and out-of-school, both male and female, in rural and urban centers. The adolescents were grouped into smaller clusters to reflect appropriate age grouping, thus ages 10-14 male and female, both in-school and out-of-school adolescents in rural and urban centers. Similarly, males and females aged between 15-19, both in-school and out-of-school adolescents in rural and urban centers were also put in their various clusters. The clustering produced a total of eight (8) groups, thus making the groups more manageable. A summary of the clustering is given below:

- Ages 10-14: In-school adolescents in rural communities
- Ages 10-14: Out-of-school adolescents in rural communities
- Ages 10-14: In-school adolescents in urban communities
- Ages 10-14: Out-of-school adolescents in urban communities
- Ages 15-19: In-school adolescents in rural communities

- Ages 15-19: Out-of-school adolescents in rural communities
- Ages 15-19: In-school adolescents in urban communities
- Ages 15-19: Out-of-school adolescents in urban communities

The FGD questionnaire covered major themes affecting adolescents, such as Adolescent socio-economic challenges, fears, decision-making, worry, and ambitions. Specific questions that were asked include:

- Who are you? (adolescent meaning)
- What do you do? (role as adolescents)
- Are you treated differently?
- How do you perceive adults? (Perception of who an adult is to an adolescent)
- Where do you want to be in the next few years?
- What do you want to be in the future? (future ambition)
- Do you worry about anything?
- Do you have any fears?
- Are there things being done to allay your fears or worries?
- Do you belong to clubs, societies, or organizations? Participation in clubs/organizations.
- Do you have time for recreational activities? (leisure)
- What do you think can be done to improve the lives of young people?
- What challenges do you face in your school? (for in-school adolescents only)
- Are you involved in decision-making in the family/school?
- Do the authorities take your opinions? (In-school only)

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Who Are You? (Adolescent Meaning)

The general consensus by the adolescents interviewed is that "we are in between children and adults, so we can be called youth." "We are adolescents or rather youth. So one cannot call us children." In Urban centers, the general consensus of what adolescents think they are is that adolescents are teenagers. "We are teenagers because it is humanly perceived that once you are 13-19 years, you are a teenager, so we are better called young adults." The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as "any person between ages 10 and 19." This age range falls within WHO's definition of *young people*, which refers to individuals between ages 10 and 24. Therefore, the perception by adolescents of who they are falls within the definition given by WHO. Furthermore, adolescents in urban centers use slang to refer to themselves, such as Maza (Plural word for men in Hausa language) or Oh boy! Therefore, there is somewhat of a general consensus between both rural and urban adolescents on the meaning of adolescents or who they think they are.

One of the key developmental tasks in adolescence and young adulthood is to develop a coherent sense of self and identity (Erikson, 1968). Personal identity refers to one's sense of the person one genuinely is, including a subjective feeling of self-sameness and continuity over contexts and time. From early adolescence onwards, adolescents begin to question and explore their identity, that is, the person they are and want to be, the roles they want to occupy in adulthood, and their place in society (Meeus, Van De Schoot, Keijsers, Schwartz, & Branje, 2010). They become aware of their distinctiveness and uniqueness from others, coherence and similarity across domains, and continuity across time and situations (van Doeselaar, Becht, Klimstra, & Meeus, 2018). As they try to find out who they are and what they want to become in their lives, adolescents re-examine the identifications they formed in childhood as they consider different identity possibilities (e.g., what kind of occupation fits my interests and abilities, what kind of relationships do I want to have), and form new commitments to identifications.

4.2. What Do You Do? (Role as Adolescents in the Community)

The general consensus given in this survey reflects the diverse role being played by young people in fostering family unity. The responses given include:

- "We go to the farm,"
- "We build whenever the need arises,"
- We also fetch water and take care of the animals at home."

We participate in community development services like sanitation. Yeresyan *et al.* (2014), in a study, corroborated this finding when they found out that adolescents living in rural areas experience more stress than their urban counterparts in Turkey and Germany. In line with this, adolescents in rural regions report lower well-being than adolescents in urban regions. Therefore, improving social and support systems, especially in developing countries, may support youths in coping with stress effectively and improving their psychological well-being.

4.3. Are You Treated Differently? (Boys from Girls)

The general consensus given here reflects a societal bias in gender roles in the communities. The adolescents strongly agreed that "in school, yes, we are treated differently. Some teachers treat us differently from girls by giving them more scores and good grades in tests and exams, and also, when we commit an offence, girls are given a lighter punishment. At home, we are generally not treated differently, but at times, our parents give preference to girls' needs over boys'. When that happens, we don't usually feel good." In urban schools, too, adolescents have the general consensus

that they are treated unequally. "Yes, in school, we are treated differently in terms of discipline; when the same offence has been committed by a boy and a girl, the boys are normally punished more severely than the girls. Why? We don't know. Maybe the girls cannot endure harsh punishment." "Sometimes this happens; when an offence is committed, the boys are normally punished without compromise, but girls are not punished like boys. We don't feel happy about it. We feel oppressed." Humensky *et al.* (2010) examined school performance among adolescents at risk for major depression. Negative mood interfered with subjective measures of school performance, including the ability to do well in school, complete homework, concentrate in class, interact with peers, and attend class. In qualitative interviews, adolescents reported that negative thinking led to procrastination, which led to poor school performance and more negative thinking. Adolescents with depressive symptoms that do not meet the threshold for referral report struggles in school. Understanding the specific challenges faced by adolescents with even low levels of depressive symptoms can help school nurses, teachers, and parents identify appropriate interventions to help adolescents succeed in school.

4.4. How Do You Perceive Adults? (Perception of Who an Adult Is Too Adolescent)

There is a general consensus in the way adolescents see and perceive adults. "We see and think about adults as fathers/mothers." "Each time we see an adult, we hope to one day become like them." "We see them as brilliant role models." "We see some adults as parents and role models because they always see the best in us." "We also see them as individuals with greater freedom, and they go to places where they want to go without restrictions." The perception of urban adolescents is not somewhat different from how rural adolescents see adults. The general consensus among urban adolescents is thus, "We see them (adults) as very strict, sometimes they can be funny, but generally, we see them as people who are more experienced and people who have freedom and deserve respect." "We see and treat them with respect. Mostly, we feel like being more like them, especially as role models." Galbo (1986) opined that though various studies have explored adolescents' perceptions of significant adults, there is no clear sense of the implications of the findings for those who work and live with adolescents. The study, therefore, updated a recent review of the findings for the family, the school, and youth-serving agencies. From the study, parents are the most frequently mentioned significant adults, but their significance tends to be situational, while teachers are not frequently mentioned as significant. Further implications are explored, which discussed the possible relationship between the level of cognitive development of adolescents and the degree and quality of adolescents' interaction with significant adults. Also, the importance of adolescents' interaction with significant adults is discussed as that relationship relates to the transmission and preservation of culture. Culture, which has been defined as "the total way of life of a people," is an essential factor for self-determination and identity as a people. Thus, preserving culture through adolescents' perceptions and relationships is necessary for sustaining and improving local production, which is necessary for attaining economic growth. Similarly, adolescents' perception of adults is also essential for building a positive relationship that can benefit the learning and cognitive development of young people within the community.

Conversely, when the adolescents were asked, "How do people see and treat you?" There is a majority consensus by both rural and urban adolescents that "some adults see us as good children, others see us as stubborn." "Some people see us as responsible individuals; others have the wrong mindset about us." "They normally think we do not know what we are doing." "We are seen as children, and our opinions are not valued." "At home, our opinions are only valued whenever our parents want to buy any kind of electronics; they ask which one is good, which one is better, and so on." "We are treated based on personality, and it varies from individual students to individual teachers." "We are also seen as ambitious future leaders." Ashby & Schoon (2010) discovered in their study on career success that adolescents' ambition value is linked to earning in adulthood. The study examined the role of gender and teenage ambition value in shaping social status attainment and earnings in adulthood. Drawing data from an 18-year British follow-up study, the researchers' findings revealed that ambition value is linked to adult earnings. The findings also confirm that teenage career aspirations are linked to adult social status attainment and suggest that family background factors, teenage career aspirations, and ambition value interact to influence social status attainment and earnings in adulthood.

4.5. How Do You Interact among Yourselves?

This consensus was only found with urban adolescents. We did not see it with rural adolescents despite being asked the same questions. Urban adolescents responded, "We have a forum; we call it problem/solution forum." "We discuss issues that affect us and how we can solve them." "We respect each other and value each other." "We see and treat each other as friends, brothers, and we are united just like a family." For adolescents, it is essential to maintain close and supportive interpersonal relationships to provide a safe setting for intimacy and identity exploration (Collins & Steinberg, 2007). Where this interaction among adolescents is lacking, it can lead to interactions with unknown individuals. Whether face-to-face or online, interactions with unknown people are risky. This perspective suggests that engaging in interactions with unknown people, offline or online, may lead to unpleasant or even harmful outcomes such as unwanted sexual solicitations, harassment, or abuse in case of face-to-face meetings (Gámez-Guadix, Borrajo & Almendros, 2016; Sasson & Mesch, 2016; Staksrud & Livingstone, 2009). Interactions with unknown people, especially face-to-face meetings, have also been viewed as highly risky behavior and a cause for concern by the general public (Holmes, 2009; Boyd, Marwick, Aftab & Koeltl, 2009) and especially by parents (European Commission, 2008; Madden, Cortesi, Gasser, Lenhart, & Duggan, 2012). Interaction with unknown individuals can be injurious to adolescents to the extent that they may not be able to continue in school or have a negative impact that alters their life ambitions throughout their span of life on earth.

4.6. *What Do You Want to Be in the Future, and Where Do You Want to See Yourself in a Few Years? (Future Ambition)*

Like all young people in school, the adolescents interviewed here are also ambitious. They were anxious about voicing out their dreams during the FGD session. Some responses recorded include:

- "I want to be a Lawyer,"
- "Medical Doctor,"
- "Engineer,"
- "Pastor,"
- "I want to be in the Army."

They want to be everything, especially looking at professions that have prestige and earn the respect of people. These aspirations are common among adolescents; even children under the age of adolescents share some of these aspirations. Just like their rural counterparts, adolescents in urban centers also have their ambitions. Some of the ambitions of urban adolescents are akinto rural adolescents. However, there are complexities in what some adolescents would want to be. Some of the responses recorded are thus:

- "I want to be a medical doctor."
- "I want to be a naval officer."
- "I want to be an astronaut."
- "I want to be a genetic engineer."
- "I want to be a scientist."
- "I want to be an accountant."

Moreover, when asked why, he answered, "Because that is me!" "I want to be a footballer." "I want to be an architect." "I want to be a pilot." "I want to be a farmer."

Regarding where they would like to be in a few years' time, the majority of them expressed optimism about where they would like to be. They were ecstatic to speak about it. Some responses are:

- "I want to see myself in the university."
- "I want to be a businessman."
- "I want to see myself graduate from secondary school."
- "In the next five years, I want to gain popularity and win the respect of others."
- "To others, they want to finish their secondary school and proceed to the university."
- "I want to see myself financially independent and self-reliant."

Like their rural counterparts, urban adolescents also have where they want to be in the nearest future. "We want to see ourselves rounding up our secondary education and getting set for the university." "I want to see myself playing polo tournament and be the best polo player ever." "We want to see ourselves in the university." "We want to see ourselves rounding up our secondary education and preparing for marriage." "I want to see myself flying a plane." There is somewhat some sophistication in what urban adolescents want than adolescents in rural areas.

Erin, Seaman, Jenkins, Van Gundy & Rebellon (2020) opined that adolescents' future aspirations and expectations influence their decisions as they transition into adulthood. However, less is known about how specific sociocultural factors interact with the formation of future aspirations and expectations and their association with goal attainment in emerging adulthood. The study used person-centered analysis with high school students from a rural county undergoing significant economic transition. It aimed to identify future orientation profiles based on adolescent-reported future aspirations and expectations for success in both education and career. Four latent profiles were identified and labeled, universally high aspirations and expectations, low college aspirations and expectations, lower aspirations than expectations, and universally low aspirations and expectations. Significant gender differences were found. High school males were less likely to be in the universally high profile and more likely to be in the universally low and low college aspirations and expectations profiles. Future orientation profile placement was associated with differences in adolescent experiences in family, school, and community contexts, as well as their work and education status and future residential aspirations in emerging adulthood. The study recommended that efforts should be focused on rural youth's preparation for adult roles and on retaining rural youth, a necessity for the vitality of rural communities.

4.7. *Do You Worry about Anything?*

Children in their formative age are also prone to anxiety or things that constitute a very serious concern for their well-being. There was a general consensus that adolescents also worry about certain things. Some of the responses are:

- "I worry that my father cannot afford to sponsor me to become a medical doctor."
- "I worry because I may not have the knowledge I want because of how the standard of education has fallen in this country."
- "I worry about how the students can learn many things when the teachers are not able to cover their syllabus."
- "I worry because of the corruption going on in this country and the insurgency."
- "I worry because maybe after my education, I cannot find employment."
- "I worry about the payment of my school fees."
- "In school, we don't have enough competent teachers, and the few ones that we have to get drunk before coming to school."
- "I worry because we are taught computers in school as a subject, but we do not take part in practicals; we do not have enough computers."

- "At home, I worry because it is always difficult for us to get water; we have to trek a long distance to fetch water."
- "I worry when I see youth taking 'hard drugs.' This is something that many people have died of, but they do not listen and make corrections."
Urban adolescents have their worries too:
- "I worry about insecurity."
- "I am worried about how teachers insult us in school, which is not good, and also bullying from our seniors. I am worried about how our rights are being denied. Sometimes we're not allowed to go and pray; when is the time to pray."
- "I worry about money."
- "I worry that I might not make it in life."
- "I worry about the economy of Nigeria; how would we be able to cope with it?"
- "I worry about heartbreaks, especially when one is involved with girls."

Worry can cause anxiety in young people, thus hampering their productivity. The rise in anxiety is a real problem for our youth. Chronic anxiety can lead to serious mental health problems such as depression, substance use, and even suicide. It can interfere with the ability to focus and learn, causing school problems that can have a life-long impact.

4.8. Do You Have Any Fears?

There is only a thin line between worry and fear for adolescents. However, they understood the explanations given to them during the discussion session. Some responses recorded include:

- "I fear that after my parents have struggled to sponsor my education, I might not get a job to also support them when they are in their old age."
- "I fear death."
- "I fear failure."
- "I fear accidents on the road."
- "I fear that after all my struggling in school, I will not get employed to have something to do."
- "I am afraid of failure."
- "I fear impregnating a girl; this may stop my ambition to be something great in life."
- "My fear is a failure, my father is forcing me to study science, and that is against my wish."

"I'm afraid of the way our teachers behave because they do not like to come to class but give notes only without lessons. Sometimes students are the ones who copy notes for us, so the notes contain many errors." "I'm afraid that I might fail in my science subjects because we do not have a science laboratory in our school, and I did not go to schools where there are such."

Urban adolescents also have their fears. Some of their responses are:

- "I fear insurgency going on in this part of the country."
- "I fear being an orphan."
- "I fear that I may fail my parents; they will be very disappointed with me."
- "I fear death."
- "I fear countries with weapons of mass destruction compared to countries like our own; one day, they might decide to use it on us."
- "I fear discrimination or nepotism and the corruption in this country."

It is essential that children have safe, secure environments in which to grow, learn, and develop healthy brains and bodies. Science shows that early exposure to circumstances that produce persistent fear and chronic anxiety can have lifelong effects on brain architecture (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010).

4.9. Are There Things Being Done to Allay Your Fears or Worries?

There was a general consensus on the role of parents in providing necessary assistance in ensuring that adolescents' psychosocial well-being is guaranteed. Some responses given include:

- "Yes, our parents are trying their best for us by counselling and also organizing after-school lessons for us."
- "Some teachers, the good ones that we have, are really doing their best."
- "Our parents are also trying to see us become something in the near future."

They, however, concurred by a general consensus that "Government is only doing little to safeguard lives and properties." There was a majority consensus among urban adolescents that not much is being done to allay their fears or worries.

4.10. Do You Have Time for Recreational Activities? (Leisure)

Responses by urban adolescents indicate access to recreational facilities and time for leisure:

- "We take part in recreational activities; we have more than enough for us to play with."
- "We chat, we interact, we play games, we do horse riding, we sleep, and we visit friends too."
- "We talk about everything, school activities, ambitions, and fun times."
- "We gist about what happened in the past politics in Nigeria."
- "We talk about girls."
- "We talk about football."

- "We play games in the common room like table tennis, pool (snooker), and Chess."

For rural adolescents, however, facilities for recreational activities were grossly inadequate. Torre *et al.* (2006) opined that the relationship between physical activity and the health status of adolescents is found to be correlated. Thus, parents' educational levels and work activities play an essential role in predicting students' physical activity because parents can afford to send their children to schools where there are standard recreational facilities. When asked about whether they (adolescents) belong to clubs, societies, or organizations, there was a general consensus that adolescents in their schools participate in clubs, societies, and organizations. Some of the clubs they participate in include: HIV/AIDS club, Press club, Maths/JETS club, Debating club, Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), and Muslim Student Society (MSS). Unfortunately, not all clubs are active, so our participation fluctuates. This is because the time allocated by the school authority for such meetings is not always convenient. In some of the schools visited, the adolescents confirmed, "The school authority has stopped all meetings." When asked why, they replied, "We don't know!" Participation in clubs and society enhances adolescents' social and cognitive development and problem-solving skills. Since not all knowledge is learned in the classroom, it has thus become necessary to encourage young people to take part in recreational and club activities, especially if it does not affect classes and other learning opportunities within and outside the school community.

4.11. What Do You Think Can Be Done to Improve the Lives of Young People?

There is a general consensus among adolescents that something can be done to improve the living standard of young people. The responses given by the adolescents include:

- "Provision of quality education."
- "Our school fees should be paid."
- "We need counselling and guidance and sound moral training."
- "Empower the youths to be self-reliant."

There was a general consensus by urban adolescents that "priority should be given equally to the less privilege so they will also feel alive." "Students should be involved in running the affairs of the school, especially by inviting them to attend staff meetings," and "free education should be given to all young people." Young adolescents cannot do everything by themselves, hence the need to provide appropriate support for their growth and for a safe transition from adolescence to adulthood. This is important because some challenges may be overwhelming, and likewise, some opportunities may not be properly utilized to yield maximum benefit for their overall well-being. Therefore, to ensure that they are able to go through life's challenges without damage to their progress and having the capacity to utilize opportunities that come their way should form part of the moral obligation that adults have towards young adolescents for a safe and prosperous society.

4.12. What Challenges Do You Face in Your School? (For in-School Adolescents Only)

Asked about challenges they face in school, the adolescents were not hesitant to admit that they face diverse challenges, which include lack of sporting facilities, inadequate science teachers, inability to pay school fees, inadequate classes and facilities, over-populated classes, lack of employment opportunities, lack of adequate learning facilities, lack of social amenities and unplanned marriage. Urban adolescents are unanimous that lack of self-esteem, stress, and being overworked are their major challenges. Also, the lack of opportunities for young adults to be gainfully employed, the high rate of poverty among young people, and discrimination are the challenges that young people face in urban areas. Harikrishnan & Lalhupui (2020) studied the challenges and perceptions of parents and teachers of school-going adolescents. They found out that parents mostly perceived that school-going adolescents faced much tension and were not studying at home. On the other hand, teachers perceived that their adolescent students faced challenges such as exam fear, negative influence by media, economic burdens at home, low participation of parents in their children's education, and poor academic performance. Findings bring out the need to integrate active cooperation and participation of parents and teachers for the overall development of school-going adolescents.

4.13. Are You Involved in Decision Making in the Family/School?

There was a general consensus on adolescents' participation in family and school governance. Their participation include:

- "We make contributions by suggesting to authorities, and they do it."
- "At home, we participate in the decision-making of the family, especially when it concerns us, but sometimes there are misunderstandings."

However, the consensus among them was that for improved participation, "We should be invited, and our suggestions and comments should be valued. We should also be consulted because we are not involved or invited during meetings. Why it is so, we do not know." "Maybe they consider us not to be able to make useful contributions in the meetings." "We suggest and advice the authority, but they don't do anything about it." When adolescents feel sidelined in decision-making by the authorities, it may lead to lackluster behaviour towards participatory governance in the school. It may further breed resentment towards school rules and regulations, which are required to guide conduct within and outside the school.

5. Conclusion

Findings from this study revealed the enormous socio-economic challenges as well as opportunities that adolescents in rural and urban areas in Adamawa state face. The challenges pose a huge threat to the welfare of young

people as well as the current and future economic plans of the State. However, available opportunities also provide concrete means for which adolescent challenges can be neutralized to guarantee healthy and productive individuals. However, practical steps are required to ensure that young adolescents are purposefully engaged in speaking up about issues that hurt them without fear of being resented or intimidated in their immediate environment. Engaging the adolescents would ensure that they have a healthy well-being which would boost their physical and psychological development.

Amos (2021) opined that differences in the level of socio-economic progress found in rural and urban areas in Adamawa state do not permit urban adolescents to experience the same adolescent challenges as those of their rural counterparts because of the problems posed by a high level of socio-economic progress in urban areas compared to rural communities. Consequently, irrespective of the areas and the dimension of challenges that adolescents face, they require the support of the government and other critical stakeholders in tackling economic woes by providing infrastructures and social services that would promote the well-being of vulnerable adolescents. When adolescents are supported and succeed, they will be useful members of society who are skillful and productive and contribute to economic growth and development. Adolescents remain a critical factor and catalyst for improving the human capital stock of the country in the future time. Therefore, it is only necessary to support their overall well-being.

6. Acknowledgement

Sincere thanks to Action Aid, Nigeria, Managements of Climax Academy, Dumne, Best Center, Dumne, AUN Academy, Yola, and GSS Demsa. Also, special thanks to all out-of-school adolescents whose honest responses enriched the study.

7. References

- i. Andrew W. C. & Lawrence S. (2007). Adolescent development in interpersonal context.
- ii. W. Damon, R. Lerner (Eds.), Handbook of child psychology, Vol. 3, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (2007), pp. 1003–1049, 10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0316
- iii. Bryant M., Joyce B. & Elaine M. J. (2018). Health needs and challenges of rural adolescents. *Journal of Rural and Remote Health*, 18(3), 4325– <https://doi.org/10.22605/rrh4325>
- iv. Collins, W.A & Steinberg, L. (2007). Adolescent development in interpersonal context.
- v. W. Damon, R. Lerner (Eds.), Handbook of child psychology, Vol. 3, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (2007), pp. 1003–1049, 10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0316
- vi. Danah, B., Alice M., Parry A. & Maeve K. (2009) The Conundrum of Visibility, *Journal of Children and Media*, 3:4, 410–419, DOI: 10.1080/17482790903233465
- vii. Elisabeth, S. & Sonia, L. (2009). Children and online risk: Powerless victims or resourceful participants? *Information, Communication & Society*, 12 (3) (2009), pp. 364–387, 10.1080/13691180802635455
- viii. European Commission (2008). Toward a safer use of the internet for children in EU – A parents' perspective: Analytical report. Flash Eurobarometer 248 – the Gallup Organization.
- ix. Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton. Google Scholar. Retrieved 3/2/2023
- x. John, H. (2009). Myths and missed opportunities. *Journal of Information Communication and Society Communication* (8):1174–1196. DOI:10.1080/13691180902769873
- xi. Joseph J. Galbo (1986). Adolescents' perceptions of significant adults: Implications for the Family, the School, and Youth Serving Agencies. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 8(1), Pages 37-51, ISSN 0190-7409, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0190-7409\(86\)90024-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0190-7409(86)90024-1).
- xii. Giuseppe L. T., Daniele M., Elisabetta D. V., Elisa L., Giovanni C. & Walter R. (2006). Extra-curricular physical activity and socio-economic status in Italian adolescents. *Bmc Public Health*, 6(1), 22–22. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-6-22>
- xiii. Iren Y. & Arnold L. (2014). Stress and well-being among Turkish and German adolescents living in rural and urban areas. *Journal of Rural and Remote Health*, 14(3), 2695–2695. <https://doi.org/10.22605/rrh2695>
- xiv. Jennifer L. Humensky, Sachiko A. Kuwabara, Joshua Fogel, Corrie Wells, Brady Goodwin, & Benjamin W. Van Voorhees. (2010). Adolescents with Depressive Symptoms and Their Challenges with Learning in School. *Journal of School Nursing*, 26(5), 377–392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059840510376515>
- xv. Julie, S. A. & Ingrid S. (2010). Career Success: The Role of Teenage Career Aspirations, Ambition Value, and Gender in Predicting Adult Social Status and Earnings. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 77(3):350–360. DOI:10.1016/j.jvb.2010.06.006
- xvi. Madden, M., Cortesi, S., Gasser, U., Lenhart, A., & Duggan, M. (2012). Parents, teens, and online privacy. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved from: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Teens-and-Privacy.aspx>
- xvii. Manuel, G., Erika, B. & Carmen, A. (2016) Risky online behaviors among adolescents: Longitudinal relations among problematic Internet use, cyber bullying perpetration, and meeting strangers online. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 5 (1) (2016), pp. 100–107, 10.1556/2006.5.2016.013
- xviii. Meeus, W. , Van De Schoot, R. , Keijsers, L. , Schwartz, S. J. , & Branje, S. (2010). On the progression and stability of adolescent identity formation: A five-wave longitudinal study in early-to-middle and middle-to-late adolescence. *Child Development*, 81, 1565–1581. 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01492.x

- xix. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). *Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.
- xx. Noora Knaappila, Mauri Marttunen, Sari Fröjd, Nina Lindberg, & Riittakerttu Kaltiala-Heino. (2018). Socio-economic trends in school bullying among Finnish adolescents from 2000 to 2015. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 86, 100–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.09.011>
- xxi. Nuhu, A. S. (2022). Socio-economic Challenges of Adolescents in Karalugwe, Adamawa State, Nigeria: A Qualitative Approach. *European Journal of Development Studies*, 2(5), 16–21. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejdevelop.2022.2.5.167>
- xxii. Samantha S., Kenia M. R., Ella R., Erika M. M., Christopher S. R., & Jenalee R. D (2021). "I Hate This": A Qualitative Analysis of Adolescents' Self-Reported Challenges During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of adolescent health*, 68(2), 262–269. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.11.010>
- xxiii. Sharp, E.H., Jayson, S., Corinna, J.T., Karen, T.V & Cesar, R.J. (2020). Adolescents' Future Aspirations and Expectations in the Context of a Shifting Rural Economy. *J Youth Adolescence* 49, 534–548 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01152-6>
- xxiv. U., Harikrishnan & Sailo, G. L. (2020). Challenges of school going adolescents: Perception of Parents and Teachers. *International Journal of Scientific Research*. Vol.6, Issue.11, pp.12-15, E-ISSN: 2454–9312
- xxv. United Nation (1959). Declarations of the right of the child. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/children> retrieved 28/10/2022.
- xxvi. Van Doeselaar, L. , Becht, A. I. , Klimstra, T. A. , & Meeus, W. H. J. (2018). A review and integration of three key components of identity development: Distinctiveness, coherence, and continuity. *European Psychologist*, 23, 278–288. [10.1027/1016-9040/a000334](https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000334)