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Chapter 6

Gender and Age Differences in Developmental Assets of Nigerian Youth in Institutionalised Residential and Non-Residential Centres

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Abstract: This chapter explores the developmental assets (DA) of Nigerian youth who were selected from institutionalised residential centres (IRC: $n = 122$, $M_{age} = 19.10$, $SD = 3.15$) and institutionalised non-residential centres (INRC: $n = 487$, $M_{age} = 16.52$, $SD = 1.46$). The study examined the youth's DA across gender, age, and centres. A questionnaire consisting of demographic variables and Search Institute's Developmental Assets Profile was used to collect data. Results (mean scores) indicated that in both centres, Commitment to learning was highly experienced, while Constructive use of time was the least experienced asset ($M = 3.38$ and $M = 2.62$, respectively, in IRC; $M = 3.44$ and $M = 2.98$, respectively, in INRC). Gender differences ($p < .05$) were repeatedly observed in IRC, with males reporting higher scores on seven out of eight assets compared to females. In INRC, females reported higher score on three assets relative to their male counterparts. Age differences were also observed, with emerging adults reporting higher scores on four DA relative to children in IRC, while in INRC, children reported higher scores on six DA compared to emerging adults. The findings suggest that youth in INRC experienced a more nurturing context for positive development compared to youth in IRC. Males also appeared to have more access to assets than females. Differences in the experiences of developmental assets among the youth appear to reflect uneven distribution of assets and resources across the two institutional centres and gender. The implications for social justice are discussed.

Keywords: developmental assets, youth, institutionalised residential centres, institutionalised non-residential centres, Nigeria

Introduction

The accessibility and distribution of resources in a nation can empower citizens towards development when fairness and equality are in place. For many individuals in developing countries like Nigeria, growing up is challenging due to societal parameters like poverty, unemployment, crime, and insecurity, causing vulnerability for many (Adeboye, 2015). Nigeria's newly revised version of the national youth policy (NYP) seeks to ensure that youth are empowered through different initiatives that could promote national development

(Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019). The paradigm shift of positive youth development (PYD), as against the deficit approach in youth studies and initiatives, focuses on developmental assets in the form of opportunities and resources that can enable positive development. The NYP goals and objectives align with the PYD perspective and take cognisance of developmental assets (DA) to achieve its goals. In line with Benson (2007), DA are the resources youth possess and those available in their contexts that can enhance their participation and contribution in the present and future.

Exploring the DA of Nigerian youth could unveil the significant role of NYP at this crucial time when the Nigerian society is faced with insurgencies, fuel scarcity, kidnapping and other social problems. The current chapter examined how DA are perceived and experienced by two categories of youth, one in institutionalised residential centres (IRC), examined as youth in orphanages or correctional homes and the other in institutionalised non-residential centres (INRC) – that is, youth attending secondary schools. The chapter is structured as follows. First, we present some information on the Nigerian context along with the national youth policy in Nigeria. Second, we provide a theoretical description of DA and briefly review DA in the African context together with the empirical evidence of their role in positive youth outcomes. We then empirically explore the DA of youth in the two Nigerian centres and discuss how the demographics (gender and age) of youth are associated with their experiences of the DA. We finally conclude with a discussion on the implications for social justice.

The Nigerian Context and the National Youth Policy

Situated on the western coast of Africa, Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960. It is the seventh most populous country in the world, and a heterogenous society with three major ethnic groups, with another reflecting a conglomerate of 250 minor ethnic groups. Nigeria's population is currently estimated to be 223 800 000, of which 63% are below 30 years old (United Nations Population Fund, 2023). Like other African countries, Nigeria is a collectivistic culture where patriarchal systems encourage communal society (Adeboye, 2015). Over the years, oil, gas, and different natural resources have been harnessed to meet the social and basic needs of the citizens (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). The country's GDP has steadily

increased from 2005 to 2015, albeit with some fluctuations (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Both inflation and population growth have affected the society negatively, resulting in lack of social security, unemployment, religious insurgencies, crime and insecurity, high density of slums, and ritual killings, among others (Africanews, 2022; Sorunmu, 2019). In fact, among the youth these challenges have become a push factor for engaging in risk behaviours (Akpor & Thupayagaale-Tshweneagae, 2019; Federal Ministry of Youths and Sports Development, 2019).

Recognising its democratic constitution, the 1999 Nigerian constitution affirmed a just country with unconditional basic income, education, equal distribution of basic and material resources for the common good of the citizens, and a fair distribution of wealth across social classes. However, in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, inequality due to the abuse of democracy and social injustice in the economy, in addition to exclusion, has remained a threat to national development (Aluko et al., 2022; Osi, 2020). In common with Onalu and Okoye (2022), Osi (2020) emphasised that corruption, reflected in economic maladministration, poor infrastructure, insecurity, and the violation of human rights, has led to the underdevelopment of Nigeria. The World Bank Group (2022) reported that Nigeria is in a critical state due to the deterioration of the economic situation. Approximately 63% of the nation's population, accounting for 133 million Nigerians, are multidimensionally poor due to lack of income and basic amenities (Nigeria Poverty Map, 2023). The political economy of the nation favours the rich over the poor, thereby hindering social justice (Aluko et al., 2022; Ucheaga, 2022). Thus, Nigeria can be depicted as a broken society with a broken economy due to the inequality gap between the poor and the rich (Indrawati, 2016). These inequalities, along with the poor social and economic conditions of the country in which youth grow up can negatively impact their development as well as their present and future roles in societal development.

The Nigerian youth population is estimated to be over 60% of the total population, forming one of the largest proportions of the global youth population (United Nations, 2019). This group of individuals can contribute immensely to the development of the country if empowered with opportunities and resources that can release their full potentials. Youth are regarded as the hope for the development of any nation. However, the instability in the Nigerian economy, evident in poverty and inequality, has predisposed

many youth to unpleasant experiences such as unemployment, low-quality education, and death. In fact, Obadare (2022) observed that most of the youth live in extreme poverty, slum areas with high rates of crime, and disadvantaged communities.

Youth are framed not only by their personality but also by their social and cultural contexts (Petrova & Schwartz, 2017; Ungar, 2007). The NYP, which currently targets the empowerment of 15–29-year-olds, is a declaration committed to promoting the fundamental rights, health, social economic and political well-being of youth. Accordingly, as youth have the responsibility to engage in positive lifestyles, the government and societies have the obligations to ensure that youth reach their goals through the creation of equal opportunities. The youth policy targets three groups of youth: low-risk, especially vulnerable, and most at-risk youth (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019).

In line with the Nigerian youth policy, this chapter focuses on low-risk youth, classified as youth in institutionalised non-residential centres (INRC), attending schools, and especially vulnerable youth in institutionalized residential centres (IRC), who reside in government orphanages or correctional homes. The most at-risk youth are those involved in violence and risk behaviours such as crime, substance use, and armed conflicts. Youth in IRC can also be sometimes classified as most-at-risk. In the NYP, two of the five strategies that address the specificity of these youths are: (1) the empowerment of youth through quality education, capacity-building, and skills development for independent economic development, and (2) equitable access to educational opportunities and partnership building and collaboration through sports (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019). Thus, it is expected that the youth would have access to resources that provide education, empowerment skills and other initiatives. However, the situational analysis as of 2019 revealed that many youths have not benefitted from these initiatives and programmes (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019). Moreover, the correctional institutions in Nigeria face a human right crisis and are poorly managed due to overcrowding of youth in need of social welfare services (Atilola et al., 2019). Osi (2020) thus noted the need for a redistribution of resources, control, and power structures as well as a re-examination of the social justice system in Nigeria.

Theoretical Account and Empirical Evidence on Developmental Assets and Positive Youth Outcomes in the African Context

Benson (2007) identified eight asset categories – Commitment to learning, Positive values, Social competencies, Positive identity, Support, Empowerment, Boundaries & expectations, and Constructive use of time that are essential for positive youth development. Accordingly, the assets are building blocks of development, provided by asset-building communities and asset-building societies that can empower youth for the future. PYD as a paradigm shift emphasises the strengths, resources and opportunities that can facilitate positive outcomes as well as stimulate holistic development (Benson, 2007; Dimitrova et al., 2021; Lerner et al., 2005; Saleeby, 1996). In particular, DA focus on social-emotional strengths, values, commitments, as well as experiences with relationships and opportunities in youth's external contexts that can support them to become successful adults (Benson & Scales, 2018). These internal and external assets are both necessary for positive youth development (Benson, 2007; Benson et al., 2011; Dost-Gozkan & Wiium, 2021; Scales et al., 2012).

Internal assets, such as Commitment to learning (e.g., school engagement, achievement motivation, bonding to school), Positive values (e.g., equality and social justice), Social competencies (e.g., planning and decision skills, cultural competence, and resistance skills) and Positive identity (e.g., personal power and sense of purpose) are skills, values, and attitudes that youth gradually acquire through self-regulation and psychological functioning (Benson, 2007). External assets are the influence of the social system through interaction and relationships, and include Support (e.g., caring school climate, family support, and other adult relationships), Empowerment (e.g., community values youth and youth service to others) Boundaries & expectations (e.g., family boundaries and school boundaries), and Constructive use of time (e.g., engaging in creative activities and youth programmes) (Benson, 2007). In the African context, research on these assets is scarce.

Among the few studies, Dessalegnn (2021) examined DA and their impact on academic achievement among 375 Ethiopian youth at three universities and found that the students only experienced Support, when considering the external assets. The other external assets were limited or inadequate, while internal assets were highly experienced. Results on gender differences indicated that males had higher scores on Empowerment and Boundaries

& expectations compared to females. Internal assets like Commitment to learning and Positive identity as well as external assets, such as Support and Boundaries & expectations were found to be positively associated with students' academic achievement. In another study in the Ethiopian context, Desie (2020) examined the association between developmental assets and thriving outcomes among 636 youth attending secondary and college preparatory schools in Addis Ababa and found that participants were more likely to report internal assets than external assets. Girls reported higher DA than boys, while participants living with parents scored higher on the assets relative to those not living with parents. When analysed as composite variables, both internal and external assets were significantly related to thriving indicators like school success and leadership skills.

Furthermore, in a cross-sectional study in Ghana, Wium (2017) investigated the experiences of internal and external assets with thriving indicators among 483 youth. Over 70% of the youth reported each of the internal assets, while for external assets, participants reported less Support and Constructive use of time. There was no gender or age difference in DA. Scores on Commitment to learning, Positive identity, and Positive values increased with the number of thriving indicators reported by the youth. In another African study involving youth in Tanzania, Drescher et al. (2018) explored the DA of two groups of youth: vulnerable (e.g., street-connected youth, youth that were orphaned, youth with disabilities) and non-vulnerable (i.e., youth that engaged in extracurricular activities and attended school). The youth ($N = 1241$) were sampled from 11 regions of Tanzania. The scores on the various DA were above average although some youth reported very little experience of assets like Constructive use of time and Boundaries & expectations. In addition, developmental assets were found to be associated with self-efficacy reported by the youth and vulnerability status.

While research on developmental assets and their role in the African contexts is relatively few compared to those done in the American and other Western contexts, the findings are consistent; youth in different settings report the experience of developmental assets although the number of assets experienced may differ depending on the conduciveness of their settings. Moreover, as has been observed in the Western contexts, the presence of developmental assets tends to be related to indicators of thriving and youth contribution (Desie, 2020; Dessalegn, 2021; Wium, 2017).

The Present Chapter

Even though earlier studies indicate the presence of DA among African youth, the reporting on these assets has often been inadequate. O'Connor et al. (2014) emphasised the need to prioritise those assets that are lacking in youth contexts. Benson (2007) and Wiium et al. (2019) argued that asset-building community (ABC) and asset-building society (ABS) are determining factors for youth's experience of DA. In line with Benson (2007), ABC demands that both responsible individuals and the community design programmes that can provide youth with resources and opportunities for growth while ABS is achieved through societal norms and policies that are geared towards building youth capacities. One of the key areas of Nigeria's national youth policy is to empower youth, especially the vulnerable. Jones (2011) acknowledged that there is still a huge gap between the national policy and social assistance for vulnerable groups, with great inconsistency between the federal, state, and local government (Marsden & Guyer-Miller, 2011). The limited research available on youth in residential centres in general has revealed that these youth receive less support and are less informed (Courtney et al., 2011; Stein & Verweijen-Slannescu, 2012). In the present chapter, we explore the DA among youth in institutionalised residential centres and those in institutionalised non-residential centres to assess the ABC and ABS of these groups of youth in the Nigerian context. We also investigate how demographics such as gender and age are associated with the report of the assets in both centres. Findings from these investigations can uncover the conditions of the youth as well as any unequal distribution of opportunities and resources. Ultimately, any inequality and social injustice can be addressed by the youth policy, a move that can lead to national development as well as the achievement of global developmental goals.

Method

Participants and Procedure

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design to collect data from 609 youth in two institutionalised centres in Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria. In institutionalised non-residential centres (INRC), 487 participants were randomly selected from ten schools while 122 participants

were purposively selected from two institutionalised residential centres (IRC). The age range of participants was 13–27 years with a mean age of 19.10 and 16.52 years in IRC and INRC, respectively. Of the participants in IRC and INRC, 94% and 67%, respectively, were males. About 71% of the participants in IRC were emerging adults while 79% were classified as children in INRC. In IRC, 79% and 70% of the participants reported that the highest level of education of their father and mother was lower than post-secondary education, while the corresponding percentages reported by youth in INRC were 80% and 76%. Christianity was the dominant religion among the participants in the two institutions.

Data were collected during participants' free periods in the study areas of INRC and during the morning hours with participants in IRC before they started their daily routines. An English questionnaire comprising demographics and items on DA was used in the data collection. With the use of paper and pen, participants spent an average of 35 minutes completing the questionnaire. The data were collected over a period of four weeks. Before the collection of data, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and verbal consent was sought from all of them. Research assistants were recruited from a university for survey administration. Participants were given snacks, juice, and a book as incentives. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria and for the data collection to commence, permission was sought from Ogun State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

Measures

Developmental assets

The developmental assets were measured with the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) (Benson, 2007; Scales, 2011; Search Institute, 2016). The DAP comprised 58 items grouped into two major categories (internal and external) and eight subcategories. Internal assets reflect four asset categories: Commitment to learning (7 items; e.g., do homework, eager to do well in school); Positive values (11 items; e.g., place importance on helping others, say no to tobacco and other drugs); Social competencies (8 items; e.g., plan and make good choices, sensitive to other people's needs and feelings); and Positive identity (6 items; e.g., feel good about oneself, thinking about one's purpose in life). External assets

also consist of four asset categories. The youth were asked how they experienced Support from family, neighbourhood, and school with 7 items (e.g., ask parents for advice, seek support from other adults). Empowerment has 6 items indicating various means of empowering youth, at family, school, and neighbourhood levels (e.g., engaging youths in useful roles, feeling valued and appreciated). Expectations & boundaries consist of 9 items (e.g., has department/school that give clear rules, teachers that urges to develop and achieve more). Creative use of time consists of 4 items (e.g., involvement in creative things, spending quality time at home doing things together). Participants responded on a four-point Likert-type scale (Not at all or rarely – 1, somewhat or sometimes – 2, very or often – 3, and extremely or almost always – 4), with high scores, indicating that more assets were experienced.

Demographics

The demographic of participants were measured as gender (i.e., male or female); age (measured at interval level by obtaining actual age, which was then recoded into children (13–17 years) and emerging adulthood (18–29 years)); parent educational level (initially as five response categories (i.e., no education, primary school, secondary school, technical or vocational school and university education) but recoded to four levels – no education, primary, secondary and post-secondary); and religion (Christianity, Islam and others).

Data Analyses

Descriptive analysis was run on each of the items that were used to assess the demographics and DA. A composite score for each of the DA was computed and used in further analyses. T-test analyses was run to determine gender and age differences in the DA. All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS statistical program).

Results

Developmental Assets

The descriptive statistics of the eight categories of DA are presented in Table 6.1. Here, the mean (*M*), standard deviation (*SD*), skewness and kurtosis

for each asset category are described for youth in the institutionalised residential centres (IRC) and those in the institutionalised non-residential centres (INRC). In both IRC and INRC, all the DA measured had mean scores above 2 (i.e., the asset in question has somewhat or sometimes been experienced). Specifically, in IRC, mean scores of the external assets ranged from 2.62 to 2.96; the highest being on Empowerment, and the lowest on Constructive use of time. For INRC, mean scores of the external assets ranged from 2.98 to 3.25; here again, the highest being on Empowerment, and the lowest on Constructive use of time. Cronbach's alpha for the external asset categories ranged from .66 to .87, except for Constructive use of time (in IRC) that had an alpha value of .54 (Table 6.1).

For the internal assets, mean scores for participants in IRC ranged from 3.10 to 3.38, with the highest mean score on Commitment to learning and the lowest on Social competencies. The corresponding mean scores of participants in INRC ranged from 3.34 to 3.44, with the highest mean score on Commitment to learning and the lowest on Positive values and Social competencies (Table 6.1). Cronbach's alpha for the four internal assets categories ranged from .81 to .93. Cronbach alphas in the current study are comparable to those observed by Wiium (2017) in Ghanaian youth (.60s–.80s).

Developmental Assets by Gender and Age

An independent samples t-test was run to determine gender and age differences in DA scores among youth in each of the centres (Tables 6.2 and 6.3). As seen in Table 6.2, for youth in IRC, significant gender differences were observed in all eight DA except for Empowerment, with males scoring higher on the asset categories compared to females. For youth in INRC, gender differences were observed in only three asset categories, all of them, internal assets (Commitment to learning, Positive values and Social competencies) with females reporting more of the assets than their male counterparts.

Results in Table 6.3 revealed that in IRC, a significant age difference ($p < .05$) was observed in four out of the eight asset categories – Support, Boundaries & expectations, Commitment to learning, and Positive identity; with emerging adults reporting more of the assets relative to children. In INRC, a significant age difference ($p < .05$) was observed in three external assets (Support, Empowerment and Boundaries & Expectations) and three internal assets

(Commitment to learning, Social competencies and Positive identity), with children reporting more of the assets compared to emerging adults.

Table 6.1 Mean Scores of the Eight Categories of Developmental Assets among Nigerian Youth in Institutionalised Centres.

Youth in Institutionalised Residential Centre (<i>n</i> =122)	Mean	S.D.	α	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistics	S.E.	Statistics	S.E.
<i>External Assets</i>							
Support	2.81	.63	.66	-.42	.22	-.13	.44
Empowerment	2.96	.69	.67	-.57	.22	-.37	.44
Expectations & boundaries	2.94	.74	.83	-.57	.22	-.49	.44
Constructive use of time	2.62	.82	.54	.03	.22	-.89	.44
<i>Internal Assets</i>							
Commitment to learning	3.38	.78	.93	-1.23	.22	.56	.44
Positive values	3.11	.74	.86	-.61	.22	-.76	.44
Social competencies	3.10	.79	.87	-.69	.22	-.54	.44
Positive identity	3.25	.71	.81	-.76	.22	-.54	.44
Youth in institutionalised non-residential Centre (<i>n</i> =487)	Mean	S.D.	α	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistics	S.E.	Statistics	S.E.
<i>External Assets</i>							
Support	3.11	.79	.85	-.84	.11	-.04	.22
Empowerment	3.25	.79	.86	-.98	.11	.18	.22
Boundaries & Expectations	3.21	.75	.87	-.96	.11	.18	.22
Constructive use of time	2.98	.76	.67	-.45	.11	-.39	.22
<i>Internal Assets</i>							
Commitment to learning	3.44	.73	.92	-1.44	.11	1.57	.22
Positive values	3.34	.73	.93	-1.14	.11	.66	.22
Social competencies	3.34	.71	.88	-1.04	.11	.38	.22
Positive identity	3.42	.73	.88	-1.34	.11	1.20	.22

Note. S.D. – Standard deviation; S.E. – Standard error; α – Cronbach's alpha

Discussion

The aim of the present chapter was to explore the experiences of developmental assets among Nigerian youth in institutionalised residential centres and institutionalised non-residential centres. We also explored gender and age differences in youth's report of the developmental assets. The findings revealed that participants in both contexts experienced most of the DA to some extent, as indicated by mean scores above 2 (range 1–4).

Table 6.2 *Gender Differences in Developmental Assets among Nigerian Youth in Institutionalised Centres.*

Institutionalised residential centre										
Variables	Males (<i>n</i> = 115)		Females (<i>n</i> = 7)		Mean Difference	95% CI	<i>df</i> *	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>						
Support	2.86	0.60	2.04	0.56	0.82	0.35, 1.28	118	3.50	.001	1.36
Empowerment	2.99	0.70	2.55	0.47	0.44	0.93, 0.97	118	1.63	.11	0.64
Expectations & Boundaries	3.00	0.71	1.90	0.53	1.10	0.56, 1.64	118	4.04	.001	1.57
Constructive use of time	2.67	0.82	1.86	0.69	0.81	0.19, 1.44	118	2.57	.01	1.00
Commitment to learning	3.43	0.75	2.58	0.82	0.85	0.27, 1.43	119	2.89	.01	1.12
Positive values	3.16	0.73	2.42	0.46	0.74	0.19, 1.23	119	2.63	.01	1.02
Social Competencies	3.15	0.77	2.27	0.66	0.88	0.29, 1.47	119	2.97	.00	1.16
Positive identity	3.28	0.72	2.77	0.51	0.51	-0.35, 1.05	119	1.85	.03	0.72
Institutionalised non-residential centre										
Variables	Males (<i>n</i> = 325)		Females (<i>n</i> = 162)		Mean Difference	95% CI	<i>df</i> *	<i>t</i> (488)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>						
Support	3.06	0.80	3.20	0.76	-0.14	-0.29, 0.01	484	- 1.87	.06	0.18
Empowerment	3.22	0.79	3.33	0.79	-0.11	-0.26, 0.04	483	-1.45	.15	0.14
Expectations & Boundaries	3.18	0.76	3.26	0.72	-0.80	-0.22, 0.61	484	-1.12	.26	0.11
Constructive use of time	3.02	0.76	2.91	0.77	0.11	-0.33, 0.26	477	1.51	.13	0.15
Commitment to learning	3.39	0.73	3.56	0.72	-0.17	-0.31, -0.30	482	-2.39	.02	0.23
Positive values	3.28	0.75	3.46	0.69	-0.18	-0.32, -0.41	482	-2.61	.01	0.25
Social Competencies	3.29	0.73	3.46	0.65	-0.17	-0.31, -0.41	481	-2.66	.01	0.25
Positive identity	3.38	0.75	3.50	0.69	-0.12	-0.26, 0.13	482	-1.73	.08	0.17

Note. *Different degrees of freedom due to uneven missing cases on the asset categories.

Table 6.3 *Age Differences in Measures of Developmental Assets among Nigerian Youth in Institutionalised Centres.*

Variables	Institutionalised Residential Centre									
	Children (<i>n</i> = 35; 13–17 years)		Emerging adults (<i>n</i> = 87; 18–27 years)		Mean Difference	95% IC	<i>df</i> *	t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD						
Support	2.52	0.60	2.93	0.60	-0.410	-0.64, -.17	118	3.35	.00	0.67
Empowerment	2.83	0.71	3.01	0.68	-0.18	-0.46, 0.09	118	1.32	.19	0.27
Expectations & Boundaries	2.67	0.79	3.05	0.70	-0.38	-0.67, -0.09	118	-2.63	.01	0.53
Constructive use of time	2.43	0.80	2.70	0.83	-0.27	-0.60, 0.06	118	-1.64	.10	0.33
Commitment to learning	3.14	0.88	3.47	0.72	0.53	-0.66, 0.00	119	-1.98	.05	0.43
Positive values	2.97	0.90	3.17	0.66	-0.20	-0.53, 0.14	119	-1.17	.25	0.27
Social Competencies	2.91	0.85	3.17	0.75	-0.26	-0.57, 0.05	119	-1.65	.10	0.33
Positive identity	3.02	0.69	3.35	0.70	-0.33	-0.61, -0.06	119	-2.40	.02	0.48
Institutionalised Non-Residential centre										
	Children (<i>n</i> = 384; 13–17 years)		Emerging Adults (<i>n</i> = 103; 18–27 years)		Mean Difference	95% IC	<i>df</i> *	t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD						
Support	3.16	0.75	2.92	0.88	0.24	0.07, 0.41	485	2.75	.00	0.31
Empowerment	3.30	0.77	3.08	0.86	0.22	0.05, 0.39	484	2.55	.01	0.28
Expectations & Boundaries	3.26	0.70	3.02	0.88	0.24	0.08, 0.40	485	2.56	.00	0.32
Constructive use of time	3.02	0.73	2.86	0.87	0.16	-0.01, 0.32	478	1.86	.06	0.21
Commitment to learning	3.48	0.73	3.31	0.75	0.17	0.01, 0.33	483	2.03	.04	0.23
Positive values	3.37	0.72	3.22	0.78	0.15	-0.02, 0.32	483	1.77	.08	0.21
Social Competencies	3.39	0.70	3.18	0.81	0.21	0.04, 0.38	482	2.39	.01	0.30
Positive identity	3.47	0.69	3.23	0.84	0.23	0.06, 0.41	483	2.60	.01	0.32

Note. *Different degrees of freedom due to uneven missing cases on the asset categories.

This alludes to the fact that DA are universal (Benson, 2007). For the external asset categories, the highest mean score was registered for Empowerment,

followed by Expectations & boundaries, then Support, and finally, Constructive use of time. For internal assets, the most experienced asset category was Commitment to learning, Positive identity, Positive values, and Social competencies, in that order. This was true for both residential and non-residential centres. Thus, Empowerment and Commitment to learning were the most experienced external and internal assets, respectively, in both IRN and INRC. Our findings are contrary to Desie's (2020) observations that suggested that Ethiopian participants scored below average on these two asset categories.

Empowerment of youth in both IRC and INRC contexts implies that communities in the Nigerian context values youth, engage them in the community as well as provide them with safety. These empowerment skills appear to be provided within the educational system. Like youth in INRC, youth in IRC have access to education and can attend school. In addition, youth in IRC are engaged in empowerment programmes, such as workshops, seminars, and religious activities. Moreover, the experience of Commitment to learning is an indication that youth have achievement motivation for academic success (Search Institute, 2016).

The least experienced of all the assets in both centres was Constructive use of time (an external asset category). This observation was also noted by Scales (2011) in various international samples and by Wium (2017) in Ghanaian youth. While youth have some access to other external assets, access to creative activities was limited. Youth in both INRC and IRC experienced little recreational activities, although the former had a bit more access to these assets than the latter. Sporting and attending religious programmes are the common social activity of youth in Nigeria. Thus, there is a need to promote more recreational activities like music, theatre, and other creative activities unique to the Nigerian context in schools; activities that can boost the morale of youth as well as promote positive development.

Our findings indicated that participants experienced more internal assets than external assets. This finding was also reported among Ethiopian youth by Desie (2020) and Dessalegnn (2021). Furthermore, youth in INRC scored higher on the internal assets relative to youth in IRC, findings that are also reflected in those of Drescher et al. (2018) who found that developmental assets in Tanzania youth were related to vulnerability status. In addition, Desie (2020) observed among Ethiopian youth that those living with parents were more likely to report the assets, especially internal assets compared to those

in other living arrangements. Thus, our findings suggest that youth in INRC (youth in secondary schools) appear to have an advantage over those in IRC (youth in orphanages or correctional homes) when it comes to their exposure to asset-building community resources. Zakariyya et al. (2018) observed this lack of resources and opportunities in borstal homes where adequate care is lacking and youth are usually confined to a closed institution. This could indicate that a fair system is not in operation across the two contexts, as assets were usually minimal in IRC. That external assets were least experienced in both IRC and INRC could also imply that as observed in other African contexts (Desie, 2020; Dessalegnn, 2021), the asset-building community and asset-building society in the Nigerian context do not adequately nurture these assets and thus, should be simulated to provide the resources and opportunities that the youth, especially those at risk or in vulnerable conditions, need to develop their full potential.

The present chapter also examined gender differences in the DA of participants in the two centres. In IRC, gender differences were observed in seven assets, where males were more likely to report all the internal (Commitment to learning, Positive values, Social competencies and Positive identity) and three external assets (Support, Boundaries & expectations, and Constructive use of time) compared to their female counterparts. That youth living in orphanage and correctional homes, and males, in particular, can engage in Positive values, implies that youth believe in themselves and have values for equality and social justice (Search Institute, 2016). It is also reassuring that youth living in confined conditions in IRC have a positive view of the future as indicated by their scores on Positive identity. In INRC, no gender difference was observed in the external assets, a finding that is consistent with those found by Wium (2017) in Ghanaian youth. However, gender differences were observed in three internal asset categories, where females scored higher on Commitment to learning, Positive values and Social competencies. Despite the encouraging findings of the presence of DA among the youth, the overall findings in favour of males in the Nigerian context appear to reflect African cultural practices and gender socialisation that have often discriminated against the female gender, limiting their opportunities and aspirations (Dako-Gyeke & Owusu, 2013).

Concerning age differences, it was interesting to observe that in IRC, emerging adults were more likely to experience both external (Support, and Expectation & boundaries) and internal assets (Commitment to learning

and Positive identity) compared to children, while the opposite was true in INRC. Here, children were more likely to experience the external (Support, Empowerment and Boundaries & expectations) and internal assets (Commitment to learning, Social competencies and Positive identity) compared to emerging adults. Although the current findings suggest that age determined the experience of the assets to some extent, the role of age in DA is not clear. Indeed, in earlier studies, the findings on age have also been mixed. The finding that younger youth tend to experience more assets compared to older youth in INRC has also been found in Western youth samples (e.g., Nag Delgado et al., 2021), while no such difference was found in the Ghanaian study by Wium (2017). However, in our study, for the youth in INRC, attending school appeared to be associated with their experiences of DA, especially for children, while older youth appeared to get more access to these resources and opportunities in IRC.

Limitations

Despite the significant findings of the present chapter, there are several limitations worth noting. The present study is a quantitative study that adopted tools developed in the United States without consideration of the Nigerian context. It is therefore possible that despite the youth report of the developmental assets, some of the items (like Constructive use of time that had low Cronbach's alpha) might not sufficiently address the specificity of the Nigerian situation experienced by the youth, especially youth in IRC. Thus, there is the need to develop an adapted version of the instrument that is functional for the Nigerian context. In addition, the cross-sectional nature of our study prevents any causal inference of the findings. Future studies using longitudinal designs may be more appropriate to determine the causal relations among the variables. Furthermore, the use of self-report data could have biased the responses of the youth. Including objective data from teachers and the management of the institutions may present more reliable findings.

Again, the different sample sizes and sampling procedures used might have produced samples that did not represent the target groups in both institutionalised and non-institutionalised centres, as well as the different genders. Future research may consider similar sampling procedures and more representative samples selected from more than the one metropolis used in

the current study. More complex analysis could also be conducted to account for third variables like engagement in risk behaviours and socio-economic status that may have some implications for the report of the developmental assets. Finally, the majority of the studies on PYD have been carried out with adolescent samples, although recent studies have also included emerging adults like is done in our study. However, while adolescents and emerging adults may differ in age, their developmental needs appear to be similar, thus, justifying the inclusion of emerging adults in PYD studies like ours.

Implications for Social Justice

The current chapter has relevant implications for social justice in Nigeria. While youth in both IRC and INRC experienced several of the developmental assets, the mean scores of youth in INRC were consistently higher. This might suggest inequality and an unfair distribution of available resources across the two contexts. Logically, it may be easier to allocate resources to INRC youth who may be perceived as a national asset rather than to IRC youth who may be seen as a liability. However, despite their challenges, an investment in effective asset-building community and asset-building society for IRC youth can likely change their status from a liability to a national asset. Moreover, the goal of the Nigerian youth policy to promote equitable access to educational opportunities and partnership building and collaboration through sports (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019) can be met through equal distribution of the opportunities and resources.

The current findings also indicated some form of inequality across gender, where in general males appeared to experience the assets more than females. Indeed, even on the national and regional levels, a gender gap appears to persist in many African countries, with males having more access to rights, resources and economic opportunities compared to females (World Economic Forum, 2023). To ensure that all the youth can be engaged to promote national development, policies like Nigerian youth policy would have to address injustices and inequalities that appeared to be reflected in the gender differences found in the report of the assets. This is even more so as the youth form such a large proportion of the Nigerian total population and are the backbone of the country.

Conclusions

Findings in this chapter extent the universality of the developmental assets proposed by Peter Benson and the Search Institute and the generalization of the Developmental Asset Profile to the Nigerian context. Two groups of youth, low-risk and at-risk or youth in vulnerable conditions, were found to have experienced several of the assets to some extent. As in earlier studies, internal assets were experienced more than external assets. We also found that youth in IRC (i.e., in orphanages or correctional homes) were less likely to report the assets compared to those in INRC (i.e., youth attending school). In addition, the general findings indicated that females were less likely to experience the assets compared to their male counterparts. These results may indicate a form of social injustice and inequalities with regards to the distribution of the available resources and opportunities to Nigerian youth. While the Nigerian youth policy should support an asset-building community and society that nurtures both internal and external assets, measures can be taken to ensure social justice and equal distribution of the resources and opportunities. This will not only help the country to successfully engage the youth in national development, but it can also help the country to meet its global developmental goals.

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