

DECLINE IN TRADITIONAL VALUES/FOLKLORES AND THE RISING INCIDENCE OF DRUG ABUSE AMONG THE YOUTHS IN THE RURAL AREAS OF RIVERS STATE

**DEEDAM DORKA GODBLESS
PhD**

Sociology Department,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Ignatius Ajuru University of
Education,
Rumuolumeni,
Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
dorkadeedam@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The Paper focuses on the high rate of decline in traditional values/folklores and the rising incidence of drug abuse among the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State. In Nigeria, and Rivers State in particular, the responsibility of nurturing, training and moulding the behavior and character of the young ones is vested in the family. The family employed several strategies including folklores as well as strengthening and maintaining the value system in course of training the young ones. The value system and folklores helped to shape and also to mould the characters of the young ones to suit societal expectation. Unfortunately, in recent times, the value system and folklores have been bastardized as a result of drug abuse by the youths. Globalization introduces foreign ways of life, that trickle down into the rural areas and influence the behavior of the youths. The paper also revealed that the cultists that are all over the rural communities are drug abusers. After taking these drugs, they exhibited anti-social behavior such as killing, raping, stealing, destruction of houses etc. The constituted authorities in these rural communities are not respected, even their parents are not respected neither are they ready to obey the laws of the land. It was therefore recommended that the Rivers State Government in collaboration with non-governmental organizations should engage in enlightenment campaigns against the increase in drug abuse and its consequences on the youths of Rivers State.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rivers State is a multi-ethnic State in Nigeria, and it is located in the South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria. It comprise of various ethnic groups such as Ikwerre, Ogoni, Ekpeye. Ijaw, Ndoni, Abua, Etche, Egbema, Ogba, Odua etc. Each of these ethnic groups has their established value system, custom, tradition and folklores handed over to them by their progenitors.

It is imperative to point out that value system instilled discipline and moulded the

character of the young ones. The family as a social unit is bestow with the responsibility to care for its young ones and to inculcate the values into them.

Orisa (2013) asserts that traditionally in Nigeria, this responsibility is not limited entirely to the nuclear family unit. It covers the extended family, relatives as well as neighbours who invariably contribute immensely to the upbringing of the child, providing him or her with wide range of stimulating interaction that positively noture the child's intellectual, physical and moral development.

In Nigeria society, the importance of traditional value system and folklores cannot be undermined, especially the forms known as proverbs and folktales. In fact, folktale was one of the important ways or means of moulding the character of the young ones in the rural areas of Rivers State. Amaechi and Epuchie (2002) assert that during the pre-colonial days, the Igbo people use folktales to educate their young ones on various aspects of Igbo history, values, norms, beliefs, language and so forth.

Folktales and the value system have so much influence on the behaviour of the children, because the stories did not only entertain, but also contributed immensely to shape their behaviour. It is an unarguable fact that the Nigeria society today and the entire rural areas of Rivers State are no longer the same as before. The value system is collapsing at a very high speed as a result of globalization that introduces new ways of life. On the other hand, Orisa (2013) states that the harsh economic situation which is increasing people's poverty level has made several families unstable and unable to cope with the provision of material needs and emotional support of their children. This ugly situation forces a lot of youths to join cults, and drug abuse is a common feature of the cultists.

A drug is said to be abused when it is used in manners that deviate from medically approved or socially acceptable patterns within society. The term "drug abuse" refers to the use of drug with such frequency, which can cause both physical and mental harm to the user or impair social functioning.

Laver (1978) defined drug abuse as the improper use of drugs to the degree that the consequences are detrimental to the user and the society. Drug abuse is considered as one of the social problem that gave birth to other heinous crimes such as arm robbery, kidnapping, assassination, raping, election rigging etc. Its very common in both the developed and underdeveloped nations, and among the urban dwellers and the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State. Its so alarming and it has clearly manifested on the behaviour of the youths who engaged in anti-social behaviour in their respective communities. The adverse effects of substance abuse by the youths manifested in several forms,

such as flagrant violation of the values and custom of the people, disrespecting constituted authority, raping, and marriage by elopement, formation of several militia groups that attacked each other frequently causing death and destruction of property.

The militia groups that are called different names such as Deywell, Deygbam, Jagaban, Green landers, ice landers etc are terrorist gangs used by the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State to perpetuate their nefarious and barbaric activities. People are killed at reckless abandon, properties worth millions of naira have been destroyed at one time or the other in the rural area of Rivers State. Few years ago, in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State, villagers deserted their villages as a result of incessant deadly attacks on people and their properties. In similar vein, the people of Emohua Local Government Area, Abua/Odua, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni and some parts of Ekpeye clan as well as parts of Andoni and Okrika Local Government Area respectively also abandoned their communities as a result of the anti-social behaviour exhibited by youths who abused drugs.

The custom, value system, folklores have been undermined and thrown overboard by the youths who engaged in drug abuse. Their pattern of dressing are affected and changed drastically, the girls wear dresses that exposed their breasts and laps while the boys wear trousers that exposed their buttocks. The girls put ring on their tongues, noses and their bodies are designed with different styles of tattoos.

Definition of Terms

Folktales

This can be defined as a short narrative or story transmitted orally in prose to the listeners from one generation to the other. The meaning and moral lessons derived from it helps to mould the character and behaviour of the young one.

Value System

This has to do with the traditional standard and ethical values set aside by a group of people as standard of behaviour.

Drug Abuse

This can be defined as taking drugs not prescribed by a medical personnel. It can also be

seen as taking excessive drugs so that one can be intoxicated.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective is to examine the impact of decline in the traditional values/folklores and the rising incidence of drug abuse among the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The culture of a particular group of people is the tiny tread that binds the people together, and it reflects in their origin, language, dressing pattern, folklore, festivals, architectural designs, food, art, belief system, value system, dance, music, laws and even names. The culture of the people reflects their total ways of life. The folklores express the world view of a particular society, and it also makes the fabric of the culture more attractive and humane. Ancient stories and traditional philosophy enhanced independent thinking and problem solving abilities necessary and needed in binding the people together as well as regulating the behaviour of individuals to suit the established standard of behaviour.

Our cultural values and folklores are eroding on a high frequency and degree as a result of the anti-social behaviour exhibited by drug abusers in the rural area of Rivers State. However, drug abuse is not peculiar to the rural areas of Rivers State. It is a national menace and a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the bone marrow of the Nigerian youths, both educated and the un-educated residing in both the rural and urban cities of Nigeria. Kobiowu (2016) confirmed from his findings that in 1981 alone, three to six million (3-6m) out of the population of Nigeria could be classified as drugs abusers. According to Jamabo and Adoo (2013) Nigerian youths have caught up with their counterparts in the developed nations who required the use of drugs which affect the mind and produce changes in mood and behaviour. Most of the abused drugs are commonly found in schools, streets and communities among teenagers, youths and adults.

Fantino (2002) posits that marijuana still remains the drug largely used by undergraduates, and other drug abusers. It is also the most controversial of all the popular drugs used in both the rural and urban areas. It is derived from

hemp, and it is popularly known in our local parlance as "Igbo", Wewe, "gay" and "ganze". It is planted and processed locally. The users, smoke or eat the leaves of marijuana plant to induce a general excitement or euphoria.

According to Kinch (2005) heroin is another form of drug that is commonly abused. It is derived from the gumming substance extracted from the opium poppy and it is powdery. Heroin is either sniffed or injected. Udofa (2024) posits that the consumption of hard drugs is on the increase in the rural areas of Rivers State among the youths because it is considered as an enabler and also an influencer. These drugs enabled them to engage in oil bunkering, vandalization of oil pipes, kidnapping, arm robbery, assassination and other barbaric acts.

He buttressed further that drugs exert major influence on the brain, which motivated them to behave negatively in the society. Orisa (2013) posits that Nigeria's traditional norms and family values have collapsed, the entire centre cannot hold any more. The family has lost a number of its socialization functions in modern industrial Nigeria. It becomes increasingly difficult for the families and communities to maintain their values since a good proportion of the youths in the rural areas are engaged in drug abuse.

Udofa (2024) posits that drug abusers enhanced the destruction of value system/folklores. The cultures have been desecrated, rules are not obeyed, elders and the custodian of the tradition are not also respected, sacred places are now public places, parents have lost their values and are not respected. Infact, the various traditional institutions that were established to regulate the behaviour of people have been bastardized by cultists who depended on drugs.

Ibrahim (2017) states that Nigeria has witnessed changing trends in the display of psycho-active abuse with tramadol hydro-chloride emerging as a drug of choice in various parts and regions of the country. He buttressed that in Nigeria the use of tramadol and cannabis have become a problem of national mental health and psychiatric significance, because the abused of tramadol and cannabis were associated with psychosocial economic and medical complications.

The Present State of Culture and Folktales in the Rural Areas of Rivers State

In the pre-colonial era and even during colonialism African culture, traditional belief system, folktales were considered very important in the upbringing of the children. Several fora were provided through which the cultures, values, morals and acceptable ethical behaviour were inculcated into the young ones.

It is vital to point out that these traditional value system and folktales that are embedded in their respective cultures have been bastardized, less emphasized and undermined as a result of so many reasons. Some of the reasons responsible for the bastardization of the culture, value system and folktales are as follows, western education, introduction of foreign religion, colonization and globalization, urbanization and industrialization, watching of foreign films, programmes and reading of foreign novels.

Emergence of Western Education

The introduction of western education by the British colonialists introduced foreign ways of life into Nigeria and Rivers State in particular. Our culture were seen and regarded as barbaric and fetish, hence it should be avoided, while the western culture should be embraced and imbibed wholesomely. This made the youths and other educated people in both the rural and urban cities to undermine and neglect our value system, folktales and embrace the use of foreign drugs to perpetuate evil.

Introduction of foreign Religion

The colonial masters introduced Christianity to substitute our belief system. The missionaries and new converts preached against the culture, tradition, custom and the value system of the Nigerian people. This affected our traditional orientation system and facilitated the rapid decline in our value system and culture.

Colonization and globalization

Colonialism paves way for globalization, which has substantial effects on our cultural values and folktales. The colonial masters introduced their ways of life and economic system which eventually transformed the ways of life of the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State. The dressing patterns, types of food, drugs, economic system have been changed tremendously.

Globalization enable the youths in the rural areas to have easy access to all kinds of hard drugs, weapons including phones. The cultural values and socialization processes have been neglected and abandoned.

Urbanization and industrialization: The rapid rates of urbanization and industrialization have greatly influenced the behaviour of the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State. The pattern of life in the cities easily trickle dawn to the rural communities. Drug abused was high in the cities including the practice of Whiteman culture. Several decades ago. These anti-social behaviour has now penetrated into the rural areas. This is made possible because there is increase in rural-urban migration and urban-rural migration. These anti-social behaviours are easily imbibed by the youths in the rural areas who communicate with their friends in the cities on daily basis. Inventions made it easier for them to have guns, hard drugs, sophisticated communication gradgets that made them to feel that the foreign ways of life is the best.

Watching of foreign films and reading of foreign novels exposed the youths in the rural areas to the ways of lives of the Europeans and Americans. These influenced their behaviour as well as undermining the cultural values and folktales established by our ancestors.

Family Orientation and Benefits of Sustaining Traditional Values and Folktales

According to Obi (2009) values are beliefs about what is right or wrong, and what is important and useful in life, whether it be physical, psychological or emotional. Value represents the extent to which something (tangible or intangible) improves one's wellbeing or sense of satisfaction or satisfies a purpose.

All the families provided the platforms through which their young ones are socialized based on the custom and tradition passed on to them by progenitors. The children are taught what is right and also exposed to those things that are wrong. This type of orientation enables the people to maintain equilibrium, stability and coherency in the society. Deviation from the cultural values and folktales are responsible for some of the deviant behaviours we are experiencing in the rural areas of Rivers State. One of the important benefits derived from socializing the young ones based on

the tradition is to shun and avoid violence, cultism and arm-robbery. It also enhances respect for elders and constituted authorities.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study anchored on the main assumption of the social learning theory propounded by Albert Bandura in 1968. The theory holds that behaviours are learned in the context of reciprocal determinism or through interaction between individuals in the society. In the process of learning the new behaviour, cognitive factors and external environment that effect the individual are vital factors that influence learning. Adolescents and youths easily emulate or learn both bad and good behaviour from their immediate environment. These individuals learn their behaviour from others and change their normal behaviour.

Scholars use this theory to explicate the relationship between the actions of an ideal adolescence or youths and deviant behaviour learned from parents, teachers, friends (peer group) relatives, secondary groups as role models.

In this circumstance, the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State learned to be drug abusers from others who are engaged in this act. They are disinterested in maintaining the traditional values and folktales and became fascinated in adopting and applying the behaviour learned from others.

Discussion of Findings

This study reveals that there is a relationship between drug abuse and decline in traditional values and folktales in Rivers States. The excessive use of hard drugs among the youths in the rural areas motivated them to behave contrary to the established traditional values and folktales in Rivers State.

This finding corroborated with the findings of Marchie and Nnamdi (2003) who, revealed that drugs exert a major influence on the brain and the psychological functioning resulting in such effects as sedation, stimulation or change in mood or behaviour.

It was also confirmed that there is rapid incidence of drug abuse among the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State. This increase in drug abuse paves way for increase in criminality,

disorganization of the society and cultism that have claimed the lives of so many people.

It was also revealed that the introduction of foreign religion, western education, globalization and urbanization impacted negatively on the behaviour of the youths in the rural areas of Rivers State. Infact, the above actors made them to undermine the traditional value system and folktales that were used to mould the behaviour of the young ones.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

The Rivers State Government in collaboration with non-governmental organizations should engage in enlightenment campaigns against the increase in drug abuse and its consequences on the youths of Rivers State.

The study of history, civic education and social studies should be encouraged and made compulsory at all levels of education in Rivers State and Nigeria in general.

Parents should endeavour to re-unite their children and wards with storytelling and other moon-light stories, songs and plays that will get the children acquainted with their cultural values and folktales.

The government should ban the sales of hard drugs such as cocaine, marijuana etc, while sellers and buyers should be arrested and prosecuted.

VI. CONCLUSION

Traditional values and folktales are considered as important component of the culture of the Rivers people. Traditional values and folktales are passed on from generation to generation and they help in no small measure to mould the character of the children. Folktales are useful teaching tools for the young generation and

it covers all aspects of human endeavour. These were the invisible thread that binds the society together. More hideous crimes are perpetuated by the youths in the rural communities of Rivers State because the traditional value system and folktales that exposed the youths to what is right and what is wrong are declining at a fast rate. These youths abandoned and undermined their respective culture and embraced the ways of life of the western countries. It was discovered that most of the youths are drug addicts who formed. Several militia groups (cult groups) to attack both innocent people and members of rival cult groups. Many people have lost their lives and properties worth millions of naira destroyed in most communities in Rivers State. In addition, many people mostly leaders, elites and girls/women find it difficult to stay in their communities for fear of being kidnapped and killed.

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