



ISSN: 0976-3031

Available Online at <http://www.recentscientific.com>

International Journal of Recent Scientific Research
Vol. 7, Issue, 8, pp. 13064-13067, August, 2016

**International Journal of
Recent Scientific
Research**

Research Article

IMPACT OF ADOLESCENT MATERIAL AND NON MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY: THE WAY FORWARD

Achilike B.A

Department of Educational Foundations Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 20th May, 2016

Received in revised form 29th June, 2016

Accepted 30th July, 2016

Published online 28th August, 2016

Key Words:

Impact, adolescence culture, contemporary, Nigerian society.

ABSTRACT

The Nigerian society today is plagued with a lot of adolescents' anti-social behaviours which result from their culture. This paper therefore attempts to examine adolescents' culture in material and non-material forms and the anti-social behaviours that characterize each form. It further looks into the factors responsible for adolescents' culture and ways of identifying the anti-social behaviours that are manifested. The paper at last concludes and recommends different measures for helping adolescents to develop in the right direction that will map them out from maladjusted behaviours. Among the recommendations are modification of the school curriculum to include vocational subjects for skills acquisition, good parenting styles, counseling services and others.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence stage is the period in human life which lies between the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood (NERC, 1981; Denga, 1999 and Chauhan, 2013). Chauhan added that it is transitional period of life and the stage is sometimes called 'the period of teenage'. Psychologists are not unanimous in their findings about age precision of the adolescence stage due to variations in cultural practices which decide the period in different societies. However, it is generally maintained that the period lasts from 12 to 21 years.

The adolescence stage is usually marked by a spurt in physical growth, hormonal changes, changes in body proportion and maturation of primary and secondary sex characteristics. These changes plunge adolescents into different types of problems. Hall in Chauhan (2013) also agreed that during adolescence stage, marked physical changes take place which have significant behavioural implications.

On the other hand, psychologists like Hollingworth, Benedict and Mead in Chauhan (2013) opposed the view that adolescence is the period of storm and stress. According to them, the stress and strain of adolescents are caused by the cultural taboos and socio-economic conflicts. They again maintained that adolescents can also be rebellious if their energies are not properly channeled. It is important to note that in Nigerian society today, a lot of factors exert harsh pressures on adolescents. Such pressures include poor academic achievement, problem of securing admission into tertiary

institutions, problem of choice of career, unemployment and so on. The behavioural implications of the social pressures to adolescence include formation of their own culture both in material and non-material forms which may result to anti-social behaviours (Anagbogu, Nwachukwu and Nwudu, 1995).

A look into the numerous incidence of anti-social behaviours in Nigerian society today, would reveal that most of them stem from the culture of adolescents, hence the need to identify and address them becomes relevant. Although some researchers had worked on adolescent subcultures, cliques and other subcultures, adequate attention has not been given to material and non material and non material subcultures of adolescents. This paper therefore attempts to look into this lacuna via a critical discussion of material and non-material culture of adolescents and discussed ways of helping them to readjust such behaviours that normally push them into maladjusted life.

Concept of material and non-material culture

Culture may be explained as the totality of the people's way of life. Harper (1992) defined culture as the ideas, customs and art produced by a particular society. Taylor in Onwuka (1996) saw culture as that complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society.

Culture exists in two forms namely, *material* and *non-material*. Material culture refers to those things made or used by man to suit his ways of life such as styles of building and dressing, farming practices, hair designs and others. It is also in the same context that Onwuka (1996) explained material culture as man-

*Corresponding author: **Achilike B.A**

Department of Educational Foundations Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

made objects like tools, weapons, clothing, shelter, machines and the like.

Non-material culture on the other hand includes people's mode of thinking, beliefs, ideas, attitudes, verbal expressions and so on. Contributing also, Onwuka (1996) maintained that this aspect of culture involves a group's way of thinking, expectations, beliefs, traditions, technique ways, mores, values and all of the people's psychological reactions.

Material Culture of Adolescents

It may be correct to argue that adolescents of today have deviated considerably from the original culture obtainable from the society to which they belong. In support of this view, Ayoride (2006) observed that each passing day witnesses depreciation in the level at which adolescents practice the culture of their society. He added that the Nigerian society generally, appears to be witnessing deviant revolution in adolescents' culture. The trend has given rise to rapid increase in adolescents' anti-social behaviours or maladjusted life. A pertinent question is, "What are those things that constitute material culture of adolescents?" Material culture of adolescents may be seen as their styles of doing things which are not in conformity with what the culture of the society specifies. In other words, it implies the ways in which adolescents do their things which are not synonymous with the conventional patterns adopted by the society. Among the material culture of adolescents are:

Indecent dressing: Adolescents have their dressing culture which is usually indecent. Majority of adolescent boys and girls dress indecently. In recent times, most boys adopt the style popularly known as 'sagging'. In this style of dressing, they expose half of their buttocks which is only covered with an inner wear.

Adolescent boys have also adopted the dressing styles and hair do's used by the females. For example, they wear earrings and necklaces and also perm and plait their hairs. All these dressing styles make them to appear like women. Girls on their own side dress in *mini-skirts*, *show-backs*, *open-chests* and other wears that usually expose their thighs, backs, breasts and ambits.

The dressing culture of adolescents has been a serious issue of concern in the society today. For instance, sagging by adolescent boys makes them to look irresponsible and therefore always treated with disregard. Cases abound where adolescent boys have lost chances to secure admission in schools or jobs in offices because of their sagging style of dressing. The dressing culture of girls also lowers their decorum and most often exposes them to the risk of sexual harassment by their male counterparts. As a matter of fact, majority of the incidents of rape and other illegitimate sexual acts meted on adolescent girls are caused by the sensation generated by their indecent dressing.

Driving and drinking culture: Adolescents also have their driving and riding culture characterized by high speed and other reckless behaviours. Whenever adolescent boys drive cars or ride motor-bikes, they usually go on high speed which generates worries and public comments. Denga, (1998) remarked that adolescents try to speed on the road wherever

they ride or drive and crash or smash others before they know it.

Drug addiction: Drug addiction also characterizes adolescents culture. As a matter of fact, drug addiction by adolescents is among the most crucial issues in the society today. In support of this claim, Ezeh (2002) remarked that drug usage has become a very serious problem in our society especially among adolescents. The effect of drugs on adolescents lead them to anti-social behaviours like conflict with parents, violent acts, rape, cultism, armed robbery and others. Besides these maladjusted behaviours, a good number of adolescents in the society today have ruined their lives through drug addiction.

Possession and use of dangerous weapons: This also marks adolescents' culture. Those adolescents who indulge in the acts of thuggery, cultism, armed robbery and the like, usually equip themselves with such arms like guns, daggers, axes, explosives, acids and others, which they use for attack or defense during confrontations and in barbaric situations. In those days, possession and use of dangerous weapons as mentioned above by young people were unethical. Today however, it has become the order of the day in the lives of adolescents. Consequent upon this, they are usually ready to shoot or kill during rampages, when they fight, when they engage in armed robbery or other ugly events.

Love for material things: Adolescents love to acquire such things like radio, costly hand phones, musical gadgets, latest/reigning fashions of clothes and many other precious things. They usually go to any length to secure those things even including borrowing, cheating, stealing, tricking out money from parents or forcing them to release it to them. Where they fail to succeed, it normally gives rise to unhealthy situations and rivalry between them and their family members.

Non-material culture of adolescents

Nwankwo (1992) described non-material culture of adolescents as a form of behavioural problems like aggression, violation of stipulated rules, noise making, unhealthy remarks and negative attitudes. Along this line, the following non-material culture of adolescents are highlighted:

Music: Majority of adolescents are music lovers and are usually very much upset when their right to music is denied. Generally, they usually show little or no regard in any occasion that is organized without music. The negative aspect of adolescents tendency towards music is that it leads to undesirable behaviours such as fighting, rioting, sex-scandals and destruction of life and property. It is common to note that whenever a group of adolescents engage in a social activity that involves music, they usually indulge in excessive drinking and smoking which land them in anti-social behaviours, Magnal (2012).

Language/slangs: Adolescents, in their culture, have their languages which are usually inform of slangs. Although they use such slangs basically to communicate among themselves, in most cases they use them in manners that are irritating to parents, teachers and people generally. Such slangs and their meaning include:

- Tua-down meaning to get to a place
- Wetin-de shele meaning what is happening?

- What's popping also meaning what's happening?
- Migrate meaning to make a travel.
- Chop knuckle meaning to have a hand shake.
- Reason me meaning talk to me.
- Casting meaning disappointing.

Wrong attitudes: A good number of adolescents usually express negative attitudes towards their studies, work, going to church, listening to advice by parents or the elderly members of the society. Such attitude include truancy in schools, disrespect to constituted authorities, disrespect to parents, promiscuity, sexual harassment, and many others. These attributes normally lead to conflict between them and the people they relate with.

Ideas/ways of reasoning: Most adolescents are fond of disagreeing with adults. They reason differently and stick more to their own ideas. This mostly happens to adolescents who are initiated into adulthood prematurely. They lack experiences which should equip them to think or reason like adults. For this reason, they always argue issues with adults or oppose their own ideas. Supporting, [Denga & Ekoja \(2008\)](#) observed that in societies that initiate adolescents pre-maturely into adulthood, the period of adolescence is practically eliminated once an adolescent becomes a parent. He begins to attend family and village meetings where he argues neck to neck with elders thereby generating disrespect for constituted authority.

Factors responsible for adolescent culture

The genesis of adolescents' culture can be traced to many factors among which are:

Poor parenting styles: Good parenting style is one of the indices for social and emotional development of adolescents. Some families or parents are lacking in their duties in this aspect. [Ugwu \(1997\)](#) maintained that some families are democratic in their parenting styles. Others are autocratic while there are those that adopt the *laissez-faire* method. Ugwu went on to argue that those adolescents who are parented in families that use autocratic or *laissez-faire* styles are likely to develop anti-social behaviours like being rebellious, use of rough language, drinking of alcohol, drug abuse, lack of respect and negative attitudes.

Poor orientation: Poor orientation is used here to mean failure of the family or society to direct the young ones towards the right ways of life approved by the society. It is important to note the fact that in every society, the culture demands that at each stage of human development, individuals should acquire certain skills and behaviours which are essential for their proper adjustment. Where the individuals fail to learn the skills or behaviour expected at each stage, maladjustment arises. According to [Chauhan \(2013\)](#), for the individual to adjust well in the society he must possess or acquire an acceptable level in certain kinds of competencies according to his age, sex and situation. He added that failure to achieve those competencies has a crippling effect on the individuals' personality. Along this view, adolescents who are given poor orientation are usually prone to maladjusted behaviours.

Peer group influence: The influence of peer group on the life of adolescents is highly remarkable. It is in that forum that adolescents establish their own codes of conduct, beliefs and ideas which have significant impact on their personality either positively or negatively. On the negative side, peer group

usually form their own culture which are different from the codes of conduct or competencies desired by the society. For example, such undesirable habits like smoking, drinking, drug abuse, sexual abuse, indecent dressing and others, are usually acquired by adolescents from their peers. [Ezeh \(1991\)](#)

Lack of skill-acquisition: One of the problems facing adolescents in the society today is lack of skills-acquisition. As a result of this, many of them who have passed out from schools keep on roaming the streets in search of jobs. When they fail to find any, they become frustrated and resort to unconventional ways of behaviours. The ugly trend is usually blamed to the failure of the school curriculum to emphasize skills acquisition through relevant vocational subjects or programmes.

Poor teacher-adolescents relationship: Some teachers in secondary schools hardly relate cordially with adolescent students. In most cases, their relationship do not go beyond normal classroom interactions during lessons. Also, such teachers are fond of imposing their authorities on adolescent students. Hall in [Chauhan \(2013\)](#) argued that adolescents tend to be rebellious when teachers infringe on their rights or strain the relationship between them.

Techniques for Identification of Adolescent' Culture

Adolescents' culture can be identified through the following methods:

Observation: Anti-social behaviours like wrong dressing, smoking, drinking, wrong use of language, use of drug and others can be identified by observing adolescents engaging in the acts.

Listening: This is mostly employed to identify the type of language, slangs or utterances made by adolescents. Songs and arguments by adolescents can also be noted through listening to them.

Case history: This involves detailed information deliberately and carefully collected about adolescents. Such information normally centers on family background, physical, mental, social and emotional characteristics, attitudes, habits, interests and others. Information obtained in these areas help to project the behavioural attributes of adolescents.

Reports: Reports from parents, teachers, peers and other close persons to the adolescents can provide valid information about the behavioural attributes which form parts of their culture.

CONCLUSION

A conducive society is a great asset to the members. This can only be achieved when every segment of the members of the society upholds her culture optimistically. In our Nigerian society today, anti-social behaviours and crimes are rising everyday at alarming rate following the resultant effect of material and non-material culture of adolescents. The situation calls for quick intervention of all and sundry to assist in creating enabling environment for proper development of adolescents and an assurance of an orderly society.

A Way Forward

There are various measures for suppressing anti-social behaviours which usually arise from the material and non-material culture of adolescents. Some of the measures include:

Parenting styles: Parents should try to adopt parenting styles that will create good rapport between them and their children particularly during adolescence. They should begin right from their children's early stages to curb undesirable habits in them. All these will help to curb them from behaviours that will lead to maladjustment.

Good orientation: Parents and the society generally, should always try to orient adolescents properly into the behaviours that will prepare them for adjusted life in the society. The society is fast changing. As a result, adolescents of today need certain skills and behaviours that match the needs of the present time. In the light of this, parents and the society generally should be mindful of the type of skills and behaviours they impose on their adolescent children to enable them adjust well in the changing society.

Counseling services: Guidance counselors should always organize effective counseling programmes for adolescents on the dangers inherent in anti-social behaviours like indecent dressing, drinking, smoking, drug abuse and how to avoid them.

Skills-orientated curriculum: Secondary school curriculum should be modified to include vocational subjects through which students should be adequately prepared to acquire skills that will make them self dependent when they pass out. This measure will address such adolescent tendencies towards anti-social behaviours like cheating, robbery and exploiting their parents. The recent review and implementation of the Senior Secondary School curriculum in Nigeria to address the issue of lack of skills acquisition by students is a welcome development.

Government, teachers and all other relevant stake holders in education should do everything possible to ensure successful implementation of the skills-oriented curriculum.

Teachers' rapport: Teachers of adolescents should always relate cordially with them. They should treat them with care and always engage them in activities that are devoid of anti-social behaviours.

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How to cite this article:

Achilike B.A.2016, Impact of Adolescent Material and Non Material Culture in the Contemporary Nigerian Society: The Way Forward. *Int J Recent Sci Res.* 7(8), pp. 13064-13067.