



Social Change: A Stigma on Community Development in the 21st Century in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper discussed social change as a stigma on community development practices in the 21st century. Stigma are assumed to be the negative effects of social change in the practice of community development, because of the indicators of permanent marks, label deposited on the activities of community development especially in the aspects of social, economic, cultural, political, technological, environmental, demographic and educational space. This negative stigma have caused communities traumatic and depression effects by dysfunction of some parts of the social structures and institutions which in turn destabilized human and social development in our rural communities. The new age does not encourage self-help efforts to the extent of not cleaning drainages, waterways, cut road paths, select leadership by age and experience naturally, rather it has attracted the government, avoidance of age grade mechanism, local communication systems, use of the wealthy, influential politicians, recruitment of cult groups and high handedness in the affairs of the communities and community development practices in the 21st century. Therefore, it is very pertinent to say that social change of the 21st century have done more harm than good to the grass root rural communities in Nigeria. This paper further discussed the concept of social change, its features, stigma, areas of social change stigmas, community development and objectives, relationship between social change, stigma and community development in the 21st century, conclusion and recommendations were made.

Keywords: Social Change, Stigma, Community Development.

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INTRODUCTION

The human society is dynamic in nature with its driving forces of change internally and externally especially in the integration of socio-cultural, psychological, economic and political conditions of people. These driving forces of change bring about desirable socio-economic development for the populace in the contemporary world.

In evolution of society, several distinct stages have been recognized depending on the physical structure, socio-cultural and economic characteristics. Pre-industrial and post-modern period are distinct stages of the society visible in history (Spicy, 2020). The social characteristic of the various stages having affected different societies depending on the different socio-cultural, political and economic structures and, largely determined by geographical demarcation. The effects have been visible on many aspects of the lives of people in those communities/societies, such as life standards, education, social mobility and health. Change they say is inevitable, natural and a constant, phenomenon in every given society, whether in local councils, farm settlements, state, regional and global settings. This is because change alter or differ certain activities of the people, especially in rural communities. It is also irreversible and progressive.

Social Change

Defining the term ‘social change’ is highly controversial, particularly among sociologists. This is because the object is a social phenomenon, a social process that tends to have divers dimensions and facets unfolding at different levels of generality (Morariu & Ignat, 2011). However, social change can be defined as alteration within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols rules of behaviour, several organization or value systems (Olagbanju, 2015; Morariu & Ignat, 2011). Social change simply means change in the systems structure and practices that shape life of people in a community. Ekpenyong in Oji (2022) also saw it as the development of new values, norms, modification of role expectations, a shift to new types of sanctions, the development of different criteria for ranking and the introduction and use of new production techniques. Social change occurs in chains. Social change is an ongoing process that has been in place since the beginning of history but arguably accelerates with time such that societies change faster.

In sociology, social change means the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations, or values system. Social change can evolve from a number of different sources, including contact with other societies, changes in the eco-system, technological change (industrial revolution) and population growth, and other demographic variables. Social change can also be spurred by ideological, economic and political movements.

Also, social change is any change in social relations. It is an ever present phenomenon in any society. Although the idea of social change is more or less universal, sometimes there are disagreements on the direction of change as with the mechanism of change. Huntington in Oludele (2020) viewed social change as challenge for social scientists. It is an ubiquities feature of social reality that widely described and explained the evolution of human societies as well as the trans-formation in the basic components of human societies right from the traditional to new age societies (Olagbeju in Oludele, 2020).

The fact remains that human societies have experienced constant alternations or change in social values, norms, institutions, relationships and stratification as a result of internal and

external forces of social change. Examples of such external forces are climate change, wild fire, floods, deforestation, farming activities, etc. which occurred largely, affecting an entire nation or several nations, while internal forces are events that occurred on a small scale local industrialization, dressing pattern, peer group settings, and lifestyles. They play or exhibit far-reaching influences on the social fabric of the society.

Social change appears when there is momentous shake up in social and cultural elements that form an enduring network of relationship in which there is interaction between people, organizations, communities and nations, (Ololube et al., 2013). Social change is either positive or negative in nature. Positive social change involve desirable development and improvement in the entire or some parts of societal institutions which include culture, economy, education, family, international affairs, law, population, politics and religion, which invariably enhance, human and social conditions (Ololube et al., in Oloudele, 2020).

In this paper, negative social change are assumed to be the 'stigma', permanent mark on community development caused as a result of social change in the 21st century, which has created permanent effect on someone's mind through traumatic experiences to the grass root stakeholders in our communities and society. It is really tagged to be negative things towards the activities of community development practice in the 21st century. Such negative aspects are the stigmas and scars in social changes that depict dysfunction in the entire or parts of social structures and institutions as earlier mentioned.

This occurrence of social change has a significant impact on the social, economic, environmental and political conditions of people in the community. This is noticeable as it often alters the social elements (norms, values, culture and behaviours patterns) and social arrangements (roles, statues, structure and institution). In this respect, economically, social change impact on the process of industrialization, commerce, workplace, trade formation, as well as work, Capital drive, human and material administration. Politically, social change influences the political organization and administration of power resources and governance, which has lead to bad leadership, corruption, egocentrism, gender, inequality etc. Environmentally, social change alters the way natural and mineral resources are being managed and utilized by people in the rural communities through deforestation, illegal mining activities, pipeline vandalization, causing pollution of land and water ways etc. Social change changes people's behavioural patterns on how to think, and their attitudes of legitimacy and authority to involve in crime and criminalities, disobedience to constituted laws and order of the society. Social change brings change to the system structures and practices that reshape lifestyles (rascality) in a community. Actually, it is an ongoing process that has been in place in past and present, since the beginning of history, but arguably accelerates with time such that societies changes faster now than before in every given community and society.

Other areas of Social Change Stigmas

Spicy (2020) supporting this view submitted some of the examples of social change defects to the society to include:

Demographic: This simply means the composition of society at a point in time including factors just as age, gender and ethnicity. They change with increased births, deaths, emigration, immigration and the process of life such as aging has been effected through drug abuse and enhancement.

Role: The roles that people play in a society, community, organization and family change over time. Through gang up, bad judgment, devoid of natural truth, wickedness, high handedness, etc.

Power: Power is the control of resources. The historical and present distribution of power are somewhat similar to whereby a small elite controls most resources. Power sharing has turn to be a scared community in the hands of the old and young people who have decided to pocket others, especially through diabolic means and formation of influential groups.

Politics: Politics is the process by which societies make decisions and allocates resources. Historically, politics was centered on economic class. But in recent times this has changed to a situation whereby people are less likely to identify with their common class interest. Politics has turn to be a do or die affair, a household or trademark for a few in the communities and country.

Education: Changing approaches to education for example standardized testing that encourages a shift towards convergent thinking and away from divergent thinking. Non-challant attitude critical stakeholders in the sector has played major roles in regular strike and protest against educational activities in recent times as a result of behavioural deficiencies on the institutional management and managers.

Community: In the community the way people interact with each other has changed because of envy, jealousy, mistrust against one another, lack of brotherhood, hate speeches, blackmail and disrespect. Gangups against goodwill projects and programmes to the rural community by the government and NGO's.

Individualism: Modern values have shifted towards individuals over collective pursuits and identity mostly when it has to do with sharing common wealth.

Religion: It has caused proliferation of churches, shrines, worshippers. Native doctors have turned to be pastors, pastors go to juju houses to acquire power for demonstration to the citizenries (Christ like) through spiritual ignorance that encourage all sort of social vices.

Lifestyle: This simply means the way people live. In the modern age, that has changed rapidly with each generative examples in marriage patterns (gay), joint crime through 419, internet and yahoo fraudsters or younger persons for wealth (marrying older partners), pattern of feeding at eateries.

Technology: Technology has changed communication media work, recreation and leisure. Different phones in distribution and production are used for worst against the original purpose of information dissemination and research amongst students in schools and other life endeavours.

Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship leads to economic change. In recent time, tend to influence other elements of society such as lifestyles. Countries that embraced entrepreneurship change more quickly than others. Today, crime and criminality strategies are seen as an entrepreneurship ventures.

Culture: Culture is a set of shared practices and meaning that emerge through shared experiences. Today, most families cannot speak their native dialects or dress properly. On the other hand, Tradition are enduring elements of culture. They provide stability and allow continuation of the same culture from one generation to another. Some communities and societies may go into extinction with their culture and tradition, because of the new age social change activities.

Family Life and Structure: Changes with time and space. Divorce cases, separation, single home, etc. are the order of the new age.

Media: Changes in media consumption and participation is alarming with the proliferation of mobile devices and apps that allow for personal consumption of media over shared experiences. This has turned to be used to cause public disturbance by posting of pornography pictures, videos and others alike to the entire human domain.

Globalization: This is the interconnection of different places on a global basis. In recent time world powers have developed turf to disconnect their perceived rivals either through wars or sanctions (Russia and Ukraine). This affects the rural communities of the world.

Environment: The degradation of the environment causes decline in the quality of life of people in the community. Youths and adults alike destroy crude oil pipeline and cause land and water pollution which has resulted to the extinction of wildlife and sea food products. Resultant effects of quick riches.

Health: Elements of health including things like diets, exercise, behaviour, social interaction and medicine child and infant mortality has drastically declined on a global basis in the past 30 years. But of recent there are presence of different sicknesses and ailments around the globe as a result of bad dietary intake and pollutant environment.

Development: This is the capacity of a poor nation to leave behind dissatisfaction, vulnerability, and suffering and work towards quality of life. This may come from international cooperation and support of donor agencies through comparative advantages amongst countries, nations. But this benefit has been hampered because of value chain of certain goods and services, which has pushed countries devalue their products and currency, even creating opportunities for environmental destruction, conflict, poverty, war, disease or disasters inform of Covid-19 and other global diseases and ailments plaguing man in our rural communities.

FEATURES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

In tandem with above example of social change, some features that distinguished social change from social events are briefly explained with some insights from the Nigeria rural society:

- The belief that social change occurs everywhere naturally, because human society is never static. Social, political, economic and cultural changes occur repeatedly which varies from time to time and place to place.
- The notion that change can be intentional yet often unplanned.

- Social change often generates controversy. For example, the motion from developed countries (U.S.A., Canada, etc.) that same-sex marriage should be acceptable in Nigeria and other developing countries caused serious controversy involving the government, military, religious leaders and the society at large. The rural communities seriously frowned at it.
- Some changes matters more than others. Social change across human societies can be as a result of internal or external forces; natural or non-natural events; historical or contemporary issues. It may arise from an alternation in population size, structure and composition: A change in the population could be unavoidably influenced by the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas, where jobs and human livelihood are easier. Rural-urban migration (causing population decrease in rural areas and population increase in urban areas). Which results to social tension, social unrest and conflict (between two or more races, religious sect, social classes political parties, community), etc.
- Social change results from interaction of a number of factors and not a single factor.
- Social change in one aspect of life gives rise to a chain reaction of changes affecting other aspects.
- Presence of crisis and resistance ignites social change in a given society.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Various authorities have defined community development from different perspectives based on their experience and areas of specialization. Community development however can be defined from three perspectives; as a process, movement and as a field of study. Community development is as old as man both in principles and practices (Onyenemezu & Needum, 2021). Community development has always been practiced by man over time due to the need for improvement and better living conditions. Oyebamiji and Adekola in Oji (2021) observed that community development is a modern way of achieving the aim of improvement and better living in communities by their members or an external agency such as government, non-governmental organizations etc. Community development in participatory is nature and leads to transformation of the society to better. Community development is a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities, to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of community to integrate those communities into life of the nation and to enable them contribute fully to national progress (United Nations in Onyenemezu, 2021).

Anyanwu in Oji (2021) summarized the objectives of community development as follows:

- To educate and motivate the people for self-help;
- To develop responsible local leadership;
- To inculcate among community members a sense of spirit consciousness and citizenship;
- To introduce and strengthen democracy at the grass root level through the creation and revitalization of institutions designed to serve as instruments for local leadership;
- To initiate a self-generative and self-sustaining and enduring process of growth;
- To enable people establish and maintain cooperative and harmonious relationships.

The above objectives are laudable and geared towards positive social change because they are tied to making people in communities become comfortable with a better way of living life in a natural environment for sustainability.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIALCHANGE, STIGMA AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN 21ST CENTURY

The 21st century has been characterized by creativity and innovation, collaboration and communication, critical thinking and problem solving, global citizens, technology literacy life etc. The era called 'jet age', people on the speed lawn, high-tech decisions makers, working towards social change, hence, transformation of our communities over a period of time.

In Nigeria and her rural communities, social change stems largely from the fact that there are unresolved social problems which are occasioned by constant changes in social structure, social relationships and social institutions. For instance the shift from three regions to thirty-six states, agriculture based economy to oil-based economy, military rule to democratic system of government etc. Also, cultural patterns shifted from the traditional African culture to Western European culture.

Some of these shift overtime generated series of social problems like bribery and corruption, child labour, family instability, election irregularities, unemployment, religious conflict, environmental degradation, poverty, insecurity kidnapping, banditry, etc. The existence of social change in Nigeria and her communities has promoted civilization, acculturation, public private partnerships as well as technological advancement and community development. Therefore, it is assumed that social change has brought about positive changes. But its applicability has resulted to negative transformations in communities not in doubt.

A situation whereby communities no longer gather to take decisions on self-help projects and activities, rather they wait for the government agencies and NGO's to be in charge of their primary activities, even cleaning their water ways, drainages and waste management operations. Leaders are now elected and appointed not through the natural ways of seniority, but by influence of the wealthy, recruitment of cult groups and government influentials without experience of popular participation, devoid of degree of 'tokenism' in terms of dealing with community thematic felt needs. Rather this has led to dysfunction of the leadership and value system. Communities in recent time are, also devoid of the reasons for community development objectives as stated earlier, as it was in the past.

This argument or discourse cannot be overemphasized, because the speed and rate at which it is spreading in the new era, especially in our communities known to be hospitable and accommodating as a result of natural ways to conserve our God given resources has been destroyed by gang groups, militarism, wise men etc. who took over leadership of communities by force.

CONCLUSION

Rural communities in Nigeria have witnessed a sequential progression from a traditional to modern communities with a certain level of advancement in the institutions that make up the social system in Nigeria, for instance, it has undergone a series of development strategies changes, such as moving from agriculture based to crude-oil based which has helped to increase the gross domestic product (GDP), purchasing power propensity and nation income generation as

claimed. However, social-economic improvement is yet to be felt by majority of people in the rural communities, as a result of the stigmas aforementioned in this paper. Therefore, it became very pertinent to say that social change and globalization have done more harm than good to the rural countries of Nigeria, especially in promoting community development activities in the 21st century.

Recommendations

- Community leadership selection should be maintained to be democratic according to the will of the people, not by imposition by any group.
- Existing technological apparatus should be used for the utmost benefits to the community members by communication and disseminating information that will be helpful in solving community problems of felt needs.
- Communities should be encouraged to use their natural administrative pattern in carrying out community development activities through the machineries of the age grade, cooperative societies, elites, CDC, Youth groups etc.
- Annual cultural/traditional activities: Should be organized yearly as to allow community members home and abroad gather to discuss pressing issues that will better the land.
- Elders, elites groups should organize workshop, symposia to counsel the youths on the need to be empowered skillfully, especially with the use of our God given natural resources around us in the rural communities.
- Issue of mother tongue, language communication should be decided and taken serious as most of the dialects are going into extinction.

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