

CHAPTER FIVE

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOURS AMONG IBIBIO YOUTHS: LATENT DYSFUNCTION OF SELECTED COMMUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural values have the capacity to influence people's attitudes toward substance abuse and their risk of experimentation with psychoactive substances. Substance abuse is related to the cultural values of society. Abbott and Chase (2008) posit that socio-cultural beliefs can shape the approach to and behaviour regarding substance use and abuse. According to Soto *et al.* (2011), many studies show that traditional cultural values influence adolescents' attitudes and beliefs, which in turn influence their health risk behaviours (for example, cigarette, alcohol, and drug use) According to their report, there exists few studies which show how specific cultural values can be or operate as protection against substance use (Unger *et al.*, 2002; 2006; Castro *et al.*, 2007).

Heath (2001) is of the opinion that culture plays a central role in forming the expectations of individuals about potential problems they may face with drug use. Substance use and abuse is found to be rooted in culture of the people (Peters, 2019). According to Jiloha (2009), drug abuse is a complex phenomenon, which has various social, cultural, biological, geographical, historical and economic aspects. Jiloha further maintained that apart from cultural practices, the disintegration of the old joint family system, absence of parental love and care in modern families where both parents are working, decline of old religious and moral values etc lead to a rise in the number of adolescent drug addicts who take drugs to escape hard realities of life. According to Effiong and Agha (2020), early intervention strategies can mitigate psychosocial ill health. Some strategic interventions include social intervention, psychosocial intervention, medical intervention, advocacy, and community-based rehabilitation

In Nigeria, traditional marriage rites are common among the various ethnic groups but relative in practice as defined within the cultural boundaries of each group. According to Nzoiwu (2012), traditional marriage rite is defined as the ceremonies surrounding marriage within a traditional setting according to the customary laws and tradition of the people involved. It involves series of negotiations, presentation of gift, payments and in some cases divination. Traditional marriage rite process can take years from when the girl is betrothed from childhood to when she is actually established in her husband's house (Nzoiwu, 2012). Traditional marriage rites involve giving of marital requirement items, payment of bride wealth and presentation of gifts, and these items in most of Nigerian culture contain one illicit substance or the other depending on the cultural acceptability of the people (Peters, 2019). This cultural acceptability through traditional marriage requirement has set

the basis from which drug/alcohol consumption and abuse are present within the Nigerian communities. As part of gift presentations during traditional marriage ceremonies, illicit substances have found its presence in some homes through marital union ceremonies. Alcohol use and abuse has found its presence in most homes due to the cultural acceptability accorded it through presentation and collection of alcoholic drinks during traditional marriages at various traditional marriage occasions. According to Nwaubani (2013), alcohol and livestock are given to the public as part of burial traditional rites whereby the entire community is summoned for “Ikpo Oku” in order to be publicly informed of the death of a community member. Alcohol and other psychoactive substances play key part in the traditional rites of many ethnic groups in Africa.

The roles of culture in substance abuse cannot be adequately examined without considering the traditional rites influence and cultural experiences of the people who abuse such substances. Many scholarly studies have shown that cultural practices through traditional rites play great influential roles in substance and drug acceptance, drug use and the level of abuse of psychoactive substances (Jiloha, 2009; Guerreroa, and Andrews, 2011; Room, 2013). Many cultural justifications are given by some cultural setting for substance and alcohol use and abuse. The use of alcoholic beverages has been an important aspect of many cultures for thousands of years (McGovern, 2009). According to Room (2013), there was a shift in American culture at the time of the rise of the temperance movement. And in the context of that movement, it was argued that drinking came into focus as a potential explanation of bad events or behaviour as Americans came to see alcohol as an exceptionally powerful substance that not only made drinkers clumsy but also made them behave in ways in which they would not wish to behave when sober. Alcohol consumption and later addiction in this environment received a cultural acceptability to ease depression and set one out of sober mode.

Substance and alcohol use and abuse is rooted in the culture of the people of Nigeria (Peters, 2019). In the southern part of Nigeria, alcohol and other psychoactive substances are culturally accepted and celebrated but in the northern part of the nation, alcohol as a psychoactive substance is forbidden while cigarettes, kolanut, bitter kola are culturally accepted and celebrated. Different ethnic groups in Nigeria have culturally practices that accept the use of some psychoactive substances and alcohol for various traditional rites. Nwagu *et al.* (2017) further observed that, consumption of alcohol particularly palm wine by members of the community is therefore generally seen as normal. The community only frowns at the abuse of alcohol which to members is drinking to the point that one cannot control oneself. It is, however, wrong to believe that it is only when an individual cannot control himself or herself after drinking that alcohol has been abused. People’s definition of what ‘normal’ and ‘harmful’ drinking is, can be used to assess and compare their attitudes about alcohol consumption with that of other communities. Alan (2003) argued that the motive behind drug abuse may be sociological (status-seeking, peer pressure, the news media or substance-oriented society), psychological (to banish pain or discomfort, to attain euphoria, fantasy or to escape from unpleasant reality), out of curiosity, boredom, to alleviate fear, derive sexual and physical pleasures, or family background. He further stressed that despite the fact that drug abuse has adverse effects on the youth involved by changing their brain perception of difficulties and problems, the number of undergraduates that use or abuse stimulants has steadily increased in recent years.

While low to moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages may not cause any harm to the drinker, heavy and uncontrolled consumption, especially among young people predispose drinkers to numerous health challenges (WHO, 2014). Apart from health challenges of abuse of alcohol and other psychoactive substances, people under heavy alcohol and other psychoactive substance abuse tend to misbehave. According to toppr.com, the ill effects of alcohol, smoking, and drug abuse can be of many types. One, they can cause the individuals to become antisocial, indulge in vandalism, rash and reckless behaviour etc. people especially the young people are likely to be involved in antisocial behaviours, vandalism, and other harsh and uncontrollable bad behaviours. Alcohol and substance abuse also impacts users’ behaviour, which can result in accidents and violence (Gateway Foundation, 2023). People who abuse alcohol and psychoactive substance have the tendency to exhibit deviant behaviours under the influence of such substances.

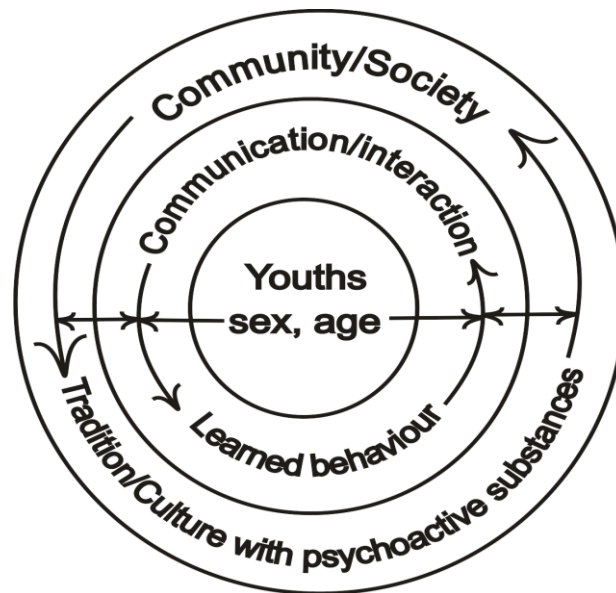
Deviant behaviour just like any other antisocial behaviour can be explained with reference to the pathology of the individual actor or with reference to the group in which the deviant organizes his or her behaviour as a result of certain influence which alcohol and other psychoactive substances are key players (Rock 2013). Deviance just like crime is a social construct based on the moral boundaries of every society. This means that deviant behaviour can be constructed within the context of a society's moral standards. Placing certain individuals in deviant roles on the basis of their conduct must be in consideration of their society's standardized moral practices, beliefs or social norms. Considering deviance as rule breaking within the context of a particular society, Rock (2013) opines that the range of human behaviours is potentially so wide and behaviour that a social group permit to circulate within the domain of their cultural territory forms moral boundaries that people participating in the social system must confine their social actions to. Deviance therefore in this nuance is breaking of significant rules which are grounded in deep and widely held moral feelings, normative values and institutionalized practices of a society. Deviance therefore is affront to the moral order of a particular society and natural law. Actions that offend both rationality and morality of a given society and nature (natural law) are deviance. Weinberg (1974) as cited by the US Department of Justice (2023) posited that to explain the processes, impact and control of deviancy, the five forms of deviance must be considered which are: the delinquent, the drug addict, the homosexual, the mentally ill, and suicides. These behaviours are found to be related to influence of alcohol and substance abuse.

The Ibibio people are a coastal people in southern Nigeria, which according to Peters (2019), are known for cultural adoption of foods, drink and other psychoactive substances as parts of traditional rites within their culture patterns. The Ibibio people are mostly found in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. They are related to the Efik people. During the colonial period in Nigeria, the Ibibio Union asked for recognition by the British as a sovereign nation (Britannica.com). The Ibibio people are known for many cultural practices in which many traditional rites are embedded. Some of these traditional rites include burial (mkpa/ubuk-owo) rites, traditional marriage (ndo) rites, naming (Usioanyi) ceremonial rites, chief's (Obong) coronation rites, clan head (Edidem) coronation rites, village head (Eteidung) coronation rites, name-sake (okpongo) traditional rites, masquerade (ekpo) traditional rites, youths' (Nka Mkpawawa) rites, grandchild (eyeyenn) rites, in-laws' (ede/awan eyen) rites, and other fines or settlements rites. These traditional rites are mostly performed with alcohol and psychoactive substances like; raw tobacco leaves (mfang ikong), grinded tobacco snuff (Ikong iwoo), cigarettes, illicit gin (ufopop), kolanuts (ibong) and recently, Ibibio youth have introduced what they called "Hymn no. 4" (Peters, Bassey, Usoro, and Emmanuel, 2022) or "brew," which is a blend of illicit gin, marijuana (Ikong Ekpo), hollandia yoghurt, lemon grass, tramadol and palmwine (Ukud Nsung/Ata Ukod) (Peters, Bassey, Usoro, and Samuel, 2022).

Youths are the most consumers and abusers of these substances during traditional rites (Peters, Bassey, Usoro and Samuel, 2022), though some of the elders do so. The locus standi for the youths' consumption and abuse of these psychoactive substances and alcohol remains the traditional rites as stated by Peters (2019); Peters and Bassey (2020) and Peters, Bassey Usoro and Samuel (2022). These substances are said to influence behaviours of individuals especially when abused. Studies have shown that there is a link between substance abuse and criminal behaviours. Šarić, Sakoman and Zdunic (2002), in their study on how substance abuse influences criminal behaviours reported in their findings that among men, the first act of criminal behaviour depends on substance abuse and long term of substance abuse leads to more serious criminal behaviours. Among the Ibibio youths, traditional rites as dimensions of cultural practices have influenced youths in certain levels of substance abuse (Peters, 2019). The nub of scientific studies whether on deviance or any other social reality is to understand the roots of social problems thereby explaining how these problems may be remedied (Bridges and Scott 2023). This study sought to examine the latent functions of traditional rites among the Ibibio people in influencing alcohol and psychoactive substance abuse which in turn led to criminal tendencies and behaviours among Ibibio youths.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Model of Cultural Influence on Youths' Psychoactive Drug Abuse Behaviour (Peters, 2019)



The model is a synthesis of Social Learning Theory, Differential Association Theory and Ecological System Theory (Peters, 2019). The youths within a certain age cohort (culturally defined as young adults and adolescents between the age of 50 years and below or as define by the cultural settings), and mostly of males though females are included, through communication or interaction with other members of the age group, with time develop learned behaviour of drugs and psychoactive substance abuse due to engagement in traditional rites and cultural acceptability of psychoactive substances (alcohol and tobacco) as part of traditional requirements for cultural activities and traditional rites. This has been prevalent in all societies across the world whether traditional or modernized society, where culture has played acceptable roles of what is acceptable as drinks and foods within society or community which in turn are learned by youths as members of such society.

The principles of Cultural Influence of Youths' Psychoactive Drug Abuse Behaviour model (Peters, 2019) are:

- i. Psychoactive Drug Abuse Behaviour is acquired through learning social behaviour which later generates new behaviours acquired by observing and imitating others.
- ii. Youths come to have differential access to certain Psychoactive Drug Abuse Behaviour through interaction with other people in the community/society as defined by traditionally accepted codes and cultural practices of the elders or elites.
- iii. Youths build and develop behaviour through relationships within communities and the wider society which they found themselves.

METHOD

Ethnographic research design was adopted by the researchers for the study. This research design involves multiple qualitative data collection techniques such as in-depth interview, key informant interview, focus group discussion and objective observation by the researchers. The study was conducted in 3 Ibibio local government areas across Akwa Ibo m State. Etinan Local Government Area, Ibessikpo-Asutan Local Government Area and Onna Local Government Area were selected for the study. 2 villages were purposively selected from each of the 3 selected local government areas. The Fetterman's (2010) Big-net approach was used to randomly select study participants from each of the selected villages. Data were analysed thematically with excerpts.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Traditional rites with alcohol and other psychoactive substance

Emergence from the study as gathered by the researchers show that there exist traditional rites among the Ibibio people that are legal patterns for alcohol, tobacco and other psychoactive substance consumption and abuse. These traditional rites form generational pattern of substance abuse among the Ibibio youths. According to findings by the researchers through interviews, discussions and observations, these include; traditional marriage rites, which the people of Ibibio origin collect alcoholic drinks of different type/brands and other psychoactive substances as part of their requirement for giving out their daughters in marriage. Study participants and family heads engaged as key informants in the study explained that it is a laid down tradition by their fathers to collect alcoholic and psychoactive substances as part of their marital requirement in giving out their daughters in marriage. Therefore, they cannot change a practice that has existed over the generations and it is acceptable by everybody.

According to one of the study participants aged 68 years from Ikot Ibok in Etinan Local Government Area:

See, our tradition is tradition, we did not created but it was handed over to us by our fathers who also took over from their fathers; that alcoholic drinks and those other items whether it is intoxicated or psychoactive substances must be collected as part of traditional marriage requirements for giving out our daughters. That is why we do stress the point Traditional Marriage Requirements so that one will know that it a tradition, not something we just sit down and say okay let us collect this or that. It is in inherited and transmitted from one generation to another (Effi, 54, interviewed 2022).

According to the response of a community leader in Etinan Local Government Area, he said that:

What you see today as traditional marriage requirement list is not what was obtainable as our traditional marriage requirement. Our children today have borrowed a lot of things into our cultural practices. This may be because they have a lot of people to entertain today than those days. We didn't use to collect beer, penetrol, cigarette, and hot drinks, but dry tobacco, grinded snuff, kola nut, original illicit gin and palm wine were what we used to collect. Beer, hot drink and penetrol were introduced to our people by the British. Today our people are collecting these alcoholic drinks in quantities that is alarming, and sometime I do asked some of my people if they want to open a drink shop after their daughters' marriage, but it will surprised you that our people will finish these drinks and cigarettes, and add more to it (Obong A. Abraham, interviewed 2021).

Traditional marriage rites according to study participants, have offered opportunity for Ibibio youths to abuse alcohol and psychoactive substances under the cultural practice of marriage celebration through a section of requirement items called "mkpo mkparawa" or youths items which is a must give requirement that contain alcohol drinks, tobacco and other substances.

Traditional rites and deviant behaviours

Findings of the study through interviews, observations, key informants, and discussions show that alcohol and psychoactive substance abuse by Ibibio youths through traditional rites ceremonies have not only formed patterns of drug abuse, but have created substance abuse addictions among the youths and influence their deviant behaviours. According to findings, most Ibibio youths have become addicted abusers of alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes, marijuana, and other drugs through participations in traditional rites ceremonies. One of the study participants from Awa Iman in Onna Local Government Area in his responses said that:

It is true that we were born to meet these traditions and we say that tradition is tradition. Meaning we cannot change because it was laid down for us by our fathers as

doe in other places especially across the Ibibio land.... It is true that we collect items like alcohol, cigarettes, tobacco and local gin for the youths as “Mkpo Mkparawa” which is common among Ibibio people but, I am of concern that this tradition has open up our young ones for drugs and substance abuse and addictions. That is why if you go to where there traditional marriage ceremony or burial ceremony, you will see a lot of youths there trying to struggle for these things and most times, some of them bring other items and drugs to sell to their friends at the venue because they know that that is where they have cultural right to smoke, drink and eat anything that is given to them as youths. So I have concern on these things (Obong Manes, 56, interviewed, 2023).

Further findings of the study show that Ibibio youths engage in criminal behaviours under the influence of psychoactive substances. According to findings from study participants, the majority of the youths who engage in criminal behaviours like rape, stealing, thuggery, assaults and other violence behaviour are said to do so under the influence of alcohol. One of the study participants from Ibesikpo-Asutan Local Government Area in her responses reported that:

Most of these youths are behaving like criminals; in fact, a lot of them are criminals today. I don't blame them, it is just that the elders, those who supposed to tell them not to take some kind things that will make them high, they will be the one enforcing that such things should be given to them during occasions in order to calm the youths from making trouble because they will disturb the event and from there may steal or loot away your things as criminals. Every time people have events especially traditional events these days, you must have security for your event to hold successfully and peacefully. Else, these youths after they have smoke their weed and drink all manners of things and alcohol, they will cause problem in order to have chance to steal and loot away people property especially those cultists. And you should where the host has a cultist as a son, eh, eh, eh, that one the person must prepare their stuff complete else there will be serious problems and they will use the opportunity to steal, loots and assault somebody (Mrs, Ekong, 62 interviewed 2023).

Another study participant from Etinan Local Government Area had this to say:

You see this alcohol and smoking of weed during traditional events, it has caused so many bad things and bad behaviour within our community. There is one married lady that used to drink at burial and traditional ceremony and she will always get drunk. There was one of the burial nights' virgil that she drank and got drunk. So without her knowledge under the influence of the alcohol, young boys under the influence of weed and brew helped her into a room for her to rest there, and only for her to wake up later and discovered that her pant was not on her and her has been rape and rape. So these things have been responsible for many criminal behaviours among our youths (Mr. Aboi, interviewed 2023).

Substance abuse during traditional rites has been found to be responsible for so many criminal behaviours among the Ibibio youths. A study participants interviewed during one of the traditional burial rites in Etinan, in his responses narrated how they used to drag drinks and rice for young girls to eat and drink during so events in order to have their consciousness knock off so that the boys can have unsolicited sex with the girls. According to him:

You see these girls will think that they are strong such that sometimes they want to compete with guys. But some of them are very stubborn and sometimes we use what we known to win them. Sometimes we will have to mix drinks like weed with kaikai and Alomo Bitter for those girls, if the thing does not overcome them, we take them home and cook rice with pepper soup and used more weed (Marijuana) in the pepper soup for them and that one will get them off and get their pants away and more fucking men (Akan, interviewed 2023)

Traditional rites have been responsible for the substance abuse by Ibibio youths and such have been found to be responsible for most criminal behaviours found among the youths. Youths through findings were into criminal behaviours under the influence of alcohol and substance abuse.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Emerging findings from interviews, observations, discussions and key informants reports show that alcohol and substance abuse is rooted in the traditional rites of the Ibibio people in Akwa Ibom State. Jiloha (2009) gives credence to this finding postulating that drug abuse is a complex phenomenon, which has various social, cultural, biological, geographical, historical and economic aspects. This finding revealed that substance abuse is traditional among the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State and it is culturally cultivated in the cultural tenets of their traditional practices. This finding gives credence to Peters and Bassey (2020) who found that traditional marriage rite and burial rites are among others, some of the traditional rites with allocated rights of alcohol and substance consumption for the Ibibio youths. On abuse and addiction of substances, findings show that youths consider traditional rites as opportunities for alcohol and substance abuse which later lead to abuse. Abuse of alcohol and substance among Ibibio youths was found to be a follow-up behaviour from substance consumption during traditional marriage and burial rites. The abuse is an act of continuity in taking stimulant substances which have high tendencies of causing addiction especially among young people.

On criminal behaviours as a result of alcohol and substance abuse, findings show that as the Ibibio youth continue in alcohol and substance abuse, they tend to engage in criminal behaviours under the influence of Alcohol and substance abuse. Findings also show that some youths used substance abuse as means of taking criminal advantage over others as in young boys using substance abuse to take criminal advantage over young girls for raping and sexual exploitations. Credence to this finding is obtained from US Department of Justice (2023) who posited that to explain the processes, impact and control of deviancy, the five forms of deviance must be considered which are: the delinquent, the drug addict, the homosexual, the mentally ill, and suicides which behaviours found to be related to influence of alcohol and substance abuse. Most of the youths used “Mkpo Mkparawa” as means of abuse of substance and findings show that when such items are not given as suppose, the youths seize the opportunity to cause trouble for criminal behaviour like stealing and looting of people’s property during traditional rites events. Findings further showed that youths who abuse alcohol and substances have high tendencies of involving in criminal behaviour like rape, stealing, theft, thuggery, assault and fighting among the age cohort.

The study sought to examine the Ibibio traditional rites as patterns of alcohol and substance abuse, and deviants’ behaviours among youths. Model of Cultural Influence on Youths’ Psychoactive Drug Abuse Behaviour was adopted by the researchers for theoretical framework for the study. Researchers adopted Ethnographic study design which involves multiple qualitative data collection techniques such as in-depth interview, key informant interview, focus group discussion and objective observation by the researchers. The study was conducted in 3 Ibibio local government areas across Akwa Ibom State. Etinan Local Government Area, Ibessikpo-Asutan Local Government Area and Onna Local Government Area were selected for the study. 2 villages were purposively selected from each of the 3 selected local government areas. The Fetterman’s Big-net approach was used to randomly select study participants from each of the selected villages. Data were analysed thematically with excerpts. Findings of the study show that the manifest functions of the Ibibio traditional rites was to boost the morale of the youths for their community services and solidarity, but there were found latent dysfunctions of such traditional rites which have become the factors predisposing some Ibibio youths to alcohol and drugs abuse and many forms of deviant behaviours.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of this study was to investigate Ibibio traditional rites as patterns of alcohol and substance abuse, and criminal behaviours among youths. The Ibibio traditional rites are rewarding Ibibio youth with assorted kinds of intoxicating gins both foreign brewed, Nigerian brewed and native brewed for their gesture of kindness and solidarity in logistics management as “Mkpo Mkparawa” during traditional and social events such as burial ceremony, marriage occasion, child naming, festivals, chieftaincy coronation etc. The manifest functions of the above stated Ibibio traditional rites was to boost the morale of the youths for their community services and solidarity, but there are found latent dysfunctions of such traditional rites which have become the factor predisposing some Ibibio youths to drugs abuse and many forms of deviant behaviours. The researchers recommended that community elders, religious organizations and other educational institutions should embark on proper education of the young people on the dangers of substance abuse on young people and the future pending problems of alcohol and substance abuse especially in old age. Security institutions should be on the alert at community level especially at traditional rites events in order to check on deviants and criminal behaviours which are capable of disturbing the peace and safety of people.

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