

The Influence of Religion, Education and Socio-Cultural Values on Economic Development in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Socio-cultural values refer to a set of values, beliefs, traditions and habits of a particular society that shape how people within that society approach risk and view careers. The values also influence their perceptions of money and ideas of an ideal lifestyle. Socio-cultural norms do not only affect how people relate and interact with their environment, they also influence how individuals within the society interact with the world and this in turn influence how they approach the process of economic developments. The thrust of this article is therefore to examine how religion, education and socio-cultural values influence economic development in Nigeria. Being an historical research, the paper employs historical method in its analysis. The findings of this paper reveal that religion and socio-cultural values such as materialism or post-materialism, collectivism or individualism, innovations, obedience, thrift and risk propensity, influence how individuals approach everyday activities, personal decisions on work, business venture, industrialization and by extension, economic development in Nigeria. The paper however concludes that the variable experiences of individuals during their development which include environmental factors, quality of education and relationship with others are dependent upon their socio-cultural backgrounds.

Keywords:

Socio-cultural values; economic development; traditions, environment; individuals; interactions

I. Introduction

Economic, political and social developments will remain unattainable grandiose without taking into consideration certain expected and important variables upon which the development of every society depends (Akinwumi, 2018). Academic discourse on religion and socio-cultural values as part of the variables for economic development have been neglected in recent times in Nigeria as a result of the overwhelming influence of insecurity and other challenges confronting the nation. It is however necessary to examine the socio-cultural values as one of the important aspects of life that enhance economic development (Jemiriye, 2009). When citizens understand their values, they are driven, focused and able to live authentic and happy lives. Economic development can only be achieved where there is peace and tranquility (Tunde, 2007). Unfortunately, in Nigeria, peace has eluded the vast majority of its citizens over the years; individuals and communities are sentenced into lives of constant sorrow and humiliation as a result of the activities of men of the underworld which include: the bandits; kidnappers; the robbers; political thugs; and rapists.

Being a multi-ethnic society, Nigeria has a value system that is derived from the diversity of its people, religion and culture. It is in the view of this that the paper intends to explore the nation's socio-cultural values with the aim of establishing how they can influence the expected economic development. To successively achieve this, we shall make some conceptual clarification and examine the place of socio-cultural values and the interplay between them and economic development.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Culture

The word 'Culture' is a derivative of a Latin word "Colere" which means 'to cultivate' (Ogundele & Soetan, 2017). In a general sense, it refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that make such activities important. An understanding of Culture requires an understanding of language, knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Culture can be defined as the manifestation of the combined thought process, ideas, customs, rituals and social conduct of a particular community of people. It is the totality of the knowledge, attitude, beliefs, goals, morals and values shared by society (Akinwumi, 2018).

Culture is the capability and way of life that people acquire in life such as morals, knowledge, laws and art. It distinguishes people's way of life from one society to another. A society is known by its culture (Jemiriye, 2009). It has different components such as language, food, music, art, dances, gender, marriage, rituals, clothing and so on. "It entails all that people have learned and preserved from past collective experiences". It encompasses the tangible and intangible as it also incorporates the 'sub-total of the material and immaterial tools, artwork and knowledge accumulated by the people.' (Tunde 2007). The peculiarity of a given culture, therefore, is a function of its distinctiveness as it relates to its impact on the attitudes, aspirations, motivations, representations, skills and behavior of the people celebrating some and discarding others (Akinwumi ; 2018).

Culture can be broadly divided into two; Material and Non-material. Material cultures can be defined as the manifestations of some physical objects, spaces and resources created by people of a particular culture (Ogundele & Soetan, 2017). These include; Homes, schools, mosques, churches, temples, factories, offices and so on. Non-material cultures are those that are intangible. They include; morals, rules, values, languages, beliefs, arts, literature, music, social roles, customs, traditions and many more (Ogundele & Soetan, 2017).

Culture can be defined as the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, value, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people from generations to generations through individual and group striving (Adefolaju & Jegede, 2017).

It can be described as systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people. In a broad sense, it can be seen as a cultivated behavior that the totality of a person's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted or more briefly, behavior through social learning. It is a way of life of a group of people_ the behaviors, beliefs, values and symbols that they accept generally without thinking about them, and they are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to another (Otite, 1990)

Culture comprises of patterns, explicit and implicit, of behaviors that are acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups including their embodiments in artifacts, the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values (Stenning, 1978).

Culture is the sum totals of learned behavior of certain group of people that are generally considered to be the tradition of that people that are passed down from generation to generation. It is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another (Ogundele & Soetan, 2017).

While culture describes the shared characteristics of the entire groups which has been amassed through its history, tradition describes a group's beliefs and behaviors that are passed from one generation to another. Culture acts as the underlying thread that connects you to everyone else but, tradition acts as the events and customs that honor the connection (Otiye, 1990).

The ideas, meanings, beliefs and values people learn as members of a society determines the human nature. People are what they learn. This theory is known as cultural determinism. It has both optimistic and pessimistic versions. The optimistic version postulates that there is no limit on the abilities of human beings to do or whatever they want while, the pessimistic version postulates that human nature is infinitely malleable and so man can choose the ways of life he prefers. It states further that human beings are what they are conditioned to be. It presents human beings as positive creatures that do whatever.

2.2 Values

The word 'values' has so many meanings depending on the context it is used. Scholars are not uncanny as regards the definition of values though there are no generally accepted definitions of values but when used in relation to Civic Education, it is described as the principle and standards which guide human actions (Ajayi & Oluwasanmi, 27). There are different levels of manifestations of values. These manifestations can be at individual or societal values. An individual manifests values when he is unique no matter what others may do or say. For instance, a police officer refuses to take bribe or a custom officer avoids corruption. Manifestation of values at societal level means principles and standards which dictate and influence human behaviors and interactions in the society.

There are three types of values that an individual must strive to explore. These include; Character values, Work values and Personal values. Character values are the universal values that one needs to exist as a good human being. They can also be described as the core characteristics that employers look for while hiring. Examples of these values are: respect for others, loyalty, positive attitude, commitment, honesty, faithfulness and diligence.

Work values are values that help one find what he wants in a job that will give him job satisfaction. An understanding of one's work will assist professionally. Work values include: prestige, stability, public contact and so on.

Personal values are values that help one define what one requires from life and what will help one obtain happiness and fulfillment. These values are referred to as the guiding principles of one's life. Examples of personal values are: family life, popularity, health and appearance. We need to understand our values as this will assist us to determine what drives us. Exploring the values mentioned above will help us find a place where we'll "fit in" and be most successful.

Values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine what is important to us. Values describe the personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions; the kind of person we want to be; the manner in which we treat ourselves and others; and our interactions with the world around us. They provide the general guidelines for conduct.

Value in a narrow sense is that which is good, desirable or worthwhile. They are the motives behind purposeful actions, the ends to which we act and come in many forms.

Value specifies relationship between a person and a goal. It can be agreed that values are relational in the sense that what one person values may not be what another person values even in the same situation. A person who values honesty may not hesitate to expose the financial misappropriation of a boss or superior whereas another person who values loyalty may remain silent. This is no doubt an example of values conflict. The honest person may believe there are limits to loyalty and keeping quiet about a wrongful act out of loyalty might harm others. The loyal person may believe in the importance of keeping one's confidence even if it might harm others because of the trusting relationship (Christopher & Longe, 2013).

Values can be viewed from two different perspectives. It is therefore very important to distinguish intrinsic from extrinsic values. Intrinsic value is something that has value on its own right such as honesty and kindness whereas, extrinsic value is doing something for another reason. We need to be committed to our core values such as honesty, kindness, compassion, respect and personal responsibility. These values must be admired because they are illustrative of a person of integrity.

2.3 Cultural Values

Cultural values can be defined as the hereditary values that form core of societal culture. They are the values that people hold in high esteem because they (the values) give a shape to the culture and society. By their very nature, they are difficult to change because they remain embedded in social institutions and norms of the people. Cultural values can be described as the ideas of society that perpetually remain in the memory of elders, old books, religious and ethnical literature. Social values can as well be referred to as traditions of our lives. Every individual in the society is therefore expected to adhere strictly to them because deviation from them can create serious social problems. These values include; respect for elders, kindness, truth, generosity, sacrifice, tolerance, integrity, honesty, diligence, perseverance and so on.

Values portray "Ideal Culture" which is the standard the society would like to embrace and live up to. Cultural values are inculcated through rewards and punishments. When people observe the norms of the society, they are often rewarded and punished when they deviate from them. Values are not static, they are dynamic; they vary across and from culture to culture.

2.4 Social Values

Social values are the current values of a social group in a society. These refer to those cultural values which have been accepted by the society and reflect the social life the people live daily. They are the present social life and described as the direct aims of the people. Technical knowledge acquired and computer literacy are perfect examples of social values.

From the above description of both cultural and social values, one can assert that while the former that the ideals and the latter appear to be the real goals of the people. It is also very obvious that cultural values change slowly than social values; several attempts have been made by scholars at defining the word 'Religion'. These attempts emanated from the angles of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, humanities and countless other fronts down the ages. It is however obvious that no consensus of opinion exists among scholars as to what Religion really is. It is necessary at this juncture to define Religion within the context of the study. Thus, It is a system or systems of faith and worship in its many faces like the spiritual, organizational, financial and hierarchical. It is the professional practice or conviction of the existence of Supreme Being or beings or of supernatural or influences controlling man's humanity, nature or destiny. Religion is a cause, principle or system of tenets held with ardor, devotion, conscientiousness and faith. It is a value of supreme importance in life, death and beyond

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 Economic Development

Economic development is usually the focus of federal, state and local government to improve our standard of living through the creation of jobs, the support of innovation and new ideas, the creation of higher wealth and the creation of an overall-better quality of life. Economic development is often defined by others based on what it is trying to accomplish. Many times, these objectives include building or improving infrastructures such as roads, bridges and so on). Although the term is sometimes used as a synonym for economic growth, generally it is employed to describe a change in a country's economy involving qualitative as well as quantitative improvements.

It is the process by which a nation's wealth increases over time. It is generally referred to as an increase in wealth over an extended period. It is the transformation of a simple low income national economy into modern industrial economy. Economic development is the quantitative and qualitative change in an economy. It is the reduction and elimination of poverty, unemployment and inequality with the context of growing economy. It represents the enhancement in man's materialistic needs but also on overall development on rise in its living standards. Economic development centers more on advancement in the lives of individuals. It is the qualitative factor that emphasizes improving people's living standards. It implies economic growth plus progressive changes in certain important variables which determine well-being of the people such as health and education.

3.2 Influence of Religion on Economic Development

Religious practice is an efficient and effective catalyst that speeds up socio-economic growth. Religious organizations in Nigeria contribute substantially to the nation's economic revenue. Churches established for instance are made to register under Cooperate Affairs Commission (CAC), the registration fee paid to the commission is added to the internally generated revenue of the nation, this in turn contributes to the economic development.

Economic activities thrive where religious organizations are concentrated. There is always high patronage of business commodities such as candles, anointing oil, writing materials, food items and so on are sold where churches and mosques are concentrated. Banks that have their headquarters in areas where religious activities are regularly carried out enjoy conducive environment and get more customers. Increase in government revenue will no doubt lead to economic development. Religious camp such as that owned by Christian sects like the Redeem Christian Church of God, Winners Chapel and Deeper Life attract to Lagos thousands of visitors from Europe, United States of America and many more countries. These brings in a lot of foreign currencies to Nigeria, however, the government is not determined to attract people through a clear cut tourism policy into the country.

Religious practice also naturally and efficiently contributes to human capital necessary for a thriving economy. Human capital refers to the economic value of a worker's skills and experience. It includes assets like education, training, intelligence, skills, and health and so on. It is perceived to have a relationship with economic growth, productivity and profitability. The worker's training and entrepreneurial programs constantly and persistently organized by religious organizations have a direct relationship with economic development of the nation. Schools built by churches and mosques are undeniable sources of revenue to both the churches or mosques and government.

As part of the development of human capital, religious organizations also provide health-related services and resources that promote economic growth. Hospitals that are built by religious organizations serve dual purposes of stabilizing the health of the beneficiaries and sources of revenue to the communities where they are built. The revenue generated by these religious organizations in turn enhances the economic development of the nation.

Another form of religious activities that promote economic development are congregational activities such as tithe (this refers to the tenth percent of one's monthly income) and offerings, Zakat (obligatory alms giving), Saodakah (voluntary alms giving), Zakatul-fitri (this is also a mandatory alms giving that is expected to be observed two days before the end of Ramadan. Some religious organizations also constantly set aside certain part of their income and possessions to be given to the under-privileged people. This is generally referred to as charity. All these religious activities are catalysts of socio-economic development.

Revenue derived from the sales of religious books, religious television networks, Christian gospel music, Radio announcements are all promoters and expounders of economic developments. Religious beliefs also reinforce characters such as honesty, hard work, thrift and value of time. The reinforcement of characters contributes greatly and significantly to the human capital necessary or needed for a thriving economy. Religious openness constantly boosts trade performance of any country. When trade performance is boosted, the economy of the nation will invariably develop. It is also transparently clear that religious liberty contributes to better business and economic outcomes.

Though, religious practice, as we can see from the foregoing, is a catalyst of socio-economic development. It has also exerted negative influence on economic growth. Increase in religious attendance for instance, has seriously affected business outcomes in some parts of the country. There are instances where members of certain religious organizations abandon their businesses just in the name of religion. This practice is inimical to economic development.

Strict adherence to religious practices and doctrinal beliefs which often lead to religious extremism has seriously hampered economic development in Nigeria. There are situations where people tactically avoid transacting business with others because of religious differences. Some have even missed business opportunities because of religious attraction.

For a religion to remain as a catalyst of socio-economic development, all hands must be on deck. The adherents of all religions must be ready to uphold the positive aspect of religion that will enhance economic development while the negative aspect of religion that can inhibit economic growth and development should be de-emphasized.

3.3 The Interplay between Socio-cultural Values and Economic Development

Socio-cultural values describe the interaction between man and his environment. This kind of values which refers to ideological and attitudinal change from a traditional and agricultural-based living standard into an industrialized and business-driven society influence economic development. Since socio-cultural values describe the attitudes of people to life, they, therefore, exert great influence on economic development of every society. Some socio-cultural values that can influence economic development include: materialism or post materialism, collectivism or individualism, innovation, religion, obedience, thrift and risk propensity.

Materialism: This is a social concept that informs how an individual or group of people place greater value on physical needs or properties than quality of life and spirituality. Post

materialism on the other hand places greater value on spiritual well-being, quality of life and relationships (study.com/academy/les). Any society that places emphasis on material possessions than quality of life will not develop economically whereas; a post materialist society will constantly witness economic development.

Collectivism: This describes a value that makes people to consider things that will bring greater good to the total populace. Collective interest overrides individual and personal interest. Individualism suggests that people emphasize individual interest at the expense of collective interest. People make decisions for their own benefits maximizing individual happiness according to them is the best way to maximize societal happiness.

The economic development in a collectivist society would be rapid since people are ready to rub minds and cross-fertilize ideas that will bring progress. Economic development is made possible because people are driven, focused and able to live authentic and peaceful lives. Economic development will remain an illusion since there is little or no regard for the well-being of the greater society.

Innovation: This can be described as the interest of culture in progress. Cultures that are high in innovation will always show interest in new technologies, transformation and changes that will invariably lead to economic growth. Cultures with low innovation, in contrast, may be fearful or hesitant to implement or start anything new that will bring development.

Obedience: This refers to the level of conformity of citizens to the social norms and expectations. Where obedience is high, the decisions made will be in conformity with the cultural norms and people are not ready or willing to do anything outside of these norms. The adherence of people to these social norms would bring unity and peace. Economic development thrives in a peaceful and conducive environment.

Thrift: It refers to how much the culture saves money and sees value in spending it (study.com/academy/les). Economic development requires both saving and spending. For any society to develop economically there should be willingness to save and spend.

Risk Propensity: Risk propensity is the level of risk an individual is ready to take. A society that is willing to take risks will witness economic development than the one that is fearful and not ready to take risks. The society that will not take risks will have nothing and become nothing; instead of economic development, such a society will constantly witness retrogression and stagnation.

3.4 Influence of Education on Economic Development

It is a fact that cannot be disputed that education has a positive effect on the economy of a country and the world. Educated people receive more training and industry populated by well-trained people becomes more productive. The effects of education are best seen in wages and salaries earned by workers. Well-trained people, no doubt, are paid more than uneducated individuals. People that are paid more will spend more thereby, helping the society to develop economically since their spending will boost the industry of a state more. Greater education makes better workers. The workers are more efficient and they can help the industry to develop more by making use of the knowledge they acquire.

Apart from the above, education enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to activities that bring social benefits to

individuals and society. When people's understanding is enriched, they will be able to interact favorably with others; this will make peaceful co-existence a reality. This will not only improve the standard of living but also enhance economic development.

Areas where schools are concentrated develop faster than other areas. The commodities the students buy on daily basis means more profits to businesses in those areas and the more the profit, the more the economic development. People think of more innovations when profits are made. Education remains one of the primary resources of change. For instance, households with educated people stand a better chance of lifting themselves out of poor living conditions than households without educated people. Education plays great role on health. When people are educated, they take care of their health; they will not do anything that will be inimical to their health. A healthy individual can think positively and perform his duty better than any sick person. A healthy person works more, earns more, spends more and invests more.

Environmental factors can also influence economic development. Pollution, for instance, can lead to poor air quality which in turn engenders health hazards. Unhealthy living will definitely increase mortality rate that can affect growth and development.

Damage to nature can also damage the productivity of both land and seas. Soil erosion and deforestation hampers economic development of the affected areas. The land becomes infertile and unable to support the growth of agricultural products which will invariably affect the income of the people.

IV. Conclusion

Development is the goal of every individual on earth but what the vast majority of people witness on daily basis is retrogression and stagnation as we can see from the study above. This development at the individual level is influenced by environmental factors, quality of education, religion, relationship with others and social - cultural backgrounds. Since whatever affects individuals in the society invariably affects the society at large, economic development and all other form of developments are influenced negatively or positively by individuals in Nigeria, for no nation in the world can grow beyond the level of development of its people. These prove why Nigeria is enmeshed into democratic problems like insularity, tribalism, and distinctness in tribal affiliations (Duyile & Ojo, 2021). Despite the Nigerian Christians expected contribution to Economic and National Development; the nation is enmeshed in crisis that is infused in cultural values and morals. For instance, in a democracy, National Security is determined by elected officials and not the security operatives whose input will nonetheless be cardinal to the articulation of national security policies and economic growth (Duyile, *The Sea Factor in Nigeria's National Security*, 2015). It has been argued that excessiveness in religion is considered to be a great danger threatening both the nation and religion and leads to total destruction; also economic growth is dependent on values, morals, and the socio- cultural Justice system. The Boko Haram crisis was part of this fall out which invariably leads to economic down grade. Boko Haram threats include attacks on the environment, food, supply, mental harassment, wanton disregard for people's rights-Kidnapping, bombing...etc Christian faith also plays down female roles in the society(Duyile, *A Prelude to the Boko Haram Insurgency: A Doctrinal Interrogation*, 2023). The Christian faith for instance subdues the woman. These could be traced to the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. A critical study of Mathew 15:28, Luke 7: 37-47 and John 4: 7-27 lend credence to the assertion that Jesus was a strong promoter of women liberation and dignity (Duyile W. A., Nwachukwu, Ediaibonyia, & Olofingbaika, 2020). However, Paul one of the notable apostles that shaped the course of Christianity after Jesus Christ found it difficult to

detach himself from the Jewish Culture (Duyile W. A., Nwachukwu, Edigbonya, & Olofinbaika, 2020). A nation that plays down on his women in the society can't grow quickly. It is poor economy and insecurity that allows for the 'japa' phenomenon; it is about Nigerian youths migrating to Europe, Americas and Asia (Duyile & Nwachukwu, 'Japa' Phenomenon and Nigeria Students in the Mix of a Proxy War in Ukraine, 2023).

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