

The Menace of Get Rich Quick Syndrome Among Some Nigerian Youths: Changing the Narrative through Social Studies Education

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Abstract: *The desire to get rich quick and live a lavished life style among Nigerian youths is becoming an issue of great concern. Today, the Nigerian youth who is supposed to be a beacon of hope is engaged in all manner of fraudulent activities with its negative consequences just to make ends meet. Thus, this paper identifies major types of 'get rich quick' schemes among Nigerian youths, highlights factors responsible for this ugly trend, it also discusses the rationale for mitigating the menace of 'get- rick- quick' syndrome through social studies education and the role of social studies education in curbing this nefarious activity. The paper concludes by proffering recommendations that would help reduce the incidences of 'get- rich- quick' syndrome; social studies as a corrective subject should continue to emphasize and advocate for the dignity of labour, there is a dire need for national reorientation of the Nigerian youth such that ethical values of honest living and hard-work are promoted.*

Keywords: *Menace, Get-rich-quick, Nigerian Youth, Social Studies Education*

I. Introduction

Get-rich-quick syndrome is the new normal amongst Nigerian youths. More often than not, you hear them saying “school or formal education is a waste of time”, “school is a scam” and the more rhetorical question “who school help?” which means “who has school or formal education helped?” and is meant to support the notion that school is a waste of time. This idea amongst Nigerian youths is derived from the belief that going to school will not help them acquire financial wealth. For them, the ultimate goal in life is to make money and live in luxury. In the not too distant past, acquiring formal education was perceived to be an automatic ticket to financial wealth and many parents sent their children and wards to school with the hope that they would get a good job and become rich. In fact, parents dictated the academic discipline and career paths for their children to tow. Medicine, law, banking and finance were seen as the most lucrative fields and many students struggled to study these courses because of their parents. However, upon acquiring formal education in these fields, they found it hard to get good jobs while others couldn't get any job at all. The strong desire to quickly acquire financial wealth while doing almost nothing tangible or worthy of the financial rewards they seek for has led many Nigerian youths into immoral and criminal acts such as advanced free fraud also known as 419, kidnapping, robbery, 'money rituals', human organs harvesting, prostitution otherwise known as “runs girls” and drug dealings. At the same, many Nigerian youths who try to acquire money quickly by doing unethical and lesser work have fallen victims to fraudsters, ponzi schemes and human organs harvesters (especially the young ladies who meet with 'rich people' only and visit them at various locations for money). Suffice to say that the desire to get-rich-quick by many Nigerian youths

is leading them into crime. Many scholars and researchers have treated the issues and crimes that arises from this dangerous trend called the get-rich-quick syndrome such as kidnapping, fraud (also known as yahoo yahoo or 419, and money rituals). However, they mostly tend to treat the effects of the syndrome and tend to either treat them as independent components or generalize crime, its causes and solution. Get-rich-quick syndrome itself is not a crime known to any law in Nigeria, it however raises moral or ethical concerns which can lead people (the youths) into committing serious crimes with its attendants' negative consequences. In fact, it has been leading many Nigerian youths into committing crimes. An attempt is therefore made to investigate some of the major reasons why many Nigerian youths are developing the get-rich-quick syndrome, the adverse effects of get-rich-quick syndrome and concludes by examining how this ugly menace can be checked through the instrumentality of social studies education.

II. Review of Literatures

2.1 Conceptual Elucidation

a. Get-Rich-Quick

This is a concept characterized by generating a large sum of money quickly and (typically) without requiring much effort or energy. Any scheme that promises to actualize the get-rich-quick plan or concept is known as a get-rich-quick scheme. The urge to get-rich-quick is often driven by greed. The term is usually used to describe shady businesses. They tend to involve offers that are bogus or unrealistic. There is no clear explanation on what business, trade or investment will be done in order to generate the high profits being promised. For example, a get-rich-quick scheme would promise investors to return 200% of whatever amount of money they invest in the scheme within a certain period of time. No explanation on what the money invested will be used for, or how the profit will be made. "Get rich quick syndrome" refers to an obsessive desire for rapid wealth accumulation, often leading individuals to engage in risky or fraudulent schemes, and can be fuelled by several factors including: economic instability, unrealistic expectations fostered by media, lack of financial literacy, social pressure, and psychological factors like impatience and entitlement; all of which can contribute to an unhealthy mindset focused on quick gains rather than sustainable wealth building.

b. Nigerian Youth

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world with about 220 million people most of which are the youths. The Nigerian Youth are a group of young people from different social backgrounds, religious, cultural and traditional beliefs, who share common geographical territory, constitutional laws, political and economic system. According to the National Youth Council of Nigeria(2020) a Nigerian youth is any Nigerian citizen who is between ages of 18-35.

c. Peer-Pressure

Peer-Pressure is the process in which individuals within the same group influence others in the group to engage in behaviour or activity that they may not otherwise engage in. A peer can be any individual who belongs to the same social groups or circles as you and has some type of influence over you. Peers play a large role in the social and emotional development of people especially in their adolescents. It is natural, healthy and important for young adults to have and rely on friends as they grow and mature. Peers can be positive and supportive. They can help each other develop new skills, or stimulate interest in books, music or extracurricular activities. However, peers can also have a negative influence. They can encourage each other to steal, cheat, use drugs or alcohol, share inappropriate material online,

or become involve in other risky behaviours and illegal activities. The majority of Nigerian youths who indulge in cybercrime began doing so as a result of peer pressure. This pressure can happen in person or on social media.

d. Poverty

From an economic point of view, poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living.

Poverty means that the income level from employment is so low that basic human needs cannot be met. It is seen as the inability to meet the basic life essential elements such as food, shelter, clothing and the likes. Poverty-stricken people and families might go without proper housing, clean water, healthy food, and medical attention. Poverty is not just about money, but also includes issues of access to services such as health care and education, marginalization and exclusion. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society. Despite the many definitions, one thing is certain; poverty is a complex societal issue. No matter how poverty is defined, it can be agreed that it is an issue that requires everyone's attention.

e. Greed

Wikipedia describes greed as an uncontrolled longing for increase in the acquisition or use of material gain (be it food, money, land, or animate/inanimate possessions); or social value, such as status, or power. It is seen as a bad human trait because it causes behavioural conflicts between self and societal goals. The strong desire or lust for possessions often drives people to obtain these possessions in ways that may be considered unethical and harmful to other members of the society. For example, a man driven by greed will tend to obtain what does not belong to him by means such as deception or forceful stealing. This can cause pain or loss of property to the person being deceived.

f. Syndrome

Etymologically, the word syndrome was derived from Greek and modern Latin word "sundromē" which is a combination of two Greek words – sun meaning "together" and dramein which means "to run". As an English terminology, syndrome means a characteristic combination of opinions, emotions, or behaviours. Interestingly, the opinions or thoughts ,emotions and behaviours of man seems to run together, or at least, work together because opinions shape our emotions, and emotions shapes our behaviours.

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 Some of the Major types of Get-Rich-Quick Schemes Common in Nigeria

a. Ritual Killings

This involves the use of black magic, voodoo or juju – as it is popularly known. The ritualists are required to offer blood sacrifices in exchange for money overnight. it is a fact that ritual killings or money rituals has become very common amongst many Nigerians in recent times and it is widely believed to be one of the quickest ways to acquire financial wealth from the "spiritual realms". ThisDay newspaper of September 2024 reported a horrifying case of a 16 year old boy who lured a 4 year old girl and strangled her to death. On Saturday, 29th of January 2022, three teenagers were arrested in Oke Aregba area of Abeokuta, Ogun State for the murder of a young girl. The teenagers confessed to have killed and burnt the girl's head in a locally made pot as a process for money ritual which they found on Facebook. The case Timileyin Ajayi who murdered his girl friend Salome Adaidu in Abuja is still fresh in our

memory. There are other plethora of cases of ritual killings going on in Nigeria some of which are undocumented.

b. Organ Harvesting

This is another get-rich-quick scheme that has since become a menace in Nigeria. People who were reportedly missing are found dead with their vital body organs missing. For example, on Saturday, 12th of February 2022, a couple were arrested in Ogun state for killing a friend of the wife and selling her head for N70,000. Selling human parts and organs has proven to be a fast way to acquire wealth in the country and more people are adopting this crude means of wealth acquisition. Some youths in a desperate attempt to get rich quick sell their organs such as kidney, the case involving the former Nigerian Deputy Senate President, his wife and their Doctor who were convicted and jailed for organ harvesting in the United Kingdom is a case in point.

c. Internet Fraud (Yahoo Yahoo)

Internet fraud or Yahoo as it is popularly known in Nigeria is a fraud scheme mostly practiced by the youth. They create false digital identities to deceive unsuspecting people into thinking that they are genuine business persons. Some of the schemes include pretending to own a property they wish to sell, pretending to be business owners offering investment opportunities to investors, or business electronic compromises.

d. Kidnapping

Kidnapping was initially adopted on a large scale in Nigeria as a means for getting government's attention and forcing the government to the negotiation table with youths and members of oil-producing communities who felt neglected. People were sympathetic and approved their method as at then. As time went by, many others realized that kidnapping, if successful, can be a medium for acquiring large sums of money quickly. It has become popular in all parts of the country.

3.2 Causes of Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome among Nigerian Youths

a. Economic Hardship and Inequality

The recent increase in the way Nigerian youth craves for wealth and indulge in various means such as money rituals, kidnapping, and robbery has called for concern, especially among minors. According to Babajide, (2022), Nigeria is a failed nation, which led to the failure of each society in terms of societal responsibilities in inculcation of moral values in the upcoming generation. Akan, Egbo, Owoseni & Ojiziele (2022) explained that many families could no longer provide for their wards, the children had turned to their source of livelihood, this made them lose the grip on their children and this resulted into moral laxity in the society.

Hence, in our society the ends justify the means that is (the society now celebrates people without any means of income, (Saka- Olokungboye; Fapetu, Agbi and Ologun, 2021). Therefore, the urge to make money among the youth has increased and society has monetized value (Nwoye, 2017). Thus, the innocent one was tempted to eat this forbidden fruit in order to be celebrated by the society.

High unemployment and poverty rates push individuals to seek desperate measures for financial stability. When people experience significant financial stress due to unemployment, low income, or a widening wealth gap, the allure of quick riches can become more enticing, making them susceptible to risky schemes promising fast solutions.

b. Media Portrayal of Wealth and Success

Mass media often glamorizes extravagant lifestyles and portrays "rags to riches" stories without highlighting the hard work and time required to achieve such success, creating unrealistic expectations and fueling a desire for instant gratification. : The portrayal of lavish lifestyles and quick success stories can create unrealistic expectations and a desire for instant gratification. The way and manner the media both the traditional media (television, radio, newspapers and magazines) and the new age media (the internet) have led many youths into believing that one can get rich overnight.

c. Lack of Financial Literacy

A poor understanding of basic financial concepts, such as investing, budgeting, and risk management, can leave individuals vulnerable to misleading "get rich quick" schemes, as they may not be able to assess the legitimacy of such opportunities.

d. Social Pressure and Peer Influence

When individuals see their peers seemingly acquiring wealth quickly, either through legitimate or questionable means, it can create social pressure to seek similar rapid gains, even if it means engaging in risky behaviours. The desire to keep up with societal standards and the flaunting of wealth by some can create a sense of urgency to acquire wealth quickly.

e. Psychological Factors

Impatience: The Nigerian youth of today is not patient, he lives on the fast lane. The notion of hard work and diligence is not in their lexicon, as such they are not ready to learn a trade for instance and gradually grow. An Nigerian youth have strong desire for immediate results, without considering the long-term consequences, which can drive individuals towards get-rich-quick schemes.

Entitlement mentality: Believing one is inherently deserving of wealth without putting in the necessary effort can lead to seeking shortcuts to riches.

Optimism bias: Overestimating the likelihood of success in risky ventures can make individuals more likely to pursue get-rich-quick schemes.

Weak institutions: Corruption and lack of accountability can create an environment where illegal activities seem like viable options. The anti - corruption agencies in Nigeria such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) are very weak when it comes to checking the excesses of youths who live extravagantly and whose sources of income is questionable.

Poor education: Limited access to quality education can lead to a lack of understanding of financial literacy and the importance of hard work and patience.

Influence of social media and entertainment: The portrayal of lavish lifestyles and quick success stories can create unrealistic expectations and a desire for instant gratification.

Decline in moral values: A shift in societal values, where hard work and integrity are not as emphasized, can contribute to the pursuit of quick wealth. Today, in the Nigerian society people celebrate "success" without asking questions as per the source of wealth of the individual. Our religious institutions- church and mosque heaps praises and adore individuals who are their financial pillars without questioning the source of their wealth. To them, the end justifies the means. These factors create a complex web of challenges that contribute to the get-rich-quick syndrome in Nigeria.

3.3 The Rationale for Mitigating the Risks of "Get Rich Quick Syndrome" Through the Instrumentality of Social Studies

Social Studies as one of the school subjects came into being at the beginning of the 20th century. It has been made one of the core subjects in the primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria and has ever since gained recognition in the school system. The focus of the discipline in Nigeria education system is to correct the abnormalities in the society as well as create a new reaction to the inadequacies of past educational practices, particularly in its primary concern for the inculcation of desirable norms, values and attitudes that were required to sustain the new independent nation. It is problem solving discipline which focuses on human issues and challenges with the sole aim of proffering solution to them all (Adediran, 2014). Some of the problems are political, economical, social, cultural and technological in nature among which include get-rich-quick syndrome which is the core of this discourse , others are ; fraudulent practices, truancy, rigging, unemployment, prostitution, tribalism, nepotism, high incidence of youth immorality and restiveness, indolence, ostentatious display of wealth, violation of fundamental human rights, frauds and scams of various forms and magnitudes, flagrant disrespect for rule of law, sex abuse and rape, inflation, bunker, religious clashes, smuggling, disrespect for elders and examination, inflation etc (CrimeAlert. 2015; Transparency International, 2014). Most of these problems were born the advent of technology and massive failure of character by Nigerian youths.

Since the attainment of Nigerian independence in 1960, geography and history are taught as traditional, separate, and un-integrated subjects. Geography featured specifically the learning of definitions and of landforms, places, names, and economic activities in foreign lands while history is characterized by learning the biographies of foreign heroes and heroines (Adediran, 2014). After sometimes, they become unsuitable and was not really addressing the needs, yearnings and aspirations of the Nigerian populace. The social relevance of the two separate subjects was not enough as problems of the world do not come in a departmentalized form but as a whole. Also, the astronomic increase in crime, value deterioration, loss of respect, love for ostentatious living while abandoning dignity of labour etc, propelled the need for a single school discipline to prepare pupils and students to challenge and face head on both personal and societal problems, later formed part of the general concern that prepared the way for the now famous National Curriculum Conference of 1969 held in Lagos (Sofadekan, 2012). This invariably led to the introduction of Social studies education at primary and junior secondary school in Nigeria. Coupled with the changing social condition of mankind within the society, Social Studies makes its scope assume an increasing horizon. It is an interdisciplinary subject that cut across several other disciplines particularly in the Social Sciences and Humanities. National Council for Social Studies (NCSS, 1992/93) defines Social Studies as an integrated study of the Social science and Humanities to promote civic competence within the school programme. The primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world. It is primarily culture bound as most of its" curriculum contents derived from different cultures which change from time to time depending on the needs, yearnings and aspiration of the people. Ogundare (2019), social studies education encourages learners to examine the dynamics of human relationships ,societal structures, and cultural norms, equipping them with the tools to understand and engage with societal issues effectively . This therefore suggests that by teaching students the values , morals and the love for humanity , the youths are able to value human life the more.

3.4 The Role of Social Studies Education Curbing the Menace of Get-Rich Quick Syndrome among Nigerian Youths

Education and schooling in all societies purports to teach students the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function as responsible citizens. Social studies is seen as one of the principal vehicles for preparing youth to accept roles as responsible adult citizens. Students who have sound understanding of their country's culture and historical development will be more inclined to address recent societal problems and not building criminalities and absurdity. In order to help the Nigerian people to cope with rapid economic, social, and political developments, and to bring about meaningful participatory citizenship among her youths, strong implementation of core Social studies curriculum contents is very important now than before. In Nigeria of today, countless number of criminal activities are being perpetrated, this is apparently due to low level of understanding of the concept of civility, dignity of labour, values, patriotism, integrity and host of other required societal principles (Cyber Intelligence Company, 2018; Aransiola, & Asindemade, 2011; Fadeiye, 2015). Furthermore, according to Alexander (2016) given the burgeoning tide of crime and violence, the future stability of Nigeria depends on being able to cultivate citizens most especially youths to demonstrate socially and morally responsible behaviour. Early in this decade, citizenship education in school became statutory for learners between the age of 11 and 16years. In addition, Social studies should help to groom youths with positive required societal principles which will enable them to participate effectively in public life. Social studies with all its principles and agenda, is saddled with the responsibilities of making a total man in any society with its countless strategy in capturing youths through the forceful re-introduction of topics encapsulated under citizenship education into her curriculum as an antidote to decreasing levels of participation in public life by young people (Kerr 2019). The aim of citizenship education programmes is therefore to help children develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to equip them for participation in public life (Alexander, 2016). Social Studies education has a crucial role to play in curbing the menace of the "get-rich-quick" syndrome in Nigeria. Specifically, social studies can play the following roles in curbing the ugly trend of get-rich-quick syndrome among the Nigerian youths;

a. Value Reorientation

- i. Ethical Values: Social Studies can instil strong ethical values like honesty, hard work, integrity, and patience in young minds. These values are antidotes to the get-rich-quick mentality, which often involves cutting corners and engaging in fraudulent activities.
- ii. Realistic Aspirations: It can help students develop realistic aspirations and understand that success comes through hard work, dedication, and perseverance, not through shortcuts or luck.
- iii. Critical Thinking: Social Studies can equip students with critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate different paths to success, enabling them to differentiate between legitimate opportunities and fraudulent schemes.

b. Economic Awareness

- i. Financial Literacy: Social Studies can incorporate basic financial literacy concepts, teaching students about budgeting, saving, investing, and the risks associated with quick-money schemes.
- ii. Entrepreneurship Education: It can promote entrepreneurship education, encouraging students to create their own businesses through innovation and hard work, rather than seeking quick riches.

iii. Understanding Economic Principles: Social Studies can help students understand basic economic principles like supply and demand, the role of investment, and the importance of sustainable economic practices.

c. Social and Civic Responsibility

- i. Community Development: Social Studies can emphasize the importance of contributing to community development through hard work, innovation, and social responsibility, instead of focusing solely on personal enrichment.
- ii. Patriotism and National Pride: It can instil a sense of patriotism and national pride, encouraging students to contribute to the nation's development through legitimate means, rather than engaging in activities that tarnish the country's image.
- iii. Civic Engagement: Social Studies can promote civic engagement, encouraging students to participate in governance and hold leaders accountable for creating an environment that supports hard work and discourages corruption.

d. Historical Perspective

- i. Learning from the Past: Social Studies can teach students about the history of Nigeria, including the struggles and sacrifices of past leaders who built the nation through hard work, commitment and dedication.
- ii. Understanding Consequences: It can also highlight the negative consequences of past get-rich-quick schemes, demonstrating the long-term damage they can cause to individuals, families and society.

e. Collaboration and Integration

- i. Interdisciplinary Approach: Social Studies can collaborate with other subjects like Economics, Civic Education, and Religious Studies to create a holistic approach to value reorientation and economic awareness.
 - ii. Community Involvement: Schools can involve parents, community leaders, and successful entrepreneurs in the educational process to provide real-life examples of success through hard work and integrity.
- By incorporating these strategies, Social Studies education can play a significant role in curbing the menace of the get-rich-quick syndrome in Nigeria and fostering a culture of hard work, integrity, and sustainable development among the Nigerian youths.

IV. Conclusion

Get rich-quick syndrome and other nefarious activities, driven by the quest to live a flamboyant lifestyle have shown to have a negative effect on the Nigerian youths who are the future of the nation. The "get-rich-quick" syndrome in Nigeria is a complex issue with no easy solutions. However, it is hoped when the youths are economically empowered by creating job opportunities, and providing skills training schemes, the Nigerian youth can earn a living through a legitimate means. It is important to recognize that this is a long-term problem that will require a sustained effort from all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and individuals.

Hence there is the need to gear up effort by Social studies stakeholders, curriculum planners, educators, scholars, researcher and promoters etc on fighting and upholding the mandate given the discipline in clearing off abnormalities and absurdities in the society.

Recommendations

Hence, to properly deal with the issue of get-rich quick syndrome, the following recommendations are made;

1. Social Studies as a school discipline must live up to expectations in terms of incorporating concepts, themes and topics that addresses the issue of get-rich quick syndrome in form of creating awareness into its curriculum.
2. Social Studies as a corrective study should continue to advocate for dignity of labour and de-emphasized the get-rich quick syndrome and put away mindset of excessive materialism of the Nigerian youths.
3. There is need for national reorientation of Nigerian citizens most especially teenagers and youths on Nigerian values. There is need to put back honesty and hard work on the pedestal. Nigeria has to play the long game to deal with and defeat this hydra-headed monster called “get rich quick syndrome”.
4. There must strong re-orientation of the Nigerian youths in shunning illicit and ostentatious living.
5. There should be strong measures, viable policies and programmes on poverty reduction and eradication mechanism which must be judiciously backed by actions and strong measure. Unemployment has to be dealt with to get rid of this national menace.
6. Nigerian youths and internet users across the globe should be security conscious as well as gear up their knowledge about the changing world of ICT.
7. The remote and immediate causes as identified above must be statistically and qualitatively traced and examined, thereby leading to getting a plausible solution to the cancer worm.

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