

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL VARIABLES IN PREDICTING GET-RICH-QUICK SYNDROME (GRQS) AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

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Abstract

In the time past, wealth and riches had been a product of hard work, commitment and perseverance but the truth is that many youths in Nigeria today have lost their true sense of value, self-sacrifice, hard work, endurance and perseverance that is required to earn an honest living. The Seminar explores the Impact of Social Variables in Predicating Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome among Youths in Nigeria. Get-rich-quick mentality is characterized by a "short-term, impulsive focus on achieving wealth, often at the expense of other values and goals". Other characteristics of GRQS include Unrealistic expectations, vulnerability to scams and exploitation, engagement in risky behavior and Erosion of moral values. This mentality can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including financial problems, social isolation, criminality, problems with the law and psychological distress. The study examined a host of activities indulged by youths to make quick money which includes Cybercrime/Internet Fraud (Yahoo or Yahoo Plus), Kidnapping, Drug Trafficking, Gambling/ Sports Betting, Human Trafficking, Human Organ Harvesting, Ponzi/Pyramid Scheme among others. Furthermore, the study adopted the Strain/Anomie Theory developed by Émile Durkheim and further expanded by Robert K. Merton to explain the social environmental factors that contributes to increasing Get-Rich-Quick syndrome among youths. In addition, the study identified family dynamics, Peer pressure, unemployment, poverty, social media, Nollywood and bad governance as social factors that contributes to GRQS among Nigerian youths. Finally recommendations which includes; promoting the ethics of hard work and perseverance, promote positive values such as honesty, integrity, and responsibility, encourage youths to explore entrepreneurship, and financial literacy were made to help Nigerian youths overcome Get-Rich-Quick mentality.

Keywords: social variables, get-rich-quick, syndrome, Nigerian youths, impact

Introduction

Nigeria the giant of Africa and the most populous black nation on earth is blessed with so many human and material resources that are enough to put her on the pedestal of the richest countries of the world and a power block in the African continent. But over time it has not been able to proof the above position or demonstrate a proper utilization of her resources to translate into better standard of living for her citizens and its economy. The story today is a pitiable state of poverty, unemployment and under employment, high inflation, expansion of income

inequality, corruption, and insecurity of both life and properties among other challenges suffocating the country (Okunade & Shehu, 2015).

Our national anthem celebrates the labour of our past heroes and how our founding fathers molded Nigeria with great zeal for success. This was based on the way and manner they collectively fought and achieved political independence for Nigeria from British colonialist through hardwork, patriotism and selflessness, but the level of poverty and economy hardship has made many youths deny the part of dignity in labour and hardwork to a path that gives money and comfort with “ease” (Nnaemeka et al., (2015). Nigerian youths who understand and adopt the philosophy of hardwork are not lazy but always proactive in their various endeavours and pursuit of means of livelihood. This is evident when compared with other youths across the globe; they remain outstanding in their overall responsibilities.

Becoming rich at a young age is not evil but the source of the wealth is what matters (Nwaozuru, 2020). Nothing is absolutely wrong with making money and accumulating wealth legitimately through hard-work and legitimate earning to escape poverty; but to make money and accumulate wealth with little or no hard-work or not necessarily sweating for it, especially through cybercrime, use of human body parts for ritual or other illegal means is what can be described as “get-rich-quick syndrome” (Enaikele et al., 2022).

Since at least the early 1900s, the phrase "get rich quick" has been used to refer to dubious investments (Ogunrin, 2018). Today, it has become worrisome that the teeming energetic Nigerian youths are bedeviled with a disturbing trend: the prevalence of "get-rich-quick" (GRQ) syndrome among its young population. This is a phenomenon, characterized by the pursuit of wealth through unconventional and often unethical means.

A combined force of get rich quick schemes are becoming a threat to Nigerian psycho-socio-economic wellbeing. It is becoming a major contributor and symptom of a breakdown of the social order and morality as witnessed by increased act of criminality, lowered productivity and total insecurity in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2013). The increase sped of GRQS is moving the country to a dysfunctional state as it threatens its stability and it is therefore, a social problem that requires a concerted effort towards finding a lasting solution to it.

There is a worrisome rising urge among youths to make money at all cost today. This is believed to be caused by the dwindling economy hardship and wrong orientation towards riches among other reasons (Weiss &Keinan, 2015). The youths have run to seek comfort and “safe zone” in Get-Rich Quick Schemes to cushion the effect of the economy hardship bedeviling the country. This pervasive desire for rapid wealth and success has astronomically increased in recent years, as increasing number of youths are drawn towards shortcuts to financial prosperity, often neglecting the importance of hardwork through trade, handworks, even the non-available white collar jobs and ethical means of livelihood. This trend poses a significant challenge to the morality of the country's vibrant and youthful population, impacting both individual aspirations and societal values (Atkinson, 2016).

The concept of the get-rich-quick Syndrome is significantly drawing the attention of scholars this has giving rise to different conceptualization. According to Atkinson (2016) the get-rich-quick mentality is characterized by a "short-term, impulsive focus on achieving wealth, often at the expense of other values and goals". Atkinson argues that this mentality can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including financial problems, social isolation, criminality, problems with the law and psychological distress. Weiss and Keinan (2015), defines the get-rich-quick mentality as a "focus on immediate, materialistic goals that are detached from deeper personal values and long-term aspirations". They argue that this mentality can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including reduced well-being and satisfaction with life. Other scholars have explored the cultural and historical context of the get-rich-quick mentality. Elumah (2023) believes that the rise of capitalism and consumer culture in the western society has led to a pervasive focus on materialism and individualism, which significantly encourages the get-rich-quick mentality this has made youth to become lazy and adapt shortcut to wealth creation and give little or no attention to legitimate profession. Similarly, Bauman (2000) in his book "Liquid Modernity" is of the view that the instability and uncertainty of modern life has led to a greater emphasis on immediate material gain and a rejection of long-term planning.

Furthermore, Nwaozuru (2020) opines that the allure of quick wealth acquisition has become a focal point for many Nigerian youths, driven by a complex interplay of societal expectations, economic pressures, and the aspiration for upward mobility. The prevalence of the Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome is further exacerbated by the influence of internet and social media and familial expectations. The pressure to showcase material success, such as driving the latest cars and residing in opulent mansions, has intensified, creating an environment where individuals who do not meet "these standards" may feel inadequate or labeled as failures. One consequences of this syndrome is the discouragement of hard work and meaningful efforts to earn a decent living. With unrealistic expectations mounting on the youth daily, the pursuit of legitimate career paths and gradual success is overshadowed by the desire for immediate financial and material gains (Ezediuno, et al., 2023). The societal emphasis on instant wealth has led to a decline in the dedication to hard work, affecting the overall work ethic among the younger generation (Elumah, 2023).

Literature Review

In the time past, wealth and riches had been a product of hard work, commitment and perseverance but the truth is that many youths in Nigeria today have lost their true sense of value, self-sacrifice, hard work, endurance and perseverance that is required to earn a honest living. The byproduct as well as the irresponsibility on the part of youths are being highly infectious and have eaten deep into the psyche of the young people. The practice of quick-money exist in the families, churches, schools, banks, government agencies, market places, universities, The desperate quest by youths to 'blow'; the modern slang which depicts desperation for quick wealth, this has pushed many youths into committing crimes. get-rich-quick syndrome is one of the contemporary social problems of Nigerian society and could be described as culture of quick

fixes or shortcuts that is prevalent among youths, which is unlawful, unreasonable, untenable and even ungodly (Oluwadare, 2023).

The get-rich-quick syndrome among youths refers to a pervasive social phenomenon characterized by an intense and often unrealistic desire for wealth and material possessions achieved through shortcuts, unconventional means, or minimal effort. This often manifests in risky and unethical behaviors, fueled by a combination of societal pressures, lack of opportunities, and unrealistic expectations (Osinowo et al., 2019). This pervasive desire for rapid wealth and success has raised alarms in recent years, as an increasing number of young individuals are drawn towards shortcuts to financial prosperity, often neglecting the importance of hard work and ethical sources of livelihood (Asuai & Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2023). This trend poses a significant challenge to the country's vibrant and youthful population, impacting both individual aspirations and societal values. The allure of quick wealth acquisition has become a focal point for many Nigerian youths, driven by a complex interplay of societal expectations, economic pressures, and the aspiration for upward mobility (Adebayo 2013).

With unrealistic expectations mounting on the youth, the pursuit of legitimate career paths and gradual success is overshadowed by craving for immediate financial gains. The societal emphasis on instant wealth has led to a decline in the dedication to hard work, affecting the overall work ethic among the younger generation. The influence of social media and familial expectations has added to the pressure experienced by Nigerian youths (Asuai & Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2023). The constant exposure to images of ostentatious lifestyles on social media platforms, home videos and musical videos fuels the desire for rapid wealth, pushing individuals towards high-risk ventures. The fear of being perceived as unsuccessful or unable to meet societal standards contributes to the increasing engagement in dubious schemes and questionable activities.

Psychologists have in recent times developed interest in the changing pattern of human priority. Some have tune attention to the impact of materialism on human choices, behavior and well-being. According to Kasser (2002), materialistic values are associated with lower levels of well-being, increased anxiety, and greater social isolation. He has also shown that people who prioritize material wealth tend to have lower levels of empathy and concern for others. This means that one who is materialistic is likely to indulge in money making behavior regardless of the legality of the process.

Materialistic values adopted by youths today have made many develop a strong urge to make money at all cost regardless of who it hurts, this attitude also known as 'get-rich-quick syndrome' is described as a growing deadly social moral and ethical problem in Nigerian society today. This syndrome' is seen as a disease or disorder which affects individuals views of making or wanting quick, effortless or sweat less money. It makes individuals with this mentality seek ways or means, mostly illegal or unethical to make money. The desperation for instant wealth is seeping into every corner of our youth's lives. This is basically what makes them give into the 'shortcut' through nefarious fast making activities in order to get rich. The irresponsibility on the

part of many youths is highly infectious and has eaten deep into the psyche of many young people regardless of their age or gender. The practice of quick money syndrome exists in virtually all sectors of our society today (Ogra, 2022).

Characteristics of Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome

There are factors identified by scholars to cause or contribute to developing GRQS

1. Obsessive desire for wealth: Youths with this syndrome prioritize materialism and instant gratification above all else. Their primary focus becomes attaining wealth and possessions by any means possible, regardless of the long-term consequences.
2. Unrealistic expectations: The desire for quick wealth is often coupled with unrealistic expectations about how long it takes to achieve financial success. They may underestimate the hard work and dedication required for sustainable wealth and overestimates the potential of quick schemes or unethical ventures.
3. Vulnerability to scams and exploitation: Youths with this syndrome are more susceptible to falling victim to scams, pyramid schemes, Ponzi schemes, and other exploitative practices that promise quick returns on minimal investment. Their desperation for wealth can cloud their judgment and make them easy targets for predatory individuals.
4. Engagement in risky behavior: In pursuit of quick wealth, youths may engage in risky and illegal activities such as cybercrime, gambling, drug trafficking, or even ritualistic practices. This can lead to significant personal and legal consequences, jeopardizing their safety and future prospects.
5. Erosion of moral values: The focus on "getting rich quick" often comes at the expense of ethical considerations. Youths may prioritize immediate gain over integrity, honesty, and respect for the law, potentially eroding their moral compass and contributing to wider societal issues.

GET RICH QUICK SYNDROME EXAMPLES IN NIGERIA

This section will examine illegitimate means some Nigerian youths follow to make quick wealth.

- **Cybercrime/Internet Fraud (Yahoo)**

Internet Fraud (Yahoo Yahoo) Presently, internet fraud activity or cybercrime popularly called Yahoo Yahoo seems to be a hot cake business for many Nigeria youths as some are rushing into it with the aim of getting rich quick. The advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been essential in today's digital world, this came with its own price of criminality seen in internet fraud or cybercrime. According to Augustine (2010), cybercrime may reasonably be defined as numerous criminal activities and offenses perpetrated through the Internet or cyberspace such as illegal possession or distribution of information through computer networks or systems.

Every positive development that has taken place globally comes with a corresponding crime metamorphoses. The advancement in internet technology has given birth to cybercrime which gives room to criminal minded persons to take advantage of internet as a window of

opportunities to commit crime (Strassmann, 2009). Adedipe (2016) observes that the advent of internet is supposed to be a gift to humanity since it allows people to have boundless opportunities to have to make money legitimately without leaving their home, they can trade, buy and sell, create content and make money from them, and navigate the world even from their beds. The opportunities and endless but these opportunities are quickly turning into a wellspring of inconvenience and stress because of the abominations being executed through it by unscrupulous people Nwaozuru (2020). Various sectors in Nigeria are vulnerable to cybercrime attack but it could be observed that the banking sector is mostly attacked by internet fraudsters. Internet fraudsters in Nigeria are every day formulating better approaches for executing their unholy act; some even use charms and diabolical means to dupe both citizens and others outside Nigeria popularly known as Yahoo-Plus Nwaozuru (2020). Cybercrime activities by Nigerians have given the country a negative image especially now that the country is trying to redeem its reputation from been the most corrupt country to attract investors.

Global statistics on cybercrime shows that a total of 41.6 million accounts were breached in Q1'2023, with Russia ranking as number one. The latest study by cybersecurity company Surfshark has revealed that the incidences of data breaches in Nigeria increased by 64% in Q1, 2023. According to the report, Nigeria recorded 82,000 cases of data breaches between January and March 2023 up from 50,000 recorded in Q4 2022. With this, the country is ranked 32nd in the world on the list of countries most breached by hackers (Akintaro, 2023). Data breach occurs when an intruder copies and leaks user data such as names, surnames, email addresses, passwords, etc. This also includes instances of hackers gaining access to or hijacking people's social media accounts, especially, Facebook and WhatsApp.

- **Kidnapping**

Kidnapping activities are among the major violent crimes bedeviling the Nigerian nation. Hardly would a day pass without the news of kidnapping been heard around the nation. The saying that kidnappers target only wealthy individuals who would pay ransom when kidnapped is no longer true as everybody is now the targets of kidnappers. This is because kidnapping has gone beyond demand for ransom from the individuals, their family and associates to using the victims to press on the government and religious bodies to intervene (Chiagbata, 2013). The word which has become more popular than armed robbery today is the unlawful taking or carrying away of a person or persons through the use of force or false pretense against the person's will. The principal motives is to subject the victim or victims to some forms of involuntary servitude, expose them to commission of some further criminal act or to obtain ransom for the safe release of the person alive or death as the case is today in Nigeria (Britannica, 2024). The word is derived from "kid" meaning; child and "nab" which means; to snatch or steal (Balikis, 2018). The earlier meaning portray an act of snatching children into force labour in the olden days but today the meaning has been generalised to accommodate any act of snatching persons regardless of age and gender (Nwaozuru, 2018).

Many youths have found this as the new way to make quick cash since it proceeds inform of ransom comes in Millions of naira and hundreds of millions in some cases within one operation (Leadership News Paper 2024). Kidnapping seems easier compared to other forms of serious crimes. According to Davidson (2010) a group of criminals armed with guns and cell phones apprehend unsuspecting victims and drag their victim into a secluded spot and begin to make phone calls to friends and relations to demand for a ransom. Nwaozuru (2018) observes that child trafficking, rape; forceful marriage, rituals and modern day slavery are sometimes traced to the root of kidnapping. Hence, Nwaozuru (2018) states that the equation of kidnapping could be seen as: Victim + Ransom= Fast Cash. The above viewpoint shows that kidnapping could be seen as avenue to earn quick money.

Kidnapping is billion naira businesses today in Nigeria. Kidnapping for ransom has become pervasive throughout our country, affecting virtually every state and resulting in the death of numerous citizens across the country. Between the year 2011 and 2020, Nigerians paid at least \$18.34 million (N7 billion) as ransom to kidnappers, Leadership News of January, 2024 cited a report from SB Morgen (SBM) Intelligence published early in May 2020 captured the kidnap cases that occurred from June 2011 to the end of March 2020. The report shows the 10 states with highest kidnap cases includes Bayelsa – 85, Delta -96 and Rivers – 120. Other states with high kidnap incidents include Kaduna – 177, Borno – 82, Kogi – 59, Edo – 55, Ondo – 54, Katsina – 52 and Taraba – 47 making a total of 827 victims (Leadership newspaper, 2024)

• **Drug Trafficking**

Drug Trafficking Youth involvement in drug trafficking as short cut to wealth is not exempted. Many Nigerian youths traffic hard drugs within and outside the country just to get rich quick (Nwannennaya and Abiodun, 2017). International Narcotics Control Board reports that Nigeria tops the list with highest drug trafficking and abuse in West Africa. It could be observed that most African drug peddlers to Europe and America are Nigerian citizens mainly youths. Many of them run out of luck as they are arrested by law enforcement agencies in such countries. They have been reported cases where many Nigerian youths have been caught in airports with hard drugs like cocaine and so on concealed in their luggage, ingested in their system and in food items Nwaozuru (2020). Those who travel abroad would bear witness that the search being carried out on a Nigerian in foreign airports is quite different from others who are not Nigerians. In some Arab nations such as Saudi Arabia, drug trafficking is an offence with capital punishment meted out to offenders and many Nigerian youths have fallen victim to it (Nwaozuru, 2020). Drug trafficking and abuse among youths have aided violent crimes in Nigeria. In a bid to fight drug trafficking and abuse in Nigeria, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) was established. NDLEA to some extent has been making efforts to curb high rate of drug abuse and trafficking as many drug barons and traffickers have been arrested while many farms used for growing hard drugs have been destroyed. It could be observed that the reason this business is

thriving is that there are drug barons in Nigeria and abroad who sponsor the youths that carry the drugs from one country to another (Ogra, 2022).

- **Gambling/ Sports Betting**

Gambling came with the advent of the British colonial government in Nigeria. Then it was mostly elderly men that gamble particularly lotto popularly called Babaljebu and pool (Chiagbata, 2022). With introduction of sports betting in Nigeria it is now a trending business for many youths in the country. There is no doubt that Nigerian youths participate actively in sports particularly in football either as participants or spectators showing that Nigerians are lovers of sports. Hardly would you see a Nigerian youth that is not a fan of a football club either in Africa or Europe. Sometimes some youths fight in football viewing centers as they argue about football issues. Hence one could say that Nigerian youths have passion for sports. Sports betting could be seen to have taken over the gambling industry in Nigeria as sports betting shops are seen in nooks and crannies of the nation (Chiagbata, 2022)

Nwaozuru (2018) observes that gambling generates revenue to government and telecommunication companies or network providers; provide employment opportunity to youths and so on. Many youths see sports betting despite its economic risk and mental health implication as a short cut to wealth creation hence they patronise it. The suppressing thing is that both the employed and the unemployed youths are actively involved in gambling related activities to get quick cash. Some spend a lot of money or use their valuables to bet yet without meaningful returns while few bettors hit the jackpot once a while. Sports betting are in no doubt gaining ground in the lives of many Nigerian youths (Balikis, 2018).

- **Human Trafficking**

Incidence of human trafficking among youths in Nigeria today is alarming. Akor (2011) defines human trafficking as a modern day slavery involving the movement of victims who are subject to violence, deception or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labour. During the colonial rule slave trade was allowed as at this time many able bodied men and women were sold abroad to the Europeans and Americans for the purpose of human labour in their teaming industries or their farm cultivations and few were used as domestic slaves. Some were used for sexual exploitation which can be exchange with cash as a commodity (Balikis, 2018). When slave trade was abolished in the eighteenth century, international and local laws were made against human trafficking. In Nigeria, Nkememena (2009) states that human trafficking law was enacted in 2003. The law is known as the trafficking in persons (prohibition) law enforcement and Administration Act. He further added that the Trafficking in persons (prohibition) law enforcement and administration Act created the National Agency for the prohibition of Trafficking in persons and other related matters (NAPTIP). This government agency has been in the forefront of the fight against human trafficking. In fact, Nigeria became the first country in Africa to enact such law and establish a special agency to complement it.

• **Human Organ Harvesting**

Over the last few decades there have been a substantially higher percentage of successful organ transplants due to significant technological advancement in the health sector. This advancement is worth celebrating but also it has created a significant imbalance between the demand for and the supply of organs, the demand for human organs has grown faster than the supply. Organ in high demand includes the kidneys, liver, heart, lungs, corneas, pancreas, and other body parts from living or deceased people connote organ harvesting. Driven by a surge in renal disease, the demand for kidney is rising all over the world, with less developed countries, including Nigeria, becoming the go-to market for foreigners in need of kidney transplant. At least 1,353 kidney transplants have taken place in Nigeria from 2005 to date, according to the Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation (Sadiq, 2023).

Organ harvesting is the illegal removal of organs from people without their consent, usually for transplantation or commercial sale. It can happen as a result of compulsion, fraud, or abduction and may exploit vulnerable persons, particularly those living in poverty or marginalized groups. They may be misled into believing the procedure is both safe and equitable. Abduction or kidnapping can also be employed, in which victims are forcibly taken and their organs are harvested without their consent or under duress (Ogundipe, 2023). However, Ogundipe (2023) clarify that this is not the same as lawful organ transplantation, which involves the voluntary and altruistic donation of organs for the purpose of saving lives or improving health. Legal organ transplantation takes place inside a regulated framework with strong ethical criteria and donor and recipient informed consent. Organ harvesting, on the other hand, breaches human rights, exploits vulnerable individuals, and poses severe hazards to both donors' and recipients' health and well-being. The incidence of forced organ harvesting is rising worldwide. The World Health Organisation predicts that more than one illegal organ transaction is made every hour worldwide. Some are victims of kidnap whose organ(s) forcefully removed. Other victims are tricked into believing they require an operation and whilst under anaesthetic have an organ removed, without knowledge or consent while other victims are murdered on demand and have their organs removed (Ambagtsheer, 2023)

The increased demand for organs created the basis for a highly profitable black market trade in human organs. This has also opened the door for illegal organ trade, forceful harvesting and trafficking including from children and youths (Bagheri, 2016).

• **Ponzi/Pyramid Scheme**

A Ponzi scheme is an investment scam that robs Peter to pay Paul. The scheme pays early investors with money taken from later investors to create an illusion of big profits. A Ponzi scheme promises a high rate of return with little risk to the investor. It relies on word-of-mouth to lure unsuspecting investors to "invest" their money. As new investors hear about the mouthwatering returns earned by early investors, they become motivated not only to invest but to also invite others to invest as their down liners (Chen, 2024). It is a fraudulent

investment scheme in which an operator pays returns on investments from capital derived from new investors, rather than from legitimate investment profits. Ponzi scheme operators entice new investors with abnormally high short-term rates of return. The scheme is named for Charles Ponzi of Boston, Massachusetts. In the 1920s, Ponzi launched a scheme that guaranteed investors a 50% return on investments in postal coupons. Although Ponzi was able to pay his initial backers, the scheme dissolved when he was unable to pay later investors (Cannon, 2023). In a Ponzi scheme, the underlying investment claims are usually entirely fictional; very few, if any, actual physical assets or investments generally exist. As the number of total investors grows and the supply of potential new investors dwindles, there is not enough money to pay off promised returns and cover investors who try to cash out. Ponzi schemes operators aren't investing their clients' money in anything. They are creating an illusion of profits by paying early investors from the funds deposited by later investors. Meanwhile, they are pocketing the bulk of the money for their own use (investopedia,2022) . Similarly, a pyramid scheme is a fraudulent multi-level marketing strategy whereby investors earn potential returns by recruiting more and more other investors. Multi-level marketing strategies are not intrinsically fraudulent, and there are many legitimate multi-level marketing companies offering various consumer products and services. What makes a multi-level marketing strategy into a fraudulent pyramid scheme is the lack of a genuine underlying investment enterprise or product upon which the strategy can hope to be sustained. As the membership pool expands exponentially, further recruiting becomes impossible and the “business” becomes unsustainable. A pyramid scheme often appears as a legitimate multi-level marketing (MLM) practice. Nigerian youths have fallen victims of several Ponzi and pyramid schemes. Mmm, chymall,

Strain/Anomie Theory

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) was a French sociologist who first proposed the theory of anomie in 1893 with the publication of his book *The Division of Labor in Society*. Robert K. Merton expanded the theory and named it Strain theory. Merton used the theory to explain why some people engage in deviant behavior, like crime, suggesting it often arises from a disjunction between societal goals and the legitimate means to achieve them. According to the theory, anomie is a state in which expectations are unclear and the social system that keeps people functioning has broken down. He believed that anomie, or normlessness, could result in feelings of deep despair and worthlessness for individuals (Merton, 1957; Blakeley et al., 2023).

Merton (1957) explain why some people engage in deviant behavior, like crime, suggesting it often arises from a disjunction between societal goals and the legitimate means to achieve them. The theory believes that there was agreement or consensus over society's norms and values in modern societies, which resulted in social order and stable societies. This occurred because society's institutions (e.g., education, religion, family and security) successfully implemented social control. The proponents of this theory Durkheim and Marton further added that in periods where the norms and values of society are unclear, people become confused about

how to behave. Social order would be threatened and people would not feel that their behavior is constrained by norms and values – a feeling of anomie, or normlessness.

People respond in different ways to feelings of anomie. For some people widespread social normlessness becomes an opportunity for profit. These people may engage in war profiteering or attempt to fill a power vacuum to exploit the sense of despair that surrounds them and others to make money or name out of the situation (Blakeley et al., 2023).

Far more common as a response is a feeling of strong anxiety and confusion that drives people to act in unusual and often illegal ways. People respond to a lack of social order by attempting to meet their own needs using whatever means are available to them; this is an expression of human survival instinct.

This theory further asserts that, crime often occurs when people lack the legitimate means to support themselves, creating strain between people's goals and the resources that they have to achieve those goals. Social structures within a society may pressure citizens to commit crimes. It arises when there's a disjunction between culturally prescribed goals (like wealth and success) and the socially acceptable means to achieve them. This disconnect can lead to strain, resulting in different types of deviant behavior, depending on how individuals adapt to this strain (Inderbitzen, Bates, & Gainey, 2016). Youths from a humble background have a high desire for financial freedom but are limited by a lack of education, unemployment and underemployment, their dreams are threatened by high level of corruption by government officials, and economy instability (Inflation) among other variables. This mismatch between goals and the reality of opportunity for the youths creates anomie and deviance; it results gives birth to all forms of shortcut to make money through any means including illegitimate means addressed in this work.

Five Responses to Strain

Merton's strain theory proposes five responses to anomie, of which three are deviant. These responses either accept or reject cultural goals, and accept or reject institutionalized means (the legitimate means through which one can achieve a society's cultural goals) (Nickerson, 2023).

Conformity, Merton argues, is the only non-deviant response to anomie. When someone conforms, they accept the cultural goals of society and try to use the institutionalized acceptable means of achieving them

Innovation, in contrast, accepts the cultural goal of a society but rejects the institutional means of obtaining it. A thief may be pursuing the same cultural goal of economic success as the college student but is using illegitimate, illegal means to achieve it (Inderbitzen, Bates, & Gainey, 2016).

Ritualism is shared by those who have abandoned the cultural goals of their society (e.g., materialism) but continue to use legitimate means to make their way.

Retreatism, meanwhile, is the adaptation of those who have both rejected the cultural goals of society (materialism) and the legitimate means of achieving them this people have no desire to attain financial freedom and also don't work towards that too. These people are "in the society

but not of it” (Merton, 1957). An individual can also exist completely outside the system of a society’s goals and means of achieving them.

Rebellion, in Merton’s theory, refers to those who attempt to change a societal system to their own liking. Rebels replace the dominant cultural goal — such as wealth attainment — with another goal and create their own means of doing so.

SOCIAL PREDICTORS OF GET-RICH-QUICK SYNDROME

- **Unemployment**

Unemployment significantly influences the prevalence of the get-rich-quick syndrome among youths. The lack of employment opportunities pushes many young individuals towards seeking quick wealth through illicit means. Studies have shown that the desperation to accumulate sudden wealth is fueled by factors such as unemployment, online influences, peer pressure, poor parenting, and societal values that prioritize wealth over hard work and integrity (Okoli et al., 2022). The failure of the government to provide adequate job opportunities exacerbates this issue, leading to frustration among unemployed graduates who resort to illegal activities like ritual killings and fraud in pursuit of quick money (Ayinla&Ogunmeru, 2018; Ladyhippolyta88, 2018). Additionally, the societal glorification of wealth acquired through questionable means further perpetuates this damaging trend, creating a cycle where youths prioritize immediate financial gain over ethical and lawful means of earning a living(Enaikele et al., 2022). In essence, the combination of limited economic opportunities, inequality in wealth distribution, and the absence of viable employment options significantly contributes to the emergence and sustenance of the get-rich-quick syndrome among Nigerian youths (Uroko, 2022).

- **Peer pressure**

Peer-Pressure: is the process in which individuals within the same group influence others of their peers to engage in behaviour or activity that they may not be motivated to do independently. 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. The influence of peers who engage in "get rich quick" activities can pressure others to follow suit. The desire to fit in and be recognized in their social circles drives many young individuals to seek quick wealth, often through illicit means (Okoli et al., 2022). The lack of employment opportunities exacerbates this issue, as unemployed graduates become frustrated and may resort to illegal activities like ritual killings and fraud in pursuit of quick money (Enaikele et al., 2022). Additionally, societal glorification of wealth acquired through questionable means further perpetuates this damaging trend, creating a cycle where youths prioritize immediate financial gain over ethical and lawful means of earning a living. Parents and religious institutions should play a more active role in insisting on the values of integrity and good reputation, rather than celebrating wealth without questioning its source(Okoli et al., 2022). Furthermore, the government should address the root causes of unemployment and

poverty, as these factors significantly contribute to the emergence and sustenance of the get-rich-quick syndrome among Nigerian youths (Uroko, 2022).

- **Social media**

Significantly influences the get-rich-quick syndrome among youths by promoting the culture of instant wealth and encouraging the pursuit of quick riches (Enaikele et al., 2022). The glorification of wealth and instant success through shortcuts, often portrayed in Nollywood movies or social media, fuels the desire for riches. (Enaikele et al., 2020; Ajao, 2022). The allure of rapid wealth has driven many young people to explore entrepreneurship, investment, and various income-generating opportunities. However, social media also exposes youths to deceptive information and messages that often mislead them into engaging in illegal activities like internet fraud, human trafficking, pornography, prostitution, and ritual killings to make quick money. The constant exposure to glamorized lifestyles and materialistic content on social media can create a distorted perception of success and wealth, leading some youths to prioritize financial gain over ethical and lawful means of earning a living (Ajasa et al., 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to promote financial literacy and education among Nigerian youths and raise awareness about the risks associated with get-rich-quick schemes through public campaigns (Okoli et al., 2022). Finally, creating an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation while providing support and mentorship to young entrepreneurs can help channel the energy and ambition of Nigerian youths toward legitimate avenues for wealth creation.

- **The Nigerian home video industry**

Nigerian home video industry popularly known as Nollywood, has contributed to the get-rich-quick syndrome among youths by promoting the idea that wealth can be acquired instantly and without hard work. Nollywood movies often feature characters that become rich overnight through dubious means, such as rituals, fraud, and other criminal activities (Nseyen, 2022). These portrayals can create unrealistic expectations and encourage youths to pursue quick wealth, often through illegal means such as internet fraud, human trafficking, prostitution, and ritual killings (Ladyhippolyta88, 2018). The glamorization of wealth and materialism in Nollywood movies can also lead to peer pressure and societal expectations for youths to acquire wealth quickly, regardless of the means (Enaikele et al., 2022). To address this issue, it is important to promote financial literacy and education among Nigerian youths, raise awareness about the risks associated with get-rich-quick schemes, and encourage entrepreneurship and innovation while providing support and mentorship to young entrepreneurs (Nseyen, 2022). Additionally, Nollywood producers and directors should consider the impact of their portrayals of wealth and success on youths and strive to promote more realistic and ethical values in their movies (Nseyen, 2022).

- **Family dynamics**

Family dynamics play a significant role in influencing the get-rich-quick syndrome among youths. The pressure to conform to societal and family expectations, as well as the desire to meet certain standards, can lead to harmful outcomes such as depression, drug abuse, and excessive alcohol consumption (Nseyen, 2022). The lack of parental involvement and supervision, as well as the adoption of authoritarian parenting styles, can also contribute to the emergence of this syndrome among youths (Enaikele et al., 2022). Additionally, the allure of rapid wealth and the desire for instant financial success can lead some youths to neglect education and traditional career paths, favoring shortcuts that often lead to dead ends. To address this issue, there is a need for increased financial literacy and education among Nigerian youths, as well as the creation of an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation while providing support and mentorship to young entrepreneurs (Ogundipe, 2023). Additionally, parents should improve their relationship with their adolescents, choose the right parenting style, and monitor and supervise their development to help them abstain from indulgence in get-rich-quick schemes (Nwodo, 2021).

- **Bad governance**

Bad governance significantly influences the prevalence of the get-rich-quick syndrome among youths. The failure of the government to provide adequate job opportunities, implement effective policies, and mobilize the citizenry to address pressing issues contributes to the desperation of unemployed youths seeking quick wealth through illicit means (Nseyen, 2022). The lack of governance transparency, accountability, and responsiveness creates an environment where corruption thrives, leading to a sense of hopelessness among young individuals who may resort to illegal activities like fraud, ritual killings, and other criminal acts in pursuit of quick money (Nwodo, 2021). Additionally, the absence of good governance perpetuates societal values that prioritize wealth over hard work and integrity, further fueling the desire for immediate financial gain through questionable means (Okoli et al., 2022). To combat the get-rich-quick syndrome effectively, there is a critical need for improved governance that focuses on creating job opportunities, implementing policies that support economic growth, and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability to deter illicit activities among Nigerian youths.

Bad governance policies that contribute to the get-rich-quick syndrome among youths in Nigeria include: Inadequate job opportunities, Corruption and bad governance, Failure to provide employment, Lack of mobilization of the citizenry, Lack of transparency and accountability, Limited economic opportunities, deprivation, and inequality in wealth distribution among other factors.

- **Poverty**

Poverty is a significant factor that influences the get-rich-quick syndrome among youths in Nigeria. 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 can't be met. 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 lack of job opportunities, inadequate support for entrepreneurship, and limited economic opportunities can lead to economic deprivation and inequality in wealth distribution (Asuai & Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2023). These factors contribute to the inordinate desperation of youths to get-rich-quick and accumulate sudden wealth and riches (Ogundipe, 2023). The failure of the government to provide employment to the youths contributes to their frustration and involvement in ritual killings to make quick money (Nwodo, 2021). Additionally, societal glorification of wealth acquired through questionable means further perpetuates this damaging trend, creating a cycle where youths prioritize immediate financial gain over ethical and lawful means of earning a living. The absence of good governance and the lack of mobilization of the citizenry to deal with pressing issues also contribute to the get-rich-quick syndrome mentality among youths (Ogunrin, 2018).

Effect of Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome

The get-rich-quick syndrome affects Nigeria in various ways, impeding the country's economic development and leading to negative consequences for its youth population. This syndrome, characterized by an insatiable desire for instant wealth, has led many Nigerian youths to engage in fraudulent schemes, scams, and illegal activities such as Ponzi schemes, online scams, and cybercrime³. The pursuit of quick riches has resulted in financial devastation, disillusionment, and legal consequences for countless young people, impacting their future prospects and well-being. Additionally, the obsession with immediate wealth has diverted some youths from education and traditional career paths, favoring shortcuts that often lead to dead ends, hindering the development of a well-educated and skilled workforce vital for sustainable growth³. In essence, the prevalence of the get-rich-quick syndrome in Nigeria poses a significant challenge to the country's economic progress, social stability, and the future prospects of its youth population.

Conclusion

The prevalence of "get rich quick" syndromes among youths in Nigeria underscores a complex interplay of societal factors, cultural influences, and economic disparities. This phenomenon, characterized by a pursuit of wealth through dubious or unsustainable means, has significant implications for both individuals and society at large. Through an exploration of its general overview, specific examples, and underlying social causes, it becomes evident that a combination of factors such as widespread poverty, limited opportunities for economic advancement and societal pressure contribute to the allure of quick wealth acquisition.

Recommendation

This paper highlighted the Social Predictors of Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome among youths in Nigeria. From the observations made in this paper, the following recommendations are drafted for policy makers' implementation.

Parents, Educational institutions and religious Leaders should help prevent the get-rich-quick syndrome by promoting the ethics of hard work and perseverance. They can emphasize the importance of working towards long-term goals and the satisfaction that comes from achieving them.

Addressing unemployment and providing employment opportunities for youths can help to reduce frustration and the desire for quick wealth.

Reorienting family values and reinforcing the role of traditional and religious institutions should work to promote positive values such as honesty, integrity, and responsibility. They can help youths understand the importance of making ethical decisions and the consequences of making unethical ones.

Our Educational curriculum from primary School to higher institution should teach financial literacy, emphasizing the importance of saving, budgeting, and investing. This can help youths understand the value of money and the importance of making informed financial decisions.

Parents, Models, media and educational institutions should encourage youths to explore entrepreneurship as a means of earning a living. They can provide resources and support to help youths develop their skills and ideas.

Parents and family members should provide a supportive environment for youths, helping them build self-esteem and confidence. They can create a safe space for youths to express themselves and share their thoughts and feelings. This can help youths develop a sense of purpose and direction, reducing the temptation to engage in risky behaviors such as get-rich-quick schemes.

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