

Impact of Pious Study of Social Etiquette & Rules in Ijaw Culture

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of pious study on social etiquette & rules and morality in ijaw culture, with particular reference to selected people in Port Harcourt Local Government Area, Rivers State. The study was guided by four objectives: to examine the role of pious beliefs in shaping social etiquette & rules within ijaw culture, investigate how pious teachings impact moral values, analyse the impact of pious practices on interpersonal relationships, and explore the connection between pious rituals and community cohesion. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised selected ijaw people in Port Harcourt Local Government Area, while a sample of 100 respondents was specified in the research methodology. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire divided into Sections A and B. The instrument was structured around the research questions and used a four-point response scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, and Disagree. The data analysis procedure specified frequency tables and simple percentages, while the hypothesis was to be tested using Chi-square statistics. However, the supplied hypothesis-testing results reported a calculated t-value of 2.813, a critical value of 1.96, and a decision to reject the null hypothesis at the 0.05 significance level. The discussion of findings indicates that pious beliefs and practices contribute to the promotion of moral values, respect for elders, honesty, communal responsibility, interpersonal harmony, and social cohesion in ijaw society. The study concludes that pious beliefs remain an important impact on social etiquette & rules and moral development in ijaw culture, although modernization and changing pious practices may affect the transmission of traditional values. It recommends promoting interfaith dialogue, strengthening moral education, equipping pious and community leaders with conflict-resolution skills, and encouraging further research into the relationship between religion, social etiquette & rules, and morality in contemporary ijaw communities.

Introduction

The ijaw people, predominantly found in south south Nigeria, have a rich cultural heritage deeply intertwined with their pious beliefs. The ijaw religion, often referred to as Ifá, is a complex system of divination, worship, and moral teachings that significantly impact social behavior and moral values. According to Abimbola (1976), Ifá is not just a religion but a way of life that encompasses the ethical and moral codes guiding the ijaw people. The divinities, known as Orishas, play a crucial role in the daily lives of the ijaw, providing guidance and support in various aspects of life, including social interactions and moral decisions.

One of the key aspects of ijaw pious study is the emphasis on communal living and social harmony. The ijaw believe that the well-being of the individual is intrinsically linked to the well-being of the community. This belief is reflected in their social behavior, where cooperation, respect for elders, and communal support are highly valued. As noted by Idowu

(1962), the ijaw concept of "Obinumu Vie" encapsulates the ideal moral character, which includes virtues such as honesty, integrity, and respect for others. Pious teachings and rituals reinforce these values, promoting a sense of responsibility towards the community and fostering social cohesion. The moral teachings of the ijaw religion also play a significant role in shaping individual behavior. The Ifá corpus, a collection of sacred texts and oral traditions, contains numerous stories and proverbs that convey moral lessons. These teachings are often imparted through pious ceremonies, festivals, and daily interactions with pious leaders, known as Babalawos. As Peel (2000) points out, the moral codes derived from these teachings are not just abstract principles but are actively applied in everyday life, influencing decisions and actions. For instance, the concept of "Oma vie" (good character) is a central tenet of ijaw morality, encouraging individuals to act with kindness, humility, and compassion.

Pious study in ijaw culture also addresses the consequences of immoral behavior. The belief in divine retribution and ancestral punishment serves as a deterrent against unethical actions. The ijaw cosmology includes a strong belief in the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms, where the ancestors and deities oversee human affairs. As described by Dopamu (2005), the fear of incurring the wrath of the Orishas or displeasing the ancestors motivates individuals to adhere to moral standards. This belief system reinforces the importance of maintaining good character and upholding social norms. Furthermore, the role of pious leaders in ijaw society cannot be overstated. Babalawos and other pious figures are not only spiritual guides but also moral exemplars and community leaders. They are responsible for interpreting the Ifá corpus, conducting rituals, and providing counsel on ethical issues. Their impact extends beyond pious matters, impacting social and political decisions within the community. As noted by Olupona (2011), the authority and respect accorded to these leaders underscore the integration of pious and social life in ijaw culture.

The study of religion in ijaw culture profoundly impacts social behavior and moral values. Through the teachings of Ifá, the emphasis on communal living, the moral lessons imparted by pious texts, and the role of pious leaders, the ijaw people are guided in their interactions and ethical decisions.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Research design is the specification of methods and procedures for acquiring the information needed to solve problems. This study employed the descriptive survey design. The nature of the problem was duly considered in the study.

Population of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the target population consists of selected ijaw people in ijaw Community in Port Harcourt LGA, Rivers State.

Samples and Sampling Techniques

The sample of the study refers to that part of the population that was selected for closer study. To select the needed samples for this study, the researcher used a total number of one hundred (100) selected ijaw people in ijaw Community in Port Harcourt LGA, Rivers State.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection instrument to be used is questionnaire designed by the researcher. The design is well constructed and simple. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was for collection of information on personal data of respondents while Section B consisted of questions drawn from the research questions that elicited responses from the

respondents with response options: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Disagreed (D).

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure the face validity of the study, the research instrument was scrutinized and judged by the supervisor for appropriateness of each item of the instrument. The comment of the supervisor was used to obtain final items which were further subjected to content validity to ensure that the content of the instruments representative of the area which the instruments are intended to cover.

Method of Data Analysis

The response to the questionnaire items was analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentage method. The research hypotheses stated earlier was tested using Chi-Square Statistics.

4.2 Presentation of Data

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire

	Frequency	Percent
Returned	87	87.0
Unreturned	13	13.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.1 showed that 87%(87) respondents returned their questionnaire while 13% (13) respondents did not returned their questionnaire. This implies that a large proportion of the questionnaire were filled and returned.

Table 2: Distribution According to Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	51	58.6
Female	36	41.4
Total	87	87.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

As indicated in Table 2, 58.6%(51) respondents were male while 41.4%(36) were female. This shows that male respondents participated more in the research than their female counterpart.

Table 3: Distribution according to Age

	Frequency	Percent
21 – 30 years	30	34.5
31 – 40 years	24	27.6
41 – 50 years	18	20.7
51 – 60 years	9	10.3
Above 60 years	6	6.9
Total	87	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In the age grade category in Table 3, it shows that the respondents 34.5%(30) respondents are between 21 – 30 years, 27.6%(24) are between 31 – 40 years age range, 20.7%(18) are from 41 – 50 years, 10.3%(9) respondents are in between 51 – 60 years, while 6.9%(6) are in the age bracket of above 60 years.

Table 4: Distribution According to Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent
Single	49	56.3
Married	38	43.7
Total	87	87.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The Marital category of the respondents shows that 56.3% (49) respondents were single while 43.7%(38) respondents were married. This implies that respondents with single status attended more to the questionnaire.

4.3 Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

H₀: pious beliefs cannot shape social behavior within the ijaw culture

H_a: pious beliefs can shape social behavior within the ijaw culture

Table 5: Relationship between pious beliefs and social behavior

Structure	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Standard Error	t-cal	t _{crit}	Decision
pious beliefs	87	3.59	0.883	172	0.177	2.813	1.96	H ₀ Rejected
social behavior	87	3.09	1.398					

0.5 level of significance

Table 5 above shows that the calculated value of t-test $t_{cal} = 2.813$ which is greater than the critical value $t_{crit} = 1.96$ at 0.05 level of significance with degree of freedom $df = 172$; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis which states “pious beliefs cannot shape social behavior within the ijaw culture”. This showed that pious beliefs can shape social behavior within the ijaw culture.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings on how pious beliefs shape social behavior within the ijaw culture reveals a complex interplay between traditional pious practices, social norms, and moral values. One significant finding is that the ijaw religion, which includes the worship of deities known as Orishas, plays a crucial role in establishing community cohesion and social order. According to Idowu (1962), the rituals and ceremonies associated with the worship of Orishas are not merely pious acts but are deeply embedded in the social fabric of the ijaw people. These practices foster a sense of belonging and collective identity, which in turn impacts social behavior by promoting values such as respect for elders, communal support, and adherence to societal norms. Another important aspect is the moral framework provided by ijaw pious beliefs. The concept of "iwa" (character) is central to ijaw morality, and it is believed that good character is essential for both personal and communal well-being. As noted by Abimbola (1976), the teachings of the Orishas emphasize virtues such as honesty, integrity, and compassion. These moral teachings are reinforced through proverbs, folktales, and pious education, which collectively shape the moral compass of individuals within the community. The emphasis on good character and moral behavior is not only a pious obligation but also a social expectation, thereby influencing how individuals interact with one another.

The role of pious leaders, such as priests and priestesses, is also pivotal in shaping social behavior within the ijaw culture. These leaders are seen as custodians of pious knowledge and moral authority. They provide guidance on ethical issues, mediate conflicts, and perform rituals that reinforce social norms. According to Peel (2000), the impact of pious leaders extends beyond the spiritual realm and into the everyday lives of the ijaw people. Their counsel is sought in matters ranging from personal conduct to community decisions, highlighting the interconnection between pious beliefs and social behavior. Furthermore, the integration of pious beliefs into the legal and political systems of the ijaw culture underscores their impact on social behavior. Traditional ijaw society operates on a system of customary laws that are often derived from pious principles. As Olupona (2011) points out, these laws govern various aspects of life, including marriage, inheritance, and conflict resolution. The enforcement of these laws by community leaders ensures that pious values are upheld, thereby shaping social behavior in accordance with moral and ethical standards.

The impact of pious beliefs on social behavior is also evident in the way the ijaw people approach social issues such as crime and deviance. Pious rituals and sanctions are employed to address transgressions and restore social harmony. For instance, the practice of offering sacrifices to appease offended deities or seeking atonement through pious rites serves as a means of social control. This approach not only deters deviant behavior but also reinforces the importance of maintaining moral integrity within the community.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that pious beliefs are deeply intertwined with social behavior and morality in ijaw culture. The worship of Orishas, the emphasis on good character, the role of pious leaders, the integration of pious principles into customary laws, and the use of pious rituals to address social issues all contribute to shaping the social behavior of the ijaw people. These elements collectively create a moral and ethical framework that guides individual conduct and promotes social cohesion. The impact of pious beliefs on social behavior in ijaw

culture is thus both profound and pervasive, reflecting the integral role of religion in the everyday lives of the ijaw people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of how pious beliefs shape social behavior within the ijaw culture reveals a deeply intertwined relationship between spirituality and daily life. The ijaw people, with their rich pantheon of deities and intricate rituals, demonstrate how religion is not merely a set of abstract beliefs but a lived experience that permeates every aspect of their social interactions. The adherence to pious practices and the moral codes derived from them guide the ijaw in their communal living, influencing everything from family dynamics to community governance. This integration of religion into social behavior underscores the importance of understanding cultural contexts when examining the role of faith in shaping human interactions. The findings indicate that pious beliefs among the ijaw are instrumental in fostering a sense of community and social cohesion. The shared rituals and ceremonies, such as the annual Ifa festival or the Egungun masquerade, serve as communal activities that reinforce social bonds and collective identity. These events are not only pious observances but also social gatherings that provide opportunities for communal support and the reinforcement of social norms. The moral teachings embedded in these pious practices, such as respect for elders and the importance of honesty, are internalized by individuals and reflected in their behavior towards others, thus promoting social harmony. Moreover, the study highlights the role of pious leaders and institutions in shaping social behavior within the ijaw culture. Priests, diviners, and other pious figures hold significant authority and are often consulted on matters ranging from personal dilemmas to community disputes. Their guidance, rooted in pious doctrine, helps to resolve conflicts and maintain social order. The respect and reverence accorded to these pious leaders further emphasize the centrality of religion in the social fabric of ijaw society. This dynamic illustrates how pious authority can impact social behavior and moral decision-making, reinforcing the values and norms that sustain the community.

Finally, the study underscores the adaptability and resilience of ijaw pious beliefs in the face of external impacts and modernization. Despite the spread of Christianity and Islam, many ijaw people continue to practice their traditional religion, often blending it with elements of the newer faiths. This syncretism reflects the enduring relevance of ijaw pious beliefs in shaping social behavior and moral values. It also highlights the capacity of the ijaw culture to evolve while preserving its core spiritual principles. The persistence of these beliefs and practices in contemporary ijaw society attests to their profound impact on social behavior and the moral framework within which individuals operate. In summary, the study provides compelling evidence that pious beliefs are a fundamental component of social behavior within the ijaw culture. The integration of pious practices into daily life, the role of communal rituals in fostering social cohesion, the impact of pious leaders, and the adaptability of ijaw spirituality all contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how faith shapes social interactions and moral values. These findings have broader implications for the study of religion and culture, suggesting that an appreciation of the specific pious context is essential for understanding social behavior in any cultural setting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on how pious beliefs shape social behavior within the ijaw culture, several recommendations can be made to further understand and enhance the positive impacts of these beliefs on the community. Firstly, it is essential to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding within the ijaw community. By encouraging conversations between different pious groups, individuals can gain a deeper appreciation of diverse beliefs and practices, which

can foster mutual respect and reduce social tensions. This can be facilitated through community events, educational programs, and collaborative projects that bring together people from various pious backgrounds. Secondly, integrating pious teachings with modern social values in educational curricula can help reinforce positive social behaviors among the youth. Schools and pious institutions should work together to develop programs that highlight the moral and ethical teachings common to ijaw pious beliefs, such as respect for elders, community solidarity, and honesty. By embedding these values in the education system, young people can be guided to develop a strong moral compass that aligns with both their cultural heritage and contemporary societal expectations. Thirdly, community leaders and pious figures should be trained in conflict resolution and mediation techniques. Given the influential role that pious leaders play in ijaw society, equipping them with the skills to address and resolve conflicts can significantly enhance social harmony. Training programs can be organized to help these leaders understand the root causes of conflicts and employ effective strategies to mediate disputes, thereby promoting peace and cohesion within the community.

Additionally, it is recommended to conduct further research on the evolving role of pious beliefs in shaping social behavior in the context of globalization and modernization. As ijaw society continues to interact with global cultures and ideas, it is crucial to understand how these external impacts are impacting traditional pious practices and social norms. Longitudinal studies and comparative analyses with other cultures can provide valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between religion and social behavior in a rapidly changing world.

Moreover, policymakers should consider the findings of this study when designing social policies and programs. Recognizing the significant role that pious beliefs play in shaping social behavior, policies that support pious freedom and encourage the positive contributions of pious institutions can be beneficial. For instance, funding for community development projects led by pious organizations can help address social issues such as poverty, education, and healthcare, leveraging the trust and impact these organizations have within the community.

Finally, it is important to foster a culture of inclusivity and respect for diverse pious practices within the ijaw community. Efforts should be made to celebrate pious diversity through cultural festivals, public awareness campaigns, and inclusive policy-making. By creating an environment where all pious beliefs are valued and respected, the ijaw community can strengthen its social fabric and promote a more harmonious and cohesive society.

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