



GET RICH QUICK SYNDROME AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ON YOUTH LIFESTYLE IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

¹OKUNIMA, Chinedu; ² IKENYEI, Ngozi Sandra (PhD)

Sociology Department, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
ngoziikenyei@yahoo.com; okunimachinedu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined the get-rich-quick syndrome and its socio-economic impact on youth lifestyle in Delta State. The get-rich-quick mentality has become increasingly common among Nigerian youths, particularly in Delta State, where many young people display sudden wealth without legitimate source(s) of income. This behavior has contributed to moral decline, reckless lifestyles, and rising involvement in fraudulent activities. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design using the survey method to collect data from 396 respondents. Questionnaires and structured interviews were employed as instruments of data collection, while descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were used for analysis. Findings revealed a significant relationship between socio-economic background and the prevalence of the get-rich-quick syndrome. The study also found that social institutions such as family, religion and the media indirectly encourage this phenomenon through unrealistic societal expectations and material glorification. It concluded that the get-rich-quick syndrome negatively affects youth attitudes, family values, and national productivity. The study recommended public awareness campaigns, financial literacy programs, and a national reorientation that promotes honesty, entrepreneurship and hard work among Nigerian youths.

Keywords: Get rich quick syndrome; socio-economic impact; youth lifestyle; Delta State; Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's socio-economic landscape has become increasingly unstable, with persistent poverty, unemployment, and inequality driving citizens to seek faster ways to improve their living conditions. Among Nigerian youths, this has evolved into a culture popularly referred to as the "get rich quick syndrome," which emphasizes rapid wealth accumulation with minimal effort. According to the World Bank (2020), about 40% of Nigerians live below the poverty line, a condition that fuels financial desperation and encourages unorthodox means of achieving success. The pursuit of wealth has become a dominant motivation for survival, pushing many away from education and professional development toward short-term gains.

In the modern Nigerian society, material success has become the principal yardstick for measuring social achievement. This has led to an erosion of moral and ethical values, as many young people now idolize those who display wealth without legitimate sources of income. Ogunrin (2018) observed that illegal means of wealth acquisition are increasingly being normalized in mainstream media, while those who engage in them often receive social validation instead of condemnation. This shift in value orientation has encouraged reckless lifestyles and heightened involvement in internet fraud, ritual killings, and other criminal acts. According to the Nigeria Police Force (2022), over 65 percent of individuals arrested for kidnapping are between 20 and 30 years of age. This was further corroborated by the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (2023), which found that about 70 percent of kidnappers fall within the 18 to 35 age range.



These findings reveal that young people are increasingly involved in serious crimes such as kidnapping, challenging the long-held belief that criminal activities are largely perpetrated by older men (NPF, 2023). Chikundi (2022) explained that many Nigerian youths are turning to the get-rich-quick syndrome because they see little hope in following the conventional route to success. Graduates now resort to menial jobs, teaching in private schools with poor pay, or working as Point-of-Sales (POS) operators and cashiers in betting shops, while many remain unemployed. For these young people, the choice often lies between engaging in quick money-making ventures to achieve upward financial mobility or facing a lifetime of economic hardship. Theresa (2022) supported this claim, noting that the get-rich-quick mentality is gaining ground in Nigeria, where success is now judged by material display and lavish spending. Those who amass wealth quickly are celebrated by families, churches, and peer groups, while hardworking individuals are often dismissed as failures. Major cities such as Benin, Asaba, Osogbo, and Abuja have become hubs for such ostentatious displays of wealth. Delta State, one of Nigeria's most economically active regions, reflects this troubling reality. The state's vibrant youth population, coupled with exposure to social media and entertainment, has made it a fertile ground for both legitimate and illegitimate ventures. Young people in Delta State increasingly view rapid wealth as a status symbol, often neglecting the long-term benefits of education and skill acquisition. The growing fascination with luxurious lifestyles has also led to substance abuse, gambling, and criminal activities among young people. This development poses serious social and economic challenges for the state and the nation at large. It undermines productivity, weakens family and institutional values, and contributes to a culture of moral decadence. This study, therefore, examines the get-rich-quick syndrome and its socio-economic impact on youth lifestyle in Delta State. It explores the roles of socio-economic background, family, religion, and media influence in sustaining this syndrome and offers recommendations for addressing its negative effects on Nigerian society.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing number of under-30 millionaires with no visible means of income has raised concerns about moral decline and rising crime rates among Nigerian youths. In Delta State, young individuals exhibit luxurious lifestyles funded by questionable means. In recent years, the get rich quick syndrome has become a disturbing trend among youths in Delta State and across Nigeria. Many young people now measure success by the speed and size of their wealth rather than the legitimacy of its source. This obsession with quick wealth has led to an increase in social vices such as internet fraud, ritual killings, drug abuse, and the neglect of education and hard work. According to Edewor (2021), the rising culture of materialism among Nigerian youths is fueled by economic hardship, unemployment, and the public celebration of sudden wealth without scrutiny of its origin. This situation has weakened moral values and created a distorted sense of achievement among young people. Despite efforts by government and religious bodies to promote ethical standards, the get rich quick mentality continues to spread, threatening social order and economic productivity. The problem, therefore, lies in understanding the socio-economic factors and institutional influences that sustain this behavior among youths in Delta State, as well as its implications for their lifestyles and the moral fabric of society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The 'get-rich-quick' syndrome refers to the increasing desire among individuals, especially youths, to acquire wealth within a short period, often without legitimate effort or patience for gradual economic progress. According to Ogunrin (2018), it is rooted in social comparison and the glamorization of wealth in contemporary society. Many Nigerian youths have been influenced by the visible success of peers who appear to prosper through questionable means,



leading to the normalization of shortcuts to wealth. The phenomenon is further sustained by the country's economic instability, unemployment, and a weak reward system for hard work. Social media and entertainment platforms have amplified this trend by portraying affluence as a measure of success. The result is a distorted perception of wealth acquisition, where morality, diligence, and integrity are undervalued. Studies such as Akanbi (2020) and Edewor (2021) found that young people exposed to materialistic media content tend to exhibit stronger tendencies toward unethical wealth-seeking behaviors. Thus, the get-rich-quick syndrome has evolved from a fringe attitude to a dominant cultural feature among Nigerian youths, affecting social stability and moral development.

Get Rich Quick Syndrome in Nigeria

The get-rich-quick syndrome in Nigeria refers to the pervasive desire to acquire an enormous amount of wealth, valuables, and social recognition within a very short time and with minimal effort. This pursuit may occur through ethical or unethical means. The phenomenon has become increasingly visible due to the prevailing socio-economic conditions in Nigeria (Okonkwo & Aluko, 2022).

Causes of Get Rich Quick Syndrome in Nigeria

The get-rich-quick syndrome has attracted serious concern in Nigeria, as its influence cuts across different segments of society. Some of the major causes identified include:

Economic Challenges: The high rate of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria is alarming (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). As a result, many people resort to shortcuts to wealth, regardless of whether the means are ethical or not.

Societal Pressure and Materialism: Nigerians naturally desire a better life, and there is widespread glorification of materialism. Abioye (2019) observed that societal expectations, especially from families and peers, often push young people into dubious activities in order to gain social acceptance.

Poor Financial Literacy: Many Nigerians lack the financial knowledge to distinguish between legitimate investment opportunities and fraudulent schemes. Eze and Ugwu (2020) noted that this has made people vulnerable to Ponzi schemes such as the infamous MMM, leading to financial losses. Adeyeye (2017) also emphasized that a limited understanding of personal finance and investment risks contributes to this problem.

Weak Institutional Framework: The institutions responsible for combating financial crimes often fail to carry out their duties effectively. This weakness has encouraged the rise of get-rich-quick practices in Nigeria. The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Commission (2019) reported that many citizens lack trust in public institutions such as government agencies, banks, and multinational organizations, leading some to seek alternative, often unethical, routes to wealth.

Influence of the Media: Both visual and audio-visual media have created an environment where wealth is excessively displayed. Ibrahim (2020) observed that platforms such as reality TV shows, celebrity culture, social media, and advertisements promote luxury and consumerism, pressuring people to desire instant wealth.

Greed and Over-Ambition: Personal ambition and excessive desire for gratification have made many individuals prioritize wealth acquisition without considering the associated risks or moral implications.

Get Rich Quick Success Stories: People who have achieved wealth through shortcuts often influence others to follow the same path. Eze and Igwu (2020) noted that such success stories create pressure on those who have not "made it," encouraging them to adopt unethical means to achieve wealth.



Effects of Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome in Nigeria

The get-rich-quick syndrome has continued to shape Nigeria's socioeconomic landscape, influencing values, behaviors, and economic activities. While the phenomenon has generated some economic opportunities, its broader implications have been largely negative, affecting morality, productivity, and social stability.

Positive Effects of Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome in Nigeria

Creation of Job Opportunities: The rise of wealth-driven ventures, such as sports betting and online lottery businesses, has generated employment for Nigerian youths. Ogundipe (2018) observed that these industries have created jobs in marketing, customer service, and technology. Similarly, the National Lottery Commission (2024) reported that over 10,000 young Nigerians are directly employed in the betting and lottery sector.

Increase in Entrepreneurial Activities: The aspiration for financial success has encouraged more Nigerians to engage in entrepreneurial ventures. According to Okeke and Osuji (2020), many individuals now seek self-employment opportunities as a response to poverty and limited formal job options, especially within the informal economy (Ikenyei & Akpotor 2020).

Growth of the Informal Sector: The widespread pursuit of income-generating ventures has led to the rapid expansion of Nigeria's informal sector (Ikenyei 2017).. Eneh and Onu (2019) noted that this trend has boosted small-scale business activities in urban and rural communities, improving household income levels.

Boost in Real Estate Investment: The desire for quick financial returns has significantly stimulated the real estate market. Adejumo (2019) reported an increase in property investments as individuals seek long-term wealth accumulation. However, Adeleke (2018) cautioned that this has contributed to inflated housing costs and higher demand for building materials.

Expansion of the Digital Economy: The digital revolution has provided new platforms for online businesses and investments. Eze (2019) highlighted that the quest for rapid wealth has driven many Nigerians into digital entrepreneurship, cryptocurrency trading, and online commerce, fostering the growth of the digital economy.

Negative Effects of Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome in Nigeria

Increase in Crime Rate: The obsession with instant wealth has fueled criminal activities such as internet fraud, kidnapping, and ritual killings. Adebayo (2018) noted that these crimes have become common sources of income for some individuals, thereby heightening insecurity across the country.

Erosion of Moral Values: The glorification of material success, regardless of the means of acquisition, has weakened the nation's moral fabric. Okoye (2023) emphasized that honesty and integrity are being replaced with greed and moral compromise, as wealth becomes the main determinant of social status.

Psychological and Emotional Strain: The pressure to attain wealth quickly often leads to mental stress, anxiety, and depression, particularly among young people who fail to meet societal expectations. Odera (2021) linked this pressure to cases of self-doubt, frustration, and social withdrawal among Nigerian youths.

Weakening of Work Ethic: The growing preference for shortcuts to financial success has reduced the value placed on hard work and persistence. Sanjo (2021) observed that this trend has eroded the culture of diligence, with many youths now prioritizing immediate financial gratification over long-term career growth.

Negative Influence on Youth Aspirations: The get-rich-quick mentality has distorted the ambitions of young people, making education and skill development appear less important (Ikenyei 2020). Okey (2022) found that many students now aspire accumulation wealth rather than professional achievement, which undermines national productivity and



sustainable development.

Socio-Economic Determinants of the Get Rich Quick Syndrome

Socioeconomic background plays a crucial role in shaping young people's attitudes toward wealth acquisition. Poverty, unemployment, and inequality have left many young Nigerians frustrated and disillusioned. In societies where legitimate economic opportunities are limited, individuals often resort to illegal or unethical methods to achieve social mobility (Adewale, 2020). This pattern aligns with the idea that economic hardship and weak institutional support encourage deviant behavior.

In Delta State, the prevalence of the get-rich-quick mentality can be traced to widespread unemployment and underemployment among educated youths. Many young people who complete tertiary education struggle to find stable jobs and are pressured by family and community expectations to succeed financially. Consequently, they become vulnerable to fraudulent activities such as cybercrime and ritual practices, which appear to offer quick rewards. The socio-economic context thus serves as both a motivator and a justification for such behaviors.

Role of Social Institutions

Social institutions, particularly the family, religion, and media, play a powerful role in shaping values and behaviors related to wealth. Families are expected to instill discipline, honesty, and work ethics; however, many parents now celebrate wealth regardless of its source, sending conflicting moral messages to children (Okonkwo & Aluko, 2022). Religious institutions, instead of providing moral guidance, sometimes promote prosperity doctrines that emphasize material blessings over spiritual integrity.

The mass media have further reinforced the idea that success equals wealth. Reality shows, music videos, and online influencers often glamorize lavish lifestyles without showing the effort or ethics behind them. According to Ojo (2021), continuous exposure to such imagery cultivates unrealistic financial expectations among youths. As these institutions lose their moral authority, the youth increasingly adopt the belief that the end, financial success, justifies any means.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts Robert K. Merton's Strain Theory (1938) as its theoretical foundation. The theory posits that society sets culturally approved goals, such as financial success, but often provides unequal access to legitimate means of achieving them. When individuals cannot attain these goals through acceptable methods, they experience strain or frustration, leading some to adopt deviant behaviors to succeed.

Many youths in Nigeria face limited access to quality education, employment, and economic opportunities. The resulting strain pushes them toward illegitimate means such as fraud, corruption, and other shortcuts to wealth. This theory was adopted for this study because it explains how societal pressure to achieve wealth, coupled with limited access to legitimate means, drives individuals, especially youths, toward deviant behaviors. The theory aligns with the study's focus by linking the get-rich-quick syndrome in Delta State to structural inequalities, unemployment, and the societal glorification of wealth. It helps interpret the behavior of youthful population not simply as moral weakness but as a response to the strain created by unequal opportunities and economic hardship.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a cross-sectional research design. Data were collected using questionnaires and structured interviews from 396 respondents. A multi-stage sampling



technique was used to select participants. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to determine relationships between socio-economic background, social institutions, and the prevalence of the get-rich-quick syndrome.

Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design. This design was suitable because it enabled data collection from a large number of respondents at a single point in time. Structured questionnaires and interviews were used to gather information on youths' attitudes, behaviors, and socio-economic conditions. The approach provided a clear snapshot of how the get-rich-quick syndrome influences lifestyle patterns among youths within the study area.

Study Population

A total of 396 respondents formed the study population. They were drawn from youths in Delta State between the ages of 14 and 35 years, which aligns with the National Youth Policy definition of youth. This age group was chosen because it represents the most active and vulnerable segment of the population, often influenced by the get rich quick mentality. The respondents were selected from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds across the state to ensure fair representation and a comprehensive understanding of how the get-rich-quick syndrome affects youth lifestyle in Delta State.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interviews administered to 396 respondents across Delta State. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique consisting of purposive, proportionate, and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select areas where the get-rich-quick syndrome was more evident, proportionate sampling ensured fair representation from each selected area, and convenience sampling helped reach accessible participants. Trained research assistants administered the questionnaires to ensure accuracy and completeness. The instruments gathered information on respondents' socio-economic background, attitudes toward wealth acquisition, and lifestyle influences. Relevant secondary data were also sourced from journals, textbooks, and government reports to complement the primary data.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Simple percentages and frequency distributions were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and responses, while the chi-square (χ^2) test was employed to determine the relationship between socio-economic background, social institutions, and the get-rich-quick syndrome. The results were presented in tables for clarity and easy interpretation. All analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Data Presentation

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the socio-demographic profile of respondents as contained in the original thesis table.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	210	53.0
Female	186	47.0
Total	396	100
Age Range		



14 – 24	120	30.3
25-35	276	69.7
Total	396	100
Marital Status		
Single	305	77.0
Married	91	23.0
Total	396	100

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of data and hypothesis testing revealed significant relationships among the major variables investigated in this study. The result showed that societal factors have a strong influence on the escalation of the get-rich-quick syndrome. The calculated t-value of 4.46, which exceeded the critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level, indicates that conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and the societal glorification of sudden wealth significantly contribute to the spread of this behavior. This finding supports Ajibade and Ojo (2021), who observed that materialism and economic inequality have normalized the pursuit of wealth through illegitimate means. Similarly, Okonkwo and Eze (2022) reported that peer influence, unemployment, and social comparison drive many young people toward risky or criminal avenues of wealth acquisition.

The study also found a significant relationship between the get-rich-quick syndrome and the lifestyles of Nigerians, as shown by a t-value of 4.01 greater than the critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the get-rich-quick mentality directly affects the consumption habits and lifestyle choices of many individuals, particularly the youth. The influence of social media, celebrity culture, and political elites has encouraged materialism and the desire for instant gratification. This finding aligns with Nwosu and Olatunde (2020), who observed that consumerism and the public display of luxury among Nigerians have reinforced the belief that wealth defines social worth and success.

Furthermore, the study established a significant relationship between social institutions and the encouragement of the get rich quick syndrome. The t-test result of 3.94, higher than the critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level, suggests that the family, religious bodies, and educational systems play key roles in shaping youth attitudes toward wealth. When these institutions fail to uphold moral values, they inadvertently encourage unethical wealth acquisition. This finding is consistent with Chukwuma and Ibrahim (2019), who linked the moral decline among Nigerian youths to institutional failure and poor value transmission.

Finally, the result revealed that societal reorientation significantly relates to the prevalence of the get-rich-quick syndrome, with a t-value of 4.07 surpassing the critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the lack of sustained moral education and civic reorientation has contributed to the persistence of this behavior among Nigerian youths. According to Afolabi and Umeh (2023), continuous national campaigns that promote integrity, hard work, and delayed gratification are essential to changing societal attitudes toward wealth acquisition. The findings, therefore, underscore the importance of collective societal reorientation in addressing the growing culture of unethical wealth pursuit in Nigeria.

SUMMARY

The study examined the get-rich-quick syndrome and its socio-economic impact on youth lifestyle in Delta State. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 396 respondents, with 382 valid responses analyzed using simple percentages and t-test statistics. Findings showed that unemployment, poverty, materialism, and weak institutional values significantly contribute to the spread of the get rich quick mentality among youths. The study



also revealed that social comparison, media influence, and declining moral standards shape youth lifestyles and attitudes toward wealth. It concluded that the get-rich-quick syndrome poses moral and socio-economic challenges to youth development and recommended moral reorientation, youth empowerment, and the promotion of hard work and integrity as lasting solutions.

CONCLUSION

Get-rich-quick syndrome undermines moral values and promotes crime among Nigerian youths. Government, religious bodies, and community leaders should collaborate to promote ethical wealth acquisition and entrepreneurship. Financial literacy programs should be integrated into schools to encourage responsible economic behavior. Public awareness campaigns should be launched to educate citizens about the risks of fraudulent schemes and promote a culture of integrity.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings generated from this study, it is recommended that social institutions such as family, education, and media should be leveraged to promote positive values and attitudes towards wealth accumulation, and educational institutions should incorporate financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills into their curricula.

REFERENCES

- Adebisi, M. A. (2022). Cultural influences and deviant behavior in Nigerian society. *Journal of African Social Studies*, 14(2), 88–102.
- Adogunre, T. (2021). Wealth display and religious leadership in Nigeria. *Journal of African Christianity*, 13(1), 50–65.
- Ajibade, K. T., & Ojo, M. L. (2021). Cultural materialism and the rise of get-rich-quick syndrome among Nigerian youths. *Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 10(3), 112–128.
- Akanbi, O. (2020). *Risk factors associated with get-rich-quick schemes: An economic perspective*. *Journal of Financial Studies*, 15(3), 45–62.
- Asaju, K. (2021). Miracle products and consumer behavior in Nigerian churches. *Journal of Religious Marketing*, 7(3), 105–119.
- Asebajo, G. (2021). Religious products and the commercialization of spirituality in Nigeria. *Journal of African Religious Commerce*, 4(2), 55–70.
- Babatunde, O. (2020). Family support systems and social welfare in Nigeria. *Journal of Nigerian Social Welfare*, 11(3), 77–91.
- Chukwualuka, E. (2020). The cultural significance of music in Nigeria. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 14(4), 101–115.
- Durojaiye, M. (2020). Real estate investment trends in Nigeria: A pathway to wealth creation. *Nigerian Journal of Property Management*, 14(2), 74–89.



- Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. (2021). *Annual report on financial crimes in Nigeria*. Abuja, Nigeria: EFCC Press.
- Emeh, O. J., Atabo, M. O., & Ogar, A. I. (2023). Desperation for wealth and the decline in educational aspiration among Nigerian youths. *Nigerian Journal of Social Issues*, 14(1), 50–67.
- Eze, C., & Igwu, A. (2020). The impact of get-rich-quick mentality on Nigerian youth: A socio-economic analysis. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 12(1), 55–72.
- Ibrahim, A., & Ojo, O. (2020). Individual values and resilience in the face of societal strain: Evidence from Nigerian youths. *Journal of Social Psychology in Africa*, 11(2), 123–139.
- Ikenyei N. S (2017). Dynamics of conflicts and criminal activities in Warri and environs, Delta State, Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol 15 (2) 48-62.
- Ikenyei N. S. & Akpotor J. (2020). Ethnic politics and development in Nigeria: Implication on Gender and health. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/ Egyptology* Vol 17: 3, 5501-5517.
- Ikenyei N. S. (2017). Police and challenges of crime control in Uvwie community, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Health and Social inquiry* Vol 3 (1), 1-32.
- Ikenyei N. S. (2020). The Psychological implications of police violence on road users in Nigeria. *Interdisciplinary Journal of African and Asian Studies (IJAAS)*6(2)
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Poverty and inequality in Nigeria: Executive summary*. Retrieved from <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng>
- Nwabueze, C., Igbo, E. U. M., & Okoye, U. C. (2023). Wealth display, youth crime, and the collapse of ethical norms in Nigeria. *Journal of African Criminology and Justice Studies*, 17(1), 43–61.
- Nwafor, J. C. (2021). Globalization, cybercrime, and youth deviance in Nigeria. *Journal of Global Criminology*, 5(1), 66–81.
- Oginyemi, S., & Osun, J. (2020). Advanced fee fraud (419): A continuing challenge in Nigeria. *Journal of African Crime Studies*, 11(2), 120–135.
- Ogunley, M. (2022). Growth of the sports betting industry in Nigeria. *International Journal of Sports Economics*, 10(1), 58–70.
- Okoye, N. (2023). Moral decline and societal change in Nigeria: An analysis. *Journal of Ethics and Society*, 8(1), 15–29.
- World Bank. (2020). *Nigeria development update: Addressing economic inequality*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.