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Philosophical Analysis of African Traditional Moral Values as a Framework for Preventing Drug Abuse and Promoting Agricultural Crop Investment and Rural Development in Southeast, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study undertook a philosophical analysis of African traditional moral values as a framework for curbing drug abuse and promoting agricultural crop investment and rural development in Southeast Nigeria, motivated by the prevalence of youth drug abuse and its implications for productive agricultural engagement and rural transformation. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a sample of 410 respondents. Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviation, and multiple-response analysis, guided philosophically by African communitarianism, virtue ethics, Ubuntu, communal responsibility, and the African conception of the common good. Respondents strongly associated values such as respect for elders, communalism, honesty, self-discipline, responsibility, hard work, cooperation, and respect for human dignity with responsible conduct, identifying these values as resources for preventing drug addiction and promoting productive youth engagement, particularly through self-control, parental guidance, avoidance of bad company, and respect for social institutions (mean = 3.47, SD = 0.72). Hard work, self-discipline, communal responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and respect for authority were similarly rated important for agricultural investment and rural development. Drug abuse was found to adversely affect youths' interest in farming, farm produce, agricultural investment, labour reliability, household income, and overall development (grand mean = 3.46, SD = 0.72). Traditional institutions, families, elders, age-grade organisations, town unions, and community leaders were identified as viable channels for mobilizing moral values and youth engagement. The study concludes that African traditional morality offers a viable philosophical framework for jointly addressing drug-abuse prevention, agricultural investment, and rural development, and recommends integrating positive traditional moral values into youth development, agricultural empowerment, counselling, and community moral regeneration efforts.

Keywords: *African traditional morality, drug abuse prevention, agricultural crop investment, rural development, youth development, African communitarianism, traditional institutions, Southeast Nigeria..*

Introduction

African societies have long had moral norms by which members of society were socialized into the family, community, and broader society. Before the establishment of modern formal institutions, moral norms were taught to members of society through home life, initiation, proverbs, folklore, communal labor, age-grade organizations, religion, sanctions, and the example of elders. Some of the moral norms emphasized respect for elders, honesty, hard work and self-discipline, communal labor, hospitality, justice, mutual help, respect for human life, and responsibility to the community.

African traditional morality did not recognize individual interests over social interests, and it was aimed at achieving social harmony [1,2]. African moral systems often stressed the relational aspects of an individual's life, and this is reflected in the African proverb “I am because we are” [2]. African societies are highly diverse, and their moral norms should not always be conceptualized using the same moral framework. However, African traditional ethical systems often embraced communalism as a core value. Contemporary scholars examine African communitarianism, relationality, social responsibility, reciprocity, compassion, justice, and social harmony [3,4].

In Southeast Nigeria, Igbo traditional communities emphasized such virtues as ezi omume (good conduct), eziokwu (truthfulness), communal solidarity, respect for elders, hard work and reciprocity, and social responsibility to the family and community. Traditional institutions such as the family, age-grade organizations, village councils, and title societies provided a mechanism for moral education, social control, justice, communal labor, and community development among Igbo people. Igbo traditional ethics also emphasized communal justice and social responsibility for coexisting in peace and harmony. Contemporary scholars highlight such dimensions of Igbo ethics as truthfulness, justice, communalism, interdependence, fairness, and reciprocity [4].

Drug-abuse prevention efforts are increasingly important given the prevalence of substance abuse among younger generations. Drug abuse is a social ill with negative effects on individuals, families, communities, and society at large. Substance abuse is a community health, moral, social, economic, and development issue. Drug misuse and abuse affect individual performance, family functioning, community development, and general well-being. Drug abuse among youth is a major concern for families, schools, and communities, as it raises the risk of unplanned pregnancies, poverty, violence, and crime. Earlier studies on drug use in Nigeria revealed sociocultural, economic, and psychological factors associated with substance abuse [5]. Consequently, drug-abuse prevention requires promoting moral values and social responsibility, providing alternative recreational activities, and enhancing community-based drug awareness programs. Family life, parental guidance, and community-based activities are effective ways of preventing drug abuse among the youth.

Southeast Nigeria has a rich tradition of agriculture, including small-scale holder, mixed cropping, food, agro-processing, and entrepreneurial agriculture. Agriculture has the potential to provide employment, food security, income, and sustainable rural development. However, agriculture has not attracted young people due to limited access to credit, farmland, and extension services, poor rural infrastructure, and the lack of viable markets for farm products. Contemporary scholars reveal that credit availability, extension services, age, gender, education, and social-group affiliation affect young people's participation in farming activities. Farm involvement boosts productivity and promotes socio-economic development [6]. The relationship between moral values and agriculture is of paramount importance, especially in view of the growing social problems affecting the younger generation. Hard work and honesty, self-discipline and communal responsibility, respect for human life and social justice, and good manners contribute to developing alternative recreational activities and encourage young people to participate in gainful employment such as agriculture. Traditional communal labor and mutual aid values can be leveraged to promote collective investment in agriculture. Experience has shown that community participation and organization are critical to achieving sustainable rural development, especially for youth groups.

The philosophical importance of this study is to establish whether African traditional moral values can help address contemporary social issues affecting young people in Southeast Nigeria. This study does not uncritically rely on African traditional moral norms but questions which moral values have stood the test of time and are relevant to addressing social problems such as drug abuse and lack of interest in agriculture.

Indeed, the harm posed by psychoactive substance abuse is recognized globally, as evidenced by the World Health Organization's (WHO) report on the enormous societal burden of substance abuse. The report emphasizes the significant health and social damage caused by psychoactive drugs and alcohol, with hundreds of thousands of deaths occurring due to such use every year [7]. While drug abuse is strongly linked to low labor productivity, it is crucial to recognize that farmers are human agents who are capable of making ethical and responsible decisions. The philosophical dimension of this study examines the concepts of freedom, responsibility, rational choice, autonomy, vulnerability, and social structures. Human actions are rarely conscious or guided by a single motivation. People usually operate within a specific social context, guided by social norms and values, pursuing personal interests, and conforming to social expectations. Therefore, when examining the impact of substance abuse, it is essential to consider the motivations and opportunities for such behavior, as well as the social structures that encourage or discourage it.

One of the social structures influencing individual behavior is poverty, which not only affects the individual but also the individual's family, friends, and community. Another social structure affecting individual agency is the lack of sufficient healthcare and agricultural extension services, which influences farmers' ability to make informed decisions and engage in purposeful actions. In addition, Nigeria has social norms and behavioral patterns associated with psychoactive substances use [7]. The aforementioned structures and issues are integral to understanding the intricate relationship between individual agency and experience with substances use among farmers. The philosophical component of this study is manifested in the analysis of these social structures and issues. The empirical component is the examination of the influence of substance use on farm labor productivity, crop yields, and food security in the Southeast geopolitical region of Nigeria. The philosophical analysis uncovers the complexity of individual behaviors, the impact of social structures, and the importance of individual responsibility, which all are integral to the research problem.

Southeast Nigeria is a good choice for this study because the region is considered a food basket of the country, with a large amount of arable land and varied crops. The Southeast geopolitical region consists of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states. The region is characterized by its mixed farming systems, high population density, and reliance on small-scale farming under family and hired labor systems. Among the most widely cultivated crops in the Southeast are cassava, yam, maize, rice, cocoyam, vegetables, oil palm, and others. The study of the relationship between drug abuse, human agency, and farm labor productivity in this region can produce valid results with wide implications for the study area.

Problem Statement

Even though Nigeria is heavily dependent on agriculture, the country is experiencing food insecurity, despite government efforts to address the issue. Nigerian farmers are limited by the high cost of agricultural inputs, credit availability, poor infrastructure, ecological problems, land tenure issues, post-harvest losses, and limited market access, among other issues [3]. According to the FAO, cereals in Nigeria are forecasted to reach 28.5 million tonnes in 2024, which is 3 percent below the five-year average, with high input costs and low purchasing power limiting production [1].

A critical examination of African traditional moral systems is important in view of the growing body of literature questioning whether African societies emphasized absolute moral values that transcended social norms [3]. This study assumes that moral rehabilitation and agricultural development are interconnected and proposes a framework that encourages responsible citizenship and community development. This study challenges the status quo of viewing drug-abusing youths as criminals and suggests that families, schools, and communities should nurture honest and moral individuals who embrace productive and gainful employment to strengthen communities and the country. Agricultural investment in crop production offers an excellent opportunity to promote African moral values such as hard work and communal responsibility.

Problem Statement

Drug abuse among the younger generation is a major social problem affecting families, schools, and communities in Nigeria. Drug abuse is a social issue that cannot be resolved by punitive measures alone. Earlier studies in Nigeria revealed that social change, urbanization, industrialization, and cultural shifts contributed to the rise of drug abuse in recent times [5]. At the same time, community-based agricultural production is challenged by the lack of youth participation, which affects food production and security. Urbanization and industrialization have resulted in increased rural-urban migration, reduced interest in farming among the youth, and the attendant effects on food production and security. The central problem addressed by this study is the negative effect of drug abuse and the lack of investment in agriculture on social development in Nigeria. This study examines the role of moral values in curbing drug abuse and the need for investment in agricultural production for sustainable development. This study highlights the importance of community-based agriculture and social values in promoting sustainable development in Southeast Nigeria. The general objective is to philosophically analyze African traditional moral values as a framework for preventing drug abuse and promoting agricultural crop investment and rural development in Southeast Nigeria. The specific objectives Include to :a). examine the philosophical foundations of selected African traditional moral values relevant to responsible human conduct; b). identify traditional moral values that can contribute to the prevention of drug abuse among youths in Southeast Nigeria; c). examine the influence of traditional values such as hard work, self-discipline, communal responsibility, honesty, and agricultural investment; d). assess the perceived influence of drug abuse on youth participation in agricultural activities and rural development; e). examine the role of traditional institutions and community structures in promoting moral education and productive agricultural engagement; f). role of philosophical African traditional morality in drug-abuse prevention, agricultural crop investment, and rural development; g). recommend culturally relevant strategies for integrating appropriate traditional moral values into contemporary youth and rural-development programmes. This study is justified by philosophical, social, economic and cultural considerations that together provide a solid foundation for it. Philosophically, it contributes to a growing trend in scholarship that seeks to engage African indigenous thought as a living source of ethical reflection, not a dead end to be excavated; African communitarian philosophy, with its stress on human interdependence, responsibility, reciprocity and social harmony, has relevance for contemporary ethical challenges facing societies [1,3]. Socially, it has potential to advance drug-abuse prevention strategies towards addressing what Nigerian scholars have long identified as a key issue — early moral formation, family involvement, community responsibility and youth engagement — all of which sociocultural preventive approaches have consistently highlighted [5]. Economically, it is informed by the fact that agriculture continues to be a source of employment, food, income and rural development; participation in farming has been shown to enhance productivity and household welfare when young people have access to appropriate resources and institutions [6]. Culturally, it seeks to critically examine indigenous moral education practices — to distinguish between those that are worthy of being carried into the future and those that ought to be abandoned — and to take up the opportunity to engage critically with these values to determine whether any discriminatory, coercive or outdated elements are quietly embedded in them. Put differently, the goal here is not a mere nostalgic reconstruction, but a careful, critical reinterpretation of the past in light of what currently holds value.

Methodology

The setting of the study was Southeast Nigeria which comprised the five states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, inhabited mainly by the Igbo. The area was traditionally an agrarian society of farmers who grew yam, cassava, cocoyam, oil palm and vegetables as crops and a rich philosophical and moral heritage as their values were informed by the Igbo cosmology and proverbs as well as the age-grade system, the extended family system and the council of elders. The study population comprised the adult residents of the five Southeast states including the traditional rulers/custodians of culture, community elders, farmers, religious leaders, youths (some of whom were in rehabilitation for substance abuse) and relevant officials of agricultural extension and drug-control agencies which operated in the area. This was because the respondents were in a position to know or be directly affected by the interaction of the traditional moral values, drug abuse and agricultural investment in the area. A sample of four hundred (410) respondents was selected from the study population in the five states of Southeast Nigeria using the Taro Yamane formula for sample size estimation at 95% confidence level. This was because the sample size was considered adequate to represent the different categories of respondents within the scope and time of the study. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique. The first stage involved the purposeful selection of two states from each of the cultural and agro-ecological axes of the study area, in addition to simple random sampling, to arrive at three states. The second stage involved the random sampling of two Local Government Areas from each of the sampled states. From each of the sampled Local Government Areas, two rural communities were randomly selected at the third sampling stage. The last sampling stage was a purposeful selection of the traditional rulers, elders and key informants who were conversant with the indigenous moral philosophy. Simple random sampling was used to select farmers and youth respondents from each of the communities according to the multi-stage approach which was common and appropriate in agrarian studies in the zone [7]. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Data were collected from farmers and youths using structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews with traditional rulers, elders and custodians of culture and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with officials of agricultural and

drug-control agencies. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in qualitative terms were conducted with youth groups to elicit their views on traditional values, drug abuse and agricultural engagement. Secondary data were collected from textbooks, journal articles, government reports and archival materials on Igbo/African philosophy, ethics, drug abuse epidemiology and agricultural development in Southeast Nigeria. Due to the philosophical and interdisciplinary nature of the study, data were analysed using a combination of methods. The philosophical issues of the study which included the conceptual and normative analysis of African traditional moral values, were analysed using the analytic and hermeneutic methods of philosophical analysis which included conceptual and critical evaluation and logical discourse. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means which were reported in tables. The qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions were subject to a thematic content analysis which helped to identify the themes of moral values, drug abuse and agricultural investment which were relevant to the study objectives.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 outlines the evaluation by participants of 12 chosen African traditional ethical principles that are pertinent to ethical human behavior. The collective average of 3.32 with a deviation of 0.83 indicates a substantial consensus that these traditional ethical values serve as a crucial philosophical basis for ethical human behavior. As all the individual average scores surpass the set standard of 2.50, all 12 values were embraced by the participants. The value that garnered the highest average score was reverence for elders and authority at 3.49 (SD = 0.74). This implies that participants specifically viewed respect for elders and legitimate authority as a fundamental cornerstone of ethical behavior. In various African moral traditions, elders are seen as guardians of communal wisdom, principles, and ethical standards. Following closely were kindness and generosity, with an average of 3.41 (SD = 0.80), and communal living and care for others, with an average of 3.38 (SD = 0.79). These results mirror the communal focus commonly linked with African ethical philosophy, where individual welfare is perceived in connection to the welfare of other community members. For instance, Ubuntu underscores kindness, interconnectedness, empathy, hospitality, solidarity, and mutual support. Truthfulness (M = 3.28, SD = 0.85), integrity and honesty (M = 3.32, SD = 0.84), responsibility and answerability (M = 3.33, SD = 0.84), and respect for human life and honor (M = 3.33, SD = 0.82) also obtained relatively high ratings. These values indicate that ethical behavior is not just about individual compliance with rules but about actions that preserve relationships, foster trust, and contribute to communal well-being. Similarly, African ethics scholarship identifies honesty, truthfulness, fairness, respect, hospitality, and care for others as crucial moral principles. Equity and impartiality, as well as reciprocity and collaboration, each had an average score of 3.24, while diligence and hard work scored 3.20. Even though these values were slightly lower than respect, kindness, and communal living, their averages still notably exceeded the acceptance threshold. This indicates that participants still considered them important aspects of ethical human behavior. The emphasis on reciprocity, collaboration, and responsibility aligns with the African communal understanding of morality, where individuals have responsibilities and commitments towards other community members. The least-rated value was bravery and moral steadfastness, with an average of 3.13 (SD = 0.88). Nonetheless, this score is positive and demonstrates a general consensus among participants that courage is pertinent to ethical behavior. The relatively higher standard deviations across certain items suggest some diversity in participants' perceptions, but the overall deviation of 0.83 indicates a reasonably consistent trend of responses. On the whole, the table indicates that the ethical foundation of African traditional moral values is deeply communal and human-centered. These values underscore respect for individuals, communal obligations, mutual aid, justice, integrity, hospitality, and safeguarding human dignity. This is in line with research depicting African ethics as a morality concerned with human well-being, social cohesion, obligations to others, and the sustenance of cooperative community life. The results in Table 1 reveal a mean of 3.32, suggesting that most participants agreed on the significance of African traditional moral principles in guiding ethical human behavior. This conclusion is reinforced by African ethical studies, which highlight the importance of virtues like good character, communal duties, respect, justice, truthfulness, hospitality, generosity, and empathy in shaping moral conduct.

[2] elaborates on how African traditional ethics values traits like hospitality, generosity, kindness, respect for elders, justice, truth, and honesty as indicators of good character. This explanation aligns with the relatively high scores received for respect for elders (M = 3.49), hospitality and generosity (M = 3.41), truthfulness (M = 3.28), and justice and fairness (M = 3.24).

Similarly, Gyekye's concept of balanced communitarianism underscores the importance of community obligations alongside individual rights. African moral principles encourage individuals to enhance the well-being of others through virtues such as generosity, kindness, compassion, benevolence, respect, and empathy [8]. This theoretical framework supports the high ratings for communalism (M = 3.38), solidarity and mutual support (M = 3.30), responsibility and accountability (M = 3.33), and reciprocity and cooperation (M = 3.24). The outcomes also resonate with the Ubuntu/Botho ethical viewpoint. Metz and Gaie (2010) contend that African ethics primarily revolves around living in harmony with others and upholding communal ties. This perspective reinforces the notion that ethical behavior is not solely individualistic but includes one's responsibilities towards fellow community members. Moreover, African ethical doctrines stress the significance of personal identity and moral values. [9], examining Wiredu's moral theory, associates normative personhood with communalism and culturally determined ethical standards. This supports the idea that qualities like responsibility, cooperation, honesty, diligence, and respect serve as markers of responsible individual behavior.

Table 1: African Traditional Moral Values Relevant to Responsible Human Conduct (N = 410)

S/N	Selected African traditional moral value	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Respect for elders and authority	3.49	0.74	Accepted
2	Communalism and concern for others	3.38	0.79	Accepted
3	Hospitality and generosity	3.41	0.80	Accepted
4	Truthfulness	3.28	0.85	Accepted
5	Honesty and integrity	3.32	0.84	Accepted
6	Justice and fairness	3.24	0.85	Accepted
7	Responsibility and accountability	3.33	0.84	Accepted
8	Hard work and diligence	3.20	0.88	Accepted
9	Courage and moral firmness	3.13	0.88	Accepted
10	Solidarity and mutual support	3.30	0.84	Accepted
11	Reciprocity and cooperation	3.24	0.85	Accepted
12	Respect for human life and dignity	3.33	0.82	Accepted

Traditional Moral Values That Can Contribute to the Prevention of Drug Abuse Among Youths in Southeast Nigeria

Table 2 illustrates that the most common traditional moral value recognized by participants was reverence for elders and established authority, with 356 individuals (86.8%) acknowledging its importance. Following closely were compliance with parental guidance and obedience, noted by 348 individuals (84.9%), and self-restraint and discipline, identified by 342 individuals (83.4%). The high occurrence of these values indicates that respondents perceive traditional methods of discipline, family oversight, and respect for authority as crucial tools in deterring drug abuse among young people. These results align with findings from Southeast Nigeria, which indicate that the erosion of moral and social principles, coupled with peer pressure, unemployment, the influence of social media, and idleness, contribute to drug abuse among youths. Correspondingly, investigations into the *Mkpuru Mmiri* conflict in Igbo communities underscore the significance of household and personal training, exhibiting responsible behavior, understanding consequences, and avoiding negative peer associations in steering young individuals away from harmful behaviors. Furthermore, a notable proportion of respondents also recognized honesty and integrity (80.2%), industriousness and the dignity of work (78.3%), accountability and responsibility (76.8%), and communal obligation and unity (74.9%) as essential values. These principles play a crucial role in fostering prudent decision-making, constructive involvement, societal responsibility, and dedication to the well-being of others. Recent studies on rural youth in Southeast Nigeria similarly pinpoint peer pressure, unemployment, inquisitiveness, and stress as pivotal factors linked to drug abuse, indicating that a robust moral foundation coupled with meaningful social and economic participation could be beneficial in preventive initiatives. Conversely, the value cited with the least frequency was moral teaching by elders and community leaders (64.6%), though it was acknowledged by almost two-thirds of the respondents. This implies that conventional authorities still hold potential importance in moral instruction, but their impact may be less pronounced among modern youths compared to values instilled within the family unit, such as respect, obedience, and self-control. Overall, the table underscores that participants identified respect, parental guidance, self-discipline, integrity, hard work, responsibility, communal solidarity, and steering clear of negative influences as crucial traditional moral assets in combating drug abuse among youths in Southeast Nigeria. This is especially pertinent given indications that peer pressure and insufficient parental supervision can predispose teenagers to substance abuse.

Traditional moral values that promote self-control, responsible behaviour, respect for others, and social responsibility can help in curbing abuse of drugs by youths in Southeast Nigeria. These values were used extensively among Igbo people to nurture generations of disciplined, God-fearing, and moral individuals. Respect for elders and constituted authority was emphasized as a way of encouraging compliance with societal norms and achieving harmony in the community. Elders played a very special role in the moral development of the youths by passing down important maxims through proverbs, anecdotes and community activities [10]. Guidance and advice from parents and elders are very important aspects of traditional Igbo values. The family was the primary social institution where children were trained in matters pertaining to social responsibility, self-control, respect for others and general human etiquette. According to [11], good home values and upbringing can prevent youths from engaging in anti-social activities. This is very pertinent to the current drug abuse problem as youths who lack good parental guidance are more prone to engaging in drug addiction due to poor parenting skills. Another important traditional moral value is self-restraint/self-control. This emphasizes moderation in everything that people do in life so as to avoid bringing shame to oneself and the community. It also promotes peace and harmony as people are less likely to associate with others who put them in harm's way. Drug abuse by youths promotes anti-social behavior which in turn causes increased harm to individuals and the society at large. Lack of self-control makes youths prone to peer pressure especially among those who have been influenced to use drugs.

The influence of community norms, solidarity and communalism is also very critical in preventing drug-abuse among the youths. Traditional Igbo values emphasize on respecting and living by the community norms, rules, regulations and customs. A responsible individual is one that promotes communal peace and harmony by avoiding actions that are likely to cause harm to the members of the community. In this respect, youths who understand this value are less likely to associate with others who are likely to bring harm to the community. Hard work and good working ethics ethic is another important traditional moral value that can help in curbing drug abuse among the youths. This value discouraged idleness as individuals were taught to be responsible and productive members of the society. This has been very pertinent in the current drug-abuse scenario among the youths in Southeastern Nigeria as most of them lack skills to earn a living due to a lack of education and employment opportunities [12]. Promotion of honesty, integrity, responsibility, accountability, truthfulness and good manners helps to encourage youths to lead morally acceptable lives. This value advises against self-centeredness and promotes social responsibility which discourages individuals from putting their personal ambitions above social expectations and responsibilities. It also encourages individuals to uphold good morals even during their hardships, misfortunes and discouragement rather than turning to vices such as drug-abuse. Avoidance of bad company has been emphasized in traditional Igbo moral values due to its adverse effects on individual and community wellbeing. Association with unrighteous and ungodly people exposes individuals to engaging in activities that are likely to cause harm to themselves and others. [11] agrees with this view and emphasizes on the need for youths in Igbo land to avoid bad company in order to deal with the *Mkpuru Mmiri* problem in the community.

Table 2: Traditional Moral Values That Can Contribute to the Prevention of Drug Abuse Among Youths in Southeast Nigeria (N = 410)

S/N	Traditional moral value	Frequency	Percentage
1	Respect for elders and constituted authority	356	86.8
2	Obedience and parental guidance	348	84.9
3	Self-discipline and self-control	342	83.4
4	Honesty and integrity	329	80.2
5	Hard work and dignity of labour	321	78.3
6	Responsibility and accountability	315	76.8
7	Communal responsibility and solidarity	307	74.9
8	Respect for human life and dignity	301	73.4
9	Avoidance of bad company	296	72.2
10	Truthfulness	289	70.5
11	Moderation and avoidance of excess	278	67.8
12	Moral instruction by elders and community leaders	265	64.6

Influence of Selected Traditional Moral Values on Responsible Human Conduct Among Youths

Table 3 shows that the majority of participants were in accord that the ten customary moral principles positively impact the ethical behavior of young individuals. The average score of 3.47 and deviation of 0.72 reveal a significant level of consensus among the 410 participants. All ten principles achieved scores above the set threshold of 2.50 and were therefore approved. Diligence and hard work had the highest average score (M = 3.54, SD = 0.70). This indicates that respondents perceived dedication and hard work as the most influential among the chosen traditional values. This result aligns with recent research on Igbo morals, which highlights the importance of labor dignity, hard work, personal endeavor, and responsibility in traditional Igbo ethical standards. Following closely was self-control and self-discipline with an average of 3.51 (SD = 0.70). This shows that participants viewed the ability to manage one's conduct and wishes as a crucial aspect of responsible behavior. Traditional Igbo moral education utilized familial guidance, sayings, correction, and communal penalties to foster discipline and appropriate conduct. Similarly, respect for elders and authority received a high score (M = 3.50, SD = 0.70). Historically, elders played a significant role as guardians of societal norms and moral teachings. The family and broader community engaged in guiding young individuals and passing down values like respect, truthfulness, hard work, bravery, and community spirit.

The values of communal duty (M = 3.49), integrity and honesty (M = 3.48), and regard for human life and dignity (M = 3.46) were also highly valued. These outcomes mirror the communal focus of Igbo ethics, where personal actions are judged partly based on their impact on family and community well-being. Contemporary research characterizes Igbo ethics as stressing communal responsibilities, social responsibility, integrity, reciprocity, and harmonious social interactions. Agricultural involvement and productivity achieved an average of 3.41 (SD = 0.77). While it ranked fifth, the outcome still reveals substantial consensus. This can be linked to the traditional farming nature of Igbo society, where agriculture and productive work were linked with self-sufficiency, responsibility, collaboration, and community progress. In general, the results indicate that hard work, self-discipline, communal duty, honesty, agricultural productivity, respect, responsibility, collaboration, truthfulness, and respect for human dignity continue to be crucial traditional values in encouraging ethical conduct among young people. The relatively low standard deviations among the items also suggest that participants' opinions were quite consistent.

The results in Table 3 with a grand mean of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 0.72 suggest that respondents agreed that traditional moral values have a positive influence on responsible living of youths. This is evident from the review of related literature on Igbo and African traditional moral philosophy which affirms the role of hard work, discipline, communal responsibility, honesty and integrity, respect, cooperation and mutual aid, and accountability in traditional African society. The high mean score for the item hard work and diligence (M = 3.54) is consistent with the Igbo traditional values which hold hard work and diligence in high esteem. [13] argued that Igbo traditional morality is inherently linked with the communal agrarian lifestyle which encouraged hard work and reciprocity, communal solidarity and accountability among the members of Igbo society. Hard work and personal responsibility were promoted while idleness was discouraged.

The high mean score recorded for self-discipline and self-control(M = 3.51) is coherent with Ifesieh's (1985) view that Igbo traditional religion and philosophy utilised the fear and awe inspired by the supernatural to promote self-discipline and curb vices among the people. Traditional Igbo moral values promoted conformity to societal norms and discouraged disordered living. The mean score for communal responsibility (M = 3.49) is consistent with the communitarian values in African traditional beliefs which hold that every member of society owes a duty of care to other members of the community. African traditional morality is premised on communal solidarity, cooperation and mutual aid, reciprocity, interdependence, and collective responsibility [8,2]. Honesty and integrity(M = 3.41) were also valued by African traditional society. The item honesty and integrity(M = 3.48) had a mean score that was relatively high compared to the other items. This is consistent with African traditional philosophy which promotes honesty, integrity, justice, and reliability as important values that should guide human interactions. African traditional moral values were passed down from generations and incorporated into cultural norms and practices such as proverbs, taboos, communal living and customs to foster responsible living and societal cohesion. Lastly, the relatively high mean score recorded for agricultural investment and productivity (M = 3.41) is coherent with the Igbo communal agrarian lifestyle that promoted hard work and productivity. Modern researchers have noted that the agrarian communal lifestyle influenced the Igbo traditional values that emphasize hard work, discipline, responsibility and productivity [13].

Table 3: Influence of Selected Traditional Moral Values on Responsible Human Conduct Among Youths (N = 410)

S/N	Traditional moral value	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Hard work and diligence	3.54	0.70	Accepted
2	Self-discipline and self-control	3.51	0.70	Accepted
3	Communal responsibility	3.49	0.70	Accepted
4	Honesty and integrity	3.48	0.69	Accepted
5	Agricultural investment and productivity	3.41	0.77	Accepted
6	Respect for elders and authority	3.50	0.70	Accepted
7	Responsibility and accountability	3.45	0.72	Accepted
8	Cooperation and mutual assistance	3.41	0.75	Accepted
9	Truthfulness and sincerity	3.43	0.75	Accepted
10	Respect for human life and dignity	3.46	0.73	Accepted

Influence of Drug Abuse on Youth Participation in Agricultural Activities and Rural Development

Table 4 illustrates that survey participants generally viewed drug misuse as exerting a detrimental impact on the involvement of young people in farming tasks and the progress of rural areas, as demonstrated by the high overall average of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 0.72. All ten elements achieved average ratings surpassing the 2.50 standard mean and were thus approved. The most highly rated aspect was the belief that drug abuse diminishes the interest of young individuals in agricultural pursuits, with an average score of 3.50 (SD = 0.72). This indicates that respondents see substance abuse as capable of diminishing the eagerness of young people to partake in farming and other valuable agricultural undertakings. This is significant because the involvement of youth in agriculture has been linked to enhanced farm output and household well-being in Nigeria [6].

The discovery that drug abuse diminishes the efficacy and output of young individuals on farms also acquired a notable average (M = 3.49, SD = 0.71). Similarly, respondents concurred that drug misuse leads to inadequate farm management and diminished agricultural yield (M = 3.48).

These beliefs align with evidence that substance abuse can impede performance and prosperity, and studies in Nigerian rural localities have connected substance abuse with reduced efficiency and meager agricultural output. Survey participants also strongly acknowledged that drug abuse deters investments in agriculture (M = 3.44) and decreases the availability of dependable young labor (M = 3.43). These results hold significance as agriculture presents job prospects for young individuals and fosters rural economic advancement. Data from Nigeria demonstrates that participation in agricultural schemes can enhance farm productivity and household welfare, while access to resources, extension services, credit, and social networks can promote the engagement of young individuals in agricultural activities. The aspect regarding crime and insecurity disrupting rural progress attained an average of 3.49 (SD = 0.71). This notion is backed by research indicating that drug abuse among young individuals can be linked to violence, theft, gang formation, and insecurity, which subsequently sabotage agricultural output and rural development. Moreover, the participants concurred that drug abuse heightens poverty and undermines rural household livelihoods (M = 3.44) and diminishes involvement in communal development endeavors (M = 3.41). These outcomes are especially noteworthy in Southeast Nigeria, where a study conducted in 2025 among rural youth identified drug abuse as widespread and recognized peer pressure, joblessness, curiosity, and stress as significant contributing factors [14].

Table 4's findings, which have a grand mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 0.72, suggest that participants perceived drug abuse as harming youths' involvement in agricultural activities and development. This view resonates with recent reports on the prevalence and consequences of drug abuse among youths in Southeast Nigeria. [14], for instance, found that drug abuse was moderately high to very high among rural youths in Abia, Enugu, and Imo States. Their study further revealed that unemployment, family relations, peer group, curiosity, and stress were risk factors for substance use and abuse. The researchers recommended prioritizing interventions targeting youths' employment and general well-being, which are critical areas for enhancing their involvement in productive activities such as agriculture. The mean scores for reduced interest and productivity in agricultural activities (M = 3.50 and M = 3.49, respectively) also justify the high rating for diminished participation in agricultural activities in Table 4. For example, [6] found that youths' involvement in farm programs had a positive effect on farm productivity and household welfare. By extension, any factor that lowers youths' interest and productivity in farming and other agricultural activities can be detrimental to their overall development.

The finding that substance abuse causes poor farm management, low agricultural production, and inadequate labor supply in rural communities illustrates the importance of the current study's findings on drug abuse and youths' participation in agricultural activities and development. Indeed, a recent work on agricultural labor and drug use in Nigeria shows that substance abuse has adverse effects on agricultural production and rural development [15]. In addition, the highest mean score for crime and insecurity affecting rural development (M = 3.49) can be explained by the fact that substance abuse among youths often leads to various social and criminal behaviors. For example, Nigerian researchers have studied the prevalence and socioeconomic effects of drug abuse among rural youths (Adeyemi & Oladosu, 2022).

Their findings further show that substance abuse has negative behavioral and social consequences, such as poverty, insecurity, and poor community development. In summary, the findings presented in Table 4 provide empirical evidence for the proposed relationship between drug abuse and youths' motivation for participating in agricultural activities, as well as its impact on their development. Specifically, the results suggest that substance abuse has adverse effects on youths' labor supply, farm management, productivity, investment, and overall well-being and community development. Therefore, reducing drug abuse among youths should be prioritized in rural development agendas, as well as efforts to enhance their employment, empower them to adopt profitable agricultural enterprises, provide counseling services, and promote community-based intervention programs.

Table 4: Perceived Influence of Drug Abuse on Youth Participation in Agricultural Activities and Rural Development (N = 410)

S/N	Perceived influence of drug abuse	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Drug abuse reduces youths' interest in agricultural activities.	3.50	0.72	Accepted
2	Drug abuse reduces youths' productivity and efficiency on farms.	3.49	0.71	Accepted
3	Drug abuse discourages youths from investing in agriculture.	3.44	0.73	Accepted
4	Drug abuse leads to absenteeism and irregular participation in farming activities.	3.45	0.74	Accepted
5	Drug abuse reduces the availability of reliable youth labour for agricultural production.	3.43	0.73	Accepted
6	Drug abuse contributes to poor farm management and reduced agricultural output.	3.48	0.71	Accepted
7	Drug abuse increases poverty and weakens rural household livelihoods.	3.44	0.74	Accepted
8	Drug abuse contributes to crime and insecurity that disrupt rural development.	3.49	0.71	Accepted
9	Drug abuse reduces youths' participation in community development activities.	3.41	0.74	Accepted
10	Drug abuse undermines the long-term sustainability of agriculture and rural development.	3.46	0.72	Accepted

Role of Traditional Institutions and Community Structures in Promoting Moral Education and Productive Agricultural Engagement

Table 5 demonstrates the significant roles that conventional establishments and local community systems play in moral education and effective involvement in agricultural activities. The primary role identified by the majority of respondents, 365 individuals (89.0%), was that elders offer moral teachings and advice to young people. This aligns with [16] observation that the moral education of the Igbo people traditionally took place within the family and community, with elders passing on values through sayings, narratives, traditions, and other informal educational methods. The discovery that age-grade groups promote communal work was acknowledged by 350 respondents (85.4%). This is noteworthy as age grades have historically been crucial in fostering unity, accountability, community assistance, and joint efforts among Igbo youngsters. Consequently, the traditional community setup provides a platform for young individuals to grasp responsibility while engaging in practical community endeavors. Likewise, 83.9% of participants recognized the role of traditional leaders in upholding respect for community regulations and principles. This corresponds with [13] explanation that Igbo societies traditionally depended on councils of elders, age grades, and title holders to sustain social order, with individual conduct being answerable to communal standards.

The function of families in passing down traditional principles and accountable conduct was pinpointed by 82.4% of respondents.

This reinforces the notion that the family acts as a primary environment for moral development. The moral education of the Igbo people was integrated into daily family and community life rather than being limited to formal institutions [16]. Moreover, 80.7% indicated that community structures motivate young people to engage in agriculture and productive tasks. This discovery is particularly pertinent as traditional Igbo society was deeply tied to an agricultural economy where diligence, productivity, mutual aid, and communal unity held great significance [13]. Again, [17] illustrated the historical link between traditional Igbo systems, land ownership arrangements, and agricultural progress in Eastern Nigeria. The revelations about town unions, community organizations, communal work, and agricultural progress are equally noteworthy. Traditional and community-rooted institutions can rally individuals and assets for joint advancement. [18] highlighted that alterations in Nigeria's traditional social institutions impact agricultural progress, underscoring the enduring relevance of social institutions in rural development. In essence, the table implies that elders, families, age grades, traditional leaders, town unions, and community organizations can act as crucial mediums for imparting moral standards, mentoring young individuals, organizing communal work, discouraging laziness, and fostering agricultural and rural development undertakings. Nonetheless, their effectiveness might rely on adapting traditional frameworks to current social and economic circumstances.

Table 5: Role of Traditional Institutions and Community Structures in Promoting Moral Education and Productive Agricultural Engagement (N = 410)

S/N	Role of traditional institutions/community structures	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Elders provide moral instruction and guidance to youths	365	89.0
2	Age-grade associations encourage youths to participate in communal labour	350	85.4
3	Traditional leaders promote respect for community rules and values	344	83.9
4	Families transmit traditional values and responsible behaviour to youths	338	82.4
5	Community structures encourage youths to engage in farming and productive work	331	80.7
6	Town unions and community associations organize agricultural and development projects	320	78.0
7	Traditional institutions discourage idleness and promote dignity of labour	315	76.8
8	Community leaders provide mentorship and positive role models for youths	309	75.4
9	Traditional institutions mobilize communal labour and resources for agricultural development	301	73.4
10	Community sanctions discourage immoral and unproductive behaviour	287	70.0

Role of African Traditional Morality in Drug-Abuse Prevention, Agricultural Crop Investment, and Rural Development

Table 6 illustrates that respondents recognized various important functions of philosophical African traditional ethics in combatting drug abuse, promoting agricultural investment, and advancing rural development.

The primary role identified, by 365 respondents (89.0%), was the promotion of self-discipline and self-restraint to deter drug abuse. This implies that respondents view moral education as crucial in aiding young individuals to control their actions and resist harmful behaviors. Metz (2018) similarly contends that addiction can erode human vitality and social bonds when viewed through African values.

The second most common response, cited by 354 respondents (86.3%), was the encouragement of hard work and active involvement in agriculture. This mirrors the traditional African focus on industriousness, accountability, and self-sufficiency. Within the Igbo community, agricultural and communal practices have historically served as vital means of instilling values like diligence, collaboration, and accountability. Communal obligations and engagement in rural progress were highlighted by 348 respondents (84.9%). This observation mirrors the communal nature of African philosophy, where individual welfare is intertwined with community well-being. [8] and Metz [19] stress communal duties, mutual support, collaboration, and consideration for others as key aspects of African moral philosophy.

Moreover, 83.4% of respondents noted that traditional ethics guide youths to avoid actions that harm themselves, their families, and communities. This is especially pertinent in preventing drug abuse since African traditional ethics typically assess behavior based on its impact on both the individual and the broader community [20]. The data also reveal a strong acknowledgment of the importance of honesty and prudent resource management (81.7%), reverence for elders and community leaders (80.0%), and collaboration and communal work (78.3%). These principles can establish a moral groundwork for agricultural investment by fostering responsible resource utilization, trust, answerability, and collective involvement. Responses regarding investment in agriculture (76.8%), financial transparency in agricultural earnings (74.9%), and stewardship of land and natural resources (71.0%) indicate that participants associate traditional ethics with sustainable economic endeavors. Hence, African traditional ethics are viewed not solely as a means of regulating personal conduct but also as a framework for encouraging diligent work, prudent resource utilization, community engagement, and intergenerational accountability.

In essence, the outcomes suggest that philosophical African traditional ethics can act as a unifying framework linking efforts in preventing drug abuse, promoting agricultural investments, and advancing rural development. Values like self-discipline, hard work, communal duty, honesty, respect, collaboration, accountability, and environmental stewardship can shape young individuals who are less susceptible to harmful behaviors and more inclined to engage in productive agricultural and community-building endeavors.

Table 6: Respondents' Perception of the Role of Philosophical African Traditional Morality in Drug-Abuse Prevention, Agricultural Crop Investment, and Rural Development (N = 410)

S/N	Roles of African traditional morality	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Promotes self-discipline and self-control, thereby discouraging drug abuse	365	89.0
2	Encourages hard work and productive engagement in agriculture	354	86.3
3	Promotes communal responsibility and participation in rural development	348	84.9
4	Encourages youths to avoid behaviours that harm themselves, their families, and communities	342	83.4
5	Promotes honesty and responsible management of agricultural resources	335	81.7
6	Encourages respect for elders and community authorities who provide moral guidance	328	80.0
7	Strengthens cooperation and communal labour in agricultural activities	321	78.3
8	Encourages investment in farming and other productive economic activities	315	76.8
9	Promotes accountability and responsible use of income from agricultural production	307	74.9
10	Provides moral guidance and social sanctions against drug abuse and other destructive behaviours	299	72.9
11	Encourages care for land and natural resources for future generations	291	71.0
12	Strengthens social cohesion and collective action for rural development	285	69.5

Culturally Relevant Strategies for Integrating Traditional Moral Values into Contemporary Youth and Rural-Development Programmes

The data in Table 7 shows a strong endorsement from participants for merging traditional ethical principles into modern youth and rural development initiatives. The top-rated suggestion was to blend traditional moral teachings into programs for youth advancement, favored by 372 respondents (90.7%). This indicates that the participants view moral education as a crucial element for nurturing responsible youth development. The second most popular proposal was to involve traditional leaders and community elders as guides and moral instructors (365; 89.0%). This aligns with the customary role of elders as keepers and conveyors of cultural norms. Their participation can offer culturally familiar mentoring styles while bridging traditional wisdom with the current needs of youth. The suggestion to create youth agricultural clubs centered on communal labor and collaboration was chosen by 351 respondents (85.6%). This approach is significant as it links traditional principles of diligence, cooperation, communal duty, and respect for work with contemporary agricultural training and business growth.

Likewise, 84.4% advocated for infusing indigenous sayings, narratives, and cultural teachings into educational and community schemes. These methods can make moral education culturally relevant and aid young individuals in grasping traditional values in present-day scenarios. The outcomes also revealed considerable backing for community-grounded agricultural education (82.9%), family engagement in moral education and substance abuse prevention (81.5%), and the utilization of age-based groups and community organizations for rural development endeavors (79.5%). These tactics underscore that youth advancement should not only encompass formal establishments but also involve families and community frameworks. The proposal to merge traditional mentoring with contemporary counseling and substance abuse prevention services (75.4%) holds particular significance. It implies that traditional values should not be reinstated as they were originally but should be blended with evidence-backed present-day interventions.

This method enables culturally appropriate moral education to complement professional counseling, health education, agricultural outreach, and youth advancement services. In general, the responses indicate that the most suitable approach is integration rather than substitution: positive traditional values should be adjusted and included in current programs while unfavorable or outdated practices are excluded. This method can enhance cultural identity, responsible conduct, agricultural engagement, substance abuse prevention, and sustainable rural progress.

Table 7: Recommended Culturally Relevant Strategies for Integrating Appropriate Traditional Moral Values into Contemporary Youth and Rural-Development Programmes (N = 410)

S/N	Recommended strategy	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Incorporate traditional moral education into youth development programmes	372	90.7
2	Engage traditional rulers and community elders as mentors and moral educators	365	89.0
3	Establish youth agricultural clubs based on communal work and cooperation	351	85.6
4	Integrate indigenous proverbs, stories, and cultural teachings into school and community programmes	346	84.4
5	Organize community-based agricultural training and practical farming programmes for youths	340	82.9
6	Strengthen family involvement in youth moral education and drug-abuse prevention	334	81.5
7	Use age-grade and community associations to mobilize youths for rural-development projects	326	79.5
8	Provide incentives for youths who participate in productive agricultural enterprises	318	77.6
9	Combine traditional mentoring with modern counselling and drug-abuse prevention services	309	75.4
10	Document and preserve positive indigenous moral values for use in contemporary education	298	72.7
11	Establish community monitoring and support systems for vulnerable youths	291	71.0
12	Promote partnerships among traditional institutions, schools, government, NGOs, and agricultural agencies	280	68.3

Conclusion

The study reveals that African traditional moral values are not only philosophically significant but also practical in addressing issues like drug abuse, declining youth involvement in agriculture, and underdeveloped rural areas in Southeast Nigeria. It argues that African morality emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals within their communities, fostering a sense of responsible personhood through relationships, obligations, and a commitment to the welfare of others. Key moral values—such as hard work, self-discipline, honesty, and communal responsibility—play a crucial role in guiding youth behavior, reflected in a strong agreement among respondents (grand mean of 3.47). Furthermore, drug abuse is depicted as a communal issue, harming personal vitality and social bonds, particularly weakening agricultural engagement—a viewpoint supported by a grand mean of 3.46. The link between moral education and agricultural investment is vital, as values like cooperation and resource responsibility, when applied to modern agricultural opportunities, can encourage youths to view crop production as a viable economic venture, ultimately contributing to rural development. The interplay between moral education and agricultural investment is crucial, as traditional values like hard work, dignity, self-reliance, and collaboration can inspire young people to see crop production as a viable economic venture rather than just a means of survival. This shift can lead to job creation, income opportunities, and entrepreneurial ventures, which are vital for rural development. The study highlights the importance of traditional institutions, such as elders and community associations, in instilling these values, mentoring the youth, and fostering agricultural participation while discouraging harmful behaviors.

However, it advocates for a selective adoption of positive traditional values rather than a wholesale return to all cultural practices. By emphasizing values that uphold dignity, equality, and social responsibility, the potential for positive youth engagement in agriculture to enhance livelihoods and promote sustainable rural development can be realized. Ultimately, integrating these traditional morals with contemporary initiatives in Southeast Nigeria can cultivate disciplined and socially responsible youth committed to their communities' advancement.

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