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# OKE-ITE RITUALS, MORAL TRAINING AND SUSTAINABLE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN ANAMBRA STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING SERVICES

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## ABSTRACT

*This research is theoretical in nature and the purpose was to examine the Oke-Ite Rituals, moral training and sustainable youth development in Anambra State with implications for Counselling Services. The study noted the concern of the state government which is the believe that "Oke-Ite" and its associated practices are undermining traditional values and ethical behaviour, leading to negative social and economic consequences, particularly among the youth. Basic concepts in the study were defined. The morality problems in Nigeria were discussed. The study blamed blamed the breakdown of morality in Nigeria on the breakdown of traditional values, culture adulteration through western education, loss of institutions compared to flashy, but mainly irrelevant foreign ones. In the same vein, '"Oke-Ite"' was defined as money-making ritual or charm. As noted in the study, '"Oke-Ite"' is an imported harmful culture and tradition which has nothing good to offer. It was noted in the study that most Igbo youths missed their roots as established in the "Igba-boi" system of working for a master for a considerable amount of time before being allowed to engage in trading themselves. The consequence is the "Oke-Ite" rituals and other related criminal activities in the area. The Anambra State Government subsequently enacted the Anambra State Homeland Security Law 2025 to guarantee that no evil activity can thrive anymore in the State. Some Guidance and*

*counselling services for the youths in general and victims of the "Oke-Ite" syndrome were discussed. Basically, two aspects of counselling services viz: individual and group counselling exist in literature. The major areas of guidance services discussed in the study include: orientation, placement, appraisal, research, referral, evaluation/follow up and information services. In the light of the above, some suggestions were made. One of such suggestions is that the Anambra State Homeland Security Law 2025 should be sustained and part of it made significant parts of Civic Education in schools in the State. It was also suggested that the Anambra State youth award scheme should be instituted and sustained in the State. This scheme can provide training for physical, mental, social and moral development of the youth. It also inculcates in youths, qualities of self-discipline, self-reliance, self-services and patriotism which are essentials for the realization of national goals.*

**Keywords**: Oke-Ite Rituals; Morality; Sustainable Youth Development.

## Introduction

The present generation of Nigerian youths has many difficult challenges in their development into adults. Before going into the challenges, there are points to note. The first one is that the survival and welfare of a nation depend largely on the way of life of its members, specifically, the youths, their mental orientation and their cohesion as members of the nation. a society. The second one is that the horrible evils of indiscipline, lack of faith, commitment and corruption have eaten deep into the core values of Nigerian as a nation and rendered the country economically and morally bankrupt, almost devoid of decency, civic consciousness and patriotism. Undesirable attitude like greed, brutality, armed robbery, drunkenness, kidnapping, tribalism, ritualism, insensitiveness to filthy surrounding and many other needy identifiable ills of the society become manifest in the youths of the country. These are serious challenges to youth development and Nigeria as a nation.

The concern of the state government is the believe that "Oke-Ite" and its associated practices are undermining traditional values and ethical behaviour, leading to negative social and economic consequences, particularly among the youth. The Anambra State government response to the threat of "Oke-Ite" is the implementation of initiatives like Operation Udo Ga-Achi and the Agunechemba security network, aiming to restore the state's reputation for hard work, integrity, and ethical behaviour. The focus of the government in this regard is the promotion of positive values and behaviours among the youth, encouraging them to pursue ethical paths and contribute positively to society. The approach of the government is to "sanitise" traditional and Christian worships in the State by addressing the perceived negative influences associated with "Oke-Ite" and not to ban them.

## Conceptual Clarification

**Morality** has to do with the principles of right and wrong behaviour in human beings. It is a given society's principle of

living or general behaviour. Morality is the standard or norms of every society that needs to be taught for the development of the young ones, (Elijah and Ekpe, 2010).

**Sustainability** means the ability to hold, to retain, to keep and to build on what has been built, reclaimed or achieved. Sustained development therefore means an unfolding and actualization of endowment which is conducted such that no ground is lost, but indeed a later achievement is built on an earlier one, (Ebigbo, 2010).

**Youth is** a period after transition from childhood to adolescence. That period of a young person's life, when biological changes are prominent, when physical, social and emotional changes in the life of the young person are at its climax. This period is marked with crisis within and outside of self in adolescent (Abrefoh, 2006).

**Youth development** means conscious efforts to coordinate support positive activities that promote the social, emotional, physical, cultural, moral and academic wellbeing of the youth.

**Morality Problems in Nigeria**

According to Ilori (2004), one major morality problem and cause of ills of the Nigerian society is the sadly and shaky foundation on which the elders built the society through colonial days by discarding the good part of the traditional society and then got caught up in the conflict of the culture of trying to graft the so-called sophistication of European society. The results so far have been abysmal failure. Shehu Shagari, according to llori, (2004) blamed the breakdown of morality in Nigeria on the breakdown of traditional values, culture adulteration through western education, loss of institutions compared to flashy, but mainly irrelevant foreign ones. Nigerians instable taste for foreign things, disintegration of family ties, get rich quick, man's insufficient attention to character molding in school curriculum, low level of education among teachers and poor motherhood care. This moral breakdown has given rise to excessive materialism in which wealth is worship instead of God. Majority of the present-day youths are ready to engage in anything that can fetch them money on the erroneous believe that money can give them popularity, the source, notwithstanding. Most of them want to be wealthy without working for the wealth. The is the major cause of violent crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping and currently, the '"Oke-Ite"' rituals.

**What is '"Oke-Ite"'?**

'"Oke-Ite"' is money-making ritual or charm. '"Oke-Ite"' is the acceleration of ones predestined accomplishments in weeks or years and once one is done with ones predestined attainments, death will follow it or exchange of loved ones such as wife or children. According to Nwafor, Amatu and Nwodu (2023), recently in Nigeria, and more especially in the South Eastern region, the popular trend among youths has become the get rich syndrome which has become a whirlwind trend in social media. There is a revamp of African Traditional religion that heighten the practice of idols, occultism, rituals and sacrifices.



**Fig. 1:** '"Oke-Ite"' Shrine.

The youths nowadays belief to appease the god of prosperity through '"Oke-Ite"' money making ritual. Nwafor, Amatu and Nwodu further noted that the awakening of '"Oke-Ite"' charm in this modern age due to the power of social media has made it possible for the digital traditional priest, priestess and witch doctor to show case their spiritual belief and talents by varying for patronage and recognition through social media platforms. However, the youths are believed to be most vulnerable of this trendy '"Oke-Ite"' quick money-making ritual social media messages. The media in its agenda setting function can set the public agenda and thus can trigger a spiral of silence with time into the psychic of the viewers to accept or reject certain ideology.

**Etymology of '"Oke-Ite"' Traditional Charm**

According to Ibukun, (2019) '"Oke-Ite"' is not part of Igbo culture and tradition, neither is it part of Igbo people's 'Odinani' (historic traditional culture) but was imported from Igala, Yoruba and other neighbouring African Nations. '"Oke-Ite"', 'Nne Ite' or '"Oke-Ite Awele" as the name applies means, 'Oke' (male or great) and 'Ite' (pot). From the name, the charm has a male and female category. Hence the name 'Nneite' which means female charm or mother charm. 'Awele' means favour in Igbo, but whether 'Oke, Nne or Awele', the meaning goes to one direction of 'money making ritual or favour'. '"Oke-Ite" Ogwu' means a pot of progress. It is a deadly money-making ritual in clay pot or crude metal pot- 'Ite ona' prepared with the blood of animals and human parts that demands regular blood sacrifices. Mostly, the '"Oke-Ite"' is prepared with human parts, placenta of the womb of a young girl, strong wild roots, street owls, vultures, dogs, elephants, monkeys and combination of drinks all in one pot. It is tied with white cloth boiling to perform booming functions. It has been the easiest way for the youths to make money these days.

As noted by Nwafor, Amatu and Nwodu (2023), to do '"Oke-Ite"', you need to settle your 'onye uwa (reincarnation), Agwu (gods), Ndi mmiri (water goddess), Ndi Iche (destined god)'. Those spirits are against '"Oke-Ite"' and if a person is from 'mmiri' (water spirit), '"Oke-Ite"' might not work for the person because 'mmiri na aso ogwu' (water goddess is against charm of prosperity).

In the present day in Nigeria and Aanambra State in particular, many young people troop in to get the charm without minding whether it will work for them or not. Of course, it has worked for many people but there some untold secrets about '"Oke-Ite"'. Someone who did "Oke-Ite" may die suddenly or suffer prolonged illness, it can cause impotency, death of children, relatives either mother or wife, it can affect friends and associates that are close to the person, it can make a person to give birth to children that have down syndromes, take the destiny of their unborn children and linage, kills innocent souls, makes a person so pained, miserable, ruined and can mysteriously cause sudden and instant death, and can make one to run mad. Sometimes, if one gets the money and decided not to continue again, the so-gotten money might vanish or it could kill the person immediately. According to some people, to avoid the above listed karma, the person needs to renew the rituals either daily, weekly, monthly, yearly as the case may be. It is unfortunate that the witch doctors who prepares the charm will not tell victims (patronizes) about the consequences and repercussion. Making the charm is like creating the whirlwind which blow both the immediate and future generation.

**The Trouble with the Youth of Anambra and South East in General**

In the realm of trading, the Igbo people established the "Igba-boi" system of working for a master for a considerable amount of time before being allowed to engage in trading themselves. Cutting corners is not an option. The Igbo people's "Igba-boi" business culture has been hailed as the world's example of business incubators by institutions like Harvard University in the United States. Igba-boi business incubation places pride in diligence in learning the business over many years rather than the fly-by-night for getting rich overnight without mastering any trade or craft.

In the past, Igbo parents would not accept any expensive gifts from their children that could not be justified as legitimately earned. It therefore defies logic that a university student who does no work at all will gift his parents an expensive car that even businessmen with years of experience cannot buy, and such parents joyfully collect it. This is a direct parental endorsement of the life of crime their children live.

In addition to receiving such unwholesome gifts from their unemployed and schooling children, some parents nowadays have even gone so far as to pay for their children's attendance at Yahoo training schools. In the

Yahoo business, you hear beguiled parents claim that their kids are simply taking money from the white people who once pillaged our land. Tragically, the fundamental Igbo values of diligence, morality, honesty, and fear of God have been attacked by such evil and negative destructive activities.

East of the Niger, the central tenet of the youth is steeped in the worship of money. Their role models are now extravagant spenders who don't appear to have any legitimate sources of income. To obtain the questionable fortune, anything goes. The criminal industry includes human sacrifice, robberies, advance fee fraud, kidnapping for ransom, fetish activities, and witchcraft. They reportedly have a tight friendship with mortuary attendants and maternity homes, where they gather various items allegedly used to make Oke-ite and its higher form, including Awele, Ibobo, and Uduakomili. That is the extent of the depravity of the Igbo society today, where idolatry and sorcery are making startling comebacks.

The trouble with the Youth today is that they are being misled by the adults, when children are given birth to, there's normally nothing wrong with them, but when parents, adults, society and leaders fail in their responsibility to teach them and be good examples for them, they become problem and a serious threat to the nation. Just like in anything or group of people, the bad overshadow the good. Among the youth, the good ones seem so helpless while the few bad ones are full of vile energy because the youth to some extents are the real victims of the callous system of the earth. Children are withdrawn when levy are demanded in school. Many youths are school dropouts because of the poverty level they find themselves in for no fault of theirs. The new Igbo youth, who can barely explain how he made the money, also enjoys police and army protection in their convoys while corrupting the social order. In some way, the law has been taken over by the outlaws, who are altering the fundamental Igbo principles to fit their fantasies.

**Anambra State Government and the Challenge of Oke-Ite Rituals**

In order to eradicate the "Oke-Ite" rituals and other related criminal activities, the Anambra State Government enacted the Anambra State Homeland Security Law 2025. This law guarantees that no evil activity can thrive anymore in the State. The law criminalized certain categories of practitioners, prominent among them include: evil native doctors, fake native doctors, and false prophets who deceive the gullible populace, especially the younger generation.

The purpose of the law, however, is not to prevent traditional healers from practising their profession or traditional worshippers from enjoying their religious freedom. It is to prevent the evildoers, like Oke-ite criminals, from infiltrating their ranks, meaning the law aims to sanitise rather than outlaw. The law introduced the Anambra-structured security network—Agunechemba and Operation Udo Ga-Achi— as agencies to battle against and

eradicate Oke-ite and its allied crime enablers in the State.

According to the State Commissioner for Information, Law Mefor (2025), some claim that traditional religion and practices have been banned in the state by the new law, which establishes the legal and operational frameworks for the battle to reclaim the Anambra social order. This assertion, which is made out of ignorance or malice, is completely untrue. By purging traditional worship of quacks and other evil practitioners who are robbing the state of its youth, the new law and its implementation aim to sanitise, not to ban.

According to Mefor (2025), the evil pot called Oke-ite and its affiliated sorcery potions, including Uduakomili, Ibobo, and Awale, are the inspiration for the get-rich-quick mentality that is today wreaking havoc throughout Igboland. There is also Odeshi (bulletproof amulets), which these evil native doctors prepare for kidnappers and armed robbers that give them Dutch (foolish) courage. As Mefor noted further, one thing unites them: wealth without work. In previous generations, the topic of money rituals—known locally as "Ogwu-ego"—was often brought up. In the Igbo motherland, the nouveau riche is currently obsessed with the Oke-ite syndrome. According to some people who know the evil pot, Oke-ite, the clay pot is made with bitter herbs and leaves, dog meat, human body parts, bats, various evil birds, the spiritual Ogilisi tree, and more. Another aspect is that the charm needs to be made from the body parts of women who are virgins or have not given birth. This explains why we see here and there those vital parts are harvested from the victims of ritual killings (Mefor, 2025). As Mefor further noted, everything about Oke-ite is evil and negative destructive energy, which alters destinies and is upending Igbo core values. The Igbo values of diligence and hard work are entirely at odds with Oke-ite and all other associated money-making rituals and potions, especially when it comes to Ndi Anambra, who have achieved success and a stellar reputation through hard work. No reasonable mind can justify Oke-ite's anti-Igbo culture and traditions. In the good old days, Igbo republicanism dictated that a trueborn son must never, ever bring home soiled money, as this would severely damage the family name.

**Counselling Services for Oke-ite Victims; Morality and Sustainable Youth Development**

According to Uba (2021), Guidance and counselling services deal basically with assisting the individual to understand himself, his world and be able to live a normal, well- adjusted and fulfilling life. This basic service stems from the assumption that individuals who understand themselves and their world are more effective, more productive and happier human beings. The services are potentially intended for all people, not only those who have problems. Asiyai (in Uba, 2021) supported by saying that guidance and counselling services are those services given to individuals or groups to enable them function effectively in life. The services are aimed at helping people with concerns in various areas of adjustment. Different counselling services exist in

literature.

As noted by Uba (2021), there are broadly two aspects of counselling services viz: individual and group counselling. In the former the student is examined based on some personal issues, or problems with the aim of resolving them while on the later (group counselling) refers to a situation in which more than one individual are handled. The major areas of guidance services provided in the schools include: orientation, placement, appraisal, research, referral, evaluation/follow up and information services.

**Orientation Service**: In orientation service, the students are made to feel at home with their new environment so that the problem of adjustment will not arise. This is mostly done for new comers, that is, those entering the secondary school newly and those newly transferred to the school.

**Placement Service**: These services are aimed at helping the students to choose and utilize the opportunities within the school to plan the future. Placement service is the admitting of students into the right class which they belong. This is concerned with adjusting school or on the job.

**Appraisal Service**: One way to ensure that students are properly assisted in their growth is to have a store of information or data about such students. Appraisal is the means by which counsellors arrive at such data. Appraisal service is geared towards gathering and assessing personal information regarding the students in school or clients generally.

**Research Service**: This counselling service is a human oriented service and humans are by nature complex and dynamic.

**Referral Service**: This occurs in a situation where a counsellor finds out that the problems, he is handling is not within his scope, the counsellor refers the cases to appropriate quarters. This goes in to explain the fact that in guidance service programmes, the counsellor alone cannot carry out all the work involved.

**Evaluation and Follow-up Services**: to evaluate is to assess or to measure with a view of to passing judgment whether or not a course of action has been effective. When we evaluate, we are concerned with looking at the services that have been rendered, whether it has been effective or not. When treatment is effective, it is an indication that we consolidate such techniques and methodology used.

**Suggestions/Way forward**

The counsellors, as nation builders, are expected to play significant roles to play in producing useful youths for sustainable national development. Some of the roles include:

1. Formation of Christian Women Organization (CWO) – this body arrange for Guidance and Counselling of youths not only on educational matters but also on youth general way of life. The reason is obvious. A healthy, well-nourished and educated youths are better than large numbers of youths who will be house toys, domestic servants to their age mates in future.

2. Putting in place some schemes, which are supposed to reduce unemployment among the youths. This can be achieved through vocational or occupational guidance.
3. The Anambra State Homeland Security Law 2025 should be sustained and part of it made significant parts of Civic Education in schools in the State.
4. State youth award scheme should be instituted and sustained in the State. This scheme can provide training for physical, mental, social and moral development of the youth. It also inculcates in youths, qualities of self-discipline, self-reliance, self-services and patriotism which are essentials for the realization of national goals.
5. There should be cultural exchange programmes to enable the youth to travel across the country to learn about other regions, culture and trip their social integration. This will foster healthy cultural understanding and enhance tribal and peaceful existence as well as sustainable national development.

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