Cultural dynamism and household sustainability in Benin City

By

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Abstract

Despite the "wind of change" prevalent in modern society and the integral elements that stimulate the changes, man still remains a force to be reckoned with. Though culture is said to be dynamic, the potency of the dynamism seems to create a gap among families. Hence, this study examines some cultural changes in contemporary Benin metropolis, Nigeria and its influence on household relationship. The Robert K. Merton functionalist model was adopted for the study as it explains the manifest and latent role of cultural changes on household relationship. The study elicited information from 384 adults of ages 20+ years and 6 in-depth interviews conducted in Benin metropolis of Edo state. Quantitative method of data collection were adopted in the study, the data were analyzed at

a univariate and bivariate level using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and content analysis was used for the qualitative data. Findings from the study revealed that changes in Benin is more of the physical (material) than others and also that the material cultural changes have influenced the social aspect that are non-material. The study revealed that the social aspect in some ways has altered the social order among household members hence straining its sustainability. Based on the findings it is recommended that there should be a social integration of family values among household members in Benin metropolis as it will promote unity and tranquility in the state and beyond

Key word: **change, culture, household and relationships**
Word Count: 235

Introduction

The ethos of cultural dynamism has been the machinery for its development, as society strives in its quest to catch up with the trend in technological advancement, more and more changes seems to have been emerging and man has been involved overtime. Culture in all human societies is social rather than biologically transmitted as it is a learned aspect of human society (Scott and Marshall, 2005). Mead (2002) affirmed that culture means the whole complex of traditional behavior which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation, it could be noted that from one decade to another changes into cultural practice, norms, behaviour and values have been consistent.

In the word of Ferraro (1998) culture involves what people have, think and do as a member of a society. This 3 major component: To have material possession, to think-things they carry around in their heads e.g. ideas, values, and attitude, finally things do-behaviour pattern. Considering this definition, the concept of cultural dynamism can never be ignored as it is a basic assumption of culture itself. The perception of

understanding a particular culture using ethnographic method can never be masterminded from a particular vein point. This explain Osunde (2012) notion that affirmed that:

> However simple a society may be, custom or moral rules cannot be understood by all in the same way… proper customary behaviour is encouraged for the avoidance of conflict and behaviour leading to conflict and disorder frowned at.

Conflict resolution involves harmonious relationship and adapting with the trend of changes theories prevalent in a society, as the narrative says "nothing is constant on the face of the earth". In striving for physical, cultural and social advancement and development most small cultural settlement/communities especially the third world countries tend to actualize the Western was of life and gradually modify the already existing practice and process in line with Ferraro's idea of the change process, Schaefer (2008) agree that innovation and diffusion are of the machinery for cultural change and his classification of innovation are discovery and invention. There have been synergies between cultural advancement and household sustainability, as the concept sustainability involves the act of maintaining at length without interruption or weakening something (Advanced English Dictionary) as this un-interruption of social and physical changes devoid the human society man changes gradually to adjust and adapt to the discovery of contemporary time.

The driving forces of cultural change according to Ferraro (1998) can be internal and external. In Nigeria, as in other society the forces includes technologies (Ferraro, 1998, Alenkhe and Obarisiagbon, 2019), Migration (Adepoju, 2010; Alenkhe and Longe, 2015; Sadoh and Alenkhe, 2014), Globalization Remittances (Alenkhe 2011; Alenkhe and Longe, 2015) and many others.

Statement of the Problem

Though there have been some cultural re-structuring in intangible/non-material entity, there is a dichotomy between cultural static and cultural dynamism in most cultural practice and processes in Nigeria. Benin City the homeland of the Bini (Benin) has a rich history of cultural practice and trace of origin (Ugiagbe and Eweka, 2012). However, little attention have been given about the contemporary changes in language, occupation dressing pattern, religion, Arts and music, marriage rite, rituals about some persons and their communities in Nigeria. In 2011, a study shows that one of the impacts of remittances on the household is that it has altered the household structure (Alenkhe, 2011). In same Vein, Ikhuomola (2015), observed that remittances has caused household conflict among household members in a community were respect for elders is highly valued, it is gradually "passing out" the concept of widow inheritance, where the first son inherit a widow (His father's wives) and many others. Language extinction is gradually creeping into the current generation of youth as a result of migration, socialization, globalization, modernization and advancement in technology. Therefore, sticking to the universal language of Nigeria known as "English" is becoming a trend. In the light of this, it pertinent to establish a relationship between what has change culturally in the Benin traditional society and the level of acceptability and adaptation within household in selected rural community in the state capital.

Research Questions

(a) What are those phenomena that have changed in this community?
(b) What influenced the social change of the practices?
(c) What is the of acceptability and sustainability of such changes in the society?

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the relationship between changing cultural practices, values and moral and it household adaptability and acceptability in contemporary Benin City. Specifically, the study will

1. Ascertain what has changed and the motivating factors that influenced the change
2. Investigate how the communities welcome to changes and the change process.

Brief literatures review

Cultural changes, types and impacts in modern societies

Although the concept of culture has been widely studied by numerous anthropologists and researchers, it's variation, scope and perception, dynamism is always constant. To Kottak (2002) as cited in Imhonopi and Urim (2011), "culture includes much more than refinement, taste, sophistication, education and appreciation of the fine arts. This assertion proved that culture has a bifocal dimension: The visible and invisible. The uniqueness of a particular culture is its learned process and these processes create room for adaptation and acceptability. However, there are two basic types of culture and these include material and the non-material culture. Material culture are those tangible and visible aspect of culture in the society, while the non-material culture are the aspect of culture that cannot be seen or touched e.g. values, greetings, beliefs, folklore, customs etc. (Imhonopi and Urim, 2011, Okpokunu, 2002).

According to Ferraro (1998) two forces influence cultural changes; Internal changes (Innovations) and external changes (cultural diffusion), on the internal change, Ferraro stated that the internal change which he classified as innovation or invention often emerge from within the society as some invention are very deliberate and purposeful while others are unconscious unintentional. For the external change he calls cultural diffusion, he is of the opinion that for there to be internal change there must be an external process that influences such internal change. On this, Ferraro stated some

generalization that often associate with cultural diffusion, they include; selectivity, reciprocity, modification, likelihood and variables.
In Ajani (2012) view, research and theory on socio-economic development has created a dialectical dimension or school of thought, first was the school whose emphasis was on the convergence of values as a result of "modernization" and the second school emphasis was on the persistence of traditional values. The first school sees the continuous downturn of traditional values as a result of the continuous advancement of modernization, globalization and technologies. The second school sees the fight to retain traditional values despite the advancement in changes and it emphasizes that values are relatively independent of economic conditions. In explaining further Ajani stated that the act of clothing is evolve over time and it dynamism has either been to cover persons nudity or act as an article of looking good and representing ones cultural identity

Obioha (2010) in explaining one of the factors that influences culture change in Africa, stated that globalization has played a great role in the interaction between counties and this interaction has a toll on the level of cultural diffusion between countries in the interaction process. This Obioha affirmed that borrowing and diffusion of cultures amongst nations is made much easier with the advent of globalization. Jones (2012) also affirmed that the Africa nation is becoming an hybrid of a complex culture due to the advent of globalization and countries like Nigeria are always at the receiving end as globalization has created a borderless society. Jones added that globalization has given rise to a number of developments with effects that are far-reaching to the African nation and this could be linked with advancement in technology.

Theoretical orientation

Robert K. Merton functionalist model was adopted for the study as it explains the manifest and latent role of cultural changes on household relationship, in this senerio the changes in the society/culture may manifest

on the immediate benefit of the household as well as it's unitended consequences that playout when not properly utilized. The fractal benefits often out weigh the impending danger when compared and in an era of globalization, modernization and urbanization often associated with urbanism. There is need for positive change that will instigate the advancement of human society. This utilization of this theory often emersed the immediate and aftermath benefits in the context of role and responsibilities of the changes as well as it utilization.

Methodology

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey design and made use of a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative method of data collection and analysis which include the use of a semi-structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide in eliciting the desired responses from the respondents who are of the Benin root and are residence in the selected Local Government Area of Benin city.

Discussion of findings

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents = 384

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	269	70.1
	Female	115	29.9
Age	20-27 years	82	21.4
	28-37 years	97	25.3
	38-47 years	100	26.0
	48-57 years	53	13.8
	57 years +	52	13.5
Educational degree attained	Primary	128	33.3
	Secondary	35	9.2
	Tertiary	212	55.2
	Vocational	09	02.3

Occupation	Student	94	24.5
	Businessman/woman	80	20.8
	Civil servant	74	19.3
	Artisan	65	16.9
	Private workers	71	18.5
Marital status	Single	109	28.4
	Married	271	70.6
	Separated	04	01.0
Religion	Christianity	312	81.3
	Islamic	53	13.8
	Traditional Religion	19	4.9
Residents community	Idogbo (Ikpoba-Okha)	66	17.2
	Aduwawa (Ikpoba-Okha)	66	17.2
	Ewase/Ogbe/New Benin (Oredo)	137	35.7
	Uselu (Egor)	95	24.7
	Adolor (Egor)	20	05.2

Source: *Fieldwork 2019*

Discussion of table 1

From the table 384 copies of the questionnaire was admitted, from which the result 70.1% were male and 29.9% were female. Within the range of 20-27 years are 21.4% of the entire respondents, 28-37 years (25.3%), 38-47 years (26%), 48-57 years (13.8%) and 57 years and above had 13.5 respectively. Thirty-three point 3 percent of the respondents are student; twenty point eight percent are businessmen and women, while nineteen point three percent were civil servant. Still on the occupation of the respondents the

study confirmed that the artisans and private workers constitute 16.9% and 18.5%, while on the marital status 70.6% of the entire respondents were married as at the time of the study while 28.4% of the respondents were single. Only 1% of the respondents were separated, based on the location of the study there were more Christian's worshippers than other religious worshipper. The result shows that 81.3% of the respondents were Christians; while 13.8% were Muslims and the Traditional worshipper constitute 4.9% of the respondents.

The result also showed that Oredo had the largest number of respondent as they constitute 35.7% of the entire respondent from different community, this was followed by 34.4% for respondents in Ikpoba-Okha (with Idogbo and Aduwawa community constituting 17.2% respectively) and Egor Local Government Area had 29.7%.

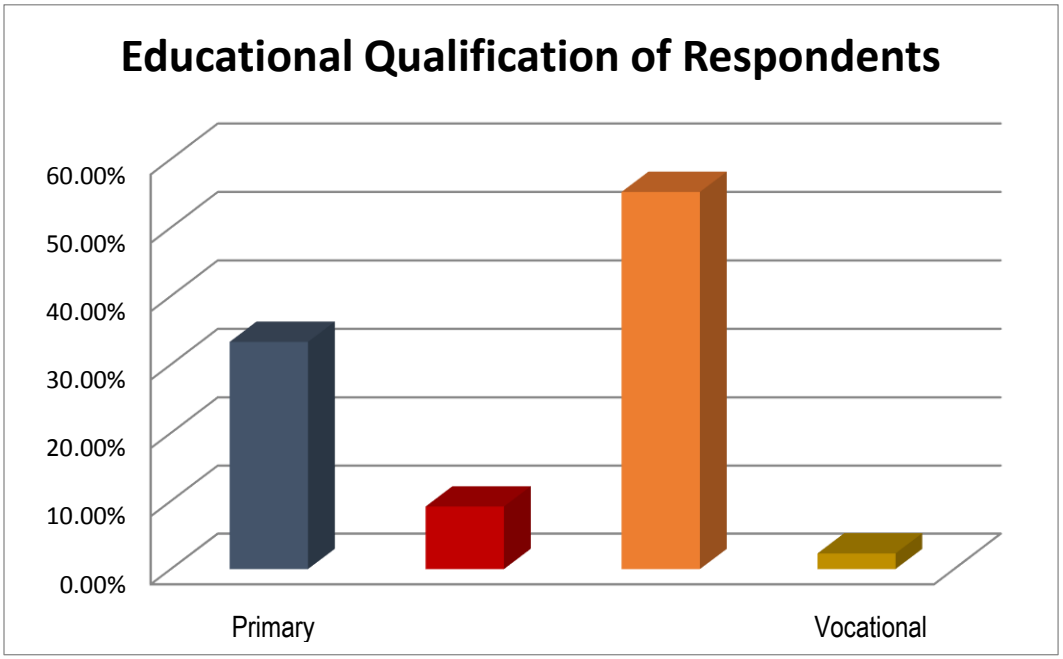


Table 2: Types and determinant of cultural changes in Benin City (N=384)

Have you been residing in Benin city for more than ten years	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Yes	384	100
	No	0	0
Have there been change with the period you been residing here	Yes	384	100
	No	0	0
Are the change visible or invisible	Visible	212	55.2
	Invisible	134	34.9
	Both	38	09.9
What are those visible changes that you have witnessed	Nose piercing	13	05.6
	Sagging of pants	82	35.3
	Meaningless tattoo	15	06.5
	Semi-nudity	45	19.4
	Food and feeding habit	18	07.8
	Invention of new technologies e.g. handset, yam pounder, blenders, micro wave etc.	40	17.2
	Fashion	19	08.2
What are the invisible changes that you can point within this period	Greetings	56	36.8
	Respect for elders	10	06.6
	Marriage rite	26	17.1
	Music	15	09.9
	Religion	15	09.9
	Quest for quick and easy money	18	11.7
	Traditional ceremonies	12	07.8

What are the responsible factors for these changes	Modernization/civilization	91	23.7
	Migration/remittances	25	06.5
	Social integration	42	10.9
	Weak family values	56	14.6
	Technological advancement	81	21.2
	Urbanization	64	16.6
	Inter-ethnic marriages	25	06.5
Are these changes positive or negative	Positive	45	11.7
	Negative	255	66.4
	Both	84	21.9

Source: *Fieldwork 2019*

Discussion of table 2

The result from the table above revealed that all the respondents are all residents in Benin city and they all agreed that there have been changes of all sort both visible and invisible changes, other respondents claimed both the visible and the invisible. On the visible cultural transformation been practiced within the city include; Nose piecing (5.6%), sagging of pants (35.3%) while respondents who said meaningless had 6.5%. other visible changes are semi-nudity with 19.4%, food and feeding habit had 7.8%, invention of new technologies and fashion had 17.2% and 8.2% respectively. For the invisible changes that respondents can feel during the period of the study includes; greetings (8.2%), respect for elders had 6.6% and marriage rite mad 17.1%. Others includes music with 9.9% and religion with 9.9%, some respondents asserted that another example of invisible cultural changes are quest for quick and easy money (11.7%) and traditional ceremonies with 7.8%.

The finding from this table supports the interview by a community elder

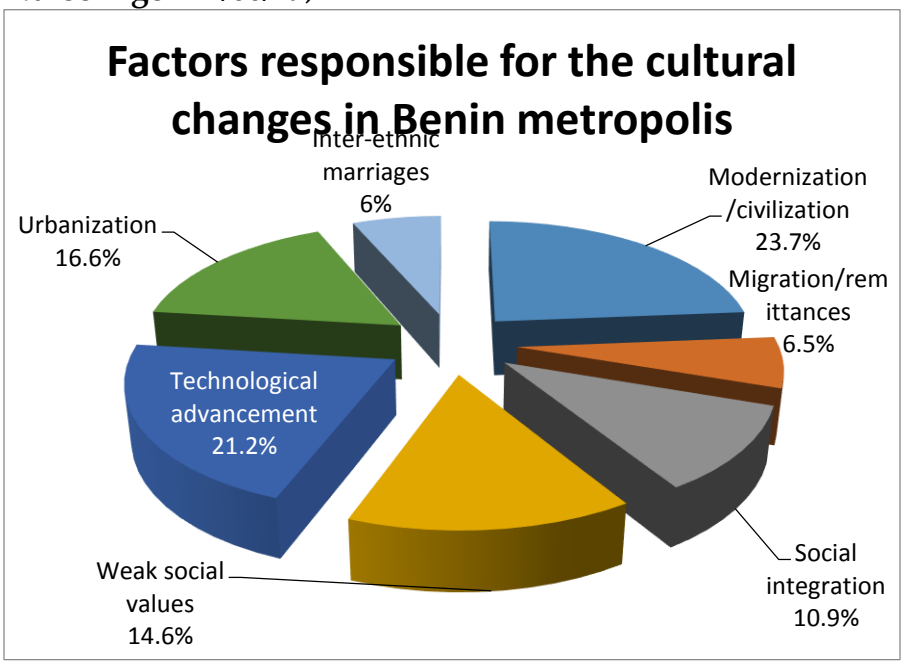
> My dear, most of the cultural changes are visible and this is due to the rate of global changes in all spheres of the society. Changes is the only thing that is constant but the changes am seeing from your generation is really surprising where girls go naked and boys show everyone their dirty boxers (inner wear). In the last few years boys now pierced their eye as if they are girls and girls pierced nose, eye brow and more amazing is the piercing of nose and tongue, I wonder if this generation has gone mad. I school abroad in the 80s and this madness was not there. I pity the future generation (**IDI-Community elder- Oredo-11/06/19)**

From the result also, the respondents attributed the factors for the changes to modernization/civilization, migration/remittances, social integration, weak family values and technological advancement. Others include urbanization and inter-ethnic marriages. In affirming if the changes are positive or negative, majority of the respondents agreed that the changes are negatively inclined as they constitute 66.4% and 21.9% of the respondents said it is both positive and negative. Only 11.7% of the entire respondents agreed that the changes are positively inclined.

Another respondent in an interview said;

> There are changes and the changes are obvious to all that really knows the tradition of the ethnic group that is domicile in this city, where decent dressing has turned nude, respect for the elderly has been watered down . My brother, all this I will say was due to modernization or globalization as you guys will call it. We are gradually going back to the era of Adam and Eve in the old testament in the bible, I know culture changes but must it be on the negative side where people now celebrate evil as against good and follow the trend without questioning. I am a mother, I think the family as an institution has failed and we

need to restructure our direction as it is getting late (**IDI-Nurse- Egor-11/06/19)**



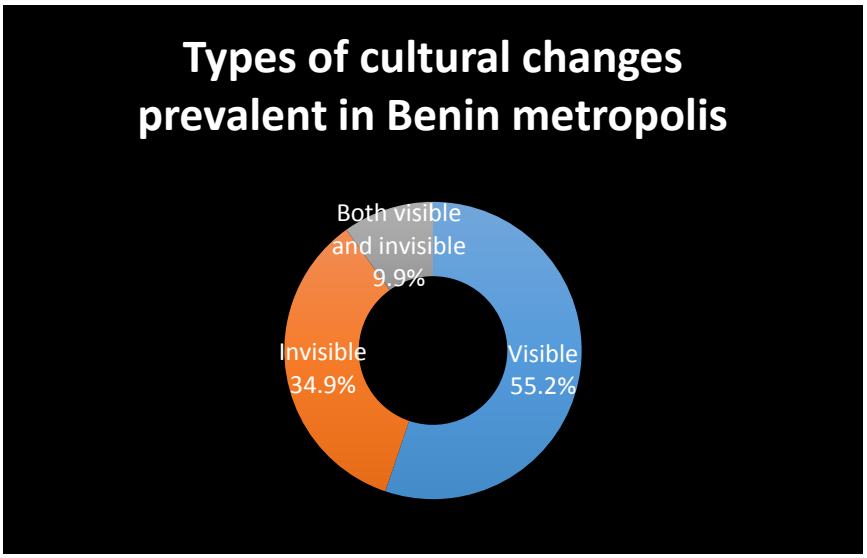


Table 3: Acceptability and sustainability of the cultural changes (N=348)

What is your view on the current social change	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Acceptable	149	38.8
	Unacceptable	235	61.2
Do you welcome the changes that you see	Yes	149	38.8
	No	235	61.2
Do you think these change have any implication on the young generation	Yes	232	60.4
	No	152	39.6
What has been the implication of some of the changes to families in Benin city	It has caused chaos between families	09	03.9
	It has alter household structure	32	13.7
	It has aided household chores	18	07.7
	It is making some language go into extinction	41	17.7
	It making a new meaningless generation	33	14.2
	It is good as it is educating families	28	12.1
	It is making life more easier	12	05.2
	It has lifted some families standard	21	09.0
	It is gradually wiping away our values system	38	16.4

Do you want the changes to continue	Yes	71	18.5
	No	131	34.1
	Some of them	182	47.4
How do we keep our cultural values and still accept the relevant changes in present times. (sustainability)	Keep family unity	32	09.2
	Restoring back our languages	38	10.9
	Imbibe the right societal values	54	15.5
	Keep relevant practices and discard the fetish and barbaric ones	44	12.6
	Establish a strong family value system	53	15.2
	Key to our social structure irrespective of our level of education or wealth	33	09.5
	Utilize the technological advancement for better living	51	14.7
	We should know the origin of some changes before accepting them	43	12.4

Source: *Fieldwork 2019*

Discussion of table 3

In accessing the acceptability and sustainability for the household cultural change in Benin City, the result from table 3 revealed that most of the respondents perceive the current social change as unacceptable and 61.2% of the entire respondents affirmed this while only 38.8% of the entire respondents see the social or cultural change as acceptable in Benin City. Still on acceptability, 61.2% of the entire respondents affirmed that they will

not welcome the trend of cultural changes in Benin City and 38.8% of the respondents were affirmative that they welcomes the social changes in the society. In examining if the changes have implication for young generation, and from the result it showed that 60.4% of the entire respondents agreed that the changes had implication for young generation and 39.6% of the respondents disagreed that the changes will have impact on the young generation.

From the result, the following were seen as the implications of the changes at the micro level which is to the families in Benin City; causing chaos between families, it has alter household structure, aided household task (especially in the areas of technological advancement) and it has made some languages gone into extinction. Others includes; it is making a new meaningless generation (superficial realities), it also had some good advantages, such as educating families, making life and living easier, and also lifted some families status and standard. Lastly, according to the respondents another implication is that it is wiping away our values system. On the issue of sustainability, which can also be associated with continuity, 47.4% of the respondents want some of the changes to continue and other not to while 34.1% wants the changes to stop as against the 18% of the respondents that want it to continue.

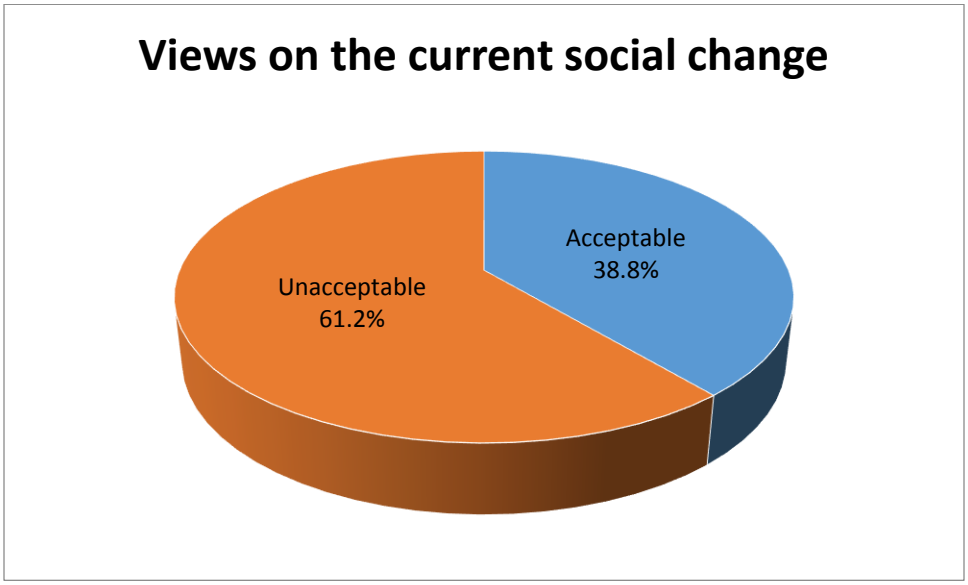
This result supports the responses from a respondent that said:

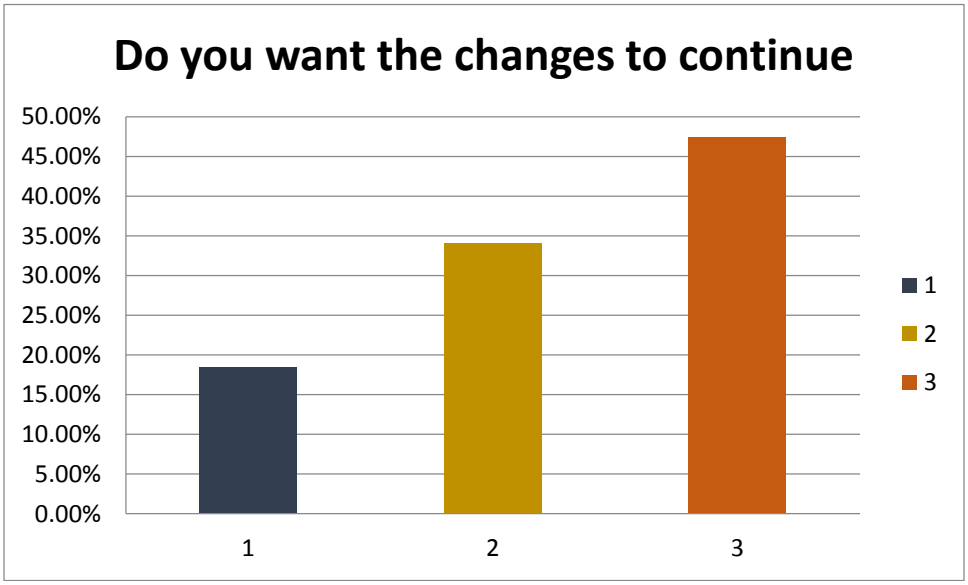
> Most of the modern changes I am experiencing within my community here is not welcoming at all and the issue of continuity is not something one will recommend, where sagging of pants is taking over decent dressing and arrogance is overshadowing respect for the elderly and other social vices. Although there are good aspects of the changes but they are very few as I think continuity for some cultural practices need to be stop and preach against (**IDI-Pastor-Ikpoba-12/06/19)**

Another respondent that have a contrary view said;

> I have travelled and I have seen changes in both social and physical realities, changes are the only thing that is constant. You don't expect us to be playing same old song, practice same old fetish tradition, live in the same old hut like that of our forefathers, adhere to the ancient ways of healing when technological advancement has hit the use of modern medicine, or still be using bicycle when light trains, electric cars and modern gadget are taking over the world. My brother we need to grow up and meet with realities if we must compete with modern trend in the world. (**IDI-International businessman-Oredo- 12/06/19)**

On how to still retain our cultural values and still adopt the relevant changes in present day Nigeria society, most of the respondents gave the following opinion as follows; keeping the family united, restoring language, imbibe the right societal values, keep relevant practices and discard the fetish and barbaric one, establishing a strong family value system and citizen should key to their social structure irrespective of our level of education or wealth. Others gave their opinion as follows; utilize the available technological advancement for better living and finally, citizen should know the origin of change before accepting them.


Views on the current social change
Acceptable
38.8%
Unacceptable
61.2%


Do you want the changes to continue
50.00%
45.00%
40.00%
35.00%
30.00%
25.00%
20.00%
15.00%
10.00%
5.00%
0.00%
1
2
3
1
2
3

Conclusion and recommendation

It was observed that some demographic variable has a great influence on the acceptability and the sustainability of cultural changes, the narrative often goes that "change is the only constant thing in life". The acceptability of most cultural changes are those changes that are deemed to have a positive influence on the life of future leaders (the youth), this assertion is in line with opinion of the elderly who often believe the cultural changes to be discarded are those with negative connotation that have bad reputation on the life and living style of the youth. It is also discovered that most of the changes in the society are carried out without finding the origin of its cause such as sagging of pants or trousers by youth and the piercing of body part by many youth all in the name of trending fashion. The study also discovered that forces such as modernization, migration, technological advancement, urbanization and the likes play key role in the trend of cultural changes and as such adherence to these changes will go a long way in ensuring a better life for the residence in Benin City. On this premise the study advocates the following;

1. Government should ensure that technological advancement should be all embracing as it will not only reduce stress in most domestic activities' but also aid in other sectors of the Nigeria economy and also ensure its acceptability from the grassroots up to the household level.
2. There should be public awareness on the benefit of most cultural changes, often as the case against most conservative elderly citizen who often believe in the utilization of crude and ancient tools and method in achieving contemporary results that would be time taking and exhaustive.
3. Community leaders are never left out, as they are to correct some cultural practices that are biased oriented and are having a fetish outlook. Community leaders should ensure that our youth orientation toward indecent dressing, quest for quick money and other deviant practices are corrected with strict adherence.

4. Community leaders should question the attitude of youths in their community toward unnecessary desire that often lead them astray and contradict the community norms and value system, this will checkmate the anomalies been perpetuated by youth on modern day Benin city.
5. The family as a unit must not shy away from its responsibility of training their children and ward as this will go a long way in structuring their children toward doing the right time at the right time when they grow up.
6. All should accept technological advancement that are beneficial to their immediate environment as well as discard that which is harmful, this will not only better the lot of the individual but will uplift the society and the nation at large.

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