

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE CHANGE: THE RIJIYAR ZAKI SOCIO-DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

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Abstract

The existence, survival, and sustenance of human beings depend on a healthy environment. The actions of humans in their quest for survival sometimes affect the environment negatively, which leads to climate change. The effects of this change sometimes hit hard on the livelihoods of arable crop farmers, which in turn, impacts food production and availability. This could result in food insecurity. Therefore, limited awareness on the impact of humanity's actions on the environment has led to the misunderstanding of problems that emanates from its actions and impact on climate change. This ignorance gives birth to views such as the popularly held claim events in society are orchestrated divinely, and not by the activities of human beings. This, perhaps, proves that awareness on issues of climate change is very low, especially among people in the grassroots, rural dwellers, and vulnerable groups like women, and children who are yet to fully understand the impact of their actions on climate change. This instigates the need for crucial interventions. Through socio-drama, this article X-rays how the actions and inactions of the populace can deepen health issues and food shortages in Rijiyar Zaki, a small settlement located in Ungogo Local Government Area of Kano State, Nigeria. The study employed key person interview (KPI), direct observation and action-research instrumentations. It was fortified by Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

Keywords: Awareness, Climate change, Environment, Rijiyar Zaki, Socio-drama, TPB.

Introduction

There are numerous benefits that the environment provides. Human beings rely on these benefits for existence and sustenance. Recently, climate change has spawned one of the most devastating environmental crises faced by humanity. In some parts of the world, the rural and natural resource-dependent communities and the poor are the most vulnerable. Perhaps, this stems from their lack of awareness about climate change. Several people still have very little knowledge despite the efforts made by the government in incorporating some initiatives to educate people. Thus, it can be claimed that in places like Nigeria, regardless of awareness about climate change, the impact is not strong despite initiatives like tree planting, cleaning up the environment (sanitation), and providing a good means of disposing waste like recycling plastics, among others.

In Kano State, Aliyu writes that "climate change has had a significant effect on all aspects of society" (10). Part of the activities which instigates this is that they usually set their piece of land on fire to clear bushes coupled with the fact that a

majority use a slash to burn and clear large areas of land, forgetting extreme heat waves, fires in the arctic and so on. This act, aside from the fact that it is a climate hazard is also a medical hazard. Yet the present level of research and knowledge on climate change in the area has hardly advanced. This instigated the need to close the knowledge gap on climate change through an action research method. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to create targeted awareness on the dangers of climate change and possible measures that can be adopted to mitigate its continuity and spread. It based on a field work, using socio-drama in Rijiyar Zaki of Ungogo Local Government Area of Kano State, Nigeria with 200 level students under the supervision of the lead facilitator, Ihuoma Okorie. The intervention took place from 28 February 2023 to 2 March 2023. The total number of students that took part in the dialogue was twenty-one.

Climate Change in Nigeria

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as a change that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity which alters the composition of the world. Climate change poses one of the greatest existential threats to the planet and its people, especially in Africa. Tallas states that "climate change is having a growing impact on the African continent, hitting the most vulnerable, and contributing to food insecurity, population displacement and stress on water resources" (3). Nigeria has a tropical climate with two distinct seasons: wet and dry seasons. Huma claims that:

Nigeria's climate has been changing, evident in temperature increases, variable rainfall, rise in sea level and flooding, drought and desertification, and land degradation. More frequent extreme weather events affect freshwater resources, and loss of biodiversity. The durations and intensities of rainfall have increased, producing large runoffs and flooding in many places in Nigeria. (3).

From the above, it is clear that Nigeria has witnessed noticeable effects of climate change which have affected the country's agricultural ecosystems, including freshwater, coastal resources, and weather-related disasters, which have become more frequent (Omoera and Guanah 1-2). Reid and Simms aver that "the negative effects of climate change on developing countries have a direct bearing on freshwater, farming, and healthcare among others" (12). Furthermore, Musa and Godpower claim that the direct effects of climate change on health emanates from extreme weather events such as heat waves, floods, droughts, windstorms, and wildfires, while the major indirect effect is malnutrition. Reduced food production leads to ill-health and the spread of waterborne illnesses like typhoid fever and cholera. Increased air pollution and high temperatures equally results in increased cases of meningitis (23).

Sustainable development goal 13 (SDG 13) implores stakeholders to take critical actions that can help mitigate the effects of climate change given its impact on human health and fauna and flora in the ecosystem generally. Despite the attention on climate change in international politics and media, the political will to counter the change in Nigeria was instituted only recently, when the draft bill for the establishment of the National Climate Change Commission was considered in the Nigerian Senate.

This, perhaps, shows that climate change is one of the least addressed issues. Hence, the minimal actions targeted at tackling it. This implies that there is a lack of political will and a lack of simple solutions that provide immediate remediations in local communities. Abandoning efforts, is of course, not an option because there is far too much at stake. Therefore, considering its timeliness, there is need for a more targeted information mechanism to create awareness-raising initiatives. At any rate, an entity like Nigeria requires focussed interventions to mitigate the impact of climate change on its rapidly growing population.

Climate Change in Kano State

Kano State, with a population of over nine million, is situated in the north-west geopolitical zone and the Sahel savanna region. In more senses than one, it is an overcrowded state. In this regard, Musa and Godpower claim that the Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern towns and villages, coupled with drought, has led to population migration to places like Kano, leading to noticeable congestion (overcrowding), increased vehicle traffic, air pollution, and poverty (28). There have been several reports of severe flooding in parts of Kano State with farms and cattle destroyed resulting from prolonged heavy rainfalls. The ripple effect is poor harvest, high cost of food items, and malnutrition. This is the point Aliyu made when he stated that “climate change and variability institute multiple threats to Kano State” (2). The key risks hover on the agricultural systems, dams and the riverine neighbouring communities. The vulnerability of Kano State spans recurrent occurrence of droughts, increased pre-rain dust bowls and poor visibility caused by harmattan, and frustrating urban microclimate. Furthermore, Aliyu argues that “the adaptation strategies currently used in the state are grossly inadequate in the rising challenges of climate change particularly in rural areas” (12).

For centuries, rural communities coped well with variations in the climate (Kent 408). However, the predicted stresses of the human-induced climate change impacts have become prevalent. This instigates the need to think out new ways of making people, adapt to the climate change realities and devise mitigation strategies to avoid the risk involved. As stated by Schemmel and Scholze “the effects of the physical damage resulting from climate change may be common in places, but inadequate knowledge remains one of the principal causes of climate change” (423). This calls for an improvement in the awareness-creation capacities and strategies in urban and rural areas. In Kano State, there is a huge impact because many of the people are farmers and herdsmen who live in rural areas. However, the recurrences of droughts and floods have often left rural and urban dwellers victimized by one form of vulnerability, and suffering or the other.

As an important global issue, climate change has a close relationship with human health. A critical study which explicates this was carried out by Musa and Godpower. They examined climate change and primary healthcare in Sahelian Kano Nigeria. The study exposed the fact that climate change has potential impacts on primary healthcare and practice. The study further uncovered unswerving clinical presentations logically associated with high temperatures and excessive flooding in

certain months of the year. Consequently, effects range from skin and waterborne diseases to malnutrition and stress-related disorders (Musa and Godpower 24). Given the effects, there is a need for strategic intervention planning by stakeholders. As regards the risks associated with climate change, the damage caused, and adapting strategies in Kano State were presented by Aliyu Barau. They include “droughts, flooding, storms, poor visibility, urban microclimate, dust bowls/harmattan dust, increased temperature, and extreme cold weather while the possible damages include food insecurity, increased poverty and malnutrition, loss of farmlands, deaths, displacements, and outbreak of epidemics, destruction of private and public properties among others” (Aliyu 6).

With regard to the adaptation strategies, relief assistance from the government formed the crux, hence, the need for strategic awareness creation on how the actions of humans contribute to climate change as well as its upshots. This shows the vulnerability of Kano State in terms of adverse effects on climate change. Thus, it can be inferred that the lack of awareness of climate change has caused a lot of harm like disrupting food production and escalating health issues. This implies that environmental ignorance fuelled by misunderstanding is the bane of climate change issues in Kano State and to counter this there is the need for increased awareness.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was developed by Icek Ajzen as an attempt to predict human behaviour. Ajzen posits that attitude toward behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intention (179). The TPB started as the Theory of Reasoned Action in 1980 to predict an individual’s intention to engage in a behaviour at a specific time and place. It was intended to explain all behaviours over which people can exert self-control. The key component of this model is behavioural intent. Behavioural intentions are influenced by the attitude and likelihood that the behaviour will have the expected outcome and the subjective evaluation of the risks and benefits of that outcome. The theory further states that behavioural achievement depends on both motivation (intention) and behavioural control.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) comprises of some constructs that collectively represent a person’s actual power over behaviour. These include: Attitudes: This refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour of interest. It entails a consideration of the outcomes of performing the behaviour. Attitudes consists of behavioural beliefs and outcome evaluations. Behavioural intention: This refers to the motivational factors that influence a given behaviour. The stronger the intention to engage in a given behaviour, the more likely it is to perform that behaviour. Thus, if there is an intention to perform the behaviour, there is a likelihood that the behaviour will be performed.

Subjective norms: This is a social pressure to perform or not to perform a given behaviour. This refers to the belief about whether most people approve or disapprove of the behaviour. It relates to a person’s personal beliefs. It further considers whether others (peers and people of importance to the person) think he or she should engage in

the behaviour. Social norms: These refer to the customary codes of behaviour in a group of people or a larger cultural context. Perceived behaviour: This refers to the perceived presence of factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of a behaviour. Perceived power contributes to a person's perceived behavioural control over each of those factors. This theory is used to explain the ways through which human behaviour and actions affect climate change in Kano State. Other perceived factors which instigate and lead to planned behaviour would also be accentuated.

Socio-Drama

The use of art is foundational in nearly every social movement. According to Scott, "drama and theatre existed with connections to community entertainment, religion, politics, education, psychotherapy, and social action" (2). This is consistent with the view of Hecht which states that "Hull House's use of theatre was based on its potential of inspiring and empowering the community with an emphasis on highlighting social and political ills" (5). This is evident in the way drama is used as a tool for social change. The term socio-drama suggests a meaning of 'social in action' or 'social action.' Socio-drama is a method of action created by J. L. Moreno in 1974. It is an active method that uses theatre as a form of activism to articulate people's way of being and thinking with their possibilities of learning and problem-solving. It dramatizes social issues within community forums for societal change. Socio-drama, a spontaneous and creative arts approach, is a fitting modality for community work related to social change. Socio-drama through the use of role-playing technique can be used to engender learning for social change. This paper conceives it as the process of using action-based methods in community settings as an experiential and communal event of social action, behavioural change, and awareness creation.

The Rijiyar Zaki Socio-Drama Dialogue

To properly educate people on the negative effects of climate change, Ngogo Local Government Area (Rijiyar Zaki) was chosen. The choice stems from the fact that a majority of the people (group) were rural dwellers with little or no formal education and whose livelihood is mainly based on agriculture. Secondly, a large number of farmers had motorbikes that emits smoke which affects the environment. Thirdly, pollution is prevalent and severe flooding is experienced whenever it rains. Hence, there exist a large amount of both air pollution and land pollution. The class engaged the group in what is referred to as a socio-dramatic dialogue in line with the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Through this, some pieces of information were reeled out. The questions were asked in line with the constructs that collectively represent a person's actual power over behaviour. It also leveraged the environmental and economic factors which instigate people to behave the way they do.

During the warm-up process, there was a moderated discussion where the people voiced out the difficulties they face. Most of the people reported that the heat during the dry seasons has increased while rainfall decreased compared to their previous experiences. They also complained of experiencing very erratic and severe cold during the Harmattan period. This extremely cold weather has had a destructive

effect on their agricultural production. It was further reported that the frequency of water, food, and weather-related diseases had increased. A male farmer mentioned that in recent times, new and unknown diseases and outbreaks were often identified among members of the community. However, he was countered by another who noted that their experiences have been divinely orchestrated. Therefore, whatever is happening in their community has already been willed.

The group members were asked whether they are aware of what climate change is and how human activities contribute to it. They confessed that no modern techniques or technology were available to inform or educate them about how their activities affect climate change. From the findings received from the community, it was proven that their choices and lifestyle also contribute to climate change. This is evident in their habits which can later impact their future. They complained that it is harder to grow food in the face of supercharged storms, intense droughts, and rising sea levels because such environmental issues affect them in their vulnerable situations and threatens their lives. Concerning the high cost of gas, the people reported their use of burning coals and firewood. Their ways of generating power for electricity, heat, and transportation, and the ways they interact with their environment generally cause climate change.

The buildings were unsurprisingly another major cause and the amount of time spent inside them. The buildings, both residential and commercial, emit a lot of greenhouse gases because of heating, cooking, and running appliances. Deforestation is another way they unknowingly inject more greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. This is because vegetation and soil store carbon by keeping it at ground level or underground. Therefore, environmental and economic influences mixed with ignorance remain the bane of climate change among the people of Rijiyar Zaki. From the socio-dramatic dialogue, it is evident that the human impact on checking climate change is very low in the area under investigation. However, using the socio-dramatic dialogue in detailing and discussing the main causes of climate change is not about shaming people or trying to make them feel guilty about their choices. It is about defining the problem and ensuring that the people can arrive at effective solutions.

Thus, looking at the fact that the primary cause of recent global climate change is humanity, the solutions are also within the domain of human beings. Hence, the place of socio-drama. With this knowledge, climate change issues were brought to life using role-playing method as an educational tool. Afterwards, the session moved into action, enacting the described encounters. Collectively, there was a spontaneous role play. Before then, the group tried to observe, understand, measure, and analyse the positive, negative, and neutral relationships of the group which consisted mostly children, teenagers, and a few youths and old people. There were warm-ups. This was in a bid to familiarize more with the people before the enactment. This was kept short, to a minute or two. The moderator invited people who were interested in playing roles, while a few others volunteered. The enactment was done in Pidgin English and Hausa.

Act one: The drama began with the song which was conceived by the students. Both Pidgin English and Hausa were used for a better understanding:

Our climate go better
Make change be our number one plan
Take am easy o
Let us stop deforestation
Pollution no good o
E dey scatter climate
Change na the answer

The play opens with two women walking along the village path complaining bitterly about the lack of fruits and fresh vegetation due to the change in weather, particularly the low rainfall they experience; while talking, they come in contact with some women who are also lamenting and attributing their difficulties to divine will. They finally agree to see the Ruler to talk him into engaging in a religious activity to cleanse the community.

Act two: Saidu, one of the villagers is moody and worried about the change in weather and the negative effects it is having on his crops. He laments that if it continues, he will not be able to feed his family. He discusses the situation with Salim and two other farmers. They acknowledge the importance of looking for possible ways to address the issue.

Act three: Bilkisu, a student visits the community with a group of other students carrying posters that reads “Save the Environment.” She explains to the ruler (head of the community) that climate change is caused by human activities like deforestation, burning fossil fuel, and pollution. She emphasizes that everyone needs to reduce their carbon footprint and protect the environment. The villagers listen attentively and agree that everyone needs to be more responsible and take care of the planet. She explains the causes and how their activities harm the environment

Act four: Saratu, a government official, enters with her co-workers to discuss the government’s efforts to address climate change. One of the villagers expresses his scepticism about the government’s actions but Saratu assures him and the others that several initiatives have been launched to protect the environment. They share leaflets to the people containing tips on how they can contribute to the efforts made by the government. The socio-dramatic enactments successfully allowed the students, as well as some of the community members who participated to reverse roles with each other. This is in a bid to enhance the understanding of their plights. The students equally felt the plight of the communities’ members when they reversed roles.

Post-Performance Discussion

Whether grappling with droughts, natural disasters, or other adversities, there is a proclivity to attribute these occurrences to supernatural forces, yet the genuine roots of these issues often reside closer home. After the performance, participants de-rolled, returned to their seats, while the sharing phase also known as the post-socio-drama performance discussion began. Here, the facilitators were keen on discovering why they choose to attribute their misfortunes to divine will. This was imperative because

there is an intricate psychology behind the human tendency to assign responsibility to supernatural forces for omens and misfortunes, while neglecting the tangible human induced causes. This inclination to discern meaning and causation, influences the interpretation of events. For instance, in the face of the consequences arising from climate change, it was more convenient to ascribe blame to supernatural forces than to confront their actions. This discourages critical self-reflection and the imperative for engendering change and fostering a collective resignation towards their actions. In this regard, one of the participants, a community member reiterated, *Nan gun da muke, Mahallici ne ya bamu, don haka, kome yin sa ne*, which means “This place was given to us by the one who created us, therefore, whatever happens to it has been willed by him.”

The statement above reveals the people’s deliberate separation from their activities, weaving it into a broader cosmic plan. This to a large extent distances them from the responsibility of finding solutions to the problem of climate change. The response is consistent with the tenets of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which assumes that individuals act rationally according to their attitudes and subjective norms. This forms a backdrop for their decisions. Such a mindset poses an impediment to proactive measures. Therefore, there was a deliberate attempt to demystify these thoughts during the discussion. This is because while finding meaning and solace in the divine is inherent in human nature, it should not serve as a justification to evade accountability for human actions and their repercussions. Thus, the fact that persistent adherence to existing practices perpetuates some of the challenges they face was further brought to the fore. It can be averred, therefore, that subjective norms and normative beliefs were significant predictors of the people’s behaviour. Thus, the people’s attitude towards their environment influences their actual behaviour.

The people commented on and further appreciated their newfound insight. The discussion exposed the fact that the people were not aware that some of their practices affect the climate. The discussion which involved the locals exposed the fact that the people are unaware that some of the causes of climate change are oftentimes man-made. They further understood that climate has changed and that the changes result in a wide range of negative effects on health, agriculture, and livelihoods. When the discussions came to an end, they agreed that there is the need for a collective re-evaluation and proactive approach to address the climate change issues they experience. By implication, it is clear that based on the outcome of the Rijiyar Zaki experiment, climate change education is yet to penetrate many rural communities.

Another pertinent problem that was brought to the fore was the economic status of the people. Although, any population is at risk of experiencing the adverse effects of climate change, the activities of people pose a huge challenge. In this regard, another participant asked, *Idan an halasta abubuwan da ke was an kwakkwayon, me ake so mu yi tunda ba wata hanya?* That is, “If you ask us not to engage in those activities that were showcased in the drama, what exactly do you want us to do seeing that we have no other means?” The question revealed that financial challenges/ poverty has a huge impact on the activities of people towards their environment. Most of them are burdened by poverty as they struggle to earn a living, feed their families, and create

stable homes. Thus, they deploy every possible means to maximize dwindling resources. This explains why they engage in activities that place compounded stress on the environment.

They are unaware of the fact that the effects of climate change have the tendency to push them further into poverty. As explained to them in Act Three of the performance where Bilkisu explained the effect of their activities on the environment, the class went ahead to reiterate it. This was explained by one of the students, “Your activities threaten the cleanliness of the air, and limit food supply.” Almost immediately, an older man interjected, asking how that was possible. He was intimated on the fact that some of their lands may have been weakened, putting them at risk of depleted harvests that can cause hunger, poverty, and displacement. This is because soil, which is essential for healthy crops and ecosystems is being lost. The reason for climbing temperatures and declining rainfall experienced was further revealed.

Low income stands as an enabler of the social practices they engage, which in turn, affect the climate. It can be inferred that low income holds a seemingly unbreakable grip on the people. And this influences their behaviour, and instigates them to do what they do. Thus, as contained in the TPB, low income prompts the behaviour they exhibit towards their environment; hence, a link between economic hardship and behaviour. The implication of this is that more work needs to be done in making the populace understand the correlation between the environment and climate change in their communities. The socio-dramatic dialogue revealed that the people’s attitude towards their environment, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control significantly influence their activities. However, just as human behaviour is one of the drivers of climate change, it is equally a driver for its mitigation; hence, the need for targeted interventions. Through the use of socio-drama, the students were presented as social workers. This is contained in the words of Freire the “educator” as an intervener or social worker (63).

Conclusion

This study demonstrated how socio-drama can be used as an active and experiential method for research and service to society, using Rijiyar Zaki in Kano State, Nigeria as a point of departure for discussion and analysis. It reaffirmed the idea that drama is a useful community tool that can be used to wield social change. The study concretized its argument with the Rijiyar Zaki socio-dramatic dialogue where the problem of climate change was exposed with possible mitigation strategies. The Theory of Planned Behaviour as adopted helped to explain how attitudes, behavioural intention, subjective and social norms contribute to the populace’s attitude and behaviour towards climate change. This is evident in the finding which revealed that most of the people are unaware that their attitudes affect the climate. Thus, the socio-dramatic dialogue exposed them to the negative impact of their attitudes. They consequently resolve to desist from engaging in activities that instigate climate change. The study also revealed that climate change education is yet to penetrate many communities. Therefore, winning the fight against climate change will require a great effort. The fight must go beyond sloganeering; it requires a firm commitment to collective action, fuelled by

determination because the activities of humans remain the major causes of climate change.

Recommendations

Climate information ultimately needs to be part of every decision on future infrastructure, agriculture, and societal risk management strategy. There is a need for greater awareness and implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures in local communities in Nigeria. There is a need for environmental education in schools to empower children early about the dangers of climate change and their roles in mitigating them.

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