

Assessing Social Distinction as a Major Subject of Sierra Leonean Writing

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ABSTRACT

That which is given to humanity and passed down from generation to generation is called culture, and it encompasses a wide range of elements. There are hierarchies in every culture, with certain members of society held in more esteem than others. Age, position and social-status, class, cultural difference perception, gender, and many others are among the most obvious determinants of these differences. As they set out to write, Sierra Leonean authors examine these issues in order to create comments with the potential to alter the way people think about themselves and their place in the world.

The variables that, if internalized, will aid in reducing these social disparities appear in the chosen books. This study's main focus is on this very issue. The initiative's secondary goal is to raise consciousness about the value of Sierra Leonean literature and encourage its widest dissemination. Topics such as age, position and social standing, cultural perspective, and gender are crucial to this study's methodology. The results of a phenomenological study conducted with the assumption that these variables contribute to the observed divisions in Sierra Leone would be applied to the nation. Many authors from Sierra Leone, including Mallam Osman Sankoh (2001), Mohamed Gibril Sesay (2015), Joseph Ezekiel Thulla and Philip Yamba Thulla (2014), Oumar Farouk Sesay (2015), Jedidah Adyln Johnson, and others, have focused their writing on the challenges of achieving social justice in a society where class distinctions are widely held.

INTRODUCTION

In every culture, certain distinctions exist which elevate particular members of society above others. These distinctions most apparent determining factors are; Age, Position and Social-

when they set out to write discuss these factors to make statements that have potentials to shape the minds of people and the manner and reason people define themselves in relation to others that in most cases bring positive changes in the society. The works of Mallam Osman Sankoh, Mohamed GibrilSesay, Philip YambaThulla and Joseph Ezekiel Thulla, Oumar Farouk Sesay and JedidahOlayinkaAdlyn Johnson have been selected for careful scrutiny in this regard. It has been observed by many scholars like Runcan (2013), Rata's (2010), Khalili et al (2011), that the subject of social distinctions is prominent in their writing.

The selected texts seem to present such factors which, if imbibed, will help in curbing these social distinctions. This is the concern of this research. Its additional thrust is to create awareness and maximize the possible benefits Sierra Leonean Literature can produce. The conduct of this research is based on discussing the subjects of social distinctions like; Age, position and social status, cultural perception and gender. Using a phenomenological approach with the views that, its outcome would be applied to Sierra Leone, a country that has been observed to be divided along the factors outlined above. Studies have shown as Mallam Osman Sankoh (2001), Mohamed GibrilSesay(2015), Joseph Ezekiel Thulla and Philip YambaThulla (2014), Oumar Farouk Sesay (2015), Jedidah Adlyn Johnson and others, that most Sierra Leoneans writers have directed their discussions based on pertinent issues of social distinctions and it has repaid attention in the sense that, with the established views of social stratification, equity has posed a challenge in most Sierra Leonean societies. This initial chapter deals with the following sub-headings:

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research aims at discussing the subjects of social distinctions as portrayed in some of the works of Sierra Leonean writers.

The objectives of this research are to:

- i. Highlight areas in the texts that portray the factors of distinctions;
- ii. To explain how the authors are able to put points across that would let Sierra Leoneans be aware about social distinctions;

distinctions.

- iv. Explain the factors' immediate and implied social appeals of social distinctions.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Distinctions – differences in perception or beliefs among people
2. Age – difference in growth and experience
3. Position- achievement and successes in the society
4. Class - level or category in which people belong
5. Gender – category of sex (male\ female)
6. Culture – a way of perceiving things or doing things
7. R.U.F – Revolutionary United Front (rebel fighters)
8. Temne, Mende, Kono, Fulas, Limba- tribes in Sierra Leone
9. Ataya base- a meeting point to drink and discuss issues of the day
10. Gang and cliques- groups formed for violent activities
11. Or moray- Islamic member perceived to possess invisible powers
12. Dreams- are perceived to be true future happenings
13. Pan bodi- a place to live in made of corrugated iron sheets
14. Freedom fighters- those who secure the freedom for the people at the expense of their lives
15. Tap tomi- women that can easily sleep with men without being married
16. Kananka- chameleon that would change its color or appearance
17. Maraka - one of the business tribes in Sierra Leone that are respected for their honest dealings
18. Thuma – one's name sake or share similarities
19. Colonel Ranka- higher rank soldier that display foolishness or involve in unlikely situations

RESEARCH QUESTION

This research aims to give clear answers to the problems of distinctions as in Age difference, Class, Position- social status, Culture, Gender and others. Despite efforts to curtail these distinctions seeming effective with challenges. The uncompromising difficulties posed by these distinctions creates divide and differences which give room for an investigation into causes of distinctions and possible means to quell down these distinctions. However, Sierra Leonean writers have galvanized efforts to discuss these distinctions in their writing which creates a platform for Sierra Leoneans to become aware and to minimize these distinctions. The writing of Sierra Leoneans by and large seeks to implore all and sundry for a change in the perceptions like- racism (moral superiority) treatment given to strangers, cultural barriers in the society, the perceptions about wealth, misuse of women and many more, will be the main thrust of this research.

The prevailing conditions for social distinctions have gripped the minds of Sierra Leoneans. Their rights and opportunities have been deprived with certain behaviors like jealousy; malicious practices such as neglect of others rights and dignity, political sycophancy and others. The unfair treatment could lead to disgruntled minds that might show off negative reactions. Efforts to restore or level the ambient circumstances of social distinctions seem to be ongoing with less achievable claims to quell the social distinctions. Prominent organizations and bodies like: Anti-Corruption Commission, Legal Aid Board and Human Right Organizations are expected to contribute in minimizing these problems of social distinctions through advocacy and legal means, would minimize the rate of social distinctions. Embracing or utilizing Sierra Leonean Literature will help in providing answers to these factors or wedge the gap of social distinctions. The political landscape envisages the overwhelming misuse of youthful energy that would exert their support to political figures that have involved associations like Supporters clubs, Ataya base clubs and youth clubs which have left their dreams unfulfilled, resulting to youth having pessimistic outlook generally on life. The youth could only show off behaviour patterns that are personally and socially debilitating-prance around in violent dresses belonging to gangs and cliques marauding houses at night and involving in broad-day light robbery, engaging in

Si Leonean writers as a potent substitute in discussing their subjects which are ultimately the focus of the dissertation.

However, this work would benefit writers of Literature and others (sociologists, historians) educational cycles (Ministry of Education, West African Examinations Council, Teachers and Tutors of Literature, Pupils and Students of Literature and Future Researchers). Thoughtful considerations would be made by the educational circles (Ministry of Education Science and Technology) for the inclusion of some of these texts in the curriculum and Literature syllabus. This work enhances the benefits for future writers to be able to internalize issues of social distinctions in the Sierra Leonean context. A swift reaction from readers and future researchers would be to promote and include these writings as part of their quest to make Sierra Leoneans aware about social distinctions and the effects they would likely cause. It is important that, if these distinctions are understood and moderated would inject good morals in the Sierra Leonean society. Meanwhile, this work should benefit literature writers who would be able to present a more comprehensive analysis of this nature with the use of other writers and texts. This intention would help to change the direction from which Sierra Leonean Literature was before and even now perceived (as less effective or discuss trivial issues) and of which purpose it was read in Sierra Leone. In other words, this study would instill positive feelings about Sierra Leonean texts works and would seem more relevant to readers, for they place values like acceptance and tolerance for one another, love and empathy etc that are fit to be adopted in Sierra Leone.

In addition, a study of this nature if promoted effectively in schools, colleges, universities and political circles, could stimulate awareness and help to unify various people and groups within these institutions. This study would also lead to a better understanding and would make clear of the usefulness and the roles of Sierra Leonean Literature to moderate social distinctions in the society. Sierra Leoneans are encouraged to pay keen attention to works of Sierra Leoneans. This would stimulate others with expression of actions reflecting the views of writers that would solve the problems of social distinctions. The expansive views of Sierra Leoneans discussing social distinctions can serve as a social remedy not only for Sierra Leoneans but serves as an open appeal that cuts across nations. The writing of Sierra Leonean is capable of addressing the problems of social distinctions by mastering and adopting the ideas put across that expose social distinctions.

Finally, it is hoped that this work will send a message and create an awareness that would propagate the importance of discussing social distinctions and would serve as useful reference for instruction and research by both students and teachers. It will give the study of Sierra Leonean Literature a very special place in our educational system. Conducting a research of this nature offered an exciting challenge, due to the newness of some texts and the importance of reading them. The researcher struggled to raise the finances for transportation fares and to purchase the research materials. The relevant materials cannot be easily accessed at one point; one has to visit different libraries in Makeni, Warima and Freetown to purchase the required books of Sierra Leonean writers. Another constraint is to maintenance his motorbike (with the purchase of rain-gears due to the rainy season) that is the means of transportation from Makeni to Bo and through Njala (Makonde) to meet my supervisor.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The background to a study on the social distinctions as subject matter explored in the works of some Sierra Leonean writers, as required here, brings certain considerations into focus.

- I. Age distinctions
- II. Position and Social-status distinctions
- III. Class distinctions
- IV. Cultural difference\Perception
- V. Gender distinctions

This chapter describes in detail the research design as it is done in three ways:

Phenomenological Approach: this method is used to effectively discuss the issues of distinction as they are expressed through the conduct of semi-structured interviews that help to reveal the experiences of the writers as to how they feel and perceive things. It seeks to bring out these experiences through posing questions to authors that have contributed to the topic under review. The text analysis help to bring out issues of distinction like Age, Class, Position-social status, Cultural difference, Gender and more. The questions are focused on retrieving direct views, thoughts and experiences of writers and why. Texts are referenced and applied to fully capture their thoughts about social distinctions. The researcher interviews the writers, due to their presence or availability of these writers.

in discussing social distinctions without sourcing credible materials from the internet. Websites like Google and Yahoo were visited to source materials that have a bearing to Social distinctions. It serves to complement the views and discussions of writers put forward in their works. Scholars are being quoted to lay emphasis in this discussion of social distinctions.

Library Method- the researcher perused the Regional library in Makeni for the purpose of extensive research. This is to capture the works about scholars that have contributed in discussing social distinctions in various fields as in philosophy, sociology, politics and religion.

The research hypothesis is centered on determining whether “Literature has the moderating effect on human conduct with regards to social distinctions”. In this regard, the researcher has endeavored to review some Sierra Leonean writing in the usefulness of literature to address social distinctions; reviewing claims that Sierra Leonean writers are concerned with social distinctions, collecting and evaluating information about Sierra Leonean successes in this direction, and finally presenting these materials and recommendations as evidences of the outcomes in Sierra Leone.

Referance :

- 1Palmer E, (2000) Wey Den Say? Den Say KapuSehnsNorKapu word
- 2Coker, C) The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar
- 3Palmer, E (2000) The Growth of the African Novel
- 4Wood & E. (2002) Gender Differences and Social Behaviour
- 5Markus (2007) Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
- 6DeAngelis Tori Class Differences vol,46 no.2
- 7Piff (2014) Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin