

WESTERN INFLUENCE ON IGBO CULTURAL VALUES AND ETHICS: THE FARWORD

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Abstract

As diversified as the human nature and communities are characterized, there remains the solemn tendency of exertion of projection and control by every group of people who believe and share same aspirations, motives, goal, sentiments and fears. These act as guide in their adventure of sojourning their immediate environment for their own progress and betterment. Prerequisites to near peaceful cohabitation which necessitates acceptance and subsequent tolerance are all embodied in their culture and tradition. They include; language, food, marriage, spirituality, etc. In the world today, it is glaringly obvious that every race, ethnic group and community try as much as they can to maintain their control and protection of their culture and tradition in fear of gradual or sudden extinction. However, lose cultures and traditions today are prone to cold war against the influence of foreign cultures which penetrate so easily now through internet technology. Unfortunately, the consciousness is overwhelming and gradually, the younger generations who happen to exist momentarily alongside the era tend to subconsciously jettison their various indigenous cultural and Traditional values, embracing the foreign ones which they perceive simple. Some of Igbo cultural values in marriage, food, language and spirituality are the most affected by westernization. They have been tampered with to an extent, perceived as archaic, stressful and barbaric. Based on this, an empirical description is adopted in this piece to identify the various ways westernization has tried

displacing the indigenous cultural values of Igbo. The piece further recommended that the whole situation is not a war, but misunderstanding and reactions of generations globally. It further suggests that cultures can coexist as long as the core indigenous ones are respected inasmuch as they are not inimical to the natives.

Keywords: Western, Igbo, Culture, Ethnics, Forward

Introduction

All over the world, people in every society take pains, devote time and attention to educate the young ones to be functional adults. In most cases, these pains, devotion of time and attention to the training of young ones are geared towards impacting and transmitting culture and social knowledge that will enable them fit well in the society, and physical environment of the society in which they live. In the process of impacting the social and cultural knowledge to the young ones, different socio-cultural values and norms are used (Anagbogu, 2001: 70).

Igbo cultures (Omenala ndi Igbo) are the customs, practices and traditions of the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. They consist of ancient practices as well as new concepts added into the Igbo culture either by cultural evolution or by outside influence. These customs and traditions include the Igbo people's visual art, music and dance forms, as well as their attire, cuisine and language dialects. Because of their various subgroups, the variety of their culture is heightened further (Wikipedia, 2021)

From time immemorial, the Igbo ethnic group had cultures and traditions which are transferred from generation to generation. As people who existed before civilization, cultures and traditions were regarded as the embodiment of ethics, norms and values which are watchdogs to people's behaviors and actions and thus, it helped in maintaining a peaceful and progressive coexistence in Igbo ancient communities. Hardly were there wars or communal fights because the natives were well behaved according respect to those cultural values. Erroneously, other ethnic groups postulate that the Igbos have no king and thus, they are not loyal people. It is a verifiable fact that the Igbos are more political, liberal and progressive than every other people and their society is not devoid of respected statutory

positions such as Igwe, Onowu, Ndi ichie, Ndi nze na Ozo, Isi opkara and otu ogbo. Based on their various capacities, they all have some level of influence in the Igbo society even till date.

On the other hand, the Igbo youths of the current age could be seen as people who had through their interaction with the white man's formal educational and cultural practices, adroitly or partially abandoned the cultural heritage of the Igbo people formerly and at present have their way of living which is common among them, but the cultural pattern had been gradually relegated to the extent that one can hardly identify an Igbo man with his living pattern. The truth is that the pervasive drive in our present day youths seems to make them naturally open to all kinds of pervasions which are provoked by western traditions where legalization of all kinds of abominable practices and all these are sold to our young ones just in a push of button through all the available mass media (Udechukwu, 2022). She further asserted that unfortunately and most regrettably today, immoralities and their practices are now the sailing- point or the incentive that foster a high patronage of the products from the present day entertainment industries. The 21st century uncensored display of immoralities are now on majority of the entertainment TV cable channels, most of the lucrative musical videos today are the sexually provocative ones, our home movies today are alarmingly characterized with nudity advertisement of all kinds of sexual misconducts like, lesbianism or gay sexual relationship, sexual promiscuity among others. All these have been on the negative effects on human and economic development. (Udechukwu 2022)

Some Igbo Cultural Values

Values are important things in the daily life of society. That is anything getting importance in our daily life then becomes our values. The origin of values is not biological but it is a social production. While living in society, the values develop. Values depend upon the culture; culture varies from society to society and thus values are different in every social situation. The culture is full of values and can transmit from one generation to another. It is the cultural value of people that make them have "Norms" Norms are the rules and the guidelines which specify the behavior of an individual in a society. Norms keep a person within the boundary of society and its culture. It gives restriction about something which to do and which not to

do. It moulds our behavior and gives us knowledge about wrong and right. The action or conduct of one man within the community can affect the other members for good or for evil. In other to prevent man from becoming rebellious and thus endangering the welfare of the society, there set patterns or code of behavior for the individual and community as a whole. There are certain standards or norms to be observed. These norms can be seen as moral values. (Udechukwu 2022)

Prevalently, no Igbo cultural value is instituted with a negative purpose for both natives and strangers who wish to cohabit with them. They are mostly excerpts from natural laws which could also be likened to the God's commandments in Christian faith. First of all, there is this utter recognition and loyalty to a supreme being called "Chukwu" whom is believed to be the originator and initiator of everyone and everything. In whatever prayer or libation to be said, his existence must be recognized before calling on the gods and ancestors. Other values include respect for parents and elders in the family and outside, good character worthy of emulation, preparation of our food and mode of dressing among others. These good values are inculcated in every Igbo child at tender age with also some provisions for social interactions and activities evident in Igbo literature. This encompasses music, songs, proverbs, riddles, jokes, folklores and plays. The stories are characterized by adventures of brave warriors and men, good deeds, bad ones and their various rewards. They also contain love, trust and care from one human to another. Family ties, which throws light on the responsibilities of fathers, mothers and children in the family and also a reversal consequence resulting from failures of anyone in discharging his/her obligation. For instance, in families, the duty of the father is provision of shelter, food which they provide by cultivating in their farm lands and with their barns used in storing yams, and mostly the protection and security of the family. The mother takes charge of the kitchen and cooking of food, and the children contribute immensely when they grow up by keeping the compound neat every early morning, fetching fire wood and availing themselves for other errands. Glaringly, there is the concept of division of labour in the native Igbo family of old.

Unfortunately, today, the present generation exists alongside technological advancements of westernization, accepted it, embraced and imbibed it to the extent it becomes a source of distraction to those who are fragile in their

will power to assert self control and discipline. Inasmuch as the western formal education is advantageous too, it is sad that Igbo cultural practices are now facing considerations of abandonment by today's Igbo youths.

(Udechukwu 2022) argued: The truth is that the pervasive drive in our present day youths seems to make them naturally open to all kinds of pervasions which are provoked by western traditions where legalization of all kinds of abominable practices and all these are sold to our young ones just in a push of button through all the available mass media. Unfortunately and most regrettably today, immoralities and their practices are now the sailing- point or the incentive that foster a high patronage of the products from the present day entertainment industries. The 21st century uncensored display of immoralities are now on majority of the entertainment TV cable channels, most of the lucrative musical videos today are the sexually provocative ones, our home movies today are alarmingly characterized with nudity advertisement of all kinds of sexual misconducts like, lesbianism or gay sexual relationship, sexual promiscuity among others. All these have been on the negative effects on human and economic development.

It is even sadder that some choices our youth make today affect them negatively but because of the mindset to impress people, they still fall prey to self destruction. For instance, bleaching and tattooing of the body is never part of Igbo women's culture until in recent time. Funny enough, the word "bleaching" itself sounds negative to most people's understanding especially those who know the after effect on the body, so they have changed the name to "organic skin care", but their outcomes are same. Although medically, bleaching of skin is proven to cause kidney damage, our young women find a bizarre solace in toning their skin colours as they feel they look prettier with fair skin.

Igbo cultures influenced by European Societal Characteristics Marriage

In Igbo culture, there is a belief that in-laws are automatically related by marriage. The union initiates a long lasting relationship between families of the bride and groom. Before the union, series of consultations and deliberations are conducted by both families. The groom first visits the family of the bride for introduction and the bride's family also makes consultations as to ascertain the family background of the bride to be.

When all these are concluded, the union is blessed by the parents if the bride on a fixed date when everyone would be present. Upon this, there is a significant exercise which creates the scene of the blessings by the bride's father. It is the handing of a cup of fresh palm wine to the bride for her to go out in search of her husband to be among the crowd. She moves about and would be wooed by men gathered as to test her allegiance to her man. At the end, she finds him amidst the crowd and kneels to give him the cup to drink. This is believed to seal the trust between the two families and whence this is done, the marriage blessing will be showered on them immediately after. The palm wine signifies naturalism, which is projected into the fresh marriage.

Today, some overzealous Christians have substituted the palm wine to Eva wine or malt drink. Citing that palm wine is alcohol and as Christians, they shouldn't drink. Morse so, some churches make the mistake of conducting wedding ceremony for couples without seeking approval from both parents of the bride and groom which is way out of Igbo culture. In Igbo culture, divorce is never encouraged. The stigmatization alone can cause depression to a woman. But today, it is as if divorce is encouraged. Most ladies today have plenty reasons to stay out of marriage or become single mothers. This is one influence of westernization.

Child Raising

In Igbo culture, it is believed that a child is not trained by its own parents alone. It is a collective responsibility of parents especially in communities. A parent must react citing a child misbehaving irrespective of the fact that it's his or her child. Parents especially mothers spend time mentoring and tutoring children in line with Igbo ethics and values. Some decades ago, children try to finish cores at home as to be allowed to engage in social activities in evening. Sometimes, they gather around a tree in the compound and tell stories in the moonlight. Today, children are engaged with phones and tablets as leisure and the screens are affecting their eyes. The level of exposure children had then help in building agility and vigor in carrying out domestic activities as to be compared with children of today. (Udechukwu 2022) argued that Igbo traditional education also produced children whose characters and behavioural patterns were excellent. In these days, young girls were thought to behave themselves at all time for them to get married. Okonkwo in *Things fall apart* portrayed

this well, when he commanded Ezimma to sit like a woman (Achebe, 1958: 40-41). This was said when Ezimma was not sitting properly before his father Okonkwo and when she was asking her father question while she was eating, forgetting that Igbo child is taught about table manner i.e. people should not talk when they are eating because pepper may go down the wrong way.

Fashion

No culture projects nudity and indecency in their mode of dressing. The Chinese, Greek, Japanese, Indians, Thais, etc showcase and depict their decency especially in their movies. Their women have sincere regards for their bodies. The Igbos also have much regard undressing culture too. Igbo women do not expose their bodies no matter the clothing. In Nigeria, the likes of late Mrs Dora Akunyili of blessed memory, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala and Mrs Chimamanda Adichie are good examples of Igbo women who dress decently and are still revered in their walks of life. It is quite unfortunate that in all to copy from the west, our young ladies choose indecency in the guise of looking sexy, fly, and confident of their bodies.

Food

Igbo native foods are complete representations of balanced diets. Especially soup and garri. Some of the vegetables used in making soup are herbs that serve health purposes. Examples are uziza, utazi, onugbu (bitter leaf), nchuanwu (scent leaf) and añara leaf. Fortunately, these leaves are constructively used in making foods and one will wonder why there was super health and longevity decades ago. Today, the story changed with the influx of processed foods like tomatoes sauce, noddles, hot dog, etc. The hidden truth is that processed foods are preserved with chemicals which are inimical to the health of the consumers. On the aspect of natural drinks, people refer drinks like zobo, kunu and tiger nuts as filthy, but embrace the cocked ones which are preserved with harmful contents. This is the reason there is much cases of cancer and kidney failures in our society today.

The youth

The youth are the most indispensable part of every society. In Igbo culture, the progressiveness and future of the youth is given a commendable

security immediately after primary or secondary education. The Igbos run an apprenticeship business inclination where a young boy is taken to a successful businessman as apprentice for a period of years and he will be settled and starts his own business empire. This idea has produced more millionaires in Igbo land. However, the youth of today finds it hard to adopt this idea because they feel they are going to waste those years. Aside that, there are also many skills one can acquire and become a professional later. However, so many of them choose fraudulent online activities, drug peddling and other illegal activities that seem easy for them. The internet is the main aid to this, irrespective of the fact that it is more beneficial to users. The same youth device means to engage in smooth malpractices refusing to study and sit for examinations. It is so sad that today, some schools add examination malpractice fees and parents pay hoping that their results come out in flying colours. This is one of the reasons we have many half baked doctors, lawyers, engineers etc in our various systems today. Anagbogu (2005) affirms that the major effect of immorality on the youths is that the youths for one reason or another drop out of schools which end them up in abject frustration in life. In the other hand, those who grudgingly complete their stay in schools without hard works, come out of the schools with very poor results or where they make good results, do so through crooked means- hence not being able to defend the certificates they parade.

Conclusion

If Igbo cultural values are worthless, Igbos all the way in USA will not be spending so much celebrating Igbo cultures over there for their younger ones to learn. Culture defines and gives background to someone. Inasmuch as westernization has cut so deep into the lives of Igbos today, the olden ethics and norms preserved by our ancestors and elders should be inculcated into the lives of the younger generations so that they will not go into extinct.

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