

## IGBO CULTURE, NEW TRENDS AND FUTURE HOPE

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### **Abstract**

*Culture is characteristically dynamic, hence, there is new trends in virtually all aspects of Igbo cultural life. Some of the new trends in the culture are progressive, while some are retrogressive. This paper x-rays some aspects of Igbo cultural life, the way they were, as well as how modernity has affected their practices both negatively and positively. This paper will immensely benefit scholars of African cultural studies. The writers adopted the functional culture theory to support the research efforts in the areas of culture concept, aspects of some Igbo cultural practices in their original forms, some aspects of Igbo culture that have been affected by the new trends, and the effects of these modernity. The paper used survey research method, and with a critical analytical discourse, discovers and concludes that some new trends in African culture impacted on the society positively while some have negative impact. The paper recommends caution while deviating from the usual ways of doing things that pertain to the culture of the people. Also those aspects of African culture that are negative and repugnant should be done away with.*

**Keywords:** Culture, New Trends, Dynamism, Modernity, Progressive.

### **Introduction**

Life is dynamic, so also culture, which changes from one system of doing things to the other. The Igbo of the South Eastern Nigeria have their ways and methods of doing things that are peculiar to them. In the olden days the traditional Igbo society was inclined to doing their building construction with mud (for the body of the house) and thatch (for the roof of the house). Presently, the trend has changed into the era of cement, blocks, stones, chippings, aluminum roofing sheets, tiles, P.O.P ceilings, screeding as well as the introduction of many imported building materials and building designs.

This emerging trends also affect other spheres of Igbo cultural life, economically, socially, educationally and religion. Colonialism, development and interaction, exposure to foreign cultures have so much influenced the Igbo culture, in such a manner that in some aspects of the new trends, there seem to be a weak connection between the usual way of doing things and the modern way of life. That is to say that in as much as the new trend brings a whole lot of innovation and facelift with it, there are still areas where it is found wanting in addressing the needs of the people, areas where the old ways of doing things are preferable to the new trends. It therefore calls for a synergy and balance of ideas between the old ways of life and the current trends in order to maximize their benefit.

## **Culture**

Culture may be described as the generality of peoples' way of life, which includes the way they deal with their environment, arts and different life situations. Culture also includes what people eat, their dressing, language, all the things they are generally known for and the way they do their things. Culture also influences the way a society reasons as well as their output, that is to say that culture identifies a society. Okorji and Ezebuilo, (2014), as cited in Ezebuilo, (2020: 87) states "Culture addresses the ways in which people understand their relationship to the social world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the people understand the possibilities for the future". Society goes a long way in influencing the culture of a people, because culture exists out of one's interaction with one's society (environment) showing that culture is not gotten biologically, rather learnt from the society where one finds one's self.

Hudson, (1980: 78), explains culture as "the knowledge, which one acquires socially by virtue of the person being a member of a specific society". By way of classification, culture can be classified into two, tangible and intangible culture. Tangible culture is a product of concrete objects and what a group of people have materially, like house, vehicles and other properties, while the intangible culture is made up of beliefs, behavioural patterns and ideas of a people. (Umeodinke, 2020: 58).

Abakare, (2009: 3) defines culture as "the complex totality of man acquisitions of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs, technology, etc, which are stored and transmitted from generation to generation".

Culture can only be mentioned in connection with a people in a society and since it is beyond personal characteristics, it outlives an individual or a set of people. The only circumstance where a people's culture may disappear completely is in a case of total annihilation or wipe out as a result of natural disasters or chemical weapon. Abakare, (2009: 3). Culture functions in the formation of both the individual and the society. It differentiates one social group from the other. It makes society to exist as well as provide all the necessary things it will take to make the society work. (Igbokwe, 2013: 274).

All cultures are dynamic and constantly changing as individuals navigate and negotiate the beliefs, values, ideas, ideals, norms and meaning systems that make up the cultural environment in which they live.( [newprairiepress.org](http://newprairiepress.org)>). Cultural dynamism therefore implies the ability to do away with negative cultural practices, while positive aspects are guarded jealously. This is also a way of fostering universally acceptable cultural norms and practices ending much of the cultural based conflicts. [www.newtimes.co.rw](http://www.newtimes.co.rw)>[section](#)>[read](#). In a general sense, cultural dynamism encompasses the numerous aspects of culture that continue to change and evolve based on major external forces in human life.

### **Functionalist Theory Of Culture**

Functionalism considers culture as an interrelated whole not a collection of isolated traits. Like a human being has various organs that are interconnected and necessary for the body to function correctly, so society is a system of interconnected parts that make the whole function.

Functionalism, in social science is a theory based on the premise that all aspects of a society – institutions, roles, norms, etc, serve a purpose and that all are indispensable for the long term survival of the society. [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)>[topic](#)>[functionalism](#). Structural Functionalist acknowledges that there are many parts of culture that work together as a system to fulfill society's needs and to promote stability.

### **New Trends in Igbo Culture**

New trends usually begin with urbanization, which according to Ofoegbu, (1982: 198) “is a process of change involving an increase in the proportion of total population concentrated in towns and cities relative to the population in the rural area”.

This new trend informs about change in patterns of behavior and values which are derived from coming together at one location by huge number of people with difference. This value and behavioural changes are followed by full commitment and involvement of the new urban city residents in the new urban way of life. This new way of life restricts an individual from the usual old way of life, for instance a committed family man who was known for spending quality time with his family, extended family and other kits and kin now spends more time at his place of work and other businesses, so much that the little time he can scratch out will be for his immediate family. New trend involves changes in ways of behavior that has to do with reformation of the urban resident, in the areas of his style of life and that of his family, value placement and pursued interests. Ofoegbu, (1982: 199)

From the above inferences, new trends means new ways or current ways, styles, materials and systems of doing things that could bring a change, improvement, upgrade and new era from the old ways and manners of doing the same thing. New trends, new ways or introduction of current styles of doing things is usually good and brings a new

lease of life, but not without its negative implications, especially in the areas of perceptions, misconception, abuse and wrong application.

This paper will now look into some aspects of Igbo cultural life, the way they were and how much the new trends have affected them positively and also negatively, (where applicable).

### **Some Igbo Cultural practices and New Trend:**

#### **Traditional Education**

Traditional education is the foremost, basic and most effective form of education. In Igbo traditional society, every mentor is either learning or teaching, parents served as role models who monitor the daily activities of their children.

According to Okeke, (1982: 16),

Prior to the coming of Europeans, Ndi Igbo educated themselves and their children. At that time, traditional education was fully capable of supplying the necessary ingredients to maintain the levels of social, economic, technical and cultural attainments of the society.

Traditional education starts from birth and unconsciously goes on to shape the power of a person, his habits formation, training of his ideas as well as stimulating his emotions. Okeke, (1984) as cited in Apakama, (2019:16) says that this methods of education “... were efficient in those days and were fitting for life”. The main principles of African traditional education formed the foundation of Igbo traditional education. This form of education was able to prepare the child to be able to confront the future, as well as learn their values, norms and even the taboos and belief systems.(Apakama,2019:16).

#### **Moral/family Education**

Moral training, mostly as it affects the family gives much attention to the dos and don'ts in the family cultural life. There are kinds of utterances that cannot be tolerated from the child. Swearing falsely, stealing, fighting and other misdemeanor were strongly frowned at. Attending to household chores like sweeping, washing of plates and clothes, personal hygiene, like washing of face and chewing stick before tasting food were part of the family norms. In this family education a child learnt how to respect elders and superiors whose names were prefixed with Ndaa, Deede or Dee, according to one's dialect speech community. A child willingly surrenders his chair for an elder to sit on. Most remarkably was that in the traditional Igbo society, girls and boys can play during the moonlight games though they may be naked or half naked, yet none of them will express any sexual feelings because they knew if they do there is no way one of them at least, will not report them to their parents and part of their punishment will

require parading them before the people and because of this no child will like to experience such stigma which goes with mockery and names calling.

Traditional education offered the children the opportunity for character molding. In a traditional Igbo society, a child who has penchant for stealing from the pot was usually disgraced. It was very rare for a child to consciously pass flatulence to the notice of the elders to avert the heavy knock that could fall on his head.

In the words of Ukay (1966: 34), "... they are trained to show implicit obedience to parents and superiors, and to be transparently honest, and never tell lies".

In Igbo cultural life good character was held with the highest premium, hence the say "Ezi aha ka ego" (good character surpasses wealth).

### **Mental/Intellectual Education**

Mental education in traditional Igbo society was a way of making a child to reason and ponder deeply. The ability to weigh and access an incident in relation to one's experience in order to form a concept. The Igbo have always championed mental development on their children, and this they achieved through these exercises, in Okereke, (1982: 19)

The proverbs, the riddles, the ideation of 'chi' and 'anyanwu la ezeelu', the ability to distinguish between a killing herb and a healing one - all these constitute a veritable store house of intellectual exercise" "... proverbs and riddles are used to hide a saying from the ordinary turn of mind. They help in selecting and analyzing issues and problems of the moment. Traditional education exposed the Igbo to this training.

The Igbo value proverbs so much that the ability to understand proverbs qualifies one as intelligent and reasonable. That's why Okonkwo (1997: 99), says,

Igbo proverbs reveals a lot about the Igbo themselves. The Igbo proverb is the experience and wisdom of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression; while some natives quote the Bible, or the works or maxims of acknowledged authorities or wise men; or from a carefully worked out code of law, the Igbo quote proverbs (the time honoured wisdom of their folk) to support and give authority and authenticity to an idea or a disputed fact.

The most benefitted by the wealth of Igbo proverbs are those children that always stay with the elders. They also enjoy folk tales, which is another avenue of impacting wisdom on children in Igbo traditional society. The folktales abound in Igbo culture. They are veritable means of teaching morals, create amusement and laughter, uncover the foolishness of the people as well as applaud the commendable behaviours of the people. Some folktales are basically for entertainment, using musical effect and others talk about the myths and the Igbo belief in natural phenomena. (Okonkwo, 1976: 110).

### **Vocational Education in Igbo Culture**

In a traditional Igbo society job related training or “handiwork” was well regarded. People were preoccupied with farming, where they engaged in cash crops production, rearing animals, fishing and the processing of their bye-products. Parents practically taught their children how to farm, both in the gardens and in the farm. They were informed about the sacred market days when nobody is expected to be in the farm. They also got abreast with the shifting cultivation or crop rotation farming methods, trying to, identify the farming year when a particular farmland was ripe for cultivation. They were enlightened on how to use waste products from the domestic animals to form manure, which were deposited into the farms to help nourish the crops for an increased yield and output harvest.

Talking about agriculture as a dominant sector in traditional Igbo society, Korie, (2007: 126), while citing Olaudah Eqivano, (1788, posits, “Agriculture is our chief employment, and everyone, even the children and women are engaged in it. Thus we are all habituated to labor from our earliest years”.

Agriculture/farming usually is the foremost vocation acquired by children in Igbo society.

In the area of crafts and trades, the traditional Igbo society engaged their children in apprenticeship which served as their system of education and training. What they learnt include wine-tapping and palm fruit cutting, weaving, dying, hunting, making of mats, building, carving, dress making, carpentry, painting, food selling, decorating, traditional medicine and very many others.

Some families are known for certain trade and skills. Such families inherited such skills from their forebears, and they guard it jealously. These families are always referred to whenever their services are required. Some of those special skills include – rain making, orthopedics, psychiatrics, midwifery, and other branches of traditional medicine. Anyanwu, (2021: personal communication).

### **The Igbo Dress Orientation**

Far from the old belief that the Igbo and the people of Southeastern Nigeria either “were moving about nude or were putting on scanty loin cloth in the olden days” archaeological findings have proved that the tradition of cloth making or textile industry has been in existence before the white man rule. Ofoegbu, (1975: 211), says, “

... the occupational pursuit of the Igbo before their contact with Europeans emphasized the profession of weaving and dress making. Some parts of Igbo land grew cotton. Strips of cotton tread were spun and woven into cloth on handloom. The spinning of cotton and the weaving of spin cotton into cloth were specialties of women.

The Igbo further produced Akwaete George which formed their common dressing as they produced different design of it.

### **Igbo Architecture and construction**

The Igbo made use of the building/construction materials available in their localities. Mostly used were mud, which they dug from the ground, thatch which they produced from the palm leaf the bamboo, the bamboo twine rope, and in some cases plank. Igbokwe and Omire (2020: 13) buttress,

“The traditional Igbo society predominantly made use of thatch and mud in constructing their houses. In order to get the quality texture of the mud needed for the construction, a deep excavation is made and is mixed with clay, sand and silt in order to serve as a building material. The clay makes it to be strong and cohesive, while the sand helps to resist water damages”.

Housing constructions in those days were mainly of simple plans and designs like one room, two rooms, three or four mostly in straight form.

This paper has been able to give a hint on how some aspect of Igbo cultural life served the people of that era, before the introduction of new trends and changes in those manners of doing things.

The following part of this work will look into the introduction of new trends in these various aspects of Igbo culture, and how they have affected the people either positively or negatively or both.

### **New Trends in some aspects of Igbo Culture**

New trends in Igbo culture basically means culture change which is bound to happen to the people’s way of life after a long time, based on what is encountered in the society.

According to Spacey, (2018), “Culture change is change that occurs over time to the shared way of life of a group. This emerges with the experiences of a society traditional culture, organization, super culture or sub culture”.

Spacey further explains that changes could take place under the following areas – Invention, Economy, Globalization, War and disaster, ideas, Aesthetics, Rights and freedoms, Law, Design, Infrastructure, Health, Education, Environment, Art, Music, Literature, Media and Leadership.

The above enumeration covers virtually all facets of human living that form the culture of the people. What this work has been able to do is to look at some aspects of Igbo way of life as a representation of the generality of their culture.

### **New Trends in Education Culture**

Education in Igbo culture has almost shifted from its traditional grassroots to the western system, which takes off from the day-care to kindergarten and from there upwards. Features of new trends in education include, the introduction of qualified and trained teachers, organized school system, unified curriculum, school buildings and

infrastructure, instructional materials, electronic system of teaching, information and technological advancement in teaching and learning, to mention but a few.

While appreciating the emergence of new trends in the educational culture of the people, which introduced new lease of life and improved teaching and learning, this paper is not without a reservation, considering how the new trends in education has drowned the traditional education and orientation that starts from the family. In this era, children are left at the mercy of their day-care attendants and kindergarten teachers thereby losing the parental nurture and directions. Quality times is no longer spent with the family, no time for moonlight games, folktales, riddles and jokes, from where the children receive orientation about morals and other values of life. Children of this age now spend quality time watching television, movies, video games and their phone mobile applications.

In view of the fact that the educational institutions graduate their students who are satisfactorily found worthy both in character and learning, how far has the new trend in education helped a child to achieve this worthiness in character?

### **New Trends in Agriculture**

In Igbo culture agriculture which was practiced in small scale, served the purpose of providing food for the family, and a little more for exchange. They practiced shifting cultivation as they have the knowledge of certain types of crops that are suitable for certain areas. During harvest, they take the much that can serve their family till the next seasons and also reserve/preserve some crops for next year's planting. Agriculture today with its new trends has shifted from subsistent farming to mechanized farming and from family production to commercial and industrial production. There is introduction of improved seedlings, fertilizers and some crops/plants are now genetically modified.

Presently, farming of a particular crop can take very large acres of land as against the old method, where some crops are planted on a piece of farmland. There is great improvement and benefits from the new trend in agriculture, especially now that a people can produce for exports.

This new trend in agriculture also has its demerits, especially in the areas of application of chemicals, fertilizers, and some improved seedlings that are genetically modified. The application of chemicals/fertilizers on a land over a time is bound to weaken and render the land infertile. Also, consuming some agro-products with chemicals/fertilizers could be injurious to health and life threatening.

### **New Trend in Training and Apprenticeship**

Training and apprenticeship were major ways of establishing people in Igbo culture. Anozie, (2003), as cited in Igbokwe, (2018: 146) explains,

Mgbe gboo, ndi choro inweta akaoru na-agakwuru onye na-aruru ahu o choro imu n'ebe dikariri ya nso were muo ya. Onye choro imu oru ugbo na-ejekwuru otu onye nwoke maara maka oru ugbo nke oma ya na onye ahu ebiri dika afo ise ... O buru onye choro imu otu e si akpu uzu, o ga-achota onye na-akpu uzu no ya nso muo oru uzu n'aka ya.

In the olden days, those who intend to acquire any skill usually approach a person who knows that skill that is nearest to them, in order to acquire it ... One who intends to acquire skills in farming usually meets a seasoned farmer and live with him for about five years ... One who wants to acquire skills in blacksmithing, will look for a blacksmith that is nearest to him, in order to learn the work.

From the above insight it is obvious that in the olden days in Igbo culture, for one to acquire any skill in any handiwork or trading one has to go and live with an expert in that field. Recently, the new trend in training and apprenticeship has shifted from going to live with the mentor to online trainings, workshops, Visual/Audio recordings, motivational speeches, networking and publications.

These new approach to skill acquisition and training is good, time saving, far reaching and affordable, but also has its negative impacts. The new trends could breed mediocrity, charlatans and half baked proprietors in different entrepreneurial organizations due to improper and rushed training of personnel.

### **New Trends in Healthcare Culture**

In Igbo traditional society issues concerning healthcare were handled by herbalists and Native doctors. Some of them specialized in different kinds of ailments and health challenges. Any case of ill-health was referred to them, and they used mostly roots and herbs to cure those ailments. In some cases, the diviner (Dibia afa) was first consulted to decipher the cause and source of the ailment. After divination, the diviner and the sick person will be in a better position to know if the case at hand could be referred to the herbalist (Dibia mgborogwu na mkpakwukwo) or the native doctor (Dibia ogwu), as the case may be. In the case of spirit possession, the native doctor will perform the right sacrifices to set the sick person free. In traditional Igbo society, the dibia afa (diviner) served as the laboratory scientist, who conducts tests to discover the health problem, through his divination.

Ezeuko, (1986: 13) explains,

Dika omenala Igbo siri di, ha kwenyere n'ihe gbasara igba afa dika uzo ha nwere ike isi choputa ihe na-eme ha ma o bu odachi diiri ha. Ndi oru igba afa diiri bu ndi a na-akpo Dibia afa. Ndi Dibia afa bu ndi maara akpramagwa ndi mmadu n'udi di iche iche mere ha ji enwe ike ikowaputa onodu mmadu n'ihe di iche iche.

According to Igbo culture, they believe in divination as a way of finding out what was wrong with them or their problems. Divination is the work of diviners who know people's characteristics in different ways, so much that they were able to explain peoples' situation at all times.

Presently, the new trend in the health sector has brought a tremendous change and improvement in the sector. Orthodox medicine, qualified doctors and health personnel, medical equipment and health infrastructure, laboratories and better policies by the government are products of the new trend.

The new trend in healthcare is very good, but they have their inadequacies too. Most medications and treatments have their side effects in a human body. Most orthodox health practitioners don't see the efficacy in traditional medicine.

### **New trends in Igbo dress culture**

The traditional Igbo society who were mostly dressed with wrapper, and at a later stage jumper and trouser, with cap for men and wrapper with blouse and head tie for women, have at the present age changed tremendously in their mode of dressing. Apart from the few, that still put on traditional attire, most Igbo both young and old men or women have towed the part of western way of dressing.

Regrettably, the new trend in dressing has so much influenced the traditional society in such a manner that some of them appear odd in the midst of their kinsmen. Western culture considers the prevalent weather in making choice of their outfit, but over here in Igbo society, some people choose to dress arbitrarily, thus forming bad influence on the younger generation.

### **New trends in Igbo food culture**

The traditional Igbo society, were known for their traditional cuisines. Their food was natural and fresh because most of what they ate were brought from their farms. Most of their foods were also considered as good medicines that not only nourish their body, but also cure or prevent them from suffering certain ailments. Precisely, the food culture of the Igbo traditional society is acclaimed the best because even at this present age, the modern dieticians also recommend those foods for their clients.

The new trend in Igbo culture introduced processed food and the use of preservatives and foreign spice that have received warning from experts as being capable of causing health problems.

### **Hope for the future**

This paper has been able to x-ray some aspects of Igbo cultural practices and the new trends in the culture, with their merits and demerits. All in all a giant stride has been made virtually in all facets of Igbo culture. Remarkable improvements have been made

but more can be done to make a better future. The future is very bright with the level of development and improvement in the peoples' way of life. Igbokwe, (2018: 143) buttresses,

“Ka o di ugbu a, ndi Igbo a gbasapula aka burukwa oka ibe n’ihe gbasara azumahia. Ha na-atu mgbere udi ngwa ahia di iche iche, nke mere ha na mba uwa di iche iche na-azukorita ahia. Site n’ihe ndi a na-eri eri, ruo n’ihe ndi a na-eyi n’ahu, sitekwa n’ebe ahu gaa n’ogwu na akorongwa di iche iche eji agwo oria, ma ugboala ma igwe tapia hadum. Kedu nke a ga-ako hara ibe ya”.

Presently, the Igbo have diversified and become the champion in trading. They deal on different kinds of products and that led to their trading ties with other parts of the world. From food stuffs to wears/clothing, from clothing to medicals and their equipments, both vehicles and computers. They are too numerous to mention.

The citation above extends to other aspects of Igbo cultural life, which have received innovative trends. In education, health, economy, entrepreneur, industry and more, The Igbo are already on the same page with the innovative trends and are willing to go higher and do better in their different endeavours.

The required efforts come in the form of recommendations as follows:

- Any innovation and new trend in any aspect of people's way of life has to take a lift from the traditional way of doing things.
- Innovation in the area of healthcare has to consider and incorporate the traditional healthcare and medicines.
- The Innovative trend made in education will bring greater desired change if the content of traditional education could be incorporated and followed in the curriculum in order to pass on the norms and values of the people.
- Innovative trend on food should focus more on how to produce local food in greater sufficiency as well as preserve them adequately. They should discourage flooding the society with processed food and junks that are unhealthy for humans.
- Cultural orientation and acculturation programmes should be encouraged in order to integrate people's cultures for future development.

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