

## The Impact of Globalization and Culture Change on Igbo Children

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**Abstract:** The Igbo people of south eastern Nigeria have well institutionalized method of child upbringing that nurtures a child through the transitional period of adolescence to adulthood. In traditional Edda society, morals and societal values are usually inculcated into the children through folklore, which comprises folktales, riddles, proverbs and songs. Virtues were imbibed through this medium but now the reverse is the case due to globalization; many children have found themselves in pathetic and ugly situations. This has led them to street hawking, child abuse and child trafficking, drug abuse, teenage unwanted pregnancies, diseases, prostitution, armed robbery and other societal vices. Is there a way out of this? Yes there is and that is the focus of this paper. This paper seeks to find a better platform to give meaningful life to the children who have found themselves victims of the effect of globalization. The paper concludes by extolling the contributions of traditional methods of cultural transmission of values to the upcoming generation.

**Key words:** Globalization • Culture • Igbo and children

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### INTRODUCTION

African tradition has a way of training and monitoring the lives of a child until he / she becomes of age [1]. They do this through the use of folklore: folktales, songs, myths, storytelling, proverbs and other informal trainings. This was done in the nights mostly during moonlight [2]. The children and youth were well behaved because of the fear of the consequences they will incur from the wrath of gods [3, 4]. This has changed in this contemporary period due to social disorganization as a result of globalization, economic, dynamics, climate change, crime and diseases, among others [5]. This paper tends to investigate the effects of globalization on the children; to ascertain the negative and positive effects it has on the training of an African child [6].

Globalization refers to the increasingly global relationship of culture, people and economic activity. Globalization can also be seen as the process of international integration arising from interchange of world views, ideas, product, business and culture [7]. While culture on the other hand, is the recognition of good literature, enjoyment of good music, food and arts. Culture refers to the totality of customs, morals, values and habits, etc., acquired by man as a member of society [8, 9]. Culture is dynamic, not static. It is in a continuous

process of change but in spite of the change, it remains an indispensable means of identity, dignity, continuity, security and bond between members of a society. Globalization is also seen as a series of powerful processes that provide both opportunities and threats. It is well known that the development model foisted upon the ‘developing’ world by the west, in the name of modernization has been regarded for decades by many non-western scholars and activists as cultural imperialism [10].

Globalization has brought positive and negative on our culture. It has affected our language, the way we dress, respect for their elders and ultimately our environment. In all these we also have some positive effect of globalization such as well-developed cities, sophisticated machineries and technologies [11, 12].

According to world Council of churches “no culture is possible without a language. It is an important perquisites and therefore to kill the language is to kill culture” (World Council of Churches). In Nigeria for instance, globalization is gradually killing our language as the younger generation finds it hard to relate in their native dialect or see it as moribund and out of fashion to speak their own native language. They perceive English language as more prestigious and trendy [13, 14].

Traditionally, children were not rude to the elders, children would ask their parents virtually everything and anything before they do them because of the fear and respect they had for their parents. Unlike, what is happening to the children and youth this day. Because of Globalization children no longer sit around fireplace at night to listen to stories. Stories, that promotes integrity, peace, unity, love and values of respect. Rather they prefer watching late night movies or playing video game [15, 16].

According to World council of churches “the youth prefer the western beats to the local artists and hair styles, shoes, clothing keep to the trends of the western fashion scene”. Africans generally respect their bodies and believes that a woman who does otherwise has lost her self-respect or has no elderly person at home to caution her. We can see that because of globalization women walk almost naked and call it “fashion” in our today’s world.

Globalization has brought about great technologies, sophisticated machineries that make life easy for humans. But with this advancement comes problems. Youths are forced to live from hand to mouth because they use their salaries to buy these so called new invented machineries or items. The reason they do this is because nobody wants to be left behind. Everyone wants to go with “the flow”. Nobody wants to feel or be seen as outdated [7].

The advancement in technology has not only damaged the physical environment with the emission a high percentage of carbon dioxide but it has also changed the temperature thereby causing Global warming. Pollution is another product of globalization. With globalization our soil, water and air have been polluted and this causes genetic impact on our children and youths. That is when a gene is altered it alters the physiology of that individual hence producing altered enzyme which ends up causing destructive diseases such as Alzheimer’s, brain dysfunction. Polluted water on the other hand is very harmful either by causing typhoid or cholera. Even when globalization has been seen as good because it has prompted growth in developing countries, which has made humans life easier, but its effect outweighs the gain.

It can be seen that Globalization has brought a great impact to human lives. Culture is one strong tool for human survival even though in our today’s world it is said to be constantly changing and easily lost because it exists only in our minds [9].

Cultural uniqueness is lost in favour of homogenization and a “universal culture” that draws heavily from other culture. Another common concern is the impact of globalization on culture and identity. Some saw it as “*threatening traditional institutions such as family and school*”. Or threatening the way of life of whole communities. Globalization brought a widespread sense of instability and insecurity. “*There is a growing feeling that we live in a world highly vulnerable to changes we cannot; a growing sense of fragility among ordinary people, countries and entire regions*”.

Globalization could be frightening, stimulating, overwhelming and destructive from almost everywhere came a sense of the power of globalization, whether driving by technology, economics or politics. Someone from Egypt said “We were sleeping on the shore when a big wave came”.

Globalization can intensify social divisions and as young people are struggling to establish themselves in a new social context-the sometimes intimidating adult world- they may be perceived as being particularly vulnerable to the threat of segregation or exclusion [12].

**Methodology:** In terms of methodology, the ethnographic method was adopted. Some elders reputed for their skills in Igbo culture and storytelling in the community were purposively chosen as our informants. The writer also interviewed some old women who gave the functions of some Edda Igbo folktales who also poured out the negative effect of globalization on Igbo culture. This crop of people became the live-library for our investigation.

### **The Library and Internet Sources Became Second Source of Methodology**

**What Should We Do to Bring Back Our Children’s Morals?:** The morals of the children and youths of this generation can still be tackled or brought back to sanity by the introduction of traditional ways of education. These ways are by the use of folktales, riddles, tongue twisters, proverbs and songs etc. at homes and in the schools.

**The Use of Folktales:** Igbo folktales by their nature as well as their definitions are regarded as fictitious, fabulous, mythical, totally removed from real life situation and events. In their appreciation in actual life performance, one discovers that folktales exhibit some elements of truth that somehow translate into realism and

true life situation. This accounts for the reason why real people on their appreciation react to them as if they are real life stories. Besides a careful study of the folktale performing sessions show that neither the performer nor his audience is ready to move out of the scene. None shows sign of getting tired of either the story or listening to the story. Folktales are introduced to a traditional Igbo child from infancy. This means that the traditional Igbo child starts appreciating folktales from infancy to adulthood.

Folktale is a mirror of the society. It explains some mysteries as [1] explains that a story “does many things. It entertains, it informs, it instructs”. That is why it continues to exist and that is why the content of folktale remains stable. [2] puts it as follows, “the story itself is a primary form of the oral tradition, primary as a model of conveying culture, experience and values and as a means of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, feeling and attitudes in oral societies”. [3] has this to say “The Igbo folktale in Igbo culture enjoys popularity for some reasons: it serves a didactic purpose for child rearing and it is a vibrant artistic genre with educational and socializing functions”. This has transmitted the Igbo culture, norms and values through generations by orally narrating the memorized landmarks of their history, belief, ethics, tradition, codes and culture, values and practices. However, the art of storytelling is almost extinct in Nigerian homes and schools. There is evidence that the Igbo folk tale tradition is seriously on the decline, due to the influence of modernization as a result of globalization about which the Igbo people particularly the Edda people have shown much enthusiasm. Equally true is the fact that modernity has a considerable extent taken the family and the folk community and given these functions to such formal institutions as the schools and the popular media.

**Functions of Folktale:** No one can exactly say when Igbo folktale originated but one thing is certain, the folktale is as old as the society it belongs to. Folktale stems from man's desire to communicate his experiences to others, to let others share his views about life, to direct members of the society and satirize deviant characters in the society and to instill the spirit of love for the community amongst members of the society. It is interesting to note that the folktale narrator lives in the community with others. He takes materials for his tales from his experiences in the community so events of Igbo folktales are not strange to his audience. Igbo folktales contain the people's culture,

world view, norms, spiritual life, their hopes and aspirations. In short Igbo folktale contains Igbo man's total way of life.

One of the functions of Igbo folktale is education. [4] asserts that “The widespread of human tendency to teach, entertain and satirize by indirect means seems to be at the root of the evolution of folktales”. Igbo folktale is used to educate both the young and the aged. It contains folk's skeptical views about life which are based on their observation of people's behavior in the society. It inspires the young and provides moral standard cherished by their society. It also directs members of the society on the right action to take in case of emergency. It provides them a common line for their action. Since Igbo folktale mirrors the activities of members of the society, it then means that the problems and the successes embodied in their folktale are the problems and the successes of the society. That is Ashton has it that, “the introduction of folkways in folktales is merely to give verisimilitude to a depiction of life of a particular locality”. This introduction of folkways in folktale implants realism in the folktale and makes for easy comprehension of the folktale.

Another function of folktale is entertainment. Folktale is normally told in the evening after the evening chores. Children normally sit round the fire side in their father's “obi” or in their mother's hut to listen to folktales. Normally, the elders, their father or mother tells the story. Children then take turns in telling their own stories. At times, children are grouped to compete in proverbs, riddles and tongue twisters. At the end of the competition the winners are happy. These are aimed at preparing them for their adult life. It is important to note that proverbs, riddles and tongue twisters are introduced to the children to make them speak fluently as orators who will be future representatives of their society on any occasion.

The story telling sessions normally take place in the evening after the evening chores. They take place in the relaxed atmosphere unlike today's education which is characterized by strictness and rigidity. Traditional Igbo child listens to the folktale from infancy to adult life. By the time he gets to adult life, the events of the folktale had entered into the marrow of his bones. This means that he is firmly rooted in his society's way of life. This will continue to direct his life through out on earth. That is, folktale serves for the execution of the biblical injunction “train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it”. (Proverbs 22 vs

6). This means that once a child is properly rooted in the lore of his people, he is firmly rooted in the sound moral upbringing and the total way of life of his people and will therefore not depart from this education when he grows up.

#### **The Impact of Storytelling on Traditional Igbo Child Can Be Summarized Thus:**

- It helps the child develop creative thinking as a natural process through which a person becomes aware of a problem, difficulty or gap in information for which he has no previous knowledge.
- It gives the child the opportunity of using imagination to decipher the truth and develop his intellectual ability. Their wits are tested by allowing them give quick answers to questions posed to them.
- Obedience and respect are other contributions of folktale to children development. Most stories and songs condemn bad behavior. In African folktales good always triumphs over evil, truth over falsehood, honesty over dishonesty.
- National consciousness and patriotism are inculcated into the child with the aid of folktale. Children learn bravery, selflessness etc. from legendary stories and songs that tell how heroes suffered greatly or even died for their people. Children were attracted to such characters and usually they aspire to be like them. Legendary stories give the child an undiluted insight into the history of his society. This type of story embodies the values, fears and assurances of the people who invented them.
- Every story has a lesson to teach just as the stories about heroes and heroine encourage children to be brave in the defense of their society.

Folktale is used to satirize the deviant characters in the society thereby making them change their bad behaviors for good. For example, a wayward girl or woman in the society can be satirized. A woman who maltreats an orphan is satirized.

Equally, a man that beats up his wife or who neglects his family responsibility is satirized etc. through satire, the society maintains its codes of conduct.

**Proverbs:** Proverbs has been and remains a most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of a people from one generation to another. The reason behind the efficacy of

the proverb is that it is aphorism, or wise saying based upon people's experience and is a reflection of the social values and sensibility of the people. A collection of proverbs of a community or nation is a real sense an ethnography of the people, which if systematized can give a penetrating picture of the people's way of life, moral truths and social values.

Whenever there is doubt about an accepted pattern of behavior, whenever there is doubt about a stipulated line of action, whenever traditional norms are threatened there are always proverbs and indeed tales or myths to vouch, illuminate and buttress the wisdom of the traditional code of conduct.

The value of the corpus of societal proverbs lies not only in the way they strengthen tradition, but in the variety of ways in which they may and do contribute to the life of continuity of the given society and the individual who lives in it.

The proverb conveys its meaning through the use of aphorism, which is a wise saying based upon people's experience and is a reflection of the societal values and sensibility of the people.

In terms of form, the proverb is a graphic statement that expresses a truth of experience. Its beauty and source of delight is that what it says is reality perceived and accepted as an incontrovertible truth. The truth presented in the proverb is not a logical, priori or intuitive truth, it is often an empirical fact based upon and derived from the people's experience of life, human relationship and interaction with the word of nature. The proverb, as a short popular saying in form, expresses a truth of experience or an observation in a strikingly figurative language. It is marked by its epigrammatic terseness and by the readily acceptance of its truth.

Proverbs are the vehicle through which words are conveyed for the informal education of the society, especially children. No one needs to go to school to learn proverbs, everyday usages contain them and the child must get to know them as a matter of course. Thus if one fails to understand what the proverb conveys the saying is "When the fool is told a proverb, its meaning has to be explained to him".

#### **RESULTS AND CONCLUSION**

The paper finds out that the rate of moral decadence in our society is becoming too high because parents have left their children in the hands of changing world and

globalization in pursuit of material wealth. The traditional ways of inculcating virtues to children have been abandoned. And the children find solace in watching television, pornographic and playing games. These have led them to street hawking, child abuse and child trafficking, drug abuse, teenage unwanted pregnancies, diseases, prostitution and armed robbery to mention but a few.

This paper studies the effect of globalization on child and youth as obtainable in the Edda a community in the eastern part of Nigeria and its evolution into today's world of digital technologies. Since indigenous folktales, proverbs, riddles and songs appear to dwindle, succumbing to the explosion of western influences called globalization. This study also investigate how cultures through the use of folktales, proverbs and riddles can make impact on children and youths. And that culture is a strong tool for human survival, it is constantly changing and can be easily lost if not checked because in recent times, it only exists in our minds. It was found that amongst others, the reason for this decline lies in globalization. This paper therefore concludes that parents, teachers and society at large should make frantic efforts to engage in the traditional means of training children which include different forms of oral literature to bring back the moral of our children and youths by embracing folktales, proverbs and other forms of traditional methods of inculcating the morals and values to our children and youth in order to rescue it from obscurity.

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