

FORMAL EDUCATION AND CULTURAL DEGRADATION IN IGBO SOCIETY: A STUDY OF UMUNNEOCHI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ABIA STATE

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Abstract

The paper took a critical look at formal education and its impact on destabilizing some functional cultures in the historic Igbo society, using Umunneochi Local Government Area of Abia State. It adopted survey method and three research questions guided the study. Questionnaire items were administered on 560 respondents representing a sample size of 56,593 population of the study. Proportional stratified random sampling technique was adopted. Simple percentage tables were used to show the responses from the respondents. Statistically, Chi Square was used. It was found that formal education irrespective of its laudable imprints in the socio-political, economic and cultural life of people in Igbo society, had actually disrupted those cherished indigenous cultures bequeathed to its future generations by their forefathers. Such findings included rendering into futility the traditional ways of inculcating the philosophy and wisdom of the society like folktales, regard for Igbo language, self-reliance, respect for elders, and team spirit among others. Based on these findings, some recommendations were made which included inward look to revitalize those functional aspects of Igbo culture such as self-development, setting appropriate structures in place to monitor compliance, and adherence to code of conduct. Thereafter, a conclusion was drawn.

Keywords: Education, Igbo, Traditional, Culture, Abomination

Introduction

Every society has socially approved ways and means of internalizing its wisdom and philosophy into its members. Before the advent of formal education which is the type of education that is received in an organized setting, Igbo ethnic society had functional ways of getting its members abreast with cultural demands such as beliefs, norms, values of the society so as to integrate them into the scheme of society's expectations. It is only when the members adhere to these socio-cultural expectations that they are truly adjudged as acceptable and useful members of the society. Agu (2004:36) explained that "this was generally rewarded with wealth, position, and prestige as manifested in the awards of chieftaincy, 'nze' and 'ozo' titles".

In addition, culture and education are intertwined hence education is conceptualized as and serves as the socially approved method of inculcating the cherished cultures to the members aimed at achieving self-independence and state of equilibrium in Igbo society. Fafunwa (1974) defines education generally as what each generation gives to its younger ones, which makes them to develop attitude, abilities, skills, and other behaviours which are positively valued to the society in which they live. Then culture is simply defined as the totality of people's way of life which include material and non-material cultures. Onwuka (1998) avers that respect for elders is a cultural injunction which is expressed in two practical ways namely, the way elders are greeted and the way their opinion is respected. Stating further, greeting of elders by a junior is compulsory and they are consulted in serious social issues. It is also supported by aphorism that words of elders are words of wisdom, the wise man hears and gets wiser. It is therefore the position of this paper to establish the

relationship between western education and cultural degradation of Igbo society in the selected eight autonomous communities in Umunneochi which was bequeathed to them by their forefathers, and upon which the members must be held accountable. This statement does not suggest that formal or western education has no positive impact. It is applauded for the eradication of some obnoxious cultural practices such as killing of twins, burying people alive in areas designated as evil forests, abolition of human trade, and unhealthy widowhood practices among others.

Statement of the Problem

The emergence of formal education as a colonial legacy has many degrading effects on Nigerian culture with particular reference to Igbo society. Irrespective of its positive impact, as highlighted above, others conflict with Igbo culture which subject every well-meaning member of the society in a worrisome situation hence the outcry to revitalize and revive her true identity in the scheme of national and international arenas. To achieve this, series of Igbo socio-cultural summits have been set in place and observed as annual events. They include 'Ahiajoku', 'Olu Igbo', and 'Odenigbo' respectively, where emphasis is laid on the need to make a U-turn to those healthy Igbo cultures which westernization of Nigeria eroded. In the 2013 Odnigbo lecture titled 'Oganihu Igbo: OnoduAsusu Igbo' which translated as Igbo Progressive Welfare: Where does Igbo language stand? Most Rev Archbishop Anthony Obinna, criticized in practical terms, the abortion law passed by Imo House of Assembly which followed fierce criticism and protests that trailed the law before Governor Rochas Okorocha apologetically repealed the law. This is because it works against Igbo belief of dignity of life. He further maintained that our youths have completely lost Igbo tribal identity which depicts in their preference for English language, lack of respect for elders, foreign dressing culture, loss of folkways through which the wisdom of elders are transmitted to these youths. Others include emulating western vices such as kidnapping, highway robbery, ritual killing, loss of spirit of brotherliness and corrupt internet related cases. These variables conflict with functional heritage from pre-historic Igbo culture.

Uche (1980:60-61) identifies the following negative influence of western education on our culture:

- (a) Most people in Nigeria today have abandoned the society's simple way of life;
- (b) Our mode of dressing at official and business times are more western than African;
- (c) Most of our educated elites are more westernized than westerners themselves;
- (d) Some of the Nigerian women today colour their hair, skin and bleach their bodies;
- (e) Unlike our forefathers, there is no longer trust in integrity of labour;
- (f) The present generation of youth prefers western music to our traditional one;
- (g) Crime rate among people in particular has risen greatly.

Nduka (1975:85) while lamenting on the harm of western education on our land said "Nigeria in the eagerness to acquire western cultural innovations and because of some of the exigencies of the culture contact, often grapple with ideas and practices they did not understand and whose underlying assumptions

they would have repudiated if they had understood them. This statement simply means that there is cultural relativism which may be functional for a given society and dysfunctional for the other. It is also outrageous in prehistoric Igbo society for a girl to engage in premarital sex. Our common experience in this 21st century Nigeria is that it has become a norm to the extent that some parents encourage their children to indulge in it. Virginity no longer counts as a cultural and moral prerequisite for spouse selection. This eventually leads our young girls into unwanted pregnancy in which to avert the shame and label that are associated with premature motherhood where either these new born children are sold for ritual purposes, money or dumped in gutters and refuse dumps, which Igbo culture considers an abomination.

Many of our youths have taken to commercial sex activity which is a foreign culture that is antithetic to our traditional culture by emulating what they view in pornographic films, and magazines. Pornography depicts an explicit sexual subject matter for the purposes of sexual arousal, pleasure and erotic satisfaction. The introduction of sex education which informs a girl a safe period within which she will have intercourse and not be impregnated has greatly influenced and rubbed parents the traditional sex education that is the exclusive preserve of the family. All these are considered problematic which prompted this paper.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to find out how formal education has negatively impacted on the culture of selected Umunneochi autonomous communities of Igbo society of Nigeria. Specifically, it is

1. To find out the relationship between the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery schools and the traditional roles of mothers in Umunneochi.
2. To find out the relationship between the introduction of sex education and erosion of Igbo moral standards in Umunneochi.
3. To find the extent to which foreign culture is preferred to Igbo traditional culture in the study area.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this research.

1. What is the relationship between the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery and traditional roles of mothers in Umunneochi?
2. How does the introduction of sex education at school erode the traditional moral standards in Umunneochi?
3. To what extent is foreign dressing culture preferred to Igbo dressing culture?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be used in the study.

1. There is a significant relationship between the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery schools and the traditional roles of mothers in Umunneochi.
2. There is a significant relationship between the introduction of sex education and erosion of moral standards in Umunneochi.

Research Methodology

The design of the study is cross-sectional survey. First-hand information were collected using questionnaire and focus group discussion from a sample of indigenes in eight (8) selected autonomous communities out of

eighteen (18) autonomous communities in Umunneochi Local Government Area of Abia State. Both males and females covered by the cultural practices in the area of study are included. The general population of Umunneochi Local Government Area drawn from 1991 population census is 88,819 persons but the research (target) population is 56,598 persons from the selected communities in Umunneochi. 1991 population census is preferred because the 2006 population and Housing Census in Nigeria had not been categorized into localities, thereby making the 1991 population census the ideal source for population of this study. The research (target) population is shown below as follows:

S/No	Locality	Males	Females	Both Sexes	Sample Size
1.	Ubahu Nneato	1,543	1,668	3,211	32
2.	Eziama Nneato	4,063	4,544	8,607	85
3.	Akawa Nneato	819	722	1,741	17
4.	Ngodo Isuochi	6,414	7,221	13,535	134
5.	Amuda Isuochi	3,574	4,256	7,830	78
6.	Umuaku Isuochi	5,228	5,494	10,722	106
7.	Lokpoa Ukwu	3,793	4,603	8,396	83
8.	Leru	1,099	1,457	2,556	25
	Total	26,433	30,165	56,593	560

Source: 1991 Population Census of Nigeria.

The sample size for the study is 560 persons derived as follows:

$$N = \frac{Z^2(pq)}{e^2}$$

where: n = The required sample size when population is more than 0,000.

Z = Confidence level 95% or 1.96.

P = Proportion of the target population (i.e. 0.63 in this case).

Q = Compliment of p (i.e. 0.37)

E = level of precision or error margin (i.e. 0.04 in this case).

$$n = \frac{Z^2(pq)}{e^2}$$

$$= \frac{(1.96)^2(0.63)(0.37)}{0.04^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.8416(0.2331)}{0.0016}$$

$$= \frac{0.89547696}{0.0016}$$

$$= 560$$

Proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select the required respondents from each autonomous community as shown in table 1 above. What the researchers did here was to multiply the

proportion of each community to the overall sample size for each community above. Simple random sampling was then applied to get the right respondents and to give each respondent equal chance of being selected in each of the eight communities. The research instrument (Questionnaire) was administered by the researchers and six (6) trained research assistants that helped them to cover the eight selected communities. The data were then analyzed with descriptive statistical tables and percentages, and chi-square statistic using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 20.0.

Results

Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by sex

	Responds	%	Mean
Male	203	36	2.8
Female	357	64	1.6
Total	560	100	

The above table shows that the population of male respondents was 203(36%) while that of the females was 357(64%).

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age

	Responds	%	Mean
15 - 19yrs	67	12	8.3
20 - 24yrs	40	7	1.4
25 - 29yrs	84	15	6.7
30 - 34yrs	140	25	4.0
35 and above	229	41	2.4
Total	560	100	

It was shown from the above table that those who fell with the ages of 15-19 years were 67 (12%), 20-24 years were 40(12%), 25-29 years were 84(15%). Then 30-34 years were 140(25) while 35 and above were 229(41%).

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

	Responds	%	Mean
Singel	123	21	4.6
Married	295	53	1.9
Widowed	91	16	6.2
Separated/ divorced	51	10	10.9
Total	560	100	

The above table shows that the respondents who were single were 123(21%). The married were 295(53%), widowed were 91(16%) while the separated/divorced were 51(10%).

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

	Responds	%	Mean
FSLC	97	17	5.8
SSCE/GCE/NABTEB	110	20	5.1
Diploma/NCE/ND	86	15	6.5
B.SC/B.ED,HND	185	33	3.0
Above first Degree	82	15	6.8
Total	560	100	

Table 5. shows that 97(17%) of the respondents had First School Leaving Certificate, 110 which represents 20% had either SSCE/GCE/NABTEB. 86(15%) had Diploma or National Certificate of Education and National Diploma while 82(15%) had above first degree.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

	Responds	%	Mean
Business/self employed	321	57	1.7
Civil service/public service	109	19	5.1
Any other(please specify)	130	23	4.3
Total	560	100	

On the occupation of the respondents shows that 321(57%) were either business people or self-employed. Civil Servants were 109(19%) and 130(23%) were engaged in another occupation.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents by Place of Residence

	Responds	%	Mean
Rural	341	61	1.6
Urban	219	39	2.6
Total	560	100	

The table above shows that 341(61%) of the respondents lived in rural areas while 219(39%) lived urban area

Analysis of Substantive Issues in Formal Education and Cultural Degradation

Table 8: Pre- Nursery Schools and Traditional Roles of Mother

	SA	A	D	SDD	Total
The presence of pre-nursery schools have negative effect on length of breast feeding of a child	121	192	154	93	560
	21.6%	34.3%	27.5%	16.6%	
Mean	4.6	2.9	3.6	6.0	
The presence of pre-nursery/ nursery schools affect emotional attachment of children to their mothers	192	218	71	79	560
	34.3%	38.9%	12.7%	14.1%	
Mean	2.6	2.8	5.8	10.9	
Presence of pre-nursery/ nursery have affected on the roles of mothers in the socialization of a child	214	198	97	51	560
Mean	2.6	2.8	5.8	10.9	
Presence of pre-nursery/ nursery have negative effect on the child's physical/ spiritual protection	222	206	91	41	560
	39.6%	36.8%	16.3%	7.3%	
Mean	2.5	2.7	6.2	9.2	
Total	749	814	413	264	2,240

The above table shows that 121 and 192 of the respondents representing (21.6%) and (34.3%) agreed that the presence of pre-nursery schools had negative effects on length of breast feeding of their children. While 154(27.5%) and 93(16.6%) respondents did not agree. 192(34.3%) and 218(38.9%) confirmed that the presence of pre-nursery schools affects emotional attachment of children to their mothers. Then, 71(12.7%) and 79(14.1%) said no to the statement. 214(38.2%) and 198(35.4%) agreed to the statement that the presence of pre-nursery schools have negative effect on the roles of others in socializing their children while 97(17.3%) and 519.1%) disagreed to that. 222(39.6%) and 206(36.8%) agreed to the statement that the presence of pre-nursery school have negative effects in a child's physical/spiritual protection while 91(16.3%) and 41(7.3%) respectively did not agree to the statement.

Table 9: Sex Education and Erosion of Igbo Moral Standard

	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Sex education has encouraged pre-marital sex among youths	321	112	106	21	560
	57.3%	20.0%	18.9%	3.8%	
Mean	1.7	5.0	5.2	26.7	
Sex education has encouraged teenage pregnancy	32	112	94	32	560
	57.7%	19.8%	16.8%	5.7%	
Mean	1.7	5.0	5.9	17.5	
Sex education has encouraged occurrence of incest	197	212	109	42	560
	35.2%	37.9%	19.5%	7.5%	
Mean	2.8	2.6	5.1	13.3	
Sex education has affected respect for elders negativity	109	279	91	81	560
	19.5%	49.8%	16.3%	14.5%	
Mean	5.1	2.0	6.2	6.9	
Total	950	714	400	176	2,240

The table above shows that 321(57.3%) and 112(20.0%) agreed that sex education has encouraged pre-marital sex among youths while 106(18.9%) and 21(3.8%) did not agree to the statement. 323(57.7%) and 111represent (19.8%) confirmed that sex education encourages teen age pregnancy while 94(16.8%) and 32(5.7%) said no to that. 197(35.2%) and 212(37.9%) agreed that sex education has encouraged the occurrence of incest among youths while 109(19.5%) and 42(7.5%) did not agree to the statement. 109(19.5%) and 279(49.8%) agreed to the statement that sex education affected respect for elders negatively while 91(16.3%) and 81(14,5%) did not agree to the statement.

Table 10: Foreign Dressing Culture and Igbo Traditional Sense of Decency

	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Foreign dressing culture encourages people to go half-naked	301	128	119	12	560
	53.8%	22.9%	21.3%	2.1%	
Mean	1.7	4.4	4.7	46.7	
Foreign dressing culture encourages neglect for traditional wears	219	243	66	32	560
	39.1%	43.4%	11.8%	5.7%	
Mean	2.6	2.3	8.5	17.5	
Foreign dressing has negative effect on women's traditional expectation.	121	141	159	139	560
	21.6%	25.2%	28.4%	24.8%	
Mean	4.6	3.9	3.5	4.0	
Total	641	512	344	183	1,680

This table indicates that 301(53.8%) and 128(22.9%) agreed that foreign dressing culture encourages people to go half-naked. Then, 119(21.3%) and 12(2.1%) did not agree to the statement. 219(39.1%) and 243(43.4%) agreed that foreign culture encouraged neglect for traditional wears while 66(11.8%) and 32(5.7%) did not agree to that. Then, 121(21.6%) and 141(25.2%) agreed to the fact that foreign dressing culture had a negative effect on women's traditional expectation while 159(28.4%) and 139(24.8%) did not agree to the statement.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1:

Hi: There is a significant relationship between the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery schools and the traditional roles of mother's in Umunneochi Local Government Area.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery schools and the traditional roles of mother's in Umunneochi Local Government Area.

Table 11: Relationship between the Introduction of Pre-nursery/ Nursery Schools and Traditional Roles of Mothers

	<u>O</u>		<u>E</u>	<u>X²</u>	<u>2</u>
12	1	18	7	23.	4
19	2	20	4	0.	6
15	4	10	3	24.	9
9	3	6	6	11.	0
19	2	18	7	0.	1
21	8	20	4	1.	0
7	1	10	3	10.	1
7	9	6	6	2.	6
21	4	18	7	3.	8
19	8	20	4	0.	1
9	7	10	3	0.	4
5	1	6	6	3.	4
22	2	18	7	6.	4
20	6	20	4	0.	0
9	1	10	3	1.	5
4	1	6	6	9.	5
				99.0	3

The above table shows that the calculated value (99.03) is greater than the tabulated value (16.919). We therefore reject the null hypothesis (Ho) that there is no significant relationship between the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery schools and the traditional roles of mothers in Umunneochi Local Government Area. We then accept the alternative hypothesis (Hi) that there is a significant relationship between the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery schools and the traditional roles of mothers in Umunneochi local government area.

Hypothesis 2

Hi: There is a significant relationship between the introduction of sex education and erosion of moral standards in Umunneochi Local Government.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the introduction of sex education and erosion of moral standards in Umunneochi Local Government.

Table 12: Relationship between the Introduction of Sex Education and Erosion of Moral Standards

<u>O</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>X²</u>
32	1 237.	5 29.
11	2 178.	5 24.
10	6 10	0 0.
2	1 4	4 12.
32	3 237.	5 30.
11	1 178.	5 25.
9	4 10	0 0.
3	2 4	4 3.
19	7 237.	5 6.
21	2 178.	5 6.
10	9 10	0 0.
4	2 4	4 0.
10	9 237.	5 69.
27	9 178.	5 56.
9	1 10	0 0.
8	1 4	4 31.
		298.

The table showed that the calculated value (298.6) is greater than the tabulated value (16.919) of chi-square. We rejected the null hypothesis (Ho) that there is significant relationship between the introduction of sex education and erosion of moral standards in Umunneochi Local Government. And accept the alternative hypothesis (Hi) that there is a significant relationship between the introduction of sex education and erosion of moral standards in Umunneochi Local Government area of Abia State.

The Hypothesis is tested using the chi-square statistical tools.

$$X^2 = (O-E)^2/E$$

Where X^2 = calculated of chi-square

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

Decision criterion for validation of hypothesis

In taking a decision, the null hypothesis is rejected if the calculated value of chi square is greater than the compared value of chi square tabulated at alpha level of confidence hence, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Alpha = 5%, degree of freedom = 9.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of hypothesis one at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom = 9 shows that there is a significant relationship between the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery schools and the traditional roles of mothers in Umunneochi Local Government area. This agrees with the view of Nduka (1975) that Nigeria in the eagerness to acquire western cultural innovations and because of some of the exigencies of the culture

content, often grapple with ideas and practices they did not understand and whose underlying assumptions they would have repudiated if they had understood them.

Hypothesis two at a =0.05 and degree of freedom = 9, shows that there is a significant relationship between the introduction of sex education and erosion of moral standards in Umunneochi. This means that exposure to sex education increases the erosion of moral standards in Umunneochi

Conclusion

Formal education and its positive effects in Igbo traditional culture notwithstanding, has negatively reduced the functionality and utility of indigenous culture of Igbo society of Nigeria. These are obvious in the areas of the introduction of pre-nursery/nursery schools where the emotional attachment that would cement the desired bond between and mother and her child is separated. Others include sex education, preference for foreign culture to traditional Igbo which manifest itself from language of communication both in the school and at home.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the research, the authors make the following recommendations:

1. That Igbo language be made compulsory both at the primary and secondary schools especially in Igbo speaking areas.
2. All the Governors of five Igbo speaking areas should encourage Igbo culture by offering scholarships to students who study Igbo language in our tertiary institutions to encourage others to develop likeness for Igbo language.
3. Churches should discourage the use of English language as the means of communication in their religious rituals or worship.
4. Sensitization efforts should be made among all the Igbo speaking areas by setting a day apart for appraisal of Igbo culture in their respective areas.

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