INTEGRATING THE IGALA TRADITIONAL VALUE SYSTEMS AS A MODEL TO SOLVING NIGERIA ETHICAL PROBLEMS

Okpe, Nicholas Ojoajogwu, Ph.D
Department of Religious Studies,
Faculty of Arts and Humanities,
Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba
Email: okpenicks@yahoo.com
And
Ameh Isaiah (Ph.D Student)
Department of Religious Studies,
Faculty of Arts and Humanities,
Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba
Email: isaiahameh904@gmail.com

Abstract

Nigeria, like many African nations, is grappling with a myriad of challenges that hinder its human and societal development. From widespread corruption to escalating insecurity, the country is in need of innovative solutions that can address these issues at their core. One of such solution could lie in re-awakening of African consciousness towards ethical traditional values. This paper argues that the promotion and integration of Igala traditional values can serve as a panacea to solving some of the challenges faced by Nigeria today. Using Socio historical research method, this paper proposes that these values have the potential to foster a sense of unity and solidarity among Nigerians, transcending ethnic and religious divides. Moreover, the adoption of ethical traditional values can have a tangible impact on human and societal development in Nigeria. In its findings, the research sees values such as honesty, integrity, and accountability as essential means of building a culture of trust and transparency, which are critical components of economic prosperity and social progress.

Key words: Integration, Igala, Tradition, Values, Model, Nigeria, Problems

Introduction

By integrating Igala consciousness towards ethical and traditional values for good governance in Nigeria, the Igala cultural values can contribute to the broader efforts towards promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership in Nigeria. This re-awakening is essential in shaping a more just and prosperous future for the country, where traditional values and ethical principles guide decision-making and governance processes.

The erosion of traditional values in Nigerian society has been a longstanding issue, with the influence of Western ideals and modernization often leading to a decline in morality and social cohesion. However, scholars have highlighted the importance of traditional values in African societies, noting that they are rooted in communalism, respect for elders, and a sense of collective responsibility (Goncalves, 2007). These values have the potential to foster a sense of unity and solidarity among Nigerians, transcending ethnic and religious divides.

The adoption of ethical traditional values can have a tangible impact on human and societal development in Nigeria. Researches have shown that values such as honesty, integrity, and accountability are essential for building a culture of trust and transparency, which are critical components of economic prosperity and social progress (Adewale, 15). By integrating Igala consciousness towards these values, individuals can contribute to the creation of a more just and equitable society for all.

Nigeria Ethical Challenges

In Nigeria, like many African countries, governance faces numerous challenges that hinder the effective implementation of ethical and traditional values for good governance. These challenges include the following among others:

Corruption: Nigeria has long struggled with pervasive corruption at all levels of government, undermining efforts to promote transparency and accountability. Re-awakening Igala consciousness towards ethical values can help combat corruption, even though entrenched systems and practices may prove resistant to such changes.

Ethnic and religious tensions: Nigeria is a diverse country with a complex mix of ethnicities and religions, leading to potential conflicts and divisions. Re-awakening Igala consciousness towards unity, tolerance, and inclusivity can help promote social cohesion and national unity. This is attested to by Okpe (7) is his contribution to how religion can also serve as catalyst to nation's building of Nigeria.

Socio-economic inequalities: Nigeria faces significant socio-economic inequalities, with a large proportion of the population living in poverty while a small elite controls wealth and resources. Integrating Igala consciousness towards traditional values of communal sharing and mutual support can help address these disparities and promote inclusive development.

Overcoming these challenges and awakening Igala consciousness towards ethical and traditional values for good governance will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and the general populace. By working together to promote ethical leadership, accountability, and respect for traditional values, Nigeria can advance towards a more just, equitable, and prosperous society.

Ugwu (17) identifies eight human values in his work on Religion and the Development of human values in Nigeria. Thus; value for human life, for good human relations, for the sacred and religion, for hospitality, respect for elders and those in authority, for kindness and brotherhood, for community life or solidarity and for obedience to the state and law.

The same thread runs through all of the above lists of values in every typical traditional African, and Nigerian society. But there could be more emphasis on one or more values

in one ethnic group or the other to show their peculiarities. A careful perusal would show that most of the values identified above are as intertwined and in exhaustive at one and the same time. Lots of values are worth pursuing as can be gleaned from the above scholars. Such values fall under the subject matter of spiritual, social, personal values in love and marriage, etc. and these values are mostly learned by means of socialization. In this case, parents, peer groups, religious groups, the mass media and the physical and social environment play a very central role.

Who the Igala People Are

According Okpe (218), the word Igala represents a people, an identity, a land and an ethnic. Igala is the language of the ethnic group located at the eastern flank of the confluence of rivers Niger and Benue. In other words, they are located on the eastern region of Kogi State, bordered on the north by Benue and Nasarawa states, on the west by river Niger, on the East by Enugu State and on the South by Anambra State. Igalaland is 120 kilometers wide and 160 kilometers long. It is located approximately between latitudes 6^0 30" and 8^0 North and longitudes 6^0 30 and 7^0 40" East, and covers an area of about 13,665 square kilometers. The people are densely populated around Idah, Anyigba and Ankpa and are also sparsely found in Edo, Delta, Anambra, Enugu, Nasarawa, Adamawa and Benue States. But the bulk of the Igala are found in Idah, Ankpa, Dekina, Omala, Olamaboro, Ofu, Igalamela/Odolu, Ibaji, Bassa (Egbunu, 49). The traditional boundaries of the land included: "the greater part of Idoma land, Nsukka area, Kogi Anambra Area (North of Onitsha) which were formerly under the sovereignty of the Attah Igala" (Okwoli, 30). It is estimated that their population is about 2.6 million in the present dispensation. However, the 2006 federal Government census puts it at 1.6 million. Owing to the centrality of the location of Igalaland in Nigeria, it has enjoyed some influences by the neighbors, especially the Yoruba, Edo (Benin), Jukun, Idoma, Nupe, Ibo, Hausa, Ebira, Bassa-Kwomu, Bassa-Nge and the Kakandas.

Igala Traditional Arts and Values

Igala traditional values in this context are principally expressed and transmitted through oral traditions such as myths, folktales, rituals, proverbs, folksongs, dances, sayings, social institutions and works of art. Among the Igala, some myths are carved on woods, clay, iron, ivory and stones. Some are tattooed on the body. Some other ones come as tribal marks accordingly in different strokes, shapes and sizes. Others are represented in arts and crafts and especially in stools, staff, chairs, tables, doors, etc, while yet others are retained in dances, rituals and ceremonies and on masks. Some still, are represented in natural objects such as trees, rivers and mountains.

In the indigenous Igala educational system, there is not so much emphasis on paper qualification but on passing on information, entertainment and edification. Among Igala, every genuine elder is an encyclopaedia of knowledge and experience. Most of the lessons are either passed on orally or through observation and practices. Examples abound in the learning of trades and occupation. In farming, for instance, they could diversify into plantations or in accordance with the variety of crops through group farming (adakpo, owę or ailo); harvesting of palm fruits or fishing, hunting and smiting or as the physical environment may dictate. Other forms include Mud-block moulding, building, thatched roofing, hut making, setting of bones, traditional folk songs, brewing of local liquor, weaving, dyeing or tanning by the women folk (Egbunu 70).

In Idegu (18) many sterling qualities of the Igala are laid bare, namely, self-sacrifice, fortitude, bravery and the irrepressible desire to be free prevails to assist the indomitable spirit of the Igala person. The last point here is related to what Omale (33) terms the spirit of resilience, but it must be resilience with the right side up, not downward. Egwemi (1983) also using Ibaji axis as a launch pad gives a vivid overview and x-ray of Igala as a hardworking, honest, peace-loving, forward looking people, and a force to be reckoned with in Education, Business and Agriculture.

Ethical and Traditional Values in Igala Society

Ethical and traditional values have long been central to Igala societies, serving as the moral compass and guiding principles for individuals and communities. The Igala people, with their rich cultural heritage and strong sense of community, have opportunity to awaken and promote these values in contemporary Nigerian society to foster good governance and sustainable development.

In African societies, ethical values such as honesty, integrity, respect for others, and a commitment to the common good are deeply ingrained in traditional practices and customs. These values not only promote social cohesion and harmony but also serve as a foundation for good governance by emphasizing accountability, transparency, and respect for the rule of law.

Re-connecting with these ethical and traditional values can help address the pervasive issues of corruption, nepotism, and lack of accountability that have long plagued Nigerian society. By promoting a culture of integrity and ethical leadership, the Igala people can contribute to building a more just and equitable society where the needs of the people are prioritized, and resources are managed wisely for the common good.

Integrating Igala ethical and traditional values aligns with the broader movement towards African cultural renaissance and the promotion of Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of shared humanity. In contemporary Nigeria, where the quest for good governance and sustainable development is paramount, integrating Igala ethical and traditional values can be a powerful catalyst for positive change. By embracing these values and integrating them into governance practices, building a society that is founded on principles of justice, fairness, and respect for all would be a reality.

Relating Igala Traditional Values to Good Governance in Nigeria

In contemporary Nigerian society, integrating the Igala consciousness towards ethical and traditional values could play a crucial role in promoting good governance. The Igala

people, like many African communities, have rich ethical and traditional values that can serve as a guide for promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in governance in Nigeria.

One such value is that of Udama (Unity), which emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all individuals in the society. This value can help promote a sense of community and solidarity, encouraging leaders to make decisions that benefit the common good rather than serving personal interests.

The traditional Igala belief in strong leadership is based on wisdom, integrity, and moral authority that can serve as a model for effective governance. Through this, Nigerian leaders can be inspired to prioritize the well-being of their constituents, uphold the rule of law, and promote social justice.

Furthermore, the Igala tradition of respect for elders and traditional authorities can contribute to fostering a culture of accountability and respect for authority in governance. This can help address issues of corruption, nepotism, and abuse of power that have plagued Nigerian governance for decades.

By integrating Igala ethical and traditional values, Nigeria can harness the wisdom and moral guidance of its cultural heritage to build a more just, equitable, and prosperous society. This can pave the way for a new era of ethical leadership and good governance that promotes the well-being and development of all Nigerians.

Conclusion

Many problems of nation building are connected to people's negative values and attitudes. Societies benefit from members who are morally upright and have positive value orientation. They ought to have social standards which help to dictate and produce cherished behaviour patterns. The social and economic life of any society depends on the moral value of its people. Loyalty, patriotism, honesty, dedication, incorruptible leadership, allegiance, national consciousness are basic conditions for the building of a strong nation. Other positive values include democracy, justice, fair play, hard work, equality, tolerance, liberty and responsibility. These positive values yield positive

attitudes towards nation building. On the other hand; negative values and attitudes of people in general could be obstacles to nation building. Nigerians display many negative values and attitudes (e. g. the get-rich quick syndrome, hatred, envy, lack of contentment and high-taste without the ability to produce, elimination of political opponents, etc), inhibit nation building.

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