

Igbo Child Training Versus Western Child Labour: A Comparative Study

Obiakor, Ethel Ebere¹, Onuora, Ngozi Theresa^{2*}, Olekaibe, Chinenye C^{3*}, Nwizu, Pauline Chinasa⁴

¹School of General Studies Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri

²Department of Languages/Linguistics/Literary Studies/Theater Arts Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo

³Directorate of General Studies Federal University of Technology, (FUTO) Owerri

⁴School of General Studies Department of Languages and Humanities Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri

*Corresponding author

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400266>

Received: 02 April 2025; Accepted: 10 April 2025; Published: 10 May 2025

ABSTRACT

There are different strokes for different folks. This is typical of Igbo concept of child training taunts by the Western world as child labour. Among the Igbo, child training begins early from the family. Children grow up following their parents: understudying their day-to-day activities which prepare them for the task of adulthood. Being mostly agrarian people, Igbo families' father, mother and children all take part in the farms and the daily house chores. A setting and knowledge the Western world describes as informal education. On the other hand, such belief and orientation are seen as inhuman tag as child labour whose law dates back centuries ago domesticated by Nigeria. This law put to question the Igbo idea of preparing their younger ones for tomorrow and maintaining family trait. This work looks into the early childhood of Igbo children, its import, why informal education? And the Western child labour. The work establishes that the Western notion of Child labour is nothing but the Igbo means of engaging, observing and inculcating early in their children the importance of being useful in life. The work shows that the word child labour is non-existence in the Igbo worldview rather it forms part of their training to contribute to the growth of the family and the society. It also proves that the Western child labour mentality breeds truancy, non-committal to the family growth and bonding, lacks foundation of life and unhealthy to the family and society at large

Keywords: Igbo, Western, Child, Labour, Family, Education.

INTRODUCTION

The Igbo people of South East Nigeria cherish family and would do everything to preserve it. In the light of this, any man that reaches marriageable age never seizes to do so with the aid of his immediate and extended family, his age grade, friends and well-wishers. "There is nothing like the power of support system where one thinks about collective growth, not individual growth" (Okoroji, 2023) this is typical of Igbo family spirit. Among the Igbo, the primary aim of marriage is for reproduction. That is why the Igbo frowns at any marriage without fruit of the womb and would apply other measures to ensure that the couple has children that will guarantee that their lineage will not go into extinction. When such is the case, the idea of marrying more wives comes in despite the fact that Igbo culturally and traditionally are polygamous in nature.

Anything that will cut short the Igbo lineage receives frontal attack to the extent that a woman whose husband dies without a child marries her fellow woman for the family's continuity. The Igbo, knowing that the fate of the family lies on the ability of their children to continue from where they stopped has laid down principles of nurturing them. Samphina (2023 pg. 1) emphasizes that among the Igbo, "Parents in larger proposition owes to

the society and indeed mankind, the duty to train up their children properly”. As in the words of Isidienu (2015, pg. 120) “once a child is born, the training starts”. The joy begins from conception to the Childs birth to both families (paternal and maternal) and the community at large. The naming ceremony brings the two families together while the child’s training goes beyond the immediate parents: the community and elders play important role in the nurturing of the Igbo child. This concept of training makes the Igbo to see a child as that which belongs to not just the immediate family but the community hence the name “Nwora”.

Hardly can you hear an Igbo person of old say “nwa m” my child rather you will hear “nwa anyi” our child. Every child’s misdemeanors are a disgrace to the immediate family and the society at large, parents therefore ensure that children are nurtured and trained unto healthy and responsible adults (Okoye, 2022, pg. 1). So several measures are put in place to ensure that Igbo child receives proper training that will stand the test of time because the family is the foundation of the society Isidienu (2015, pg. 126). All these fears Ihemebere and Anusiem (2023, pg. 2) say contributes to children’s development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experiences, and help to prepare them to be productive members of the society during their adult life

Statement of the Problem

The Igbo people of South Eastern part of Nigeria in West Africa is one of the three major ethnic groups of the country while its people are known for their entrepreneurial spirit. Often times, many writers especially the international organizations and Human Rights advocates equate the Igbo early childhood training with that of child labour regardless of the discrepancy of cultural ways of its people. It’s in this strength, Obiejesi (2018) lists South East region which is Igbo land to having 46.6 percent of their children involved in child labour. US Department of Labor (2006) classifies as child labor; children work in family and commercial firms as domestic servants including those who are into fishing, mining, quarrying, the transport industry, construction and garment manufacturing. The above catalogue of what constitutes child labour prompts Nwokoro (2011, pg. 3) to quiz “when and how a particular work is to be truly regarded as harmful to the future of a child even interferes with his wellbeing”.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) figure shows that under the 2020 Global Estimates of Child Labour: In the World, 160 million children are in child labour representing 1 in 10 of all children worldwide and are prevalent in boys and girls at every age. While the Agricultural sector ILO says has the highest chunk of the child labour worldwide. According to Arowolo (2023, pg. 3) “when the International community recognized the need to take action towards the elimination of child labour, this started with the enactment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC0 in 1989”. In furtherance, Arowolo (2023, pg.6) states that “at the regional level, the African Continent adopted the African Charter on the Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 1990”.

Nigeria, a country in West Africa is signatory to the Childs Right Act domesticated by her federal government and adopted by most of its states except some states in the northern part of the country. As Ettang (2020) captures, “In 2003, then-Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo signed the Child Labour Act, to preserve the rights of children and protect them from exploitation”. Beyond this, Arowolo (2023, pg 1) points out that “Nigeria is a party to several International Instruments that prohibit child labour”. As in its level of prevalence in Nigeria Decker (2020) lists “child labour as one of the most monumental issues in Nigeria...affecting a large portion of the country’s children up to age 17”. This children according to Bassey (2022) “work with little food, small pay, no education and no medical care thereby establishing a cycle of Childs right violation this is in spite of Nigeria ratification of ILO’ Child Labour Convention”.

All over the world, the issue of child labour has always been at the front burner of discussion. This has been a thorny issue both in the developed and developing nations. Nwokoro (2011, pg.3) decries that “though the phenomenon of Child labour is known to exist Virtually all parts of the world, the prevalence is very high in Sub-Sahara Africa especially Nigeria, the most populous black Nation of the world”. Bassey (2022) quoting the Country Director of (ILO) in Nigeria Vanesa Phala says “not less than 15million children are engaged in child labour, and half of this number is bearing the heavy burden of hazardous work” this figure is that of

Nigeria alone. In a nutshell, various ethnic zones of Nigeria are identified with different types of child labour prevalence in their area as in the classification of Nebe, Enebe and Agunwa (2021)

The Northern Region is said to be child labour endemic Due to the misapplication of the “Almajiri System”. Consequently, the Northern region is most affected by out of school children. In the South-Easter and South South geopolitical zones, many children drop out of school to work as domestic help. In the Western zone, many children are involved in street hawking and as domestic help.

Narrowing it down to the South-East Nigeria (Igbo), further analysis shows that the child labour in this part of the country has its peculiarity as in the works of Nwokoro (2011, pg. 16) In other instances, some of the children are taken to shops And business center/workshops, to serve for a number of years (usually between 5-7yrs) with the promise to assist them establish their personal business outfits at the end of their service period.

Further to the above type of child labour, among the Nigeria South East (Igbo) states are children briskly moving under rain and sun hawking different types of food items perishable and nonperishables, snacks, water and drinks at highways, motor parks and streets. Okoye, Tanyi (009, pg. 427) lament that such children “learn things like pick pocketing in the garage while some turn out to armed robber”. Some of their young girls engage in sales girl’s services in offices, companies and shops in the cities major markets. Child labour with its attendant effects of dehumanization and rubbing its victim the opportunity to explore his or her childhood including exposing them to dangers such as dying untimely death, joining bad gang and being maimed for life. In more ways than one, child labour brings many consequences on those who work. Children begin to lose their childhood and rushed into adulthood therefore child labour leads into early marriage (and Nweke, 2021, pg. 34).

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2022) describes Nigeria as a country where many of her children are executing works in both rural and urban areas under hazardous conditions such as child sexual exploitation, and agricultural labour. The (ILO) observations according to Larai, Mahmud and Muktar (2020, pg. 1) “is part and parcel of the socio-cultural heritage of the Nigerian Society”. According to them, “the old tradition was regarded as a process of socialization”. Larai, Mahmud, and Muktar (2020, pg. 2) emphasize that “The kind of work expected of children in traditional societies are therefore no longer condoned in the modern societies that is why the western countries are up till now advocating for child rights”.

By the middle of the 19th Century when Human Rights movements where formed (including the International Organizations) several agreements were signed for the protection of indigenous peoples and protection of children against child labour Arowolo (2023, pg. 3). Also speaking on the emergence of the Childs right Reid (2023) links the growth of manufacturing and farm mechanizations During the Industrial Revolution in the Europe and the United States in the 18th and 19th Centuries led to many children working under dangerous conditions in factories and farms. This in turn prompted laws that not only regulated conditions for kids working but also mandated education.

The United Nation Child Education Fund (UNICEF) information shows that the history of Child Rights dates back to the 19th Century precisely 1924 after the League of Nations adopts Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child: a summary of work of Eglantyne Jebb, founder of the Save the Children Fund. Under the declaration, all people owe children right to means for their development, special help in times of need, priority for relief, economic freedom and protection from exploitation, and an upbringing that instills social consciousness and duty.

Later to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Rights of the Child adopted in 1959, the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 declares the International Year of the Child with UNICEF playing an active role. To date, June 12 is the United Nations-Sanctioned World Day Against Child Labour, a time to Remember the young workers who have been robbed of their childhood, education, and the future they deserve (Reid, 2023).

Igbo Child Training (Informal Education)

Igbo child training though refers as informal education has two schools and 4 departments. The two schools are the family and the society. Under the family is the parent with two departments (father and mother), while the society has peer and adult departments: under these umbrellas the Igbo children graduate by acquiring various skills. Ajakor (2019, pg 54) narrates that Igbo children “are trained differently based on their gender”. Every Igbo child passes through these schools and is made to major in department of home front but covers all external school’s curriculum. Ogbalu (2006, pg 19) explains “girls were expected to learn simple virtues, laws of hygiene, simple marketing and trading; preparation of various foods, cultivation of crops particularly, cocoa yam, cassava and care of children”. Boys on the other hand learnt directly from their fathers with whom they were with always.

Under the family school, the child’s sex determines the choice of the department to enroll. The males settle for father department while their female counterparts settle for mother’s department. They learn mostly by staying close to their parents and older people and siblings (Isidienu, 2015, pg. 125).

The separation and concentration of training of the girl child from that of the boy child sends out a strong message. As Okigbo (2015) rightly posits that “Male children and dependents are supposed to be 100% under the mentorship of the father while female ones are supposed to be 100% under the mentorship of the mother” Right from childhood, the girl child through training from the home gets to know her expectations and limitations. Ajakor (2019, pg. 54) explains that “the trainings the young girls received from their various homes between childhood and early childhood were seen to be enough for them to start lives on their own”. Same is applicable to the boys who from cradle learn to be the protector and provider for their families just as the father exhibits. Okoye (2022, pg. 5) quoting Ogbu says Igbo see childrearing; “as a process by which parents transfer, and the child acquires, prior existing competence required by the culture to assume valued future responsibilities in the society”.

Age plays a vital role among the Igbo, as every child is expected to move alongside his or her age mates in everything. It’s a life of competition where every parent would endeavor to see their children catch up with their age mates; any child that lags behind in the activities of the age mates brings resentment to the parents while those that measure up bring praises to themselves and family and at the same time become a reference point to others. It is believed that the child will grow out of childhood and enter into adulthood, physically mentally and religiously (Nnokwe, 2021). The exposure is such that the girls even outside the home maintain the company of her fellow girls while the boys do same. Anything outside this is an aberration and receives reproof from parents and elders. Okafor (2003, pg. 14) draws the distinction Expectations for boys and girls are different; boys were expected to be strong, brave and hardworking, serves as future providers for their families and to be tolerant and intelligent. Girls on the other hand were expected to be obedient, submissive and very proficient with domestic chores.

The females of the Igbo family that subscribe to mother’s department receive constant training from their mothers being by her side understudying what is today known as home economics, housekeeping and child nurturing. Under home economics the girl child starts at early age always in the kitchen observing, running errands of bringing salt, spices and grows to its pounding before graduating to cooking food proper. This Ayika (2020) describes as “a culture of life where all hands are on deck to achieve not just life but a beautiful life”. During this period, the mother passes certain etiquettes to her: how to and how not to sit as a girl and other comportments due to the fact that cultural values are passed down from generation to generation (Nduka, Mansor and Talib, 2012, pg. 1568). The Igbo girl child at younger age learns how to keep both the house and the kitchen clean under housekeeping. She is meant to toe every step of the mother knowing that one day she will grow to manage her home (marriage). This also includes helping the mother to nurture her younger ones (iku nwa).

Among the Igbo, the boy child enrolls under the tutelage of the father. Just as the girl child always clings to the mother so is the Igbo boy child does with the father. They are trained differently based on their gender (Ajakor, 2019, pg. 54). At younger age, he is the handbag of the father and companion. He goes around observing all that he does as a father, chief security officer and disciplinarian of the family. He is rarely seen in the kitchen

with the mother but at the “obi” sitting next to his father serving as his errand boy. When the father is attending age grade meeting or as the case may be, the boy child will assist in carrying his chair and his goat skin bag in line with Samphina (2023 pg. 5) “the boys were very close to the father while the girls were to the mothers in the traditional Igbo society” this is because the two home departments are quite distinct from each other. Right from childhood the children already know the area they will major. This according to Okafor, (2003, pg. 8) is “because children live what they learn and the child’s first institution of learning is the home”.

The boy child serves as intermediary between his mother and father by bridging the gap between the father’s house “obi” his resting place where he stays most times receiving visitors and the main building. So with the distance between the hut and the “obi” the presence of the younger son saves the father the energy of constantly frequenting the wife’s section and shouts when in need of something. When such is the case, the boy will hastily run down and deliver the needed message to the person concern or bring something for the father.

Among the Igbo of South East Nigeria, families are everything. These families stretch beyond the usual mother, father and children; it spans beyond their various villages up to their communities, maternal and in-laws it’s more of root of a tree. That is why Ikegbusi (1989) calls it “education by participation” Igbo live communal life and strongly believes in the word “igwebuike” unity in diversity. No one live or acts in isolation. It’s on this premise the Igbo collectively train children bearing in mind that one stained finger corrupts the entire hand “ofu mkpuru aka ruta mmanu o zuo ora onu”. The Igbo children right from birth is meant to understand where they are coming from, where they are going and all that are expected of them. Nnokwe (2021) explains that the Igbo under “the rite of childhood introduces the child to the community”. Igbo infuse their children into the day to day of the family, being active in affairs of the village down to the community level. All these Isidienu (2015, pg 125) says “are geared towards preparing them for a future adaptability in the society”. It’s an aberration to see a child idle at a time his or her peers are busy whether inside the home front or outside.

In some instances, some families prefer bringing fodders for their goat in place of outside grazing and this is part of the duty of the male children. Just as in the words of Georgas (2003, pg. 5) “each society has specific roles assigned to the family members” these are daily routing of Igbo child having inculcated these in them right from onset so there is no need of reminder from anyone. The Igbo child training is anchored on the saying ‘laziness kills’ while ‘stained hand brings fortune’ as an idle mind the Igbo believe, is the hub of evil.

Another aspect of Igbo child training is the benevolent in assisting one of their own married daughters. The assistance usually comes in form of sending their younger children to help one of the family uncles or aunties (a nursing mother) in house chores and babysitting. A comradeship Nwaneki, Uzowulu and Onwuliri (2021, pg 83) say Igbo “most times do it with love and bring up such children as their own”. This fellowship is symbiotic in the sense that the aunty must have at one time lived with the family and does same as a child. Now the family is paying her back by sending their own child to assume the same position she once held in their family while she is expected to train and take care of the child sent to her. This payback forms another chain of bonding of Igbo families. “o nuru ube nwanne agbana oso” being their brother’s keeper.

The Igbo child grows to learn how to extend help to the aged in their society especially the childless ones and the vulnerable among them. Obiakor and Onuorah (20016, pg. 88) explain that “the Igbo never limit their responsibilities to their immediate family but extend same to extended families and even non blood relations”. Being a child of the community, the Igbo child is trained to fetch firewood, water to such elders and at the same time assist them to carry their loads while coming back from the farm or market. A charity that is never futile among the Igbo as the recipient continues to shower blessing on the child as they go. Ifemesia (1979) describes this as “...a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy, and by consideration and compassion for human being”. If the woman is coming back from the market, the child is sure of receiving any of these, akara, moi, groundnut or okpa as a parting gift, a gift the child takes home to show the parent before eating it.

During farming season, children from Igbo families play vital role in helping out their parents. They are part of the workforce in the farms as they help out in clearing the bushes, making molds and weeding the farm but that

has to do with one's ability and age because everyone contributed to planting crop (Nguyen, 2015). Although those within the age bracket of 5 to 9 do not play active part in the farms. Their job is mostly to bring water and food to those in the farm and in most cases help in scaring or warding off birds that pose threat to their crops. Other areas these age bracket can be of help include planting of corn and cassava stem as well as gathering firewood. Nguyen (2015) quoting Chau says this is because the children are "required to do whatever their parents would tell them to do". In most cases their presence in the farms is more of companionship and exploration as they run around the ridges in excitement. Their presences alone give their parents a sigh of relief of their safety and assurance that they are not involved in any trouble in the home front while they are away.

The young adulthood boys among the Igbo (the teens) play active role in the family's farm. They are the force behind making ridges for the yam and cassava and dissipate their excess energy by carrying heavy loads in form of baskets of yam, cassava and logs of firewood. Their presence and assistance give their parent reprieve especially those that have come of age. The Igbo teens (the boys) engage in farm extension services to indigents among them free of charge this according to Obiakor (2016, pg. 93) "promotes passion and spirit of oneness" as they at the same time embark on money making by charging certain amount of money after working in one's farm. Most Igbo teens already have some sort of independence as they proudly make genuine money through hard work, keep them and make use of them when the need arise.

They briskly involve in several project that fetch them money; hunting, climbing palm tree to access palm nut, climbing oha tree to pluck its leaves, harvesting cocoanut, pear, oranges and digging pits. These are the services Igbo teens (boys) embark upon in order to make money for themselves. The Igbo young adulthood boys of the same age bracket form clusters with a workable timetable working in each other's family farms with their group. A coming together Obiakor (2016, pg. 93) says "promotes a healthy competition among the children". This approach can bring together two persons of the same mind or more. Whenever such grouping occurs, it gives the opportunity to measure and discover each person's ability and strength as everyone strives to be ahead of others. One's ability during cluster farming forms the basis of discussion during their leisure time. Those that perform below expectation receive cajoling of the stronger ones among them. The strength of the Igbo young teens in most cases determines their market pricing. These young adulthood Igbo boys in this age bracket receive training that will assist them replicate same when they eventually have their own families.

The Igbo girls in this category join their parents in the farm weeding, planting vegetables and cassava. Most young girls through the home economic training they receive from their mothers at home demonstrate same at the community's market day; some prepare and sell akara, okpa, groundnut moi and other confectionaries including mashed "onugbu" bitter leave for making soup and pap in line with the submission of Ajakor (2019, pg. 59) since "women were taught different arts and crafts". They are also already experts in managing homes as well as cooking food and taking care of their siblings in absence of the mother. The training of the Igbo girl child is uncompromising to every Igbo family this is to help her build a stable family when she gets married. Family of any Igbo woman that fails to make a good house wife receives the bash of the society who in their judgment attributes her irresponsibility to the family's inability to teach her the rudiments of motherhood.

Although the Igbo are generally agrarian society, each of the families is known with one craft or the other which they do as their vocation to complement the farming. Among such vocations are wine tapping, hunting, blacksmithing, dancing, traditional bone setting, curing of different ailments and craft "ikpa otari" rafter, rearing of livestock like poultry, goat, pig and cows (efi Igbo) and pottery Okafor (2003, pg. 4) sees it as that which provides a cognitive blue print that governs the action of its members". The Igbo in the coastal communities are known to engage in fishing, this is outside the usual farming. Meanwhile, while it is the duty of the girl child to sweep the house, the boys take responsibility of sweeping the compound "ezi or mbara" that is part of the responsibility the Igbo boy child performs first in the morning before taking out the family's livestock for grazing and brings them back in the evening.

Every Igbo child plays important part on the day of the towns market. They help their parents to carry their produce from the farm to the market. Each market day is a big day for every family as it affords them the opportunity to cook new soup. Beyond the new soup, the children expect goodies from their mothers when she returns from the market. The items usually come in for of "akara" bean-cake, Okpa, groundnut, "elele" moi moi. Children that distinguish themselves in carrying out house chores are usually rewarded in a special way

by receiving larger chunk of whatever the mother returns with. Fathers also buy their while coming back but that of mothers are certain.

Some Igbo children while still with their parents in their teens venture into their personal businesses. Some sell kerosene in bottles, articles during the towns market day, carry loads and engage in other menial jobs to earn money. Their joy of earning money manifests during any of the village festivity; they hand the money over to their mother to buy clothes, shoes, eye glasses and watch for themselves to the envy of the lazy ones among them. Very early in life Igbo children cultivate entrepreneurial spirit helping their parents to build their homes and at the same time engage in ventures that can fetch them personal money. A foundation Nwokoro (2011, pg. 14) supports “parents ought to take their children to the farms, markets, streams, paid-jobs basically to teach them and gradually integrate them into the society”.

Igbo girl child is not adventurous as their male counterpart. They stay mostly within the confines of the house helping their mothers in the house chores. Although they participate in fetching water, and firewood but most of her activities revolves around the house helping her mother in cooking food and rearing their younger ones. Some of the girls’ sell cooked or fried groundnut, akara, okpa, smashed bitter leave and other things on the village market days. Whatever the girl child sells Ajakor (2019, pg. 55) says “helped them to be self-employed then and thereby contributing to the economic development of the community in particular” and does not clash with her home front responsibility as she tries to balance both. Unlike the boys, Igbo girl child dare not keep late night she is priced and receives protection of her parents including her male siblings and elders of the village

Igbo youths and teens contribute to the development of their community. Cleaning the village and community stream and sweeping the village square are part of their social responsibility. This outing is structured in such a manner that they have laws guiding their streams and penalty for defaulter’s including those that skip being part of the stream cleaning exercise. The stream sanitation exercise among the Igbo is undertaken by the children between the ages of 10-15 and in most cases takes place on last Saturday of the month (Obiakor, Onuorah, 2018, pg. 74)

Among the Igbo any child that does not meet up with the speed at which his or her mates are operating is seen as “efulefu” loafer, lazy and good for nothing person. Such a child brings shame to the family and the community at large. Every Igbo family prides itself with the feat their child attains within his age mates while time is of essence in all their undertakings. Every member of the Igbo family is active in the day to day running of the house as idleness is highly frowned at. In the face of all this, the children still make out time to socialize at the village or community square a period Alaebo (2020, pg. 80) says “women look so beautiful and adore their bodies local tattoo called uri”. Whenever the moon sets, it brings happiness to Igbo children who use the period to socialize with each other having moonlight tales. After the day’s chores, every family hastily prepares dinner and set out for the moonlight telling stories, riddles, dancing, singing and other forms of entertainments. Some wrestle some engage in hide and seek game all these forms part of recreational activities.

The moonlight tale among the Igbo is not limited to children alone; elders also have the taste of the new moon; some converge in their compound telling stories while other may prefer paying visit to their friends because the presence of the moon illuminates everywhere making the night look like day. The period Obiakor and Onuora (2019, pg. 47) showcase “Igbo dancing movement associated with twisting of both hands and legs makes it a foremost medium of exercise”. The appearance of the new moon illicit kind words from the people ushering it and claiming all the good things one can wish. Words like, “onwa iru mu na gi iru oma” meaning “onwa may my seeing you bring me good things.

Aside the recreational activities of the new moon, the Igbo have other periods for festivities. Some of them fall within the pre and post period of their planting season and harvesting. Some crops are celebrated among the Igbo such crops like yam new yam festival, ifejioku, “ede” cocoyam while some deities are also celebrated. These give the Igbo children opportunity to fraternize, felicitate and celebrate with one another.

Igbo family with a father that is a hunter is usually accompanied by the son whenever he embarks on hunting expedition. Same thing goes to the palm wine tapper, black smith and other vocations because according to

Igboamazu (2016, pg. 23) among the Igbo, “vocations are gender relative” even some crops and trees are regarded as male or female (Okananwa and Igbokwe, 2015). The young lad that follows the father around gains a lot because whatever the father receives during such period is always handed over to the child who receives the large chunk during its sharing. These may come in form of meat, coconut, bean cake “akara”, palm wine, groundnut among others.

Children born in family that is known to engage in wine taping ends up taking up the father’s trade as vocation when he gets to adulthood. There is no special platform provided for the son to learn this trade aside being close to the father and observing how he goes about it. He sees his father as he gets up early in the morning to go for his wine taping, see the taping implements and most times the child may accompany the father. Achebe (1984, pg. 37) captures Okonkwo wishes for his son “Nwoye to grow into a tough young man capable of ruling his father’s household when he was dead and gone to join his ancestors”. The essence of the boy child being close to the father is a subtle way of handing over by telling the child, this is how you should do this or that and the child grows to have the knowledge at the back of his mind and will never lose sight of the formula.

Most Igbo families with the gift of healing one ailment or the other like traditional bone setters, curing of madness or native midwives usually have their children taking up the work. Obiakor (2016, pg. 394) sees ‘the living together, observation and nurturing by the parents and the elders instills lasting influence on the Childs development’. These are effortlessly inculcated into the child. In most cases some of the Igbo families have this run in their lineage. Same thing happens to a child whose father is a traditional healer

Child Labour

The word child in general terms represents a boy or a girl still under the tutelage or guidance of an adult. Other definition of child according to Cambridge Dictionary is, “a boy or girl from the time of birth until he or she is an adult, or a son or daughter of any age. Wex (2020) explains that “under the law a child usually refers to an individual who is a minor, who is below legal age or the age of maturity. The age of maturity being 18”. The Collins Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary respectively see child as “a young person especially between infancy and puberty” and “a human being who is not yet an adult”. All these definitions of a child boil down to represent time of one’s formative years that requires proper attention and protection. Around the globe, a child is a child but the only difference may be the age-bracket that determines who is still a child as in the submission of Sloan, Stearns, Halcrow and Fleer (2022) ...definition of a child is specific to the 21st Century; different Eras in history defined the child in different ways...different Cultures (used to) define the child and childhood in different Ways.

Child labour has been in existence from time immemorial. In fact it dates back to the medieval period during the European African invasion, takes them on slavery and forced them to work in their farms and industries under hard labour. Some of the slaves are underage while children born by the adult slaves are recycled by joining their parents under harsh condition working in their slave Masters farms. Nwokoro (2011, pg. 14) confirms this postulation The earliest known form of child labour is perhaps slavery

Which was big business as it both created and relied on the support network of big merchants and some well-placed members of the societies where it flourished.

Child labour to a larger extent is an act that hinders the wellbeing and growth of the child physically, emotionally and others. It encroaches on the child’s right to have a meaningful growth/living which can result into many fatalities at the long run. The International Labour Organization (ILO) outlines works that is mentally, physical, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children: and interferes with their schooling as Child labour. According to (ILO) these actions end at depriving children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity. Aside the above, Article 3 of (ILO) convention no. 182 lists all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery such as the sale and trafficking of children, the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, trafficking of drugs as worst form of child labour. Olayinka (2020) quoting (ILO) estimates that there are 152 million children in child labour, 73 million of whom are in hazardous work, seventy percent of all child labour takes place in agriculture, mostly related to poverty and parents difficulties in finding decent work.

Adedoyin (2023) lists Nigeria as one of the countries that engage the services of children to work in construction sites, markets, motor parks, as assistants in mechanic workshops, hawking on the streets, farming, mining and working as helps in homes and shops. All these are seen as child labour that has different penalties according its level by the offender.

FINDINGS

The Igbo people of South East Nigeria just like other race are people with culture a guide to their way of life that transmits from generation to generations unborn. Pappas and Mckelvie (2022) see culture as “the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts”. According to Nduka, Mansor and Talib (2012, pg. 1568) “cultural values are passed down from generation to generation” that is part of the reason its known and seen as the totality of people while People without culture are as good as dead because that is what defines them as a people and distinguishes them from others especially when it’s healthy. It also forms opinion of Obasanjo (2023) to say that “if God has created sameness in the world, it would have been a world of monotony, staleness, un-excitement, dullness and boredom”. According to Obasanjo, “multiculturalism was designed for mankind by God, and must be cherished, jealously guarded and sustained by all.

In the real sense of it, child labour is the concept of the Westerners (the Whiteman) as it has no bearing in the culture of the Igbo. Talking about child labour, what first reflects in the mind of the Whiteman is nothing but the pictures of slave trade. Reid (2023) recalls the history of child labour; Throughout history, children have contributed to the economic upkeep of their families through farming and handicrafts. However, the growth of manufacturing and farm mechanizations during the industrial Revolution in Europe and the United States in the 18th & 19th Centuries led to many children working under dangerous conditions in factories and farms.

The above submission shows that child labour is alien to the Igbo and quite different from the Igbo child training no wonder Ajakor (2019) describes Igbo child training as a “task that help the children learn how to be productive member of their family and community”. Georgas (2003, pg. 14) links the child labour malaise to the; Modernization, a theory developed by sociologists and political science, hypothesizes that increasing economic level and industrialization in a society results in the rejection of traditional values and increased individualization.

The Igbo rich cultural heritage which is a guide to their daily life is used to shape their younger children in anticipation of passing same to other generation thereby creating an unbroken bond. In line with the stance of Natalie (2023) which says “the values of the family set the basic tone for the family foundation”. Being their way of life they unconsciously transmit them on their children believing that a child of today will be the elder of tomorrow and without mincing any chances, the Igbo endeavors’ to catch them young. Just as Griffiths (2012) submits that a “comparism of one culture to another will reveal obvious differences but all cultures also share common elements” which is people’s behavior and beliefs. Dahlem (2008, pg 11) rightly posits that “employment by parents was considered harmless”. That is why the Igbo in their wisdom says “ukwu okuko zoro nwa ya anaghi egbu ya” meaning what is seen as child labour among the western world to the Igbo is fortifying and preparing their children for tomorrow. Isidienu (2015, pg. 124) expresses the wisdom behind Igbo child training If, however these basic trainings are not given in the family the society is bound to suffer. Consequently, will be filled with disobedient, ill mannered, lazy and never do well kind of people.

The idea of family and procreation is succession and no parent would be proud to leave behind a half-baked child that will not be able to maintain and uphold the family name and most importantly unable to look after them in their old age. The words of Reid (2023) that “poverty is the primary reason children are sent to work” is in sharp contrast with reality of life and common sense because idleness breeds poverty while a productive person meets up with his daily needs.

According to (ILO) child labour robs children their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. Igbo child training does not in any way negate all these attributes rather Nwokoro (2011, pg. 14) put the record straight; for the Igbo of South East Nigeria, child work is

clearly different from child labour. The former is seen as an enviable process of growth, development and integration of the child.

Igbo child training further gives them the opportunity to explore and conquer their environment and at the same time create an unending memory of their childhood. Isidienu (2015, pg. 120) encapsulates the Igbo child training as that which “covers all aspects of life (mental, political, social, economic and moral”. One thing is clear, the notion in the Igbo-African society is not the same with that of the Western culture (Onwuatiegwu 2020, pg. 18) with the full package in Igbo child training which Westerners see as robbing children their childhood and dignity forgetting that there is dignity in labour.

A cursory look at the saying, ‘you give what you have’ and you cannot give what you don’t have: Igbo parents have skills and vocations they can transmit and share with their children which the westerners do not have and at the same time lack the stamina to compete in that field. That is part of the reason the westerners embark on slave trade using Blacks to work in their plantation dehumanized Hawes (2023) captures the men had selected seven black people, most from nearby plantation, and hauled them to a porch photo studio in downtown Columbia. Someone forced the seven to partly or fully undress before a camera.

Even at the age of eighteen, Igbo parents at this stage still oversees the welfare of the child as well as taking decisions on the child’s behalf against their European counterpart that prides on the independent of the child at teen that has the powers to live the family house and become self -sustaining Okafor (2003, pg.7) draws what is obtainable whereby “American parents, on the other hand, emphasizes independence, assertiveness and individual achievements” this is against Igbo collective and communal life “igwebuikwe”.

Igbo Child Training and The New Media

Igbo child training tagged Informal Education is now the savior of the academic world with the emergence of HI-TECH technology that reduced the world to a global village. Since its emergence there is a paradigm shift on the notion of acquiring knowledge in a typical classroom setting (formal education). People now attend online classes in the comfort of their homes via zoom without meeting their lecturers and even their fellow student’s one on one. This mode of teaching and learning has taken the center stage as it goes beyond ones immediate surrounding extending to the overseas. The impetus of this online learning laced with the characteristics of informal education is given the status of the formal education with the issuance of certificate.

Also is the outbreak of corona-virus (Covid-19) which first started in the Chinese City of Wuhan in December 2019 a virus that lasts for almost three years and transverse the whole world. Chakraborty, Maity (2020, pg.6) recalls; The World Health Organization (WHO) in general order to reduce risk of transmission of COVID-19 has recommended some precautionary measures such as avoiding close contact with people...different countries postponed all types of religious, cultural, social, scientific, sports and political mass gathering events

This further open the window for online learning to make up the lost years of the pandemic occasioned by the lockdown one of the measures used to check its spread. Since after the covid-19 has come and gone, the online teaching and learning has continued to gather momentum thereby defiling one of the attributes of formal education which is being presence in an organized classroom setting. It’s now expected that with the institution of Online teaching and learning informal education should have a new definition as against its earlier narrative of absence of organized setting.

CONCLUSION

The Igbo child training of old branded (Informal Education) by the Westerners proves to possess the rudiments to solve the needs of today’s unemployment debacle. As plausible as the Igbo child training is, governments at all levels are embracing it as every pointer is now on vocational study and skill acquisition this conversely is changing the narrative of what the school curriculum should be in this 21st century so as to suit the present situation the world found itself. The Igbo of old embraces technical and vocational education thereby preparing their children to be self-reliant, entrepreneurs and job creators as against today certificate education where tom and harry seek for employment. Another example is the Igbo idea of apprenticeship (igba boi) which earlier

makes the list as one of the ways of engaging children in child labour today has continued to receive attention across the globe as a one of the easiest means of engaging young teenagers into meaningful ventures most especially a platform that ensures that children of poorest of the poorest are sure of having a takeoff capital after completing their service under their master. Ekekwe, (2018) quoting TED speaker Robert Neuwirth analysis “that Igbo apprenticeship system that governs Alaba International Market is the largest business incubator platform in the world”. Many governments and international organizations are understudying the Igbo Apprenticeship system because of its ability to remove teens from the streets and providing an alternative to challenges of government in provision of employment to its citizens. Just recently, the Nigerian government in March 2012 through the mandatory National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) under the Skill Acquisition Entrepreneurship (SAED) adopts the Igbo child training (Nwogbo, Eze and Obananya 2021) this makes it mandatory for each corps member while in the orientation camp learns one vocation or the other. Shaibu (2023) relays that “The DG told the corps members that the in-camp training was designed to expose them to entrepreneurship skills during their three-week orientation”. Aside the government move, parents now ensure that their wards after graduating from the universities still apply to acquire skill after spending several years in the university, this shows the vacuum the abandonment of Igbo child training created throughout the period the culture is alienated. For Nigerian government and other education stakeholders to wake up today to embrace and introduce the adoption of vocational and Skill acquisition for adult university leavers, shows the stuff Igbo people who embrace this training from cradle are made with. No wonder they always distinguish themselves in every sphere of life and most importantly weathering the storm no matter how turbulent the sea seems to be. Lastly, according to Azhar (2021) “western children are accustomed to making their own decisions, they frequently do not listen to their parents” but for the Igbo, this is an aberration because people are shaped by their culture. In a nut-shell, Igbo child training is quite distinct from child labour; it is a cultural tool handed down from generation to generation to prepare its people stand the test of time by being self-reliant.

REFERENCES

1. Achebe, C. (1984). *Things Fall Apart*, Heinemann Education Books London
2. Adedoyin, A. (2023). “Poverty: A Root Cause of Child Labour in Nigeria” <https://yourcommonwealth.org> Downloaded September 12th 2023
3. Ajakor, E. I. (2019). “Girl Child Development in the Traditional Igbo Society: Model for Contemporary Women Empowerment” *Preocjeh* Vol. 4 (2) 2019 <https://ezenwaohanetorc.org> Downloaded 12th September 2023
4. Alaebo, I. (2020). “Socio-Cultural Activities and Traditional Festival in Ibughubu Umuchu” In *Ibughubu Amaka Renaissance Magazine* a Publication of Ibughubu Youths Association Umuchu Anambra State, Maiden Edition
5. Arowolo, G. A. (2023). “Child Labour in Nigeria” Need for Effective Legislative Frame work” <https://www.researchgate.net> Downloaded 7th July 2023
6. Ayika, P. E. (2020). “Communal Relation in the Traditional Igbo Society” *Nigeria Journals* line <https://nigeriajournals> Downloaded 5th February 2023
7. Azhar, M. (2021). “Eastern Versus Western: Which Parenting Style is Better”? [HTTPS://www.marham.pk](https://www.marham.pk) Downloaded September 12th 2023
8. Bassey, J. (2022). “Child Labour: 15m Children Engaged in Child Labour in Nigeria-ILO” <https://www.businessday.ng> Downloaded 5th September 2023
9. Chakraborty, I. Maity, P. (2020). “Covid-19 Outbreak: Migration, Effect on Society, Global Environment and Prevention” *National Library of Medicine* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> Downloaded 10th October 2023
10. Cambridge Dictionary <https://www.dictionary.cambridge.org> Downloaded 15th July 2023
11. Children Charity childlawadvace.org.uk Downloaded 3rd October 2023
12. Dahllen, M. (2008). “The ILO and Child Labour” Faculty of Law, Uppsala University, Sweden <https://www.diva-portal.org> Downloaded 28th September 2023
13. Decker, S. (2020). “10 Facts about Child Labour in Nigeria” <https://borgenproject.org> Downloaded 5th October 2023
14. Ekekwe, N. (2018). *Igbo Apprenticeship System that Governs Alaba International Market is The Largest Business Incubator Platform in the World* <https://www.tekedia.com> Downloaded 15th July 2023

15. Ettang, I. (2020). "Child Labour Still Prevalent in Nigeria, Despite Legislative Efforts"<https://www.voanews.com>
16. FOS/ILO/SIMPOC Report on Modular Child Labour Survey Nigeria: 2000/2001<https://labordoc.ilo.org> Downloaded 7th July 2023
17. Georgas, J. (2003). "Family: "Varriations and Changes Across Cultures"<https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu> Downloaded 20th September 2023.
18. Griffiths, J. Niamh, C. Daniel, N. (2023). "Hard hitting, is Smacking a Child Legal in UK?Law of Smacking Your Child" <https://www.thesun.co.uk> Downloaded 15th August 2023
19. Hawes, J.B. (2023). "A Racist Harvard Scientist Commissioned Photos of Enslaved People One Possible Descendants Wants to Reclaim their Story" propublica.org/article/Harvard Downloaded 10th October 2023.
20. Ifemesia, C. (1979). Traditional Human Living Among Igbo. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers
21. Igboamazu, N. O. (2014). "Challenges of the Girl-Child in Nigeria: Visual Art and Education as Panacea for Sustainable Development". POFSA Journal of Art, Science and Technology, Vol. vii, Onitsha Joyce Printing and Publishing Coy, pp. 273-279
22. Ihebemere, C. Anusiem, A. (2023). "The Family as the Bedrock of Igbo Traditional Society" JMEL_Journal of Modern Language and Literature Vol. 4 <https://journal.unizik.edu.uk> Downloaded 5th August 2023.
23. Ikegbusi, P. C. (1989). "Christian Parents as Primary Catechists of the Child Through the Promotion of Christian Family Culture Complemented by Catechist in the Parish" Germany, Universitas Monster
24. International Labour Organization (ILO) (2023). International Labour Standards on Child Labour<https://www.ilo.org> Downloaded 5th October 2023.
25. Isidien, I. C. (2015). "The Family as the Bedrock of Igbo Traditional Society" JMEL-Journal Of Modern European Languages and Literature Vol. 4 2015 ISSN: 978-8450-4-5
26. Online <https://www.jmel.com.ng> Downloaded 25th April 2023Iwuchukwu, C. U. Obiabika, E. C. Alo, R. N. (2016). "Speech Act Analysis in Igbo language: A Study of Child Naming Ceremony in Oraifite" International Digital Organization for Scientific Research IDORS Journal of Communication and English (1) 2016 www.idors.org Downloaded 5th February 2023
27. Larai, H. Mahmoud, A. T. Muktar, J. I. (2022). "Child Labour in Nigeria Consequences and Solutions" <https://www.researchgate.net> Downloaded 5th July 2023Merriam –Webstar Dictionary
28. Muogbo, U. Eze, S., Obananya, C. G. (2021). "Skill Acquisition as a Tool for Solving Unemployment in Nigeria: The Role of NYSC" International Journal of Management &
29. Entrepreneurship Research 3(4):161-174 www.researchgate.net Downloaded 9th October2023
30. Natalie, R. (2023). "The Effect of Family Culture on Family Foundation" <https://www.cot.org>Downloaded 5th January 2025
31. Nnebe, N. O. Enebe, J. T. Mansor, M. Talib, M. (2012). "Prevalence and Predicator of Child Labour Among Junior Secondary School Students in Enugu Nigeria: A Cross-Sectional Study" biomedcentral.com Downloaded 9th October 2023
32. Nduka, A. C. Mansor, M. Talib, M. (2012) "Effect of Igbo Culture Importance and Participation in Cultural Events on Parents Use of Physical Punishment on their
33. Children in Imo State of Nigeria" International Journal of Asian Social Science 2(9)1564-1578 <https://www.aessweb.com> Journal detail Downloaded 5th September 2023
34. Nguyen, D. (2015). "Role of Women/Children/Family in Igbo Society" <https://www.preci.com> Downloaded March 3rd 2025
35. Nnokwe, A. (2021). "Rites of Passage in Ideato-North L. G. A. Problems and Prospects" MA
36. Thesis NAU, Philosophical Appraisal-Igbo-Traditional-System-Child-Upbringing-Vis-à-vis-Contemporary-System" <https://bravoproject.com.philosophy> Downloaded5th October 2023
37. Nwaneki, M. U. Uzowulu, O. E. Onwuliri, A. C. (2021). "A Philosophical Analysis of Contemporary and Traditional System of Igbo Child Upbringing" Trinitarian
38. International Journal of Arts and Humanities, Vol. (2). 2021 Downloaded 3rd March 2025
39. Nwokoro,C. N. (2011). "The Challenge of Child Labour to the Achievement of MDG2: Case Study of South-Eas Nigeria" <https://www.fao.org> Downloaded 5th September 2023
40. Obasanjo, O. (2023). "Why god Designed Multicultural for Mankind" globalpatriotnews.com Downloaded 9th October 2023.

41. Obiakor, E. E. (2016). "African Value and the Emergence of Social Media" In Humanities and Values Faculty of Arts, NAU. Awka. (ed) Umezina, E. C. Nwadior, K. I.
42. Umeanolue, I. L. and Obiakor, N. J. Obiakor, E. E. Onuora, T. N. (2020). "Igbo Traditional Education: A Panacea to the Nations
43. Unemployment Debacle" International Network Organization for Scientific Research INORS Arts and Management 5 (1): 42-55 ISSN: 2705-1669
44. Obiakor, E. E. Onuora, T. N. (2016). "Igbo Etiquette (Hospitality)" Ok[ulo Journal of Arts and Cultural Heritage. Owerri: National Museum and Nzuko Okpulo Inc Vol. 2, No 2
45. Obiakor, E. E. Onuora, T. N. Nnebedum, T. N. (2018). "Environmental Preservation
46. The Igbo Approach" IDORS Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences 3(1): 68-85, 2018 www.idors.org
47. Obiejesi, K. (2018). "Which Geopolitical Zone has the Highest Number of Child Labour" AnNBS Survey Answers" icirigeria.org downloaded 3rd October 2023
48. Ogbalu, F. C. (2006). "Igbo Institutions and Customs" Onitsha: Varsity Industrial Press
49. Okafor, C. B. (2003). "Child Rearing Practices in Eastern Nigeria: Implications for Social Work
50. In United States" International Journal of Global Health Vol. 2>No. 2 (2003) Downloaded 25th July 2023
51. Okananwa & Igbokwe (2015). "Gender and Fashion Transmogrification Among Igbo Women
52. In Okpulo Journal of Arts and Cultural Heritage, Owerri: National Museum and NzukoOkpulo Inc. pp.26-33
53. Okigbo, D. (2015). "Understanding the Igbo Family Life Structure"<https://www.obindigbo.com.ng> Downloaded 17th August 2023
54. Okoye, O. C. (2022). "Child Naming and Modernity among the Igbo of South-East
55. Nigeria" International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Social Sciences Vol. 1< No. 2 2022 <https://www.kksaijirss.com> Downloaded 17th September 2023
56. Okoye, U. O. Tanyi, P. A. (2009). "Perception of Child Labour in South Eastern Nigeria: A Study of Onitsha Metropolis" International Journal of Research in Arts and Social
57. Sciences Vol. 1 <https://www.academicexcellencesociety.com> downloaded 25 July 2023 Okoroji, A. (2023). "Why I Deny My Father in Public-Alex, Tony Okoroji's Daughter"[i](https://www.guardian.ng) Downloaded 5th Sept 2023
58. Olayinka, C. (2020). "ILO Child Labour Convention Achieves Universal Ratification"guardian.ng Downloaded 5th July 2023
59. Oli, N. P. Nweke, C. K. (2021). "Determinants and Prevalent Forms of Child Labour Practices inwka South Local Government Area, Anambra Stats, South-East Nigeria" Zik Journal Of Disciplinary Research: Vol. 4: 33-48 <https://www.journals.aphriapub.com> Downloaded 5th April 2023
60. Onwuatiegwu, N. I. (2020). "The Notion of Family in Igbo African Society: A PhilosophicalAppraisal" European Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religious Studies ISSN 2520-00445 www.jrpojournal.org online Vol. 4, Issue 1, Downloaded 5th August 2023
61. Pappas, S. Mckelie, C. (2022> "What is Culture?" <https://www.livescience.com> Downloaded 5th June 2023
62. Reid, K. (2023). "Child Labour: Facts FAQ'S and How to End it" <https://www.worldvision.org>Downloaded September 2023
63. Samphina, (2023). "A Philosophical Appraisal on the Igbo Traditional System of ChildUpbringing" Samphina Academy samphina.com.ng Downloaded 17th September 2023
64. Shuaibu, N. (2023). "Embrace Skill, NYSC DG Urges Corps Members" <https://punchng.com> Downloaded 9th October 2023
65. Sloan, C. Stearns, P. T. Halcrow, S. Fleer, M. (2022). "The Right of the Child" www.ox.ac.uk Downloaded October 1st 2023
66. UNICEF (2023). "History of Childs Right" <https://www.unicef.org> Downloaded 3rd October 2023
67. Wex, (2022). Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute (LII) Child law.cornell.eduDownloaded 5th October 2023