
Reviving The Practice Of “Iju Ora” In Igbo Culture As A Key Factor For Violence Prevention, Peace And Fraternity Among Families Neighbourhoods And Communities: Implications For Igbo Philosophy And Education.

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Abstract

The paper investigated the reviving of “iju ora” in Igbo culture as a key factor for violence prevention, peace and fraternity among families, neighbourhoods and communities, and its implications for Igbo philosophy and education. Five research questions were formulated to guide the study, while analytic survey was adopted as the design of the study. The study was carried out in the South-East Nigeria. The target population for the study was 23, 634,086 (consisting of 2,546,777 and 21,087,309 elderly people and youth respectively). The sample size for the study was 1,890, obtained using multistage sampling technique. For data collection, researcher-developed structured questionnaire and oral interviews were used as instruments. To answer the research questions, a computation of the mean ratings given to each of the item statements was carried out. Means and standard deviation methods were used to analyze the results. The findings showed that “iju ora” is means much more than ordinary greetings among the Igbo people, and that it has various roles to play in peace preventing violence and enthroning peace among the people. It was also discovered that the practice of “iju ora” is waning among the

Igbo people today due to a number of reasons, including social media influence. Some implications of “iju ora” for Igbo philosophy and education were also revealed, especially with regard to value clarification and moral education. Some strategies, such as going back to the early education of the child in the context of families and communities and engaging in self-introspection and critical thinking, were found to be able to enhance the practice of “iju ora”. Based on the findings, the paper concluded that “iju ora” is a veritable factor for violence prevention and peace building, and that strategies discussed can really help in enhancing its practice. The paper, therefore recommended, among others, that stakeholders, including Igbo philosophers and educators, should collaborate to see that the practice of “iju ora” is revived among the Igbo people of today.

Introduction

The Igbo people of the South-Eastern Nigeria have many beautiful traditional practices which are aboriginal to them, and embedded in their culture. These practices date back to the immemorial days of their progenitors. These traditional practices have, over the centuries, been the binding force and source of social cohesion, love, understanding and peaceful coexistence among the Igbo people in their families, neighbourhoods and communities. One of the outstanding traditional practices is “iju ora”. This term so connotes a wide range of values and generates a deep sense of affection that, even when it is coming from a perceived enemy, the addressee cannot but be moved with a sense of identity, belonging and honour, and the urge to reciprocate in like manners.

“Iju ora” is a special form of concern orally expressed and shown among the Igbo people by way of inquiry. It is usually preceded by normal greetings and exchange of pleasantries. However, while literatures abound on Igbo greetings (Nwoye, 1993; Matthias & Onyima, 2015; Udeagha,

2020), there is apparently none on “iju ora”. “Iju ora” is often multi-dimensional, as an answer to the first inquiry may lead, as it usually does, to subsequent inquiries, explanations, discussions and sharing of useful ideas and experiences. This tradition of “iju ora” was a strong propelling force for mutual understanding, empathy, respect, fraternity, cooperation, and peaceful living among the Igbo forebears at their various levels of existence. In those days of yore, it was rare to see grown-ups in the family, the neighbourhood or community living in animosity, calumniating or bearing grudges against one another, not to talk of fighting raw on the road, in the market place, in social gatherings, or even places of worship. Today, things have so changed that it appears the anomalies mentioned above, which were alien to the Igbo people, have become normal ways of living. The present generation of the Igbo seems to have taken a break from the past, in terms of positive cultural values and practices. In this regard, Ejiofor (1984) laments that “the break with the past is almost total. In the process, some of the noble value systems of the Igbo were almost swept away to the detriment of the society” (p. 5). This is not to say that there were no misunderstandings among our forefathers, but it is arguable that conflicts were more amicably and justly settled then, than the situation is today. This research is, therefore, an attempt to refocus the attention and mindset of the Igbo people to that practice of *iju ora*, which played significant roles in bringing about and sustaining peace and fraternity among the people. It is hoped that its proper understanding and renewed practice will go a long way in dousing tensions, mutual suspicions, betrayals, greed, selfishness, envy, inordinate ambitions, unhealthy competitions and violence that are gradually overtaking and eroding the core traditional Igbo values such as sacredness of human life, team spirit, sense of belonging, empathy, *onye aghana nwanne ya* (one should not abandon one’s kin), *ikwu amaghi, ibe ezi ya* (If one does not know, one’s neighbours would teach one), *nwata ajuju anaghi efu uzo* (A child who

makes inquiries does not go astray), among others. The paper explored the concept, practice, types and levels of “iju ora”. It then discussed its roles, causes of less practicing of it today, and strategies for reviving it in today’s Igbo society. The implications of “iju ora” for Igbo philosophy and education were also discussed, since philosophy and education are very instrumental to human enlightenment and orderliness of life in the society.

The Problem

A wise saying has it that prevention is better than cure. This is a direct English translation of an Igbo adage: *Mgbochi oria ka mma karia igwo ya*. In the context of peace building, it is believed that it is better to prevent violence than stopping it after it has erupted. The practice of “iju ora” served this purpose among our forebears, for it prevented possible ill feelings, distrust, hatred and injustice that would usually factor into violence in one form or another.

Of recent, cases of violent conflicts have been on the increase among the Igbo people. In most cases, resolving such spates of violence proves very difficult, and so peace and fraternity keep eluding the people. This is an evidence that the maxim ‘prevention is better than cure’ is now being relegated to the garbage bins. It is also a pointer that the roles of “iju ora”, as well as its philosophical and educational implications, are being lost sight of by the present generation of the Igbo people. To restore these and thus make for peace and fraternity among the people, through the reviving of the practice of “iju ora”, therefore, constitutes a felt need that this research work intends to satisfy. This need is even more deeply felt because, to the best knowledge of this researcher, no research work has been carried out in this regard, unlike common Igbo greetings on which literatures abound.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to pursue the revival of the practice of “iju ora” in Igbo culture as a key factor for violence prevention, peace and

fraternity among families, neighbourhoods and communities. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. ascertain the meaning of "iju ora" in Igbo culture;
2. determine the roles of "iju ora" with regard to violence prevention, peace and fraternity among the Igbo people;
3. find out the factors for the waning of "iju ora" among the Igbo people today;
4. find out the philosophical and educational implications of "iju ora" among the Igbo people;
5. determine strategies for reviving the practice of "iju ora" among the present-day Igbo people

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will be of prime benefit to the Igbo people. They will also be beneficial to individuals, families, neighbourhoods, communities, philosophers, educators, peace workers, future researchers and the wider society.

Among the beneficiaries of the findings of the study, the Igbo will stand out, as they will be helped to toe the footprints of their ancestors who made good use of "iju ora" for violence prevention and peace building. In this way, the present generation of the Igbo will be an honour to their past generations, and leave noble legacies of empathy, sense of belonging, communality, peace and fraternal coherence, among others, to their future generations.

The findings will also help individuals to value and appreciate one another by reciprocally being sympathetic and empathetic. For families, there will be an increased sense of unity, love and understanding. It is also hoped that the findings will help the neighbourhoods and communities to reduce the rate and spate of rancor and violent conflicts often witnessed nowadays.

Philosophers, educators and peace workers will find the work of immense benefit, for there will be opened to them a vista of simple ways of reasoning, advocating and educating for peace, as well as preventing violent conflicts. Future researchers in the areas of Igbo culture, greetings, peace and conflict resolution will benefit a lot from the findings of this study, for they will constitute a source of rich literature for them. Finally, the findings will benefit the society at large, since the gains made by individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities will impact positively on the society.

Scope of the Study

The study was limited to reviving the practice of “*iju ora*” in Igbo culture as a key factor for peace and fraternity among families, neighbourhoods and communities, and its philosophical and educational implications. The geographical scope of the study consisted of the five states of the South-Eastern States of Nigeria: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The content scope included ascertaining the meaning of “*iju ora*” in Igbo culture, the roles of “*iju ora*” with regard to peace and fraternity among the Igbo people, factors for the waning of “*iju ora*” among the Igbo people today, implications of “*iju ora*” for Igbo philosophy and education, and strategies for reviving the practice of “*iju ora*” among the present-day Igbo people.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What is “*iju ora*” in Igbo culture?
2. What are the roles of “*iju ora*” among the Igbo people with regard to violence prevention, peace and fraternity?
3. What are the factors for the waning of “*iju ora*” among the present generation of Igbo people?
4. What are the implications of “*iju ora*” for Igbo philosophy and education?

5. What are the strategies for reviving the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people of today?

Literature Review

An extensive and critical review of related literature was carried out for the study. The review was based on conceptual framework, theoretical framework, theoretical studies, and empirical studies. Conceptual framework discussed various concepts and conceptualizations of iju ora, their synonyms and related concepts, in a bid to establish a clear understanding of “iju ora”. In order to have a solid base, the study was anchored on theories bordering on human interactions, violent prevention, conflict resolution, peace building, cultural identity, sociocultural theory, and interpretative and interaction theory of interpersonal communication. Theoretical studies considered some interrelated abstract propositions or assumptions regarding “iju ora”, or general greetings in culture. Review of empirical studies was carried out. A summary of literature review then followed.

The literature review showed that, whereas literature abound on various kinds of greetings among the Igbo people, there is virtually none on “iju ora”. This finding reinforced the belief that the practice of “iju ora” is actually on the decline. Hence the increased propelling force for the researchers to continue the study so as to fill the gap.

Research Method

The method that will be used in carrying out the research will include the design of the study, area for the study, population for the study, sample and sampling techniques, instruments for data collection, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

Design of the study

The design to be adopted for the study is analytic survey. This design was favoured since the study is concerned with the collection of data in order to describe, interpret and analyze the existing conditions and attitudes

regarding “*iju ora*” in Igbo culture as a factor for violent prevention and peace building. The design was considered most appropriate for this study because it would help the researchers to be systematic in describing, analyzing and interpreting the facts through the collected data.

Area for the Study

The study was carried out in the South-East Nigeria. South-East Nigeria comprises five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. South-Eastern Nigeria is the most densely populated area in Nigeria, and possibly in all of Africa (CIA World Factbook, 2020). The whole of South-East has an estimated population of 50,366,800 people (Joshua Project, 2021), with a land area of 41,440 km² (Wikipedia, 2021). The estimated population of Nigeria is 214,154,169 people, and a land mass of 910,770 km² (World Population Review, 2022). The South-East, therefore, constitutes about 23.5% of Nigeria’s population.

Population for the Study

Ideally, the population for the study consisted of the entire population of the South-East Nigeria, which is 50,366,800. However, a target population was used, and it consisted of the elderly and the youths of the South-Easterners. The population of these categories of people, based on the estimate by Varella (2021), is 23,634,086, composed of 2,546,777 elderly people and 21,087,309 youths. The reason for the elderly and the youths as target population is that children and adolescents are considered unsuitable for this kind of study. They are still under the tutelage of the others, on whom they depend for grooming, mentoring, guidance and direction in life, including the issue of “*iju ora*”.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study was 1,890. Multistage sampling technique was used to select this number from the strata of the elderly and the youths respectively, culminating in 204 for the elderly, and 1,890 for the youths. The choice of multistage sampling was to enable the researchers to select

manageable respondents appropriately, since the population was very large. The selection took cognizance of shared attributes of the elderly and youths respectively, as well as the five states that make up the South-East of Nigeria. This helped the researchers to obtain a sample that would best represent the entire population for the study, thus making the findings generalizable to the entire population.

Instruments for Data Collection

Two instruments were used to collect data for the study: Self developed structured questionnaire and oral interview. This was to ensure active participation of all the intended respondents, irrespective of their educational backgrounds and exposures. The oral interview was for those who could not comprehend or write English Language well.

The questionnaire was entitled "Questionnaire on Reviving the Practice of *Iju Ora* in Igbo Culture as a Key Factor for Peace and Fraternity" (QRPIICKFPF). In this type of questionnaire, it is assumed that the researcher can anticipate possible responses of his subjects. The questionnaire usually supplies questions and some response options to the respondents. The questionnaire had two sections: A and B. Section A was concerned with instruction and personal data of the respondents, while section B contained the item statements and response options for the respondents.

The item statements of the QRPIICKFPF were arranged in five clusters: A to E. Cluster A sought information on the meaning of "iju ora" in Igbo culture, while cluster B was concerned with the roles of "iju ora" among the Igbo people. Cluster C sought to find out the factors for the waning of "iju ora" among the Igbo people today. The attention of cluster D was on the implications of "iju ora" for Igbo philosophy and education, while cluster E sought to ascertain strategies for reviving the practice of "iju ora" among the present-day Igbo people.

For response format, the summated rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used, with the options weighted as follows: SA = 4; A = 3; D = 2; SD = 1. The same clusters and response format were used for oral interview, with the researchers reading out the item statements and explaining them to the interviewees in their language of understanding, and recording their responses accordingly.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers employed some research assistants to help in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. The research assistants were trained on how to instruct the respondents and give them some explanations before they would start responding to the instrument. They had to be sure that the respondents did not influence one another, and also assure them that any information elicited from them would be strictly used for the purpose of the research, and so would be handled with utmost care and confidentiality.

Such instructions, explanations and assurances would help the respondents to be objective, thereby guarding against faking and other possible errors that might generate false information. After the administration, the questionnaire papers were collected and returned to the researchers.

Method of Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, a computation of the mean ratings given to each of the item statements was carried out. Means and standard deviation methods were used for the computation. Rating from 2.50 and above for any of the items was considered as agreed, while any rating below 2.50 was considered as disagreed. 2.50 is the average of the weighted options; hence 2.50 served as the researchers' judgment rule for agreement or disagreement on the item statements.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

After the analysis of the collected data, the results were presented and analyzed. The

presentation and analysis followed the order of the research questions. This was in turn followed by the summary of major findings of the study.

Discussion and Interpretation of Results

Based on the data analysis and major findings, the results of the study were critically discussed and interpreted. On the strength of the discussion and interpretation, some conclusions were drawn. The limitations of the study were also presented. Following from all the above, recommendations for improvement and suggestions for further research efforts were made.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Research Question One 1

What is "iju ora" in Igbo culture?

Table 1: Mean Responses of the Elderly and the Youth on the Meaning of "Iju ora" in Igbo Culture

S/N	Item	Statement	Group
Mean	SD	DEC.	
1.		"Iju ora" is an inquiry about the other person's well-being	Elderly
3.42	0.82	A	Youth
3.81	0.54	A	
2.		"Iju ora" has been a part of Igbo tradition and culture	Elderly
2.88	0.36	A	Youth
2.83	0.41	A	

3. “Iju ora” is an extended form of greeting among the Igbo	Elderly
2.98 0.24 A	Youth
2.93 0.29 A	
4. “Iju ora” is different from “iju ase”	Elderly
3.63 0.56 A	Youth
3.07 0.31 A	
5. “Iju ora” is the same thing as salutation greetings	Elderly
1.97 0.42 D	Youth
1.94 0.48 D	
6. One can substitute iju ora with long interval greetings	Elderly
1.81 0.48 D	Youth
such as “Nke a bu anya” (Long time)	
1.83 0.50 D	
7. “Iju ora” is an intimate as well as probing questioning	Elderly
3.05 0.31 A	Youth
about the other and their affairs	
3.16 0.37 A	
8. In the days of old, the practice of “iju ora” was borne	Elderly
2.98 0.24 A	Youth
out of genuine concern for the other	
2.88 0.36 A	

9. Unlike ordinary greetings, “iju ora” takes place between	Elderly
3.66 0.54 A	
people who are close or at least familiar to one another	Youth
3.09 0.36 A	
10. “Iju ora” is a sign of good will among the people	Elderly
3.24 0.39 A	
	Youth
3.28 0.41 A	
Cluster Mean	Elderly
2.96 0.43	
	Youth
2.88 0.40	

Table 1 is a depiction of the opinions of the elderly and the youth about the meaning of “iju ora” in Igbo culture. Both the elderly and the youth agree on items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10. This is indicated by their mean scores above 2.50. Their agreement shows that “iju ora”, as an enquiry into other person’s well-being, has been part of Igbo culture from the days of yore. Also, “iju ora” is borne out of genuine concern for the other, and it cannot be substituted with ordinary greetings. Their agreement also shows that “iju ora” takes place between people who are already familiar, and that it is a sign of goodwill among the Igbo people.

In a similar viewpoint, both the elderly and the youth disagree on items 5 and 6, with mean scores of 1.97, 1.94 and 1.81, 1.83 respectively. Their disagreement is an indication that “iju ora” is not the same thing as “iju ase” among the Igbo people. In the same vein, “iju ora” cannot be substituted with long interval greetings, such as “nke a bu anya” (Long time).

Overall, the table shows a cluster mean of 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.4 for the elderly, and a cluster mean of 2.88 and standard deviation of

0.40 for the youth. This clearly shows that there is an agreement by both the elderly and the youth on what “iju ora” is and what it is not, as well as its characteristic features and uniqueness from other greetings, in Igbo culture.

Research Question 2

What are the roles of “iju ora” among the Igbo people?

Table 2: Mean Responses of the Elderly and the Youth on the Roles of “Iju ora” among the Igbo People

S/N	Item	Statement	Group
Mean	SD	DEC.	
<hr/>			
1.	“Iju ora”	brings people closer to one another	Elderly
3.59	0.54	A	
			Youth
3.09	0.36	A	
2.	It helps	people to understand themselves better	Elderly
2.83	0.41	A	
			Youth
2.88	0.36	A	
3.	It fosters	mutual interest and respect	Elderly
3.17	0.38	A	
			Youth
3.08	0.36	A	
4.	It engenders	a sense of belonging and personal worth	Elderly
3.12	0.33	A	

			Youth
3.08	0.34	A	
5. "Iju ora" enhances the spirit of forgiveness among the			Elderly
3.42	0.82	A	
Igbo people			Youth
2.93	0.29	A	
6. "Iju ora" brings about reconciliation and unity among			Elderly
3.33	0.50	A	
Families, neighbourhoods and communities			Youth
3.63	0.56	A	
7. It encourages critical thinking among the people			Elderly
2.98	0.26	A	
			Youth
2.99	0.22	A	
8. The practice of "iju ora" leads to a generation of ideas			Elderly
3.15	0.36	A	
for the solution of perceived problems			Youth
3.08	0.36	A	
9. It inspires prayers and good wishes among the people			Elderly
3.30	0.46	A	
			Youth
3.59	0.61	A	
10. It reduces mutual suspicion and isolation among the			Elderly
3.64	0.55	A	

3.38	0.48	A	Youth
Cluster Mean			Elderly
3.25	0.46	A	
			Youth
3.17	0.39	A	

In table 2 above, each of the items has a mean score above 2.50, both for the elderly and the youth. This is an indication that “iju ora” plays significant roles among the Igbo people. Such roles include bringing people together, fostering understanding, mutual respect, sense of belonging and personal worth. Furthermore, “iju ora” enhances the spirit of forgiveness and brings about reconciliation among families, neighbourhoods and communities. Critical thinking, generation of ideas, inspiring prayers and good wishes, as well as reduction of mutual suspicion, are among the roles of the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people. With the cluster mean scores of 3.25 and standard deviation of 0.46 for the elderly, and 3.17 and 0.39 for the youth, both groups of respondents are on accord in regard of all the roles of “iju ora” as contained in the item statements.

Research Question 3.

What are the factors for the waning of *iju ora* among the present generation of Igbo people?

Table 3: Mean Responses of the Elderly and the Youth on the Factors for the Waning of “Iju ora” among the Present Generation of Igbo People

S/N	Item Statement	Group
Mean	SD	DEC.

1. The present generation of the Igbo people are more 3.63 0.56 A self-centred than their forebears due to the influence 3.33 0.50 A of Western individualism	Elderly Youth
2. Influence of urbanization and city life is a contributing 3.13 0.33 A factor to the waning of the practice of 3.09 0.36 A	Elderly Youth
3. The present generation of the Igbo are grossly occupied 3.10 0.31 A with pursuit of wealth and social propaganda 3.28 0.41 A	Elderly Youth
4. There is an exhibition of carefree attitudes among the 3.24 0.39 A Igbo people of today 3.26 0.47 A	Elderly Youth
5. Limited sympathies and empathies are more rampant 3.25 0.46 A among the present generation of the Igbo than ever before 3.63 0.54 A	Elderly Youth

<p>6. The present generation of the Igbo tend to be envious of 3.03 0.38 A one another 2.93 0.29 A</p>	<p>Elderly Youth</p>
<p>7. Communalism is no longer perceived as a cherished value 3.42 0.82 A among the present generation of the Igbo 3.24 0.39 A</p>	<p>Elderly Youth</p>
<p>8. Greed and mutual suspicion tend to characterize the 2.83 0.41 A attitudes of the Igbo people of today 3.08 0.28 A</p>	<p>Elderly Youth</p>
<p>9. The Igbo traditional age grade system has been negatively 3.06 0.37 A affected by the modern groups such as social clubs, 3.05 0.29 A celebrity fora, cultism, and other modern associations</p>	<p>Elderly Youth</p>
<p>10. Preoccupation with social media technological devices 3.37 0.45 A such as cell phones and televisions among others, has 3.38 0.47 A has drastically reduced physical interactions among the people</p>	<p>Elderly Youth</p>
<p>Cluster Mean 3.20 0.44 A</p>	<p>Elderly</p>

Youth

3.22 0.40 A

In table 3, item 6 has a mean score of 2.93 for the youth, while item 8 has a mean score of 2.83 for the elderly. The rest of the items have mean scores of 3.00 plus, respectively. Although 2.93 and 2.83 are low scores, compared to 3.00 and above, the low scores are nevertheless above the average, which is 2.50. This shows that both the elderly and youth are aware of the factors for the waning of “iju ora” among the present generation of Igbo people.

Item 1, with a mean score of 3.63 for the elderly and 3.33 for the youth, shows that both the elderly and the youth are of the view that self-centredness constitutes a factor for the diminished practice of “ijui ora” among the present generation of Igbo people. In a similar vein, their mean scores of 3.13 and 3.09 respectively show that they are on the same page in affirming that the effects of urbanization and city life are instrumental to the waning of the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people of today.

Research Question 4

What are the philosophical and educational implications of *iju ora* among the Igbo people?

Table 4: Mean Responses of the Elderly and the Youth on the Implications of “Iju ora” for Igbo philosophy and education

S/N	Item Statement	Group
Mean	SD	DEC.

1. The practice of “ <i>iju ora</i> ” will enhance the Igbo philosophy	Elderly
3.21 0.41 A	
of “ <i>onye aghana nwanne ya</i> ” (Do not abandon your kin)	Youth
3.18 0.41 A	
while its absence would compromise this philosophy	
2. Non-practice of “ <i>iju ora</i> ” poses a challenge to Igbo	Elderly
3.81 0.54 A	
philosophy of communalism	Youth
2.88 0.41 A	
3. The waning practice of “ <i>iju ora</i> ” is an apparent challenge	Elderly
3.33 0.47 A	
to the Igbo concept of personhood	Youth
3.09 0.33 A	
4. Knowledge gained through “ <i>iju ora</i> ” adds value to the Igbo	Elderly
3.59 0.66 A	
epistemological quest	Youth
3.30 0.48 A	
5. The Igbo sense of identity seems to be under threat due to	Elderly
3.38 0.47 A	
the diminishing practice of “ <i>iju ora</i> ”	Youth
3.18 0.41 A	
6. It appears parents are losing sight of the importance of	Elderly
3.66 0.54 A	
teaching their children how to inquire about the welfare	Youth
3.67 0.52 A	

of others

7.	The Igbo practice early age education of the child in the	Elderly
2.98	0.26 A	
	context of family and community is apparently on the	Youth
3.05	0.31 A	
	decline in the contemporary Igbo society	
8.	There is a challenge to Igbo traditional moral education	Elderly
3.12	0.33 A	
	with regard to emphasis on character formation, solidarity,	Youth
3.08	0.34 A	
	interpersonal relationships and communal values	
9.	The Igbo traditional education teaches that the life and	Elderly
3.05	0.39 A	
	dignity of the human person should be valued over and	Youth
3.10	0.41 A	
	above material gains	
10.	The regular family and kindred meetings, which used	Elderly
3.15	0.36 A	
	to be platforms for educating the youth on moral	Youth
3.12	0.33 A	
	issues, fraternal love and community values, are being neglected nowadays	
	Cluster Mean	Elderly
3.32	0.44 A	

Youth

3.17 0.39 A

In table 4 above, all the items have high mean scores above 3.00, with exception of item 2, which has a mean score of 2.88 for the youth, and item 7, with a mean score of 2.98 for the elderly. Even at that, 2.88 and 2.98 are above the weighted mean score average of 2.50. This means that both the elderly and the youth agree on all the items of cluster D. In other words, they are of the view that the practice of “*iju ora*” has some implications for Igbo philosophy and education. One of such implications is that the practice of “*iju ora*” enhances the Igbo philosophy of “*onye aghana nwanne ya*” (One should not abandon one’s kin). Conversely, its absence would compromise this philosophy. Again, both the elderly and the youth agree that non-practice of “*iju ora*” poses a challenge to Igbo philosophy of communalism, Igbo concept of personhood and sense of identity.

Other implications include parental education of children, early age education of the child within the family and community, as well as the traditional moral education, especially with regard to character formation, solidarity, interpersonal relationships and communal values. Both Igbo philosophy and education teach that life and dignity of the human person should be valued over and above material gains, and both the elderly and the youth agree to this by their respective mean scores of 3.05 and 3.10 in item 9.

With the overall cluster mean scores of 3.32 for the elderly and 3.17 for the youth, and standard deviations of 0.44 and 0.39 respectively, both the elderly and the youth agree that all the items listed in cluster D constitute some implications of “*iju ora*” for Igbo philosophy and education.

Research Question 5.

What are the strategies for reviving the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people of today?

Table 5: Mean Responses of the Elderly and the Youth on the Strategies for reviving the Practice of “Iju ora” among the Igbo People of Today

S/N	Item	Statement	Mean	SD	DEC.	Group
1.	Renewed emphasis on the value and dignity of human		2.83	0.41	A	Elderly
	person will be of help in reviving the practice of “iju ora”		2.88	0.36	A	Youth
2.	Having sense of sympathy and empathy is a good means		3.42	0.82	A	Elderly
	reviving “iju ora” among the Igbo people today		3.11	0.31	A	Youth
3.	For one to practice “iju ora”, one must eschew envy and		3.64	0.55	A	Elderly
	unhealthy competition		3.38	0.48	A	Youth
4.	It is good to go back to the early education of the child		3.16	0.37	A	Elderly
	in the context of families and communities		3.08	0.34	A	Youth
5.	Engaging in self-introspection and critical thinking		3.33	0.50	A	Elderly

can enhance “iju ora” among the Igbo people today	Youth
3.12 0.33 A	
6. If sense of communalism is inculcated in the youth,	Elderly
3.10 0.41 A	
and children, they would easily practice “iju ora”	Youth
3.30 0.46 A	
7. Igbo story-telling, riddles and folklores can contribute	Elderly
2.98 0.26 A	
to the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people	Youth
3.07 0.31 A	
8. If Igbo philosophers can come up with more convincing	Elderly
3.46 0.55 A	
reasons for, and explanations and implications of, Igbo	Youth
3.62 0.55 A	
philosophy, this would go a long way in improving the	
practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people today	
9. Having physical interaction with one another rather	Elderly
3.08 0.28 A	
than being fixated on social media devices is necessary	Youth
3.05 0.29 A	
10. To enhance the revival of “iju ora” among the Igbo	Elderly
3.21 0.41 A	
people, attention should be given to the development of	Youth
3.13 0.33 A	
rural areas so as to discourage urban drifting	

Cluster Mean				Elderly
3.22	0.45	A		
				Youth
3.17	0.37	A		

In table 5, item 1 has mean scores of 2.83 and 2.88 for the elderly and the youth respectively. These scores are above the 2.50 benchmark for agreement. This means that both respondents agree that renewed emphasis on the value and dignity of human person will be of help in reviving the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people. The rest of the items have mean scores above 3.00, with the exception of item 7, with a mean score of 2.98 for the elderly, yet above the 2.50 average score. This is an indication that both the elderly and the youth agree on all the item statements in the cluster.

With cluster mean scores of 3.22 and 3.17 for the elders and the youth respectively, and their corresponding standard deviations of 0.45 and 0.37, it means that both the elders and the youth agree that all the item statements in table 5 are strategies for enhancing the revival of the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people.

Discussion of Results

The Meaning of “Iju Ora” in Igbo Culture

Research question one sought information on the meaning of “iju ora” in Igbo culture. From the survey conducted, it was discovered that “iju ora” has various meanings in Igbo culture, all of which have positive connotations laden with values that are highly cherished in Igbo society. For instance, “iju ora” is understood as an inquiry about the other person’s well-being. Well-being is one of the values that preoccupy the mind of an average Igbo man or woman. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2024), well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals

and societies, akin to health and constituting a resource for daily living, with social, economic and environmental conditions as its determinant factors.

Economic and environmental conditions really affect one's well-being, positively or negatively. In the case of "iju ora", it is all about positive results. Human beings are part of their own environments. So, "iju ora" brings about positive experience through human agency who are at the same time both the giver and receiver of it. Well-being is sine qua non for one to function properly. One can therefore say that "iju or" is an inquiry into one's general situations in life for the purpose of bringing a sense of well-being and confidence to the other.

"Iju ora" transcends other aspects of greetings in Igbo culture, such as salutation greetings and long interval greetings, among others. None of such greetings can serve as a substitute for "iju ora". Since it takes place between people who are already familiar, it is carried out with open-mindedness. This is in accord with the view expressed by Okafor (2024), that people who know themselves are often engaged in extensive inquiries about their respective welfare, especially if it has been a long while since they saw each other. This understanding of "iju ora" sharply contrasts with the normal standard of greeting among the Igbo, in which people greet one another, whether they know them or not (Udeagha, 2020). In this context, therefore, the meaning of "Iju ora" embraces all the item statements in cluster A.

The Roles of "Iju ora" among the Igbo People

Regarding the roles of "iju ora" among the Igbo people, research question 2 was formulated to address the issues involved. Based on the responses of both the elderly and the youths to the item statements generated from the question, it was made clear that "iju ora" plays many roles among the Igbo people. For instance, their responses pointed out that "iju ora" brings people closer to one another. This function is of great importance. There

is a solidarity slogan which says that “united we bargain, but divided we beg”. This means that when people are united and agree among themselves, they become formidable, and are able to withstand their common enemies or opponents.

The more people come together, the more they understand themselves. Understanding is a key factor for peaceful coexistence. Where the practice of “iju ora” is in place, there is every likelihood of greater understanding among the people. For instance, understanding that this person cares for you, and is concerned about your well-being, you will all the more love to be associated with the person. In this regard, Nwankwo (2023) retorts, “If you do not ask questions, how would you know your neighbour’s problems, sorrows or joys? And if you do not know somebody’s issues, how would you claim to know them as persons?” Moreover, in the course “iju ora”, lots of hidden issues are revealed, thereby giving rise to greater knowledge, understanding of the situations, and proffering solutions to any identified problems. Where there is understanding among the people, there are bound to be mutual interest and respect, sense of belonging and spirit of forgiveness. Forgiveness brings about reconciliation and unity. These are some of the ingredients that sweeten family, neighbourhood and community lives and activities.

Other roles of “iju ora” include encouraging critical thinking, generating ideas for problem solving, inspiring prayers and good wishes, and reduction of mutual suspicion and fears among the people.

Factors for the Waning of “Iju Ora” among the Present Generation of Igbo People

Over the years, some researches have revealed some factors that occasion animosity and hatred among the Igbo people, especially in the present generation of the Igbo. For instance, Ekwueme and Onah (2019) have, in their studies, found out that modernism, as well as extreme individualism, inherited from the colonial masters, is one of the factors that bring about

unrest among the Igbo people these days. This adversely affects the practice of “*iju ora*”. This is because, being preoccupied or obsessed with oneself and what concerns one alone, one would hardly have time, or even the will, to ask about others’ well-being, and done in the course of “*iju ora*”. It is just like everyone unto themselves.

Influence of urban or city life is another significant factor that contributes to the waning of the practice of “*iju ora*” among the present generation of the Igbo. In the days of our forebears, there was no urban drift as it is witnessed today. In the city, no one knows who is who as such. Everyone struggles for survival and success in one kind of business or another, or in one aspect of learning or another. Over time, this attitude has blurred the vision to notice others and their problems, let alone making out time to engage them through “*iju ora*”. In this regard, Okorafor (2024) argues that urban drift has done more harm than good to Igbo culture and tradition.

Furthermore, among the present generation of the Igbo, there is an increased aggression and relentlessness in pursuit of wealth to the extent that Igbo youths are ready and willing to do anything in order to be wealthy, and that within the shortest space of time. Nowadays, it is no longer news in Igbo land that some people use their mother, father, sister or brother for money making rituals. Some others even mortgage their own lives, pledging to die ten years after acquiring the wealth, or as you as at the age of thirty, thirty-five, forty, or thereabouts. Definitely, young people with such mindset and character will have no time or interest to ask after other people’s well-being. According to Igbokwe (2013), inordinate quest for money has diminished lots values in Igbo lane, including the value of “*iju ora*”.

There is also another syndrome among the Igbo youths today, akin to Warnock’s (1971) limited sympathies as one of the human predicaments. Majority of the Igbo youths today have fallen short of sympathies and empathies that are expected to be exhibited in certain situations that affect

others. For instance, a car accident happens, the injured are groaning, the dead are lying stone-cold, yet people are busy taking their photographs and posting to social media, instead of rushing the injured to the hospital. In cases of fuel tankers, people have been seen stepping on the corpses and bodies of accident victims to scoop fuel, to the utter neglect and disrespect of both the dead and the living. Is this not an albatross heretofore unknown among the Igbo, who place a high premium on the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person?

The rise of various kinds of clubs, especially social clubs, from the early 1970s, as well as the influence of social media, are inclusive of the factors that militate against the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people of today. Engaging in club activities has virtually taken over the place of age grade system in Igbo communities. For one thing, the members of such social clubs are not all Igbo, nor the clubs themselves rooted in any specific Igbo culture. This makes it difficult to bring in peculiar Igbo characteristics such as “iju ora”. Even when the members are all Igbo, they are not so closely integrated so as to engage in deep discourses as “iju ora”. In addition to the above, young people nowadays push their problem, even their very private life issues, to the social media, instead of opening up to their families, kin and communities. Other factors such as envy, jettisoning of communalism, greed, and mutual suspicion also contribute to the waning of “iju ora” among the Igbo people of today.

Implications of “Iju Ora” for Igbo Philosophy and Education

Research question 4 was formulated to deal with this aspect of the study. Some item statements were generated in this regard. In Igbo philosophy, which is anchored on Igbo culture, the dignity of human person and sense of kinship, sense of belonging, sense of identity and communalism are among the core and cherished values. These values add strength to Igbo philosophy of “onye aghana nwanne ya” – one should not abandon one’s kin. All these are informed by the Igbo belief in the worth and dignity of

the human person. According to Killam (1973), African people had a philosophy of great depth and beauty, and they had dignity. However, many African people had lost this dignity during the colonial period. This dignity must be regained through concerted efforts. The waning of the practice of “*iju ora*” among the Igbo today is symptomatic of losing grip on the value of the dignity of the human person as well as the sacredness of human life.

As things stand now, Igbo philosophy and philosophers have great roles to play in restoring this value through value clarification, critical analysis of the benefits of “*iju ora*” among the Igbo people in regard to preventing violence and promoting peace and fraternity. In Igbo philosophy, there is a belief that the individual does live for themselves alone. In this regard, Okafor (2020) states that “an individual exists both for himself and others because he is completely dependent on the forces upholding the community for his development and contribution” (p. 68).

The present state of affairs among the Igbo people today is a pointer that Igbo philosophy and concept of the human person, communalism, sacredness of human life and lots more, are under threat. Igbo philosophers are, therefore, to wake up to the reality of the threat and face the challenges of charting pathways out of the hook through renewed efforts towards bringing back those Igbo practices that naturally lead to the living of those values. One of such practices that appear to be at the verge of being forgotten is “*iju ora*”.

In the traditional Igbo epistemology, or quest for knowledge, strong emphases were laid on a number of values, such as early education of the child, educating the whole person, moral education, hard work, honest earning of money, truthfulness, justice and life of dignity. Today, these values are no longer taken serious, since they are not amenable to the get-rich-quick syndrome, which is the current craze. All these have implications for Igbo education. Igbo educators should be thinking hard

on how to educate the Igbo child of the twenty-first century and beyond with a mindset devoid of inordinate ambition for wealth, cheap popularity, and deceptive self-projection, among other ills of the Igbo youths today. The focus then should be on the values that enhance human dignity, mutual understanding, sympathy, empathy, and general concern for others' well-being. By implication, Igbo philosophy is faced with these and other allied challenges that impede the practice of “iju ora”, just as is the case with Igbo education.

Strategies for Reviving the Practice of “Iju Ora” among the Present Generation of Igbo People

Renewed emphasis on the value and dignity of human person will be of help in reviving the practice of “iju ora”. Having sense of sympathy and empathy is also good means reviving “iju ora” among the Igbo people today. These truths are based on the responses of both the elderly people and the youths, as noted in Research Question 5. Again, for one to practise “iju ora”, one must eschew envy and unhealthy competitions. Going back to the early education of the child in the context of families and communities, engaging in self-introspection and critical thinking can equally enhance the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people today. Furthermore, if sense of communalism and sympathy is inculcated in the children, they would easily learn the practice of “iju ora”. In the same vein Igbo story-telling, riddles and folklores can contribute to the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people. This is in agreement with the nostalgia expressed by Ezekwe (2024), “I wish it were in the olden days when we learnt a lot about people’s problems and how to help in solving them, through stories told by our parents and elders”. If Igbo philosophers can come up with more convincing reasons for, and explanations and implications of, Igbo philosophy, this would go a long way in improving the practice of “iju ora” among the Igbo people today. Having physical interaction with one another rather than being fixated on

social media devices is necessary. To enhance the revival of “iju ora” among the Igbo people, attention should also be given to the development of rural areas so as to discourage urban drifting.

An Example of “Iju Ora” between two Persons – Okeke and Okafor.

Okeke: Ututu oma, Mazi Okafor – Good morning, Mr Okafor

Okafor: Ututu oma. Kedu ka i mere? – Good morning. How are you?

Okeke: A dim mma. I rahukwara nke oma? – I am fine. Hope you slept well?

Okafor: Eee. Ndi ulo go kwanu? – Yes. How about your family?

Okeke: Aru dichá ha. Kedu maka ndi nke gi? - They are healthy. How about your own people?

Okafor: Ha di mma. Ekene dili Olisa –They are fine. Thanks be to God.

Okeke: Kedu maka ahia ji gi? - How about your yam business?

Okafor: O na-agakwa obere obere – It is going on, but slowly.

Okeke: Jisie ike. Ihe siri ndi mmadu ike ugbua. Be steadfast. Things are difficult for people now.

Okafor: Kedu maka nwa gi meruru aru nnya? – How about your child who was injured yesterday?

Okeke: Hmm. Nsogbu dikwa. Dokita si na o metutara ya n’okupku. – Hmm. There is a problem.

The doctor said that his bone was affected.

Okafor: A maara m otu nwoke odinala nke na-agba okpukpu nke oma. A ga m eduga unu na nke

ya. Udi nke a abughi nke dibia bekee na-agwo. – I know a good traditional orthopediatri-

cian. I will take you to him. This type is not to be handled by conventional medical doctors.

Okeke: Daalu rinne maka atumatu a. Ka m gaa jikere ka anyi gaba ozigbo. – Thank you

for this idea. Let me go and prepare so that we go at once.

Okafor: O di mma. Dinu njikere ososo. A ga m echere unu. – It is alright. Prepare quickly. I will wait for you.

From the above example, it can be seen that “iju ora” is an extensive and dialogical interaction, which starts from simple exchange of greetings to various dimensions of inquiry, and even to proffering of solutions to problems encountered in the process. “Iju ora” can be about financial issues, sickness, educational matters, business ventures, marriage issues, friendship, and a host of others, as may concern the individuals involved.

Conclusion

The waning of the practice of “iju ora” is a reality, as can be perceived from the ongoing study, and this poses a challenge to the Igbo concept and understanding of personhood. The Igbo sense of identity seems to be under threat due to the diminishing practice of “iju ora”. It appears parents are losing sight of the importance of teaching their children how to inquire about the welfare of others. The Igbo practice of early age education of the child in the context of family and community is apparently on the decline in the contemporary Igbo society. There is also a downturn to Igbo traditional moral education with regard to emphasis on character formation, solidarity, inter-personal relationships and communal values. In a similar way there is an apparently growing apathy towards Igbo education which teaches that the life and dignity of the human person should be valued over and above material gains. The regular family and kindred meetings, which used to be platforms for educating the youth on moral issues, fraternal love and community values, are being neglected nowadays.

The above scenario is an existential reality in the current Igbo society. Understanding all these and their implications for Igbo philosophy and

education, and consequently initiating actions for remediation, are therefore imperative. The reviving of the practice of “*iju ora*” holds out as a panacea to it all. Knowledge gained through “*iju ora*” adds value to the Igbo epistemological quest, as well as the value attached to the life and dignity of the human person, which should be cherished over and above all material gains.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations are put forth:

1. Parents should take family education seriously, especially regarding respect for others and caring about their welfare.
2. Individuals should learn to eschew envy among themselves.
3. Igbo philosophers and educators are urged to face the task of value clarifications and emphasis on moral education.
4. The practice of empathy and sympathy should be emphasized in families, communities and schools.
5. There is need for further studies on the practice of “*iju ora*”, and Igbo scholars should take this seriously.

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