

The Ontological Foundation of Igbo Entrepreneurship: An Analytical Investigation

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Abstract

In recent times, the entrepreneurial performance of the Igbo people of Nigeria has become outstanding. This is as most increasing numbers of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs), as well as large business enterprises (LBEs) which underscore growth of Nigerian economy are owned and managed by the Igbo people. More still, this gross commercial performance of the Igbos even prevails amidst harsh increasing circumstances. The Igbo in fact cannot be successfully entrepreneurial on a vacuum. There must be some bases for their socio-economic performance. This paper analytically investigates peculiar sources, circumstances and skills that are the fulcrum of increasing socio-economic performance of the Igbo people. The study finds that entrepreneurial performance of the Igbos is underscored by their economic culture and value, which are highly existential in their traditions and belief system. These are however fostered by the long years of marginalization by successive Nigerian governments, as well as other prominent factors in pre and post independence Nigeria. The research concludes that with this progressive rate, Igbo people will in time be a force to reckon with in the socio-political and techno-economic sector of Nigeria and Africa at large.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Foundation; Analysis; Investigation; Performance

1. Introduction

From time immemorial, the need for socio-economic independence has engaged the attention of the Igbo people of Nigeria. This need has over the years brought the entrepreneurial skill of Igbo people to lime light. The Igbo understands entrepreneurship as a potent economic force, and a core element in the development efforts of an individual and the nation at large. For the Igbo therefore, comparative advantage among individuals has dynamically moved towards increasing competitive and qualitative entrepreneurial advancement which is the fulcrum of personal and national development. This is why despite the dynamic multiplying socio-political and economic challenges in the modern world, the Igbos exhibit overwhelming entrepreneurial strides.

Igbo people view entrepreneurship as self employment of any sort, which bothers on continuously identifying, evaluating and taking advantage of business opportunities and initiating sustainable action to ensure success. Indeed, every entrepreneurial endeavour, for the Igbo, is also a veritable answer to the questions elicited from their experiences in their special world. It is as well understood as a search for profit based on innovation, creativity and efficient utilization of resources in a consistent Igbo cultural pattern, which is filled with vision and enthusiasm and is result driven. Therefore, entrepreneurship for the Igbo people incorporates every profit and goal oriented strategies which they describe as *Ibido ahia* or *Oru* (starting an enterprise), *Izu ahia* (business transactions), *Imu ahia* (learning a trade), *Imu oru* (learning a craft or vocation), and *Igba oso ahia* (indulging in trick of marketing another's goods with his consent at a price that raises capital).

Consequently, Igbo people are outstanding in pursuing opportunities to become active economic individuals despite the meager resources within their control. All these are in an attempt to satisfy their deep rooted need and interest to be truly Igbo and economic reliant personalities. And to be truly Igbo is to belong by birth and action; to participate in Igbo beliefs, ceremonies and activities, and to feel at home in this universe (Ogugua, 2003). Thus, in Igbo understanding of life, to participate fully in Igbo life portends some amount of socio-economic reliance and gesture. For every true Igbo abhors idleness and tangibly contributes to the welfare and growth of the community. This economic gesture is what Igbo people prizes most as *aku luo uno* (wealth that reached home). In order to be part of this reality, Igbo people everywhere struggle to transform economic resources within their control from an area of lower to an area of higher productivity and greater yield deriving strength from Igbo philosophy of life reflecting in the expression *Onye ruo, O rie* (He who works must enjoy the wealth).

In all circumstances therefore, Igbo people give meaning to prevalent socio-economic reality, achieving performance by harmonizing their existence with the difficulties and contradictions prevalent in the environment. It is based on this entrepreneurial gallantry that Igbo people have excelled more than their counterparts in Nigerian socio-economic context. Consequently, most entrepreneurial initiatives, commercial centers, and structures in major Nigerian cities are managed by the Igbo people. This is why Olutayo (1999) argues that of the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbos are the most energetic parvenus in entrepreneurship, who has challenged and surpassed the established economic order of supremacy occupied by other Nigerian tribes. In fact, the 1967 secession of Igbo people from Nigeria which led to civil war was foiled out of fear that Nigerian economy may collapse with the exit of the Igbo entrepreneurial touch (Adichie, 2014).

Down in the south eastern Nigeria which is the Igbo home land and some part of Niger Delta region where

Igbo people inhabit, the story remains an overwhelming entrepreneurial advancement and economic prominence. Based on this, Anyanwu (1999) observes that Igbo people no longer look up to benevolent government for salvation but are working towards self reliance, and even contributes up to 80% of Nigeria's economy while receiving the lowest decreasing allocation from the federal government. Glaring therefore is that Igbo people believe in purposeful hardwork, and personal effort filled with communal colouration. This stems from their worldview which is inculcated in them from birth as a guiding principle and a drive towards entrepreneurial performance.

2. Igbo entrepreneurial worldview

The Igbo entrepreneurial worldview which is the pervasive unified socio-economic picture of their cosmos is the main catalyst behind their socio-economic rhythms in the universe. Uchehara (2009) affirms this reality insisting that the desirability of starting an enterprise is strongly influenced by one's worldview. Significant part of this worldview therefore is Igbo culture of praise and recognition for well deserved wealth. This tradition of encomium is discernible even in Igbo religious beliefs, rites, rituals, festivals, folklores and myths (Oguejiofor, 2009). In fact, the Igbos view wealth as a means of gaining social prestige and acquiring social befitting rank. This stems from Igbo cosmological view of human existence encapsulated in their proverb *Nwata kwochaa aka, osoro Okenye rie nri* (A child that washes his hands dines with the Elders). Based on this worldview, the traditional Igbo people flaunt their expanse lands, large farms and abundant harvests, their large compounds marked by numerous houses and peopled by wives, offspring and dependants which are the fruits of their entrepreneurial efforts. This accords them recognition and titles from the society such as *Ozo*, *Oba*, *Ichie*, *Ochiliozuo*, *Osirioha*, *Ogbuehi*, to mention but a few. It then means that one is judged worthy of attaining the social rank in Igbo context based on his large wealth and philanthropic deeds felt by the community. Most importantly, this tradition serves as an incentive towards purposeful entrepreneurship in the Igbo society. Hence for the Igbos, entrepreneurial success is not just a choice but a must.

Though acquisition is in human character, Igbo culture which stems from their worldview lays much emphasis on it as a mark of distinction in the society. In addition to the cosmic socio-economic wellbeing, riches and material achievements, wealth for the Igbos have a very important eschatological implication. Thus, in Igbo metaphysical understanding of existence, no one who dies poor (Enwe nta, enwe imo-the miserable poor) deserves a place among the ancestors (Oguejiofor, 2004). As such, one's honest acquisition accords him admission into the club of the Ancestors in the afterlife, and even guarantees him reincarnation. This eschatological reality stemming from their worldview is indeed part of the drive behind the Igbo ambitious and competitive entrepreneurship. No wonder, the Igbos reflect entrepreneurship and its fruits even in their naming culture. Thus, names like *Oruamaka* (work is good), *Oruoma* (good work), *Oruebube* (glorious work), *Orunna* (work of the father), *Ifeadigo* (wealth is available), *Ubaka* (wealth is greater), *Ubanozie* (wealth has taken the proper position), etc abound among the Igbos, pointing to their entrepreneurial and acquisition attitude. In fact, in order to belong to this cultural recognition, admiration and reward, Igbo people display all the economic initiative, characteristics of hardworking and astute trading (Dioka, 1997).

Nevertheless, part of the Igbo entrepreneurial understanding of the universe is enshrouded in their proverbs. As such, the Igbo takes to heart expressions like; *nke anyi bu nke anyi ma nkem bu nkem* (our own is our own but my own is my own), *aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu* (hard work yields wealth), *anoro ofu ebe ekiri Mmanwu* (implying that one need to explore other alternatives), etc. In these ways, the individual is inspired to indulge in honest purposeful work to acquire a personal wealth. These goes to show that it is in the nature of the Igbos to also embrace viable alternatives. "This is why there is hardly any part of the world you do not see an Igbo man" (Ogugua, 2003). In fact, Igbos are pragmatic people that generally rely on positive results despite cultural stipulations. This has also formed the basis for the pervading cultural alienation and new ways of life evident in Igbo nation.

It then stands that the Igbo entrepreneurial worldview portends an Igbo economic philosophy. This is a materialistic philosophy incorporating the needful dialectics of the community, individual and the eschatological anticipations in achieving economic performance. Yet, in this dialectics, the individual is responsible and achievement must be personal (Oguejiofor, 1996). Supporting this assertion, Nwala (1985) argues that this is so because in Igbo traditional economy, the means of production and the products belong to the individual. Based on this, Ekei avers that individualism in the Igbo world is an understanding conspicuous in property ownership, acquisitions, productions, exchange of goods and services (Ekei, 2007). This shows that both in traditional and modern Igbo world, much focus are on the economic prospects of the individual within the context of the community. Because individuals make up the community that make up the society, the economic success of the individuals is also the economic success of the society at large. Most importantly, these postulations show that from the beginning, the Igbos are already equipped for entrepreneurship through their worldview. This is what Achebe (1998) meant when he submits that "Igbo culture being individualistic and highly competitive, gave the Igbo man an unquestioned advantage over his compatriots in securing credentials or advancement in Nigerian

society”.

3. Igbo entrepreneurial value

In the ontology of Igbo people of Nigeria, life is a continuous struggle towards socio-economic excellence and perfection. Economic struggle is therefore of paramount importance because Igbo society has no room for failures and able bodied Idlers that merely exist, depending on others for sustenance. Achebe captures this abhorrent condition in the context of Unoka as narrated in his famous *Things Fall Apart*. To overcome this disdainful condition, the Igbos tend to engage in economic struggle (*Igba mbo*) displaying a resounding entrepreneurial initiative, skill, ambition, competition, enterprise and hardwork. Consequently, the Igbo embrace entrepreneurial ventures as a means of dominating nature, achieving economic reliance, satisfying their competitive innate drive for achievement, leaving human imprint, and improving the quality of human life. Thus, they fearlessly view risks as means of exploiting opportunities and a step-up opportunity. Hence, they even enterprise in stressful, inconvenient and harsh environments that would have discouraged other entrepreneurs, basing their effort on the fact that *Aka aja aja na ebute onu mmanu mmanu* (soiled hands brings about oily mouth), and knowing full well that the society is renowned for judging a man by his economic worth and not by that of his father. Truly, these are the rationale for Basden’s (1966) observation that wherever Igbo people are and whatever the conditions, it will not be long before they adapt themselves and make their socio-economic presence impactful. Based on this still, Green (1947) remarks that Igbos admire “the man of energy, the go-getter” and that the qualities stressed in children’s upbringing are property, money, honesty, and loyalty to kinsmen”.

Contextually, the Igbo recognition for achievement that has no link with inheritance is enormous. The recognition of Okonkwo above his contemporaries as narrated in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* clearly explains this Igbo attitude. Within this ambience, Igbo entrepreneurial value portends inheritance or acquisition as two principal means to wealth. Inherited wealth often accords the beneficiary titles like *Akunwanne* (wealth of brother, sister, or relative), *Chinyelugo* (God has crowned), *Akunna* (wealth of the father), *Nwa Chinemelu* (One graced by God), *Akunne* (wealth of the mother), etc which point to the source of the wealth. In the words of William Shakespeare, these beneficiaries have greatness endowed on them. But wealth is more revered when it is acquired through personal labour and sweat.

Although, the Igbo cherish economic achievements, they do not value every kind of wealth. Thus, wealth acquired through dubious means and circumstances does not earn intrinsic respect in Igbo land. As such, wealth acquisition is expected to tow the means of hard work, integrity and honesty. In fact, the Igbo assertion of *aku luo uno okwuo ebe o si* (when wealth gets home, it declares its source) depicts Igbo probe for sources of wealth that enters the community. Even in this present epoch when global forces of westernization have disorganized some Igbos into reproachable ventures, the true Igbo communities still revere wealth made through honest means (*aku akpalu na uzo kwu oto*) and repudiate ill gotten wealth or money (*ajo ego*). It is generally believed among the Igbos that ill gotten wealth is a curse rather than blessing. Thus people are reluctant to associate with people whose source of wealth is suspected to be questionable. This is more so when it is money made through charms (*ogwu ego*) and shading blood (*ego obara*).

The fundamental value of entrepreneurship to the Igbo people is therefore glaring in the fact that life cannot be preserved and enriched without wealth (Ogugua, 2003). This notion is even enshrined in their naming system and expressions. Hence, this economic value is reflected in names like *Ogbenyeanu* (to be married not by the poor), *egodi* (there is money), *egoamaka* (money is good), etc. Within this context, expressions like *aku na esi obi ike* (wealth strengthens the heart), *aku tigbulu iro* (wealth kills enemies), *aku bu uto ndu* (wealth is the spice of life), *aku na ebi okwu* (wealth settles quarrel), etc also depicts the centrality of wealth in Igbo existence.

4. Role of Colonialism in Repositioning Igbo Entrepreneurial Skill

The role of colonialism in Igbo entrepreneurial performance is enormous. At the colonial period, Igbo entrepreneurial performance was visible in Agriculture, trade and manufactures. Among the trio, Agriculture received the strongest emphasis. But there was trade between the Igbos and the Europeans. This trade dwelt on cash crops which formed raw materials for European industries. There was also an internal trade among the Igbos as well as an external trade between the Igbos and their neighbours before and at this period. On the other hand, Igbo people were versed in crafts and manufactures. Yet, colonialism brought a new phase versed with individualistic capitalist attitude. This introduces a barrier between the individual and Igbo communalistic existence.

Indeed, Igbo people pride themselves in individual achievement with communalistic understanding that “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1969). Though the Igbos are from the out-set capitalistic but lives in communal with other members of the society. The point here is that Igbos did not acquire entrepreneurial skills from the Europeans as observed by some scholars. In fact, Igbos has been entrepreneurial within and outside their society years before the advent of the Europeans. It is rather colonialism in its diverse

facets that eroded Igbo traditional and economic values pertaining to their communalistic republican dependency emphasis, and strengthened individualistic way of living which also deepened and showcased Igbo entrepreneurship.

Though, colonialism is highly linked with economic interest, its role in Igbo entrepreneurship is obvious from the perspective that it highly exposed the Igbos to legitimate trade and broadened their scope of entrepreneurial insights. Ottenberg (1959) in his observation holds this view and asserts that;

What was unique about the economic relations between the Igbo and Europeans is that they were intensive, continuous and of long duration. Through trade, first in slaves and later in palm products, the Igbo acquired many new items of material culture, new wealth, and new standard of values and prestige...the production and distribution of goods for exports became anybody's business, and economic contacts between Europe and Igbo were established on a broad basis.

In spite of this economic relationship, the Colonialists were in control of the market to their own greater advantage. Consequently, the process increased the number of Igbo entrepreneurs but still created unimaginable poverty among the greater Igbo populace that the natives were left with the sole choice of self effort to achieve survival. Supporting this stand, Odimegwu (2008) affirms that the post colonial Africa was economically sapped, as the colonialists engaged in practical exploitation of the colonized through multifaceted means. This exploitation on the other hand led to a wide individualistic search for economic autonomy and personhood. Hence the Igbos dispersed engaging in all forms of entrepreneurial ventures to achieve socio-economic fulfillment.

5. Inter and Intra Igbo Entrepreneurial Relations

Igbo association is an essential ingredient in their entrepreneurial development. Based on their open society and the need to search for greener pastures, Igbo people were in contact with other neighbouring tribes. This gesture indeed avails them of new entrepreneurial skills. Among others, Igbos have close association with Igala and Idoma peoples in the north, Ogoja and Ibibio tribes in the east, Ijaw people in the south and Edo people in the west. Isichei (1976) reveals that at the time of archaeological discovery at Igboukwu by Prof. Thurnstan Shaw, iron working diffused into Igboland from the Nok complex of northern Nigeria, developing into highly skilled and sophisticated tradition of metallurgy characterized by outstanding artistry and technical mastery. This however gives credence to Igbo association with other tribes near and beyond.

Apart from the Europeans who engaged with the Igbos in trade right from 14 century, Igbos has fervent entrepreneurial contacts with Asian countries like China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea, etc. Olutayo and Forrest (1999) agree that from 19th century, Igbos were bringing Asians to assist them in establishing industries and factories with international components in Nigeria. This close association of the Igbos with both local and international entrepreneurs led to the tremendous transformation and growth of Igbo entrepreneurial advancement.

Significantly, the Igbos have an outstanding communalistic approach to life where man is viewed as a being-with-others. As such, the individual is cosmologically understood in the context of the community he belongs. This nature avails community help to the individual both in cash and in kind. Since association expands man's knowledge about his purpose and unlocks his potentials, it stands that Igbo associations underscores their current entrepreneurial performance. Huntington (1968) however adds support to this view noting that associations mobilize people into new economic roles, and enthrone a larger and more diversified society". This is so because association is replete with "learning from others and readiness to accept assistance from any quarter" (Yew, 2011).

6. Survival factor

The need to survive is an outstanding drive in human existence. From the colonial era, the Nigerian condition threatens this need at every now and then with its recurrent corrupt practices, poor socio-economic state, political instability, religious crisis, undemocratic democracy, exploitation of the masses, complicated national resentment and discrimination of the Igbos. Successive Nigerian governments worsen the situation by neglecting to a large extent the eastern part of the country which is the Igbo native land. These ugly scenarios were pre-existed by the Nigerian-Biafran war, which was highly detrimental to the Igbos and placed them on the search for survival and emancipation. Coupled with this general loss of life-time savings is the ever increasing population density of the Igbos within a small land mass. It is based on this reality that Achebe (2012) asserts population density in Igbo land as an important factor in Igbo entrepreneurship. According to him, population density created a 'land hunger', a pressure on their low fertility, housing and other purposes leading to their ultimate migration and entrepreneurship. Concurring to this assertion, Dike (1956) asserts that the

Igbo pressing against limited land resources had, of necessity, to seek other avenues of livelihood...the growth of a large non-agricultural population in areas where the land was too small or too poor to sustain the people gave rise to some measure of specialization...If we may judge from the 19th century records, in spite of this specialization, over-population was the rule in all sections of the tribe. This reservoir of man-power accounts for the fact that Igbo land supplied the greater part of the slaves shipped to the New World from the bights of Benin and Biafra”.

But since the Igbos from the beginning were not running a mono but diversified economy. The struggle to survive also deepens their entrepreneurship in the sectors of trade and manufactures. This became real through ‘self help’ and individual efforts which are basically parts of the abilities existential in the blood of the Igbos. Thus, there was Igbo entrepreneurial influx and expansion in the areas of medicine, music, hunting, fishing, carving, sculpture, techno-crafts, wine taping, carpentry, trading, to mention but a few. Within this context, Ugbo reiterates Rohil’s (2017) observation that there were also wrestlers, entertainers and rain makers which are avenues Igbo people earn their living. Within the Igbo survival struggles are also other propelling factors such as environmental challenges, profit motive, internal victimization, and unemployment.

These realities nevertheless support the fact that in economic history, the important drive behind performance could be the availability or non availability of resources culminating in survival factor. In other words, absence of means of livelihood, poverty and vice versa, often spur people to successful entrepreneurship. Hence in Igbo context, necessity is part of the bedrock of their entrepreneurial performance. It then stands that Igbos are people that are quite dynamic and receptive to socio-economic change, and a people ‘custom-made to grasp opportunities’. However, the entrepreneurial acumen of the Igbos within this context of survival is harmonized by their innate self confidence, their idea of open society, competitive individualism and adventurous spirit, as well as the belief that no condition is permanent, and that a man is judged based on his socio-economic worth. These innate abilities indeed grounded in the Igbo cosmological understanding of the universe as *Onye ruo, O rie* (He who works will eat). Thus, with unparalleled rapidity, Igbo people are advancing fastest than other entities that make up the country Nigeria.

7. Igbo Apprenticeship system

Of particular interest in the entrepreneurial foundation of the Igbos is the apprenticeship system (Igba Odibo/Igba Boyi). This is an Igbo entrepreneurial induction strategy whereby young Igbos are inducted by a business/vocation mentor (Oga/Madam) into a particular entrepreneurial venture. This venture can be a trade, an enterprise or a vocation. The process of apprenticeship is however preceded by a period of three months trial to test the suitability of the inductee. In this entrepreneurial apprenticeship system, the apprentice (Boyi) is expected to serve the mentor unreservedly as he/she learns the trade, vocation or craft. This service is indeed grounded in Igbo cosmological understanding of *Onye fee Eze, Eze eruo ya aka* (he who serves the King shall be King thereafter).

At the end of this traditional business school and service which at times stretches up to seven years, the Mentor performs the “settlement”. This comprises of aiding the apprentice financially and otherwise in starting his/her own business or vocation based on the earlier agreement with the apprentice’s family. Once this is done, the apprentice (Boyi) is now on his own, free from the Mentor. Most of the apprentices often join their Mentors at an early stage while some Mentors prefer high institution Graduates because of the nature of their enterprise. Obunike (2016) praises the entrepreneurial performance of the Igbos which he linked to this Igbo apprenticeship strategy positing that;

The Igbo entrepreneur hardly wait for government funds to venture into the business of their choice. “Igba-odibo” (traditional Business School) has remained a source of livelihood and a means of being employed that aids incubate entrepreneurs to stand on their own, raise capital for business, and actively engage in economically worthwhile ventures.

Thus, the Igbos without government assistance is dynamically moving from trade to industry and factory. These industries are scattered in Igbo cities of Nnewi, Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Awka, Owerri, Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, and beyond. Thus, Igbos produce many things at the moment like Innoson (IVM) Cars, Motor parts, Motorcycle parts, plastics, iron casts, steel products, Shoes, Clothes, electric cables, building materials, pipes, paints, milling machines, etc. which contributes immensely to Nigerian economy. These industries and factories of course have ties and links with most Asian entrepreneurs in Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, etc. who acts as entrepreneurial advisers.

The induction strategy of Igbo entrepreneurs has continued to progress because of its advantages. It

encourages business expansion, networking and diversification, helps the entrepreneurs to have an edge over other competitors and is highly profit driven. More so, the inductee gains adequate exposure and insight into the business, gains self employment, knows the customers, producers, importers, middlemen, regardless of their locations, and acquires adequate entrepreneur-customers relations and business skills necessary for performance.

At the heart of Igbo apprenticeship system are unique and major traits of courage, perseverance and determination which surpass entrepreneurial risks, dilemma, loss, ugly experiences and enormous economic impediments in the modern world. These unique traits, Forrest (1995) submits are part of the significant strength of the Igbos over every denial, hardship, discipline and risk proneness that goes with entrepreneurship.

8. Igbo Entrepreneurial Growth

From all indices, Igbo people of Nigeria have attained an entrepreneurial height. At the moment, they could be considered as the pillar of Nigerian economy. With regard to this fact, Orugun and Nafiu (2014) hold;

Igbo entrepreneurs play vital roles in the growth of Nigerian economy. Igbo entrepreneurial activities have been observed to be the backbone for the economy of Nigeria, and have facilitated improved standard of living of the people at both rural and urban settings.

In his socio-economic analysis, Olutayo (1999) affirms that at the nick of Nigerian independence, Igbo people have the highest record of 68,220 individuals in credit association as compared to 5,776 and 2,407 individuals for the western and northern Nigerians respectively. In accordance with 2013 Maliga's (2013) recent research, 74% of investments in Lagos state alone are owned by Igbos, 5% by Hausa-Fulani, 15% by non Nigerians, 5% by other Nigerians and 1% by Yorubas. Lending credence to this research, Udegbe (2013) confirms that statistics also show that;

In Lagos, Igbo's investments is not less than N300 trillion; it is double of that in Abuja at about N600 trillion; in Kano and Kaduna, Igbo's investments run up to N10 trillion respectively, while in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, Igbo investments in N5 trillion respectively; in Plateau state, Igbo investment is hovering over N15 trillion.

At the moment, the number of Igbos in credit associations and entrepreneurship has continued to swell with wider margin. This is why 2011 Sahara report describes the Igbos as Nigeria's major and most enterprising ethnic group and a significant player in Nigerian economy. For the Igbos when compared to the other major ethnic groups in Nigeria, are in the forefront of entrepreneurial activities. Based on this reality, Agazie (2012) reveals that if Igbo tribe is to be removed from Nigeria, the country will suffer severe politico-economic collapse, and any Nigerian government that ignores the Igbos does so at the risk of its economy.

But in the midst of Igbo economic performances, one would wonder why Nigeria is still economically stunted and poor. This is because Nigeria is still encompassed by corrupt oligarchy who could not give the Igbos adequate participation in the developmental process. This is part of the source of economic recession and political retardation Nigeria is currently undergoing in President Muhammadu Buhari's democratic regime.

9. Critique of Igbo Entrepreneurial Foundation

From all indications, Igbos has established what could be regarded as a business culture. The extended family system has made it possible for Igbos to introduce their relatives to the same line of entrepreneurship. As such, Igbo business strategies often run through families and communities. Based on this, different Igbo communities in contemporary time are dominating certain line of entrepreneurship. For instance, Agulu people are generally known for bakery, Akokwa people dominate household utensils, Awka people are known for blacksmithing, Nando people are popular in pharmaceutical merchandise, Abiriba entrepreneurs are known for second hand clothes (okirika), Nnewi people are known for motor parts, Ebonyi people dominates in yam and rice production, to mention but a few. To be true, these have increased made in Nigeria goods and avails Nigeria a place among countries that manufacture exportable goods.

As significant players in Nigerian sustainable economic development, Igbos have contributed immensely to the unemployment reduction, and to Nigerian economic popularity. This has ensured the survival of most Nigerian citizens.

Besides, the entrepreneurial foundation of the Igbos has led to senseless pursuit of wealth by some misguided and self centered persons. This condition is worsened by the current forces of globalization, westernization and modernism which have introduced deceitful tendencies and systems among some Igbo entrepreneurs. These systems are filled with predatory capitalism, feudalism, unhealthy competition, business scam, swindling, to mention but a few. As such, news of entrepreneurship outside the confines of business ethics abound. This is followed by degrees of punishments; seizure of goods, imprisonment, etc of some Igbo

entrepreneurs in Nigeria and beyond.

More so, the Igbo apprenticeship system leaves many Igbo entrepreneurs without the right education to bring their ventures to the apogee. This is as most Inductees of this system are primary school leavers who barely read and write, and may never have opportunity for further education in their life. The business Mentor only undertakes the responsibility of teaching the Inductee the rudiments of his trade or vocation as well as taking care of his wellbeing at that period.

The Igbo apprenticeship system often leads to abuses on both sides. Thus, some callous Mentors at times inflict domestic violence on their Inductees while some will fail to settle theirs at the end of the service. This puts the Inductee into hard and regrettable conditions especially now that communalism through which the Inductee could have depended on his relatives, is gradually fading in Igbo culture giving way to western individualistic existence. Worst still, there has been news of Inductees liquidating their Mentors and hurling away their wealth.

One of the outstanding enduring weaknesses of the Igbo entrepreneurship is the absence of most Igbo entrepreneurs to harness positively their entrepreneurial tendencies and proceeds to the development of the Igbo nation. For most of the proceeds of Igbo entrepreneurs are not invested in Igbo land but in other parts of Nigeria, like Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Jos, and beyond.

Be that as it may, Igbo entrepreneurs should incorporate business education in their schedule. This will give them more insight into their ventures and aid them in drawing academic plans that will sustain their enterprise and increase their output. More still, the Igbo Mentor enterprise curriculum when harnessed will boost Nigerian business education system. It will also avail the vast number of entrepreneurial Inductees the opportunity to acquire some kind of formal education related to his trade or vocation which will give them a sustainable edge over other competitors.

10. Conclusion

The entrepreneurial performance of Igbo people from ancient to contemporary times is dynamic and continuous. But Igbo entrepreneurs have been successful because of their practice of right business strategy and effectiveness. These practices are however propelled by their worldview, economic value and other essential historical factors. Igbo entrepreneurs have not only dominated Nigerian economy but that of Ghana, Niger, Togo, Gambia, Mali, Cameroun, China, South Africa, to mention but a few. From the discourse so far, one could notice that these are possible because of certain foundations and skills possessed by the Igbos such as confidence, sense of responsibility, strong will, commitment, flexibility, fearlessness and vision.

Despite these, peculiar to the Igbo is a rare entrepreneurial attitude. Here are a people who view economic achievement as a bondage that calls for higher achievements. This existential philosophy underlies socio-economic struggle and determination. As such, the Igbo hardly give up on life. He believes in his persistent mental and physical strength and the fact that honest effort yields meaningful economic gain. His concern is sustainable conducive environment that enhances socio-economic creativity which are often lacking in Nigeria (Ukaegbu, 2005). From all indications, it then stands that for the Igbos, circumstantial factors like illiteracy and poor background are not considered as limiting factors but a reason and strength to achieve entrepreneurial success.

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