The Place of African Traditional Values in National Integration: The Case of Nigeria

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Abstract
The romanticization of western values, its hegemonic pretensions and the latest internationalization of communication replaced a hitherto stable African traditional indigenous society and her values with a wobbly one, thereby raising questions about the rationale behind its preference. This study therefore aims to identify the roles African indigenous traditional values play in the achievement of national integration. Among others, it exposes its culture base and discusses the merits of employing the services of African traditional values in fostering Nigerian national unity, which is presently waning. The study also examines the place of language in social integration and the challenges facing these traditional values. In order to forestall further social disintegration arising from the neglect of these values, this study concludes by taking a leaning on Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization and suggests what this paper calls a conscientization consciousness approach. This refers to a process by which, in the manner of moral crusaders, the wealth in African traditional values is canvassed so that the young appreciate and embrace their significances to the ordering of their society, Moreover, it refers to the need to welcome the meritorious aspects of other foreign values, which can be fused with African traditional values to drive sound national integration and development.

Keywords: traditional values, integration, cohesion, conscientization, consciousness

Introduction
Values are common threads that run through all societies, defining their uniqueness and informing their actions, inactions, practices and their worldviews. According to Udoidem (1992), they refer to all acceptable principles, standards of living, goals and cherished ways of life upheld by individual persons or a society. One implication of this definition is that the unity of every society is predicated on the types of values that are highly esteemed in such contexts.

An attempt at a historical trajectory to national integration in Nigeria indicates that the first ever move to unify the different people called Nigeria today was that of the Nok civilization of the 15th century which predates the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by the British. Regrettably, with this amalgamation, six hundred and twenty-five (625) different linguistic groups with their different cultures and values were cobbled together. No sooner had these different ethnicities come together as a country than they started the struggle for politico-economic and religious superiority and dominance. With the emergence of this struggle, came misunderstanding and social rifts propelled by ethnic consciousness and tribal sentiments. The aforestated became precursors to the unfortunate 1967-1970 Nigeria civil war. However, since

after the civil war as the post-civil war years reveal, and even till the present, the country has been riddled with violence, religious upheavals, injustices and more recently, the proliferation of blood-letting groups such as Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen and many other armed and violent groups. All these ugly developments rub off on society, thus widening the social gap and promoting mutual hatred, injustices, and lack of patriotism and common purpose among the peoples of Nigeria.

Beside these internal challenges, foreign incursions into the traditional indigenous African society occasioned respectively by slavery, colonization and globalization further exacerbated the social disintegration situation in Nigeria. These factors therefore bring to the fore the need for a formidable national integrational strategy. Consequently, this paper aims primarily to discuss the significance of African traditional values to national integration. It first identifies and analytically discusses some primal African traditional values which have endured both the devastations of internal disunity and the backlashes of foreign infiltrations, yet have continued to serve as the springboards of social cohesion in Nigeria. Granted that some of Africa's time-honoured values were destabilized, eroded and even lost to foreign incursions by the colonizing missionaries, this paper holds that African societies need not perpetually bemoan and advance foreign incursion as the explanatory theory for her underdevelopment. This research is rather of the view that African traditional values (encapsulated in her culture) continue to give Africa a sense of identity, thereby maintaining the dignity of the African, ensuring smooth social interactions and common purpose among African communities. It is therefore the position of this paper that these values should constitute the pivot on which Nigeria's quest for national integration revolves. In this paper, the terms "social cohesion" and "integration" are used interchangeably.

Cognizant of the fact that the world has become a global clan, this paper takes a philosophical leaning on Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization and proposes a conscientization consciousness approach, which entails a mass public reorientation of the young towards social integration. This could be done through public awareness in print and social media, television and radio campaigns, and a proactive educational curriculum which focuses on social integration, cohesion and inclusivity. It could be recalled that Socrates, in search of a changed culture in the Athens of his day, had Athenian youths as his targeted audience and succeeded in making palpable inroads towards his goal of moral re-orientation. This paper therefore believes that our suggested approach is a sure way to securing national integration.

Methods
The content analysis and the expository methods of enquiry were used for this qualitative research. Explorative narratives as couched in available literature were used to analyse the experiential data that emphasizes the significance of traditional Nigerian (African) values towards national integration. The summative focus of the research was therefore to identify the integrative powers of these traditional values in bringing about such appreciable unity that de-emphasizes ethnicity, tribal differences and social conflicts. Furthermore, the research was conducted using the 7th edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing style sheet.

Design
The study was designed as a limited study of the Nigerian case. It seeks to inspire broader discussion of the roles of traditional African values in national integration within the country, Nigeria, and by extension, Africa and all societies. The research micro-focused on the four major traditional Africa values that have shown great resilience to imperialism, colonization and present day's globalization. These values are the values of communalism, respectfulness, good sense of discernment (wisdom) and that of acting on the side of integrity. Moreover, the study also briefly emphasized the power of language in knitting together different peoples as could be found in a multi-lingual and multicultural nation such as Nigeria. Additionally, the challenges limiting the full

impact of African tradition indigenous values amidst present day realities were critically examined. This led to a reasoned conclusion of this research, which suggests a critical consciousness-raising strategy to enable youths to appreciate their indigenous values and to adapt these for the purposes of unity and national development.

Procedure

Forty (40) sources made up mainly of literature in the form of books, journal articles, thesis works, dailies and modules were consulted and surveyed. The examination of this body of literature yielded a better understanding of the meaning and role of traditional African values in enhancing social cohesion and the need for their integration with some commendable Western values in the pursuit of social integration within Africa and beyond.

Result and Discussion
The Socio-Cultural Context of Values

This research observes that Nigeria, a multicultural and multi-lingual country, upholds some fundamental beliefs, customs, and principles which earlier generations pass on to upcoming ones. These values, couched in their different cultures, are what this paper refers to as African indigenous traditional values. This study found that these values encapsulate a wide range of the peoples' spirituality, government system, social organization and moral codes. The analytical survey undertaken in this research reveals the fact that values are intricately tied with the history of the constitutive ethnic groups of Nigeria. These values serve as a formidable framework for social interaction, collective responsibility and moral guidance within the traditional communities where they pertain. This begs the question of where the values come from or where are they derived.

According to Drew (2023), values spring up from a range of sources which include but are not limited to the family system, cultures, religion, society and personal experience. Ihejirika (2018) adds that values derive from a complex interplay of various factors, including cultural, social, historical, and individual influences. However, Rokeach (1973) classified them into instrumental and terminal values. While instrumental values refer to the particular values that lead to other ends, terminal values, on the other hand, relate to values that are end goals in themselves. Nevertheless, this paper is strictly focused on the core African traditional values, which represent a coalescence of both instrumental and terminal types of values. This research observes that despite the heterogeneity of Nigeria cultures and by extension, Africa, some fundamental standards of behaviour exist in these cultures couched in forms of customs and principles which guide lived-life, ensuring social cohesion and control in these traditional settings. Ihejirika (2023) describes the epistemology of traditional indigenous Africans as being culture centric. This is because the traditional Africans understand their culture as the ethical charter their individual and corporate daily lives.

According to Birukou et al. (2009), "…culture is that whole complex of traditional behaviour which has been developed by the human race and successively learned by each generation" (p.02). It represents the composite social, religious, economic, political and epistemological worldviews of traditional Africans and informs the traditional people's emotional and behavioural patterns and their total way of life. These cultural values in the words of Ogbujah (2014) determine the specific norms, pursuable and realizable within a particular culture. They outline the nature and direction of a people's life and interrelationships. Their nature as a shared commonality implies that the standards projected by their values are also commonly recognized as definitive of what is acceptable or objectionable in such a society. When values connect every member of the society, they transcend the parochial limits of culture and become baptized as socio-cultural values, which account for our everyday behaviour, traditions and habits. Culture therefore dictates what is institutionalized in one or other community as a social practice which eventually becomes

contextually acclaimed as knowledge (Ihejirika & Edodi, 2017). It is in this latter sense that African traditional values are considered in this paper as a necessary instrument for social and national integration.

The Significances of Language and Core African Traditional Indigenous Values
As a means of expression which societies employ for socialization and communication, language acts as a repository of a people's tradition, culture and worldviews since it is the vehicle for their transmission from one age to succeeding generations (Anyadiegwu, 2012). Constituted of words, writing, signs and symbols, and structured in conventional ways, language vouches for the peoples' readiness for interactions within and without their borders. Language therefore is a potent mechanism which is crucial for the sustenance and preservation of a people's identity and their shared cultural heritage. History has proven that when any people are defeated in wars, taken into captivity, bought on slavery or lose their independence to others by any other means, their names and languages are often changed to that of their new masters. This language or name change is nothing but identity change, which is primarily meant to create the consciousness of servitude and belongingness to a new master. These victims are always forced to think, dream, reason, meditate, reflect, emote, imagine and wonder in their masters' languages, thereby perpetuating the unfreedom that comes from a dependency consciousness. Apparently, this may be the reason most British, French and Portuguese colonies in African still have English, French and Portuguese as their lingua franca even after their political independence.

Nigeria today boasts 625 different linguistic groups. These different groups have their cultures, which are the values esteemed in such local communities. These values, in turn, constitute the determinants of actions and practices that are either commendable or condemnable in such localities. All societies are therefore uniquely different from one another in both the worldviews and values they project. Ihejirika (2023) warns that the continued overemphasis on English and other foreign languages as a criterion for rationality in the Nigerian educational system pushes indigenous languages into extinction alongside their values, customs and mores. This adoption and preference for foreign languages and names over the indigenous ones make us citizens of no particular country.

However, Shoma (2021) cites the 2014 European Council survey on linguistic integration of adult Albanian immigrants in Greece as revealing that the host language has a strong relationship with social integration. This strong relationship is a function of a shared terminology which Ihejirika (2023) conceives as an instrument that shapes the linguistic landscapes that constitute the identity of people living in multilingual societies. This is made possible when vibrant strategies evolve through terminology development to bridge linguistic gaps, leading to the various language groups of multilingual societies' developing a set of terms which drive common understanding and purpose. Gogonas and Domna (2015) undertook a study of the ethnolinguistic vitality, language use and social integration among Albanian immigrants in Greece – a research study which was founded on the second-generation immigrants' perception of learning language, and their perceptions of using the host country's language. The findings revealed that the majority of the first-generation Albanian immigrants in Greece show strong preferences for using the Greek language across all communicative domains. This is consequent upon their belief that language remains the main element to becoming socialized into the Greek community. Language therefore constitutes a core element for their identity construction process (Gogonas & Domna, 2015).

This study identifies the following as core and primal traditional African indigenous values:
- Communalism and community consciousness as a value,
- Respectfulness as a value,
- Wisdom and a good sense of discernment as a value, and

- Integrity as a value.

A further discussion is necessary at this juncture in order to unveil their potential for national integration which can still be of universal beneficence.

Communalism and Community Consciousness as a Value

According to Kanu (2012), someone in an African traditional culture is not an individual who enters into a contract to live with others in society and presumably opts out if the balance of advantages is no longer favourable. Instead, the Africans conceive themselves primarily as members of their families and subsequently, of the community and society into which they were born before seeing themselves as individuals. There is therefore a strong sense of interconnectedness within the African enclave, which fosters unity and common purpose; hence, Mbiti's classic phrase says it all: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1990, p.106). On the other hand, Gove (1961) saw communalism as the theory which encourages communal ownership of goods and property so that each commune becomes self-governing and the state becomes a mere federation of communes. This idea is glaringly socialist in nature. This is because while it de-emphasizes private ownership of the means of production, it rather encourages the expansion of the community's activities so that freedom and justice are made available to individuals.

According to Ogbujah (2006), a person in African traditional context is not considered an isolated ego but an entity whose being and survival is dependent on its union with other human beings within the same locality; hence, people known and identified in, by and through their community (p.34). To a large extent, people's achievements in this society chiefly depends on how much of their community's standards they accommodate; they see as their community sees it and act as their community acts. Regarding the importance of communal living, Okoro (2013) submits that children in traditional African societies are taught the virtues of peacefully living together under one roof. These principles of community life centre around the themes of production; solidarity; respect for truth and the sense of honesty; willingness to work and strive for self and community advancement; respect for authority; modesty; tolerance; a sense of goodness and kindness; love of one's neighbour; respect for life and the like. It is for common economic reasons that farmlands were communally owned. Barns, trees, streams, and markets belonged to all. The communal land tenure system was practised for the benefit of all. Ihejirika (2021) tells us that the foregoing represents the pillars that strongly supported communal life in pre-colonial Africa.

However, Novak (1989) contended that the purpose of human community is that each person is enabled to reach the apex of his or her personal development. Therefore, human communities are judged according to how much they promote the full development of their members. This is done in order to ensure that African communal life leads to development. Moreover, Udoidem (1999) submitted that community development begins with the orientation of the peoples' minds to eschew selfishness, self-centredness, utilitarian and hedonistic relationships and rather adopt altruistic love, the wishing of good to one another for that others' sake and the convivialist spirit of live and let live. According to him, these are the links that bind and nurture a good sense of community. Ihejirika and Asike (2018) lament the unfortunate erosion of these time-honoured and treasured values found in cultural vestiges of indigenous African societies. In the traditional African communities where communalism was practised, tribesmen saw themselves as members of the same household, Africans were their brothers' keepers and communal interests were above those of individuals. They were not exceptionally rich monetarily; nevertheless, their basic needs were met. They had no beggars on their streets; built no remand or orphanage homes, neither homes for the physically challenged; their social control mechanisms were sourced through age-grade practices and masquerade institutions; and their entertainment was without any tincture of

promiscuity in the public glare of the community dwellers, who gather at market or community squares to observe their rituals and ceremonies. Their sports consisted of wrestling, which ingrained a sense of manliness and a competitive spirit in the young. Despite all this, that society remained stable.

Ihejirika and Asike (2018) submit that the trio of forces of modern technology, communication and western ideologically-influenced educational prescriptions have unfortunately leached away these highly prized African values, replacing them with the materialistic and individualistic values of the West. Ihejirika (2020) observes that this loss of community alongside the values that made for social integration and control combine with the total embrace of possessive individualism associated with capitalism; to pitch hitherto brothers against one another in an unhealthy competition. The result of all these are deep ethnic divides, rivalry and mutual hatred; hence the need for national integration in Nigeria and by extension, other lands.

Despite this litany of social disintegration, it is amazing that in some indigenous communities in Nigeria (for instance, in Igbo land and possibly other African communities), the core African values commendably continue. This is consequent upon their resilience. The questions therefore arise: what are the elements responsible for their tenaciousness? Why is it that despite rural-urban migration, the Africans who live in cosmopolitan cities still connect with their kith and kin through town union meetings? Why are they so attached and dedicated to their community?

Davidson (1969) attempts to proffer an answer to this by positing that for the Africans outside this ancestrally-centred system, there is no possible life, since a man without a lineage is a man without citizenship, without identity and therefore without allies, or as the Kongo put it, "a man outside his clan is like a grasshopper which has lost its wings" (p. 55). Achebe (1958) contended that those who lose fellowship with their community are like a fish cast out onto a dry, sandy beach. The community, by this token, becomes a living platform which ingrains the spirit of shared common purposes in African societies. In the traditional Igbo society, one cannot give one's daughter into marriage without the consent and support of the *Umunna* (the extended family members and the entire clan). African communities are therefore seen to be tackling their challenges together. An individual's problem becomes the community's concern, thereby promoting mutual support and entrenching a sense of belongingness in the citizens. When these principles of sharing are extended nationally, social bonds will be nurtured and when they blossom, an integrated society with a healthy sense of patriotism will be birthed.

Respectfulness as a Value

Elders and ancestors are seen as authority figures and repositories of folk wisdom and knowledge of the ontology, history and culture of the people. For instance, among the Igbos of Nigeria, grey hair earns the elder the rights to courtesy, humility and politeness. This is based on the conviction that grey hair is associated with accumulated experiences and the knowledge that comes with age. These elders are custodians of the people's morals, customs and values; hence, leadership positions are conceded to them regarding all affairs of the community. Onwubiko (1988) maintained that for the Igbos, "He who listens to an elder is like one who consults an oracle" (pp. 3-6). The oracles are believed to give infallible truth; thus, the elders are also believed to give the truth and their instructions are heeded for the production of good behaviour among the young. Defiance of an elder's authority attracts punishment; so also are any abuses of them. For example, it is an abominable act for one to assault an elder physically, just as it is also taboo to tell an *Ozo (*a chief*) rie nsi* (go and eat excreta - a verbal abuse). Ancestors are venerated among Africans and are considered as the invincible police in the society. Consequently, young Africans always look forward to becoming elders and ancestors in order to enjoy the attendant status and respect accorded them. Children are taught at an early stage that a child who respects an elder would later

in life be respected by the young. Nevertheless, not all grey hairs are respected among the Igbos; those who steal, drink or lack morals are considered to be *efulefu* (village idiots).

In some African communities, the society is graded along age lines; hence, the existence of age grades. People freely interact with their age-mates but once they belong to an elderly age grade, the younger become mindful of their diction when speaking in order not to incur the wrath of the elders. Coming-of-age ceremonies are ritualistic instruments to inculcate and nurture respect for the elderly in the young. Patterns of greetings among Africans reflect the same premium respect accorded to the aged. The Yorubas of Nigeria prostrate themselves to greet elders, the Hausas use revered names and bow while the Igbo males bow and their women genuflect as marks of honour to the elderly. This value, when extended to the Nigeria society at large, will inculcate a strong sense of respect among the citizenry so that in political dialogues and arguments the physical exchange of blows characteristic of the supposed hallowed chambers of their "Excellencies and Honourables" in Nigeria's Senate, Houses of Representatives and Assemblies will no longer represent a shameful national scenario. When the citizens experience mutual respect, conflicting opinions emanating from cultures and perspectives other than ones' own will be tolerated peacefully. Discipline regarding queuing in public places will become a habit. Mutual respect will not only bind the different peoples of Nigeria together in a harmonious way, it will also enhance the pursuit of social well-being for all, thereby promoting justice and social cohesion.

Wisdom and a Good Sense of Discernment as a Value
The indigenous traditional African society conceives knowledge in terms of wisdom and insight regarding the various individual and social problems. Metuh and Ojoade (1999) contended that this is because of the belief in the practical usefulness of knowledge, rather than having knowledge for its own sake. Being knowledgeable in the western criteriology entails being sufficiently equipped with facts and skills and being well certified and versed in school literacy (referring to a good oratorical ability), including proficiency in reading and writing. On the other hand, Africans emphasize more of the practical and moral application of knowledge; the ability to discern between good and bad; right and wrong; and the need for justice and maintenance of the truth, including the ability to manifest pertinent knowledge for practical problem-solving purposes.

Ihejirika (2023) asserts that being knowledgeable among the Igbos means becoming sufficiently indoctrinated into the forms of the Igbo knowledge system as couched in *Omenala* (tradition and cultural practices of the land). African indigenous values therefore canvass for the moral underpinnings of our actions and choices. When values enhance human welfare in this shared community and manifest strong potency towards the promotion of the common good, these social values are adjudged to be of moral worth. Conversely, when they fail to foster unity or become divisive or discrepant in their promotion of the common good of all in the community, they are considered as lacking any moral worth.

Besides the promotion of the general moral well-being in the community, wisdom in Africa also consists of an in-depth understanding of the people's ontology and the hierarchies of power and authority that feature in that ontology. A good mastery of this ontology shows that the supreme deity sits at its apex, followed by the ancestors (who are believed to still care for living members of their families, thereby maintaining social control). The next are the elders, who are constituted mainly of the male folks. There is also the overarching role of supernaturalism, which entails receiving information from discarnate spirits, divination, and ancestral revelation as found in that ontology. Knowledge of the role of the gods, including a good knowledge of one's anamnesis, all combine to qualify one as a wise man. In this setting, the wise person is therefore anyone who morally adapts the knowledge of African ontology, language, customs, morals, not excluding the

positive heuristics of other cultures, to form a pertinent knowledge system which solves practical and contextual problems, thereby making his society more habitable.

The Africans understand the implications of their socio-cultural values, which create a balanced epistemological perspective that secures and develops them while protecting their environment. Such Africans are aware of the fact that more is achieved cooperatively. Also, the young, who excel in the above criteria, are welcomed into the midst of the wise elders as a wise person; hence, Achebe (1958) reported that "…if a child washes his hands, he could eat with kings" (p.16). However, the mantra "the gods are wise" cannot be truer elsewhere than in African context, where retributive justice is chiefly the responsibility of the gods even if men fail in their sense of discernment and judgment.

Integrity as Value
Integrity has a wide range of meanings which this research may labour in vain to exhaust. However, for the purpose of this study, integrity is to be understood from its etymological meaning of the Latin word *integres (*intactness, wholeness, harmony). Integrity is then seen as "wholeness, completeness, and consistency and is interpreted as coherence of principles and values" (Montefiore & Vines 1999, p.9). It involves incorruptibility, uprightness, impartiality, honesty, accountability and dependability or trustworthiness (Hubert, 2018). It could also be seen as "a moral quality referring to acting in accordance or in harmony with relevant moral values, norms and rules" (Hubert, 1998, 2014, pp. 44-45). This study uses the case of the Igbos for the discussion on integrity.

The traditional Igbo man of Nigeria has what is called the *Ofo* stick (a stick from the Detarium tree), which varies in size. These sticks are considered sacred in Igbo land. According to Iwuagwu (1998), this tree is believed to be the abode of the dead ancestors; hence, the authority ascribed to it. The *Ofo* stick is the Igbo traditionalists' symbol of integrity. It is, among others, a means of prayer to the gods as well as an emblem of truth. Once the *Ofo* stick surfaces on any occasion, the truth of any issue under contention surfaces. The holder considers it as taboo to be associated with lies; hence, he tells the truth no matter whose ox is gored. In Achebe's trans-generational masterpiece, namely his novel, *Things fall apart*, the elders led by Ezeudu reminds Okonkwo of the place of integrity (in case he has forgotten) and cautions him thus regarding his adopted son Ikemefuna: "That boy calls you father; do not bear a hand in his death" (Achebe, 1958, p.57). Okonkwo, who did not want to be seen as effeminate, ignored Ezeudu's advice and proceeded to slay Ikemefuna. This singular act points to both the premium placed on integrity and the defect in Okonkwo's character, who lost his integrity owing to his unbridled ego.

In addition, the chief priest in Achebe's *Arrow of God* was schooling Nwafo, his youngest son, about the importance of the words of a father "as nothing but the truth"; hence, the remark: "A man does not speak a lie to his son, remember that always, to say my father told me is to swear the greatest oath" (Achebe, 1964, p.93). The foregoing two cases showcase how truth constituted a virtue of integrity in this cultural enclave. Telling one's child a lie amounts to risking his or her life should the child on the basis of the reportage of his father, swear an oath with *Ofo na Ogu* (the symbol of truth and justice). The punishment would be instant death by the gods, who impartially administer retributive justice. Among the lgbos is also the *Ogu* (righteousness or justice) corpus, which represents a body of righteousness. *Ofo* (symbol of truth) *na* and *Ogu* (symbol of justice/ righteousness) therefore comprised the Igbo sense of uprightness, integrity as well as justice.

Integrity also entails a sense of responsibility. In this indigenous society, leaders owe their community all necessary personal sacrifices to keep the society harmonious. Consequently, these leaders arbitrate in cases whenever they arise. They only rely on the gods in matters they cannot

handle. In some communities, policemen are not allowed to intervene in any misunderstanding between members of such closely knit communities. The leaders of such communities (in such cases) ensure that members of their community do not become victims of exploitation by involving themselves in copious spending on law enforcement agents before such cases are settled. If such cases reach the public before being referred to the traditional ruler, it is seen as a significant weakness on the part of the community leader or the village head. This does not mean that they practised jungle justice; rather, they preferred out of court settlements - a testimony to the integrity of their leaders.

Nevertheless, integrity also involves abstinence from bribery to avert justice, purity in sexual matters, and zero tolerance for corrupt practices. Such transparency left those with criminal intents or records no choice other than to relocate to the more tolerant and corrupt urban areas (where African values have already been compromised) since finding a consenting ally or even an alibi or partner in crime within the traditional society was practically difficult, if not impossible.

Integrity in traditional societies also involved the entrenchment of humane living and an honest concern for one another, which promotes social integration in the society. Regarding this, Onwubiko (1988) noted that humane living among the Igbos is a concept which is defined as a way of life unequivocally centred upon human interests and values, a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy and by consideration and compassion for human beings.

To sum up, the African traditional society of our discourse, as Isichie (1976) observes, "…was just a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the problems of their environment hence, man was always placed first" (p. 03). This disposition turned all actions in this traditional setting into joint community-oriented ones rather than one based on individualism.

Challenges to African Traditional Values
African traditional indigenous value systems as discussed above have become the weeping child of modern techno-scientific epistemology. This is because the worldview projected by the latter seems to increasingly divest the former of its time-honoured mystique. In consequence, the sudden sophisticated, modernized and acculturated Africans of the 21St century, who unquestionably embrace western scientific ways seem to disdain and downplay the values that formed their personality. These values daily inform and influence their thinking even without their being aware of it. In the fabric of these values, lies their Africanness and unique identity. Without these values, the Africans become confused citizens of no country or culture. This is the reason behind today's intractable imitation of the West. Besides the lack of documented records and the transmission of history by oral tradition, this study examines some factors stunting the recognition, relevance and observance of these values, a regrettable development that has been the antecedent of all forms of social disintegration in Africa. These factors are the following:

Globalization
Globalization is "…a composite term which espouses the idea of universalization of cultures, economies and politics towards intensified social relation which unites distant localities. Its project cuts across geographical boundaries, cultures and sovereignties with the presumed aims of socio-political and economic development and unity of nation" (Ihejirika & Asike, 2018, p.01).

The above definition of globalization is actually a supportive rhetoric fanning its universal acceptability. In reality, globalization is a prodigious monster which canvasses westernization in the name of modernism, capitalism in the name of enhanced universal economy, and western democracy in the name of political correction. It is a Eurocentric monster with its many fangs in

the forms of cultural globalization, which blurs cultural lines, destroys the beauty of cultural diversities, stifles culture-centric values by its proposals of a monolithic unity (Ihejirika & Asike, 2018). Its economic fang employed to perpetually keep African economies indebted to the hegemonic West are the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The political fang that ensures the oppressive dominations by World powers over the rest and of course, the promotion of their political will, is the United Nations with its Security Council. Howbeit, the greatest harm its cultural form, namely cultural globalization, inflicts on Africans is its erasure of cultural identities, distinctions and values.

The aforementioned factors prepare the way for forced acculturation, which coerces Africans into giving up the values that accounted for the stability of their traditional indigenous society for foreign culture and ideologies, which they hardly understand. The false image being propelled by this foreign worldview is that to be modernized is to be implicitly westernized and that modernism must centre around being scientifically and technologically ideated. Efemini (2003) identifies this false projection of the scientific and technological ideology and asserts that the external agents have employed this notion and it has enabled the West to canvass their values and experience as being aligned with development. As AtiaApusigah (2011) rightly remarks:

> …to alienate culture from development is actually to alienate people from their roles. Hence, one should not doubt why Africa and the third world have so long remained in the catching up game. This can be blamed on the way that culture has been manipulated through categorizations that privilege some cultures and disparage others. Categorizations such as 'high' and 'low' cultures, modern and traditional cultures, and 'refined' and primitive cultures and their attendant equivalences in the form of binary oppositionalities, which have created the distortions 'that have given rise to the manipulations. For instance, the former categories have been equated to western cultures and underrating on non-West cultures. Such valuations and consequent overrating of western cultures and underrating on non-west cultures, play out as a contest over supremacy that also set non-west cultures, especially indigenous people in the race towards westernization in order to attain fulfillment through so-called development (p.03).

Simply put, westernization, forced acculturation and all that globalization entails are tailored towards intimidating and if possible, abrogating indigenous values. This has left Africans confused, without a defined ideology or the recognition of the core values that drive development. Instead, what is promoted is intentional social disintegration. The West and Europe know that it is only when the oppressed act in solidarity that they can improve their plight so they do everything possible to entrench divisions and disharmony in Africa. In recent history, we perceive that all wars fought or presently ongoing in Africa are influenced by the hegemonic West and Europe. Whenever there are such rifts and civil wars in Africa, Europe and the West gain by exchanging their weapons for gold, californium, oil, uranium or other natural endowments of the warring African countries. Globalization therefore represents a significant challenge for African indigenous values.

Rural/Urban Drift
Consequent upon the twin reasons of lack of social amenities and the quest for greener pastures in African rural areas, youngsters migrate to cities to where more opportunities for employment, skill acquisition and development abound. In the process, they abandon their traditional values and customs and take up the ways of city dwellers. With the passage of time, these youngsters forget these indigenous values, while some of their numbers begin to consider them with derision as outdated practices. This attitude poses a significant threat to the transmission and preservation of these values. Worse still, if town unions in the cities, being the only remaining bonding forum for community members become weak, these values inadvertently leach away without redemption. At other times, western educational opportunities and religions in the town easily replace the

orientations of the young, leaving them with foreign values and patterns of life, which more often than not, contradict their foundational indigenous values.

Advent of Monotheistic Religions and Syncretism
Obiereka's conversation with Okonkwo in the twentieth chapter of Achebe's *Things fall apart* is instructive here. In that chapter, Obiereka confesses that "…we were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay, now, our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe, l958, p. l52). In the citation above, Obiereka recalls the regrets occasioned by the encroachment of the destabilizing values of the white mercantilist missionaries into the African soil. These missionaries cum colonialists fronted the juicy benefits of their health, religious, educational and justice institutions in order to gain acceptance into African communities. However, no sooner had they settled than they commenced stratification of their host (African) society with their dichotomizing, compartmentalizing, discriminative, philosophical and religious worldviews. After their conversion, some of the indigenes, who did not understand the full tenets of their new found religion with the passage of time, reverted to their traditional religion while others became syncretic. The case of the Igbos of Nigeria shows that the adoption of these foreign religious practices in some areas resulted in the dilution and abandonment of traditional African values. In other quarters, many of these values were labelled severally as idolatry, paganistic or simply as *juju*. The western worldview undermined whatever it failed to understand. This attitude smacks of intolerable epistemic naivety and negatively affects the distinctive value and cultural fabric of Nigeria and by extension, other indigenous societies.

The Challenge of Ideologization/Idealization of African Traditional Indigenous Values
While the romanticization of African traditional indigenous values promoted by the ethnocentric pan-Africanists succeeded in creating the awareness of Africa's rich cultural heritage, it has also become problematic. The lazy projection of the West as solely responsible for present day's African reality while the continent's failures to self-develop even after centuries of her political independence, is an act of passing the buck and an attempt to evade responsibility.

Similarly, the myriad recommendations by African scholars for a cultural renaissance and the call to revert to the cultural *status quo ante* (things as they were as of old) seem to overlook the fact that the same olden days of our reference was also the milieu of human sacrifices and other ritually-related violent activities such as the killing of twins, bundling of infectious and diseased ones into the evil forest, and wicked widowhood practices which held sway in the African traditional society.

Moreover, this paper finds that the backward-looking approach of unchanging customs and culture is based on a skewed understanding of culture as the ways and observances of our ancestors and forefathers - the way we have always been instead of the way we are and live in the present. This conception of culture and its associated traditional values suffers the limitation of not recognizing the dynamism of human nature. Today's reality indicates that it is almost impossible to revert to the ways, reasoning and logic of our ancestors and still be relevant in today's techno-scientifically-driven age amidst the hegemonic politics of the super powers.

Again, the idealization of African traditional values tends to convey a distorted view of these cultures. The consequence of this idealization and ideologization is the portrayal of these values and cultures in a way that opens up the complexities and nuances of the societies from which they originate. Reducing these values to a set of mere ideals belies their true depth and riches. Sometimes, the ideologization of these values also leads to their homogenization. The idea that African traditional values are the same or that they can easily be grouped together fails to recognize

the vast differences that exist within these traditions. This paper therefore observes that such a conception can further lead to a monolithic and solipsistic understanding of African values.

Ideologization of African values has the ability to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and exoticization. When these values become so romanticized, they are often presented as inherently primitive, thus reducing them to mere simplistic backward representations. Evidently, idealization of these values is detrimental to the African psyche and indirectly perpetuates an orientation that promotes colonial attitudes of superiority and otherness. This may be the reason African presidents seem to want to always be seen as commanding the same authority of their former colonial masters, whom they also passionately hated consequent upon their oppressive tendencies. It is baffling that these African leaders end up becoming what they hated most. This creates a sense of nostalgia and a longing for a mythical past, hence they see themselves as deities and not as men or leaders. Additionally, by valourizing African traditional values, Africans miss the opportunity to analyze them critically, thereby making it increasingly difficult to address the underlying issues that may inhere in these cultures. Ideologizing the significance of African traditional values without provision of a proactive framework that brings back the relevance of these values in the present day is at best a nominal activity and, like a sweet poem or song, it entertains the mind and there its relevance as a recreational folklore stops. However, if the relevance of African traditional indigenous value systems in today's world must be felt, there must then be the need for a pragmatic approach that transcends mere theorization. The next section takes up those challenges.

Any way out
It was Martin Luther King Jnr. who once quipped that Africa's survival depends on her ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, and to remain vigilant in order to face the challenge of change. Our challenge of change is one that requires the evolvement of a transformational epistemology which both adequately considers the dynamism of man and today's African reality. This paper therefore takes a philosophical leaning on Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization and proceeds to recommend a strategy that transcends mere theorization which is to be the called, "the conscientization-consciousness approach". As the name implies, there is the need to awaken the consciousness of Africans to the reality of the detriments of their unquestioning over-dependence on the ideologies and cultures of the West while neglecting the wealth of their own core indigenous values. How do we go about this difficult but not impossible task of re-orientating Nigerians (Africans) so that they will realize that everything foreign does not necessarily command superiority over the local? How do we convince Africans that a local product can be better than a foreign one? How do we help Africans to realize the wealth in their traditional values?

This paper is of the view that the target group should be the young. As stated in our introduction, Socrates reached out to the young, whose minds were still fresh and malleable and he almost succeeded in changing the Athenian culture with his philosophy. Paulo Freire (1968) emphasized the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality made possible by reflection and action. He called it the process of conscientization. This research, in tandem with this Freirean thought, proposes that philosophers, parents, care-givers and teachers of the young should constitute the subjects, who in a co-intentional arrangement with the objects (namely, the youngsters) reflect on their social reality. This reflection and subsequent action will unveil the need for a considered re-examination of the core African values for the purpose of effective social integration. To raise this consciousness, the government needs to build African traditional values into the school curriculum from the primary to tertiary levels of education, while aggressive public enlightenment should be embarked upon in order to unveil the significances of these values to the young minds, just as the Japanese do with their minors at the early stage of their educational formation. If the consciousness of Nigerians is raised in this moral way, the young will be

sensitized against any foreign or local value that is destabilizing. When the citizenry becomes critically conscious of the infiltration of dangerous foreign values, they will be able to sieve the useful from the not-so-helpful in foreign cultural patterns. This will place them in a better position to demystify every economic, political and cultural rhetoric that hides destructive and socially disintegrative ideologies. This recommended paradigmatic shift is neither Eurocentric nor Afrocentric. Rather, it respects cultural diversities and the polysemy of linguistic expressions.

Conclusion

This study thus argues for the examination of core African traditional indigenous values within the context of their significances towards Nigeria national integration which could as well be of universal beneficence in ensuring social integration and cohesion. This work finds that the way the African Igbo conceives and practices traditional values of communalism, respectfulness, wisdom, good sense of discernment, and integrity defies the logic of the discrepant western criteriology, which labels any worldview, foreign and strange to her as primitive and anachronistic. This study therefore observes that such hasty and pejorative categorizations drive forced acculturation which is the process by which the dominant Europe and the West with their worldviews of science and technology and culture undermine African traditional socio-cultural values. From the discussions in this research, it becomes clear that this study makes a strong case for a change of logic. It canvasses for pragmatic actions which are borne out of deep reflection over the social reality of Africans - where countries are always involved in wars, thereby paving the way for western profiteering through the sale of their weapons and armaments. The study therefore suggests an aggressive consciousness-raising approach that will enlighten Africans to value the social integrative wealth in their traditional values, which could comfortably fuse with foreign values without the latter disorienting and deceiving the indigenous people.

However, this paper believes that traditional African values continue to represent a sure and formidable pathway to natural integration in Nigeria and by extension, Africa as well as universally. In any case, it must be noted that these traditional values must be open and receptive to commendable foreign values. Consequently, this paper concludes by recognizing the fact that a symbiotic combination of both African and foreign values will represent a powerful national integrative force, which this paper is dedicated to achieving.

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