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Child Rearing and Modernity among the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria

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Abstract

Child rearing which involves nurturing and training a child from childhood to adulthood is pivotal among the Igbo people of southeast Nigeria because children ensure their continuity. Modernity and the resultant technological innovations have immensely affected child rearing. Using qualitative method, this study seeks to examine the concept of child rearing among the Igbo people of southeast Nigeria, the extent it has been affected by modernity and make recommendation on best child-rearing method to adopt. Modernization theory is used as an explanatory framework for this study. It was established that child rearing entails feeding, nurturing, teaching and correcting children to become responsible adults. Child rearing was a communal affair in the traditional Igbo societies. Modernity resulted in most parents living in nuclear families and became solely responsible for child rearing. Socialization with people from other cultures and the modern means of communication have affected children's behavior and the child-rearing style adopted by parents. The study, therefore, recommends that parents should consider the personality of their children and their environment before copying child-rearing style from other cultures.

Keywords: Child rearing, children, Igbo culture, modernity, parents

1. INTRODUCTION

Child rearing, known as *izu nwa* in Igbo culture, entails nurturing and training a child from childhood to adulthood to ensure the child becomes a responsible member of the society. Child rearing is an essential component of every human society because children guarantee its future. The family provides the base for child rearing. Parents, therefore, ensure that children are nurtured and trained into healthy and responsible adults. In line with this, Berger and Thompson opined that every home is a miniature society, contains all the societal value systems and serves as nursery that nurtures all cultural values Berger & Thompson, 1998 cited in [1]. This implies that the children are not only catered for physically at home but also morally with parents educating their children on cultural values. An unruly child is referred to as an "*Nwa na enweghi ozuzu*", meaning: 'A child that has no training'. Child rearing is a huge responsibility. Indeed, much energy is channeled towards nurturing the child as an infant to ensure its survival. Nwoke listed the various measures taken in the home to guarantee the survival of the infant and the building of values such as the interdependence on family members to include: intensive physical care of infants, feeding on demand, immediate response to crying, close body contact, keeping the child close at night, and constant care by siblings and other relatives as well as the mother [1]. Child rearing is a communal responsibility in Igbo culture. It, therefore, demands the cooperation of every member of the family to make it less demanding and

successful. In consonance with this, [2] admitted that a close knit of relatives commonly shares the costs of rearing children, in terms of emotion, time, finance and other material support, since all children together comprise the strength of the lineage. Truly, child rearing has changed immensely as a result of modernity and its outcomes such as urbanization. One of the reasons is that people have become more mobile by migrating to the urban areas and, as a result, they live away from their extended family members. Consequently, only members of the child's nuclear family shoulder the responsibility of child rearing. This study, therefore, seeks to examine traditional child rearing in Igbo culture, the changes that have taken place as a result of modernity and the effects of these changes as well as make recommendations on the best methods of child rearing in modern Igbo society.

Igbo People of South-eastern Nigeria

Igbo people are mostly found in five states in Nigeria namely Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states although they are highly mobile and dispersed in every part of Nigeria and the world. Traditionally, they are devotees of Igbo traditional religion with belief in Supreme God who has other smaller deities as messengers. Currently, most Igbo people have converted to Christianity but there are few of them who are adherents of Igbo traditional religion. In the past, Igbo society was agrarian and, consequently, Igbo men marry many wives to bear children to work in their farms. This is because a man's economic status was determined by the number of his wives and children and the size of his barn. Igbo society is patrilineally organized as inheritance is determined through the father side. Igbo people are communal people who value relationships. In Igbo communities, members of the extended family live together or close to family members. Marriage is compulsory for all grown men and women except for those who are intellectually-disabled, chronically-sick or physically-challenged. The main reason for marriage in Igbo culture is for reproduction. They strongly believe that a society without successors will eventually become extinct. Thus, childlessness is considered the worst misfortune in the life of any Igbo man or woman. They believe in training their children by inculcating good moral values to help them to be useful to themselves and the society. In line with this, an Igbo adage states thus: '*A muta amaghi ihe na ume omumu bu out*'. which means, "Having an irresponsible child is as good as being childless". As a result, the Igbo channel considerable energy and resources into child rearing.

2. METHODS

The qualitative method is chosen for this study because it helps the researcher elicit data from parents on their personal experiences on child rearing. Qualitative research is used to explore the behaviors, perspectives, feelings and experiences

of people and what lies at the center of their lives [3]. The researcher drew the data for this study from her experiences as an Igbo person and in-depth interviews of Igbo parents living in Igboland, Lagos, Abuja, Ibadan and other major urban centers in Nigeria. These parents are from Anambra, Enugu, Imo, and Abia states. One of the informants from Enugu State lives in Ireland. Fifteen (15) informants were interviewed for this study; they comprised ten (10) women and five (5) men. More women were interviewed because, in Igbo culture, women stay more with their children than the men. The women interviewed were between 30 and 65 years old while the men were between 35 and 72 years old. The minimum educational qualification of the informants is primary education. 2 of the informants, a woman and a man, were the least-educated with primary school certificate; one of the informants a woman has an Ordinary National Diploma Certificate; 10 informants were university graduates while 2 has postgraduate degrees. The informants are from upper and lower middle class. They were selected purposively because they were parents and experienced in child rearing. Two of the informants had successfully raised their children; all their children had left home. The others had little children between 3 and 15 years. The researcher briefed the informants on the purpose of the study and requested for their consent before interviewing them. They all consented to be interviewed. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with 4 informants in their respective homes in Nnewi in Anambra State and 1 in her place of work in Lagos. Interviews with the ten other informants were conducted on phone because it was during the third wave of COVID-19. Also, the phone interviews made accessing the informants easier because they were in different locations within and outside Nigeria. The language of the interview is Igbo language but some of the informants responded in Igbo and English language. The researcher took note during the phone interviews and the recorded interviews during the face-to-face in-depth interviews were transcribed and the results were translated and presented in a story form according to themes. The researcher did the translation herself because she speaks and write English and Igbo language well. Of course, the researcher obtained the permission of the informants before recording. The informants were interviewed on research questions which included:

- (1. What do you understand by child rearing?
- (2. What is involved in child rearing?
- (3. How has modernity affected child rearing in Igbo culture?
- (4. Do you support using cane to correct children?

3. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

3.1 Modernization Theory

Modernization comprises urbanization, application of science and technology, fast growth in occupational specialty, increase in bureaucratization and educational levels. However, the most-important part is industrialization which enables escape from poverty and subsistence agriculture [4]. Modernization theory studies the process of social evolution and the development of societies [5]. The theory views development as a uniform evolutionary path that all societies follow, from agricultural, rural, and traditional societies to post-industrial, urban, and modern forms Bradshaw, 1987; Escobar, 1995; Chirot & Hall, 1982; Shrum, 2000 cited in [6]. In this study, some Igbo societies developed from agricultural to rural and traditional societies, then to post-industrial and urban societies. In fact, most of these Igbo communities are at different levels of modernization. Some have become urban centers while some are still traditional societies. As these societies change, there are changes in their way of life particularly in their child-rearing style. For instance, in the traditional Igbo society, parents bear many children because they need more hands to help them in the farm. But as the society changes with urbanization and the introduction of Western education, the people's occupations change and parents have to send their children to school to empower them for the future. Indeed, the more the Igbo societies become modernized, the more parents and their children socialize with people of other cultures, the more they imbibe the new culture especially their child-rearing style.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Child rearing is a process by which parents transfer, and the child acquires, prior existing competence required by the culture to assume valued future responsibilities in the society Ogbu, 1981 cited in [7]. It is a task engaged by every parent to redirect a child's potential towards suitable right goals [8]. The need for raising children appropriately cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, the way a child is reared greatly influences the child's development mentally, socially, emotionally, physically and morally [9]. Children basically learn through imitation. In line with this, [9]Ajayi submits that parents and other siblings are the representatives of the larger society from whom the young first learns suitable behavioral patterns, attitudes, values, norms, mores and the folkways of the society. For this reason, parents and the significant others such as teachers and older siblings in the life of the child must ensure they live exemplary lives which the child can emulate. Child rearing is a communal affair in Igbo culture. According to [2], a close knit of relatives commonly shares the costs of rearing children, in terms of emotion, time, finance and other material support, since all children together comprise the strength of the lineage. To further support this, [7] argued, 'The social environment of an African village encourages and appreciates sharing of skills and possessions, as a result, sharing

your food with a neighbor's child, or correcting your neighbor's child for a wrong behavior is seen as the responsibility of all adults in the village'. Modernity has greatly influenced child rearing. Due to urbanization and globalization, change of environment as well as change of roles of women in the society, some African parents have imbibed Western style of child rearing without any form of modification to suit the African context. Indeed, evidence from some African countries shows that there are no clear-cut child-rearing patterns but rather a combination of both African and Western styles Siyakwazi & Siyakwazi 2014 cited in [10]. Indeed, there is need for African parents to consider their environment and the personality of the child before adopting any child-rearing style.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Child Rearing in Traditional Igbo Society

As already stated, child rearing involves nurturing and training a child from childhood to adulthood to ensure the child becomes a responsible member of the society. Child rearing begins from the womb and ends after the rites of passage into adulthood for both male and female. After the rite of passage which is the transition ritual into adulthood, the young men can be independent and marry while the women marry and live with their husbands. Child rearing begins in the womb. That is, the expectant mother starts nurturing and training her child right in the womb by eating the right food and tapping the baby when it kicks too hard or oftentimes turns in a manner that makes the mother uncomfortable. The tapping makes the baby change its position or stop kicking as the case may be. There are some foods pregnant women are told to avoid for the sake of the child's health, proper development and formation of desirable physical features. For instance, pregnant women are advised not to eat snail because it is believed that eating snails makes the baby drool like snail after birth; they are also told to avoid *ogbono* soup which has a mucilaginous texture similar to okra soup because it is believed to make the child bald; they are equally advised not to eat *nchi*, the grasscutter (an animal) to avoid prolonged labour just like the grasscutter and so on.

Immediately after childbirth, the new mother's mother or any of her close female relatives will go and stay with her for approximately one month to teach and help her take care of the child(ren). This is termed *omugwo* in Igbo language. During this period, the new mother is taught how to hold, bath, exercise, and feed the new born. One of the informants, a woman of about 63 years, submitted that exercising the baby by throwing the baby up and stretching and bending the limbs is important because it helps the baby to overcome fear. So, if the baby accidentally falls, he/she will not be too scared. A new mother is equally advised on what to eat and avoid to ensure she lactates well and keep the baby in good

health. For instance, the new mother is advised to take hot fluids, palm wine, bitter leaf soup and *ofe nsala* (white soup, a kind of bitter soup). She avoids certain food like *ogbono* soup and *egusi* soup three months after childbirth because such foods upset the baby's stomach and result in frequent stooling after the baby sucks it from the mother's breast. This is because it is believed that whatever a nursing mother feeds on, the baby sucks it from breast milk. In the past, new born was given water on the day of birth or a day or two after. Some mothers rub a little soup into the child's mouth when the child indicates interest in eating food whenever the mother eats by moving its mouth. This was meant to make the child get used to the taste of food and also make it easier for the baby to adapt when the mother eventually introduced solid food to it. Some of my informants submitted that, when this is not done, the child tends to reject food when the mother weans him/her from breast milk and this can be challenging for the child and the mother. In the past, children were fed with breast milk, water, plantain pudding, corn pudding (*agidi* jollof) and so on. They snack on fish, roasted corn, fruits, pear, palm kernel, and groundnut among others. Some mothers feed their children with foods like mashed yam mixed with oil and salt, bread fruits (*ukwa*) when they are about four months old to supplement the breast milk. The new mother breastfed her baby for 1-3 years and will not conceive another child until her baby is about three years. This is to ensure that the baby is properly taken care of. The polygyny system of men marrying more than one wife was helpful. The man could always visit any of his other wives to satisfy his sexual needs when one of the wives was nurturing a baby. Also, in the past, most women do not conceive when they are breastfeeding their baby. To support this, [11] established that women who breastfeed their children experience a longer period of amenorrhea and infertility after delivery than do those women who do not breastfeed. He added that the length of postpartum amenorrhea is quite variable, and depends on several factors, such as maternal age and parity, and the duration and frequency of breastfeeding. When the child is about three months, the mother teaches the child how to sit. She supports the child by sitting behind him/her to arrest a fall in case the child falls. After the child has mastered sitting, he/she crawls, stands, walks and eventually runs. Igbo people live communal life. Members of the extended family and community contribute to child rearing. For instance, in the past, when the child is about 3/4 months, the mother resumes her normal life which may involve farming or trading; she leaves her baby in the care of her mother-in-law, co-wives, other relatives or even neighbours. It is important to note that, in cases of illness, children were treated with herbal mixtures and other traditional remedies. Teaching and engaging children on how to carry out daily activities is an aspect of child rearing that cannot be glossed over. According to one of my informants, a woman of about 50 years:

'Parents begin to send a child on errand once the child understands language, parents must not wait for the child to be fully grown before

requesting a child to help with a cup or help call a sibling or any other relative. This helps in the child's development and in making good use of his senses' (August 2021 Personal Communication).

Children learn mostly by observation although they are taught to perform some tasks by their parents or other relatives. They are, depending on their ages, assigned more difficult tasks as they grow older, tasks such as; sweeping, cooking, fetching water, firewood and fodder for domestic animals such as goat and sheep. In the traditional Igbo society, tasks were assigned based on gender. For example, boys worked in the farm and broke firewood while girls fetched water, swept, and cooked as well as weeded the farm. In fact, it was considered bad manners for boys to cook or stay with the women while they cooked. Parents started assigning tasks to their children at an early age to familiarise them with such tasks. This equally makes them acquire a sense of responsibility because each child has chores to perform daily and failure to execute such tasks attracts punishment which may include any of the following: scolding, beating, and denial of certain privileges. Performing household chores equally helps the children to become independent and adapt easily to any situation they find themselves when they grow up. The denial of certain privileges serves as punishment and simultaneously trains them in controlling their passions. Similarly, children are denied some privileges, not as punishment, but to help them control their passions. For instance, children were not given eggs so as to stop them from becoming gluttons. This is portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* where Ezinne's mother gives her eggs behind closed doors because children are not allowed to eat eggs [12]. The idea is that when adults eat some things without giving the children, it will not bother them. The essence of the taboo is to enable children control their cravings. Also, play is an important part of a child's life. Children in a community exchange visits among themselves. They play with sand, run in the rain, sing, dance or perform any other activity that appeals to them. Disciplining children is taken seriously in Igbo culture.

In Igbo society, the older children are properly groomed to serve as role models to younger ones. Corroborating this, an informant who is a woman of about 43 years submitted, '*O di mkpa ijideta nke isi ndi ozo a fall o in line. Mana nke isi mebie, o na-esi ike izuta ndi ozo*' (Mrs Okoli, Personal Communication, August 2021), meaning: "It is important to successfully train the first child well, others will fall in line, but if the first child becomes unruly, it is usually difficult to successfully train the siblings". Truly, this is probably because children learn by imitation. In fact, most children particularly love imitating their older siblings and the older children influence their younger ones. As a result, most parents are stricter in training their older children and, in situations where the younger ones copy their bad behaviours, the older children are blamed for corrupting the younger ones. Parents teach their children essential Igbo values such as honesty, respect for elders, hard work, and contentment among others through folktales,

riddles and stories portraying the moral values they want the children to imbibe. Most of these stories were told mostly after dinner or during moonlight plays. Most parents were not free discussing sex with their children. Some send their children to an older relative to give them sex education. Parents, most importantly, live exemplarily lives because their children watch their behaviours to see if they are in tandem with their instructions.

Igbo people believe in disciplining children. But this is done in love with the age of the child and offence committed in mind. Hence, the saying, “*Enwere ofu aka tie nwata ihe, e nwere nke ozo guguo ya*,” meaning: “when you beat a child with one hand, you pacify the child with the other hand”. This implies that beating should be done with love and not bitterness. In other words, when a child is beaten because of bad behaviour, the child should be called and soothed and advised not to misbehave again. When a child misbehaves, any member of the family or community who witnessed such bad behaviour has the responsibility of correcting the child and reporting to the child’s parents to further enforce discipline because they believe that, “*Nwa bu nwa oha, ofu onye anaghi azu nwa*”. This means, “A child belongs to all, one person does not train a child”. In other words, disciplining and training a child is not the sole responsibility of the parents but that of the extended family and the entire village. This is informed by the belief that, if a child grows into a responsible adult, he/she will be useful to herself/himself, family and the community. Conversely, if the child turns out to be irresponsible, he/she becomes a problem to his/her family and the community at large.

It is important to note here that mothers were held responsible for their children’s bad behaviour in the days of yore. There is a saying to support this, “*Nwa di nma, oyie nna, ojoo njo, oyie nne*”, meaning: “When a child is good, he/she took after the father but when a child is bad, he resembled the mother”. As a matter of fact, the burden of child rearing rests more on the mother. In the past, most parents were in full control of their children; they imposed their choices on their children particularly in the issue of marriage. They were not close to their children. That is, being free to talk to their children about everything and know what is happening in their lives.

5.2 Modernity and Child rearing

Modernity refers to the contemporary, the new or the newest times [13]. It denotes the modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the 17th century and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence. Child rearing changed in an unprecedented way with modernity among the Igbo. This is because most Igbo people migrate to other parts of the

country and the globe for education and in search of greener pastures and, as they live among people of other cultures; they copy some aspects of the host culture including their method of child rearing. The advancement in modern medicine gave rise to population explosion which brought about the scarcity of land for agriculture. Consequently, most Igbo people no longer depend on farming as their means of livelihood while the few people who still farm do so on a subsistence level and, therefore, reduce the number of wives and children they have because child rearing became more demanding as children are trained formally in school to equip them for the future. The implication is that the more children parents have, the more the number of children they will have to train in school. The advancement in communication media like the television, phones and computer has made it possible for some Igbo people come in contact with Western culture and consequently imbibe much of them. For instance, the discoveries in medicine such as immunization of children and pre-natal drugs taken by expectant mothers have helped to reduce infant and maternal mortality.

Some Igbo people have realized that food taboos imposed on pregnant women are superstitious. Pregnant women are, therefore, advised to eat healthy foods and avoid foods that do not appeal to them or those that make them vomit. Exclusive breast feeding was equally introduced for the first one year of the baby's life because the breast milk contains all the essential nutrients needed by the baby. In addition to these, what mothers give to their children as food and snacks have also changed. Nowadays, children are fed with tea and bread, pap mixed with milk, groundnut and so on, rice, beans, yam, juice and noodles among others and their snacks include sweets, biscuits, popcorn and pastries. There are also changes in what parents feed to their children; indeed, most parents due to lack of time and convenience feed their children with junk foods such as pastries, fast foods, noodles, sweets and so on. These do result in toothache, juvenile diabetes and other sicknesses such as cancer. Toys and cartoons have been introduced for playing, educating and keeping the children busy.

Western education was introduced with modernity. When formal education was newly introduced, most Igbo communities contributed their resources to send poor intelligent children in their communities to school. This is because Igbo people, like other Africans, are communal people. They believe that, when a child grows into a responsible adult, he/she will be useful not only to the parents but the whole community. This is aptly captured by [14] in these words, "Kinship ties and love are what characterized the traditional African culture. It is only love that would make a community to tax themselves through the sale of the products of cash crops like oil palm and use the proceeds to educationally support a child who is brilliant". Igbo people are egalitarian, they believe in giving everyone an equal opportunity to harness his/her potential. However, currently, only few Igbo communities still collectively sponsor indigent students

in school because most parents train their children themselves or some poor ones send their children to serve as house helps to rich people who pay their school fees in return. When formal education was newly introduced, parents, relatives and teachers as well as the religious leaders work together to ensure that children are groomed to be responsible adults. Some parents reported their children to their teachers to be punished for misbehaving at home. Public shaming was one of the strategies used to discourage bad habits in schools in the past. For example, naughty children were flogged in front of the whole school or a necklace made with snail shells was hung round the neck of a pupil who stole in school or at home and the culprit was made to dance in front of other pupils. However, this method has been dropped because of the negative effect it has on the child's mental and psychological health. In that era, most mothers were housewives, teachers and petty traders. They had time for their children but most of them did not understand what it means to be in the lives of their children. On the other hand, young boys from about age 12 years who are not academically-inclined after their primary education are sent to live with and serve established businessmen as apprentice for an agreed number of years ranging from five to nine years after which they are given take-off capital to start-up their own business. This is termed "*igba odibo*" or "*igba boy*" in Igbo language. They actually learn the trade during their period of apprenticeship. The girls are sent to learn how to sew or plait hair. In fact, their parents pay their teachers because the children go back to their parents' home at the end of each day. The period of learning for the girls is 1-3 years after which their parents buy the material needed to start the venture. In situations where the family is poor, the girl works for her mistress and gets paid and when she saves enough money she buys the materials and starts her own business.

Globalization has turned the world into a small village. People in Africa are aware of what is happening in other parts of the world. Parents and their children are affected by this new phenomenon. Children have become bold and express themselves freely. The elite and middle-class parents became more aware of what it really means to be in their children's lives. They check their children's food flask, their body and ask questions when they hurt themselves. They look at their children's school work and ask how they fare in school that day. Mothers ensure that their children do their homework and go to bed at the appropriate time to ensure they wake up early the next day. They talk to their children on the need to keep good friends and avoid copying bad habits. They equally take them to interesting places for leisure. Some parents have learnt to talk to their children about their challenges because they have realized that, though the children are little, they understand. In fact, parents talk more freely with their children about almost everything. They talk to them about sex and encourage them to ask questions that bothers them. Regrettably, with the increase in economic stress, most mothers have become career women. They, therefore, employ nannies to

take care of their children while they are at work or, in some cases, take their children to day care center. This affected the children's behaviour immensely especially in cases when the nannies are bad. Indeed, most modern Igbo parents have no time to teach their children the basic African culture and values especially the sacredness of life. As a result, suicide and other social vices have increased among youths. In the African traditional society, it was unheard of and abominable for someone to take his/her life. In the contemporary time, most parents values system have changed, they value academic achievement more than good behaviour unlike in the traditional Igbo society where raising children with good behaviour was a priority. Parents now channel all their efforts in ensuring their children are doing well in school by enrolling them in school as soon as they are a year old and registering them for extra lessons after school every day. On school days, children leave home early in the morning and return home tired in the evening. During holidays, after a week or two, they begin their holiday lessons. In fact, most parents intentionally dump their children on teachers because they are always looking for an excuse to keep their children in school. The result is that most of the children become academically sound without character. In addition to these, some modern Igbo parents do not believe in engaging their children in house chores or sending them on errand, they employ nannies, house maids and house boys to help in doing house chores.

Most parents have also copied the Western idea of not spanking or flogging a child as punishment for bad behaviour. They forget that the environment influences children and the personalities of children in different climates differ. Igbo people call the cane *edumekwu* which literally means a thing that helps me speak or instruct. This implies that beating or flogging helps parents in instructing the children. One of the informants admitted that:

'If you spare the rod of correction, that child would be spoilt. The Bible said, 'Spare not the rod of correction. This is different from child abuse. If you want to correct a child, get a cane bearing the age of the child in mind. The beating should be proportional to the offence committed. A woman should not flog a child in anger as a result of her husband's misbehaviour. A man too should not flog the child out of the anger of what his wife did to him. The flogging must be commensurate with age of the child and the offence committed' (Nneoma August, 2021 Personal Communication).

Another informant argued that some children behave well after they are flogged because they would not want to be caned again. She narrated how her intelligent daughter performed poorly in school because she was unserious. She flogged her well after looking at her poor result and her performance improved the following term. She equally narrated how she overheard her child who is about 6 years old telling his friend that was threatening to report him to his mum for a misconduct that he should go ahead and report him to his mum that his mother would 'not do

him anything' that is, take any action. As a result, she argued that she tries to flog at times, to show she can do something when any of her children misbehaves to discourage bad behaviour. Indeed, all my informants except the woman living in Ireland that it is necessary to use cane in child rearing; especially, in situations where advising and reasoning with the child fail to yield result, using cane as a corrective tool in child rearing makes a child to realize the seriousness and the consequences of an offence and desist from repeating such misconduct. However, one of the informants submitted that the use of cane to correct misconduct is effective in child rearing but she does not like the idea of other people beating her children to correct them; instead, she prefers beating them herself. On the other hand, one of the informants living in Ireland opined that one must not beat a child to correct him/her. She argued that there are many ways to kill a rat. She spoke about denying children certain privileges like going on holiday while rewarding them when they behave well. There are cases of parents not acting accordingly when they receive bad report about any of their children's behaviour from teachers or nannies. Some of these parents are aware that they hardly know their children because they are always busy with their jobs or businesses. Instead of taking their time to observe their children and address the situation when the behavior has not become a habit, they rather go to their children's school to fight the teacher and, in situations where the nanny is involved, she may be fired or told to mind her business. The result is that, when the child eventually becomes hardened, the parents will start running around in search of solution. It is essential for parents to discourage bad behavior by making sure a child drops on time any bad behaviour he/she picks before it becomes a habit.

The advancement in technology such as the use of smart phones and the internet have affected child rearing negatively. Parents admit that it has made child rearing more difficult because the internet exposes the children to a lot of things, both good and bad. Some children learn bad behaviours by visiting sites they should not visit because they are not monitored by their parents. It has been stated earlier that most parents do not spend enough time with their children while, some, when they have the time, either watch television or get busy on social media platforms. In other words, there is poor time management and lack of interpersonal relationship between parents and their children as a result of viewing television and the use of social media. Some informants opined that praying for the children is also vital because there are cases where parents do their job as good parents and the children turned out bad probably because of peer influence. Thus, child rearing is demanding and requires love, time, patience understanding and prayer.

6. DISCUSSION

From the findings of this research, it has been established that child rearing involves considerable responsibility, beginning from the womb and ending when the child becomes an adult. [8] describes it as a task undertaken by every parent to redirect a child's potential towards the right goals. Indeed, child rearing encompasses all efforts channelled towards nourishing, educating, disciplining the child to become a responsible member of the society. The food taboos were instituted to ensure the child is properly developed and facilitate the mothers' safe delivery. In the Igbo traditional society, they believed that educating the child on the values, religion and culture as well as ensuring that the child imbibed such values was the crux of child rearing. Hence, the saying, "*Anaghi azu umuaka ka anu mgbuli*," meaning: "You do not raise children like animals for slaughter". To support this, [9] avers that, through socialization, the child is taught basic disciplines ranging from toilet habits to the more complex system. In other words, a properly-trained child must understand the way of life of his/her people and behave accordingly. Parents raise their children well for emotional, social and financial security because children are supposed to care for their parents in their old age especially in developing countries of the world where most people have no access to insurance schemes and pension plans. Therefore, the relationship between parents and their children, in the long run, is reciprocal. Igbo people are a communal people. In the past, they all lived close to their relatives and people from the same lineage or neighbors collaborated in almost all their day-to-day activities. They share sources of water, fire-wood, places of worship, and farms among others. They equally raised their children together. Most importantly, they believed that a child belonged to everybody and, therefore, could be nurtured and disciplined by any member of the community. In consonance to this, [2] admitted that a close knit of relatives commonly shares the costs of rearing children, in terms of emotion, time, finance and other material support, since all children together comprise the strength of the lineage. This is governed by the belief that, if a child is good, he/she will be useful not only to himself but also to the community at large. In the same vein, a bad child will also be a problem to the whole community. To support this, Fox et al. submitted:

Child rearing is a whole lot of responsibility which is taken up by father, mother and other responsible adults contributing individually their own parts which make lots of impact to the whole development of the children for societal wellbeing (Fox, manning, Murphy, Urbom, Marmick and O'shea 2008 cited in [8].[15] added that, beyond corrections, education of a child is a collective responsibility of the extended family system in African societies. Of course, Igbo people believe that children should not be disciplined out of malice. For instance, when a parent or any of the relations wants to discipline a child by spanking or flogging, he/she must consider the age of the child, and the offence committed. Also, the punishment should be commensurate to the offence committed. It is

important to note that the first two or three children, irrespective of their gender, are specially groomed because their younger siblings imitate them and they have the responsibility of helping their parents train the younger ones. This is because children learn by imitation which, according to [9], is the main factor in the process of socialization of the child and he learns many social behavior patterns through it. However, [7] argued:

The first son in an African family is expected to take on the family responsibility, inherit the father's property and take care of the siblings. Greater attention is given to his upbringing and socialization for the expected responsible role than would be given to the last son of the family who is allowed more carefree years and less expectation of responsibility.

In other words, in her opinion it is only the first son who receives special upbringing because of his responsibility of inheriting the father's property and taking care of his siblings.

Child rearing has been affected in an unprecedented way by modernity. In the contemporary time, Igbo people migrate from their villages to urban centers in search of better opportunities. In line with this, Evans et al. opined: "In many parts of Africa, rural to urban migration has been seen as essential to increase job opportunities, enhance social mobility, and increase income" [16]. This has resulted in these migrants living as nuclear families and as a result, the responsibility of child rearing becomes that of the members of the nuclear family. In addition to this, the modern means of communication like the television and living with people from other cultures have affected child-rearing style of most Igbo people. For example, the feeding of the new mother and the child has changed. Most mothers eat whatever they like during pregnancy and shortly after child birth. There is change in the kind of food given to the child. Children have become bolder and express themselves freely. Most of them are more influenced by the environment and their peers. The chores children were engaged in have changed because of the changes in their environment. Some parents do not believe in assigning chores to their children which was compulsory in the past, some do not correct their children when they misbehave nor tolerate any of their relatives or help doing so. This is contrary to the submission of [16], "In the best of circumstances, a key characteristic of a good care provider is her or his ability to be responsive to the child's behavior". Good parents should reward good behavior and discourage as well as correct bad ones. Some modern Igbo parents are bad care providers because they are not responsive to their children's behavior. Most parents do not have time for their children because of poor time management or nature of their jobs. Truly, the priority of most parents has changed as they prefer raising intellectually-sound children to "well-behaved" (children who know the Igbo culture and values and imbibe them) ones. This resulted in social ills such as suicide, armed robbery, kidnapping among others

that were absent in the traditional Igbo society. These gave rise to the need to re-examine child-rearing style among the Igbo people of southeast Nigeria and make recommendation on how to make it better.

7. CONCLUSION(S)

Child rearing which involves the nurturing and training of children to become responsible members of the society is of great importance among Igbo people. This is because children are the future of every society. Child rearing involves lots of responsibilities; it is therefore a communal affair in Igbo societies in terms of how parents and their relatives raise children. It begins from the womb and entails feeding the child a healthy diet, and teaching him/her values and culture of their people. It equally involves teaching as well as engaging children in household chores. Correcting a child when he/she errs is of utmost importance, and this is the responsibility of the parents and other members of the community. Modernity has affected child rearing in many ways. Most Igbo families have migrated from the rural areas living as nuclear families in urban centers. In such cases, parents are solely responsible for child rearing. Some parents employ nannies to help in taking care of the children. There are changes in the feeding habits of the children, some parents do not engage or teach their children household tasks but employ nannies to work for them at home. Most parents spend limited time with their children as a result of economic stress, poor time management and use of electronic gadgets among others. Some parents value formal education over good behavior and do not teach their children Igbo cultural values. The result is their children become academically sound without character. This tends to increase the rate of social ills in the society. The study advocates selective copying of child rearing style (those that will aid proper development and positively improve the behaviour of the child) from other cultures. This means that Igbo parents, in copying child rearing styles from other cultures, should consider the disparity in the environment. In the long run, this will lead to producing responsible Igbo children who value and appreciate their culture.

The study advocated that parents should revive and retain the traditional child-rearing practices that are suitable to their environment and adapt the Western methods that suit the Igbo child and his environment instead of abandoning the Igbo method of child rearing and copying the Western method completely. For instance, the idea of not spanking or flogging a child when advising, scolding and denying some privileges has not worked, and should not be copied from the West because some children take correction only after they have been spanked or flogged. Parents should give their children more of the indigenous Igbo foods that have been abandoned to avoid the early development of certain diseases such

as cancer and diabetes. They should also make out time to relate with their children, talk to them, tell the children stories and educate them on the Igbo cultural values. Families should carve out family time for parents to relate with their children. Most importantly, during the designated time, no member of the nuclear family would be allowed to view television or fiddle phone. Parents should also censor their children's phones to ensure they are not using them wrongly. In all, for child rearing to be a success, parents should nurture and discipline their children with love.

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The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

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