

## **A Dialogic of Taboo in Traditional Igbo Society and the 21st Century Mentality**

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### **Abstract**

The quest for sociopolitical cohesion is top most amongst the demands of any progressive society. Among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria, such cohesion has from primordial time been maintained through the institution and observation of certain taboos and abominations (arụ and nsọala) the violation of which disrupts the entire Igbo universe. A violation of these taboos is a sacrilegious sin against the earth goddess, Ala or Ani and a purification rite is required in order to restore harmony between the earth goddess, man and other supersensible realities that inhabit Igbo universe. However, it has become questionable, to what extent these taboos are adhered to in this 21st century. One does not need a diviner to see that there is less and less reverence and almost total negligence of this set of moral codes holding us (The Igbos) together. The following questions prick the mind of the researcher: what is the meaning of taboo, Why and what are the causes of violation of taboos among the Igbo, What effect does the Igbo contact with other civilizations have on these taboos, How is peace and harmony restored after the contravention of these prohibitions. These are the questions that this essay concerns itself with. The findings of this discourse expose the influence modernity; globalization, Christianity and Western education have on Igbo traditional beliefs. The author recommends the observance of taboos as a necessity for the moral, social economic and political wellbeing of the Igbo society.

Keywords: Taboo, abomination, violation, Igbo society and community.

### **Introduction**

Taboo is a cultural phenomenon among diverse cultures and societies. Every culture in the bid to understand nature and the essence of human existence has rules of conduct and prohibitions guiding the actions of members of the society. This is to ensure harmonious living among men and other realities within the cultural worldview. Although taboos are expressed *via negativa*, "do not...", it teaches which action is appropriate and which is inappropriate, which is permissible and which is not permissible within a specific culture. Whereas many cultures have areas of convergence in certain prohibitions, there is hardly any taboo that enjoys absolute universality. Taboo is a set of moral code that regulates the action of individuals in a social setting for an ordered and harmonious life. An infraction of taboos is believed to be an invitation of the wrath of the gods with dire consequences such as pestilence, disease, famine, chaos, death, barrenness etc. This is the common belief of all traditional African societies.

Taboos and abominations are essential features of the traditional cultural heritage of the Igbo. Among the Igbo, certain acts and omissions are classified as taboos (*nsqala* or *aru*). These taboos/abominations play significant role in upholding necessary moral standard; in fact, they are the code of moral conducts; though unwritten, they are orally passed from one generation to another through Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) (Essel, 2018). In the words of Ezenagu (2017, p. 27), "the benefit of this knowledge transmission is a necessity for the continuity of any race." She went further to state that the survival of some of these cultural heritages to the present points to their uniqueness and irreplaceability hence, the onus lays on the community for their preservations.

The import of taboos cannot be overemphasized as it checkmates crime within the social construct. Unlike this modern time, one does not need to be caught while committing a crime for one to be punished. Nature has its own unique way of punishing offenders and restoring cosmic order. Every action attracts an equal reaction or consequence. An infraction of any taboo, is among the Igbo, as in other African cultures, a transgression against the gods of the land and an invitation of the wrath of the god whose taboo is violated, dominantly, the earth goddess, *Ala or Ani*. This cultural heritage was efficacious in crime control and in ensuring moral codes are dully adhered to.

However, the Igbo cultural contact with other cultures, globalization, modernity, Christianity and Western education have, as Prof. Chinua Achebe said in (*Things Fall Apart*), put a knife to the thing that holds us together and the centre can no longer hold. According to Brempong (2006), (as cited by Essel 2018, p. 372), the African has been robbed and deprived of his attitude and all that is most sacred to him, his laws, his religion, wisdom and institutions are destroyed - the Christian churches and the mosques, their priests and priestesses, imams are most hateful to the traditions, customs and beliefs. Though the influences of these taboos are still felt, maybe remotely, they are being jettisoned in this age of globalization. This essay will therefore explore the idea of taboo in Igbo land, its relevance in promoting morality and crime control, violations of taboo, attitudes toward taboos, reasons for their contravention, and expiatory rites for violated taboos and finally make necessary suggestions.

## **The Concept of Taboo**

The word taboo is etymologically derived from the Polynesian term *tapu*: meaning forbidden: (Blakemore & Shelia, 2001, p. 21). The closest in meaning to this term is “*sacer* in the Greek, *kadesh* in Hebrew, *nso* in Igbo language in Nigeria and *akyiwade* or *musuo* in Akan language in Ghana (Osei, 2017, pp. 43–4). Taboo has two different meanings - one: sacred, consecrated and two: uncanny, dangerous, forbidden, and unclean (Freud, 1919). According to Essel (2018, p. 373),: Taboo is defined as an element of all situations in which attitudes to values are expressed in dangerous behaviours." Each culture makes known, exhibits its attitude towards its cherished values by prohibiting those action which it considers inimical to its values. Taboo teaches the actions that are morally reprehensible in a negative way, that is, it teaches the 'don'ts' of the society. Essel (2018, p. 373) further writes that "a taboo has something to do with "*sacredness*", something that may be "forbidden", it may apply to a "person" or to a "thing" and may describe things that are "elements" or "*devoted*.”

According to Omobola (2013, p. 222), "taboo, historically speaking, was a sacred term for a set of cultic or religious prohibitions instituted by traditional religious authorities as instruments of moral motivation, guidance and objectivity for protecting the sanctity of their shrines and the wellbeing of their worshipping communities." Afe (2013) notes that taboo permeates every aspect of the social life such as relationship between rulers and their subjects, political life, family life and the economic life of the community; it embraces everything that can be called sin, unethical or something that contravenes the norms and values of the traditional institutions and the society" (Afe, 2013, p. 98). Taboo may be used in two different senses: spiritual, cultic or religious usage and socio-economic cum political usage (Afe, 2013; Essel, 2018; Omobola, 2013). These different usages dove-tail to ensure harmony and peaceful co-existence between the two dimensions of the universe in Igbo worldview.

As changes occur in the society, so also are taboos affected and thereby changes. The relevance of taboos in the modern times has been questioned by those who considered it primitive and therefore has no place in social cohesion in modern times (Osei, 2017). In the view of Steiner (1956, p. 21), a

taboo is concerned with all the social mechanisms of obedience which have ritual significance; with specific and restrictive behaviour in

dangerous situations. One might say that taboo deals with sociology of danger itself, for it is also concerned with the protection of individuals who are in danger and with the protection of the society from those endangered – and therefore dangerous persons.

Taboo is the reflection of people's religion or belief system (Mohammad & Mohammad, 2015). On the contrary, Freud (1919) posits that taboo restrictions are different from religious or moral prohibitions since they are older than the gods and can be traced to the pre-religious age. It is however contestable whether there was a time when man was not religious. Fershtman and his colleagues maintain that taboos help in containing social ills such as cannibalism especially in difficult times. However, they are only meaningful if there are potential private benefits derivable from deviating from them. With new inventions and opportunities, private benefits increase leading to a simultaneous increase in the incentive to deviate from taboos. In other words, the incentive to deviate from existing taboos increases with private benefits accruing to deviation.

### **The Igbo Concept of Taboo**

In the traditional Igbo cultural context, taboos refer to those prohibitions aimed at the promotion of moral values, religious sanctity, social cohesion and cosmic harmony. According to Anedo (2019), taboos are a set of prohibited actions, a set of morals binding on a people; the violation of which attracts a severe punishment which may include death penalty. The institution and observance of taboos help in the peaceful co-existence of members of the community. It helps in the projection and promotion of social integration. Violators of taboos are seen as agents of socio-political disintegration and chaos. The institution of taboo targets the holistic orderliness of life and all human activities and interaction in Igbo land. Ogbu (2013) observes that the ideology of abomination "*nsọala*"... cuts across the entire Igboland and made manifest in their artistic, social and religious as well as political traditions and patterns of leadership. He went further to note that it is a heinous crime to commit abomination against the earth, *Ala*. Such crime requires sacrifices for its expiation. "The traditional Igbo see *aru* (taboo) as norms, the breach of which, whether voluntary or involuntary unleash some mystical sanctions not only on the individual but also on the entire society". (Okeke, 2019, p. 19).

Similar to Freud's assertion, Metuh (1985) writes that *nsọ* (taboo) has two senses - negative and positive senses. In the negative sense, *nsọ* literally means 'avoidance' or 'prohibition'

whereas it means 'holy' in the positive sense. These different meanings dove-tail in prescribing human actions. A person, thing or place could be avoided or prohibited because it is holy, sacred or unclean. Ukpokolo (2011) holds that participation in the social life of the community demands that the individual shares in the group life by imbibing those non-material or metaphysical aspects of the societal ideals inherent in the value system. This includes the observation of taboos and abominations of the land. It is this that ensures harmonious co-existence. The observance of these taboos/abominations earns one the appellation of *ezigbommadu* (good person). She concludes that taboos/abominations are indispensable in fostering justice, fairness, honesty and equity among members of the community. Violation of these dislocates one from the tempo-spiritual community thereby creating cosmic imbalance.

Observance of taboos/abominations leads to harmonious living, peace, progress and bountiful harvest while their infraction is an invitation to dreadful consequences. According to Nwoye(2011), from inception, through birth, puberty and adulthood, to ripe old age, the Igbos are preoccupied with optimal enhancement of their lives. As a result, they avoided infractions of taboos to avoid hardship and suffering, famine, disease and sudden death. Udezo and Nweze (2012) aver that committing "abomination (aru) in the community... may affect the harvest of the year" (p. 90). This is, according to Ugwu (2000:48), (as cited by Udezo and Nweze, 2012), "because they infringe the laws of the Earth goddess." An infringement of a taboo requires urgent sacrifices in order to avert the consequences on the culprit, the family and the community at large. Breaches of taboo, *nsqala* (the code of public morality and social prohibitions), such as stealing, incest, murder, adultery, etc; are all regarded as offences against the earth (ala) and requires ritual cleansing (*ikpualu*) to restore normalcy. Uche (2016) believes the infraction of taboo or the committance of abomination against the earth goddess, *Ala* or *Ani*, requires public confession for appropriate expiation. Confession, public or private, is necessary for the restoration of harmony among humans, the ancestors, deities, spirits and divinities. It is a check and a deterrent. Nwoye (2011) insists that strict observance of taboo is requisite for the maintenance of cosmic harmony. As he further states, violation of taboo disrupts the "cosmic equilibrium"(Nwoye, 2011, p. 310) and invites the anger of the earth goddess, the custodian of morality and other gods whose taboos may have been violated.

## **Taboos in Igboland**

In traditional Igbo society, there are a number of taboos or prohibitions for the maintenance of social cohesion and the promotion of morality. Anedo (2019) classified taboos prevalent in Igbo society into: general Taboos, specific Taboos, major and minor taboos, general taboos, I include: theft, suicide, adultery, incest, sabotage, witchcraft, disobedience to the leadership of the community, inducing one to commit suicide, killing someone with charm and murder. Specific taboos apply to specific persons or animals. Some of the specific Taboos are:

- (i) **Taboos for men and titled men:** taking or giving bribe to avert justice, sleeping with one's daughter, mother or widow, eating food cooked by menstruating woman, staying without a wife.
- (ii) **Specific taboos for women:** extra-marital and pre-marital sex, pushing down one's husband, giving birth to twins, climbing raffia palm or palm tree or kola nut tree.
- (iii) **Specific taboos for children:** it is a Taboo for a child to discuss the private parts of one's parents, cutting the upper teeth first (nwataipuezeelu), eating egg, shouting another's ame in the night.
- (iv) **Specific taboos for neonate:** coming out with legs first and failing to cry immediately after delivery.
- (v) **Specific taboos for animals:** A cock laying eggs, a cock crowing at odd times, a goat giving birth while in rope, a fowl laying only one egg.

Some minor taboos, as Anedo (2019) observes: are sexual intercourse between couple in the afternoon, killing of sacred animals, marriage between two relatives, sexual intercourse with *osu*, death during pregnancy, a woman bearing children after her son has married.

Ohaka and Ajibade (2021) note the following as taboos in Igbo land: a woman climbing, planting, plucking or breaking kola nut in a ceremonial setting, eating yam before the new yam festival (iwaji or iriji), eating mushrooms (*ero*) (among Owerri people), claim of ownership of bread fruit (ukwa), iroko and palm tree, climbing of paw-paw tree (in Ibite-Olo, Ezeagu, Enugu State) etc. It is important to note that taboos have local variations among the Igbo hence, *ihendina-erikandina-aso* (what one abhors or detest another eats). Some taboos among the Igbo, according to Udezo and Nweze (2015) are; patricide, stealing of yam and sheep, bestiality, willful death, pounding of the pestle on the ground instead of in the mortar,

fighting against masquerade, a dog or fowl crossing a corpse or a dog bringing forth only one whelp.

Hodges (2013) notes that suicide was a particular abomination in Igbo land as made manifest in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Peter Nwana's *Omenuko*. The villagers in *Things Fall Apart*, as the custom demands, refused to bury Okonkwo's corpse after he committed suicide. Taboos in Igboland also include sexual intercourse with blood relation, cutting yam's tendrils (omeji), leaving a goat or other animals to birth in tethers, having sex in the bush with one's wife or on the bare floor, eating sacred animals etc. Certain words and expressions are also tabooed in Igbo society as a result of cultural and religious norms (Oyeka, 2015).

While these Taboos have helped in ensuring peace and order, they are utterly violated presently, hence, what follows next I shall delve into, is the violation of taboo.

### **Violation of Taboos**

The general and major taboos, needless to say, are continuously utterly neglected and violated with impunity. Taboos such as murder, incest etc. are no longer punished with severe social sanctions that they are constantly committed today. The offenders in some cases walk away freely without either confessing their crimes or performing the necessary propitiatory sacrifices required for cleansing the land or appeasing the earth goddess. Taboos in Igbo land have, in this 21st century, witnessed tremendous but deleterious changes. Attitude towards the contravention of taboos is so lax. Prior to this day, taboo such as murder is normally sanctioned with death penalty or ostracization. However, the police and the law court, the custodian of law and order and justice in modern times, keep playing hanky-panky with life-threatening issues as murder; oftentimes, crispy notes change hands and then justice averted. Taboos were a way of protecting the weak against the strong, nevertheless, today's realities show that the strong violate taboo with impunity; they commit murder, claim ownership of another's landed property and purchase justice with their money and influence. It is alarming how cases of bloodletting are prevalent among the Igbo. Eze (2020) reported that one Michael Ugwuanyi clubbed his parents to death with a pestle in Enugu State. Also, Okafor (2020) reported that 26 years old Chisom Ogum allegedly murdered and buried his 70 years

old father, Christopher OgumUmuomaku in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

In the same vein, incest is gradually becoming a way of life for some perverts, receiving lesser repercussions. There are numerous cases of fathers having carnal knowledge of their daughters. Ezeh (2020) reported that the Director General of National Agency for the prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, Julie Okah-Donli, to have said that 90% of 80 cases of rape recorded in Anambra State during the lockdown were cases of incest; father-daughter rape. Things have indeed fallen apart. Okafor (2020) also said that there was a report of 80 cases of rape in Anambra State between April and May 2020. No wonder Isichei (1977, p. 27), as cited by Anedo (2029) laments that "today, we see war everywhere, we see brothers having sex with their sisters, and we see people strangulate others to acquire their wealth." People careless for the cosmic harmony, the very foundation of peace, unity and progress, hence we keep witnessing moral decay and troubling security challenges that have put on the line, our corporate existence. Anedo (2019) writes that people's attitude towards taboos have drastically changed, women now insult and challenge their husband, even putting up a fight against them.

Fershtman et al (2011) submit that taboos changes with social and demographic changes. With the passage of time, some taboos weaken or even disappear while some become stronger. Whereas such changes ought to be in line with the dictates of reason and geared towards a better human society, the reverse seems to be the case, save for the case of the killing of twins. Changes in the degree of observance of taboos among the Igbo cause retrogression and myriads of socio-political maladies in Igbo community. In Igbo cosmology, there is no chance occurrence, let us therefore consider some causes or reason for the violation of taboos.

### **Causes of Violation of Taboos**

To ensure good moral conduct and social order, taboos are jealously guarded for optimal enhancement of the lives of community members. One need not be caught before one gets punished for one's actions and or omission. Nemesis always catches up with an individual or community that desecrates the land. It is the elders and priests of deities that ensure

propitiatory rites are strictly carried out to cleanse the offender, the family or the land when there is an infraction of taboos or abominations. Notwithstanding, these taboos and abominations are not always adhered to especially in recent years for a number of reasons.

It is important to note that western education and urbanization are contributory factors to the neglect of Taboos in Igbo society. The contact of the Igbo with the westerners has come at great cost for her cultural heritage. Educated elites now consider most of the taboos as obsolete, obnoxious and primitive; hence, they pay less regard to them. The rise in urbanization has also negatively affected strict observance of taboos. No one in the city knows who is an *osu* (outcast) so as to observe its taboos (Anedo, 2019). Urban dwellers also believe that their native gods do not follow them to the city hence they contravene taboos without remorse.

Modernity, globalization and technological advancement also contribute to people's infraction of taboos. As Fershtman et al (2011) posits, taboos are continually infringed when there are incentives or greater potential private benefits derivable from deviating from taboos. This follows from new inventions and opportunities that come with them.

The impact of Christianity affects every sphere of life in Igbo land. Christianity saw to the abolition of some taboos, for example, the killing of twins. Some enthusiastic and zealous Christians have cleared some sacred and evil forests (Udezo&Nweze, 2012). It can also be recounted that several shrines has been destroyed and most sacred trees cut down by overzealous Christians. While it was a taboo for a free born (*nwaafọ*) to marry an *osu* (an outcast) or for him to sleep under the same roof, the new converts worshipped under the same roof with the outcasts (Okeke et al, 2017). They further argue that the destruction of the properties of traditional worshippers by overzealous Christians has led to reduction in their sources of economic generation as well as the number of tourist sites in Igbo land by 80%. The practice of private confession by Christians as against public confession which was prevalent in Igboland is also a reason why taboos are continuously violated.

Moreover, hunger and hardship is yet another cause of negligence of taboos. Such hunger and hardship faced during the 1967- 1970 civil war led to the breakdown of taboos. As Samuel Fury (2020) succinctly notes:

Of all the forms of violence that took place, the one that most denoted the breakdown of order and provoked the most horror, was cannibalism. Talk of it outpaced its actual incidence, but the legal records reveal that a handful of people traded and ingested human flesh in the depth of famine. All were motivated by hunger cannibalism which became rallying points for anxiety about the collapse of order and an emblem of the dehumanizing effects of the Nigerian blockade (p. 97).

Other reasons for violating taboos, according to Anedo (2019) include greed and want of titles and the introduction of law court. While greed and wants for titles engendered ritual killings, the law court instituted bribery as against honesty and justice.

### **Expiatory Rites (*Ikpu Alu*)**

Every community, in Igbo African particularly, has a set of rules and norms that govern and guide the conduct of its members. The norms are meant for the moral, spiritual, social, economic and political wellbeing of the community. A sinless and harmonious life is lived within the ambiance of permissible actions and norms of the society. It is total submission and observance of these norms that earns one the appellation of *ezigbommadu* (good person) (Ukpokolo, 2011). Being that the universe in Igbo African worldview is one but two-dimensional, an infringement on the prohibited actions is considered not only as a disruption of harmony among humans but also an impediment to a mutual and a balanced relationship between man and other suprasensible realities - the divinities and spirits - inhabiting the two worlds; the world of the living and the world of the dead. An infraction of prohibitions, taboo (*nsọala*) or abominations (*aru*) is regarded as a ritual dirt or pollution that could attract dreadful consequences. Among the Igbo, *Ala*, the earth goddess, is seen as the custodian of morality hence any deviation from the norms is a sin against *Ala*. A transgressor dislocates himself from the community, he "loses either the friendship of the Supreme Being, *Chukwu*, or the earth goddess, ancestors, or spirit of the living... he feels that it is up to him to propitiate the offended beings and be reconciled to them" (Uche, 2016). Ritual dirt or pollution, especially major ones, makes peace a far cry necessitating expiatory sacrifice or purification (Aguwa, 1993). "One, therefore, gains reconciliation through this process of traditional purification rite, expiatory sacrifice (*ikpualu*)" (Umeanolue, 2019, p. 93). *Ikpualu* is necessarily done in order to avert calamity or the anger of the gods or ancestors. Whether it

be an act of omission or commission, purification rite is required for the atonement of sin and reconciliation and the restoration of "cosmic equilibrium."

In traditional Igbo setting, it is the prerogative of Nri priest, the oldest of traditional priesthood to carry out the process of *ikpualu*; however, other priests such as the priest of Ala (*Ezealusi*), *Dibia-afa*, and the family priest can assist in the ministering of expiation (Uche, 2016). Some items usually required for the ritual cleansing include: rams, goats, sheep, kola nut, *nzu*, fowl, eggs, yams, *omu-nkwu* (tender palm frond), chicken, or a human being in an extreme case. The spilling of the blood of the sacrificial animal is believed to wash away the sin(s) of the offender and cleanse the land.

The procedure of the sacrifice varies depending on the abomination committed or taboo violated. For some, the offender is required to confess and heap the sins on the sacrificial animal which he drags around the village with his body smeared in ashes (Uche, 2016). The animal is afterwards killed in some cases or dedicated to the gods and then left to roam in the community. Anyone who kills or harms the animal commits an abomination that requires another ritual cleansing.

### **The Roles and Importance of Taboo**

The institution of taboos in traditional societies is aimed at some good - the guidance of human conducts and enhancement of human relations. This does not obliterate the fact that some of those practices are obnoxious, cruel and inhuman. Some taboos other than improve man's wellbeing have dangerous effects. As Ekwochi et al (2016) revealed in their study, taboos such as food taboos contribute to unhealthy nutritional practices for pregnant women and infants. Uche (2016) asserts that the killing of twins is an outright violation of fundamental human right. Nevertheless, the merits of these taboos and abominations ought to be emphasized and extolled.

According to Hans Kelsen, every law or norm demands or requires an existing law or norm for its guidance. In this case, taboos serve as a grand norm, a reference point in determining traditional law-breakers and in the traditional adjudication of ensuing cases (J. Osei, 2006). Taboos serve as a strong moral guide for all members of the community. It dictates and prohibits actions that are capable of causing disorderliness and uncondusive for good human relations. Generally, it prohibits behaviour that are not in tandem with good moral conducts.

They are instituted to curtail the excesses of man and ensure orderly conduct of human affairs (Anedo, 2019). Compliance to these rules of behaviour is promoted by the consequent punishment that follows their contravention. According to J. Osei (2017, P. 26), "The motivation for abiding by these principles is provided and reinforced by the religious sanctions from the gods and the ancestors or directly from the Supreme Being."

The thought of a taboo elicits punishment, that is, to entertain the thought of committing incest, necrophilia, or cannibalism is a violation of relevant taboos. Taboos don't just act as a behavioural guide but also as a "thought police" (Fershtman et al 2011:140). Taboos play significant role in crime control in Igbo community. With taboos in place and its diligent enforcement, there were minimal crime cases among the Igbo unlike in recent times. It does not only regulate actions but also the thought of violating a taboo especially where private benefit is huge. Offences such as suicide, murder, incest, adultery, stealing, lying etc. were greatly frowned at. Life, for the Igbo, is an invaluable gift from God; hence it is an abomination and a taboo for one to destroy the life he cannot create. Its heavy sanctions deterred people from committing such crimes. One who commits murder by accident is required to go into exile for seven years. Such was the fate of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* after his gun exploded and killed the son of Ezeudu. Someone who commits suicide is often believed to have contravened a taboo and decided to end his life to avoid public ridicule (Afe, 2013). The Igbo does not believe in ending one's life because of challenges of daily living, rather such challenges are collectively confronted and overcome with the help of other members of one's community.

Also, taboos are tools of social control and security. They protect individual members of the community. They protect the weak from the greediness of the stronger. They ensure the safety of all. For example, the taboo against cannibalism ensures the safety of everyone especially in times of severe famine (Fershtman et al, 2011). Fershtman (2011) and his colleagues further posit that taboos prohibiting the sale of human organs eliminates the incentive for exploiting people as well as violent harvesting of human organs. On the same hand, dietary or food taboos form part of the society's health consideration. They also help in proper child upbringing, development and cordial human relationship (Omobola, 2013).

Some taboos has economic and developmental benefits, for instance, the sacrilization of land aids land preservation for future use (Udezo&Nweze, 2012). This, in no small way, promotes

economic activities and production both at personal and community levels. Stealing of communal properties, destruction of farms, and shifting of land boundaries are tabooed because they affect the economic growth of the community (Afe, 2013; B. K. Osei, 2017). Taboos represent the best explanation for successful ecological practices that enhance biodiversity and sustainable development (B. K. Osei, 2017). He further argues that taboos ensure the general wellbeing of man and his environment. There are: environmental taboos for the protection of the environment, land, animals and plants; health taboos to prevent the spread of diseases and infections as can be noticed in taboos regulating sex; economic taboos for production and equitable distribution and management of wealth; birth control taboos, for instance, it is a taboo for a woman to still be giving birth after the first son is married; and personal safety taboos (J. Osei, 2006). The above glaringly indicates that taboos are geared towards the overall wellbeing of man and his society.

### **Conclusion**

In recent years, there has been deleterious deviation from the unifying elements of the society. Among Igbo, there are several taboos for the regulations of human conducts. These morals guides, though expressed negatively, is aimed at the optimal enhancement of lives. While these have significantly aided a conducive, morally harmonious living, there are some that have negative implications on human lives and dignity. Regardless, the achievements of these taboos/abominations outweigh their negative effects.

Taboos/abominations have endured to this age but with remarkable change in its adherence and attitude towards them. A serious taboo that prior to this age attracts severe sanctions has practically become the order of the day. The laissez-faire attitude towards Igbo traditional cultural beliefs undermines the ethical values of the Igbo people thereby paving way for a morally depraved society. In fact, there is no age that witnessed the level of moral bankruptcy common among societies in this 21st century. For the 'modernized' and elite Igbo, taboos/abominations are primitive and outdated hence should be done away with. The sweeping of current modernization and urbanization simultaneously relegates taboos. Continuous violation of these prohibitions without recourse will only expose Igbo society to more evil and immorality.

## **Recommendations**

To ensure a safer society that ensures the good of all, there is need for people to live within the ambiance of the moral dictates. I therefore suggest that taboos in Igbo land be reviewed by we the elite Igbos. It is a fact that some are obnoxious and undermines human rights and dignity, others are still of good use. It is important that obnoxious taboos be totally repealed or modified to suit the modern and civilized society of today. Also, parents should teach their children authentic African values and the need to respect those values. It is shameful that some parents don't want their children to associate with African culture and values. This is common among urban dwellers and this contributes to the infraction of taboos. Moreover, I recommend that Igbo values be included in the school curriculum. A progressive society is one that upholds highly their moral etiquette. Some autonomy should also be granted to the traditional justice system since this over time has proven to be more efficacious than what we have in Nigeria today, where in most of our communities, we have self acclaimed and unqualified traditional rulers who commits and encourage evil simply because they have money.

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