

## **Indulgence and Training in the Igbo family Value System in Contemporary times**

<sup>1</sup>Anyachebelu, Adaora Lois & <sup>2</sup>Uchenna Grace Umeodinka

<sup>1</sup>*Department of African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos*

<sup>2</sup>*Lagos State University*

### **Abstract**

This study investigates the tension between indulgence and training in the Igbo family value system within contemporary contexts. It specifically aims to examine the traditional Igbo family structure and its approaches to child upbringing, compare these with contemporary patterns, and assess the implications of these changes for value retention and character formation. Data for the study were sourced from an Igbo literary text, selected folktales, and relevant content from social media, and were analyzed using literary-sociological frameworks. Findings reveal that modern Igbo families often prioritise emotional comfort and material provision over structured discipline and cultural education. The erosion of communal training methods, such as storytelling, proverbs, and collective moral correction, has led to a generation increasingly distanced from core Igbo values. The study concludes that reversing this trend requires a conscious reintegration of traditional child-rearing principles into modern practices. It recommends that Igbo parents, educators, and cultural stakeholders actively revive indigenous training systems, especially those embedded in folktales and oral traditions, to restore balance between nurturing and discipline in child upbringing.

**Keywords:** Igbo family values, child training, indulgent parenting, cultural transmission

### **1.0 Introduction**

Among the Igbo, children are priceless. The value of children in Igbo society is reflected in the names that they give to their children. Such names include, *Nwaamaka* ‘child is good’, *Nwakaego*. ‘Child is greater than money’, *Nwadiuto* ‘Child is sweet’, *Nwakaaku* ‘Child is greater than wealth and *Nwabuifo* “Child is remembrance’. The above names show the importance of children in the Igbo society. Children are considered the torchbearers of the future. They represent the hopes and dreams of the people. However, the pathway to fulfilling this promise depends significantly on how these young ones are raised. Two critical concepts, indulgence and training, play pivotal roles in shaping children’s future. Training was key to raising children in the traditional Igbo society. Such training was through informal education based on oral literature. Folktales and oral literature, (historically used as informal tools for training), have been instrumental in reinforcing discipline and values in Igbo children. Stories featuring tricksters, truthfulness, respect, obedient, or the consequences of disobedient helped instill cultural norms and discourage deviance (Chukwu, 2013; Toni-Duruaku, 2004). In modern times, however, the influence of these traditional forms is diminishing and giving way to overindulgence.

According to The American Psychological Association dictionary, indulgence, refers to the tendency to be overly generous or lenient with someone, especially in allowing them to have or do whatever they want, often at the expense of discipline or long-term well-being. It is excessive or unrestrained gratification of desires and whims. Indulgence in parenting contrasts starkly with training, which can be defined as the intentional process of teaching, instructing, and disciplining to prepare young ones for the realities of life. Indulgent parenting, a concept rooted in Diana Baumrind’s typology of parenting styles, is characterised by high responsiveness but low

demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). In the Igbo context, indulgence is often viewed as the over-permissiveness of parents, which contradicts traditional expectations of strict moral and behavioral instruction. Studies such as those by Chuma-Udeh (2019) and Ekwuazi (2020) have raised concerns about the long-term effects of such permissiveness, including diminished respect for elders, poor self-discipline, and weakening of communal ties.

This study examines the impact of indulgence and training among children in Igbo families. The study also highlights why despite its occasional discomfort; training remains the ultimate solution to addressing the social malaise that plagues today's youth as against what obtained in the traditional Igbo society. Training was the key factor that enabled the traditional Igbo families to succeed in raising children that upheld the values of the society. Although, within this system also lay moments of indulgence, acts of leniency, pampering, or uncritical tolerance, which were often interpreted as expressions of love and care. The traditional Igbo family unit is perceived as the bedrock of morality, cultural sustainability, and social stability within Igbo society. The ancient Igbo families drew strength from the communal pattern of life that was prevalent at the time (Nwala, 2010; Eneje, 2010). Parents, extended family members, and community elders collectively assumed the responsibility of instilling values of respect, hard work, honesty, and responsibility and others in the younger generation. The reverse appears to be the case in the contemporary Igbo families. Some researches indicate a gradual shift from values of proper training to overindulgence, primarily due to the influence of westernization, urbanization, and globalization (Nzegwu, 2006; Nnonyelu, 2009). As families adopt modern lifestyles, disciplinary methods are becoming more relaxed, leading to increased indulgence in child training practices (Okafor, 2017). The traditional emphasis on collective responsibility is increasingly being replaced with individualistic approaches to parenting and family life.

In contemporary Igbo family unit, value system faces growing challenges. Some of the challenges are as a result of the shift from communal pattern of life to individualistic kind of family structures engendered by urbanization, westernization, and globalization. The above-mentioned challenges appear to have altered the landscape of parenting and moral upbringing including the delicate balance between indulgence and training which has tilted. Such shift has led to questions about the effectiveness of traditional value systems in navigating modern realities such as youth delinquency, declining respect for elders, materialism, and moral relativism.

### **1.1 The Igbo**

The Igbo are one of the largest and most prominent ethnic groups in Nigeria, primarily located in the south region of the country. They occupy the south states of Nigeria, including Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, and Ebonyi, as well as parts of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States. According to Nwala (2010: 21), the Igbo are found in every nook and cranny of the world, having a world-wide population estimated at over 100 million. They are known for their rich culture, strong work ethic, entrepreneurial spirit, and deep sense of communal and family life. The Igbo speak the Igbo language which is a tonal language with many dialects. Traditional Igbo society is organized into clans and lineages often governed by councils of elders, age grades, and titled men. Decision-making is communal, and elders traditionally hold great authority. Traditionally, the Igbo were farmers, growing yams, cassava, and vegetables. In modern Nigeria, they are known for their entrepreneurship, trading, and professional achievements in fields like education, law, medicine, and business.

In Igbo society, the man is the head of the family. There are roles for every member of the family and every member of the family plays his/her role for a peaceful family life. In the traditional Igbo family, women's role includes cooking, taking care of her husband and children and the other members of the family. Women ensure the neatness of children and compound as a whole. It is the responsibility of the children to wash plates, sweep the house and compound, they fetch water, attend to the domestic animals. The training of the children (in obedience, good manners, hard work, farm work etc.) lies in the hands of the parent and any adult around. Following Ogbalu (2006:19), children learn from their parents or senior brothers and sisters by watching them and doing what and how they observe them do ... girls were expected to learn simple virtues, laws of hygiene, simple marketing and trading, preparation of various types of food, cultivation of crops particularly, coco-yam, cassava and care of children ... boys on the other hand learnt directly from their fathers with whom they were always. Fathers train the boys in farm work, cutting the palm, staking yams, making barns and all forms of masculine endeavors. They also learn crafts such as blacksmithing, carpentry etc. as a means of livelihood. Girls on the other hand, learn basket weaving, pottery etc., all these are geared towards preparing them for a future adaptability in the society. The implication, therefore, is that if the family is good the society will be good. On the contrary, if the basic trainings are not given in the family, the society is bound to suffer. Consequently, the society will be filled with untrained and ill-mannered children.

## **2.0 Methodology**

This paper explores the complex interaction between indulgence and training within the Igbo family value system. It critically examines how these dynamics have evolved over time and evaluates the contemporary challenges they face. The primary data for this research consist of three purposively selected Igbo folktales, *Nneele na Nwaele* 'Mother Antelope and Baby Antelope', *Qji Bụ Isi Omume* 'Kola Nut Is The Very Key' and *Ede Nwa Na-Enweghi Nne* 'Ede, A Motherless Child' and Chukwuemeka Ike's novel *The Potter's Wheel*. These texts were selected due to their thematic relevance to traditional Igbo parenting practices, communal values, discipline, and the evolving notions of indulgence. The folktales serve as cultural artifacts that reflect indigenous methods of moral instruction, while *The Potter's Wheel* provides a literary representation of traditional and transitional family dynamics in Igbo society.

### **2.1 Secondary Data**

The secondary data were obtained from scholarly books, journal articles, and previous research studies that address Igbo cultural values, parenting styles, sociological and psychological interpretations of indulgent behavior, and the effects of globalization on traditional African societies. These sources provide a theoretical and contextual framework to support the analysis of the primary texts and help situate the discussion within broader academic discourse.

### **2.2 Analytical Approach**

The study employs a socio-cultural and literary analytical lens, particularly using elements of sociological criticism, to examine how the selected texts portray family structure, discipline, indulgence, and the impact of cultural change. Themes emerging from the folktales and the novel are critically analyzed in light of contemporary parenting realities in Igbo society.

### 3.0 Literature Review

In order to provide a solid foundation for this study, it is essential to explore existing scholarly works, theoretical perspectives, and relevant concepts that inform the topic. This section begins with a review of related literature that highlights previous studies on Igbo family values, child training, and indulgent parenting. It is followed by a discussion of the theoretical approaches that underpin the analysis. Together, these elements offer a comprehensive background for understanding the dynamics of indulgence and child training in the Igbo family system.

Nwachukwu (2023), examines the profound influence of Christianity on the traditional values of the Igbo people. The study concludes that while Christianity has significantly shaped the Igbo value system, It also bears the responsibility to purify and elevate Igbo culture by addressing internal divisions and promoting appreciation for indigenous institutions and values. The findings suggest that Christianity should collaborate with governmental bodies to establish commissions and centers dedicated to cultural studies. Such initiatives would involve experts who can promote cultural and religious awareness, ensuring that traditional values are both preserved and enhanced. This approach aims to counteract the effects of westernization, which often leads to the erosion of indigenous customs and traditions. The study, therefore advocates for a harmonious integration of Christian teachings with Igbo cultural values, ensuring that the rich heritage of the Igbo people is maintained while embracing positive aspects of external influences.

Onwuatuegwu (2020) in his study, examines the concept of family within the Igbo African context, highlighting its unique characteristics that distinguishes it from the western notions of family. The study identifies that family is the smallest and most fundamental unit of society, intrinsic to human existence and as old as humanity itself. It observes that the behaviors and character traits prevalent in any society can often be traced back to those exhibited within individual families, underscoring the family's role in shaping societal norms. The research highlights several features that distinguish the Igbo African family system from western cultures. Some of the features include: extended family emphasis, communal living and patriarchal orientation. According to the study, Igbo philosophy of *Igwe bu ike* 'there is strength in numbers', reflects the value placed on large family sizes and communal living, which serve as forms of social security and collective identity. Onwuatuegwu concludes that the Igbo African notion of family is distinct and deeply rooted in cultural traditions that prioritize extended relationships, patriarchal leadership, and communal values. These characteristics contrast with western family structures, which often emphasize nuclear units and individualism.

Isidien (2015), analysis the pivotal role of the family unit in shaping and sustaining Igbo society. The study emphasizes that the family is fundamental in nurturing individuals across various dimensions, politically, socially, morally, and economically. Findings reveal that, the Igbo family is instrumental in providing holistic training to its members, ensuring they are well-rounded in all aspects of life. The study identifies a correlation between societal issues and the erosion of traditional family life, suggesting that many contemporary problems stem from a departure from established family norms. This is because, unlike the western concept of family which is more individualistic in nature (nuclear), the Igbo family encompasses a broader network, including in-laws, uncles, cousins, nephews, and even non-relatives like servants, reflecting a communal approach to family life. The article concludes that to build a solidified society, the Igbo people should uphold and respect their traditional family structures. It advocates for a return to the customary family way of life. Emphasizing that such a foundation is essential

for nurturing individuals who contribute positively to society. Other studies on Igbo family include (Okafor: 2017, Ezenwanebe: 2012, Ikwubuzo: (2011, Eneze: 2010, Nzegwu 2006 and Akwuba 1999).

Ekwuazi (2020) in his work entitled “A Philosophical Analysis of Contemporary and Traditional Child Upbringing and Rites in Igbo Traditional Society” analyzes the differences between contemporary and traditional child-rearing practices in Igbo society, emphasizing the importance of home values in personality development. Ekwuazi examines how modern influences have affected traditional Igbo family dynamics and parenting methods. It highlights the communal approach to child-rearing, encapsulated in the Igbo saying, *ofu onye a naghị azu nwa* ‘the training of a child is everyone’s responsibility’. Whereas the Igbo family system has historically functioned as the nucleus of socialization and moral education. Scholars have long observed that traditional Igbo society placed a strong emphasis on communal values, discipline, and responsibility in the upbringing of children (Nwala, 2010; Eneje, 2010). Within this system, children were raised not just by their nuclear family, but by the extended family and the broader community, reinforcing societal norms and expectations (Ezenwanebe, 2012).

However, sociological perspectives suggest that changing economic realities, such as increased female employment and urban migration, have also affected the structure and function of the Igbo family (Giddens, 2006; Okafor, 2019). These shifts create new challenges in enforcing discipline and preserving cultural values. Literary works such as Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* have also reflected these cultural transitions. While Achebe portrays a society where discipline and hierarchy are central, Adichie presents a more nuanced view of parental authority, modern education, and the impact of religious extremism, all of which contribute to contemporary interpretations of indulgence and training (Ezenwanebe, 2012).

Since, the current study focuses on children’s upbringing and value transfer and retention as it applies to training and indulgence among the Igbo families in the ancient times as against the contemporary times (in the face of modernity, westernization and globalization). Hence, it is important to take a look at the family structure in the traditional and contemporary Igbo society.

### **3.1 Traditional Igbo Society and Family structure**

In African societies, especially among the Igbo people of Nigeria, the concept of family extends beyond the nuclear family (father, mother, and children). It includes a broad network of extended family members, such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, *umụ nna* (patrilineal relatives) and *umụ ada* (daughters of the lineage) (kits and kins). The *umụ nna* (patrilineal relatives) and *umụ ada* (daughters of the lineage) are essential in maintaining family unity. The Igbo family system is built on shared responsibility and collective progress. In his discussion on how children were trained or how values were inculcated into the lives of children in the traditional Igbo society, Ogbalu (2006: 56) says that as the child grows, the parents narrate the folktales to him/ her after the dinner. The story consisted of animal stories through which the children are presented with the good and the bad, the result of goodness and the reward of wickedness. It was through the stories that the children were indoctrinated and trained in the values of the society.

Kinship ties were strong, and mutual obligations existed among family members, including support in times of need. Resources and labor were communally shared, and unity and cooperation were emphasized, as an individual’s identity was intricately tied to the family and



lineage (Eneze, 2017; Olisa, 2002). In some cases, even close friends are considered part of a family. Hence, the Igbo maxim, *nwa nne di na mba* 'a relation is in another town or location'. The implication is that family ties extend beyond blood relatives. The Igbo see the family as part of a larger communal structure. The extended family plays a major role in child upbringing, decision-making, and economic support. Family matters are often decided collectively. Communalism and communal parenting were deeply embedded in Igbo culture, such that the entire community played active roles in raising children. This practice is rooted in the Igbo proverb *out onye anaghị azụ nwa* 'an individual does not raise a child', which reflects the communal ethos of traditional Igbo society (Okafor, 2017). The communal spirit extended into education, marriage, burial, and health care systems, manifesting in collective responsibility and shared decision-making (Nwala, 2010; Nzegwu, 2006). In fact, the Igbo concept of family is based on kinship, communal living, shared responsibility, and respect for tradition. Unlike western kind of family, which is more individualistic in nature. The traditional Igbo emphasize collective welfare and interdependence, making family a powerful support system.

In traditional Igbo society, the family structure was highly organized and played a central role in the social, economic, and political life of the people. Social structures such as communal farming, conflict resolution mechanisms, and kinship-based decision-making demonstrated the integrative nature of Igbo society. Even names such as Adaora "daughter of the people" and Obiora "heart of the people" illustrate the communal consciousness inherent in the culture (Okunna, 2019). The traditional Igbo family was a robust institution that ensured social order, cultural transmission, and economic cooperation. It emphasized defined roles within a hierarchy grounded in respect for elders and collective responsibility (Chuma-Udeh, 2019). Children were socialized early into the values of the community through participation in domestic and economic tasks, and through the use of folktales that instilled cultural norms, values, and the consequences of deviant behavior (Chukwu, 2013; Ekwuazi, 2020).

### **3.2 Contemporary Igbo Family Structure**

The impact of westernization and globalization on Igbo children's training and family life, as viewed through sociological criticism, reveals a significant transformation in the foundational structures of Igbo society, from collective responsibility and traditional values to fragmented, individualistic approaches influenced by foreign ideals. Modern Igbo families have undergone significant transformation due to factors such as urbanization, western education, Christianity, migration, and economic changes. The impact of urbanization, globalization and westernization has culminated in the type of families existing in the contemporary Igbo society dominated in individualistic kind of life (Nnonyelu, 2009; Nzegwu, 2006; Durkheim, 1915; Lukács, 1971; Williams, 1977). In the contemporary times, most Igbo families appear to be nuclear in nature comprising only parents and their children. Extended family ties still exist but are less physically close due to urban living. Raising of children is with less communal input with training roles mostly confined to the parents. Some of the factors that have led to the paradigm shift from what obtained in the traditional Igbo family to what exists in the contemporary family include: rising costs of living, work obligations, and global cultural influences, erosion of traditional roles, greater emphasis on formal education, career, and the need for financial independence.

In summary, existing literature shows a growing concern about the decline in traditional child-training practices and the rise of indulgent parenting in Igbo families. While cultural tools like folktales and literature remain relevant, their effectiveness is increasingly challenged by modern influences that reshape the values and responsibilities within the family unit. Of all the literatures

reviewed, none of them look at indulgence and training in the Igbo family value system in contemporary times, hence the importance of this study.

### **3.3 Theoretical framework**

This study focuses on Igbo family values, especially within the ambit of indulgence and discipline, and how the traditional values are being challenged in contemporary society. It further discusses cultural transformation, generational shifts, and the impact of modernization, which are central themes in Cultural Studies. Hence, Cultural and Sociological theories are used in the analysis of this study. Cultural Criticism examines how cultural practices, traditions, and values shape literature and society; and on the other hand, are shaped by literature and society. The focus of Sociological criticism is on how social institutions influence literature and culture (Williams, 1977). Though Sociological Criticism is not the creation of a single theorist, it evolved from a blend of Marxist, Durkheimian, and cultural theory traditions. It continues to be a powerful tool in analyzing how literature engages with society, class, institutions, and values; making it suitable for examining themes like family, tradition, and modernity in Igbo culture. It is also effective for analyzing how westernization and globalization have affected child training and family life in traditional Igbo society.

### **4.0 Presentation of Data**

In this section, data from the Igbo folktale, representing the traditional Igbo family and data from Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Potter's Wheel*; representing the contemporary Igbo family, are presented.

#### **4.1 Data from folktale**

##### **Data 1. *Nneele na Nwaele* 'Mother Antelope and Baby Antelope'**

Hunting is one of the professions that the traditional Igbo engage in to earn their living. In the tale *Nneele na Nwaele* 'Mother Antelope and Baby Antelope' narrates how the mother Antelope takes the baby Antelope to the bush to hunt for their daily bread. The tale goes further to narrate how the mother Antelope is killed by a hunter in the cause of their search for food. The death of the Mother Antelope did not stop the baby Antelope from hunting. This symbolises the Igbo believe in hard work, despite the risks that go with some of the profession. It is also symbolic of the fact that in Igbo society, children are introduced to hard work early in life, (Anyachebelu, 2018). Hence, laziness and begging have no space in Igbo society.

##### **Data 2. *Qji Bụ Isi Omume* 'Kola Nut Is the Very Key'**

The story has it that a very wealthy man by name, Nze has many wives and children. Nze is a very kindhearted man but he is crippled. During each farming season, all his children and wives relocate to the location of their farm land for the purpose of farming. It happened that during one of the farming seasons, as usual all the wives and children had gone to the farm, he is left with one of his daughter's named Nwanyioma who attends to him. One day, three men visited Nze. The three men were served by Nwanyioma. Despite all that they cooked and offered the visitors, they did not utter a word, until they were offered kola nut. Nwanyioma, though only a child, attended to his father while the rest were away at the farm. She also attended to the visitors that visited her father. The rest of the children also joined the adults in going to the farm. The children were not left at home to play, for the mere fact that they are children.

### **Data 3. *Ede Nwa Na-Enweghi Nne* ‘Ede, A Motherless Child’**

The tale narrates of the story of a man with two wives. The first wife, who is very hard working, had only a daughter, while the second wife had seven children but was very lazy. The first wife because of her industriousness with the support of her only child, had heaps of cocoyam, whereas the second wife and her seven children were very poor due to their laziness. They merely survived through their husband’s provisions. In the course of time, the first wife died and the only daughter is to inherit her mother’s heaps of cocoyam and other properties, following their custom. After the burial of the woman, their husband instructed the first wife’s only daughter to move in to live with the second wife as she was still young to live alone.

As the girl moved into the stepmother’s apartment, she begins to maltreat her. All the chores in the house, including cooking, fetching of firewood, fetching water and other domestic chores are left for the girl to do; while her half siblings only played and ate. The stepmother also goes ahead to take cocoyam from her dead co-wife’s heap of cocoyam without the permission of her step daughter (who the cocoyam was bequeathed to). Rather, she would instruct the step daughter to cook the cocoyam. As the step-daughter cooks the cocoyam, her step siblings would come and pick the cocoyam prior to the time that the food was to be shared. Any attempt by step-daughter to have some cocoyam like the other children attracted strokes of cane or other punishments for her.

The young girl remained in sorrow. One afternoon, when the step-mother meted the same ugly treatment to her, the step-daughter, she ran to *Eke Mmuo* ‘the market, known as ‘Spirit of Eke’, to see if she would see her mother. When, her dead mother arrived, she narrated her ugly ordeal to her, the mother promised to bring food for her, the next ‘Eke’ market, and directed her to leave the cocoyam and other things for the stepmother and her children. She also warned her not to go near a pot of water behind their house in the afternoons. One afternoon, after cooking for the family as usual, the stepmother asked the motherless girl to go behind the house and fetch water from the pot of water against her dead mother’s instruction. She refused. Her refusal infuriated her stepmother who beat her mercilessly. She ran to her dead mother’s room and cried out loudly. Finally, the stepmother sent her last child to go and get the water for her; as the last child arrived there, the dead co-wife who was already at the spot, killed her. All the other children went one after the other and were all killed. The woman then went herself and the same fate befell her.

### **4.2 Synopsis of *the Potter’s Wheel* by Chukwuemeka Ike**

*The Potter’s Wheel* is a classic Nigerian novel written by Chukwuemeka Ike (1973). The story is set in colonial Nigeria, centered on a young boy named Obuechina Maduabuchi, (popularly called Obu) whose experiences shape his character and understanding of life. Obu is the only son in a large family, deeply loved and pampered by his parents, especially his mother. However, his father, Mazi Maduabuchi, fears that excessive pampering, overindulgence, will spoil the boy, making him irresponsible and weak. To instill discipline and maturity, Obu is sent away to serve as an apprentice under Pa Zachariah (Teacher Zaccheus Kanu), a strict but well-respected teacher in another village. While under Teacher Zaccheus’ tutelage, Obu faces numerous challenges, including harsh treatment, hard labor, and bullying from the teacher’s family. Life is tough, but these experiences gradually mold him into a more responsible and resilient young man. He learns valuable lessons about humility, perseverance, and self-reliance. Through Obu’s struggles, the novel explores themes of discipline, personal growth, traditional education, and the role of apprenticeship in African societies. The title, ‘The Potter’s Wheel’, symbolizes the shaping of a



person's character through proper training and guidance, much like clay being molded into a useful object in the hands of a potter. *The Potter's Wheel* is a compelling story about growth, discipline, and the journey to maturity. Chukwuemeka Ike masterfully captures the realities of traditional Igbo society, showing how intentional training as against overindulgence can shape a child into a responsible adult.

In Chukwuemeka Ike's novel *The Potter's Wheel*, overindulgence is a central theme, particularly in the upbringing of the protagonist, Obuechina (Obu). As the only son among several sisters, Obu is excessively pampered by his doting mother, leading to concerns about his character development. This indulgence prompts his father to send him away to live with a strict schoolmaster, aiming to instill discipline and responsibility in him. Obu's journey from his parents' house at umuchu to Mr. Zacheus's house, at Mbanisi reflects the impact of parental indulgence and the transformative power of discipline. Obu's sojourn at Mbanisi, where he was sent by his father to undergo apprenticeship and moral training under Teacher Zacheus and his wife's care becomes the setting for much of Obu's transformation. Obu transforms from being a pampered boy into a more disciplined and responsible young boy. Obu's life at Mbanisi and the setting of the novel contributes to the theme of Igbo family training as against indulgence. Mbanisi is portrayed as a strict, structured, and morally conservative Igbo town, very different from the more comfortable, indulgent environment Obu grew up in. Life at Mbano is marked with discipline and routine. Under Mr. Okonkwo's household in Mbano, daily life is marked by hard work, early rising, chores, strict timekeeping, and strong moral expectations as against what Obu was used to.

Again, life at Mbainis is marked with harsh environment. Obu finds the environment emotionally and physically challenging. He must adjust to menial tasks, stern treatment, and a lack of affection which is a stark contrast to his life at home, at Umuchu. Community expectations are also evident at Mbanisi. The town, Mbanisi reflects traditional Igbo society's expectation of obedience, humility, and communal values. The town's people, including Mr. Zchaeus, uphold these principles with little tolerance for laziness or disrespect.

Mbanisi represents discipline which is the opposite of the overprotective home Obu came from at Umuchu, representing overindulgence. The town serves as a "potter's wheel" for molding and in this instance, molding Obu through hardship and discipline into a more responsible person. The town could also be perceived as the stage for Obu's transformation. Through tough love and apprenticeship, he learns humility, endurance, and independence. This actually reflects a broader Igbo philosophy that character is built through struggle and correction.

In the aspect of cultural expectations and gender roles; Mbanisi upholds traditional male training, where boys are prepared for leadership and responsibility. This contrast with Obu's mother's indulgence which highlights Igbo gender expectations and family dynamics. Mbanisi is more than just a place. It is a symbolic forge where Obu is reshaped. Through hardship and structure, he matures, reflecting the novel's central message: character must be molded, not pampered.

Overindulgence is a central theme in the novel, *The Potter's Wheel*. It highlights the cultural significance of male children in traditional Igbo society. Because Obu is the only male child in the family, he is being over pampered, else, why should Amuche, who is the younger child to Obu go to farm and Obu the elder brother be allowed to still be sleeping. These over indulgent

attitude leads Obu and Samuel growing up with sense of entitlement and poor discipline. Overindulging Obu by exempting him from household chores creates resentment among his siblings and contributes to his immature behavior. Ike captures it by explaining further, 'Although Obu was nearly nine, he would not give up some of his childhood habits, and he had his mother's connivance (Ike, 1973: 21). This contrast with one of the characters in data 3, though an only child of the mother was involved in the mother's farming activities.

#### **Data 4 Data from Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Potter's Wheel***

In Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Potter's Wheel*, over-indulgence is a recurring theme, especially in the early part of the novel. The early chapters focus on Obu's family dynamics, particularly his mother's favouritism. The main character, Obuechina Maduabuchi, known as Obu, is the only son of his parents and is excessively pampered, primarily by his mother. Instances of over indulgence in the novel are highlighted below:

##### **i. Obu and Samuel's Mothers Shield them from Discipline**

Obu's mother spoils him by constantly shielding him from punishment. She believes that being the only son, that he is special and should not be treated like the other children who are all female. She often justifies Obu's laziness or misbehavior by saying things like, "He is still a child" or "He's my only son, he must not suffer." The phrases reflect the sentiments of Obu's mother, who, as the mother of six daughters and only one son, dotes on Obu excessively.

Also, another character, who is overindulged in the novel is Samuel. Samuel is a bully character in the novel. His mother appears to overindulge him by not reprimanding him when he bullies other children. For instance, the action and attitude of Samuel's mother towards Obu's mother when she (Obu's mother) went to see Samuel's mother over Obu's new flute which Samuel forcefully collected from him. The story has it that "As soon as Samuel heard her voice (Obu's mother) and threats it carried, he dropped the flute with his mother and disappeared. Samuel's mother should have not collected the flute from him, rather she should have reprimand him and made him apologize to Obu's mother. Samuel's mother did not do such rather she even collected the flute from Samuel under the disguise that she picked it from where it was laid carelessly on the floor. Samuel's mother's overindulgent attitude towards him is evident in the dialogue between Obu's mother and Samuel's mother as shown here-Samuel's mother says to Obu's mother,

'Is this the thing you are looking for?' while producing a dirty looking flute. 'I found it abandoned in the kitchen.' This leads to exchange of words between the two women. In the course of that, Obu's mother says to Samuel's mother, 'That is why people say you are responsible for his actions. You heap sand around his waist, you prop him up in his vicious action!' (Ike, 1973:15-16).

Through Obu's mother's response to her, it becomes very glaring that Samuel's mother over indulges him. Such action propels Samuel further deep into a life of a bully and wickedness.

##### **ii. Obu Is Exempted from Household Chores**

Obu's mother dissuades him from engaging in home tasks like fetching water, sweeping the compound, or helping in the kitchen, duties which his sisters must perform regularly. While his sisters wake up early to do chores, Obu is allowed to sleep in or do as he please, reinforcing his belief that he is special and should be served. For instance, in one of the occasions, Obu's father,

Mazi Laza instructed that all his children, including the six-year-old Amuche (who is younger than Obu) were to carry harvested yams from the farm to the house. While the girls were getting ready to leave, Ogechukwu remembered that Obu was still sleeping, she ordered Amuche to wake Obu up to join the others. Their mother, reacted by saying, 'If I hear you call Obu, Cholera will purge you to death!... if you are too lazy to go to the farm, say so, but let me not hear you mention Obu again!' (Ike, 1973:19-20). "Amucehe, his younger sister, had successfully made two trips per day to the farm for nearly a week..." Yet, Obu's mother felt that Obu was still too young to go to the farm for the mere fact that he was her only son.

Furthermore, sometimes, when Obu's father sends him on an errand, the mother shares the errand among the girls, while releasing Obu to go to play with his friends. One of such instances, is when Mazi Laza instructed Obu to go to the houses of his workers to remind them of his invitation of them to come and feast with him and his wife. Instead of Mama Obu to allow Obu run the errand, she collected the list of those to be visited from Obu and shared the visit among the girls, while Obu is left to go out with his friends. Mazi Laza asks his wife, 'I want to know who sent Nkechi because I had given that assignment to Onyibo (Obu) ...' Obu's mother responds by saying, 'If that is what you are heading for, he told me that he had something urgent to do', ... so I decided to send the girls' (Ike, 1973: 61). Meanwhile the urgent activity that Obu had was to go out with his friends.

### **iii. He Receives Excessive Gifts and Praise**

Whenever Obu desires something, his mother ensures he gets it; even if it is unnecessary or beyond their means. For instance, Obu receives money, clothes, and treats frequently, even when he doesn't earn them or behaves badly. This over-rewarding dulls his sense of effort.

### **iv. Lack of Corrective Measures Until Later**

For a long time, Obu's mischiefs and poor behavior are overlooked or excused. When Obu bed wets, even after being woken up severally to urinate, the mother does not scold him. Rather she willingly gives him another cloth to wear. This is exemplified in the dialogue:

Mama Obu: Are you awake now?  
Obu: Yes, Ma. Good morning, Ma.  
Mama Obu: Mornny my son. Are you coming out now?  
Obu: Please bring me one cloth.  
Mama Obu: Did you pass water after I left you?

"The pair of khaki shorts Obu wore in bed was stinking with his urine, and so was the cloth his mother had used to shield him from the mosquitoes."

His mother did not see anything wrong with Obu still bed-wetting at age nine, hence she does not caution him. Instead, Obu's Mother was of the opinion that, "Bed-wetting was one of the childish habits he was bound to drop at his own pace sooner or later, Mama Obu had maintained in an argument with Papa Obu that; there was no need to develop hypertension over it, she said" (Ike, 1973: 22).

Again, Obu shared his mother's bed with her, while his younger sister, Amuche, slept on the floor with her elder sisters. He rarely ate supper along with the rest of the family, being usually fast asleep by the time supper was ready. His mother kept his food handy so that he could have it at whatever time of night he called for it. It could be midnight, it could be in the small hours of the morning: all he needed to do was to shout Mama, I want my food!' and he would be served.

After that he would go back to sleep, in preparation for breakfast the following morning (Ike, 1973: 21).

Obu's mother was of the view that when he grew older, he would adjust like others. Whereas the Igbo say, *a naghị amụ aka ekpe na nka* 'Left hand is not learnt in old age'. Meaning that whatever anyone grows with will eventually become the person's habit. Hence, if not for the firm and timely decision of Obu's father to send Obu to live with Teacher Zaccheus, Obu would have grown up to be a useless and good for nothing adult because of overindulgence.

#### 4.3 Analysis

In Data 1, the action of the Mother Antelope in taking the Baby Antelope into the bush in search of food, beyond its literary representation of hunting, is symbolic of hard work which is a virtue in Igbo society; it is also symbolic of the fact that in Igbo society, children are introduced to hard work early in life so that they will not grow to be lazy or beggars. The death of Mother Antelope is also symbolic of the possible consequence of risk-involving endeavours people engage in; in that as the Igbo engage themselves in various professions to survive; some of the professions sometimes involve taking some risks, which is symbolized by the death of Mother Antelope who gets killed while searching for food.

In Data 2, all the members of the family were involved in farming, without exempting any of them. It was only one of the children that was left behind to attend to their crippled father. In staying behind, she was also involved in some kind of chores. When the three visitors came to their house, Nwanyioma was the one that cooked for them, attended to them and ran all the errands that Onyenze, her father asked her to do. In the tale, all the children were involved in one assignment or the other, none was over indulged because over pampering was never part of Igbo culture.

In Data 3, the first wife involved her only child in her farm activities that was why they possessed big heaps of cocoyam. The second wife, who was very lazy and also overindulged her children, could not even produce a heap of coco yam. At the end of the tale, she paid for their laziness and over-pampering of the children. The tales go a long way in reflecting the fact that overindulgence has no place in Igbo traditional society. The essence of tale in Igbo society is for education and value inculcation. Folktale was one of the major means of education in the traditional Igbo society which should not be allowed to go into extinction. Before westernization, Igbo folk-tales were the basic mode of socialization, instruction and learning. Their essence is still valid even in the contemporary times. The ancient Igbo thrived with less confusion, because they held tight to their *omenala* 'the unscripted code of conduct'. According to Nwala (2010: 61), "*Omenala* thus conceived, ensures conformity, social harmony and peace, the practical and theoretical instrument for social control and hence could be regarded as the support of what is conservative in the Igbo traditional thought". Nwala's view is also in line with Toni-Duruaku's (2004: 98) view, that, "If a people throw away that by which they can be easily identified, that which brings and binds them together as one, they lose their identity and generations after generations of their people, will float in their ignorance, swim in their loss of character, and finally drown in their loss of identity".

The traditional modes of education, including the tales are forms of road maps to direct the members of the society so that they would not be lost in the journey of life. The tales are one of the means of reinforcing the tenets of culture of the people. Through the tales, Igbo beliefs and

cultural heritage are transmitted and sustained. They are veritable tools for teaching the younger members of the society.

From the data derived from *The Potter's Wheel*, data 4, which represents the contemporary Igbo society, it is obvious that some children in the contemporary Igbo families are overindulged. This is mostly evident in families with only a child or with only a male child in the midst of female children, as the case may be. This is exemplified in Obu's mother's attitude to Obu in relation to the other children in the family, for the mere fact that he is the only male child. Obu's mother's overindulgence manifests through, excessive pampering and protection, exemption from discipline, unjustified rewards, shielding from responsibilities.

Obu's father loved all his children equally, including Obu, his only son. He desired them to grow into useful adults as well as imbibe the culture of hard work. Obu's father is not comfortable with the way and manner that his wife is raising Obu. Ike captures Mazi Laza's stance regarding Obu's training in the excerpt below:

It did not matter to Mazi Laza how many trips Obu made to the farm on a day, nor the number of yams he carried per trip. All he wanted was to establish the principle that every person who breathes must regard work as an essential ingredient of life, and everybody who eats food must work for it. Anybody who shunned work was bound to end up a ne'er-do-well... (Ike, 1973: 25).

Seeing the manner Obu's mother was handling Obu's upbringing; he decides to send Obu to a teacher's house to train him. Mazi Laza says to his wife,

Mazi Laza: "The main thing I want to tell you is that I have decided to send Obuechina away to serve as houseboy to a teacher" (Ike, 1973: 69).

Mama Obu: "My son is not going to anybody as houseboy"! "He who produces the child should train him".

Mazi Laza: "It is because you have not trained him very well that I'm talking about sending him away before he dissolves completely like a bag of salt!" (Ike, 1973:70).

Mazi Laza represents, the traditional Igbo, who understands the place of training while Mama Obu represents a lot of contemporary parents who think that over indulgence is the same thing as training. If not for the timely intervention of Mazi Laza in taking the decision of sending Obu out to teacher; Obu would have grown into over-pampered useless adult, who will not know his left from his right. Hence, when Obu visited home from the Teachers house, a lot of positive transformation had taken place in Obu's life. Ike illustrates this in the following except,

'Missus, don't you see what change Onyibo has undergone?' asked Mazi Laza. "Do you see how he has been going on errands cheerfully? Did you notice that nobody told him to join his sisters in carrying yams this morning, and yet he joined them happily?" ...

'Obiano, my son. How come that you are enveloped in sweat?' Mama Obu spoke with the tender affection of a doting mother. Obu's mother, at this instance wanted the girls to go to the stream to fetch water for Obu to bath, since there was no water in the house. But Obu who at this point had been properly trained at Teachers house, objected. 'Mama,' cut in Obu. 'I'm going to the stream to have a bath and fetch some water (Ike, 1973: 250).



Obu's excessive pampering and his mother's overindulgence towards him becomes so problematic that his father is forced to intervene by deciding to send Obu to Teacher Zacheus, a strict school teacher and disciplinarian, to 'mold' him like clay on a potter's wheel into a responsible man. This decision marks the start of Obu's transformation from a spoiled-overindulged boy into a more responsible young man. Chukwuemeka Ike, author of the novel uses Obu's eventual reformation to advocate for balanced child-rearing.

#### **4.4 Findings**

##### **The Consequences of Overindulgence in Igbo Society**

Overindulgence in Igbo society results in several negative traits that can hinder personal growth and societal harmony. For example, excessive pampering can lead to poor academic performance, as seen in the case of Obu, who becomes more engrossed in fantasies than in his studies. Obu admits that in this excerpt, "In spite of being older than many of the pupils in my class, I was among the least attentive" (Ike, 1973: 9). Furthermore, overindulgence fosters self-centeredness and dishonesty. Obu conceals his punishments from his mother, manipulates her emotions, and refuses to accept correction or hardship. He expects constant defense and support, regardless of his faults (Ike, 1973: 12).

The consequences of overindulgence have become even more pronounced in today's world. With the rise of digital media and technology, the problem has escalated. Social media, in particular, promotes materialism and instant gratification, leading many young people to prioritize superficial pleasures over meaningful accomplishments. A concerned trend is the increasing prevalence of cybercrime, popularly known as Yahoo, among Igbo youths. Many are lured by the extravagant lifestyles displayed online and turn to fraudulent activities to attain similar wealth. This "get-rich-quick" mentality is often fueled by a lack of moral discipline and parental overindulgence, where children are not held accountable for their actions.

Additionally, overindulgence has contributed to a growing dependence on external assistance for basic responsibilities. For instance, most young people can no longer take time to study their books. They rather prefer to indulge in examination malpractices. Some of such students have the support of their parents. Many young adults, especially those from wealthy backgrounds, struggle with essential life skills such as financial management and household maintenance because they were never taught self-sufficiency. As a result, they face difficulties in marriage, parenting, and professional life, leading to personal instability and broader societal dysfunction.

##### **4.5 Role of the family in children's upbringing with special focus on indulgence, training and value transfer in the traditional Igbo family**

Indulgence is occasional pampering, especially during times of illness, celebration, or other worthy events. It is not inherently bad rather it can strengthen familial bonds and provide children with a sense of security and love. However, when indulgence becomes a way of life, it poses grave dangers to the development of young minds in the family and the society at large. Training, on the other hand, is a deliberate process aimed at equipping children with the skills, knowledge, and discipline needed to navigate life successfully. While it often involves temporary discomfort or discomfiture, training builds lifelong strength, resilience, and competence. Both indulgence and training mostly play out in families as children grow up.

Training of an individual begins at home and it starts early in life. In the traditional Igbo society, this type of training was informally based and was orally transmitted from generation to generation. Traditional Igbo families served as the first schools of cultural and moral education. Values such as respect for elders, hard work, honesty, integrity, courage, resilience, communal spirit cooperation, worship of God and ancestral veneration were transmitted through stories, proverbs, songs, dances, role modeling and communal experiences. Family played a fundamental and holistic role in the upbringing of children in the traditional Igbo society. The role of children's training extended beyond biological parents to include the extended family, the lineage, and even the community. Hence, the maxim *nwa bu nwa ora* 'child belongs to the society'. In the light of this, whenever an adult sees a child misbehave, instant correction is given; without waiting to obtain permission from the biological parents. According to Ogbalu (2006:19) "The training of children is everybody's responsibility and every person is expected to correct a child whether they are related or not." Community sanctions reinforced lessons learned at home. A misbehaving child could be corrected by any elder in the community.

The upbringing of children was guided by a deep-rooted sense of collective responsibility, cultural expectations, and moral discipline. While discipline was central, traditional Igbo families showed affection to children. Mothers and older siblings were the first to indulge the child with care, songs, folktales, and playful interactions, which helped foster emotional security. Indulgence was not excessive; it was balanced with the expectation that as the child grew, he/she would take on responsibilities and obey instructions. Children's training was mostly home-based. Children learned through observation, imitation, and correction. Boys were trained in farming, hunting, palm wine tapping, and other male occupations. Girls learned cooking, fetching water, caring for children, and assisting their mothers with trade or domestic chores. Discipline was key; laziness, disobedience, and disrespect were punished to instill upright behavior. As children approached adulthood, they underwent initiation ceremonies that formally inducted them into adult responsibilities and societal roles. For instance, a boy might be initiated into the age grade or masquerade society, while a girl might undergo training for marriage *irumgbede* 'fattening room'.

#### **4.6 Changing Family Structure and its Impact on Values**

The only constant thing is change, as such, there are obvious changes in the type of families that existed in the traditional Igbo society as against what obtains in the contemporary time. Igbo family has undergone significant transformation due to factors such as urbanization, western education, religious influence, migration, and technological advancement. The changes are greatly impacting on how values are practiced within the family structure, transmitted and preserved. While some core traditional values remained, many others have been diluted or replaced by modern ideologies. For instance, the Igbo traditional communal family structure is gradually giving way to the individualistic/nuclear family system. Many Igbo families now live in urban areas or in the Diaspora, far removed from the ancestral home and wider kinship networks. The reduced daily input by elders, uncles, and grandparents has affected the collective responsibility once central to value transmission. The resultant effect is that children are more influenced by peers, and media than by traditional family values. Traditional values, such as respect for elders, honesty, hard work etc. are fast eroding the younger members of the society. This is due to the fact that western ideas of child rights and freedom of expression encourages children to interrogate or challenge some of the Igbo cultural heritage. The traditional spirit of

communalism is giving way to individualistic way of life. While the traditional methods of discipline like public scolding, corporal punishment, and community correction are now considered abusive or outdated. The result is often overindulgence, leniency or inconsistency in enforcing moral behavior among children.

Again, traditional modes of education and value transmission have continued to wane. Today most families rely greatly on only formal education, digital media and entertainment and others; as against the traditional methods like folktales, proverbs, and all the other oral traditional methods. Most of the modern sources, no matter how effective they may appear, often convey non-Igbo or foreign values, creating a conflict between traditional and contemporary influences. Such conflict poses great challenge in the training of children in the contemporary times.

While the Igbo family value system has served generations well, contemporary changes and challenges have strained the traditional structures, particularly in urbanized and globalized environments. Western values, such as individualism and a greater focus on personal freedom, have become increasingly popular among younger generations. This sometimes leads to a disconnection between the traditional Igbo family values and contemporary lifestyles, particularly as young people begin to embrace values that are different from their parents' teachings. For instance, the respect for elders and communal living might be undermined by a growing focus on privacy and autonomy.

Again, as many Igbo families move away from agriculture to urban-based careers, there are increasing economic pressures. Urbanization often means that parents spend more time working to provide for the family, leaving less time for direct child-rearing and guidance. This shift in work-life balance creates a gap in the level of attention that can be devoted to raising children according to traditional norms. With the migration of younger Igbo people to other parts of Nigeria or abroad for better opportunities, the extended family system that once played a significant role in child-rearing has weakened. The collective responsibility of raising children is no longer as strong, leading to children being raised more in nuclear family units, which might not provide the same breadth of guidance and discipline from extended relatives.

There has also been a shift in some urban Igbo families toward greater indulgence in the form of material wealth and catering to children's desires. In some cases, this shift has resulted in children being raised with an expectation of immediate gratification, which undermines the traditional values of hard work, delayed gratification, and respect for authority.

Also, the increasing influence of digital technology and social media has introduced a new realm of influence on children, which can challenge the traditional family structures. Many young people are exposed to global trends and ideas, which can erode cultural values and discipline as dictated by their elders. All the above discussed factors culminate in what is left of the African societies, with special focus on Igbo society.

#### **4.7 The Role of Families in Balancing Indulgence and Training**

The family unit is the cornerstone of society, and it plays a critical role in determining whether children are overindulged or adequately trained. The family is the bedrock of Igbo society. If the family fails in its way of child's upbringing, the entire society is doomed. On the other hand, if sound training is given right from home the society is saved from collapse. An Igbo adage has it that, *A na-esi n'ụlọ mara mma pụta ilo* 'beauty flows from the inside to the outside', implying that charity begins at home. Hence, the Igbo are very careful and diligent in the choice of a life partner. This is because the foundation of family begins with marriage. Parents must understand

that training is superior to indulgence. While occasional pampering is acceptable, it should never replace the consistent discipline and instruction required to prepare children for life. Parents must set clear boundaries for their children. Indulgence without limits breeds entitlement, while reasonable restrictions teach self-control and respect for others. Again, from an early age, children should be taught essential life skills such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, and decision-making. The skills not only promote independence but also boost self-esteem. Families must prioritize the teaching of moral and ethical values. Honesty, integrity, empathy, and hard work should be emphasized through both instruction and example. Children must learn to take responsibility for their actions. This involves holding them accountable for their mistakes and guiding them to make amends. While it is important to reward good behavior, discipline should not be overlooked. Both are essential for fostering a well-rounded character. In essence, balanced parenting is essential, love must be paired with correction. This is well captured by Ike, in Obu's symbolic journey from the pampered home to the blacksmith's workshop. *The Potter's Wheel* illustrates that overindulgence, though rooted in love, can stifle a child's growth and moral development. Obuechina's transformation from a pampered boy to a responsible young man underscores the importance of discipline, hard work, and moral guidance. Through his journey, Chukwuemeka Ike warns against the dangers of spoiling children and highlights the formative power of a structured upbringing. Through Obu's transformation, Chukwuemeka Ike illustrates the dangers of spoiling children and the redemptive power of correction and hard work. The novel is a timeless call to parents to train children in the way they should go, rather than in the way that the children wish.

#### **4.8 Overcoming Resistance to Training**

One of the major obstacles to promoting training over indulgence is the resistance from both children and parents. Children who have grown accustomed to excessive pampering may initially reject the structure and discipline that proper training demands. Likewise, parents who equate indulgence with love may find it difficult to enforce stricter guidelines. Such resistance is evident in the character Obu and his mother. When Obu's father perceived that the manner his wife is overindulging Obu will be detrimental to his future, he initiated the idea of sending Obu to live with Teacher. To address this challenge, families and communities must adopt a long-term perspective. Training is a long-term investment in a child's future, and its rewards far outweigh any temporary discomfort it may cause. Parents must remain steadfast in their efforts, understanding that their persistence in instilling discipline lays the foundation for a successful and fulfilling life.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The contemporary Igbo family structure reflects a shift from the traditional extended family model to a more nuclear and individualized system. This transformation is largely influenced by urbanization, migration, western education, and economic pressures, which have redefined roles and responsibilities within the family unit. Unlike the traditional setting where child training and discipline were communal responsibilities. The traditional Igbo family system, once rooted in discipline, communal responsibility, and cultural storytelling, is undergoing significant transformation due to the pressures of modernity, globalization, and western influences. The weakening of extended family ties has led to a decline in collective supervision, mentorship, and moral guidance that were once central to the upbringing of children (Eneze, 2017; Nnonyelu, 2009). Additionally, the adoption of modern lifestyles has given rise to more permissive or indulgent parenting styles, replacing traditional practices grounded in strict discipline and

communal values. While some families still attempt to preserve cultural norms, the realities of contemporary life have challenged the consistency and effectiveness of such efforts (Ekwuazi, 2021; Okunna, 2019). While indulgent parenting is becoming more common, it poses a threat to the values that once ensured societal cohesion and moral development. Thus, the modern Igbo family operates within a hybrid space, negotiating between indigenous value systems and modern socio-cultural expectations. By revisiting and reinforcing traditional methods of child training, such as through folktales, communal mentorship, and culturally grounded discipline, Igbo families can strike a meaningful balance between modern realities and indigenous wisdom, ensuring that future generations grow up with a strong sense of identity, responsibility, and moral direction.

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The current study focuses on Igbo family value system and contemporary challenges focusing on indulgence and training. Indulgence and training are two complementary aspects of child-rearing, each playing a distinct role. While indulgence can offer moments of comfort and happiness, it should never come at the expense of proper training. Training is the cornerstone of strength, resilience, and competence, equipping children with the skills and discipline needed to navigate life's challenges and make meaningful contributions to society. In Igbo society and beyond, the increasing trend of overindulgence among the younger generation has resulted in various social issues, including dependency, entitlement, and criminal behavior. In the traditional Igbo family, child upbringing was a structured, value-driven, and communal affair. Indulgence nurtured the child's emotional needs; training prepared the child for adult responsibilities; and value transfer ensured the continuity of culture and morality. The family, therefore, functioned not just as a unit of reproduction, but as the bedrock of cultural preservation, discipline, and identity formation. But in the contemporary times, the Igbo family value system is at a crossroads, balancing the preservation of traditional practices with the adaptation to contemporary societal shifts. The contemporary Igbo family reflects a blend of traditional and modern values. While many core values such as hard work, education, and family pride persist, others like respect for elders, communal living, and cultural rituals are declining due to western influence and modernization. In the words of Toni-Duruaku (2004: 98) "If a people throw away that by which they can be easily identified, that which brings and binds them together as one, they lose their identity and generations after generations of their people, will float in their ignorance, swim in their loss of character, and finally drown in their loss of identity". What Toni-Duruaku is saying in essence is that it is very important that the people's culture be properly secured, documented, preserved and transmitted so that the younger generations will have something to look up to in form of a road map; else they will be lost in the journey of life and sooner than later the literature which mirrors the life and world view of such a society will go into extinction. The challenge for today's Igbo family lies in finding a balance between embracing global progress and preserving indigenous values that form the foundation of Igbo identity as well as knowing where and how to strike a balance between overindulgence and training.

### **5.2 Recommendation**

The solution lies in a collective effort to prioritize training over indulgence. Families, educational institutions, religious organizations, and communities must work together to nurture and discipline, responsible, and ethical individuals capable of leading their societies toward progress. By striking the right balance between indulgence and training, we can address the societal issues



affecting today's youth and secure a prosperous future for generations to come. It is recommended that Igbo families and educators reintegrate traditional values and disciplinary methods of training, such as those conveyed through folktales and other traditional modes of education into modern child training practices to counterbalance the effects of westernization and indulgent parenting. Strengthening cultural education can help preserve communal values and foster responsible upbringing in contemporary society.

## 6.0 References

- Akwuba, S. O. (1999). *Contemporary Igbo family values: A Christian perspective*. Nsukka: Afro-Orbis Publications.
- Anyachebelu, A. L. (2018). Social Symbolism in Selected Texts on Igbo Animal Folktales in Nigeria. Ph.D Thesis University of Lagos.
- Chukwu, M. N. (2013). Igbo oral literature and the education of the child. In O. A. Anedo & T. N. Udemmadu (Eds.), *Ideal Journal of Igbo Scholars Forum* (Vol. 1, pp. 12–20).
- Chuma-Udeh, N. (2019). The relevance of folktales in Igbo child training. *Ideal International Journal of Igbo Scholars Forum*, 5(1), 45–58.
- Durkheim, É. (1915). *The elementary forms of the religious life*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Ekwuazi, H. I. (2020). A philosophical analysis of contemporary and traditional child upbringing and rites in Igbo traditional society. *The Igbo Scholar*, 1(1), 15–30.
- Ekwuazi, H. I. (2021). Modernity, family, and parenting patterns in Igboland. *Ochendo: An African Journal of Innovative Studies*, 2(1), 1–14.
- Eneje, R. K. (2010). *The extended family system in Igbo culture: A social security system*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation.
- Eneze, R. K. (2017). *The extended family system in Igbo culture: A social security system*. Independently Published.
- Ezenwanebe, O. C. (2012). The African traditional family in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979). *IHAFA: A Journal of African Studies*, 5(4).
- Giddens, A. (2006). *Sociology* (5th ed.). Polity Press. Retrieved from <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ujah/article/view/199187>
- Ike, C. (1973). *The potter's wheel*. Nigeria: Harvill Press.
- Ikwubuzo, I. (2011). The family and the Igbo novel. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 8(3), 265–275. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/lwati/article/view/79817>
- Isidien, I. C. (2015). The family as the bedrock of Igbo traditional society. *Journal of Modern European Languages and Literatures* (JMEL, 4). Retrieved from <http://www.jmel.com.ng>
- Lukács, G. (1971). *The theory of the novel: A historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Nnonyelu, A. N. (2009). *Sociological insight*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Nwachukwu, G. (2023). Christianity and Igbo value system: A case for revival. *EKWE: Journal of Igbo Traditional Religion & Culture*, 5(2), 35–48.
- Nwala, T. U. (2010). *Igbo philosophy* (2nd ed.). New York: Triatlantic Books.
- Nzegwu, N. U. (2006). *Family matters: Feminist concepts in African philosophy of culture*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Obi, C. A. (1970). Marriage among the Igbo of Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://nigeriaamasterweb.comligbomarriage.htm>
- Ogbalu, F. C. (2006). *Igbo institutions and customs*. Onitsha: Varsity Industrial Press.
- Okafor, C. (2016). Child rearing practices in Eastern Nigeria: Implications for social work and educational services. *International Journal of Global Health*, 2(2), 1–14.
- Okafor, C. (2017). Child rearing and modernity among the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 9(5), 67–74. Retrieved from <https://acjool.org/index.php/ekwe/article/view/5305>
- Okafor, C. (2018). Cultural parenting: Igbo mothers raising their children in the United States. *African and African Diaspora Studies Theses*, 89.
- Okafor, C. (2019). Transforming African children through inclusive pre-colonial education and traditional socialization process: A case study of Igbo and Yoruba cultures. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, 5(2), 12–22.
- Okunna, C. P. (2019). The family as the bedrock of Igbo traditional society. *Journal of Mass Education in Nigeria*, 1(2), 89–98. Retrieved from <https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/index.php/jmel/article/view/203>
- Olisa, M. S. O. (2002). Igbo traditional socio-political system. In G. E. K. Ofomata (Ed.), *The Survey of the Igbo Nation*.
- Onwuatiegwu, I. (2020). The notion of family in Igbo African society: A philosophical appraisal. *European Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, 4(1), 17.
- Toni-Duruaku, O. (2004). Folktale and contemporary Igbo families. *Journal of Nigerian Languages and Culture*, 6(2), 98–102.
- Udeani, C. (2020). The notion of family in Igbo African society: A philosophical appraisal. *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 21(3), 141–152.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.