

SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE IGBO NATION

Kate N. N. Ndukauba, Nkechi B. Ohaiké

*Department of Foreign Language & Translation Studies, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria.
Department of Linguistics & Nigerian Languages, National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba, Nigeria.*

Abstract

There had been a series of life-threatening diseases that have attacked the human race amongst which include: HIV/AIDS, SARS, Lassa fever and EBOLA. The latest amongst them is the coronavirus disease. On December 1 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) received the first reports of an earlier unknown virus. To the best of our knowledge, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there is every possibility that in the nearest future, there will be permanent cure or vaccines, but before this time there would have been serious impact made in the whole world in every sector. This paper, therefore, x-rays the socio-cultural impact of COVID-19 on the Igbo nation. It was discovered that COVID-19 had had a great impact on the socio-cultural impact of COVID-19 on the Igbo nation. It was discovered that COVID-19 had had a great impact on the socio-cultural life of the Igbo. Great lessons have also been learnt, such as being prudent in spending, being resourceful and making provision for the future. Though the restrictions bit hard, they were also for the sake of saving and preserving lives because an Igbo truism says "ndù bù ísì" (life comes first). Thus, there are advantages and disadvantages though one outweighs the other.

Keywords : COVID-19, culture, pandemic, precaution, tradition.

Introduction

For now, the pandemic (COVID-19) "doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus and we petty men walk under his huge legs...." ¹ as Cassius would describe Caesar as he tried to plant doubts in Brutus' mind in reference to Caesar's ruling over Rome. World superpowers have been brought to their knees and humbled. Economies have crumbled; millions of lives lost, unusual ways of living and doing things have become the new normal. People, countries and scientists are running helter-skelter looking for a cure or even a vaccine to nip in the bud or at least contain it.

There are conspiracy theories which link vaccination against the virus to chips to be implanted in people's bodies, or to 5G generation mobile network that enables a new kind of network that is designed to connect virtually everyone and everything. Another theory is that some wealthy individuals are behind the insistence on the vaccines because they want to reduce the world population by introducing the disease through vaccination. They want to be in control of people's lives and the way they live. The

truth, however, is that COVID-19 has brought about never-before-seen consequences on humanity such that we now have a new normal way of life because we have to adjust and adapt to accommodate the situation since for now, we are helpless because there are no answers to the problem. It has been said that prevention is better than cure. This truism cannot be truer at any time in history than now. Hence, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended some precautionary measures to help slow down the spread of the virus. These measures include:

- Frequent washing of hands
- Use of alcohol-based sanitizer
- Use of face and nose masks
- Personal hygiene
- Social distancing
- Social etiquette when coughing or sneezing
- Border closures (though now relaxed in some countries including Nigeria).

The situation is so dire that when a case is identified, the person is isolated or quarantined. At the same time, contact tracing follows to make sure that all the people who have had contact with the case are equally tested to curtail the spread of the virus. Presently, experts have said that we are now at the stage of community transmission, meaning that one does not have to travel to contract the disease. Only one infected person is enough to infect a whole community. Governments at various levels in Nigeria have constituted Task Forces to help enforce the directives on the above measures. Sadly, many Nigerians are skeptical saying the disease is a hoax, is not real and so do not abide by the instructions. Yet there are sudden deaths all-around daily. States like Cross River and Kogi kept denying that they had cases in their states but later accepted that they were not free after all.

The precautionary measures earlier listed, the symptoms, diagnosis, isolation, treatment, and the stigmatization have impacted the people in various ways either for good or for bad. This paper discusses the different ways COVID-19 has impacted on the way of life of the Igbo people.

The Concept of Culture

Every society has its own culture or ways of doing things. "Culture is the beliefs, behaviours, objects and other characteristics shared by groups of people" ². According to Odor (2002), culture means "excellence and of the very high level of intellectual and artistic excellence in a person or group". Ugbeyavwighren (2008) says culture is "concerned with the entire essence of human existence, and refers to that intellectual and artistic



integrity that has been cultivated and nurtured over time, which the people hold sacrosanct". Ohaiké and Ikonne (2007) say that "the culture of a people is the embodiment of everything they do. Culture is a product and development of man's existence; it is learnt, not innate". The construct "culture" is no culture unless it is manifest. That is why it is seen in many circles as simply the entire way of life of a person or group of people.

Culture as a concept and experience is a universal manifest in collective and individual life. Culture is perceived as a way of life, encompassing all human efforts and achievements and the attitudes or behaviour at work. Culture ascribes identity to a people. The way one speaks, dresses, behaves, etc. point to the person's culture. Tylor (1871) defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, law and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" ³. Taiwo (2004) posits that "culture relies on the interaction of all society's components: art, learning, institution and ordinary behaviour". Culture covers all aspects of human life. It defines a people; it is the total of their way of life, which determines their nature, their activities, their relationship with one another, individually and in their communal settings. Culture drives the psyche of the people, their ambitions, hopes and aspirations and most importantly, their manner of interaction with their neighbours. Nigeria's Cultural Policy in 1988 states that culture is

The totality of the way of life evolved by a people in the attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environments, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours.

In 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined culture as 'a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group, that encompasses, not only to art and literature but literature, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs'. Culture is a vital aspect of people's identity, which makes others recognize them for what they are. These vital aspects of a people's identity when adequately utilized for maximum benefits become a source of power for other developmental needs. Nigeria, a multi-ethnic nation has a diversity of cultures, which characterize the ethnic groups. One of these is the Igbo ethnic group.

Igbo people

The Igbo or Ibo people are found in South-East Nigeria and have many interesting customs and traditions. With a population of about 40 million, they are one of the major tribes in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the Igbo inhabit an area referred to as Igbo land, which is divided into two sections along the lower River Niger. They live in most or all parts of five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, as well as in parts of Delta, Rivers and Benue states. Small

Igbo communities are also found in parts of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. The Igbo people are an ethnic group native to present-day southeastern Nigeria. "The Igbo people erroneously known as the 'Ibo people' are an indigenous linguistically, and culturally homogenous people of Southern Nigeria and they are located in two sections as divided by the Niger River – an eastern and a western section" ⁴. "In the Igbo cultural area, the people live in groups of patrilineage (Úmùnnà) and are hierarchically arranged. The patrilineage of various levels or origins forms villages and a group of villages form towns (obodo)"—Akakuru, Nwokedi & Okoli, as quoted in Ugbeyavwighren (2008). The Igbo political system was organized based on clans or forms which comprises of people that spoke the same dialect or had the same cultural, religious and social norms. The clan was sub-divided into villages, and a village involves people with the same ancestral lineage. A village is further segmented into kindreds that involve a number of families. The kindred is sub-divided into families/household. This patrilineage can be represented thus:

CLAN → VILLAGES → KINDREDS → FAMILIES →
HOUSEHOLDS

Igbo Culture

Igbo is one of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Igbo, an ethnic group in Nigeria, possesses from the very beginning district beliefs, values and expressions. These are values that have developed and sustained from generation to generation and have become part of the people. Odour (2002) categorized cultural value into two: the material culture and the non-material culture. The material Culture includes all that the people of a particular society have created or developed for their use and comfort, and which they could be identified with. Ndukauba (2010:156) corroborates this view:

La culture matérielle a affaire à tout ce qui concerne les nécessités de la vie quotidienne.

Il s'agit ici de différents aspects de la vie d'un peuple, lesquels comprennent les produits, les inventions, la nourriture, les boissons, les médicaments, la monnaie, les habits etc.

Material culture is about the necessities of daily life. It has to do with different aspects of a people's life, including products and inventions, food, drinks, medicine, currency and clothes. Examples of products and inventions are mud-bed, goatskin bag, *nzu*,

The non-material culture includes the language, attitudinal values and beliefs, philosophy, literature and festivals of the people. It can also include their ideas and perception of family support, patriotism, kindness and religion, laws, music or songs, dance, punishment and rewards, taking of titles, marriage.... Government and hierarchy of authority.

Igbo culture is a vital aspect of a people's identity, which makes others recognize them for what they are. From the definition of culture above as 'peoples' way of life', Igbo culture is the Igbo peoples' way of life. Ndiigbo, like all other ethnic groups, has enviable culture and traditions which they believe in, respect and indeed preserve. Some aspects of Igbo tradition and culture include language, naming pattern, mode of dressing, marriage practice, festivities, religious worship, politics, hospitality, communal living etc.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF THE IGBO

Most of the precautionary measures run counter to the established and accepted way of life of the people. Some of the aspects of Igbo culture affected are discussed below.

A. Language

Language is the expression of the culture of a people, for language emanates from the culture of a people. There is a real symbiotic relationship between language and culture. The expression, transmission or transference of "deposits of knowledge" can only be possible through the agency of language. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis on culture and language states that "the way we think and view our language determines the world. The language-culture-studies have it that "culture provides the environment in which languages develop and even influences how they are used" ⁵. This proves as Otto (2013) opines, that "Culture and language are undeniably intertwined" ⁶. In Africa generally, and among the Igbo people, in particular, language constitutes more than the spoken words or speech and the written symbol or writing. Language is the fulcrum that propels people's existence and their activities. Culture and language synergize their relationship with one another in their communities and neighbours. Before the advent of the colonial masters, the Igbo in their daily interaction, whether in the village traditional four market days, village government elders, women assembly, community business, language is regarded as more than merely an instrument of communication. Language must be imbued with dignity for it to continue to thrive.

Due to the damages of the 1967-70 Nigerian-Biafra civil war, the challenges of the modern society and the adventurous nature of the Igbo, explains the capacity of the Igbo to learn and speak other languages fluently. With ease, this no doubt makes them astute achievers in their different fields of endeavours but to the detriment of their language. The Igbo language is the lifeblood of Igbo society, in the same manner, their culture and tradition identify them.

The Igbo language has benefitted from the COVID-19 experience as the language was enriched with new vocabularies, e.g. *sàniṭájìzà* (sanitizer), *mkpùchí Ìhū* (face masks). There are lots of translated documents and jingles on COVID-19 from other languages into the Igbo language. The lockdown gave a lot of families the opportunity of staying together, speaking and encouraging

their children to speak the Igbo language. Some online teachings are going on in the Igbo language. Researchers have also developed and created Igbo terms on COVID-19. An example is a paper by Ndukauba and Ohaike titled "Disseminating Information on COVID-19 to Rural Dwellers through Translation: A Panacea to COVID-19 Spread". In it, there is a translation of a COVID-19 text into Igbo and a list of 117 COVID terms in Igbo together with the methods used to create them.

B. Marriage

In the Igbo culture, marriage is initiated when the man goes to the father of the woman to indicate his interest in the daughter and his intention to ask for her hand in marriage by "ìkụ aka n'uzọ" (knocking at the door). Once the consent is obtained, other traditional marriage rites follow. Marriage was sacred in the traditional society, and as such, a child out of the wedlock is treated with disdain. Therefore marriage is viewed as an institution, a human affair, which by its nature, is ordained towards the well-being of the spouses and the conservation of the human species. The traditional marriage in Igbo land is the high point of a woman's life as she makes her parents proud. They, in turn, give some cultural gifts to the bride and groom to help them start their marital journey. Thus, during the traditional marriage ceremony, it is expected that kith and kin, friends would be present. Most times, teaming attendees become very difficult to manage due to their number.

With the advent of COVID-19, there is not much fun and merrymaking anymore. The ceremony has lost much of its shine. The introduction of precautionary measures which include the imposition of total lockdown, the earlier ban on travels, the ban on large gatherings of people, the social distancing or physical distancing advisory, all became a severe impediment.

Various levels of Government have pegged the number of people permitted to gather at whatever ceremony that must be held. Where this directive is contravened, people may have their ceremony disrupted by security agents of the State coupled with arrest or prosecution of the culprits by a mobile court.

One can imagine a well-dressed groom and his bride wearing face masks on their special day. All the make-up, the hairdo, the headgear, the photographs etc., all countered by face mask.

C. Mode of dressing

The Igbo traditional attire for men is generally made up of the Isiagu top, George wrapper, with a cap that is adorned with the eagle feather. The cap could be the long woollen cap or the ordinary traditional one. A typical Igbo woman is identified with her 'omụma and ntụkwasị' (úkwù ákwà àbúḡ), beautiful puffed sleeved-blouse and headscarf. Accessories like necklaces and bracelets made with beads are also worn as a beautiful decoration to the outfits [13]. Igbo mode of dressing makes them stand tall in any gathering. They are a beautiful sight to behold.

To curb or reduce the spread of COVID-19, one of the measures prescribed by the NCDC is the wearing of the face and nose masks. Masks are not part of the Igbo dressing. They distort the beauty instead. Dressing so gorgeously, only to wear a face mask tarnishes the beauty.

D. Health

A lot of people lost their lives during the lockdown. Most remote villages have no health facility. Due to restriction of movement, people that would have been saved in hospitals could not access medical attention. Some others who had access to the hospitals were scared of contracting the deadly COVID-19 there and ended up losing their lives. Those who went to the hospital for other ailments were rejected for fear of COVID-19. Doctors, nurses and other health workers do not give full attention to patients or even do the physical examinations required for fear of contracting the disease. Rejection of patients leading to more deaths has been brought to the attention of the Government. The Nigerian Minister for Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire, recently issued a warning to Chief Medical Directors of government hospitals to guard against this.

We are told that the COVID-19 tests are done in molecular laboratories which are not readily available. Initially, samples were sent to faraway places like Lagos and Abuja, and results took a long time in coming back. Fortunately, States like Abia have been able to procure their molecular laboratories and results are faster in coming.

Again, because the symptoms of COVID-19 and those of malaria or flu are similar, there is the belief that the virus does not exist in Nigeria and that NCDC is just rolling out figures. This has also affected the people's response to the coronavirus issue and compliance with the precautionary measures.

The remarkable aspect of COVID-19 is that it has led to the improvement of the State of many government hospitals. Some of them have been equipped with laboratories, isolation wards built, personal protective equipment provided for frontline workers though inadequate and some hazard allowances have been approved for them. Whether these are sufficient and approvals implemented is another matter.

E. Festivities

Festivals occupy a vital place in the Nigerian society. Every ethnic group celebrates one thing or the other from time to time. It is a period of homecoming and of meeting with kith and kin. In Igbo land, such festivals include *írí jī* (New yam festival), *Ílū nwáányị̀* (Marriage), *Ọ̀nụ̀ ńnwá* (celebration of the birth of a new baby), *Ọ̀fálà* (A popular festival in Anambra State), *Ígbá èkpè*, (Celebration of a traditional cult), *M̀bòm ụ̀zọ̀* (a festival in Mbanọ, Etiti etc. in Imo State), *Ílá ọ̀sọ̀ Uzuakọ̀lị̀* (A popular festival in Uzuakọ̀lị̀, Abia State), *Ígbá ńgbá* (Wrestling), *Íchī́ échíchí* (traditional title taking), *Ọ̀kọ̀ńkọ̀* (Celebration of the traditional cult), *It mmanwu* (Masquerade show) etc. Most festivals in Igbo land are characterized by people dressing

in gorgeous, colourful attires, singing and dancing along the road to the venue of the ceremony. After the ceremonies, families host friends and relations to an abundance of traditional dishes and drinks. Apart from the usual Igbo festivals, Igbo people in their various communities, after each day's hectic work gather at their *m̀bárá ámá* (village square) to enjoy themselves with kegs of palm wine as a way of relaxation.

The lockdown and ban on any form of gathering greatly affected these festivals. The advisory is that people should stay away from large gatherings as the risk of contracting the disease there is very high. The festivals are 'superspreader' events. Drinking and eating anyhow is not in anybody's interest. The breaking of kola nut, sharing of *añara*, *akilu*, *ose Oji* with all respiratory droplets on them as people talk, is very risky. Where the festival must hold, there should not be more than twenty or thirty people, and the consent of the Government must be sought through written application and approval formally given. So people are no longer free to do as they like and are very cautious in relating to one another. No handshakes, no hugs, no sharing the drink with one cup anymore. This has taken the glamour off these festivities and has 'separated' brothers as it were. Below are descriptions of three of these festivals to appreciate the enormity of the change that has come with COVID-19:

F. Iri Ji

The new yam festival is an age-long festival in Igbo land. It is as old as the Igbo culture and usually holds between August and October every year. Each community determines the exact date. Each year, thousands of Igbo sons and daughters troop out en masse to celebrate the annual festival whose aim is to officially present the newly harvested yams to god and the ancestors of the land for blessing and to show gratitude for a bountiful harvest. The festival is also an avenue to thank god for sustaining the life of the farmers, the indigenes of the land and the farm product (yam) through a successful planting season. This is one of the major festivals celebrated in every family, kindred and autonomous community in Igbo land. The ceremonies may differ from community to community, but the language and essence remain.

Due to the cultural nature of the festival, there is usually a large gathering of people. Masquerades and various traditional dances are displayed, and their hosts entertain guests with local delicacies, food and drinks. The new yam festival is not only celebrated in Igbo land but is now celebrated by the Igbo in diaspora these days. Of course, COVID-19 has impacted negatively on this all-important festival as the precautionary measures run contrary to the pomp and pageantry associated with the festival.

G. Iwa ọ̀jị̀

Kolanut comes from a plant which grows into a big tree in the tropical forests of West Africa. The kolanut is presented as a symbol of hospitality, friendship and respect; and is presented to guests at important social

events such as weddings, funerals and infant naming ceremonies as well as for medicinal purposes [9]. It is the highest symbol of hospitality. The kolanut is highly celebrated in Igbo land. It is an important daily custom in the domestic life of every Igbo family, but when presented at a community ceremony, it is raised to the level of a festival. The kolanut has procedures for presentation, breaking and sharing. There are two types of kolanut, the Igbo type (oji Igbo) and the Hausa type (gworu). It is the Igbo kolanut that is celebrated. The eldest person present blesses and breaks the kolanut while the youngest shares it to all present after all, titled men or representative must have been given their 'take-home kolanuts'. No matter how small the lobes of kolanut are, everybody must get a share. This is made possible by using the fingernails to break it further. That is why the Igbo will say, 'ebe oji na-ezughike oke mvo, aka o Gara ebe e?' (where the kolanut is not enough, where did the fingernails go to?). The breaking, the sharing and the exposure of the kolanut raise the risk of COVID-19 infection.

G. Mbomu uzọ

This is ceremonial environmental sanitation. Most communities in Igbo land, e.g. Obowu, Ihitte Uboma, Mbaise, Emekuku etc. perform this festival. It precedes the initiating of a particular age-grade into adulthood. This attracts people from far and wide. During the clearing of the roads done by the age-grade to be initiated into adulthood, songs recounting the history of the community, their myth and legends are rendered by the elders. From there, new generations learn of their historical antecedents. This activity also runs contrary to the social distancing requirement.

H. Leadership

Ndijigbo appreciates and adores achievement and success. Those who attain these are revered. Attainment by dint of hard work is like climbing an Iroko tree, which is seldom done and therefore calls for a celebration. Ndijigbo is known to be so highly democratic that the choice of the *Eze* (one of the most prized titles in Igbo land) is strictly based on honesty, transparency, accountability and firmness of judgment, no matter whose ox is gored. Even when the *Eze* has been chosen, he is not invested with the insignia of the office against the norms of the land. The enthronement of an *Eze* is a revered ceremony that attracts people from all works of life. At the end of the enthronement, people are lavishly entertained with delicacies, food, drinks, various traditional dances and masquerade display.

With COVID-19 and its attendant restrictions and other measures, ceremonies of taking traditional or political titles are no longer as elaborate as they used to be. The Igbo political system has been brought to a standstill. The usual *umunna* gatherings at *mbara amā* (village square) are no longer there. This has affected the traditional ceremonies, the settling of disputes, wrestling contests, etc., which made communal living very interesting and worthwhile.

I. Hospitality

Hospitality means the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers. An admirable attribute of the Igbo is our lavish hospitality. It does not matter whether the host is poor or rich; he wants to be of as much help as possible, treating his guests with dignity and respect. The typical Igbo helps his brother in times of real need, hence the sayings 'Ọnyé ághàlà nwánnē yā' (Be your brother's keeper) and 'anyá béwé ímí ébéwé' (What affects one affects the other). A typical Igbo man is accommodating and very willing to assist guests, visitors or strangers to the best of his ability.

Today, people are advised to maintain social distancing and not to visit anybody nor entertain visitors in their homes. Most people that are sick and need assistance cannot get it at that point in time because nobody is sure of what the ailment is. Everybody is afraid of contracting the deadly virus. People are also adhering to the stay-at-home and no-movement order of Government. This runs against the culture of hospitality of the Igbo man.

J. Death and burials

Death is a natural phenomenon that occurs in one's lifetime. The traditional Igbo society respects death. Our view of life sees a bond between life and death. The death of a man at a ripe age calls for celebration and a 'befitting burial' while the death of a young person is uncelebrated and calls for mourning. However, in recent times, burial ceremonies for both old and young are more like celebrating a feat. Lavish and expensive funerals, long delays in morgues before burial, elaborate death notices in national and local newspapers, radio, television, dances, lavish eating and drinking take place during wake-keepings accompanied by modern live bands. Invitation cards are produced, and the deceased's photograph is embossed on t-shirts and wrappers. Different groups put on their different shades of uniform wears (popularly known as *aso-ebi*, a Yoruba word meaning 'family clothes') not to mention assorted kinds of souvenirs bought by families and friends for guests. All these reflect change the in attitude towards death and burial in Igbo land.

Due to COVID-19, large gatherings of people have been prohibited. Morgues are filled. People are waiting for the restrictions to be lifted, but the end is not yet in sight. They have now resorted to burying their dead unannounced. The usual cooking, display of wealth, of different dance groups and other forms entertainment have been ruled out. The expenses on burials by bereaved families have been drastically reduced because souvenirs, uniforms canopies, and other forms of extravagance are no longer necessary. Initially, bodies of the dead from COVID-19 were not released to their families, but now, people ask for their dead, especially as big men's families were flouting the directive. More so, it is an anathema for a full-grown person to be buried outside and for family members not to know the grave of their loved one. Sometimes, families do not even let outsiders know the cause of death so that there will be no interference by the Government. Another impact

of this dreaded disease is that Government has to approve burial dates. Bereaved families apply for permission to bury from the Government through the traditional ruler of the community and Local Government Chairman. This helps the State Government to monitor the ceremony and ensure compliance with COVID-19 protocols. It is worthy of note that there are so many sudden and unexplained deaths around. Many are attributable to COVID-19, but because the testing rate is low, it cannot be said categorically that they died of the disease.

K. Religion

Before the advent of the colonial masters, the Igbo believe in a Creator God (Chukwu or Chineke) who has other small gods through whom he reached his people and vice versa. The Igbo also had a system of priests who were mere servants of one particular god or spirit [8]. With the influx of Christian missionaries in the 20th century, the number of people practising traditional Igbo religion decreased drastically as Christianity was embraced by many. With the embrace of Christianity and the more recent proliferation of churches, with many worshipers going to church on Sundays and some other days of the week for fellowship. In some churches, embrace, and handshake are signs of "peace and love". During Holy Communion, priests share the bread with their bare hands to the worshippers. In some churches, communion cups are shared by many members. These are no more feasible in this pandemic period.

COVID-19 has impacted on the western religion adopted by the Igbo people. During the lockdown, there was no physical gathering for worship, no weekly activities. Today, worship is held online. This has resulted in a reduction in the tithe and offerings collected, and so pastors and priests have been affected. Some church dogmas are affected – no shaking of hands, no using of a single cup for the Holy Communion. Choir practices no longer hold, so many streams of worship are held where there used to be only one to reduce the number of people coming together etc. This year, 2020, Easter that was usually celebrated in high spirits with fun and fanfare, was quietly observed due to the lockdown. Even the Eid prayers and ceremonies by Muslims were also low-keyed. Pilgrimages by Christians and Muslims have been cancelled for fear of the spread of the virus. COVID-19 has dramatically impacted on the religious life of the people.

L. Greetings

The greeting is an expression of good wishes. It shows respect and goodwill. It is a sign of welcome that involves an exchange of pleasantries etc. The greeting is an act of communication in which human beings intentionally make their presence known and felt by each other. It pays attention to and suggests the type of relationship (usually cordial) or social status (formal or informal) between individuals or groups of people when they come in contact with each other [11]. It is something friendly or polite that you say or do when you meet or welcome someone [12].

In Igbo land, the greeting is an important part of the Igbo culture. Hence, there are greetings for various occasions and times. A child who does not greet his/her elders is seen as "ńnwá á ná ázùghị ázù" an uncultured, untrained, not well brought up child. A young lady of marriageable age who does not normally greet people may not have suitors coming for her hand in marriage. Some greetings require a handshake, an embrace, a touch, a pat on the back or a hug, depending on the level of relationship, intimacy, occasion and circumstance.

This very important aspect of the Igbo culture has been impacted seriously by COVID-19. Social and physical distancing as advised by WHO and NCDC has highly affected the way the Igbo greet. The Broadcasting Corporation of Abia State (BCA) on June 25 in an advert on COVID-19 at 3 pm, advised people to "maintain social distancing, stay indoors, do not shake anybody if you must go out, wear face mask". This advice no doubt affects the traditional lifestyle of Igbo people.

M. Economy

The principal exports of the Igbo are palm oil and palm kernels. Trading, local crafts, and farming are also important in the Igbo economy. A high literacy rate has helped many Igbo to become civil servants and business entrepreneurs in the decades after Nigeria gained independence [17]. In Igbo land, there are four market days: èké, òrìè, àfò and ñkwò. Different villages choose their main market days from the four where goods are bought and sold in wholesale and/or retail.

The most significant impact of COVID-19 was on the economy due to the total lockdown imposed by many countries of the world. Business in the whole world has been impacted negatively, and the Igbo nation is not left out. Igbo people are mainly into business, while significant numbers are civil servants and farmers. Due to the total lockdown, no single business is thriving. Markets were locked down, the few farmers that we're able to access some perishable goods had no market to sell them, and so people suffered financially and psychologically. Daily paid casual workers had nothing to do. Small scale businesses like eateries, hair salons, tailoring and fashion designing outfits, petty trading, vulcanizing, beauty salons, catering, all suffered loss because they did not have clients and the restrictions did not help. There was no cash in circulation. To even get out the little money one had in the bank was a tug of war. There was a disruption in the usual Igbo market days èké, òrìè, àfò, ñkwò out of desperation and in order not to starve to death, some village market venues were temporarily shifted to other hidden places. Commercial drivers were also hard hit as there was no movement from one destination to the other. All offices were equally locked down. As a result, most of the private companies were not able to pay their workers. Jobs were lost, salaries owed. Life became hard for many.

Conclusion

The pandemic, COVID-19, has made a severe impact on all sectors of life endeavour. Although the socio-cultural activities have almost been brought to a halt in compliance with prescribed precautionary measures, some wisdom has been acquired. The usual celebration and warm reception accorded to kinsmen vanished into thin air. People became very apprehensive and skeptical of exchanging close pleasantries let alone visiting returnees from abroad. On the other hand, most families have become united with parents spending more time with their children and with themselves during the lockdown. People learnt that there was a need to save for the rainy day and to diversify their means of livelihood. They equally came to realize that the vast expenses made during burials, wedding ceremonies, other festivities were unnecessary; rather, moderation was the way to go. Wastages were curtailed maximally. Though the measures prescribed by WHO, NCDC and Government were difficult to bear, they were still for the good of everyone. The motive was to save and preserve lives so we can live to fight another day.

It is worthy of note, however, to state that many countries have opened up while others are in the process. The need for a vaccine and appropriate medications in this situation cannot be overemphasized. The earlier they are discovered and approved, the better for everyone.

REFERENCES

- [1] Duro. O. et al. (eds.) *"Nigerian and Globalization: Discourse on Identity, Politics and Social Conflicts"*. Lagos: BAAC. P 242.
- [2] Federal Government of Nigeria 1988. Nigeria's Cultural Policy
- [3] Ndukauba, Kate. *"Difficultés Linguistiques Et Culturelles En Traduction: Etude Critique de la Traduction d'Arrow of God en La Flèche de Dieu par Irène D'Almeida et Olga Simpson"*. A

- doctoral thesis presented to the Department Foreign Languages and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Sept 2010.
- [4] Ndukauba, K. N. & Ohaike, N. B. (2020). "Disseminating information on covid-19 to rural dwellers through translation: A panacea to covid-19 spread" *Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*. Vol. 5, Issue 5. May 2020.
- [5] Odor. G.O. (2002). *"Essentials of Social Studies for Citizenship Education"*, Agbor: Royal Pace Publishers.
- [6] Ohaike, N.B. & Ikonke, U.H. (2007) *"Tradition and change in the moral values of the contemporary Igbo society"* in *Journal of the Nigerian Language and Culture* Vol 9. No 2. p9. APNILAC.
- [7] Taiwo, O.O. (2004). *"Globalization. Society and Culture: Whiter Nigerian Youths"* in Ugbeyavwighren. M. "Repackaging our culture and value system: A panacea for Autarky Development in Nigeria". APNILAC. p 72. Vol 10, No 2. 2008.
- [8] Ugbeyavwighren. M. *"Repackaging our culture and value system: A panacea for Autarky Development in Nigeria"*. APNILAC., p 72. Vol 10, No 2. 2008.
- [9] African Traditional Religion. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/9> Retrieved the eighth day of June 2020
- [10] Breaking of kola nut. <https://allafrica.co>>⁸ Retrieved the ninth day of June 2020
- [11] Cassius quotes on Colossus. <https://www.goodreads.com/tag>¹ Retrieved the tenth day of June 2020
- [12] Definition of Igbo greeting. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>¹¹ Retrieved the ninth day of June 2020
- [13] Greetings in Igboland. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>¹⁰ Retrieved the ninth day of June 2020
- [14] Igbo religion. Greetings. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo>⁴ Retrieved the eighth day of June 2020
- [15] Igbo mode of dressing. <https://www.legit.ng>⁷ Retrieved the eighth day of June 2020
- [16] Otto B., 2013, Culture-language. www.edu.com/.../culture-language⁶ Retrieved the eighth day of June 2020
- [17] Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. <https://study.com/academy/sapir>⁵. Retrieved the tenth day of June 2020
- [18] The Igbo economy. <https://www.britannica.com>>¹² Retrieved the ninth day of June 2020
- [19] Tylor Edward (1020 [1871]). Definition of culture. www2.palomar.edu³. Retrieved the eighth day of June 2020
- [20] What are culture and examples? <https://www.khanacademy.org>>². Retrieved June 10, 2020.