# INCULCATING DISCIPLINE IN THE YOUTHS THROUGH IGBO LITERATURE

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***Abstract***
*The work examines Igbo literature as a school subject, as a medium of moral upbringing and character training of Nigerian youths. Igbo Literature, in this context, has the capacity to inculcate in the youths' good morals and ethics of the society because it dwells on human issues and by its nature appeal to the youths. The Nigerian government and other agencies have at one time or the other made effort to eradicate youths' indiscipline and violence in our school and society, but all these efforts proved almost abortive. Literature, if carefully articulated as a school subject, at all levels, has the power to create a lot of impact on the lives of the youths, thereby, making them reasonable and responsible human beings. The thrust of this paper is to examine the capacity of Igbo literature in the area of three Igbo genres as a school subject in eradicating youth's indiscipline and violence in school, in particular and in Nigerian society in general. The work is an analytical survey. To carry out the work effectively, the researcher critically studies the selected works from the three genres of Igbo literature; namely prose, drama and poetry. In addition, some literatures relevant to the study were reviewed. Thus adequate information were gathered and analyzed. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is Aristotle's Rhetorical theory. This literary theory is relevant to this study because it advocates the type of discourse whose chief aim is to persuade an audience to think and feel or act in a particular way. It is hoped that this work will help in curbing the youths' indiscipline and violence, as it will inculcate moral values and sense of responsibility in them.*

## 1.0 Introduction

The problem of indiscipline and violence, especially among the youths, has so escalated that the government, past and present have continually declared war against indiscipline in Nigerian society. Thus we have witnessed the launching ofWar Against Indiscipline (WAI), War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC), the Civil Defense Corps, the Chaplaincy Corps, the Operation Smash

Patrol Team, the ANSEPEA, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) etc. All these beautiful measures have failed to solve the problems of youth's indiscipline and violence in our society. But what these measures above cannot achieve, Igbo literature as used in the context of this work can achieve them if properly harnessed. Igbo literature is imaginative work of arts which uses Igbo language to give a picture of life. It is a creative composition that represents the emotion, feeling and thought of a person which is usually society oriented.

Literature, particularly Igbo literature has power to create great impact on the lives of people in the society. Igbo literature has the capacity to influence people line of thought, especially the youths. It exposes people to their culture, values and ethics of his immediate society; thus making them to conform to them.

The literatures we are to rely on in this study are works of high merit which embrace prose fiction, drama and poetry. According to Ezeigbo (1991:10), literature in these areas in its oral or written forms operates at the level of language and has consistently remained one of the greatest tools of representation of reality. Obi (2006:487) asserts that literature has become an important means of understanding and interpreting human beings, and aspects of society such as politics, religion, economics, social conflict, class struggles, and human conditions through the medium of language. Since Igbo language deals with human beings and other aspect of society, it will serve as a verifiable tool in inculcating moral values and character training of youths.

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory. This literary approach is relevant to this study because it contends the type of discourse whose main aim is to persuade an audience to think and feel or act in a particular desired way. In this work, the direction of the study is to use the three major genres of Igbo written Literature- prose friction, drama and poetry, as a school subject; that is, course of study, to persuade the students to imbibe moral lessons from the selected texts as that will help them to be better citizens of the society. The teacher in the course of the study will persuade the students to avoid any act of indiscipline and violence in both within the school and outside school.

## 2.0 Review of Literature

This is where we take a critical look at the written works of experts in literature.

### 2.1 Indiscipline and violence Among Nigerian Youths

Indiscipline can be seen as any behavior of an individual or group of people that is not in conformity with the generally accepted pattern of behavior or norm in

the society. Igwe (1990) noted that there are three major types of indiscipline in school situation. These include:

1. Antisocial behavior resulting in destruction of public property and utility, rioting, hooliganism, stealing, bullying etc.
2. Deliberate act of defiance directed against constituted school authority and established values: e.g.: Refusal to carry out assigned punishment for misbehavior and failure to perform lawful school duties.
3. Negligence of duty and responsibilities such as careless handling of school property, equipment, facilities, etc.

As it were, the government has been contributing the problem of indiscipline in the country, by her failure to carry out her necessary responsibilities. In addition, other agencies such as the home, the school, and the society have also failed to carry out their responsibilities. For instance, the home which is the first place of the child has vital role to play in the upbringing of the child. That is why the Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." But now, there is no time to train up the child again at home: rather most children train themselves the way they like. And the result is indiscipline and violence everywhere. The home has very vital role to play in the training of the children, but unfortunately, many homes are so disorganized that they have nothing good to offer to the children. As a result, when such children get to the school, they will be manifesting the three types of indiscipline and violence as a result of poor upbringing.

In the words of Oku (2002:127);

> Also of immense importance to any discussion on the causes of indiscipline in schools is the influence of Alien culture as learnt through watching of foreign films, reading foreign literatures and write-ups. The "play tough" episodes often seen in the films and read in some novels and poems especially those that involve Human Right struggle and Mafia groups offer attraction to the school children and youths who at this period of development are adventurous.

On the contrary, the social values of the Igbo people in particular and Nigerian people in general can be studied through the oral and written literature specifically directed towards the articulation of the way of life of the people. As Ogbalu (1974:269) observes "It is in its literature that a peoples' self-consciousness is defined and given expression, and where the value they have choose to live are formulated and critically assessed.

On the other hand, according to the *New Webster's Encyclopedia Comprehensive Dictionary ofthe English language*, violence is the quality or state of being violent, intensity, fury, also an instance of violent action. It has to do with unjust exercise of power leading to destruction of lives and property. A conscious appraisal of the true situation in Nigeria, will prove that there is no peace due to indiscipline and violence.

Nnabuihe (2001 ;478) opines that;

> Violence took them over. They are exposed to violence, they imbibe violence, they indulge in violence, and so they die in violence. From the home to the school, to the larger Nigerian society. It is all tales of youth's violence each passing second.

Unfortunately, these Nigerian youths take to violence and get wasted. Why? This is simply because their parents fail in carrying out parental primary responsibilities to their children. As a result of mad rush for money, parents neglect their primary assignment of inculcating good moral values and socio-cultural norms which makes the youths better citizen as they strive to conform to them.

Based on all these observation and findings, this paper focused on how Igbo written literature in the area of the three major genres of Igbo literature can be used to inculcate in the youths the values and ethics of their immediate society in order to make them conform to the behavioral pattern and conduct that is acceptable to the schools and Nigerian society. Obviously, when we achieve this, the problem of youth's indiscipline and violence which has been eating deep in the flesh of our country, Nigeria will be eradicated.

**2.2 Literature and Society**

There is hardly any society without literature and there is no literature without society. This is because literature is an integral part of language. Egudu (1979:1) defines literature "as mode of expression". It is not just a subject that expresses something, but rather, it is the way, manner, or method in which something is said or written". Duvignand (1972:67) see literature not just as reflection, rather it is a projection of the people's aspiration for future. According to Caudwell (1997:145) "The task of literature is keeping the collective imagination of all society alive, such that its members will be able to channel their energies to communal social construction".

It therefore means that literature does not only reflect, it also affects the society.Obi (2007:2) points out that the literary artist does not just reflect his society, rather he also responds and reacts to socio-political and economic changes of the time through the medium of a specific language. Literature is language used creatively for passing message across to the audience. It comprises of the three major genres of prose, drama, and poetry. The ways of life of a people, such as their cultural values is embedded in their literature. As a result, literature teaches the culture of the society; both the prose-writer, play-wright and the poet geared their works towards creating a society that is free from evil.

## 2.3 The Place of Igbo Literature in Eradicating Youth Indiscipline and Violence

Igbo literature has two types namely: Oral and written forms; and both forms have vital roles to play in eradicating youth's indiscipline and violence in Nigeria. Dathone (1974:1) states that;

> Literature in the written vernacular languages of Africa provides an imaginative and essential link with unwritten indigenous literature; thus literature indicates the adaptability of oral tradition in that through the written vernacular literature the oral tradition expresses its versatility and diversity.

Literature, as a school subject, occupies a prominent place in the school because of the important role it plays in the lives of the people. By its nature, literature, as a school subject, offers training in creative logical and critical reasoning. It also helps and develops students analytical mind. In the contemporary Igbo written literature studied in the schools, like those to be studies in this work, aspects of oral Igbo literature such as proverbs, folklore, folktales, riddle etc., which have powerful educational value are carefully articulated into the Igbo written literature. Okonkwo (1975:116) observes that "they sharpen the imagination and help to develop keen sense of observation. It is a powerful means of educating the mind of students.

Literature deals with human values in relation to life. This implies that since culture has to do with human values, it can be very well taught through literature.

Ogbalu (1974:204) holds the view that;

> In literature, culture and human values emerge. The study of language through literature is ideal and it is

> hoped that the Ethics of the people which is usually embedded in the literature will provide the student with sustaining human values to guide him in life to realize himself.

By boarding the learner's life experience, it makes them extend their sympathy and empathy, and they will feel for others and also be able to project themselves in the place of other people. Ubahakwe (1979:158) supported this above view by postulating that literature offers individual insight to values different from those he has acquired in his immediate environment through his own culture and by so doing may lead to an enhanced moral sensitivity thereby enhancing students' knowledge and understanding of human behavior. Aristotle (1957:72) notes that literature embodies the quality of providing instructions to the students through the provision of vicarious experience which should be expected has a purging effect on the students thereby making them to imbibe humility as a virtue.

It is worthy of note that the three genres of Igbo literature are designed in such a way that they teach morals, expose the follies of people, and extol the praise worthy actions of other. The Igbo literary genres, particularly the prose fictions, always have one or more positive lessons the readers are expected to learn just as we have them in folktales. These lessons are not left to chance or are not accidental, rather the Igbo literature literary artists carefully articulated them to their literary work in a way that these lessons will always stand out after reading the work with understanding.

Just like the Igbo folktales, the contemporary Igbo literature artists usually compose their work to contain the following:

i. To illustrate the importance of kindness.
ii. To show the evil of wickedness.
iii. To show that if you do good you receive good, but if you do evil, you receive evil.
iv. To show that good name is better than money.
v. To show the important of self-control, honesty, humility and hard work etc.
vi. To show that it is not good to be covetous, greedy, over-ambitious etc.

These vital lessons transmitted through Igbo literature help the students in inculcating the virtues of living a moral life both in school and in the larger society. Thus, the youths learn to live disciplined life devoid of violence.

From the above discussion, one observes that Igbo literature as a school subject has the potential of eradicating youths' indiscipline and violence in Nigeria thereby giving room for nation building. That is to say that Igbo literature as a subject of study in school has the capacity of building up future leaders with good conscience who will care about the welfare of the masses and not such leaders who see their position as an opportunity to amass wealth. They thereby impose chaotic situation and unimaginable poverty on ruled masses of the country.

## 3.0 Analysis of Data

Our task here is to use the facts of literature to justify the values of Igbo literature as a school subject.

### 3.1 Igbo Literature Genres as a School Subject and Moral Lessons

Here, let us examine some examples of Igbo literary genres and their teaching of moral lessons. We are going to site two examples each from prose, drama texts and one example from a poetry text.

Firstly, in the area of Igbo prose fiction, in *Omenuko* by Pita Nwana, the story was told that when Omenuko who was the major character lost his goods during a business trip as they fell into a river, Omenuko did evil because he resort to selling the people serving him; human beings like himself to make- up for his lost goods; to the extent that he also sold Obiora his brother. As a result of his evil act, he was forced to leave his own town to Ndi Mgborogwu. He became a stranger element there. He has no right to be elected as a king there upon all his wealth. The only thing they managed to allow him is only to hold wallant for Obiefuna who supposed to be king because he was still a small boy. From the story, we observe that for Omenuko to come back to his town, Arondizuogu, cost him a lot of money to buy the things required to appease both the spirits, gods and his people.

From the story of Omenuko in*Omenuko* , the students will learn many moral lessons. For instance, that if one do evil, he/she will receive evil. As Omenuko did evil by selling his servants, including his brother Obiora, he received evil by running away from his home to a strange land, Ndi Mgborogwu, where he had no right to become king, despite his wealth.

Also, in C.N.Okebalama's *Odi Uko na Mba* which is another prose friction, the story shows that Ada disobeyed her father, Nwokeocha. Contrary to her father's instruction Ada ran away from her husband's house to join her aunty Ekwujuruka to go to Cameroon. In the novel we learnt that her father disowned her and also cursed her for disobeying him. The novel was designed in a way

that Ada's life was that of misconduct and indecent living and outright disobedience. As it were, Ada later ran into difficulties.

The novel has a lot of moral lessons to teach the youths such as the destructive effects of disobedience and careless attitude. Thus, they will learn to obey their parents, their teachers as well as their leaders and other constituted authorities.

In the area of drama genre, in I.U Nwadike's, there are many moral lessons to learn by both students and lecturers. The drama shows that Chinyere; who represents such female students in the University who do not settle down to read their books. The female student Chinyere prefers to use her body to pass examination. Ozuluigbo on the other hand, instead of facing his studies, went on visiting Chinyere, as his girlfriend. Dr. Emezina abused his higher academic position by victimizing Ozuluigbo. He also lowered his integrity as a senior academic staff by accepting to have sexual affair with Chinyere, her female student in order to give her WASCE question papers before examination. At the end, the drama shows that all of them were severely punished due to indecent living, indiscipline, lack of integrity and irresponsible attitude. This will teach the students that no sinner will go unpunished.

Also, in E. Akoma's Obidiya, the drama deals on consequences of covetousness. The drama shows how Oriaku killed Onuma through hired assassins because of covetousness. Oriaku wanted to take Onuma's parcel of land that is strategically located. Onuma's wife revenges her husband's death by using both poisoning, witchcraft and murder to wipe out the entire family of Oriaku both at home and abroad.

After reading this drama, the students will learn that covetousness is evil that can lead to untold destruction and hardship. They will understand that covetousness has nothing good to offer in all its ramification.

Furthermore, in the area of genre of poetry, there are many poems now available that can help in inculcating moral values to the students to make them disciplined and responsible citizens. Ikeokwu (2002:171) notes that the poet is more acclaimed with satiric renditions more than the other artists. As such, in *Obiageli*, Ogugua (nd.43) satirizes the attitude exhibited by some Nigerians which can bring another ethnic crisis. His reaction against propaganda and unhealthy rivalry that characterize the post-civil war in Nigeria is stated in the following rhetoric questions in the poem below;

Stanza 1:

Ọnụ gị agbawakwala
Dị ka igwe na-eti akụ?

Obi gị okowekwala ọzọ dị ka futubọl?
I tiwekwala ụmụnne gị ndị Nigeria
Dị ka Dick Tiger…?
Oji ọnụ egbu ọjị
I bidokwala ọzọ…?

(Has your mouth started sounding
Like a kernel cracking machine?
Has your heart started swelling again like football?
Like Dick Tiger…?
The braggert
Have you started again…?)

With this type of poem, the youths in school will learn that it is not good to involve themselves in propaganda or any other acts that are capable of generating crises.

From his tone in the poem, it is clear that Ogugua, the artist, is referring to the Biafra-Nigeria civil war and its catastrophic consequence. He opines that Nigeria is still groaning the aftermath of that civil war as he state in the following lines of poem in the second stanza:

Nigeria aka agbasịghị mkpe
Ndị I dubara n'ọnwụ ike
Site n'okwu ọnụ gị
Na ajọ omume gị

(Nigeria has not yet ended mourning
Those you brought untimely death
Through your utterances
And bad manner. )

The poet notes provoking and inciting utterances, fury and aggression as acts dangerous for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. The emotion of anger and fear engendered by what the poet is saying is heightened by the poet's creative use of language. This will go a long way to help the students comprehend the message the poet is trying to pass across. The level of the unguarded utterances, manifested by the people, can be seen by the imagery adopted in the similes used by the poet- ; people's careless and provoking utterances are compared to the kind of noise made by a kernel-cracking machine; people's furious heart swells as a football and their physical attacks on one another is comparable to the boxing action of Dick Tiger.

This type of poem with creative use of language will help develop the analytical mind of the students and also enable them have good conscience.

Last Stanza :

Udo na ịhụnanaya ka mma
Ndị Nigeria ka anyị biri n' udo
Bụrụkwa ndị nche ụmụnne anyị
(Peace and love are better
Nigerians let us coexist in peace
And be our brothers' keeper)

With the type of poem, the students will learn to live in peace and tranquility without engaging in indiscipline and violence. The poem teaches the student to avoid any act that will lead to crises and pursue peace as crises lead to destruction of both lives and property.

### 3.2 Recommendations Arising From the Analysis

To ensure that the desired goals and aspirations will be realized, the following recommendations are made:

A. The curriculum planners and Igbo language teachers have to ensure that only Igbo literature books that extol those desired virtues that will help the youths or students discover moral lessons which will help them to be honest, faithful, obedient, kind, merciful and respectful are recommended to be read by the students.
B. More time/periods are to be allocated to the teaching of Igbo literature in all levels of education in Nigeria.
C. Experts in Igbo language and culture are to be called upon to write well- articulated Igbo literature in the area of prose, drama, and poetry.
D. The National language policy on using mother-tongue (Igbo language) as the initial medium of instruction in the primary should be implemented and not just to have it in paper to enable children have good background in the language. This will help them read and comprehend Igbo literature in area of literary genres.

## 4.0 Summary and Conclusion

From the foregoing discussions, we observe that youth in schools and outside the schools exhibits act of indiscipline and violence. Youths' indiscipline and violence lead to destruction of lives and property. The study reveals that Igbo literature in the area of literary genres of prose fiction, drama and poetry will play vital role in eradicating youth indiscipline and violence particularly in secondary schools and tertiary institutions. It will help the youths in the adolescent age to acquire moral values and right attitude thereby they live a good and disciplined life. The paper noted that Igbo literature in the area of the

three genres have lots of moral lessons to offer to the youths if carefully and effectively handled as a school subject.

In conclusion therefore, Igbo literary genres as a school subject is a veritable tool in shaping the lives of the youths and thereby eradicate indiscipline and violence in schools and our society in general

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