

**Traditional Values as Bedrock for Peace Building in Nsukka Cultural Zone**

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**Abstract**

Religion plays a complex and multifaceted role in shaping the lives of human societies. The daily activities and worldview of Nsukka people are influenced by both African Traditional Religion and foreign religious practices. Despite the dominance of Western religions, African Traditional Religion remains a powerful force in shaping the values, beliefs, and actions of the community. Traditional religious teachings provide a foundation for peace and social order, with adherents placing great importance on values such as respect for life, justice, and communal harmony. Existing literature highlights the negative impact of Christianity and modernism on traditional systems of social control, which have eroded the spiritual and cultural fabric of the Igbo people. This disruption has contributed to rising insecurity in Nsukka, prompting a renewed interest in African Traditional values as a means of addressing contemporary social challenges. However, little attention has been given to how Traditional values serve as models for peace-building in the Nsukka cultural zone. This research aims to fill that gap. The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing oral interviews and participant observation for data collection. Secondary data from books, journals, and articles were also consulted. The findings of the study reveal that African Traditional Religion provides a strong moral framework, fostering values like respect for life, reverence for elders, the pursuit of justice, and the importance of communal living. The study concludes that a reintegration of these traditional values could play a pivotal role in sustaining peace in Nsukka, demonstrating the enduring relevance of African Traditional Religion as an instrument for social harmony and peace building.

**Keywords:** Tradition Values, African, Traditional Religion, Bedrock, Peace-Building, Nsukka.

**Introduction**

All societies, regardless of their socio-economic or political complexity, need a certain level of peace and order to function as a unified whole. It was in recognition of the value of peace in human society that Onah (2013) notes that peace is a good relationship well lived, a healthy absence of pressure and conflict, being strong and prosperous. In recognition of the value of peace, Mbiti (2010) notes that people want peace in our time, peace tomorrow, and peace in this new millennium.

In many post-conflict societies, efforts at restoring peace have often focused on state-centred, externally driven mechanisms, such as formal courts, international interventions, and standardized peace accords. While these approaches have their place, they frequently fall short of fostering lasting reconciliation within communities fractured by violence. This shortcoming is often due to a failure to engage with the local cultural values that shape how people understand justice, forgiveness, and coexistence. It is in this light that Omosor (2018) observed that Nigeria is confronted by serial ethno-religious crises because of wrong indoctrination and defective value orientation and recommended proper theological education as a panacea. As such, this paper explores the role of traditional values as a foundational framework for peace restoration, drawing on the theoretical lens of Cultural Relativism and Value Systems.

### **Cultural Relativism / Value System Theory**

Cultural Relativism posits that each culture must be understood on its terms and that moral and social norms derive their meaning from within the cultural context in which they exist. In tandem, Value Systems Theory suggests that communities are guided by deeply held norms and moral codes that govern interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution. These theories underscore the importance of recognizing and respecting traditional ways of resolving disputes and healing societal divisions. When applied to peace building, they highlight the potential of indigenous mechanisms such as community mediation, elder councils, and restorative rituals as authentic and effective pathways to reconciliation. Traditional African societies, for example, have long practiced conflict resolution methods rooted in collective identity, dialogue, and restoration rather than punishment. Concepts like Ubuntu "I am because we are" emphasize the interdependence of individuals within the community and encourage the restoration of broken relationships through empathy and forgiveness. Such value systems are not only culturally resonant but also socially sustainable, as they are embedded in the daily lives, beliefs, and practices of the people.

This paper argues that restoring peace through traditional values is not only culturally appropriate but also more likely to succeed because it is built upon principles that communities already trust and understand. By examining peace restoration through the lens of Cultural Relativism and Value Systems Theory, the paper highlights the critical need to integrate indigenous knowledge and values into contemporary peace-building efforts. In doing so, it challenges the dominance of Western-centric models and advocates for a more inclusive, culturally grounded approach to healing and justice.

### **Methodology**

This work adopted a qualitative design. As such, the method of data collection was oral interviews and participant observation. In this sense, relevant informants were interviewed. These include the traditional rulers, religious leaders, and lay people. The participants were purposely selected to represent several communities that make up the Nsukka cultural zone. These include elders, actors as traditional arbiters, and others who have knowledge of the people's cultural practices. The population of the informants was thirty, which included five (5) traditional rulers, five (5) religious leaders, and twenty (20) lay people. The population cuts across gender, comprising twenty (20) males and ten (10) females. They agreed to be interviewed with all necessary ethical guidelines for oral interviews being observed. The language for the interview was both English and Igbo to accommodate the non-literate participants. Data collected in vernacular were transcribed, translated, and interpreted. Added to this is participant observation. By this, the researcher participated and observed the processes of peace reconciliation, in the traditional way, in the course of the study. This took place between 2022 to early 2024. Secondary sources of information include textbooks, journals, Newspapers, and articles dealing with issues of peace in Nsukka and beyond. Data from these sources were presented descriptively in the work.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following key terms are defined for the purpose of clarity. African Traditional Religion (ATR), Peace, Value, Tradition, and Restoration

#### **Peace**

The term peace originated, most recently, from the Anglo-French meaning reconciliation, silence, and agreement. Nwolise (2005) said that peace is believed to have its root in the Anglo-Norman word *pas*, which means *freedom* from civil disorder. Ani commenting in Ikejiani (2009) defines peace as a state of mind in concourse with serenity; a state of harmony, tranquillity, concord, and a balance of equilibrium of power. Ani goes further to explain that peace is also a state of justice, goodness, and civil government. Peace can be empirical or abstract, normative or descriptive, active or passive. Hence, peace exists where people are interacting non-violently and are managing their conflicts positively.

### **Value**

According to Ugwu (2004), value is a set of social rules and norms intended to guide the conduct of people in a society. Traditional values, according to Mbiti (1975:11), refer to "the ideas that safeguard or uphold the life of the people in their relationship with one another and the world around them". According to Agha (2010:66), "value is the satisfaction of some interest. It is a quality in objects or situations that requires appreciation or preference between two variables. Therefore, value is the belief of people in which they have an emotional investment (either for or against something). As Omosor and Omosomuofa (2020) aptly submitted, there is a need for the revival of African cultural values for socio-political and economic stability and development in Nigeria.

### **Tradition**

This is the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way. In Africa, tradition is seen as a doctrine believed to have divine authority, even when it is not in scriptures or written down. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, tradition is a part of culture that is passed from person to person or generation to generation, possibly differing in detail from family to family.

### **African Traditional Religion**

Africans have their religion just like every other people of the world. African Traditional Religion is the religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. African Traditional Religion refers to the indigenous religions of the African people, which deal with their cosmology, ritual practices, symbols, arts, and so on. Nweke (2020) sees African Traditional Religion as the way Africans understand and worship their god. For Olupona (2014), African Traditional Religion refers to the indigenous religions of the African people, which deal with their cosmology, ritual practices, symbols, arts, and so on. According to Omotoye (2011), African Traditional Religion is the traditional religion of the African people before the coming of Islam and Christianity. To Bakibinga-Gaswaga (2001), African Traditional Religion is a living religion that is written in the lives of the people. According to Akinmayowa (2015), African Traditional Religion refers to the indigenous religious beliefs that Africans practiced before the advent of Christianity and Islam in Africa. That is the religion which resulted from the sustained faith held by the forebears of the present Africans, and which is being practised today in various forms, shades, and intensities by a very large number of Africans. Therefore, African Traditional Religion is the indigenous religion of the Africans, with features and characteristics distinct from other religions that can be found in other places.

### **Traditional values as a bedrock for peace building**

#### **Value for Human Life**

Life in the Nsukka traditional society is the highest value. Among the Igbo people generally, and the Nsukka people in particular, "the most important thing in the world of man was life, human existence was believed to be of prime value and any other thing was expected to serve its realization" (Ejizu 1985:44). Nwala (1965:144) agrees with Ejizu's opinion above when he observed that "to the traditional Igbo the summon *bonum* or highest value is life. "Life," hence the Igbo say, is of supreme importance. The importance that traditional society attached to life could best be appreciated from the names that elders and parents give to their children. Prominent among such names are *Ndubuisi* (Life is supreme), *Ndubuaku* (Life is wealth), *Nduka-aku* (Life is greater than wealth), *Ndubueze* (Life is king of value), *Nduka-ego* (Life is greater than money), and *Ndukwe* (If life permits).

Traditional Nsukka society placed a high premium on life and considered it sacred. The sanctity of life was derived from its source, *Chineke*. Emenanjo (2001) opines that, in the age of innocence, the rural Igbo had a very great respect for *Ndu* (life) because it comes from God. It is greater than money or wealth. It cannot be forged by a blacksmith. All things are only useful if they have life. Great care was taken to preserve life because, according to Iwe (1985:28), "traditional culture set very high value on ... the sanctity and dignity of human life". For the traditional society, "human life is the basis of all good, and is the necessary source and condition of every human activity and society. Most people regard life as something

sacred and hold that no one may dispose of it at will" (Esomonu 1981:4). Wilful taking of human life in the Nsukka traditional society attracted the death penalty. Hence, Isiwu (personal communication, February 2024) affirms that murder was considered a taboo, especially when a fellow kinsman or woman was involved. The traditional taboo to protect the sanctity of human life was extended to suicide. Just as one was not allowed by tradition to take another's life, he was not equally allowed by tradition to take his own life. Hence, suicide was considered a negative value as well as murder of any kind in Nsukka community. Death by suicide is an abomination to the earth deity, and the culprit is denied of befitting burial. These prohibitions were primarily meant to preserve the sacredness of human life in the traditional society.

Ezeanya also agrees with the high value placed on life by the Nsukka and Igbo generally. According to him:

The religious philosophy of the African is life-centred. Nearly all the prayers offered to God, the spirits and the ancestors are reducible in one way or another to prayers for obtaining life, for solving it, or for preserving it from countless dangers that threaten it (1976:2).

Life was so valuable in the traditional society that almost anything could be done to preserve or sustain it and even to uproot any obstacle that threatened its existence. Humans were at the centre of the community because the community existed because of them. Without life, humans were doomed. Hence, traditional community placed a high premium on the life of its individual members and established such values that enhanced the preservation of life.

### **Value for Justice**

In traditional Nsukka society, justice was seen as equality of opportunity, particularly in the right to live and succeed. The popular proverbs "Biri kambiri" (live and let live) and "Egbe bere, ugo berre" (let the kite perch and let the eagle also perch) reflect the importance of fairness and mutual respect. Justice was central to moral life, with unethical actions condemned and individuals who violated justice considered untrustworthy or dishonorable (Iwe, 1985). Justice in Nsukka was a principle that upheld harmonious relations, distinguishing between right and wrong, and ensuring social order. It regulated both human and spiritual interactions, emphasizing the importance of fairness in dealings with the divine, ancestors, and the living. Bribery and corruption were seen as violations of this principle, attracting severe consequences (Ugwu, personal communication, August 2024).

In cases of severe injustice, the community sought redress from divine justice, which was believed to be absolute and impartial. The supernatural was the highest court of appeal, and its judgment was final and unquestionable (Okafor, in Ekeopara, 2011). Unlike Christian mercy, traditional justice demanded strict retribution for wrongdoers, with no room for repentance or pardon (Iwuagwu, 1998). Thus, justice was a cornerstone of Nsukka society, ensuring peace, order, and moral integrity.

### **Respect for Elders and Parents in Nsukka Traditional Society**

In Nsukka traditional society, respect for elders and parents is a core value. Elders are honored not just for their age, but also for their role as custodians of wisdom and intermediaries between the living and the ancestors (Ekeopara, 2011; Chidili, 2012). Emenanjo (2001) notes that in traditional society, elders were revered because they embodied knowledge and spiritual authority. Proverbs and sayings, such as "what the elder sees sitting, a child cannot see standing," emphasize the importance of their insight. Respect was shown through greetings, obedience, and service. Young people were expected to seek guidance from elders and never lie to or insult them, as doing so could bring punishment or a curse. As Attama (personal communication, November 2024) observed, respecting elders was believed to ensure a long life. However, elders were also expected to act with integrity, as respect was mutual and earned. This reciprocal respect helped maintain peace and harmony in the community.

### **Respect for Hard work in Traditional Nsukka Community**

In traditional Nsukka society, hard work was essential for survival and success. Labor was seen as a means to secure livelihood and self-realization, with laziness having no place in the community. As Iwe (1985) notes, "The lazy person, who cannot justify their existence through honest work, was held in low regard"

(p. 150). Farming, particularly yam cultivation, was the primary occupation, and owning large yam barns was a symbol of success. Wealth and status were determined by one's industriousness, particularly in agriculture. Hard work also helped to reduce poverty, laziness, and social vices. According to Ugwuodo (personal communication, March 2024), wealthier farmers would lend seed yams to the less fortunate, promoting industriousness and discouraging idleness. This spirit of hard work also fostered social solidarity, as the community supported each other through cooperation and mutual aid. Ekwunife (1990) highlights how hard work maintained peace and stability in the socially cohesive Nsukka society. Thus, hard work was not only an individual virtue but a vital part of the economic and social fabric of Nsukka, contributing to both personal success and communal well-being.

### **Communal Spirit and Solidarity in Traditional Nsukka Society**

Traditional Nsukka society, like much of African culture, was rooted in communal living rather than individualism. The community upheld customs and traditions, and individuals found identity and purpose within it. As Ekwunife (2004) notes, Igbo values emphasized cooperation, hard work, and peaceful coexistence, with kinsmen acting as one another's keepers. Obioma and Uduak (2010) highlight that this communal focus made sharing, mutual support, and harmonious living possible. O'Donovan (2000) affirms that individuals prioritized the well-being of their community, clan, and tribe, fostering care and support for one another. This spirit was maintained through observance of omenala—traditional customs aimed at preserving peace and order (Nwala, 1985).

In Nsukka, successes and failures were shared, and community progress was valued above individual achievement. Sayings like "one hand cannot tie a bundle" and "a tree does not make a forest" reflected the belief that true strength lay in unity. As Emenanjo (2001) and Onunwa (2012) observe, the Igbo person was a team player, deeply invested in communal welfare. The fear of social disapproval also kept behavior in check, promoting peace and harmony. In essence, communal spirit and solidarity were the foundation of stability, support, and moral order in traditional Nsukka life.

### **Factors Hindering Peace Restoration in Nsukka**

In order to put the subject of peace in a proper perspective, there is a need to state those issues that generate conflicts in Nsukka. These issues could be easily categorised under the following.

#### **Youth Unemployment**

The youth are the driving force for development. According to Schafer (2015), youth is a period of life in-between childhood and adulthood. It is described as a time of experimenting with roles and identities, still void of the burden of social norms and obligations, yet slowly preparing the youngsters for their lives as full members of the social collective. Youth in Nsukka are young people between fifteen to forty years. They are young and energetic people. Afolayan (2005) defines unemployment as a situation where people who are willing and capable of working have no work to do due to no fault of theirs. In line with this, Reynolds (1978) asserts that the most obvious aspect of the problem is full time unemployment, the situation in which people are willing and able to work but have no jobs. Youth unemployment creates conditions that allow young and energetic people to remain idle. This leads to the distorting of their minds and the creation of conditions that make criminality and violence attractive. In Nsukka community, the number of youths suffering from unemployment is outrageous. Most of these youths are qualified for jobs but job opportunities are none-existing, especially white collar jobs.

It is also disheartening that even those who did professional courses in the Universities lack financial capacity for establishment, for self-employment. The implication is that most of these vibrant youths join criminal acts. In Nsukka today, unemployed youths are the major threats to peace and security in the society. This is reflected in the nature of criminal activities pervading Nsukka which include armed robbery, hired assassination, cultism, kidnapping and internet fraud, extortion using masquerades, raping, drug abuse and prostitution. Kidnapping business is still going on in Nsukka. The recent kidnapping along Ugwuogo-Opi Nsukka road on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2023, in which culprits are suspected to be unemployed youths, who demanded ransom from the relations of the victims before their freedom. This has disrupted

the movement of people to and fro Nsukka. Business transactions are also hampered as people cannot travel out of Nsukka to buy or sell goods.

Youth unemployment obviously portends great danger to the peace and development of Nsukka. It is in the same direction of thought that Ituma (2008:35-36) remarks that “corruption in Nigeria cannot be adequately handled if youth unemployment is not adequately addressed”. Thus, educational achievements may raise the aspirations of young people but they will be frustrated if they are unemployed, occasionally venting their feelings in mass political violence. In support of Ituma, Murshed and Gates, in Onuh (2017) state that at the individual level, perception of frustration arouse anger, which then functions as a drive. The youth is undoubtedly the driving force of any economy and nation. According to Onah (2016), youths make up the active population of any society. Hence, active population of any society is its productive sector and this determines the level of development of the society. Achor (2015) notes that any country whose workforce is characterised by a youthful population involved in social vices will amount to an erroneous, erratic, vain, and corruption-ridden society. When the vast majority of youths are involved in vices, there exists a great probability that the leadership and governance will decline as so many find their way in these leadership positions and effect negative changes to suit their vicious appetite. Scholars like Echebiri (2005), Ononogbu (2010), and Curtain (2000), agree that youth population has continued to increase.

Consequently, the absence of a functional and growing formal market in all the three sectors of the economy (industrial, commercial and services) may lead to youth unemployment. Also unemployment and poverty make it easier for politicians to engage the services of young people who are used to perpetrate violence, especially, against political opponents. This was prominent in the just concluded 2023 governorship election in Nsukka. Youths were paid to snatch ballot papers and kill any person who stood on their way. The most nagging issue in this stance according to Odo (2014) is that many programmes instituted by both military and democratic governments to reduce unemployment in the country and to cater for the vulnerable groups hardly reach the target populace. The people who are entrusted the task of seeing that the poor masses get relief often divert the resources to private usages. This institutes poverty the more in the country. He further explains that resources that ought to have been used in establishing industries are being squandered by politicians and the government alike for some ceremonies like birthday, funerals, voting campaign. For youths to be well engaged in the development of a society, there must be carefully planned and executed programmes for them. Furthermore, parental up bringing firstly plays a very good role while the provision of enabling environment for them would also help. Therefore, youth unemployment has not only disrupted peace in Nsukka Cultural Zone but has placed our youths in a state of confusion of mind.

### **Christianity**

The impact of Christianity on Igbo traditional values is deep and complex, bringing both positive changes and significant disruptions. Before the arrival of Christianity, Igbo traditional religion deeply influenced every aspect of life in Igboland, shaping behavior, culture, politics, and social order. However, the introduction of Christianity led to significant disruption. In support of this, Nwangama (2011) posits that:

No sooner than the missionaries introduced the new religion that they began to despite the people's religion. Christianity began to preach against the belief in divinities and other minor deities, consultation of oracles and fortune tellers, traditional burial and funeral rites, polygamy, taking of titles, belief in reincarnation and other traditional practices which they considered idolatrous practice (p.205).

Missionaries condemned indigenous beliefs—labeling them as idolatrous—and dismissed practices such as divination, ancestor worship, polygamy, and title-taking. Even though Ibenwa (2014) opines that there were some fundamental negative aspects of the Igbo belief system that needed to be thrown away, and some needed an amendment, while some to be retained because of their rich qualities, Christianity condemned virtually every aspect of the belief system without a second thought. The new religion displaced rather than complemented the traditional system. Western missionaries viewed Igbo religion and culture as primitive, often using derogatory language to describe it. In the words of Udeagha (2010:2) “the choice of terms which the western missionaries and scholars used in describing the native,

indigenous and traditional religion of the Africans were not just derogatory and opprobrious but also inflammatory and seditious". Christianity's imposition weakened traditional social control systems and spiritual values. The Bible replaced traditional oaths, but it lacked the fear-inducing authority of native deities, leading to increased moral laxity, especially in truth-telling and social accountability. Lawrence (2002). Lawrence expresses that:

Since the contact of the culture with other foreign culture and religion, things are no longer the same. There are lots of thoughts, ideas and motives that have affected the life of the people negatively. For example, the communal life and brotherhood of the people, the traditional family institution that radiated with love, have been destroyed, and it is a truism that the traditional Igbo cherished communal life and brotherhood can no longer be followed (p.102).

Admittedly, deities in Nsukka area have been victims of organised attacks by the received religion Christianity but interestingly, they have continued to soldier on. Even though the number of their adherents continues to be depleted, some nominal Christians have consulted deities during life's travails. There is hardly any doubt for such Christians, their new faith is only on the surface and a cover-up. The claim that deities have progressively lost its value in influence and patronage appears misplaced also, as investigations have revealed. Eze (2016), affirms that in recent years there has been high profile patronage from some victims of injustice who will come with all sorts of gifts to solicit assistance from the deities. To such people, deities remain the reason for their success and they therefore see themselves as the soldiers of the deities, who are recompensed at the end of every year. With the increasing wave of crime and insecurity there has been a steady increase in the number of people who go to deities for assistance in bringing criminals and culprits to justice.

Currently in Nsukka, the role of the ancestors as mediators is declining. Ezenweke (2012), citing Anderson, reveals the opinion of a well-informed member of the Apostolic Faith Mission and an Igbo Christian that:

I personally do not venerate the ancestors but I believe that ancestors are there. They do exist; they are people who have fallen asleep. They do have power to save or harm you if you do not follow their instruction; and they have the power to help you if you follow them. If people know the power of the gospel they would not have anything to do with the ancestor. But because they are bound by the devil they are still in darkness. They go up and down buying goats; slaughtering cows and nothing seem to come right. So if people could know the power of the gospel and believe in Jesus Christ, they could be set free. Now that they are still in darkness, they must do as the devil commands them (p.87).

Generally, Christians perceive veneration of ancestral cult as contrary to their Christian faith. Most of them abhor anything about their ancestral heritage. Consequently, most families are having serious challenges which are traceable to the neglect of their ancestral lineage. There are instances of ancestral curses in most families which are as a result of the neglect of family norms and good moral standard left behind by the ancestors. It is worthy to note that ancestors are those who lived exemplary lives while on earth. As such, it would not be wrong if they are emulated by the people. Christians, while adhering strictly to their Christian faith, should not neglect the rich family norms and good moral legacies left behind by their ancestors. They should accord respect to their ancestors by exhibiting a life of good moral standard and also being their brother's keepers.

Again, the Christian missionaries did not agree with the tenets of masquerade society. Thus, they queried its secrecy and counselled their members to avoid association with them. According to Ozah (2010), members who insisted on joining the cult is excommunicated from the church and those who joined the church and refused to attend the cult's meeting were excommunicated from the community. In support of this, Okwueze (2003) affirms that "the Christian missionaries intended to transfer western culture to the African context. As a result, there is confrontation between the traditional moral life and Christian culture". He further writes:

In Imilike, Ukehe, Aku, Idoha, Ede Oballa and Alor uno, all towns in Nsukka cultural zone of Enugu State. Christians have been known to carry out unjustified attacks on the traditional religion.

Sometimes it involves a complete destruction of traditional religious shrine. In Ukehe and Aku in 1994, young boys and girls belonging to the Christian youths were ordered by their parish priest to unmask traditional masquerade called Odo (p. 87)

The masquerade chased them into the bush and fought with them and had three of them dangerously and brutally machete. Furthermore, in 2002, Christians in Neke invaded and destroyed the shrine of Ezugwu and Odo deities in what they considered as inhuman and ungodly practices in the shrine. This was done to dramatise the fact that Christianity has taken over power. A close observation reveals that deities in Nsukka have continued to soldier on.

Religion is meant to serve, and continually serve, as an element of society's promotion of better social order. In his submission, Omosor (2019) held that Christian clerics are expected to promote development in Nigeria by not only living by example in terms of morality, but also inculcating the right values in their congregants instead of preaching prosperity gospel. Thus, religion, particularly Christianity, should touch on individual and group acceptable behaviour since it impinges and shapes the moral judgement of people. On the contrary, the change brought about by Christianity has further given rise to confusion. On this note, Abu-Nimer (2000) opines that, religion has an impact on the conflict causes, dynamic and resolution. In the same sense, Uwaegbute (nd) laments that, achievements of peaceful living among Nigerians is less favourable by frequent retaliation in reaction to different violence, carried out against particular religious groups. All these can never encourage human development. Therefore, Christianity and its agents have disrupted African Traditional values as bedrock for peace restoration in Nsukka Cultural Zone.

### **Globalisation**

Globalisation is the process by which ideas, knowledge, information, goods and services spread around the world (Ben 2021). Globalization refers to the transmission of ideas and values in such a way as to intensify social relations. Globalisation has done more harm than good to Nsukka culture. Nsukka community has a distinguishing cultural heritage which is not only their pride but exclusively defines her as a people. Regrettably, the story is not the same today as the people's culture is being transformed by globalisation. Agreeing with this, Elom (2015) opines that several aspects in African Traditional Religion were affected by change. The traditional drums, clothing, marriages experienced changes. The traditional theatre was found in open places (a sand-filled arena) usually known as playing ground which was common in Nsukka communities. These open theatre were used for stage plays, dance and the parading of masquerades especially during festive periods; the theatre is usually not decorated but the spectators, who form their stand to watch in a round circle, makes the traditional theatre more beautiful and attractive. But today, one can hardly find such theatres; they are being replaced by modern theatre known as "stage" and are given a different perspective from what the traditional theatre looks like. This has disintegrated the communal life of the community.

Marriage, in Nsukka conception is a good and happy moment which unites two families together. According to Ekeopara (2012), marriage strengthens bonds of kinship. It generates substantial degree of social integration and stability. Marriage in Nsukka was not costly or stressful. Girls were betrothed to their husbands while they were still virgins. A prospect husband was tested, especially in farm work, to know if he was a lazy type or not. These were the things that enhanced a long-lasting marriage. Today however, the case is different. There are rigorous ways through which a man must pass through before getting married. Presently, marriages are done in sequence, costly and expensive yet most of the marriages do not even last owing the high rate of divorce seen among married couples. In Nsukka today, material wealth is taken at a high esteem. In most places, a man is considered qualified for marriage if he is wealthy not considering the source of such affluence. A man is given a long list of items to purchase without considering his financial capacity. Moreover, such person was forced to throw an expensive traditional marriage to meet up with the demand of the modern society. A transporter in Udenu local government, spent one million naira in his traditional marriage only for his wife to find out that he is an armed robber after six months of marriage. As a result, the lady ran away for her life. This has affected the peace of many homes in Nsukka and also contributes to a lack of peace in the place.

Again, traditional worship centres (shrine), have been changed and modernised. The worship pattern which used to follow traditional precepts has been changed to beat tune with global trends. This includes the way most Africans dress now, how they eat, how they socialise and interact with each other. On this, Kasongo (2010) observes that:

In Africa tradition, collective socialisation is important in personality formation. In fact, while much of our personality is the direct result of our interaction with our parents (enculturation), the group socialisation process (rituals and traditional religion in this case) can shape it in particular direction by enforcing specific beliefs and attitudes as well as selectively providing experiences. That is how African traditional society was organised in developing the collective consciousness of the society. (p. 315)

More so, Bello and Adesemoye in Elom (2019) opine that:

Teenagers and youths generally are vital segment of the society who could be instrumental in promoting the African cultures. But unfortunately the mentality and life style of the teenagers have been grossly affected by exposure to western films to some extent that rather than promoting the indigenous cultures they have become hardened acolytes and promoters of violent, hence nudity is now seen as fashion (P.36).

Igbo (2010) and Onoyima (2011) listed the so called modern fashionable outfits introduced by our youths as follows: leggings, hip stars, hug-me, half-cut, kiss-me monostrip, palazzo paints, show back, miniskirts, see through, spaghetti, show me your chest. All these result to increase in immoral life among youths such as; sex abuse, stealing, prostitution and money rituals to beat tune the global trend which is common among Nsukka community. Nzimike in Elom (2019) captures this devastating effect of modernity and civilization succinctly in these words:

The social fabric was completely devastated and a new culture of violence was implanted. The negative effect of modernity seems to be more conspicuous and alarming among our youths who are rapidly losing touch with cultural values and that could be seen in the alien culture which they portray in their dressing code, dancing and language which invariable affects other aspect of social life (p.46)

Nsukka people used to be a people with strong social bonds. These bonds, including those of the families and oneness, are long gone. The spread of globalisation into Nsukka changed the social structure and the pattern of family life. It is disheartening to find out that the bond of cordial relationship which existed at the original united extended family system has been mutilated. The social network that promoted brotherly love within the kinship structure of the extended family system has been severed and dismembered.

### **Corrupt practices in the Society**

Nigerian society is in a sympathetic condition of moral, social, political, economic, legal and educational deterioration (Ugwu 2002). Ugwu further defines corruption as behaviour, which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding influence. In the same sense, Otumegwu in Ugwu (2002) posits that corruption has brought about siphoning of limited public funds that are meant for industries, hospitals, schools and other infrastructures. In most cases, public funds mapped for infrastructural development are embezzled, misappropriated and depleted through kickbacks over-invoicing by government agents. This has occasioned poor infrastructural development and dilapidate facilities that endanger human lives and property. Some contractors receive payment for contracts that are never executed. According to Nwaike (2000), corruption has spread to all segments of the society such as school, business, family, and church. In support of the above statement, Okereke in Ugwu (2002) opines that corruption triumphs in Nigeria, because of the desire to get rich quick that is now prevalent among Nigerians. Furthermore, almost all sectors of the society are affected by corruption. In support of this, Ezeme (2008) affirms that there is a high rate of corruption in the country to the extent that corruption has become synonymous with the name, Nigeria. This social vice is visible in both private and public life. It is practised in both low and high places. Again, Agha (2004) describes the high level of corruption in

Nigeria when he said that electoral votes are sold and purchased. This was Nigerian experience in 2023 presidential and governorship election. Agha further asserts that the result of corruption is that an entirely honest person may be embarrassed, shocked and insulted, even at our airports. Innocent citizens have been punished unjustly while those who perpetrate corruption usually go scot-free.

In support of Agha, Ugwu also reveals that corruption is cankerworm that has eating into the traditional values of Nsukka. Presently, justice does not always prevail in Nsukka. This was attributed to corruption on the part of elders and traditional leaders in Nsukka. Bribery is the order of the day. The elders who are custodians of tradition in Nsukka compromise in terms of passing judgement, by thwarting the truth. Some elders, due to money offered to them no more stand on the truth, even when it is obvious who is innocent or guilty in a case. This agrees with the saying in Nsukka, that *ikpe mara eziokwu, aka azu di ya*, when (justice is altered, bribery is not out of place). Ugwu further affirms that when justice does not prevail, people take laws into their hands, thereby promoting violence. Lending voice to this, Anugwom (2002), Okwueze (2004) and Chuta (2004) join to say that corruption is evil and it has contributed in no small measure to social vices and crises of all kind.

### Conclusion

The study has shown that prior to the coming of new religions and foreign culture in Nsukka, human life was relatively stable with the African Traditional Religion greatly influencing the lives of the people, giving meaning and purpose to all aspects of thought and action. Traditional Religion provided traditional values which the people earnestly adhered to in order to live a peaceful life in the community. These traditional values include value for life, justice, hospitality, respect for elders, hard work. Peace and harmony in traditional communities were ensured through the strict observation of communal values. These traditional values are an indispensable ingredient in upholding and sustaining human social relationships and cohesion, as well as strengthening ontological balance.

Traditional values remain a vital foundation for peace restoration in Nsukka. Rooted in African Traditional Religion, these values—such as respect for life, justice, communal living, and respect for elders—once ensured harmony and social order. In the face of rising insecurity and moral decline, revisiting and reintegrating these values into modern society offers a culturally grounded and effective path toward lasting peace and communal stability.

### Recommendation

Having discussed Traditional value as the bedrock for peace restoration in Nsukka culture, the study offers some recommendations that would help to further the restoration of peace in Nsukka

1. There should be a deliberate inclusion of traditional values such as respect for elders, communal living, honesty, and justice in school curricula and civic education programs.
2. Traditional leaders such as Igwe, Onyishi, and other custodians of culture should be empowered and included in local decision-making processes.
3. Peace-oriented traditional practices, such as new yam festivals and communal cleansing ceremonies, should be revitalized as platforms for reconciliation.

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