



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world: Challenges and prospects

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### Abstract

The study examined the challenges and prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world: The specific objectives were to: determine the challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world and examine the prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world. The research design was descriptive survey method. Study Area was Enugu State. The sample size of 163 respondents were taken from population of 276 apprentices from different major markets – Kenyetha market (44), Ogbete market (41), Timber market Abakpa (53), Artisans markets (64) and Gariki market (74) Enugu Metropolis business clusters in Enugu state, Nigeria. Research questions of the study were answered using mean score and standard deviation. The hypotheses stated would be tested with chi-square and single regression analysis. The empirical result showed that there are significant challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world (Chi-square: 33.62 > Critical-value: 0.000) and there are significant prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world (Chi-square: 98.48 > Critical-value: 0.000). The study recommended that Nigerian government should formulate policy that enforce justice between apprentice master and his apprentice to control non-settlement of apprentice after several years of patience.

**Keywords:** Igbo apprenticeship system; Igba-boy (become an apprentice); Imu Ahia (learn a trade); Imu Oru Aka (learn a craft)

### 1. Introduction

The Igbo apprenticeship system ("Igba-boy" (become an apprentice; "Imu Ahia" (learn a trade; "Imu Oru Aka" (learn a craft) has been referred to as the secret of Igbo commercialism and success in commerce (Anago, 2023). This community partnership ensures the training of new generations of successful business people. This training system has offered many a path out of poverty and created a large number of millionaires and billionaires. As Okeke, (2023) poignantly observed that Igbo apprenticeship system is now one of the critical training phases most young Igbo boys must pass through before becoming independent. Some even prefer this route to formal education or combine their service period with formal education. This apprenticeship is unpaid, although the Oga typically provides housing, food and clothing. The training period is usually about 6-8years, after which a graduation ceremony would be held for the apprentice during which the 'Oga' gifts the young man a sizeable sum of money and sometimes even extends a line of credit for the purchase of goods required to set up a new business (Adeola & Ozigbo, 2021). This training system evolved from the long-standing practice of sending younger family members to live with older relatives in other towns who supervised or provided education, whether formal or informal (trade). It gained prominence at the end of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war in 1970. Built on the Igbo principle of *lekota nwanne gi nwoke*-meaning 'take care of your brother', the system sought to restore and develop Igbo wealth.

The training system is not faultless. One of its key issues is when some Ogas falsely claim a trainee has stolen money or goods towards the end of the agreed apprenticeship period as a sly means of wriggling out of their commitment to the

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apprentice. In addition, there has been no record of an Igbo girl/lady passing through same system. Ugwu and Mbah, (2022) were apt in identifying one of the problems with the traditional apprenticeship system in Nigeria when he asserted that; 'one major problem of apprenticeship system is that; it is generally believed to be meant for people who cannot do well in the formal education system or those whose parents cannot afford to sponsor their education' (Ugwu & Mbah, 2022). The study further states that "it is assumed that people undergoing apprenticeship are 'never do well' people and they are not given deserved respect like their counterparts in the formal school system." The study noted the obvious attitude of the masters, lack of funding, outdated and unimplemented policy and lack of a standardized curriculum set out for the practice of the apprenticeship system as some of its problems. However, the pros of the system supersede the cons and is confirmed to be of immense benefits in the long run. Beneficiaries of this Igbo apprenticeship training have gone on to establish several well-known enterprises. Supermarkets like popular Prince Ebeano chain of stores, Blenco Supermarket; Car outlets like Coscharis Motors, God is Good motors; many industrial and trading companies in Lagos State and beyond (Nnonyelu & Onyeizugbe, 2020).

Okwuowulu, (2023) numerated some advantages of the Igbo apprenticeship system which include: helps build business ecosystems using cultural models: as a cultural nation, many long-standing businesses were built through cultural beliefs centred on alignment of values; it gives practical business knowledge and insight. Some have likened the kind of business skills acquired during this training to those obtained in a more traditional business school. Nnonyelu, Nnabuife, Onyeizugbe, Anazodo and Onyima, (2023) opined that Igbo apprenticeship model is an excellent example of mentorship; in other words, "catch them young" mindset. The training is usually done on a more personal level compared to formal education, and so incorporates social grooming, values and ethics development. The boys go through this training at a young age and become young experts on both the hard and soft skills required to run a successful business. Apprenticeship provides opportunity for entrepreneurship mindset. Chukwuma, (2017) stated that Igbo apprenticeship system builds an entrepreneurship mindset regardless of the mentee continuing in that same business line or setting up a new one entirely. It helps fine-tunes business ideas and skills that build expertise even at the startup stage, thereby eliminating the startup error syndrome. Graduates of this system are usually good sales and marketing experts. Perhaps, this is as a result of the reinforcements usually attached to how well they perform while looking after the trainer's store. Anigbogu, Onwuteaka and Okoli, (2019) opined that Igbo apprenticeship system provides opportunity for securing angel investment to run a business. At the end of the Igbo apprenticeship training, the trainee receives funds to jump-start his own business, at little or no interest rate. It reduces the rate of unemployment and poverty. The purpose of the Igbo apprenticeship training is to ensure that clansmen overcame poverty and establish a pathway for generational success. Apprentices receive on-the-job train, which offers the opportunity to acquire applicable skills. There is therefore need to promote, redevelop and bring the apprenticeship system to the 21st Century because it has the potential to boost the economy in many ways.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The entrepreneurial performance of Igbo people from ancient to contemporary times is dynamic and continuous. But Igbo entrepreneurs have been successful because of their practice of right business strategy and effectiveness. From all indications, Igbo's has established what could be regarded as a business culture. The entrepreneurial foundation of the Igbo's has led to senseless pursuit of wealth by some misguided and self-centered persons. This condition is worsened by the current forces of globalization, westernization and modernism which have introduced deceitful tendencies and systems among some Igbo entrepreneurs.

Today, the Igbo apprenticeship system seems to be going on extinct as the majority of Igbo boys seek immediate and big money. Also, for most individuals who are willing to pass through the apprenticeship after patiently serving out, a sizable portion of the masters ('Ndi Oga') are unwilling to settle many of the apprentices who managed to go through the apprenticeship system. The boys would sometimes face accusations of one sort or another, and many are forced to leave empty-handed. This often happens more than halfway into the settlement date. Also, there is of the view that the Igbo apprenticeship system has been facing challenges that threaten its continuity. One of the major challenges is materialism. With the rise of consumer culture and the increasing emphasis on material possessions and the get-rich-quick syndrome, many young people are no longer interested in learning a trade or business through apprenticeship. They would rather engage in activities that promise immediate gratification, such as entertainment, fashion, yahoo business and social media. As a result, the number of young people willing to become apprentices has declined, and many skilled artisans and traders are struggling to find successors.

The Igbo apprentice system is a rational economic decision that uses cheap labour to build up human resources, while creating the opportunity of developing self-employed individuals. This has helped a lot of youth to be self-dependent and not rely on the government. Research has shown that this apprenticeship system has not only helped to develop wealthy Igbo men but has also helped to reduce the problems of unemployment and hoodlums in the society. Therefore,

challenges inhibiting the growth of Igbo apprenticeship system should be looked into as it has a high tendency of reducing the entrepreneurs in the society.

### *Objectives of the Study*

The broad objective of this study was to examine the Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world: challenges and prospects. The specific objectives are to:

- Determine the challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.
- Examine the prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.

### **1.2. Significance of the Study**

This study is beneficial and important the following of groups namely entrepreneur, manager of organizations and researchers.

The study will help to highlight the importance of undergoing through apprenticeship process in other to be a well-established entrepreneur. The result of the study will help to highlight the advantages of apprenticeship process and as well depict the different types of Igbo apprenticeship system and the requirements for each system. It will help individuals choose the apprenticeship type suitable for them.

Furthermore, the study will also be of use to apprentices all over the state, by highlighting the importance of the various apprenticeship schemes on the development of skills for individuals. The study will provide encouragement on the developments of the skills sets of the individuals.

The knowledge of the study will also add to the existing knowledge in this field of study and as such serve as a reference material and an empirical review to future studies.

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## **2. Conceptual Literature**

### **2.1. Igbo Apprenticeship System**

The Igbo Apprenticeship System is embedded in the culture of Ndi Igbo. Ab initio, the inclination of Ndi Igbo to business, venture capitalism and business incubation has continued to elicit divergent connotations (Ezeajughu, 2021). Rufai, Assim and Emmanuel (2021) perceived the Igbo entrepreneurship as a system of mentorship where the master is the mentor and the apprentice is the mentee. Another variant is master-servant relationship – apprenticeship. Both systems involve training or tutoring individuals by successful masters and professionals of a given skill or profession.

### **2.2. Types of Igbo apprenticeship scheme**

The scheme has 3 major types: Igba-boi also known as Igba Odibo (become an apprentice), Imu Oru also known as Imu Oruaka (learn a craft) and Imu Ahia (learn a trade) (Okoli & Agwu, 2018).

#### *2.2.1. Igba Odibo/ Boi (Apprenticeship)*

Under the Igba Odibo type of Igbo apprenticeship scheme, the parent or guardian has agreed with their child or ward on their choice of profession, and will consciously seek for successful entrepreneurs in that particular profession for his training (Chinweuba & Ezeugwu, 2017). There is often a brief traditional handing-over ceremony of the apprentice, to his master (Oga). Ezeajughu, (2021) explained procedure and ceremony of apprenticeship that it is oral agreement for conditions and terms which is based on trust and credibility of apprenticeship master. The agreement comes in two ways; one, the intending apprentice will live with the master for the number of years agreed upon, two, that the Oga will train the apprentice in his trade with all sincerity and settle him with a seed capital to start his own business at the end of the agreed number of years. Traditional kolanuts and palm wine are shared with a Christian prayer or traditional rituals.

#### *2.2.2. Imu Oruaka (To learn a skill or craft)*

Another way of becoming an apprentice under the Igbo scheme of customary apprenticeship is through 'imu oru aka'. Here the apprentice is given to a master craftsman to be under his tutelage. Unlike the Igba-boi/Igba Odibo where an apprentice will be trained for free for a period of pre-agreed years, in the Imu Oru/Imu Oruaka and Imu Ahia types tutorship are paid for by the apprentice's parents/sponsors (Onwuegbuzie, 2017). The payment is usually accompanied

with some drinks meant for the entertainment of witnesses who are usually tradesmen within the environment in which the trade or craft is to be learnt. The fee is usually a lump sum of money paid before the training is commenced. The apprentice in this case does not live with the master within the period of the training. The master only blesses the apprentice at the end of the successful completion of the training and provides the new master with technical guide up until a certain level of business maturity. The time frame for 'imu oru aka/ imu ahia' is usually 2-5 years depending on the nature of the trade or craft.

### 2.2.3. Imu Ahia (To learn a trade)

In Igbo land, young men are engaged to learn a trade of business; *Imu-Ahia* which refers to the Igbo apprenticeship system. According to Onyeneho, (2019) the Igbo apprentice system is an extension of their entrepreneurial make-up where a strategic training process is utilised to train mostly young men of Igbo stock into entrepreneurial ventures by established entrepreneurs locally known as Oga. Uzokwe, (2018) affirms that the Igbo Apprenticeship system (*Imu-Ahia/Igbaboyi*) is an unpaid enterprise, incubator model that avails people the opportunity of learning a trade or business within a stipulated range of years (5-8), and at the end of the apprenticeship tenure, the trainee gets cash infusion and assistance to start up their own businesses. Okpara, Anoruoh, Ukonu and Agu, (2023) describes it as an apprenticeship system that purports a responsibly established businessmen [the nurturer] in a town, street or locale to pick up teenagers-young adults [the apprentice] from their homes and give them an informally formal, but raw and practical, cut-throat business education.

## 2.3. Contextual Literature

### 2.3.1. Prospects of the Igbo Apprenticeship System in Modern world

The Igbo apprenticeship system assures the best match between the skills they need and the training of young people. This system of apprenticeship brings about respect, humility and loyalty between the master and the apprentice thus fostering peace and unity among brothers. Employers can secure the skilled labour they need. This is particularly important for smaller companies which do not have the power to influence the curriculum of vocational training and sometimes find it hard to attract the attention of talented young people. The cost of inducting new staff is reduced compared with the cost of recruiting qualified applicants from the labour market (Igwe, Madichie and Nahir, 2020). Igbo apprenticeship scheme has the best practical business networking, less vulnerability to business uncertainties, reduction of market search-related transaction costs, the creation and utilization of social capital (trust), access to collateral-free credit, collective business expansion and job creation (Okwuowulu, 2023).

### 2.3.2. Challenges of the Igbo Apprenticeship System in Modern world

Every system has its challenges. Some of the challenges of this apprenticeship system are;

- **Abuse of children:** That is, taking underage children as apprentices and other abuses meted on them. A challenge of the Igbo apprenticeship scheme in its early practice is the absence of classroom work and reading. Consequently, certificates are not issued for successful completion of the training (Mpi, 2019).
- **Abandonment of formal education by the apprentices:** Dismissing of an apprentice suddenly after several years, for filthy reasons. Like; accusation of theft, affairs with the master's wife, or being disobedient to justify their action (Ogbuji & Okereke, 2019).
- **Non settlement of apprentices after the stipulated or agreed period:** Another challenge of Igbo apprenticeship scheme is the issue of settling the apprentice at the end of his indentureship, leading to abuse and shirking of duties by masters and this demonstrates lack of adequate legal protection for young apprentice, because of the fact that the contract arrangement was verbally, it will be difficult for the apprentice to file a case against his master (Okeke, 2019).
- **Low value of the apprenticeship scheme:** It does appear that apprenticeship in Igboland has not flourished, as one would expect owing to negative work ethics or low socio-cultural image of apprenticeships observed globally to the misperception in the public domain that apprentices are children of low class families (Okoli & Agwu, 2018).
- **Lack of formal contract:** Another major challenge that Igbo Apprenticeship has faced over the years is the absence of a clear formalised contract. Okoroafor and Onyeukwu, (2019) expects that contracts of apprenticeship have to be written to subsist and be valid in law.
- **Lack of certification:** Another challenge is the lack of certification which has greatly hampered the development of the Igbo apprenticeship scheme. One may argue that awarding certificates, or the undue emphasis on credentials, what is known as credentialism has been the bane of education in Nigeria, yet it seems

incomplete for a training programme, vocational, or practical not to have evidence of having successfully completed a programme, and even the duration (Obunike, 2016).

- **Lack of governmental support/No enforcement of Agreement:** The apprenticeship scheme in Igboland is left entirely in the hands of the individual master or “employer” of the apprentice. No funds are made available to subsidize the training costs. The Nigerian state does not consider it necessary, has not seen the propriety of encouraging the apprenticeship scheme to succeed and transform itself (Omoredede & Omoredede, 2017).

## 2.4. Theoretical Framework

### 2.4.1. Cultural materialism Theory

Cultural materialism is a theoretical framework developed by Marvin Harris in the late 1960s and early 1970s. To him, cultural practices and beliefs are influenced by material conditions, including environmental, economic, and technological factors. According to cultural materialism, the pursuit of material resources, such as food, water, and shelter, is a universal human trait that influences the development of culture. In the context of Igbo apprenticeship, cultural materialism can be used to analyze how economic factors have influenced the development of materialistic values and the get-rich-quick mentality among the Igbo people. In many societies, the pursuit of wealth and status is a response to scarcity and competition for resources. In the case of the Igbo apprenticeship system, the desire to accumulate wealth and possessions may be seen as a response to the economic conditions of the society, including limited access to resources and market opportunities.

Harris went further to say that cultural practices and beliefs are not arbitrary, but rather are shaped by material factors. In the case of the Igbo apprenticeship system, material factors, such as the availability of resources, access to markets, and technological innovations, may have influenced the development of materialistic values and the pursuit of wealth. These material factors may have shaped the culture of the Igbo people in ways that encouraged the accumulation of wealth and material possessions. In analyzing the impact of materialism and the get-rich-quick mentality on Igbo apprenticeship, cultural materialism provides insight into the ways in which economic factors shape cultural beliefs and practices. By examining the economic conditions that have influenced the development of materialistic values and the pursuit of wealth among the Igbo people, researchers can better understand the cultural context in which these practices arise and how they may be changing over time.

## 2.5. Empirical Review

Nnonyelu, Nnabuife, Onyeizugbe, Anazodo and Onyima, (2023) examined Igbo apprenticeship (*Igba boyi*) as exemplar of indigenous African entrepreneurship model. Specific objectives were to: ascertain the influence of Igbo apprenticeship system on indigenous African entrepreneurship model. The paper draws extensively from a 2021 study of Igbo apprenticeship in the Onitsha market, arguably the largest market in West Africa, showing how indigenous entrepreneurship has been boosted by the apprenticeship scheme. The paper highlights the nexus between the Igbo apprenticeship scheme and entrepreneurship. The paper seeks to unpack the enablers of Igbo apprenticeship, and why it is largely seen as the poster face of local Igbo entrepreneurs. The paper makes a case for the scalability and adoption of the *igba boyi* indigenous entrepreneurial model as a vehicle for the development and sustenance of indigenous entrepreneurship practices for African development. The study recommended that apprenticeship practice should be revived and modernized and also that ethnic based unions should be given legal recognition and restructured to play both social and economic roles.

Okwuowulu, (2023) investigated the impact of Igbo apprenticeship system in the development of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. Specific objectives were to: ascertain the influence of Igbo apprenticeship system on development of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design. Data were primary in nature and collected through the use of Likert scale structured questionnaire to generate responses from the selected sample. Copies of the returned questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the pattern of data. The hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square Test statistics and the hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that Igbo apprenticeship system has positive and significant impact on the development of small and medium scale enterprise. More so, Igbo apprenticeship system enhances the establishment and development of small and medium scale enterprises; promotes business growth and survival rate; creates access to trade and informal credit; and creates opportunity for excellent business management skills and competence. The study therefore recommended that the government of Nigeria and Africa by extension should adopt the practice of the Igbo man apprenticeship system, as a strategy for the development of Nigeria and African entrepreneurship.

Okeke, (2023) conducted a study to examine impact of Igbo Apprenticeship Materialism on the Get-rich-quick Mentality in selected Igbo works. Specifically, it aims to analyze the portrayal of the decline of Igbo apprenticeship in *A na-agwa nti* and *Ije Ego* and to determine how the get-rich-quick syndrome has affected the practice. The method of data analysis was critical analysis of the selected Igbo literary works. The theoretical framework of this research is the cultural materialism that considers the ways in which material conditions and economic factors shape culture and social behavior. The findings of this study show that the pursuit of material wealth and the get-rich-quick syndrome has led to a decline in the apprenticeship system in Igbo society. Furthermore, the preservation of Igbo cultural practices requires a concerted effort to reject the values of quick wealth acquisition, consumerism and prioritize the communal values of sharing and mentorship. The study recommends that *Igba boyi*, be promoted and preserved in Nigeria. This can be achieved through the incorporation of traditional practices into education curriculums, community engagement initiatives, and the promotion of individual value.

Okpara, Anoruh, Ukonu and Agu, (2023) examined the relationship between Igbo apprenticeship system and sustainability of South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the trajectory of Igbo apprenticeship system (IAS) and its sustainability in areas of economic, social and environmental development of Ndi Igbo. Using a survey design, and structured questionnaire, the focus was on the capital cities of the five states in South East Nigeria, where we employed snowball sampling technique to select 325 graduate entrepreneurs. The data collected were presented using tables and simple percentages. Additionally, we tested hypotheses using Multiple Regression Analysis with SPSS version 21. The outcome of the research is that the Igbo Apprenticeship System has had significant positive impact on the economic, social and environmental development of South East Nigeria. It is recommended that greater attention be paid to nationalize IAS for the benefit of the whole country with a view to enhance the economic, social and environmental development of Nigeria.

Ugwu and Mbah, (2022) assessed Igbo apprenticeship schemes on development of SMEs in Enugu State. The specific objectives were to; examine the effect of knowledge-based qualification on the innovation and creativity of SMEs in Enugu State; evaluate the effect of functional skills on the commitment of quality of SMEs in Enugu State and identify the effect of competence-based qualification on the interpersonal skills of SMEs in Enugu State. The sample size of 185 respondents drawn from population of 211 owners and mentees of the selected business owners in Enugu metropolis. Data analytical techniques was Z – test with aid of Special Package for Statistical Software (SPSS). The findings indicated that knowledge-based qualification had positive effect on creativity of SMEs in Enugu State,  $r(95, n = 167) = 6.268 < 8.435, p < .05$ . Functional skills had positive effect on the commitment of quality of SMEs in Enugu State  $r(95, n = 167) = 5.281 < 6.906, p < .05$ . Competence based qualification had positive effect on the interpersonal skills of SMEs in Enugu State  $r(95, n = 167) = 6.210 < 7.525, p < .05$ . The study recommended among others that the apprentice should understand on how to plan a personal enterprise, duties of human and public relation in the sustainability of individual business enterprises and effective utilization of profits.

Ezeajughu, (2021) examined the Igbo man perspectives of apprenticeship and entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria. This paper analytically investigates peculiar sources, circumstances and skills that are the fulcrum of increasing socio-economic performance of the Igbo people. The study finds that entrepreneurial performance of the Igbos is underscored by their economic culture and value, which are highly existential in their traditions and belief system. The paper concludes that the Nwaboi Apprenticeship System has the potential to significantly increase the level of entrepreneurial metabolism and to stimulate the rate and pace of new venture creation and thus a viable platform for entrepreneurship promotion in Nigeria. The research also concludes that with this progressive rate, Igbo people will in time be a force to reckon with in the socio-political and techno-economic sector of Nigeria, Africa and the World at large. The study recommends that the government of Nigeria and African by extension should adopt the practice of the Igbo man apprenticeship system and entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria as a strategy for the development African entrepreneurship.

Okeke and Osang, (2021) conducted a study to investigate decline of the potency of Igbo apprenticeship scheme in Anambra State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study was to examine challenges and benefits of Igbo apprenticeship scheme in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study therefore seeks to interrogate the perceived decline of the potency of the scheme, utilising the observation method in informal workplaces and trading sites spread across the state. The method of data analysis was content analysis. The study discovered that, the unwillingness of young men to take up the businesses of their fathers, study courses that will promote their growth and malicious stealing of their masters money by the apprentices are key factors that led to the decline of the scheme's potency. The study recommended that young men should key into family businesses so as to promote the heritage of business sustainability being transferred from generation to generation. Again, there should be a well-defined contractual agreement rather than oral agreement between the masters and the intending apprentices so as to protect the job creation intent of the scheme.

Mpi, (2019) investigated role of Igbo apprenticeship system in promoting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMES) for economic Growth and development in Nigeria and other developing economies. Specially, the study looked at the meaning of MSMEs and the challenges facing the sector, Igbo apprentices, how it can grow the MSMEs and the challenges facing the system. The method of data analysis was content analysis. The research concluded that in spite of the challenges facing the micro, small and medium enterprises in Nigeria and other developing economies, the Igbo apprenticeship system still remains a major catalyst in reducing unemployment, wealth redistribution, insecurity, increased GDP and diversification of the economy. Based on the challenges facing the MSMEs and the Igbo apprenticeship system. The study recommended apprenticeship system can be fused into the educational systems of developing and underdeveloped economies, a license or certificate issued. This can curb the challenges abandonment of education and lack of training and development. The license certificate can aid the apprentice to secure a loan or fund where and when necessary. The government should provide the enabling environment, needed infrastructures for MSMEs to strive in order to drive the economy.

Anigbogu, Onwuteaka and Okoli, (2019) examined the Igbo man perspectives of apprenticeship and entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria: Implications to economic growth. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of motivations for apprenticeship by Igbo entrepreneurs; Igbo man perspective of factors influencing entrepreneurial development; and challenges in the Igbo man apprenticeship system) on entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria. The data analytical technique were the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and the regression model of the Ordinary Least Square (OLS). A total sample of four hundred and eighty two (482) SMEs owners of Igbo extraction were the respondents of this study. From the result of the PCA, the principal components that serves as motivations for apprenticeship by Igbo entrepreneurs is the cash infusion giving to apprentice as start-up capital. Secondly, the principal components from the Igbo man perspectives of factors influencing entrepreneurial development is tolerance for risk and thirdly, the principal components from the challenges in the Igbo man apprenticeship system is that apprentices sometimes steals from their masters and adds to their start-up capital. Regression results revealed that all the three coefficients (The motivations for apprenticeship by Igbo entrepreneurs; Igbo man perspective of factors influencing entrepreneurial development; and challenges in the Igbo man apprenticeship system) have significant effect on entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria.

## 2.6. Literature Gaps

The study covered literature gaps by examining the challenges and prospects of Igbo the apprenticeship system in the modern world which many scholars have not covered. Nnonyelu, Nnabuike, Onyeizugbe, Anazodo and Onyima, (2023) examined Igbo apprenticeship (*Igba boyi*) as exemplar of indigenous African entrepreneurship model. The study failed to dwell in the modern world. This study would not only swell literature in challenges and prospects of Igbo the apprenticeship system in the modern world, but also, it will add fresh voice to the literature in the underreported zone like other African region precisely Enugu State Nigeria.

## 3. Methodology

The research design was descriptive survey method. Study Area was Enugu State. The sample size of 163 respondents were taken from population of 276 apprentices from different major markets – Kenyetha market (44), Ogbete market (41), Timber market Abakpa (53), Artisans markets (64) and Gariki market (74) Enugu Metropolis business clusters in Enugu state, Nigeria. Taro Yamane sampling technique is applied to narrow down the population to a researchable size (sample size). The study used structured questionnaire to obtain data. Research questions of the study were answered using mean score and standard deviation. The hypotheses stated would be tested with chi-square and single regression analysis.

### 3.1. Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1** Comprehensive Demographic of Respondents

Title	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire Distribution		
Questionnaires Distributed	163	100%
Returned Questionnaires	148	91%
Not Returned Questionnaires	15	09%

Gender		
Female	54	36%
Male	94	64%
Age Bracket		
21-30 Years	70	47%
31-40 Years	67	45%
41-50 Years	9	7%
51Years – above	2	1%

Sources: Field Survey, 2024

One hundred and sixty three (163) copies of questionnaires were designed and distributed to the respondents. Out of the 163 Questionnaires distributed, 148 (91%) were completed and returned while 15 (9%) were not returned. Therefore, 91 percent respondents were a good representation. The study showed the respondents profile in frequency and percentage distribution of gender and age bracket.

#### 4. Data Analysis

**Question One:** What are challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world?

**Table 2** Mean rating of responses on what are the challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	VGE (5)	GE (4)	M (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	Total	Mean	SD
1	Igbo Apprenticeship system involves underage children as apprentices and deprive under age children classroom work and reading.	410	148	42	20	5	620	4.520	0.102
		82	37	14	10	5	148		
		55%	25%	9%	7%	4%	100%		
2	Igbo Apprenticeship system demonstrates lack of adequate legal protection for young apprentice, because of the fact that the contract arrangement was verbally	345	200	36	22	6	609	4.425	0.088
		69	50	12	11	6	148		
		47%	34%	8%	7%	4%	100%		
3	Igbo Apprenticeship system observed globally to the misperception in the public domain that apprentices are children of low class families	340	204	60	14	2	620	4.483	0.098
		68	51	20	7	2	148		
		46%	34%	14%	5%	1%	100%		
4	Another challenge of Igbo Apprenticeship system is the lack of certification which has greatly hampered the development of the Igbo apprenticeship scheme.	325	168	60	24	9	586	4.392	0.093
		65	42	20	12	9	148		
		44%	28%	14%	8%	6%	100%		
	<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>4.455</b>	<b>0.0955</b>

This table shows that the respondents indicated their option on what are challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world. The respondents are in agreement with all the items. The study showed that there are significant challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world since Igbo Apprenticeship system demonstrates lack of adequate legal protection for young apprentice, because of the fact that the contract arrangement was verbally (grand mean (4.455) is greater than cut-off mean (3.00).

**Question Two:** What are the prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world?



**Table 3** Mean rating of responses on what are the prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	VGE(5)	GE(4)	M(3)	LE(2)	VLE(1)	Total	Mean	SD
1	Igbo Apprenticeship system provides apprentices with a settlement from their trade masters upon completion of their training.	375 75 51%	188 47 32%	42 14 9%	14 7 5%	5 5 3%	624 148 100%	4.517	0.101
2	Igbo Apprenticeship system demonstrates a remarkable success rate, with a significant number of apprentices	360 72 49%	228 57 39%	45 15 9%	6 3 2%	1 1 1%	640 148 100%	4.650	0.115
3	Igbo Apprenticeship system provides unique blend of mentorship, experiential learning, and cultural values	330 66 45%	204 51 34%	66 22 15%	14 7 5%	2 2 1%	565 148 100%	4.483	0.098
4	Igbo Apprenticeship system provides on practical learning by doing, and by gaining hands-on experience, skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their chosen field.	330 66 45%	164 41 28%	60 20 13%	24 12 8%	9 9 6%	587 148 100%	4.396	0.089
	Grand Mean							4.512	0.300

This table shows that the respondents indicated their option on what are the prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world. The respondents are in agreement with all the items. The study showed that there are significant prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world since Igbo Apprenticeship system provides on practical learning by doing, and by gaining handsome experience, skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their chosen field (grand mean (4.512) is greater than cut-off mean (3.00).

#### 4.1. Test of Hypotheses

The two hypotheses were formulated for this study and would be tested and a decision taken is based on the rule below.

**Decision rule: Reject  $H_0$  if P-value > 0.01**

##### 4.1.1. Hypothesis One

$H_1$  = There is no significant challenge of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.

**Table 4** Chi-square Analytical Result

What are the challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Very low extent	13	29.6	-16.6
Low extent	22	29.6	-7.6
Moderate	41	29.6	11.4
High extent	51	29.6	21.4
Very high extent	21	29.6	-8.6
Total	148		

**Table 5** Chi-square Analytical Result

<b>Test Statistics</b>	
	What are the challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.
Chi-Square	33.622 <sup>a</sup>
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 29.6.	

In testing this hypothesis, the result of the Chi-square statistic shows the model to determine the challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world. The results of the chi-square statistics denotes that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is significant the challenge of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world (Chi-square: 33.62 > Critical-value: 0.000)

#### 4.1.2. Test of Hypothesis Two

H<sub>2</sub> = There is no significant prospect of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.

**Table 6** Chi-square Analytical Result

<b>What are the prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.</b>			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Very low extent	18	29.6	-11.6
Low extent	10	29.6	-19.6
Moderate	36	29.6	6.4
High extent	74	29.6	44.4
Very high extent	10	29.6	-19.6
Total	148		

**Table 7** Chi-square Analytical Result

<b>Test Statistics</b>	
	<b>What are the prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world.</b>
Chi-Square	98.486 <sup>a</sup>
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 29.6.	

In testing this hypothesis, the result of the Chi-square statistic shows the model to examine the prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world. The results of the chi-square statistics denotes that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is significant prospect of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world (Chi-square: 98.48 > Critical-value: 0.000)

## 5. Discussion of Findings

### 5.1. Challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world

The findings of the study revealed that there are significant challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world since Igbo Apprenticeship system demonstrates lack of adequate legal protection for young apprentice, because of the fact that the contract arrangement was verbally (Chi-square: 33.62 > Critical-value: 0.000). The outcome of the study is in line with the study of Nnonyelu, Nnabuiife, Onyeizugbe, Anazodo and Onyima, (2023) that examined Igbo apprenticeship (*Igba boyi*) as exemplar of indigenous African entrepreneurship model. Specific objectives were to: ascertain the influence of Igbo apprenticeship system on indigenous African entrepreneurship model. The paper draws extensively from a 2021 study of Igbo apprenticeship in the Onitsha market, arguably the largest market in West Africa, showing how indigenous entrepreneurship has been boosted by the apprenticeship scheme. The paper highlights the nexus between the Igbo apprenticeship scheme and entrepreneurship. The paper seeks to unpack the enablers of Igbo apprenticeship, and why it is largely seen as the poster face of local Igbo entrepreneurs. The paper makes a case for the scalability and adoption of the *igba boyi* indigenous entrepreneurial model as a vehicle for the development and sustenance of indigenous entrepreneurship practices for African development.

### 5.2. Prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world

The findings of the study revealed that there are significant prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world since Igbo Apprenticeship system provides on practical learning by doing, and by gaining handsome experience, skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their chosen field (Grand mean (4.512) is greater than cut-off mean (3.00). The outcome of the study is not in line with the study of Okwuowulu, (2023) that investigated the impact of Igbo apprenticeship system in the development of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. Specific objectives were to: ascertain the influence of Igbo apprenticeship system on development of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. The hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square Test statistics and the hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that Igbo apprenticeship system has positive and significant Impact on the development of small and medium scale enterprise. More so, Igbo apprenticeship system enhances the establishment and development of small and medium scale enterprises; promotes business growth and survival rate; creates access to trade and informal credit; and creates opportunity for excellent business management skills and competence.

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## 6. Summary of Findings

The following are the major findings of the study:

- The study showed that there are significant challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world since Igbo Apprenticeship system demonstrates lack of adequate legal protection for young apprentice, because of the fact that the contract arrangement was verbally (Chi-square: 33.62 > Critical-value: 0.000).
- The study showed that there are significant prospects of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world since Igbo Apprenticeship system provides on practical learning by doing, and by gaining handsome experience, skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their chosen field (Chi-square: 98.48 > Critical-value: 0.000).

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## 7. Conclusion

The study concludes that there are significant prospects and challenges of Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world but recommendation of the study stand out to removing its challenges and boost the benefits that accrue from Igbo apprenticeship system. The Igbo apprenticeship system, which has been a longstanding tradition in Igbo culture, has been instrumental in passing on knowledge and skills from one generation to another. This system has emphasized hard work, discipline, and patience as essential traits for success. The system has also instilled a sense of community and collaboration in the apprentices, who work closely with their mentors to develop their skills and build their careers. The apprenticeship system has emphasized the importance of developing skills and building relationships, and has instilled a sense of community and collaboration among its participants. In order to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the Igbo apprenticeship system.

### *Recommendation*

For appraisal to yield the desired outcomes, it is recommended that;

- Nigerian government should formulate policy that enforce justice between apprentice master and his apprentice to control non-settlement of apprentice after several years of patience. The government should come out with a blueprint that specifically focuses on the apprenticeship schemes or practises nationally, although giving due attention to regional specificities or variations. Funding support is key to the sustenance of apprenticeship. It is no longer tenable to allow the master who hires an apprentice, or is made to have one, to bear the cost of the apprenticeship scheme. Tax rebates outside other concessions should be given to encourage the apprenticeship scheme.
- Nigerian government should introduction of new skills to upgrade the informal apprenticeship. Vocational and technical colleges may be sited within the markets, or other places that enjoy proximity to the different apprenticeship sites. A well-reviewed curriculum and school based training with certificates on successful completion of training will go a long way to complement the current style of Igbo apprenticeship.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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