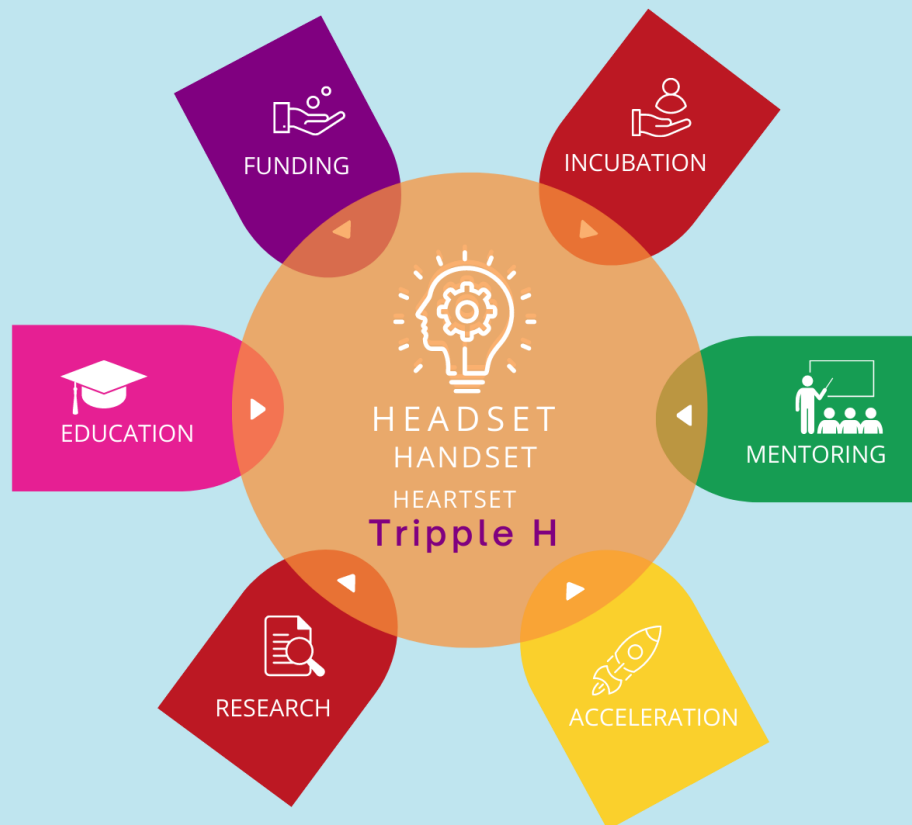




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The Entrepreneurial Spirit and Transnationalization of the IGBO Entrepreneurship Model

By: Uzomaka Godwin, Peter vander Sijde and Bart Bossink

Abstract

The Igbo ethnic nationality from Nigeria are a heuristic ethnic group who pride themselves globally as exceptional entrepreneurs, this is because the Igbo embrace entrepreneurship as a survival strategy for wealth accumulation while assuming the Igbo entrepreneurship model paradigm as a procedure of the embeddedness of entrepreneurial spirit. This paper is an exploratory study geared towards provoking debates on the entrepreneurial spirit and the Nwa-boi apprenticeship system practiced by Ndi Igbo worldwide and how the Igbo entrepreneurs maintain economic ties with their home countries and countries of residence, which enables these entrepreneurs to transform isolated geographic locations into transnational, translocal, or multilocal spaces where they can carry out their entrepreneurship using embeddedness essences derived from their ethnocultural patterns and entrepreneurial spirit.

Key Words: Entrepreneurship Model, Entrepreneurial Spirit, Ethnic Nationality

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Introduction

Nigeria as a country is endowed with a varied range of natural resources dispersed across the country's several geographical states. The country's natural resources span from solid minerals (crude oil, gold, tin, iron ore, niobium, lead, zinc, limestone, salt, and other minerals) to agricultural land with a varied variety of agricultural goods, such as palm oil, cocoa, groundnuts, beans, melon, corns, and rice, to mention but a few. Recently there is a growing interest among entrepreneurship researchers in the reasons behind individuals or ethnic groups are entrepreneurial than other ethnicities and why distinct ethnicity, and regions within nations have different entrepreneurial behaviors or orientations (Dandago & Ango, 2015). For example, in the United Kingdom, 17% of Britain prefer to be entrepreneurs, compared to 21.4% of Indians, 26.5% of Pakistanis, 27.8% of Chinese, and 19.1% of Bangladeshis residing in the United Kingdom (Horvath & Zhang, 2019). While in the quest to determine and rank the levels of entrepreneurship across member countries, the Global

Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report of 2002 observed that Indian and Thailand citizens are six times more likely to be entrepreneurs than citizens of countries like Belgium, Japan, and Russia. In a study of cultural entrepreneurship and how ethnicity and race influence the entrepreneurial attitude, Light (2000) opined that the disparities in entrepreneurship inclination of nations, regions, or ethnic groups are sometimes attributed to differences in cultural features. While Waldinger et al. (1985, 1996) also identified the culture of the individual ethnic group, the organization of ethnic enclaves, and the environmental conditions or circumstances of the ethnic group as factors that enable the ethnic group to be more entrepreneurial than the other.

The studies on native ethnic groups in the home country, like in Nigeria "where is unity without unification" are scarce (eg. Okolie et al., 2021, Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2019). One of Nigeria's major tribes, the Igbo, is known for being "naturally entrepreneurial and inventive" (Meagher, 2010) and its fierce competition for business both in the rural and urban informal economies (Okolie et al., 2021). Anyanwu (1999) also claims that Ndigbo are hardworking people who believe in self-sufficiency rather than waiting for governmental intervention. They are responsible for up to 80% of Nigeria's economy despite receiving the lowest decreasing allocation and abysmally low attention from the Nigerian federal government. As a result, Igbo people value deliberate hard work and personal effort that is infused with communal colorations. This is due to their worldview, which is instilled in them as a guiding principle and a drive toward entrepreneurial excellence from infancy to adulthood. Achebe (2012) explained that Igbos are outstanding entrepreneurs who possess competitive edges in entrepreneurship because of the ability to grab environmental opportunities that came their way, as the Igbo culture emphasized change (adaptability), individualism (self-confidence), and competitiveness (inherent democratic values).

Furthermore, the Igbo's perception is that the world is a marketplace (uwa bu ahia), which explains that as trading and entrepreneurship are prominent occupations among the Igbo, the marketplace is the epicenter of the community's social and business interaction. That is why the Igbo weekdays are named after the four Igbo markets, which are Eke, Orie, Afo, Nkwo. While children born on any of these market days often assume the default name as in Okeke or Mgbeke, Okorie or Mgborie, Okafor or Mgbafo, Okonkwo or Mgbonkwo (Agozino & Anyanike, 2007). Also, the world view of Ndigbo entrepreneurial conquest has shifted from clannish entrepreneurs to a transnational ethnic entrepreneurship approach which is due to the Ndigbo entrepreneurial spirit. This assumption is

supported by Adeola (2020) who asserted that the Igbos ethnic nationality is globally known for their commercial insight, perseverance, pliability, risk management in businesses, and entrepreneurial spirit. Given the above, the analysis of the paper shall be a descriptive analysis that's centered around the Igbo Ethnic Entrepreneurship Model (IEM) which is also called the Nwa-boi Apprenticeship Model, and other perceptions such as the Ndigbo entrepreneurial spirit in general and the transnationalism in the host country of the Igbo ethnic entrepreneurs in some selected West and Central African countries. The research proposition of this study is associated with the studies and ideas of Ojo et. al.,2013 and, Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2019 who criticized vehemently how ethnic entrepreneurial activities of African immigrants (most especially the Igbo) entrepreneurs in African countries are largely unexplored and unresearched, while adequate attention of immigrant entrepreneurship research and context for the analysis is often directed to developed countries in the western world. This paper, therefore, answers the call to further research in African ethnic entrepreneurship, ethnic entrepreneurs of the Igbo ethnicity, the entrepreneurial spirit of the Igbo entrepreneurship, and the Nwa-boi apprenticeship model.

Therefore, the goal of the paper is to exploratory analysis and expand the knowledge on the Nwa-boi apprenticeship model, underpinning critical issues in the various discussions on how the Ndigbo are entrepreneurial inclined, the Igbo entrepreneurship model, and transnationalism in selected West African countries. The study shall also add insight into how the Igbo entrepreneurial spirit evolved into the Nwa-boi apprenticeship and the Igbo ethnic entrepreneur.

Ndigbo Ethnic Demography

Nigeria is a West African country bordered by other West African countries on the Gulf of Guinea. The lower course of Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea is made up of 1608 kilometers of Niger, 85 kilometers of Chad, 1975 kilometers of Cameroon, and 809 kilometers of Benin. The southern lowlands are characterized by wetlands and mangroves, as well as woods on the southern coast. Nigeria is thought to be the most densely populated country on the African continent, with 212 million people living in an area of 923,768 km² (356,669 sq mi) and 13,878 square kilometers of water, and the world's seventh-largest population. Between the 1880s and 1910, the British Empire attacked various empires, kingdoms, and towns, resulting in the formation of Nigeria as a geopolitical entity in 1914, when the North and South protectorates were merged into a single colonial state. The territory

that is now Nigeria was once home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, each with its languages, cultures, and traditions (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Falola and Heaton (2008) further argued that Nigeria is an anachronistic region where many tribes and people might have migrated into and out during the pre-colonial era. Which consist of more than 300 ethnic groups spread around Nigeria, speaking approximately 500 dialects, and adhering to a wide range of social traditions and ideas. The Hausa-Fulani tribes, on the other hand, occupy the northern region, the Yoruba tribes in the southwest, and the Igbo tribes in the southeast. The Hausa-Fulani population consist (30%), Yoruba (15.5%), and Igbo (15.2%) as well as several ethnic minority groups such as Tiv (2.4%), Kanuri/Berberi (2.4%) in the North-East, and Ibibio (1.8%) and Ijaw (1.8%) in the South-South, and many others tribes spread across Nigeria accounts for 24.7 percent. In Nigeria, ethnicity is immensely important since it shapes people's values, personalities, and beliefs. Ethnicity is closely tied to the prevalent practice of alienating and identity branding, which has traditionally characterized both intra-global and international ties, and in which opportunities and privileges are all contingents on who you are and where you are from (Aka & Uzoh, 2019).

When it comes to a people's origins, the Ibo people (Ndigbo) historiography, like that of other ethnic groups around the world, is strewn with contradicting beliefs. The Igbo people's origins have long been a topic of contention (Nwalutu, 2019). According to Adim and Amadi (2020), the Igbo people migrated from the north of the Niger-Benue confluence and settled on the fringes of southeast Nigeria's rainforest. The four good storylines are the Amaigbo, Owerre, Awka, and Owerre-Awka viewpoints. These narratives appear to be in a stronger position to argue that the Igbo people who live along the belt formed by the Owerri, Awka, Orlu, and Okigwe divisions are at the heart of Igbo development, but from and dispersal as an ethnic group, this hypothesis is backed up by the work of famous African historians and anthropologists such as Acholonu (2005), Afigbo (1992).

The Entrepreneurial Spirit of the IGBO Ethnicity

The motivations of being entrepreneurial are due to push and pull factors. Pull factors emphasize the advantages of being self-employed, thereby making entrepreneurship a desirable activity to pursue. While the push factors, on the other hand, explain why individuals turn to entrepreneurship and self-employment as an option after, e.g. being turned down from paid-job (Shinnar and Young, 2008). The Igbos' entrepreneurial cosmological belief is also encapsulated in an aphorism that says, "Nwata

kwochaa aka, osoro Okenye rie nri" (A child that washes his hands dines with the Elders). Ndigbo also views wealth as a method of achieving social prestige and acquiring social suitable rank in the Igbo communities. This assumption serves as an incentive toward being industrious and engaging in purposeful entrepreneurial activities, hence in the Igbo metaphysical understanding of existence, no one who dies poor and lazy deserves a place among the ancestors. For the Igbos, being industrious is not just a choice but a must (Chinweuba & Ezeugwu, 2017).

Entrepreneurs are individuals who think outside the box, are innovative, and have the personal talents to influence changes in their environment while growing their businesses to support their goals. Steenberg (2017) argues that, apart from the consistency, uniqueness, and ability of entrepreneurs to be innovative, four distinct characteristics distinguish entrepreneurs from each other: not all entrepreneurs are the same, entrepreneurs have diverse motivators and motivations for engaging in business, different types of entrepreneurs have different planned behaviours and, entrepreneurial traits, talents, and values, are consistent with different types of entrepreneurs.

These distinct characteristics are prompted by the entrepreneurial spirit of the entrepreneur. The "spirit" to innovate is entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934), while the entrepreneurial mindset and attitude are referred to as entrepreneurial spirit. The entrepreneurial spirit is generally referred to as the existence of personality characteristics such as risk-taking propensity, innovation, and opportunity discovery (Ang & Hong, 2000). The entrepreneurial spirit is perceived through many scopes, as Hornaday (1982; also see Ang & Hong, 2000) views entrepreneurial spirit as a construct of several personality traits that are associated with the willingness to discover and seize opportunities and engage in wealth-creating and value-adding activities. However, Ekesiobi, et al. (2020) emphasize the "Igbo Entrepreneurship Model"(IEM) commonly called the Nwa-bio Apprenticeship system as a classic entrepreneurial model that spurs the entrepreneurial spirit of Ndigbo and has a long-standing tradition among the Igbos in Nigeria's south-eastern region. The IEM is widely regarded as the world's largest and most enduring business incubator (Neuwirth, 2018).

The entrepreneurial spirit has been described by many authors and received many definitions (Thyil & Durden, 2006). For example, "It is perceived as the spirit of adventure or the spirit of initiative" (Abdnor, 1988, pg 3), "The spirit that creates jobs and the spirit that breaks down social boundaries and provides opportunities for upward mobility for thousands of men and women" (Rae, 2000, pg. 147).

Ndigbo has always been associated with businesses and vocations that involve immigration. For example, the Nkwerre's long-distance traders, Awka's ironsmiths, and Orlu's medicine men. However, it was through this method of immigration trade that enhanced coastal trade, and then the slave trade broadened the horizons of Igbo traders and others who learned trading skills with colonialism (Afigbo, 1981). Uduku (2002) explained that the Aro, Nri, Umunneoha, Nkwerre, and Awka, immigrant traders in the 1920s, established a foothold in entrepreneurial endeavors and businesses in the Yoruba, Hausa, and other regions of other minor ethnic nationalities in Nigeria and by the 1940s, their entrepreneurial exploits have grown into a raging storm across African countries.

IGBO Entrepreneurship Model and the IGBO Apprenticeship System

Although the history of the Igbo apprenticeship system is lost to antiquity, research-based oral narrations reveal that the practice extends back to the pre-colonial era, when the Ndigbo engaged in informal enterprises to supplement their agrarian economy. However, following the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970, when many Igbo firms were destroyed and shut down, necessitated and popularized the Igbo Entrepreneurship Model (IEM) and the Igbo apprenticeship system (Farayibi, 2021). The Igbo Entrepreneurship Model is an Igbo apprenticeship system that comprises discovering potential, acquiring a mentor, acquiring knowledge, and establishing a business. Innovation, originality, enthusiasm, commitment, critical thinking, perseverance, resiliency, and independence are all traits that define it (Olumide, 2019); it is an unstructured, spontaneous, and non-contractual type of apprenticeship model. Contrary to popular belief, the Igbo entrepreneurial apprenticeship model is simple and culturally enforceable (Biriowu, 2019). Iwara et al. (2019) described the Igbo entrepreneurship model as a system that is based on the indigenous apprenticeship method named as Igba-Odibo, which means "going to serve somebody." The overall purpose of this model is to provide entire servitude to the master (mentor) at no cost, but for a set amount of years.

Agozino and Anyanike (2007) maintain that the Igbo entrepreneurship model usually called the Nwa-boi apprenticeship model is divided into Igba-boi, also known as Igba Odibo (apprentice), Imu Oru, also known as Imu Oruaka (learn a craft), or Imu Ahia (learn a trade). While describing these categories in the Igbo entrepreneurship model, Okeke and Osang (2021) asserted that the willingness to learn, resiliency, and trustworthiness are the three key characteristics that determine whether an apprentice will start the first category of the apprenticeship training or is sent home after the first three

months, apprentices that make it past this level frequently show a desire to learn basic methods like client negotiating, maximizing entrepreneurial prospects, creating a solid customer relationship, and the transaction processes are all taught to the apprentice.

The apprentice is also encouraged to develop a skill set that will aid her/him in dealing with the complexities of the growth and development of the business. The master enables the apprentice to work with little supervision, about two years before the completion of the agreed number of years for his apprenticeship. Then the apprentice shall be settled after completing the training. There is usually a liberation party at the end of the agreed period, which acts as a graduation and commencement ceremony for the former apprentice to begin his business sojourn known as "Idu-uno". During the ceremony, the former apprentice is provided with seed capital to enable him/her to start a firm and the former apprentice continues mentoring until a specific degree of business maturity. Premiums are not paid to the master during the period of training.

Following the settlement period, the apprentice becomes a certified member of the local trade union and can fully utilize the business network that was established during the training period to acquire goods on credit from his former master, who invariably becomes a guarantor to his former apprentice who is now an entrepreneur. Most of the time, he runs his business alone for about six months, depending on the nature of the firm, before he is allowed to hire an apprentice to work under his supervision, and the cycle continues with an introduction of an apprentice. Neuwirth (2017) described the cyclic model of the Igbo apprenticeship system as the largest business incubator platform in the world.

Okeke and Osang (2021) further asserted that the "Imu Oru/Imu Oruaka" or "Imu oru aka" which is the second category of the apprentices model takes between 2 and 5 years to complete, depending on the nature of the trade or craft. The Igbo entrepreneurship model terms and conditions. Iwara et al., (2019) and Olumide (2019) stated that the completion Igbo entrepreneurship apprenticeship period requires years of study and mastery of the craft under the guidance of a master. The mentee is taught to view the world as a marketplace in which he or she must carve out a space for himself. Similarly, the apprentice is expected to be trustworthy (integrity), diligent, and innovative throughout the period of mentorship. If these expectations are not met, the apprenticeship programme may be terminated.

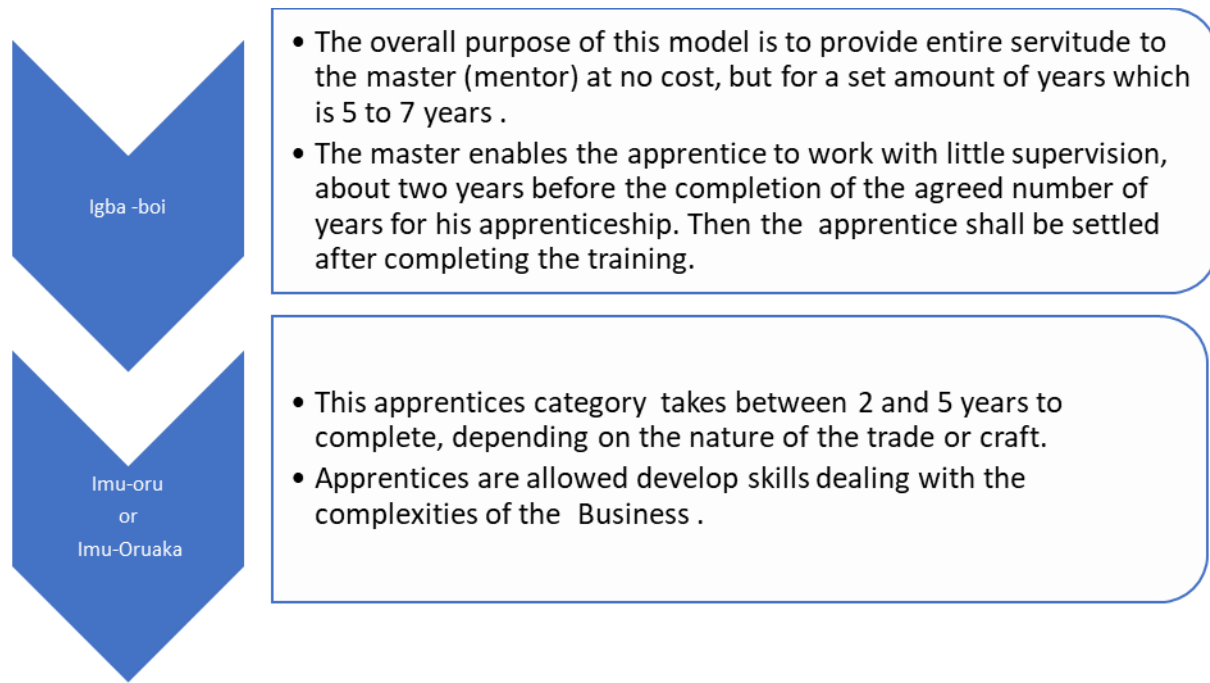


Figure 1: Categories of Igbo (Nwa -boi) apprenticeship model. Source; Authors.

Basis of the IGBO Entrepreneurship Model (IEM)

The IEM is the social learning theory in practice. Which emphasizes learning by doing and observation during the Nwaboi apprenticeship period to appropriate new behaviours. Bandura (1977; also see Igwe et al., 2018) asserted that the social learning theory perceives every individual can serve as a model, these models can present examples of behavior to study and imitate. People are naturally drawn to imitate, explore, adapt, and internalize the social roles, knowledge, abilities, and practices that surround them, to the point that they become self-descriptors (e.g. Ram et al., 2012). Culture and the family system are part of the socialization environment and encourage as well as hinder the development of an entrepreneurial spirit in the apprentices, as exemplified by Mungai and Ogot (2009): while investigating the differences in entrepreneurial attitude and the perceptions of the various communities on entrepreneurship on four Kenyan ethnic groups (Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Kamba, and Lou) they discovered that some ethnic groups nurture entrepreneurship more than the other, these assumptions were acknowledged by scholars (e.g. Igwe et al., 2018; Iwara et al., 2019). Farayibi (2021) also argued that the positive correlation between the Ndigbo culture and entrepreneurship nurtures and develops the transgenerational entrepreneurial spirit in Igbo entrepreneurs.

Transnationalism according to Schiller et al. (1992) is the evolution of immigrant entrepreneurship through which immigrants (virtually live in two countries, which are their country of birth and the other is the country of settlement). Effectively such transmigrants as these entrepreneurs are usually called, succeed in building social bridges between two countries. Each of these countries could easily be called 'home'. They stay as active participants in both countries but are not fully encapsulated as a mono-cultural participant in either. Light (2010) perceived transnationalism as a process by which immigrants construct social fields that attach to their place of origin and their country of settlement. In all dimensions of transnational entrepreneurship, Adim and Subai (2020) maintain that Igbo entrepreneurs give value to the socio-economic reality of any communities they reside in, attaining success by balancing their life with the challenges and inconsistencies of the environment. Igbo entrepreneurs have outperformed other Nigerian tribes in the socio-economic status of Nigeria's economic growth, which is due to their entrepreneurial spirit. As a result, the Igbo people have handled the majority of entrepreneurial activities and commercial centers in major Nigerian cities and most African counties alike. No wonder, the Igbos, Ashkenazi Jews, and Swiss Protestants have been identified as ethnic nationalities with the highest success motivation in the world (Raimi & Aslani, 2019).

From all Indications, there exists an evolving relationship between the Igbo entrepreneurship spirit and the Igbo entrepreneurship model as noted by Chinweuba & Ezeugwu (2017) that the Igbo socio-cultural norms, rites, myths, and folklores are discernible and reflect around entrepreneurial achievements of the Igbo entrepreneurs. This assumption can be seen in the diagram below as the Igbo entrepreneurs are great thinkers and innovators, and have the personal talents to influence the environment. Furthermore, the entrepreneurial foundation of the Igbo entrepreneurship exploits' is built on the Nwa-boi apprenticeship system which is an incubator to nurture future entrepreneurs (Neuwirth, 2018).

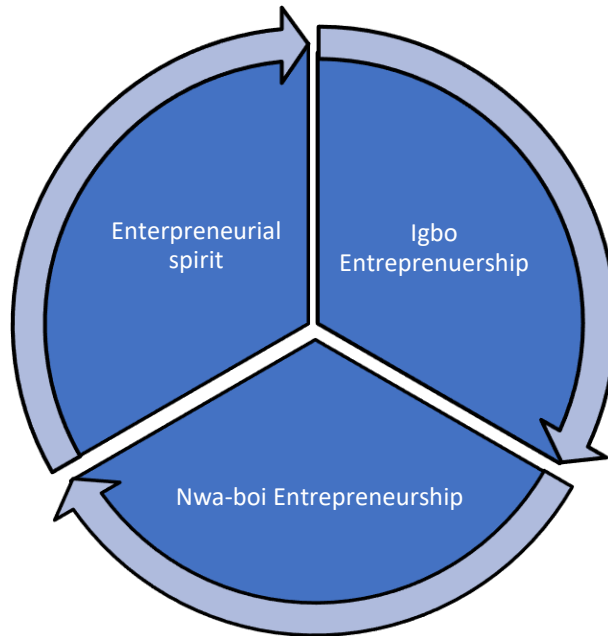


Figure 2: The relationship between entrepreneurship spirit, Igbo entrepreneurship, and Nwa-boi entrepreneur. Source; Authors.

Ndigbo Ethnic Entrepreneurs and Transnationalism in Some West and Central Africa Countries

Since pre-colonial times, Nigeria has played a critical role in the transregional networks of migrant entrepreneurs throughout West Africa (Forrest 1994). This is due to Nigerian migrants' extraordinary adaptability and integrating abilities, as well as their exceptional proclivity for change and innovation (Kohnert, 2010). While chronicling the historiographical contours of Nigerian immigrants and the changing configuration of Nigerian immigrant entrepreneurship in Ghana. Antwi-Bosiakoh (2019) stated that between 1433 and 1454, Hausa traders with an interest in the kola nut trade established trade routes between Bornu (Bono) and northern Nigeria, as well as 'Gwanja' (Gonja), while the Hausa traders settled in Gonja, Gbuipe, Kafaba, Umfaha, Yend, Salaga, Kintampo, and Atebubu areas. By the end of the 19th century. The Gold Coast became a British colony much later, in 1874, and remained so until 1957. In the Eastern region, particularly in Akwatia and Akim-Oda areas, which had the highest concentration of Yoruba migrants in Ghana in the 1960s, some Yorubas and Igbos Nigerians preferred load carriage in mines to underground activities and are also involved in diamond excavating and butchery. By the 1960s the Yoruba's immigrant entrepreneurs became the highest immigrants in Ghana and were recognized as 'Ghanaian most enterprising traders' (Kohnert, 2010).

Based on the rise of anti-immigration and indigenisation activities which were spearheaded by Ghanaian indigenous entrepreneurs in the late 1950s, the Ghanaian Aliens Compliance order of 1965 (Aliens Compliance Act 1969) and other indigenous protectionist laws were promulgated by the Busia-led government, this policy visibly reduced immigrants population in Ghana. Nigerian immigrant entrepreneurs were either driven out of economic activities or deported (Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2019). Data conducted by The Ghana Statistical Service (2013) disclosed that, out of the 3.9 percent of immigrants in Ghana as of 2010, Africans made up the 86 percent of the immigrants, while 68.3 percent wherefrom the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the majority from Nigeria. Antwi-bosiakoh (2019) asserted that the Igbo entrepreneurs consist of the majority of the Nigerian population in Ghana.

Olatuyi et. al. (2013) observed that Nigerians dominate Ghanaian immigration both from the West African sub-region and from other parts of the world, thereby making Ghana the third most popular destination for Nigerian migrants in the global south and the fifth most popular destination worldwide. Antwi-Bosiakoh (2019) further explained that the reasons why Ghana is a destination choice in Africa for Nigerians are multi-faceted, taking into account the political, economic, and historical relationship between Nigeria and Ghana, while recent Nigerian immigrant entrepreneurship in Ghana has been described as the demonstration of historical linkages between both countries since the 13th century, with the areas of trading operations they undertake, symbolizing the continuity with those of their forefathers in pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial times. There are more than a million Nigerians in Ghana (Akinyoade, 2015).

Most of these immigrants come from Nigeria's three primary ethnic groups: the Igbos live primarily in Accra, while Yoruba and Hausa immigrants appear to view Ghana as a second home. The numerically dominating tribes in Ghana are the Igbos who are more transitional, as Ghana is perceived by the Igbo's as a stepping stone in a larger migration effort to Europe and America (Akinyoade, 2015). Uduku (2002) asserted that the Ndigbo immigration to neighboring West African countries is prompted to secure the various forms of remittances to their home country in Nigeria. This was in line with González-Rábago and Blanco (2016) assertion that transnational entrepreneurs' emphasis is geared towards their action and social action dimensions which enables the transnational entrepreneur to engage in economic transnational activities in the sender (Host) and receiving (Home) nations. While conducting the ethnic profiling of the Nigerian entrepreneurs, Antwi-Bosiakoh (2019)

observed that in the Accra region, 94% of the entrepreneurs were of Igbo origin, it was 70% in Ashaiman and 57% in Kumasi, while the Igbo tribe dominance cut across both genders. These entrepreneurs are engaged in a diverse range of trading such as mobile telephony businesses and IT-related accessories, automobile spare parts activities, Hotel and Hospitality, and other entrepreneurial activities that show no signs of specialisation and precinctisation, albeit in a rudimentary form, and this is a key feature of Ndigbo entrepreneur embeddedness in Ghana and other West African countries.

Antwi-Bosiakoh and Williams (2018) argued that ethnicity not only underpins business identity and motivational rationales, but it also plays a role in business operation structures in Ghana, as Igbo entrepreneurs rely on the non-remunerated labour services rented by their relatives or apprentices who learn about the business and are assisted in starting their own. Thereby creating ethnic embeddedness and ethnic specialization.) In economic life, this is referred to as relational embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985). This is in support of Rath's (2010) postulation that ethnic entrepreneurs form business links with ethnic suppliers and customers, as well as immigrant networks inside of their ethnic inner circles, with similar beliefs, and norms to work together (Werbner 1999). Antwi-Bosiakoh and Williams (2018, p.50) also acknowledged that in the face of isolation, forfeiture, and perseverance, Igbo entrepreneurs in Ghana persevered in the face of adversity, mobilizing skills, strengths, and resources, as well as cultural capital, mainly networks, to overcome the challenges of entrepreneurship projects. Through the demonstration of "daring immigrant entrepreneurial spirit". Amaazee (1990) asserted that from 1932, The Igbos arrived in Cameroon in a variety of ways through southern Cameroon. Most in the wake of the British extension of control, the first were civil servants, others departed to work with foreign companies on the Nigeria-Cameroon road, while others came to work on the African Fruit Company (AFC) and the Guatemala Plantation Company (GPC) Banana plantations. The majority of Igbo migrants also worked in Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC) and Pamol. The Igbo made up around 25-30% of the CDC workforce and about 80% of the Pamol workforce in the 1950s (Molokwu and Uchime, 2020). They eventually brought their families and began farming the land surrounding the camps. Kleis (1980) explained that the Igbo entrepreneurs gradually began to dominate Kumba, Tiko, and Victoria markets in the provision of local groceries and imported items, as well as the transportation business and the retail and wholesale distribution of palm oil in the whole of Cameroon, while dominating southern cross-border trade between Nigeria and Cameroon (World Bank, 2013), despite the Banyang, Ejangham, Iroko, and other ethnic tribes

present on both sides of the border dominate the southwestern border, however border trade in that area has historically been dominated by the Igbo ethnic groups (Budd et al., 2005).

In the mid-1960s, the Cameroonian state passed a series of actions intended at dismantling the Igbos' sociopolitical organization and ethnic solidarity expression. Legislation prohibiting ethnic organizations, including the formidable Igbo Union, was enacted. Igbos were subjected to the regulations that govern aliens' activities and are frequently confronted by police, gendarmes, market inspectors, and other government officials (Kleis, 1980). All intimidations were presumably a conspiracy against Ndigbo because the Igbos were able to establish an early monopoly on inter-colonial trade, which stretched from Southern Cameroon to Ghana and across British West Africa. As Igbos traders, challenged France's economic dominance in Cameroon in a variety of ways, some of which were through secondhand trade-in motor parts, cosmetics, canned tomatoes, and rice supply are among the items imported. Furthermore, the Igbos have continued to remain in Cameroon for two interconnected reasons. The first is simply economic in nature. It was and continues as it is easier to create a business in Cameroon. Secondly, Cameroon has also served as a haven for Ndigbo fleeing Nigeria's social and political crises since the Nigerian-Biafra civil war (Blackwell, 2020).

Due to the Igbos' social capital of ethnicity (Ndjio, 2008), academic achievement, entrepreneurial temperament, and group-centric attitude to commerce, the Igbo dominance in cross-border trade in Cameroon has made it extremely difficult for other ethnic groups to break into the cross-border trade and informal sectors (Molokwu and Uchime, 2020). As ethnicity remains a crucial element for entry and success in cross-border trade (World Bank, 2013). As early as the 1960s, Igbo merchants controlled more than 85% of business in Tiko, 75% in Kamba, and 70% in Mamie (Konings, 2005). Despite the uncertainty of the exact number of Nigerians living in Cameroon, the Southwest area, particularly Ekok, Ekondo-Titi, Kumba, Idenau, Limbe, and Tiko, is home to a large group of Nigerians, a majority of whom are Igbo traders (Sheneyeh et al., 2021).

Nigerians have lived in the Republic of Benin since pre-colonial times when the Yoruba kingdom spanned lands that were later divided by colonial borders between French Dahomey and British Nigeria. Following World War II, Nigerian migrants most especially the Igbo entrepreneurs, settled in the urban cities of Cotonou and Porto Novo, which were the Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomey) economic and political hubs, respectively. In 2005, the estimates of Nigerian migrants in the Republic

of Benin ranged from 51,780 to 205,512 of which the majority are Igbos entrepreneurs (Martineau, 2009). While the majority of Igbo people started immigrating to the Togolese Republic in the late 1960s and early 1970 as a result of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war and the early 1990s. These two periods signified the former devastating loss, deprivation, and poverty of Ndigbo due to the Biafran conflict and later was due to the political instability and deficiencies of a declining economy due to the economic sanction imposed by the Common-Wealth of Nations and other western nations on the General Sani Abacha led-government. Presently the Igbos in the Republic of Benin and the Togolese Republic are specialists in the sales of Okrika or secondhand clothing, vehicle spare parts, and phone and computer accessories (Anigbogu, 2012).

Conclusion

Individualism and collectivism are both stout traits among Ndigbo (Osiri, 2020), this is because Igbos believe in the interconnection of community members and promote the concept of Igwebuiké ("strength in numbers" or "power from many") (Kanu, 2017). Igbo entrepreneurs are frequently suppliers-middlemen, wholesalers, and retailers (micropreneurs) who break bulks, innovate, and meet requirements in their hosts' internal markets while living off their profits. The influx of the Igbo entrepreneurs into Ghana and other West African countries, as well as their concentration in huge numbers, has established a favourable environment for their ethnicity, cultural embeddedness, and business conquest, as it also plays an important business set-up and business operation roles. Apart from the food industry, evidence of ethnic embeddedness amongst Igbo entrepreneurs was found in the automobile spare parts business in Suame, Kumasi, and the phone and IT accessories business in the PZ and Kwame Nkrumah Circle areas of Kumasi (Accra). (Ojo, 2018).

The Igbo entrepreneurs were the ones who brought packaged water (clean water) to Ghana. There are a large number of Igbos in West Africa who are taking advantage of lucrative commercial opportunities in Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, China, and Dubai. They can be found in every state in the United States and Canada, as well as the United Kingdom and Western Europe (Mbaegbu & Ekienabor, 2018). Nnadozie (2002) noted that the Igbo entrepreneurs have achieved significant progress in all aspects of entrepreneurship such as foremost, the development of enterprise and industrial zones in the South East region of Nigeria, Nnewi automobile parts industrial revolution, Onitsha enterprise zone, and the Aba technology agglomeration. Secondly, the dominance of imports and exports from Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Europe, and others.

Thirdly, the extension of areas of entrepreneurial influence to other African countries such as Cameroon, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, among others.

The massive landmarks as explained above is derived from a philosophy apprentices system where individuals including the socially deprived, can negotiate better social status as apprentices and eventually entrepreneurs (Uchendu, 2007). Despite the economic marginalization and discrimination of the Ndigbo nation as a result of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war of 1967-1970 as the reason for the mass migration of Ndigbo from their homeland in the South-East of Nigeria, Chukwuezi (2001) explained that the belief that the "outside world provides better financial opportunities" and the desire to 'get rich quick syndrome that has pervaded the Ndigbo culture has become a factor for the entrepreneurial transnationalisation of the Igbo people. This further amplifies the reason why the Nigerian diaspora's financial investing capacity appears to be its greatest asset. The World Bank rated Nigeria fifth among the major remittance recipients in 2017 (\$22 billion). Remittances' contributions to Nigeria's economic development and poverty-reduction programs are not new. What's new is the Nigerian government's interest in the diaspora's potential contribution to the country's growth (Fuller-Love & Akiode, 2020).

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