

## GLOBALIZATION AND THE BREAKDOWN OF AFRICAN COMMUNAL CHILD-TRAINING STRUCTURES: A REDEMPTIVE APPROACH

By

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### Abstract

Child-training is a dominant mandate in every human society. However, the encroachment of globalization into traditional African societies has significantly disrupted the indigenous system of communal child training, replacing collective moral responsibilities with individualism and external cultural models. This paper critically explored the implication of globalization on the breakdown of communal child-rearing structures, focusing on ancient Israelite and Yoruba socio-cultural frameworks. Both traditions historically stress the role of family and community in shaping the moral and spiritual lives of children. Biblical texts and 20 purposively selected Yoruba proverbs were the primary data. The study utilized the Historical-critical methods in the interpretation of both biblical and the selected Yoruba proverbs. Through a comparative ethical analysis of biblical texts and Yoruba proverbs, the study reveals converging values such as discipline, respect for elders, integrity, and communal accountability. The paper argues that the erosion of these values has contributed to moral laxity, youth alienation and cultural disintegration in contemporary African societies. It proposes a redemptive framework that re-engages biblical and Yoruba communal ethics in parenting, education and social policy. This model calls for faith-based institutions, cultural custodians, and educational systems to collaboratively revive a holistic and contextually relevant approach to child development. Bridging faith and culture, the study provides a restorative pathway toward moral resilience and sustainable value transmission in the age of globalization.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Communal Child-Training, Biblical teachings, Yoruba values

### Introduction

Global cultural diffusion, urbanization, and individualism have contributed to the disintegration of African communal values that emphasized collective child rearing (Fabarebo & Iyanda, 2024). The erosion has negatively impacted moral development, social responsibility and identity formation among African youths. Restoring effective child training through collective responsibility, moral upbringing and spiritual formation, Israelite and Yoruba ethical philosophy was employed as a redemptive framework. In ancient Israel and traditional Yoruba society, communalism, a set of cultural practice that prioritize the role and function of the collective group over individual in a worldview context, was used as internal moral compass to mediate

cultural traditions to the next generation. The essence of existence is social and normative because the communal structure, as observed in the studying cultures, creates a sense of community which was organized around communal welfare, responsibilities, obligations, interconnectedness, and solidarity (Adesina, 2020). Thus, personal identity is never separable from socio-cultural environment in which individuals are embedded. This is because individuals exist as persons, as members of a group and as members of a community; and all of them interact and interpenetrate one another (Olufemi, 2016). In ancient Israel and among the Yoruba, inculcating moral values was unanimously considered imperative in order to produce progeny that would later become an indomitable rock of their cultural traditions. Conversely, as noted before, the aims of inculcating moral values have remained the most neglected ones in contemporary societies. The neglect has been visible now in the present dismal picture of societies, rampant with corrupt practices, flouting of rules, and so on. Youths have lost their moral values to new era of modernity and globalization. Therefore, stabilizing social order and conserving socio-cultural heritage in Nigeria today, there is a need to reflect into the past with the aim of influencing the present and future.

### **Globalization, Communal Child Training: Conceptual Exploration**

#### **Globalization**

Globalization has become one of the most popular buzzwords of our time (Yusuf, 2002). It refers to the increased interconnectedness of economies, politics and cultures, which promote liberal democracy, market capitalism and a homogenized global culture often centered on Western ideas. Globalization is the increasing interaction of national economy with that of First World, which ultimately aims at creating a state of frictionless capitalism. The process of globalization entails that there is interconnection of foreign nations through trade and capital flows, harmonization of economy rules that govern relationship among these sovereign nations, creating structures to support and facilitate interdependent and creating a global market place (Simon, 1998). From the perspective of culture, globalization is the process of harmonizing different cultures and beliefs (David, 2002).

Castells (1997) states that globalization is the process that erodes differences in cultures and produces a seamless global system of cultural and economic values. Sociologists, such as Martin & Elizabeth (2004), define globalization as “all those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single world society”. Thus, globalization is a social and cultural process in which individuals of different cultural backgrounds interact with each other in all spheres of life more intensively than before. This integration is increasingly exposing people to different ways of thinking, cultural values and new forms of family life (Sudhi, 2007). Women are getting out of the family home, and children are educated to partake in a world other than that of their parents. One important feature of globalization is the interchange of ideas as symbolized by the internet. The concern involves the clash of cultures and spread of materialistic values (Yusuf, 2002).

#### **Communal Child Training**

Communalism is a strong sense of belonging to a particular community, especially a religious community. It is the principle or practice of communal ownership, and a strong allegiance to one's own ethnic group rather than to society as a whole. Communalism is a shared ideology within one group that promotes the isolation of that group from others. Essentially, it is a form of self-segregation that hinges on a group's belief that it has more differences than

similarities with other group of people. Child Training is considered to be a communal rather than family task, where emphasis is laid on group rather than individual values. Children are raised in peer group somewhat apart from the adult/parent community; values are inculcated through this educational system (Judith, 1980). In African tradition, communal child training involves the extended family, and community assumes joint responsibility for instilling discipline, morality and social etiquette in children.

## **Communalism in Child-Training in Ancient Israel and among the Yoruba Society**

### **Communal Child-Training in Ancient Israel**

In ancient Israel, communalism and child-education were possible bedmates in the socio-cultural terrain. Wisdom, as people say, is the supreme (Prov. 4:7 NIV) and principal thing (Prov. 4:7 KJV) which is connected with honour, prestige and social stratification that must be taught in the community. Collective responsibility in Child-Training is explicitly evident in Israelite use of vocative *beni* "My Son" (Sneed, 2005). Theologically, children are considered the heritage of God, given to every community for continuity (Psalm 127:3). Axiologically, children are to be taught in order to ensure an ideal and aesthetic society. In Israel, learning about wisdom is set forth in a father-son relationship with the listener frequently addressed as "My son". The appellation "father" and "son" metaphorically reflects the communal relationship in the Jewish community, particularly between teacher (older person) and pupil (younger person). Competent Old Testament scholars saw this as one of the sufficient numbers of biblical allusions to prove the influence of Ancient Near Eastern cultures upon the life of Israel. In ancient Near East, being old or having grey hair was connected with wisdom. As the person aged, in the ancient world, their honour or prestige increased correlatively, and they were valued for their wisdom and knowledge that had accrued over a life time. The younger persons would go to the village or city elders (comprising family heads) for advice and counsel. The teacher addresses the pupil as his son and maintains a parental tone in any context of moral education. Consider these:

My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them (Prov. 1:10)

My Son, if you accept my words and store up my commands with you... (Prov. 2:1)

My Son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart (Prov. 3:1)

Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many (Prov. 4:10)

My Son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen well to my words of insight (Prov. 5:1)

My Son, if you have put up security for your neighbour, if you have struck hands in pledge for another..... (Prov. 6:1)

My Son, keep my words and store up my commands within you (Prov. 7:1)

Now then, my son, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways (Prov. 8:32)

From the above excerpts, it could rightly be deduced that in ancient Israel, every older person was considered as parent to the younger ones. This is also applicable in traditional Yoruba culture, where every adult saw the younger persons in the community as his children, with a view to playing necessary parental roles on them. Being a family-oriented society, parents in Israel were considered the child's earliest instructors in the customs, moral standards, and traditions of the community. They were the quintessential teachers who passed on their life experiences, skills and wisdom to their children in order to enable them to be productive members of the family and citizens in the broader world.

## **Yoruba Communal Efforts in Child-Training**

The uniqueness of a race or people is found in their cultures, as reflected in their world-view, language and other social elements. The similar nature and forms of expression in Israelite and Yoruba moral education happily provide a wealth of comparative data. As preserved in Jewish culture, there were Philosophical theories that extolled dignity of human value among the traditional Yoruba people. Like the Israelites, Yoruba people were communal in character. They believed and said that: *Ohun ti a ba dijo wo, gigun nii gun* (whatever we observe collectively is always accurate). It was also said that: *Agbajo owo la fi n soya* (We often beat chest with hands joined together) and that: *Ajoji owo kan ko gb'eru d'ori* (One hand does not take load to the head). In traditional Yoruba society, individual's existence was understood in the light of the community (Olufemi, 2016). That is why it was said among the people that: *Igi kan ko le da igbosa* (A tree cannot make a forest).

The community was considered supreme above and higher than every individual, unlike the western world which is characterized by individualism. That remained a fundamental factor for sustainable social and ethical order in their society. In the Yoruba setting, all belonged to the community and members were bound together, seeing themselves as of common blood, descended from Oduduwa. Honour and shame were shared collectively; thus, it was considered imperative to sanction and enforce moral values. Within this understanding, every child belonged to the community and inculcating moral rectitude was the responsibility of the entire members. One Yoruba proverb says: *Oju merin lo n bi Omo, Igba Oju nii woo* (four eyes brings into existence a child, two hundred raise it). Traditionally among the Yoruba people, older persons were seen as repositories of wisdom, and high premium accorded them (Fayemi 2009). As elders, they were meant to help, support, guide or control the youths in a way that their exuberance would be judiciously curtailed and acceptable character be extolled through them in the community. Elders, in traditional Yoruba society, cannot be seduced, tempted or influenced by appeals to favourism, manipulations, personal desires or selfish interest, unlike today's elders, many of whom, are found playing leading roles among the lawless people. The singular goal of elders, in the ancient time, was to guide and guarantee the corporate good and collective advancement. Thus, their views were rarely challenged, and dissenting opinions from the youths were condescendingly treated as impulsive behaviour or as outright affront and disrespect, which sometimes attracted heavy punishment, depending on how "young" the offender. Like ancient Israel, traditional Yoruba community was family oriented; child-Training started with the family. One Yoruba proverb says: *Ile laa tii k'esoo rode* (charity begins at home).

## **Globalization, Erosion of Communal Structures and Its Consequences**

### **Globalization and Erosion of Communal Structures**

There are notable adverse effects of globalization on African communal structures. Some of them include the following:

**a. Cultural displacement** – Cultural displacement is a concept that describes the process of a culture either being physically separated from its root or having the imposition of another culture eclipses and/or replaced that culture. Cultural displacement refers to the feeling of alienation and loss experienced by individual or communities when they move from their original cultural environment to a new one, often due to factors like migration, diaspora, or globalization (Walsh, 2004). Today, western ideologies of individualism have taken over

African communal values, thereby resulting in diminishing influence of local languages and indigenous worldviews.

**b. Technological disruption** – Technological disruption is a phenomenon where innovation fundamentally changes or replaces established technologies, industries or practices. African communal structures, today, have been eroded, often with conflicting value orientations due to children's exposure to global media and reduction in face-to-face community engagement.

**c. Urbanization and Nuclear Family Structure** - Migration from rural to urban settings for jobs, education and better living leads to physical separation of family members, dissolving extended family network. Urban life promotes individualism and privacy, reducing communal living common in extended families. Shared decision-making and care giving roles once held by the extended family become limited.

### **Consequences of the Breakdown**

**a. Moral and Ethical Crisis** – This includes the rise of youth delinquency and crime, disrespect for authority and elders, increase in substance abuse, peer pressure, and antisocial behaviour as well as community elders and adults engaging in questionable and sacrilegious behaviours.

**b. Weakening of Social Cohesion** –There is loss of intergenerational ties and shared values and rise of identity confusion and emotional alienation.

**c. Educational and Developmental Impact** – There is poor character formation despite formal education and overdependence on formal systems for guidance.

### **Toward a Redemptive Ethical Synthesis: Implication of Israelite and Yoruba Communalism for Child-Training in Contemporary Nigeria**

Previous sections of this work have afforded us the opportunity to establish the relevance of collective responsibility in child-Training. Culled out of and interpreted from the cultures under study, it is quite evident that parenting is a serious responsibility that carries grave consequences. Besides, it is a responsibility that must not be left to the biological parents. Child-training requires collective efforts, involving interpersonal skills and makes emotional demands (Egbetakin, 2013). Parenting efforts, in a communal manner, gradually allow the child to imbibe, through enculturation, the fundamental wisdom behind adults' views about life, its challenges, its triumph and failures. The first principle of this parenting style, as Babatunde and Setiloane posited, is making the child understand that he is part of a group that cares and expects respect in return (Babatunde and Setiloane 2014).

The second principle, according to the same scholars, is that child gradually becomes aware of the template of socialization, the example of which the Yoruba people refer to as *Omoluabi* (well-behaved). It is unfortunate today that many parents have personalized the responsibility, frowned at communal correction and parenting, and limited the training of their children to themselves. This explains the increased anti-social behaviours among contemporary children. This position may appear as seeking to inspire seemingly contradictory or archaic perspectives, because this present generation, as earlier noted, has been deeply influenced by the prevalent consumerist nature of contemporary sociopolitical system. However, functionally involved parents who are dutiful in raising well-behaved children will certainly extract some lessons from it.

## Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper explored communalism in child-training as preserved in ancient Israel and traditional Yoruba societies, focusing on the relevance of this traditional method in contemporary societies. The work revealed that communalism, as a set of cultural practice that prioritize the role and function of the collective group over individual in a worldview context, is imperatively inevitable for mutual co-existence. This is because the essence of human existence is social and normative. The communal structure, which is peculiar to humanity, creates a sense of community organised around communal welfare, responsibilities, obligations, interconnectedness and solidarity. Therefore, child-training, which is a dominant mandate in every community, ranging from family to the whole community, requires collective efforts, skills and interpersonal relations in order to preserve the old age cultural traditions that prioritize human values. The paper recommends that parenting should be more of a communal enterprise in contemporary societies; it should involve the entire community and not be limited to the parents of the children alone. Biological parents should also appreciate communal efforts in child-training.

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