

Full Length Research

Human and Children's Rights, in Southeastern Nigeria: Visual Arts Perspective

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Human Rights may be viewed as significant rules, norms or principles guiding and protecting the effective existence of man, regardless of status or race, as supported by Egbomuche-Okeke (2006). It is the position of the study that no massive growth and development may be achieved without human. The study, therefore, tries to situate human, particularly, children as future and hope of tomorrow and shares the view that children neglected, abused, deprived and unprotected are future neglected, deprived and unprotected, therefore, Human and Children's' right must be hugely protected for futuristic focus. Again, it is observed that most people in the southeastern Nigeria are deprived, abused and neglected with the resultant effect of retrogression, retardation, and intimidation, which to a greater degree may affect the growth and development of ndigbo. The study considers visual arts as massive human endeavor that inspires and synergizes creativity and sustainable development but its neglected, including other agencies that could galvanize effective development of ndigbo. Different studies have been carried out in different aspects of human rights as well as visual arts, there may not be significant and comprehensive studies on this subject, hence the study. Primary and Secondary sources of data collation are used to achieve the objectives of the study. Again, the objectives are further achieved against the backdrop of Art Formalism and Historical Theories. Findings include human and children's rights are neglected, visual arts and entrepreneurship ignored, High rate of school dropout, youth unemployment and others. Conclusively, visual arts should be mobilized as a counter strategy to enhance creativity and youth empowerment. Human rights should be guided to secure the future of the future generation of ndigbo. The projected conclusion paved way for further recommendations.

Keywords: Human and Children's Rights, Visual Arts

INTRODUCTION

Human rights particularly, children's are some of the pathetic and deplorable issues facing ndigbo in contemporary times. These however, have affected the quality of lives among the Igbo people in the southeastern Nigeria geopolitical zone. Apart from quality of life, more lives have been lost due to injustice, oppression, sabotage, and marginalization to the extreme of these people called ndigbo to the extent also that majority of ndigbo have fled to other cities in

the country and beyond in search of protection, justice, livelihood and others that could make life worth living.

The continued human rights violations in all parts of the southeastern Nigeria, particularly, by those who are indeed supposed to protect the right of sons and daughters of ndigbo, have situated Igbo people as sojourners and slaves in their father land – giving rooms to so many unanswered questions – where are their chi, ancestors, forefathers, *Ikenga, Njoku, Ala,*

Amadioha which were and are predominantly, powerful before the advent of Christianity and modernism in southeastern Nigeria today.

The study share, the view that before the advent of colonialism and *modernism Chi*, ancestors, Ikenga, Njoku, Ala, Amadioha and others represented to a higher degree, human and children's rights in igbo land and beyond. To this extent, these deities (gods) represented and protected the people from vices, injustice, intimidation and other forms of violation facing man and society in recent times. One may observe with absolute discomfort that in contemporary times, ndigbo no longer have right to effective existence, quality life and effective legal system that may protect rights that could restore freedom and dignity of man in southeastern Nigeria territory. These, in situ, have placed ndigbo in a disadvantageous position, leading to in-effective existence, migration, abuse, unfocused and un-coordinated activities which may trigger social ills, like robbery border crimes, migration, drug peddling, prostitution and others. Agitation for freedom and sovereignty which may inspire Justice, innovative technology, creativity, entrepreneurship, economic empowerment. Is on the increase, as a result of human and children's right abuse.

Human rights, strictu sensu as noted by Egbomuche Okeke (2006) are such rights that are attached to one by the mere fact of being born as a human being. They are those rights that naturally accrue to man in his capacity as a human being.

Again, he further states that human rights ipso facto are inalienable and inherent by the position of the human condition of existence and cannot be taken away from man by force or fiat of the state. This is against the backdrop of violence and abuses and violations meted out to the people of southeastern Nigeria in recent times by President Muhamadu Buhari in 2018 through (Operation Python Dance) where ndigbo in southeastern Nigeria were invaded, attacked, maimed and killed unlawfully. Again, under the platform of looking for Mazi, Nnamdi Kanu, whose residence was invaded, attacked and more than 28 innocent souls and animals were unlawfully killed in the same 2018 by uniformed military operatives who are supposed to promote peace and protect the territorial integrity of the country. However, Ndigbo were and are left abused and unprotected. Their lives and rights were and are violated till date. These human rights violations against ndigbo and others constituted an important development in the Vienna world conference of 1993, where it was stated and declared that: as cited by Egbomeche-Okeke (2006:4).

All human rights are universal, indivisible interdependent and interrelated. The international

community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner on the same emphasis. While the significances of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind. It is the duty of states regardless of their political economic and cultural system to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

However, in recent time's politicians, particularly, in the Nigeria environment, Human and Children's Rights seem not be enshrined in the nation's constitution hence the animalistic and barbaric acts meted out on the citizenry.

VISUAL ARTS

Visual arts is one of the creative and entrepreneurial endeavors that could catapult most economies into world powers. Unfortunately, visual arts which could serve as creative incubator and galvanizer of innovative and industrial technology are neglected in most of the developing countries, like Nigeria, indeed, Africa. The study observes that there is human and children's' right abuse in Nigeria today, where people particularly, children are discouraged from reading or studying visual arts in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in favour of medicine and surgery, law, accountancy and others. The study maintains that if the society- the government, parents, organizations, individuals and others could prevent and or discourage people or children's from pursuing or studying the courses of their choice in favour of others it is human and children's' right abuse and detrimental to economic and sustainable development.

One may submit that knowledge of visual arts may impact on creativity aesthetic awareness and environmental technology which could in the end boost economic and sustainable development, particularly, in the third world countries. The study shares the view that visual arts could massively impact on the economy if well applied and utilized by authorized agencies in the society. It is in this direction that Okereke and Ekpe (2002:2) state that development implies change which often follows a well-ordered sequence and exhibits common characteristics across countries. They further observe that

Development is more than just the acquisition of industries but includes such ideals of modernization as rise in productivity, social and economic equalization, modern technical and attitudes as well as rationally coordinated policy approaches.

The study is of the view that no meaningful development may be achieved in any society where there are infringement on fundamental human rights.

Certainly, underdevelopment abound when human lives are neglected and the right values ignored. The contemporary politicians in Nigeria are basically concerned with primitive and animalistic acquisition of wealth with little or no regards for human lives and values.

In recent times, as observed and noted by the study, people are unlawfully detained without prosecution, extra-judicial killing here and there, there is no effective law protecting the rights of children and so many of them are out of school hawking and are massively abused. The study is of the view that children should have right to quality education, health care, freedom and right to effective existence, however, qualitative education and the study of visual arts should be paramount in the agenda and policy making of the government and concerned citizens.

Experiences abound in Nigeria in recent times that human and children's rights are relegated to the background to the extent that cows and goats are honourable and dignified than human. Lives of human particularly, children are worthless before the government in power, including the contemporary politicians in Nigeria contexts. Children and underaged are left wandering the streets and are seen at every nooks and crannies of the communities without hope and future, leaving them with little or no option than to hawk and involve in juvenile delinquencies and other forms of abuse which are counterproductive to human capacity and economic advancement, particularly, to developing economies like Nigeria and others with nepotic and dehumanizing characteristics.

In Nigeria today, anybody who seeks for human right are branded terrorist and treated as such. The study observes that the judiciary or Nigerian legal system are collaborators with the ruling government and mass media to stagnate and strangle human and children's' rights which are hitherto the last hope of the common man in the society. The system is so bastardized that, today, it is Boko-Haram, tomorrow is Fulani Herdsmen, extra-judicial killings here and there. The study shares the view that the child deprived is the child denied and a future disillusioned and destroyed with resultant effects of retrogression, underdevelopment and abject poverty without remedy.

One may agree with the study that misplacement of priority as well as neglect and abuse of human and children's right may be considered a major setbacks in developing economies, particularly, Nigeria, indeed, Africa. One may suggest that in Nigeria today human and children's rights are exclusively for the families of the ruling party, and those in the higher echelon of the social strata. Any policy that is not directly connected to looting, corruption, abuse of human right and killing of innocent

souls from targeted geopolitical zone in the country is not given a due attention for consideration and effective existence of the people. The study is of the view that effects of maladministration, poor policy non implementation of right policies impact negatively on human and children's rights including human capacity and the economy at large.

However, visual arts may provide a huge platform for restoration of lost values and massive education of the public, particularly, victims of human rights abuse, through graphic illustration and paintings as well as sculpture which on the long run may calm down emotions and psychological trauma and other traumatic and emotional disorders emanating from abuse.

Colours and other graphic illustrations may calm down emotions and bring back to life those who are traumatized.

Examples includes figures 1-2



Figure. 1: Freedom, Pen and Ink, 2019, (6X9) cm
Nnaji, Henry Dunk



Figure. 2: Joy of Freedom, Pen and Ink, 2019,
cm (6X9) Nnaji, Henry Dunk.

Visual arts play monumental roles in capacity building as well as technological development. The study is of the view that those who are meaningfully engaged in

visual arts enterprise become job providers and not job seekers, consequently *quaderat demonstradum (QED)* in nation and capacity building.



Figure. 3: Joy of Freedom, Pen and Ink, 2019,
(6x9) cm Nnaji, Henry Dunk



Figure. 4: Liberty, Pen and Ink, 2019, (6X10) cm
Nnaji, Henry Dunk.

A nation could be said to be developed if only she is productive, including human and children's rights protected to create a suitable playground for sustainable development.

Conclusively, human and children's right are important phenomena in the history and development of mankind. They are designed to promote and protect the effective existence of man and society, thereby creating a significant and suitable environment for capacity building, as well as technological and sustainable national development.

Creativity and imagination may not be totally removed from industrial and national development hence Visual arts should not be relegated to the background when policies affecting man, technology and industrial development are made, particularly, in the developing economies.

Visual arts should be encouraged and anchored toward empowering and galvanizing sustainable national development. Teaching and learning of visual arts should be encouraged in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions to develop the imagination and creative potentials of individuals.

Policies should be made to protect and promote human and children's rights as this will hugely inspire effective contributions to sustainable growth and national development. Visual arts fosters profound sense of belonging, originality, creativity that could inspire and trigger Technology, human capacity as well as sustainable growth and national development.

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