



HUMAN DISCRIMINATION: AN IGWEBUIKE PERSPECTIVE



Okoro Romanus Obiora
Department of Philosophy
Tansian University, Umunya
romchristus@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper takes a critical look on the issue of human discrimination in Igwebuike ethical perspectives. It captures the convergence of authoritarianism, economic crisis and end of the Cold War as determinants of the spheres of human discrimination and marginalization in authoritarian states. These variables are simultaneously the key to understanding the role of the international community. This paper argues further that credit could be given to the international community for promoting the course of human rights and impartiality. The study employed the analytic and hermeneutic research methods and made the findings that the human discrimination is not even the phenomenon of our time but has passed through different epoch in human existence in different forms like: slave trade/human slavery, human experimentation, tribalism, marginalization, subjection of women, child trafficking, abuse or violation of fundamental human rights etc. It is also show that human

beings naturally sort each other into groups based on sex, race, age, colour, and other attributes. This process of social categorization leads people to see others as either similar to themselves or as different. The consequence of this process is, once we distinguish between “us” and “them,” we begin to assume that “they” are all alike. This belief makes it easy to view in stereotyped ways others who are different. The work examine the best practices for remedying these forms of discrimination and promoting diversity in Igwebuiké philosophy is to work in mutual togetherness and complementation for the well being of common good. Indeed, this study submits that people needing a boost in self-esteem are often motivated to belittle “them” in order to feel better about “us.”

Keywords: Igwebuiké, Human Persons, Human Discrimination, Ethics, Complementary, Violation.

Introduction

No doubt, we are all familiar with lists of the usual victims and the usual perpetrators of discrimination. So, for instance, we would all say that women were (and, in a few places, still are) discriminated against because, unlike men, they do not have the right to vote or to run for public office; that whites discriminated against blacks under apartheid; and that, unlike members of the majority religion, members of a minority religion are discriminated against, when they are not legally permitted to practice their religion publicly. While such lists offer some understanding of what discrimination is, this

understanding is incomplete. This becomes apparent, when we come across new, putative cases of discrimination and need to determine whether they extend the list. So, for instance, when smokers complain that they are being discriminated against when not hired for jobs in the health sector, or obese people think that they are being discriminated against because the public space is designed on the basis of needs and requirements of non-obese people, are they right?

However, man is the foundation cause and end of every society. All things on earth therefore should be ordained to man as to their centre and summit. Man is the author of development and development outcomes improve man's standard of living. National policies and programmes, natural and human potentials, the state and indeed all human structures should aim at the same thing: to make man's life a success¹.

Thus, Ejizu avers that “life and its enhancement is the overriding concern of traditional African experience. A life fully enhanced is the one that realizes the ideals and key values of one's society.

¹ C. O. Asogwa, “Introduction: The Goals of Human Rights,” *Human Rights in Nigeria: The Way Forward*, (Enugu: Praise House Publishers, 2004), 1.
menical Theology, Vol. 4 (Enugu: Snaap Press, 1991), 1-2.

Good health, prosperity, initiation into title position, a sizeable family, old age, works and generally earning a good living are highly appreciated in African societies².” Africans and African nations ought therefore to see development more as human-centered expressed in education, health, food and nutrition, housing, income and employment. Consequently, we shall look into “Human (Humanism)” and “Discrimination,” and then determine the Human Discrimination in Igwebuike ethical perspective.

What is Human Discrimination?

It is very crucial that we define the two independent words “human (humanism)” and “discrimination” respectively before we proceed. Literally, the term humanism is from the Latin noun *humanus* understood as human; it is the attitude of the mind, which attaches importance to man and his faculties mundane state of affairs temporal aspirations and well-being. The term could, also be understood to stand for any man-centred philosophy. This perspective of understanding is offered clarity by Nicola Abbagnano. For him, “Humanism is any philosophy, which recognizes the value or dignity of man and makes him the measure of all things or

² C. I. Ejizu, “Human Rights in African Indigenous Religion,” *Bulletin of Ecu*

somehow takes human nature, its limits, or its interest as its theme³.”

However, at the epicenter of humanism is an intrinsic anthropocentrism. In the words of Battista Mondin, it is a “project” in which “man is the supreme question for man⁴.” Fredrick Edwards succinctly tries a definition as follows: “Philosophical Humanism is any outlook or way of life centered on human need and interest⁵.” He further summarized some of the different nuances of what he thought the concept to mean as follows:

Philosophy focused upon human means for comprehending reality. Philosophy for the here and now, which regarded human values as making sense only in the context of human life rather than in the promise of a supposed after death. As a realistic philosophy as against mere speculative type. In sum a philosophy for those in love with life⁶.

3 N. Abbagnano, “Humanism,” in Paul Edwards (Ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol. IV (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, 1967), 69-70.

4 Mondin Battista, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1985), 1.

5 Edwards Fredrick, “What is Humanism,” Text of a talk presented to various audiences by the Executive Director American Humanist Association (Washington DC, 1989), 1.

6 Ibid., 7.

The term “discrimination” comes from the Latin *discriminatio*, derived from the verb *discriminare* (meaning “to distinguish”), comprising the prefix *dis-* (indicating separation) and the root *crimen* (the act of distinguishing). However, discrimination has an inseparable definition with human discrimination. In other words, discrimination revolves around human person, whereby one discriminates against fellow fairly or unfairly. In fact, human person is both the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of discriminating. Therefore, human discrimination is to show favour, prejudice or bias for or against a person on any arbitrary grounds, for example on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth by an employer. Discrimination can be viewed as favourable or unfavourable, depending on whether a person receives favours or opportunities, or is denied them. For example, a senior citizens' discount shows favourable discrimination toward senior citizens. However, in modern usage, discrimination is usually considered unfavourable.⁷

7 Norman Dorsen and Jethro K. Lieberman, "Discrimination." Microsoft® Encarta® 2009 [DVD]. (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).

Forms of Human Discrimination

There are many different discrimination- relevant ways of treating a discriminatee. Meanwhile, there are two kinds of discrimination- fair and unfair discrimination. Thus, fair discrimination is a situation where the law is set out four grounds on which discrimination is generally allowed, namely: discrimination based on affirmative action, discrimination based on inherent requirements of a particular job, compulsory discrimination by law and discrimination based on productivity. While the unfair discrimination is where the policy or practice showing favour, prejudice or bias against one in terms of the above mentioned grounds and which is not fair can be deemed to be discrimination. Initially, one might distinguish between direct and indirect discrimination, where this distinction is understood to be exhaustive of forms of discrimination. In other words, there are two forms of discrimination related to 'unfair discrimination', namely - direct discrimination and indirect discrimination.

Direct discrimination: Direct discrimination is easily identifiable and involves overt differential treatment between employees and job applicants on the basis of arbitrary grounds. For example an employer follows a policy of remunerating a female employee on a lower scale simply because she is a woman, whereas a male employee is remunerated at a much higher scale for doing the same work.

Gertrude Ezorsky observes that:

Direct discrimination occurs whenever some of the phenomena described below take place. What is common to them is that they all involve representational items- e.g., desires, beliefs, statements, laws- that refer to, or otherwise distinguish between, those who are discriminated against and those who are not in the relevant discriminatory respect. Hence, to directly discriminate against, say, women you need to represent those you are discriminating against as women.”

Indirect discrimination: On the other hand, is not as easily recognizable as it is a more subtle form of discrimination. It involves the application of policies and practices that are apparently neutral and do not explicitly distinguish between employees and job applicants but that, in reality, have a disproportionate and negative effect on certain individuals or groups. The laws also emphasize that - Sexual harassment will be prohibited. Essentially one has to give consideration to the impact of actions, policies and procedures when evaluating discriminatory practices rather than the intention thereof. Gertrude Ezorsky notes that:

Roughly, indirect discrimination occurs

8 Gertrude Ezorsky, *Racism and Justice: The Case for Affirmative Action* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 39–40.

whenever an individual, institution, or practice acts (or is) in such a way that the interests of some individuals are systematically favored and yet this does not involve direct discrimination. For instance, many observers would probably say that much of the employment discrimination against women that takes place nowadays is indirect—that women are discriminated against not primarily because men prefer to hire men, but because of the way the labor market is set up, and the connected difficulty of reconciling the demands of one's job with being pregnant and giving birth to children⁹.

In all, discrimination is not an ideology, belief, sentiment, or bias. It is a form of behavior, procedure, or policy that directly or indirectly disadvantages members of certain categories compared to others, simply because they happen to be members of that category. Therefore, defining an action as discriminatory does not require any underlying intention or motivation.

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to present an Igwebuike ethical perspective on the question of

⁹ Ibid.

human discrimination. Thus, let us firstly consider what Igwebuike philosophy is.

The Concepts “Igwebuike” and “Igwebuike Philosophy”

The concept of Igwebuike embodies a crucial aspect of African ethics, as it denotes the underlying principle that unifies the diversity of ethical perspectives within Africa. It serves as a constant factor amidst the plurality of ethical perspectives on the continent, and as such, it can be regarded as the operating condition that maintains a degree of coherence and continuity amid the remarkable diversity of African ethics.

Igwebuike is the heart of African thought, and in fact, the modality of being in African philosophy¹⁰. It is taken from the Igbo language, which is a composite word made up of three dimensions¹¹. Therefore, it can be employed as a word or used as a sentence: as a word, it is written as Igwebuike, and as a sentence, it is written as, Igwe bu ike, with the component words

11 A. I. Kanu, “Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Wholistic Response to the Problem of Evil and Human Suffering,” *An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3. 2. (2017), 52.

12 A. I. Kanu, “Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Ethic of Reciprocity,” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol 3. No 2 (2017), 127.

enjoying some independence in terms of space¹³. The three words involved: Igwe is a noun which means number or population, usually a huge number or population. Bu is a verb, which means is. Ike is another noun which means strength or power. Thus, put together, it means 'number is strength' or 'number is power', that is, when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force¹⁴. Its English equivalent is 'complementarity.' At this level, no task is beyond their collective capability. It is a concept that was employed by African traditional philosophers of the complementary school of thought to discuss the nature of the observed African reality¹⁵.

Philosophically, Igwebuiké is anchored on the African worldview, which, according to Iroegbu is characterized by a common origin, common worldview, common language, shared culture, shared race, colour and habits, common historical experience and a common destiny¹⁶. It is a

13 A. I. Kanu, "Igwebuiké as a Complementary Approach to the Issue of Girl-Child Education," *Nightingale International Journal of Contemporary Education and Research*, Vol. 3. No. 6 (2017), 13.

14 A. I. Kanu, "Igwebuiké and Logic of African Philosophy," *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3. 1 (2017), 9.

15 A. I. Kanu, "Igwebuiké and the Question of Superiority in the Scientific Community of Knowledge," *Nightingale International Journal of Contemporary Education and Research*, 3. 1 (2017), 78.

16 P. Iroegbu, *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy* (Owerri: International Universities Press, 1995).

complementary philosophy which understands life as a shared reality. Life is a life of sharedness; one in which another is part thereof. It is a relationship, though of separate and separated entities or individuals but with a joining of the same whole¹⁷. It is a relationship in which case the two or more coming together makes each of them a complete whole; it is a diversity of being one with each other. This notwithstanding, Igwebuike is an African philosophy of Complementarity.

The Principles of Igwebuike

The principles of Igwebuike refer to the framework that shapes Igwebuike. These principles are the values on which Igwebuike stands. While these principles guide Igwebuike, they also justify Igwebuike. These principles include:

(a.) The Principle of Identity: This principle makes one an essential self from others and gives a sense of complementarity as well as putting he/she into interconnectedness with others. This identity is determined by the *Chi* of the being (anatarara Chi-received from God), which individuates it in relation to the other. Kanu, avers that “the principle of identity is very important in Igwebuike because, before we can talk about inter-subjectivity,

17 A. I. Kanu, “Igwebuike as the Consummate Foundation of African Bioethical Principles,” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 2. 2 (2016), 41.

complementarity, interconnectedness, the other must have an identity of its own¹⁸.”

(b.) The Principle of Hierarchy: This principle emphasizes on the variety of the degree of forces, which is at the base of the categorization of being hierarchically. God is at the apex as the source of all force followed by others with greater force. It is God-*Chi* that determines the force, relationship and places them in the hierarchy of beings. *Chi* is used within the context of the imprint of the part of *Chukwu* (the Supreme Being) on all that He has made.

(c.) The Principle of Contrariety: this principle within the context of Igwebuike, contrariety is part of the natural universe. For instance, in the same universe, we find both good and evil, life and death, light and darkness, hot and cold, wet and dry, love and hate, unity and diversity, short and long, substance and accidents, act and potency, fortune and misfortune, male and female. For Kanu, these are contraries to each other, and are indispensable realities of the universe¹⁹. Therefore, it is the *Chi* of a being that individuates it and thus makes it contrary to the other.

18 A. I. Kanu, “African Identity and the Emergence of Globalization,” *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*. Vol. 3. No. 6. (2013), 34.

19 A. I. Kanu, “Igwebuike, Personal Identity and Alterity,” *Igwebuikepedia Internet Encyclopedia of African Philosophy*, A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies (2018).

(d.) The Principle of Unity: This principle within the context of Igwebuike understands every individual reality as part of and the completion of the whole, and thus, there is a unity in the midst of diversity²⁰. However, God- *Chi* being a 'thumb print' of *Chukwu* in all that He made, provides for the unity of being, and, a basis for interaction and collaboration. Hence, *Chi* is not only a basis for identity in Igbo ontology; it is also a basis for unity- a common gift or platform for communal relations.

Igwebuike Ethical Perspectives of Human Discrimination

Igwebuike is an underlying principle of African Philosophy. It is a collaborative in its own sense of harmony, community, complementarity and solidarity. It is a worldview in which individuating differences must work towards a corporate existence where the 'I' does not stand as the 'I' this kind, difference does not divide neither does it constitute a threat, but rather unite and give hope that future existence would have meaning. In Igwebuike philosophy, it is seen in the same light, however, as disintegration of togetherness because Igwebuike perspective believes in communalism. It is also seen as complementarity and similar to Ujamma, and it is in this regard that Mbiti writes on the basis of African

20 A. I. Kanu, "Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Ethic of Reciprocity," *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol 5. No. 3 (2019), 129.

philosophy: "I am because 'we are and since we are, therefore, I am²¹." So the basic thing there in Igwebuiké philosophy is that human discrimination is also a violation of human right and disintegration of the unit or body or peace in the society. This notwithstanding, Igwebuiké is an African philosophy of Complementarity.

In furtherance, Igwebuiké as an Igbo-African perspective of life, while the meaning of life concerns the human race, there cannot be a human race if there isn't first a human person. In other words, human discrimination in Igwebuiké philosophy is simply means or as the form of depriving people of their right or discriminating against people in so such a way that infringes on the right of those people.

The Igwebuiké ethical principles that evaluates the respect for persons, beneficence and non-maleficence are underscores the philosophy's emphasis on respect and love towards each others. Preserving moral integrity of others is rightful ways to demonstrate care and concern rather than exposing people to harm. The Igwebuiké perspective here is on the principle of golden rule: "do to others what you want others to do for you, rather than discriminating or doing wrong thing to others. Safeguard others as human person is gift from God.

²¹J. Mbiti, *African Traditional Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1970), 108.

On the Igwebuike ethical values of human dignity, human equality and universal brotherhood/sisterhood, these perspective places everyone on the same level as well as giving everyone his due place. It is of greater good to value human persons on basis of dignity, equality and brotherhood/sisterhood which will also, accompanied by love, cooperation and solidarity. Human discrimination shows no value and spirit of considerate to others but African ethics calls for the recognition of our shared humanity and the promotion of mutual respect, care and concern for one another as members of a global human family.

Talking about the Igwebuike ethics of reciprocity, it lies on the fundamental principle of compassion, which is the ability to empathize with others and act for their well-being. It reminds us of the importance of fostering strong social bonds and relationships, and of our inherent obligation to care for one another and promote the common good. Igwebuike ethics is against human discrimination because it does not consider and carry others along. Thus, the human reason and sense of feeling help the human person to discover that life is a relationship and that a sense of community and relationship is indispensable for the achievement of the meaning of life.

In addition with Igwebuike theory of happiness, it is on the quality of life that we lead determines the

quality of happiness that we experience. It is not possible to live a life that goes against our nature and still expect to achieve genuine happiness. This implies that our attention to the public well-being usually needs to extend only so far as is required to know that we are not violating the rights of others. Those who discriminate are, therefore, deemed incapable of accessing the happiness that is truly deserved by the human person. Discriminating others from common national value and making others to be in sorrow and pain.

The moral calculus of Igwebuike ethical theory is to help individuals arrive at moral decision easily without any form of ambiguity or clarity. In other words, individuals who are against human discrimination morally promote humanness, self-realization, the common good, fellowship among people and honour relationships possess a dignified existence. While those who support the action human discrimination are immorally deceitful, arrogant, ill-will, violent, corrupt, jealous, envious, deceptive, etc., are referred to as men and women without dignity.

Igwebuike and Human Discrimination in Nigeria

Human discrimination happens in Nigeria in another form called tribalism. Tribalism can be interpreted as superiority complex among specific ethnic group, which makes them prejudiced towards

their neighbours. The existence of tribalism traces back to the era of slavery. However, in the modern days of Nigeria, this issue still exists and prevents so many people from getting along and uniting to combat more relevant issues, which concern all of the Nigerian people. Tribalism influences many sphere of social life- for instance, quite often competent workers are overlooked because of their tribal identity, the leaders lack federal character on the key appointment and marginalization on one section of the country- Igbo part of Nigeria is case study. The so claimed democracy being practice here has nothing to write home about. Human discrimination in Nigeria has destroyed the love and true ethical principles and values.

In African ontology, the dignity of people springs from their network of relationships and solidarity with others in the pursuit of the good common to all. No one within the African traditional societies attained great heights because of what he or she has been able to do for himself or herself but because of what they have been able to do for others. Some warriors, hunters, kings, priests, medicine men, etc., were referred to as men and women of dignity simply because of the quality of their relationship with the community or with others in relation to the pursuit of the common good.

Nevertheless, the principles of African bioethics that are generated from Igwebuiké in its dimensions centered on the principle of solidarity, which is based on African sense of community; this is followed by respect for persons, beneficence and non-maleficence reflected on the mutual relations to others. As the modality of being, complementary relations to the other, therefore, becomes the point of fulfillment for being, for it is in relation to the other that a being realizes itself. Every being needs the other for self realization- the self is not realized in isolation. It is said that “all fingers are not equal”, however, when they different fingers come together, they can achieve a lot. Some fingers are shorter, but they have their use; some fingers are taller, they have their use; some fingers are slimmer, they also have their use; the importance of each emerges when the time for application arrives. The other is needed others to complement our efforts and works. There is an African saying that says: “one finger does not carry a load on the head”, which means that we need others. Some work great jobs while some small, otherwise how do we exist²²? Thus, to be our brothers/sisters keeper matters, not discriminating.

In all, Igwebuiké philosophy echoes the Igbo proverbs that express the Igbo philosophy of

22 A. I. Kanu, Igwebuiké Philosophy and Human Rights Violation in Africa,” *Agora : Journal of Philosophical & Theological Studies*, Vol. 2 (2017),284.

complementary and the part which the other plays in the life of the other for realization of the self rather than discriminating:

1. Aka nri kwo aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwo aka nri:
If the right hand washes the left hand, the left hand would wash the right hand.
2. Anyuko mamiri onu ogba ofufu: If people urinate in the same spot it foams.
3. Ngwere gharu ukwu osisi aka akparu ya:
When a lizard goes far from the tree, it would be caught.
4. Ugo beru egbe eberu: Let the kite peck and let the eagle peck.
5. Gidigidi bu ugwu eze: Unity is strength.
6. Onye ayana nwanne ya: No one should leave his brother behind
7. Otu onye tuo izu, ogbue ochu: Knowledge is never complete: two heads are better than one.
8. Ihere ad gh eme onye ara ka na-eme m -nna ya: Relations are concerned most with a person's behaviour.
9. Otu nkp r aka r ta mman o zue ha n : No one is an Island.
10. Ehi enweghi odu, chi ya na churu ya ijiji: A cow without tail, its god chases flies away for it.
11. Eze mbe si na olu oha di mma: The tortoise said that many hands at work is enjoyable.

12. Onye bi n'ulo ugegbe anaghi atu okwute: He who lives in a glass house doesn't throw stone
13. Ezigbo oyi kariri ezi nwanne: A good friend is better than a brother/sister.
14. Onye ndi iro gbara gburugburu n'echendu ya nche mgbe nile: He who is surrounded by enemies, guards his life always.
15. ha na az nwa: Childrearing is an affair of the community²³.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the work has identified the notion of generic discrimination. In other words, discrimination is sometimes used to refer to generic discrimination, but it is important to note that when people complain about discrimination they have in mind a more specific form of discrimination, one that is at least *prima facie* wrong. On the other hand, Igwebuiké ethical perspective is against human discrimination and embraces complementarity as well as togetherness of people from different segments. However, discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatments of people based on different characteristics of people, most commonly on the grounds of race, age, sex, sexual preference. It is unjust because none of these characteristics are

23 A. I. KANU, "Sources of Igwebuiké Philosophy: Towards A Socio-Cultural Foundation," *International Journal of Religion & Human Relations*, Vol. 9 No 1 (June, 2017), 9-10.

relevant to how people should be treated, or how well somebody can perform in the workplace as the case may be. Therefore, discrimination is morally egregious when we use it to justly treating another human person as anything less than human person, as anything less than a person possessed with inherent dignity, and immeasurable intrinsic value.

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