

## Changing Cultural Values and Grassroots Transformation in Nigeria

Maria Ekpenyong

*Ph.D., Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Ibadan. Nigeria*

### **Abstract**

*The issue of changing cultural values and grassroots transformation is the concern of every Nigerian, and as such, grassroots communities should embrace change. Some people refuse to embrace change for so many reasons. This could be due to the complexity of values and beliefs which are prevailing in a society. This forms the basis for justifying people's actions which are termed ideologies. Ideology is a crucial device for the sustenance of the community as it has the capacity to shape how community people perceive and interact with society about grassroots transformation. Hence a society without a clear-cut development ideology or agenda risks stagnation. It is on this assumption that this article suggests that Nigeria should embrace cultural change for transformation at the grassroots for national and global benefits. Against this background, the article examines the cultural value and the transformation of people at the grassroots with a view to understanding how changes in cultural values will affect transformation at the grassroots in Nigerian communities. Based on this, the article believes that there is a connection between changing cultural values and grassroots transformation capable of avoiding stagnation and enhancing innovation; increasing understanding, improve productivity, community services and socio-economic activities. The article recommends the provision of acculturation to keep up with emerging global demands and survive future uncertainties. We need to change what is termed "normal and acceptable" and educate people to master our environments and acquire new skills from other societies for innovation to enhance a higher standard of living and growth at the grassroots.*

**Keywords:** *Changing Cultural Values, Grassroots, Nigeria, Transformation.*

### **Introduction**

Change is one of the concepts that human beings find it difficult to accept, but the universe cannot run away from it because it is inevitable. No matter the severity of challenges societies face, they still must pass through it. Recently, Covid-19 pandemic caged the whole world, bringing changes to every sphere of life. But all nations sought solutions to forge ahead by way of renovation and creativity. For instance, changes took place in Churches, Mosques, and other religious centers where face masks, social distances and washing of hands were created to protect the masses from the deadly Covid-19 infection. In educational sectors, many innovations took place in the

learning process to continue. Even at the grassroots, people changed their ways of life and adjusted to Covid-19 protocols. It could be seen how most crises always lead to a breakthrough for the benefit of all. In the past, societies have benefited from massive changes in all fields, such as, education, health, and technology but changes in cultural values have often been resisted. Globalization has brought in new changes, and more discoveries are taking place daily. This paper is proposing a change in cultural values and technological content so cultural values will not go into extinction. It is a known fact that value stands for worth, and those standards are considered to be important and beneficial to members of the

---

*Received: 19.01.2021*

*Accepted: 04.02.2022*

*Published on: 13.04.2022*

*\*Corresponding Author: ekpenyongmaria8@gmail.com*

community. What this paper is saying is that Nigerians cannot continue with obsolete cultural values because some traditional norms are causing stagnation and need modifications from time to time for grassroots to meet global demands. It is pertinent to add value to traditional norms and customs to open access to a new culture and trending ideas and innovations. Experience has shown that grassroots is becoming stagnant, and people are becoming dissatisfied with Nigeria's cultural system. Unfortunately, resistance to change in cultural values has blocked ways to innovation and creativity and a high standard of living at the grassroots.

In rural communities, daily lives are shaped by cultural values constructed with traditional norms and customs. The Prospect of growth is impeded by an obsolete culture where our ancestors hold on to complex ideologies. Based on this, under-developed, impoverished, malnourished lifestyle, stagnation, under-developed, fear of the unknown and malnourished lifestyles is the order of the day. The reason is that digital technology is not yet inculcated into traditional values. And this could result in an impediment to grassroots transformation. But the world is transforming, and grassroots must transform. There are challenges of growth all over due to the fact that the leaders are not ready to embrace change.

Transformation can be achieved by digitizing the cultural value's contents at the grassroots. Awareness of harmful cultural values and benefits of the new traits of cultural values could be created through the conventional, traditional, and new media. A cultural transformation will also change the way the community people think, act, and deliver community services and socio-cultural activities.

Another relevant issue in this paper is cultural transmutation which is seen as a blend of old and new cultures. Relevant cultures could be retained while new ones would be

adopted as a strategy. This is awareness the media must create at the grassroots. Therefore, cultural values must be re-examined to sieve irrelevant and obsolete values from the new ones and reposition them in line with the current trend to favor people at the grassroots. As mentioned earlier, if the invisible Covid-19 pandemic could bring change to everything worldwide then irrelevant cultural values could be changed and replaced with new and relevant one's order to bring transformation to the grassroots. Unfortunately, community people are still not averse to enlightenment due to ideological matters. As the world is embracing change, Nigeria should also embrace change with acculturation. As it is, the rapid grassroots transformation will depend completely on Nigeria's acceptance of new cultural values.

Although changes may affect traditional ways of doing things, especially where the cultural patterns of such communities are very strong, but a change will usher in a new mode of communication and ideas. Unfortunately, over the years, people have been conforming to the standard set up by their culture, and this has brought the grassroots to a standstill. With the global changes, irrelevant societal norms and ideology have no place again in Nigerian society. This article is an appeal for Nigerians to adapt to change, embrace changes in cultural values, norms, and traditions, and change their ideas or behaviors in other to deal with future challenges successfully. Although ideology is an essential means for the sustenance of the grassroots cultural values, an ideological mindset of the people also needs to undergo several changes for the liberation and growth of the grassroots.

## **Culture**

Culture is perceived as a system of values, beliefs and behaviors that shapes how the actual work gets done in different spheres. It is also the ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people or society. To corroborate this assertion, [1] gave her own definition of

culture. According to her, “culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts”. This means that culture covers our way of life, covering our modes of dressing, hairstyle, food, the way we speak, our songs, the marriage pattern, our modes of greetings and so on. In Nigeria, culture equally encompasses the above, and it grows in groups with identity tied around the social pattern and unique to the group. Baran, cited in [2], explained that culture is socially constructed and maintained through communication. Based on this, Nigerian culture must equally be maintained in the media, especially the new media. Changes must be gradual, foreign culture should not be copied, but through modification and innovation. Since culture is a continuous process, it must be assessed and upgraded to a global level, capable of connecting grassroots to the rest of the world. According to [3], culture is a collective mode of life, a repertoire of beliefs, styles, values, and symbols. Culture is subject to change and made global through the intervention of new media. Smith, cited in [2], asserted that “the idea of a global culture is practical impossibility except in interplanetary term. New media radically breaks the connection between the physical place and social place” In the same vein, Nigerian cultural value is likely to face stagnation if the country refuses to connect and upgrade cultural values with new media. In line with the global demands and changes, Nigeria needs to inculcate new technologies into its cultural system with a view to gaining new ideas, new attitudes, and behaviors to function in this age of globalization.

### **Cultural Values**

In the African system, cultural values are cherished by all communities as the bedrock of their existence, and these values should be uphold and cherish everywhere. Unfortunately, new media has influenced Nigerians, especially,

children, negatively. A study by Lagos mums [4] found that people share whatever they want to on social media, thus exposing children to what they are not supposed to be exposed to. The women went further to warn against negative effects on cultural values among children. The covid-19 pandemic also affected African and Nigerian cultures negatively. According to [5], “cultural experts also believe that the global incursion of the Covid-19 pandemic has affected societies on a grand scale such that a new era appears to have risen after the surge.” In Nigeria, obsolete cultural values abound, which require change for the new traits to emerge to face new societal changes. [6] stated that values are criteria for judging what is good or what is bad, desirable, undesirable, beautiful, ugly, and so on. In addition, [3] identified Nigeria’s core values as age, greetings, dressing and so on. In the same vein, [3] also highlighted Nigerian cultural values such as, age, special greetings, language, dressing, marriage and so on. In Nigeria, there is a need to erode irreverent culture and give way to acculturation. It is the believe of this researcher that from cultural values, social system, education to religion, there should be a shift in cultural change for the better. Obsolete cultural practices such as relegating women to the background, high cost of marriage and complicated marriage process, female genital mutilation, Osu and Olu caste system; denial of women inheritance; the grooms rolling on the ground to greet their parent in-laws, even in their white and immaculate linen apparel and a host of others should be eroded and give ways to values of love and acceptance. This is implementable because Covid -19 pandemic has given rise to cultural change, and Nigeria needs cultural changes in these areas.

Therefore, Nigerians should embrace changes in cultural values and acquire new traits to strengthen existing ones for grassroots transformation. However, the change must be gradual, foreign culture should not be copied, but our value system must be modified to give

way to innovation and creativity, just like other nations. The family system in African society involves norms and values for family members to imbibe. Our fathers left positive values for us, and those values must be re-awakened to strengthen the value system. Values should be developed from the family because values influence social behavior. To ensure grassroots transformation Nigeria must acquire new traits to improve the living standards of the people.

### **Changing Cultural Values**

Cultural change is referring to changes in material and non-material cultural elements.[5], lamented that the deteriorating nature of our values system has affected the cultural values, which means that it will be fruitless to continue with the old cultural system. Unfortunately, Nigeria is still nursing some obsolete values and holding them in high esteem. Some of the obsolete and irrelevant cultural values that Nigeria still holds in high esteem include female circumcision, Osu caste system, the killing of twins, placing of curses on someone, clans, and villages, degrading of women's status and discriminating against women; denial of women inheritance, discrimination against women; lack of respect for elders and parents; Marriage conflict and disagreement between families concerned. All these should undergo changes to give way to new traits powered by the new media. (globalization). The suggested new traits to emerge are as follows: Truth because man has truth as his nature; that is, man's behavior should reflex truth (sincerity). The man should act according to his thoughts, words and his actions should be consistent and complementary. Basically, all things in creation are subject to the law of change and human beings, too, are subject to this law. In essence, people should use traditional cultural values for progress and not for subjecting human beings to the level of animals. This means that female circumcision should not be done by force but be carried out in a non-violence manner and with the consent of the females concerned. Osu caste

system should be abolished, and the value of love and acceptance should be applied. All twins should be accepted and respected. The placing of curses on someone should be replaced by counseling and conflict resolution. In addition, women must be valued as indispensable species in the world henceforth, the value of peace, love and acceptance should be applied to all women's issues. Obsolete values of conflict and disagreement between families should be replaced with new traits of values of peace, right conduct, and conflict resolution skills. Values of love, truth, peace, and non-violence be applied to respect for elders and parents.

Irrelevant traditional norms are not only applicable to Nigeria but are still practiced in other African countries. Cultural change must be sought for by both urban and rural population in Nigerian and African societies. Several benefits could be derived from new traits of cultural values, such as innovation and creativity in cultural values and a high standard of living at the grassroots. In the same vein, once there is a modification in cultural values, the grassroots will begin to experience transformation through innovation, invention, discovery and contact with other societies. [5] asserted that changing cultural values is nothing but shifting traditional values to the reflex foreign culture. But [6] argued that changing cultural values is emerging of new traits, which could be so complex as well because they appear in different forms. In Nigeria, the youths could be the main drivers of the traits of cultural values, and society will accept the new changes. Ironically, the new media has already initiated changes so many changes in Nigerian society. For instance, the use of foreign cosmetics as against Nigerian black soap, which the people were accustomed to; mini-skirts and short dresses; spargatti straps tops, short bumps even to the extent using to places of worship. Ekpenyong, cited in [6], explained that changes brought by the new media could be seen as new traits of fashion capable of replacing obsolete

ones which are no longer relevant in the scheme of things.

The new changes could be facilitated and enhanced by activities of the new media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and so. The argument is that judging from the activities of new media, changes in cultural values will continue to undergo changes and innovations. The refusal to embrace change by the elderly in society could be due to the complexity of values and beliefs which are prevailing in a society. The youths and Nigeria in Diaspora are no longer impressed with the Nigerian cultural system. Sticking to obsolete cultural values or what is termed- “normal and acceptable “is no longer tenable because individuals are now controlled by social media and no longer by leaders. The Internet has shifted Nigerian culture to foreign culture, making modes of greetings, dressing, cooking, and eating habits. All inventions and technological changes have a broad impact on culture and have affected Nigerian culture and traditions. What Nigeria should be concerned is the adoption of cultural transmutation, which is a blend of old and new cultures. This is a strategy used by those who place importance on both maintaining their original culture and adopting the new culture. Some researchers in the field of traditional cultural values have discussed the relevance of intercultural adaptation, which involves ability to adapt to situations and surroundings and this could afford people greater opportunity to succeed and achieve their goals [7].

### **Influence of social media on Changing Cultural Values**

As [4] has observed, the advent of social media has both positive and negative sides, which has brought significant changes to Nigerian culture. The advent of new media came along with high impact connections between individuals and nations positively. It allows sharing of opinions, photos, and other stuffs online with stress. According to [8], new media improve creativity and social awareness

for societies to interact with one another and in sharing new ideas and opinions. Therefore, we need creativity and a high sense of innovations in the new traits of cultural beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Social media has exerted a lot of influence on African beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. And this influence is taking a new direction because human beings are adapting to various changes daily to belong, survive and move ahead. Nigerian communities have experienced changes with the advent of the social media, but the changes are not visible in the cultural values. This paper is appealing to the media to employ its channels like television, print media, radio, and traditional media to enlighten Nigerians on the new traits of cultural values could lead to grassroots transformation. The new traits of traditional norms are expected to be more friendly to sharing ideas and opinions with the outside world. The new media has already reshaped will also reshape the ways messages are now exchanged on cultural issues. Knowledge will be shared in the enlightened way as Nigerians interact across cultural divides irrespective of language and cultural differences.

Media intervention in cultural changes will promote understanding and increase their communication skills so as to meet the challenges of a new cultural environment. Nigerians will use social media to connect more with people in the society, interact and share opinions, and integrate into other’s cultures while trying to adapt to changes in their new surroundings. However, while some people are extolling the importance of social media, [9] felt that unlimited access and flexibility of social media activities could be worrisome, that is, when it comes to preserving cultural values. With the new media, connections and relationships will be strengthened and serve as a bridge for people from different states and nation. In support of social media, [4] and [10] have confirmed that there is a positive blend of African culture and social media, but this researcher believes that activities of social

media are well handled, they may not erode African values. The media should also create awareness in rural communities through community leaders. Community leaders comprise the church leaders, educational heads, men and women leaders, market leaders, youth leaders, heads of community artisans and so on. Responsibilities of media will include explaining and counseling the leaders at the grassroots how the new media and internet have changed the values, norms, and traditions already.

### **Grassroots Transformation**

Grassroots is usually identified with stagnation, under-developed, impoverished, and malnourished lifestyle. There are challenges of growth all over because Nigerian leaders are not ready to embrace change due to obsolete traditional laws and customs. As a result of irrelevant cultural values, the process of socio-economic activities is slow and almost stagnant at the grassroots. Religion, education, health, politics, economic activities and are also negatively affected. Nigeria must investigate traditional norms in local communities and see the areas that require cultural changes and enlighten the people through the media on how the grassroots people will benefit from the new traits of cultural values. The new traits of cultural values and ideologies could be inculcated through conventional and traditional media. The youths would be the best people to drive new changes at the grassroots because the elders may lose interest. The good news is that contact with other cultures and between other societies environments will bring technical inventions and innovations in education, health, technology and so on. Unfortunately, these are the areas change are often resisted.

[11] explains that grassroots transformation is radical thinking of how changing cultural values can connect the grassroots to the rest of the world. Including the fact that media has a part to play in making information accessible to everyone, sharing of information, leveraging on

the new app and so on. Basically, The transformation will raise the standard of living at the grassroots, and this is what is required now in Nigeria. Local culture could be aligned with new new cultural values to reflect global trends. As a result, changes in traditional values and society will usher in growth, development, renovation, modernization and indigenization as people will no longer be afraid of cultural restrictions. Acquisition of new technology will lead to new skills for people to function in all areas. Grassroots transformation will enhance socio-economic growth, higher standard of living, adequate health and maternity care, a healthy environment, good morals, positive attitudes and behaviors, improved welfare in all aspects of life, increased tolerance and opportunity to come together with love and understanding.

In addition, the grassroots transformation will lead to knowledge transfer, respect for other cultures, values, beliefs, norms, and traditions. It will add value to the way community people act and deliver community services, will provide the opportunity for economic and social freedom. It will also usher in acculturation which is the transfer of values and customs from one group to another. According to [8], acculturation is a process through which a person or group from one culture comes to adopt the practice and values of another culture while still retaining their own distinct culture. And this new attitude will improve cultural exchange and open foreign investment socially, educationally, and economically.

### **Cultural Values and Grassroots Transformation**

Globalization has turned over everything all over the world. As the world is now a global village, nations must join the band wagon to be relevant in the affairs of things. The time is ripe for Nigerians to change what is termed “normal and acceptable”. Irrational thinking and an obsolete manner of doing things will result in

stagnation but no transformation. The new traits of cultural values will retain respect and be more capable of connecting Nigeria to the rest of the world. Grassroots transformation will ensure global exposure in the medical field, education, socio-economic sector, communication, fashion and in food production and nutrition. Obsolete traditional norms at the grassroots have obstructed Nigeria's connections to the world. The new cultural values will be relevant in all sectors, and women will no longer be relegated to the background. Community development officers and foreign investors will no longer be scared of investing in rural communities due to strange harmful traditional norms.

The media is culpable in retention and in the growing spat of harmful traditional norms because it has not carried out the creation of awareness on harmful traditional laws and customs. Ironically, the new media is eroding these harmful traditional values, norms, laws, and customs as well as connecting relevant values globally. Therefore [9] believes that social media can have a positive effect and increase connection between grassroots and the outer world. Nigeria media must take responsibility and expose irrelevant cultural values that can no longer ensure transformation at the grassroots. Men and women will share opinions. Pictures and other stuff are being shared on social media with other cultures, and this has increased creativity and social awareness for grassroots people to interact with others and share ideas on issues that have an impact on their daily lives. Cultural change is relevant in all sectors of life by both urban and rural populations in Nigeria to accommodate new innovations as manifested in other nations. As I noted earlier in this paper, during the Covid-19 era, all cultural values were ignored to give way for survival, and the same is required for grassroots survival and transformation. Therefore, if there is anything Nigeria should desire, it is to embrace change for transformation at the grassroots. There will

be changes in the behaviors of the individual, changes in political structures, and the way people think globally. Holding on to obsolete cultural values has constituted a nuisance in the change in behaviors and the way people think globally. Changes in cultural values will promote valuable ideas or behaviors to deal with life successfully.

## **Methodology**

This article adopted primary and secondary sources of data collection, including discussion and observation methodology. The researcher engaged grassroots leaders in all sectors to obtain core information that was very useful to this work. Data were analyzed using a narrative approach.

## **Results and Discussion**

From discussions and observations, the paper found that digitized and modified cultural values would reposition and add values to daily lives at the grassroots. It was also revealed that grassroots are not progressive due to complex and obsolete cultural values which do not encourage innovation and creativity. It was also found that changes in cultural values and ideologies will create long-lasting social change, and there will be great changes in the socio-economic activities at the grassroots. Global connection and new values will influence social behaviors through their inculcation into the traditional beliefs, laws, and customs. The significance of this paper is that since values are widely recognized and respected by community people as what is important to their survival and identity, needs and aspiration, they will understand the zeal for new traits of cultural values. The importance of being connected to the rest of the world for survival has been topical among researchers. The new traits will open the floodgate and access to innovation and creativity for problem-solving and decision-making process to improve quality and raise the standard of living at the grassroots.

## Conclusion

This article has examined the cultural values and grassroots transformation with a view to understanding how changes in the cultural values will positively affect transformation in Nigerian communities. Based on the above, the paper concludes that due to global changes such as Covid-19 pandemic, Nigerians cannot afford to continue to live with what is termed “normal or acceptable” under this changing world. It is interesting to discover how many Nigerians were welcoming the issue of new traits of cultural values. This is imminent because of the need for Nigeria to create boundless contact with global communities for more ideas for transformation. In this age of globalization, Nigeria need not continue to stick to the obsolete cultural values when social media has initiated the dreaded change already. From all indications, there is connect between changing cultural values and grassroots transformation. New cultural values will reposition families and social systems and save them from extinction. It follows that the changes in values, attitudes and people’s behaviors will promote and boost productivity. Again, obsolete modes of acting, speaking, and dressing, even in the eating habits of Nigerians, need more of global contents. I strongly believe that there will be a positive change in the modified cultural values, norms, people’s lifestyles, access to new talent and enlightenment. Finally, cultural values must be shifted to give way to modernization, innovation, creativity, and changes in cultural value contents for grassroots transformation in Nigeria. Nigerians must adapt to change and embrace changes in cultural values, norms, and traditions, as well as ideas opinions and behaviors in other to deal with future challenges successfully.

## Recommendation

1. The article recommends that community leaders and community people be liberated

from obsolete values and embrace acculturation to keep up with emerging global demand and survive future uncertainty.

2. Nigerians should embrace the new media as an instrument for cultural imperialism, and people from diverse cultures should use social media as a bridge to adapt into other people’s culture to connect and build relationships to succeed and benefit from one another.
3. The man should no longer become his own enemy by forcing harmful values on the people but should be aware of his genuine nature and transform.
4. Human beings should use traditional laws and customs for progress and not for wicked purposes and descending to the level of an animal.
5. Henceforth, righteousness should be the norm that grassroots people must imbibe in order to change from good to better and from better to the best.

## Conflict of Interest

I hereby testify that this study was self-sponsored, and I am not in conflict with my employers as per the sponsoring of this study/conference. I also have no affiliation with any other organization that could influence this research. Therefore, there is no conflict of interest.

## Acknowledgement

At this junction, I would like to appreciate all the executive members of Texila Education and Management Service Private Limited for providing an opportunity for me through a digital platform to participate in the writing of my Abstract and accepting my Abstract. I also express my gratitude to them for the opportunity to present my paper at the 2022 Texila conference. I have learned so much from my association with Texila.



## References

- [1] Pappas, S. and McKelvie (2021). What is culture. Dec 15, [www.Livescience.com](http://www.Livescience.com).
- [2] Baran, S. (2002). Introduction to mass communication. Media literacy and culture (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill Higher Education.
- [3] Asemah, E. S. Ekhareafu, D. & Olaniran, S. (2013). Nigeria's core values and the use of social media to promote cultural values. *International Journal of Information and communication technology education: an official publication of the Information Resources Management Association*. Vol. 9, No. 4: 58- 69.
- [4] YWEE, (2019) The effect of social media on our cultural values. <https://smum.com/the-effect-of-social-media-on-our-cultural-values>. Muhammed K. & Aremu. F. (2021). Cultural values: Shifting or tumbling? *Nigerian Tribune*. 19 September. <https://tribuneonline.com>
- [5] Uzorka, M. L. & Deekor, L. (2013). Changing cultural values and political development in Nigeria. *Research on humanities and social science*. Online. Vol. 3. No. 20.
- [6] Oyira, E. Duke, E.U. Essien, N. & Onoyom, A. E. (2015). Changing the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of the Efiks, Quas and Efuts of Calabar Manuclplality towards the practice of female circumcision. *Journal of Hospital Administration*. Vol. 4 No. 3 DOI:10.5430/jha. v4n3p61
- [7] Cole, N. L. (2020). "Understanding acculturation and why it happens." ThoughtCo, Dec. 30.
- [8] Kareem. (2017). Social media effects on our culture. <https://sites.chapman.edu/2016s-eng103-akali100/2016/11/28/social-media-effects-on-our-culture/>
- [9] Oruka, H.O. (1982). Ideology and Culture: The African Experience. *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development*. Vol. 12. [www.jstor.org/stable/24355715](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24355715)
- [10] Henley, M. (2018). A road map grassroots digital transformation. <https://cmswire.com> Retrieved: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022.