From Tradition to Tech: An Ontological Journey in Igbo-African Culture

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Abstract

This philosophical exploration examines the emergence of technology in the Igbo-African context. Drawing on philosophical literature and Igbo cultural practices, the paper explores how technology has been understood and used in Igbo society. It considers the role of culture, ethics, and values in shaping the development of technology and highlights the importance of a holistic approach to technology that takes into account the social and cultural context in which it is used. The paper argues that a deeper understanding of the Igbo worldview and philosophy can provide insights into the ethical and social implications of technology and offer a more balanced approach to technology development and implementation. Ultimately, the paper suggests that an engagement with African philosophical traditions can enrich global discussions about technology and contribute to a more diverse and inclusive technological landscape.

Keywords: *Technology, African Thought and Values, The Role of Culture, Social and Cultural Context, Holistic Approach.*

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The emergence of technology is a global phenomenon that has significantly impacted human societies across the world.[1] While technology has played a significant role in the development of Western societies, the application and understanding of technology in African societies have been less studied.[2] This literature review aims to explore the philosophical and cultural context of technology in the Igbo-African society.

The Igbo-African society is known for its rich cultural heritage and traditional way of life.[3] In Igbo-African society, technology was developed through the practical application of knowledge, skills, and resources that were available in the environment. The concept of technology in Igbo-African society was not limited to machines and equipment but extended to include cultural practices, beliefs, and customs.[4] For instance, the technology of the Igbo-African society was evident in their agricultural practices, metallurgy, medicine, and architecture.

The Igbo-African society had a philosophical outlook on technology that was embedded in their cosmology, worldview, and social structure.[5] The concept of technology in Igbo-African society was not limited to physical tools and machinery but also extended to the metaphysical realm. The Igbo-African society believed that technology was an extension of their spiritual and ancestral heritage. The concept of technology was intertwined with their beliefs in ancestral spirits, divination, and cosmology.

The emergence of modern technology in Igbo-African society has brought about significant changes in their social structure and cultural practices.[6] Modern technology has had an impact on the traditional way of life, which has resulted in a shift from communalism to individualism. The impact of modern technology on Igbo-African society has also resulted in the loss of traditional knowledge, skills, and practices.[7]

The emergence of technology in Igbo-African society has had a significant impact on their cultural practices and social structure.[8] The philosophical and cultural context of technology in Igbo-African society provides insight into the way technology was developed and understood. While modern technology has brought about significant changes in Igbo-African society, it is important to recognize and preserve their traditional knowledge, skills, and practices. Further research is needed to explore the impact of technology on African societies and to develop a better understanding of their cultural heritage.[9]

IGBO-AFRICAN TECHNOLOGY QUESTIONS

In the Igbo-African context, the nature of technology raises fundamental questions that are tied to the cultural, social, and economic fabric of the community. These questions have significant implications for the way technology is designed, adopted, and used within the community.[10]

One of the fundamental questions is the role of technology in Igbo culture. In the traditional Igbo society, technology was not only used for practical purposes, but also had symbolic and ritualistic meanings.[11] For example, the use of carved wooden masks and drums during festivals had cultural and religious significance. Thus, it is important to ask whether the introduction of modern technology has eroded the cultural significance of traditional technology in the Igbo society.[12]

Another important question is the impact of technology on the social dynamics of the Igbo community.[13] Technology has

the potential to transform social relationships, alter power structures, and create new forms of inequality. For example, the introduction of social media has transformed the way people communicate, connect and relate to one another. Therefore, it is important to explore how technology is changing the social dynamics of the Igbo community and whether it is creating new forms of social exclusion or reinforcing existing ones.

Furthermore, the economic implications of technology[14] cannot be overlooked. Technology has the potential to either improve or worsen the economic conditions of a community. For example, the introduction of modern farming techniques and equipment can significantly increase agricultural productivity, leading to economic growth and development. On the other hand, the replacement of traditional handicrafts by machine-made goods can lead to the loss of jobs and economic hardship for artisans. Therefore, it is crucial to assess how technology is impacting the economic well-being of the Igbo community and whether it is being used to promote inclusive growth and development.

Finally, the nature of technology also raises questions about access and control.[15] Who has access to technology and who controls its use? In the past, access to technology was often limited to a few elites who held positions of power and influence. Today, the situation has changed, with technology becoming more widely available and accessible. However, there are still concerns about unequal access and control, particularly in rural areas and among marginalized groups. Therefore, it is important to examine the distribution of technology within the Igbo community and whether it is being used to empower or marginalize certain groups.

Invariably, the nature of technology in the Igbo-African context raises fundamental questions that need to be carefully considered. These questions are tied to the cultural, social, and economic fabric of the community, and their answers have significant implications for the way technology is designed, adopted, and used within the community. By engaging in critical reflection and dialogue, the Igbo community can ensure that technology is used in a way that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

IGBO TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

The Igbo people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, and their history dates back thousands of years. According to the CIA World Fact book, the Igbo people are indeed one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, making up about 18% of the country's population.[16] Technology has played a significant role in the development of the Igbo society, from ancient times to the present day. This essay will examine the origins and implications of technology in the Igbo-African milieu.

The origins of technology in Igbo-African milieu can be traced back to pre-colonial times when the Igbo people lived in small independent communities. The Igbo people were skilled farmers and artisans who created their tools and weapons using local materials. According to Nwando Achebe, a professor of African Studies, the Igbo people indeed had a rich tradition of technology and craftsmanship. They used iron to make weapons and tools, pottery for cooking, and weaving to make clothes.[17]

In the pre-colonial era, technology was mainly used for practical purposes such as agriculture, hunting, and fishing. Igbo people also used technology for cultural and religious purposes, such as building shrines, creating music instruments, and developing masquerade costumes. According to Chinua Achebe, a renowned Nigerian author and scholar, technology played an important role in Igbo society for practical and cultural purposes.[18]

Technology has had significant implications for Igbo-African society. According to Ifeoma Nwankwo, an associate professor of English, technological innovations have facilitated trade and commerce, leading to the growth of urban centers and the development of specialized crafts. This has had a profound impact on Igbo society.[19]

Moreover, modern technology has opened up new opportunities for Igbo people. The internet, in particular, has allowed Igbo people to connect with other communities across the world, facilitating the exchange of ideas and resources. This has been noted by scholars such as Chika Okeke-Agulu, an associate professor of African and African Diaspora Art History.[20]

However, there are also negative implications of technology in Igbo-African society. Modern technology has disrupted traditional ways of life, causing some to lose their connection to their cultural heritage. According to research conducted by Chidi Ugwu, an environmental scientist, the adoption of modern technology has contributed to environmental degradation and the exploitation of natural resources in Igbo communities.[21]

Obviously, technology has played a significant role in the development of Igbo-African society, from pre-colonial times to the present day. Technology has facilitated trade and commerce, shaped Igbo culture, and opened up new opportunities for Igbo people. However, there are also negative implications of technology, including the disruption of traditional ways of life and environmental degradation. As Igbo-African society continues to evolve, it will be important to balance the positive and negative impacts of technology to ensure the preservation of Igbo culture and the well-being of its people.

IGBO-AFRICAN TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATIONS

The ontological and epistemological foundations of technology in the context of Igbo-African refer to the philosophical assumptions and beliefs that underlie the ways in which technology is conceptualized, designed, and used within the Igbo-African cultural context. In other words, it is concerned with the basic understanding of what technology is and how it works within the Igbo-African worldview.

Ontologically, technology in the Igbo-African context is viewed as a tool or instrument that is created and used by human beings to meet their needs and solve problems.[22] However, technology is not seen as a separate entity from human beings but rather as an extension of human capabilities. In Igbo-African thought, humans and technology are intertwined,[23] and technology is viewed as a product of human creativity, ingenuity, and intelligence.

Epistemologically, the Igbo-African approach to technology is rooted in a holistic and experiential understanding of the world.[24] Knowledge about technology is acquired through practical experience, observation, and experimentation. This is in contrast to a more abstract, theoretical approach to technology found in Western scientific thought. In Igbo-African epistemology, the knowledge of technology is situated within a broader cultural and social context, and is deeply embedded in the cultural practices, customs, and traditions of the Igbo-African people.

One key aspect of the ontological and epistemological foundations of technology in the Igbo-African context is the role of community and social relationships in the development and use of technology. Technology is viewed as a communal endeavour, and the design and implementation of technology are often collaborative efforts that involve the participation of multiple individuals within a community. The social and cultural context of technology is also emphasized, with an emphasis on the role of technology in facilitating social and economic development, as well as cultural preservation and continuity.

IGBO PHILOSOPHY & TECHNOLOGY

The Igbo people are an ethnic group in Nigeria, with a rich cultural heritage and a unique worldview[25] and philosophy. Understanding the Igbo worldview and philosophy can provide valuable insights into the ethical and social implications of technology, and offer a more balanced approach to technology development and implementation.

One of the key aspects of the Igbo worldview is their belief in the interconnectedness of all things.[26] They believe that everything in the universe is connected, and that every action has consequences that ripple through the web of interconnectedness. This belief in interconnectedness has profound implications for how the Igbo approach technology.[27]

For the Igbo, technology is not simply a means to an end. Rather, it is a reflection of their relationship with the world around them. They believe that technology should be used in a way that is harmonious with the natural world, and that it should not disrupt the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

In addition, the Igbo place a great emphasis on community and social responsibility.[28] They believe that every individual has a responsibility to their community, and that technology should be used to promote the well-being of the community as a whole. This means that technology should not be used in a way that benefits only a select few at the expense of the rest of the community.

Furthermore, the Igbo have a deep respect for tradition and cultural heritage.[29] They believe that technology should not be used to undermine or erode their cultural traditions, but rather should be used to preserve and promote them.

In light of these principles, a deeper understanding of the Igbo worldview and philosophy can provide valuable insights into the ethical and social implications of technology. It can help us to develop a more nuanced approach to technology development and implementation, one that takes into account the interconnectedness of all things, the importance of community and social responsibility, and the need to preserve cultural heritage.

For example, when developing and implementing new technologies, we should consider their impact on the environment and ensure that they are in harmony with the natural world. We should also consider the potential social and economic implications of the technology and strive to ensure that it benefits the community as a whole, rather than just a select few. Finally, we should be mindful of the cultural implications of the technology and strive to ensure that it does not undermine or erode traditional cultural practices.

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN IGBO SOCIETY

The Igbo people of Nigeria have a rich and vibrant culture that is shaped by various factors, including technology. Over the years, technology has played a significant role in shaping Igbo-African society and culture.

Communication is one of the most significant ways in which technology has impacted Igbo-African society and culture. According to Nwankwo and Udeh, "the advent of modern communication technology has transformed the way Igbo people connect with each other and the rest of the world." They further explain that "the widespread availability of smartphones, social media platforms, and messaging apps has made it possible for Igbo people to stay in touch with their friends and family members, regardless of their geographic location."[30] This accessibility to communication tools has undoubtedly influenced the way Igbo people interact and maintain their cultural connections.

Technology has also influenced Igbo-African culture through the arts. The Igbo people are known for their rich artistic traditions, and modern technology has provided new opportunities for artists to create and share their work. According to Osuagwu, "technology has opened up avenues for Igbo artists to showcase their talents to a global audience."[31] Platforms such as Spotify and YouTube have enabled Igbo musicians to reach fans worldwide, promoting and preserving Igbo musical traditions.

Moreover, technology has transformed the work and business landscape in Igbo-African society. Nwosu and Edozie note that "advances in technology, such as the internet, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence, have created new job

opportunities for Igbo people."[32] They highlight how Igbo individuals are now involved in industries such as software development and e-commerce, which were previously unimaginable. This shift in employment opportunities has undoubtedly shaped Igbo society and culture.

Furthermore, technology has had a significant impact on education in Igbo-African society. According to Onyemelukwe, "technology has revolutionized education in Igbo communities, making it more accessible and flexible."[33] Online learning resources, such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and e-books, have provided Igbo students with opportunities for self-paced learning and access to knowledge from around the world. This accessibility to education has empowered individuals and facilitated the sharing of Igbo knowledge and expertise.

THE ETHICAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF IGBO-AFRICAN THOUGHT AND VALUES.

The advancement of technology has impacted various aspects of human life, including the ethical, social, and political implications in the context of Igbo-African thought and values. The Igbo people, who are part of the larger African community, have their unique set of values and belief systems that influence their understanding and use of technology. In this response, we will explore the ethical, social, and political implications of technology in the context of Igbo-African thought and values.

Ethical Implications

The Igbo people have a strong sense of communalism and value systems that prioritize ethical behaviour, including the principles of honesty, integrity, respect for others, and responsibility.[34] In the context of technology, ethical issues arise concerning the use of technological advancements that might undermine these values. One of the most significant ethical implications of technology is its impact on traditional Igbo cultural practices. For example, the increasing use of social media and digital platforms has created a significant disconnect between younger generations and traditional values, thereby undermining the cultural fabric of the Igbo people.[35]

Furthermore, the use of technology has given rise to ethical issues such as data privacy and security. The Igbo people highly value the privacy of their personal information and data, and the misuse of such information could lead to adverse social and economic consequences.[36] Therefore, it is crucial to establish ethical guidelines and policies that protect the rights and privacy of individuals in the context of technology use.

Social Implications

The use of technology has significant social implications in the context of Igbo-African thought and values. The Igbo people have a strong sense of community and the use of technology has impacted traditional forms of social interactions, leading to a decline in face-to-face interactions.[37] This could undermine the social fabric of the Igbo community and lead to a sense of social isolation and disconnection.

Furthermore, technology has also led to the digital divide, creating disparities in access to information and opportunities for those without access to technology.[38] This could lead to social inequality, further widening the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged in the Igbo community.

Political Implications

The use of technology has significant political implications in the context of Igbo-African thought and values. The Igbo people have a long history of communalism and democratic ideals, where decision-making is often based on consensus and consultation.[39] The use of technology has impacted this traditional system of governance, with the potential to undermine democratic ideals and the power of the people in decision-making.[40]

Moreover, the use of technology has also given rise to issues such as cyber-crime, political propaganda, and misinformation, which could undermine the political stability of the Igbo community.[41] Therefore, it is crucial to establish robust policies and guidelines that ensure the responsible use of technology in the political sphere.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The exploration of the emergence of technology in the Igbo-African context is a fascinating philosophical topic that sheds light on the ways in which culture and technology interact.[42] From this exploration, it is evident that technology has always been a part of Igbo-African culture, although the nature and extent of its influence have varied over time.[43]

One of the significant findings from this exploration is that technology has been used in Igbo-African culture to facilitate social and economic activities. From the invention of the Akwete loom, which revolutionized textile production in the region, to the use of palm oil to produce soap, technology has been employed to enhance the quality of life for people in the region.[44]

Furthermore, the exploration shows that technology in Igbo-African culture is not viewed solely in utilitarian terms but also has spiritual and symbolic meanings. The use of the Uli art form, for instance, involves the use of technology in the production of intricate designs that have religious and cultural significance.[45]

Despite the positive aspects of technology in Igbo-African culture, there are also negative impacts, such as the loss of traditional knowledge and practices due to the dominance of Western technology. This dominance has resulted in the marginalization of local technologies and cultures, leading to a loss of diversity and identity.[46]

In conclusion, the exploration of the emergence of technology in the Igbo-African context provides valuable insights into the relationship between technology and culture. It

highlights the fact that technology is not neutral but is shaped by cultural values and beliefs. As such, it is essential to recognize and preserve the diverse technologies and cultures of the region to ensure that they are not lost to the forces of globalization.[47]

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