



TECHNOLOGICAL CULTURE AND THE CHALLENGE OF EROSION OF YORÙBÁ MORAL VALUES

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ABSTRACT: *The advent and rapid evolution of technology have significantly impacted global cultures, including the culture of Yorùbá people, an ethnic group primarily located in southwestern Nigeria. The Yorùbá people are known for their rich cultural heritage, which includes a strong emphasis on communal living, respect for elders, and a deep sense of spirituality and moral uprightness. However, the pervasive influence of technological advancements, such as the internet, social media, and mobile technologies, has posed a significant challenge to the preservation of these values. Social media platforms, in particular, have played a role in reshaping perceptions of morality, success, and identity, often promoting values that conflict with traditional Yorùbá principles. This paper examines how technological culture contributes to the erosion of Yorùbá moral values, traditionally passed down through generations. A self-structured questionnaire grounded in the Omólúàbí Code of Ethics was used as instrument. One hundred Yorùbá youths in Ede community, Osun State, Nigeria were sampled across the three major religious groups in Nigeria and copies of the questionnaire given to them. The findings reveal a significant relationship between the increasing use of technology and the perceived erosion of Yorùbá moral values. The younger generations, who are more engaged with digital platforms, exhibit a noticeable shift in moral perspectives, often aligning more with globalized digital culture than traditional Yorùbá ethics. Now, while technological culture poses challenges to the preservation of Yorùbá moral values, it also offers opportunities for innovative cultural engagement and education. The study, therefore, recommends a balanced approach, advocating for the integration of traditional values within modern technological frameworks. This study also recommends that film censoring should be taken more seriously by the government in order to disallow contents that seem to downplay good moral values and that broadcasting houses should promote/project indigenous cultural and moral values.*

KEYWORDS: Technological culture, Technology, Moral values, Yorùbá, Erosion, Omólúàbí.



INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying the fact that technology has brought about many positive benefits to African society. Several scholars have considered the positive transformation being experienced in all facets of African society as a product of technological advancement. For instance, in the aspect of business, Africans have utilized technological facilities to establish valid online businesses to earn a living (Akpan & Ibidunni, 2021). Drees sees technology as a liberator in view of its positive contribution to human lives: It liberates humans from all kinds of burdens; it increases standards of living around the world; it promotes a longer and healthier life; it facilitates better communication as well as offers humans more spare time as machines take over various tedious tasks (Drees, 2002). The birth of social media or social networks has been seen as the most revolutionary in recent years (Matassi, Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2022). In addition, technology plays a significant role in the preservation of cultural heritage. It allows for the digital documentation of cultural heritage sites, artifacts, and intangible practices, thereby creating a permanent record for future generations, reducing the risk of damage or loss (Vital & Sylaiou, 2022).

While technology brings these benefits, it also poses significant challenges to the preservation and transmission of African cultural and moral values, with the Yorùbá moral values in particular. The indigenous Yorùbá community is fast losing its grip on its cultural and moral values. For instance, Western movies, music, and social media platforms often depict lifestyles and values that are at odds with traditional Yorùbá values. These include materialism, individualism, and sometimes permissive attitudes towards behaviors such as premarital sex, which conflict with Yorùbá moral standards (Rodgers & Van Oers, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the benefits of technological advancements, the increasing adoption of technological culture in Yorùbá society poses a significant threat to the traditional moral values, as the influx of foreign cultural influences and the proliferation of social media platforms perpetuate a shift away from the rich cultural heritage and ethical principles of the Yorùbá people, leading to a loss of cultural identity and a rise in morally reprehensible behaviors among the youth. While most recent literature focused on the transformative power of technology on African society, this study examines the negative contribution of technological culture to the erosion of Yorùbá moral values with Ede Community as a micro study area.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the contribution of technological culture to the erosion of Yorùbá moral values. The objectives are to:

1. investigate the specific Yorùbá values that are most vulnerable to erosion; and to
2. examine the extent to which technological advancement has contributed to the erosion of Yorùbá moral values among the youth.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Technological culture refers to the set of values, practices, beliefs, and social norms that arise and evolve as a result of the integration and pervasive influence of technology in society. It encompasses how technology shapes human interactions, behaviors, and perceptions, as well as how society adapts to and incorporates technological advancements. It includes the widespread use of devices such as smartphones, computers, and the internet, which have become integral to daily life. People rely on these technologies for communication, work, education, entertainment, and more. The way people communicate has drastically changed with the advent of social media, email, and instant messaging. Technological culture values speed, convenience, and connectivity, leading to a more interconnected world. The internet has democratized access to information, allowing people to easily share and consume vast amounts of data. Technological culture is characterized by a continuous push for innovation and improvement. This includes advancements in fields like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and renewable energy, which continuously reshape societal norms and expectations (Drees, 2002). The influence of technological advancement on people's cultural values and norms cannot be overemphasized and the Yorùbá ethnic group is not left out of this.

The Yorùbá people are an ethnic group from West Africa, primarily residing in southwestern Nigeria, Togo, and Benin. They have a rich cultural heritage and a significant diaspora presence in the Americas, Caribbean, and other parts of the world. Today, Yorùbá communities can also be found in Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and Haiti (Oyewo, 2023). The Yorùbá people often pursue communal wellbeing and this motivates their ethical discourse. It is believed among the Yorùbá that the wellness of the society largely depends on the moral wellness of the members. In other words, the inability of the members of the society to maintain moral uprightness causes the whole society to suffer. This stems out of the people's reverence for *Olódùmarè* (the Supreme Being of the Yorùbá). They believe that the wrongdoing of any member of the society can trigger the anger of *Olódùmarè* (God) and his lieutenant-deities. This can bring evil consequences upon the entire society. Therefore, the people place a very strong emphasis on good moral standards (Abimbola 1975).

Ọmọlúàbí Code of Ethics

Without a set of moral principles or values to guide human behavior, people would revert to a more primitive, instinctual, and selfish state, similar to that of animals. Ethical codes are what separate humans from animals. Without this, humans would be driven solely by their basic instincts, desires, and self-interest, leading to a more savage and brutal behavior. Their passion for survival can push them to that point where no method or idea is bad inasmuch as such an idea will further their course as individuals (Akintan & Oyenuga, 2023). Therefore, every society has its code of ethics defining what is morally acceptable within the given society. The Yorùbá philosophy and ethics is encapsulated in the Ọmọlúàbí concept. Analyzing this concept comprehensively involves examining its origins, principles, and implications for both individual and societal behavior.

Ọmọlúàbí is the ideal, morally acceptable person, within the Yorùbá community. Scholars have variously explained this word morphologically. For instance, Ọmọlúàbí is “Ọmọ+ tí+ Olúwa+ bí.” Omo means “child”, *ti* means “that”, *Oluwa* means “Lord” or “God” and *bi* means “bear” “beget” or “produce.” This means that an Ọmọlúàbí is a child born by God (Muyiwa, 2018). The implication is that before a person could be tagged “Ọmọlúàbí” they must have



consistently exhibited the character of God. *Ọmọ́lúàbí* also means “*Ọmọ+ tí+ Olú+ iwà+ bí.*” *Omo* means “child”, *ti* means “that”, *Olu-iwà* means “the chief of character”, and *bi* means “bear” “beget” or “produce.” Thus, *Ọmọ́lúàbí* is the baby born by the chief of character (Banjo & Afolaranmi, 2023). Therefore, a morally upright member of the Yorùbá community, whose character is considered acceptable and satisfactory to both the young and the old, is considered an *Ọmọ́lúàbí*.

Abimbola identifies eight fundamental principles of *Ọmọ́lúàbí*, which are stated below:

- **Expert use of language** (*òrò síṣò*): This principle portrays the imagery of a masterful tongue that speaks words of wisdom, kindness, and inspiration, like a skilled drummer whose rhythms bring joy to the heart. *Ọmọ́lúàbí* must have a mastery of language and communication skills, using words to build and uplift others.
- **Humility and respect** (*ìtẹ́ríba*): This is a picture of a humble leaf that bends in reverence to the wind, acknowledging the strength of others and the wisdom of tradition. *Ọmọ́lúàbí* must show modesty, deference, and reverence to elders, authority, and tradition. This principle also includes self-respect.
- **Goodwill** (*inú rere*): This is a depiction of a generous river that flows with kindness, nourishing all who come to its banks, and revitalizing the landscape of relationships. *Ọmọ́lúàbí* must embrace kindness, benevolence, and generosity towards others, promoting harmony and balance.
- **Truthfulness and honesty** (*òtítọ́*): This is a clear mirror that reflects the truth, untainted by deceit or bias, revealing the beauty of sincerity and the strength of integrity. *Ọmọ́lúàbí* is an embodiment of sincerity, integrity, and authenticity in words and actions.
- **Good character** (*iwa rere*): This represents a sturdy tree with roots of integrity, branches of compassion, and leaves of wisdom, providing shade and shelter for all who seek refuge. *Ọmọ́lúàbí* must cultivate a strong moral foundation, integrity, and a good reputation.
- **Bravery and courage** (*akínkanjú*): This symbolizes a fearless warrior who confronts challenges with the strength of a lion and the strategic mind of a general, triumphing over adversity. This means that *Ọmọ́lúàbí* must demonstrate valour, resilience, and determination in the face of challenges.
- **Hard work** (*isé síse*): This virtue describes a diligent farmer who tills the soil with dedication, nurtures the crops with care, and harvests the fruits of their labor with pride. *Ọmọ́lúàbí* embraces diligence, perseverance, and industriousness to achieve goals and fulfill responsibilities.
- **Intelligence** (*ọpọ̀lò pípé*): This virtue illustrates a wise owl which sees in the dark, illuminating the path to wisdom, and guiding others with the light of knowledge and insight. This implies that *Ọmọ́lúàbí* must cultivate wisdom, discernment, and strategic thinking to navigate life's complexities (Abimbola 1975).



These principles are considered essential for personal growth, social harmony, and community development in Yorùbá culture. *Ọmọlúàbí* represents the ideal of a well-rounded, virtuous individual who embodies these Yorùbá moral values.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A self-generated structured questionnaire grounded in the *Ọmọlúàbí* Code of Ethics was used as instrument. One hundred (100) Yorùbá youths in Ede community, Osun State, Nigeria were purposefully selected across the three major religious groups in Nigeria and copies of the questionnaire given to them. Ninety-one (91) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and the analysis was based on the returned copies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below are the findings from a sample of 91 youth participants whose responses were retrieved out of the 100 participants selected. The result shows that 39 of them were male while the remaining 52 participants were female. With regards to religion, 36 of them were Christians, 43 of them were Muslims while the remaining 12 participants were African Traditional Religion adherents. Their ages range between 17 and 30 years. This demography reveals that the participants were selected across sex and religious beliefs. Based on the findings, 82% of the participants indicated that they spend more time being busy with their phones and other electronic devices than interacting physically with members of their families. 77% of them indicated television and social media stars as their models. This suggests that the Yorùbá value of community is at risk of extinction.

Another Yorùbá moral value discovered to be most vulnerable to erosion is respect as 68% of the participants indicated that they were not at home with the Yorùbá traditional way of greeting and respecting elders. In addition, the value of self-respect is also vulnerable as 71% of the participants indicated that there is nothing wrong in wearing revealing clothes and other wears considered as indecent according to Yorùbá ethics. Also, 54% of the participants agreed that there is nothing bad in watching pornography and only 30% of them indicated that they are resilient and can keep going during adversity. This also implies that the values of bravery, hardwork and sexual morality are also vulnerable to erosion. Finally, a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.83$) was found between the amount of time spent on the internet/social media and exposure to sexual immorality, violence and other behaviors which are contrary to Yorùbá ethics.

This result agrees with the social learning theory as formulated by Albert Bandura. The theory suggests that observation and modeling play a primary role in how and why people learn. The author proposes that learning occurs through observing and imitating others. People learn new behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge by observing models, such as parents, peers, or media figures (Bandura, 1977). In this study the respondents have television and social media stars as their models. This was made possible because they devote more time watching and interacting with those people online. These Yorùbá youth imbibe the ways of life of those stars. Unfortunately, many of the traits these youth learn through technology are at variance with the Yorùbá moral values.



Therefore, the corrosive effect of technological culture Yorùbá moral values is multifaceted, affecting family structures, cultural practices, social interactions, and economic behaviors. The emergence of new technologies has paved the way for access to diverse and remote cultures via television, radio, social media and the internet. These foreign cultures are fast eroding the African moral values and the Yorùbá people are not left out (Appiah & Baffour, 2022). One of the core values of Yorùbá as stated earlier is humility and respect for elders. However, technology has made it easier for people to engage in unethical behavior, such as cyberbullying and online harassment. Social media has created a culture of disrespect, where young people freely express opinions without any iota of fear. These youngsters easily rain insults on elders, and even traditional authorities, with impunity. This attitude is unbecoming of an Ọmọlúàbí.

One key aspect of respect in Ọmọlúàbí code of conduct is self-respect and this is evident in responsible physical outlook (dressing). Yorùbá people believe that the purpose of wearing cloth is to cover one's nakedness. Ọmọlúàbí must never wear any cloth that reveals the sensitive parts of the body. Such clothes as see-through clothes, sagging pants (for men) and micro-miniskirts (for women) all violate Yorùbá moral standard (Ogunajo, 2021). However, exposure to foreign cultures through technology has led to both young and old Yorùbá people appearing publicly in such dresses without any iota of shame.

Also, digitization of cultural practices has watered down the significance and meaning of face-to-face communal interaction and deep conversations characteristic of Yorùbá people. The Yorùbá understanding of man embraces and emphasizes the sociality of man, the spirit of community, corporate existence and togetherness in the society (Akitan & Oyenuga, 2020). Most people, especially today's youth, prefer to spend more time with their electronic devices than they do with members of their family (Appiah & Baffour, 2022). With the rise of smartphones and the internet, parents and children spend less quality time together, leading to weakened bonds and less opportunity for parents to instill moral values in their children. The popularity of global digital spaces and platforms continually strives to alienate established human-centered cultural communication and indigenous epistemic order. A study reveals that 40-50% of social interaction in the 21st century tends to play on social media (Okeke, 2019). Another study reveals that youths spend more time with media than with any other activity (Odochie & Emmanuel, 2023). Thus, technology has changed family dynamics, leading to a decline in quality time and shared activities. Social media has created a culture of comparison, leading to family conflicts and relationship problems. Technology has promoted individualism, leading to a decline in communal values and collective responsibility. Communal living, which fostered moral education and upbringing among Yorùbá people in the past, has almost gone into extinction due to technological advancement. Interpersonal relationships and community gatherings played a crucial role in moral education in the past but social media has created a culture of self-promotion, rather than community-oriented values (Udoiwang & Akpan, 2023).

Furthermore, exposure to explicit content on social media and the internet has contributed to the violation of Yorùbá moral standard, especially among the youth. Sexual immorality is a taboo in Yorùbá culture. Such acts as incest, homosexuality, bestiality and transgenderism are unheard of in the Yorùbá ethical codes. Virginity was highly celebrated in Yorùbá tradition and rewards awaited that woman, including her parents, whose husband met as a virgin. The issue of sex was never to be discussed openly (Akitan & Oyenuga, 2020). However, the reverse is the case today. Exposure to the Western culture through the internet and the media has corrupted this value to the extent that even many Yorùbá people do not see such acts as evil



any more. Access to obscene contents through the internet is fast eroding this cultural and moral value. Many young people today pattern their lives after television and social media stars, whose cultures are at variance with Yorùbá values (Ola, 2015). In addition, the rise of internet fraud, known locally as "Yahoo-Yahoo," has become a significant issue. The pursuit of quick money through fraudulent means is seen as morally corrupt and stands in stark contrast to the Yorùbá values of honesty and hard work.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been established from this study that there is a positive relationship between technological culture and erosion of Yorùbá moral values. Key concepts in the Omojúábí code of ethics are being violated and eroded, especially among the youth. This study does not ignore the fact that any society, Yorùbá community inclusive, that must grow and be more relevant cannot do so without embracing technology. The study only finds it crucial for the Yorùbá community to find a balance between embracing technological advancements and maintaining their rich moral values. The researcher believes that emerging technologies could reinforce rather than erode good moral values. This study therefore recommends that technologies that promote Yorùbá moral values should be developed. This suggests that African nations generally should begin to empower digital natives in order to improve human capacity. African languages and culture must be accessible to technology for development and preservation by integrating them into the prevalent technological innovations. In addition, film censoring should be taken more seriously by the government in order to disallow contents that seem to downplay good moral values. Finally, broadcasting houses should promote/project indigenous cultural and moral values.

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