

**A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF *IWA AKWA* CULTURAL CEREMONY OF DIMNEZE COMMUNITY IN IHITTE-UBOMA, IMO STATE****Authors & Affiliations****DR. ELIZABETH OKON JOHN**

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**ABSTRACT**

The concept of the cycle of life in Igbo worldview is aptly captured in their traditional practice of rites of passage. For traditional Igbos of Dimneze community puberty rites known as *Iwa Akwa* serve as a means by which the cultural norms and values are preserved. In the course of the festival young boys are initiated into the men's forum, enlightened about what the family and the society at large expect of them. This age-long traditional practice is gradually dwindling. Despite the significances of *Iwa Akwa* rite of passage to community building and development, in contemporary times this rite becoming abandoned and considered obsolete this probably may be the effect of modernity and acculturation. The research adopts the phenomenological method in its investigation. Through lived experience and from a subjective perception, the research is aimed at describing the activities, significances and challenges of *Iwa Akwa* rite of passage in Dimneze Community. The paper is qualitative research; the information used in the work is derived from existing literature on the subject. It is anchored on the theory of functionalism. The paper holds vehemently that the recent moral decadence and social vices in Dimneze community may be associated with the infiltration of western culture into the practice of *Iwa Akwa* cultural ceremony and the devaluation of the practice. Therefore, the research advocates the need to revitalize the *Iwa Akwa* cultural ceremony as proposed paradigm for proffering solutions to these problems.

**Key words:** *Iwa Akwa* Ceremony; Igbo Cultural Rites; Rite of Passage; Dimneze Community; Indigenous Cultural Practices; Cultural Identity and Socialization

**Introduction**

The rite of passage is a religio-cultural ceremony endemic among traditional societies in Africa, Asia, and Australia. It is an age-long practice that can be traced back to ancient human history. The term 'rite of passage' was introduced by the French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep to explain the rituals which accompany this rite in traditional communities and people (Janusz and Walkiewicz, 2018). His contribution to the discussion is that change (transition) in itself sacred; societies cannot simply flip a switch between identities; they need structured rituals to safely navigate transformation. Lebesse et al (2022), explain that rite of passage symbolizes a period of transition in the life of an individual or community. They are ceremonies whereby rituals are performed to mark a significant transition in the cycle of life from puberty to adulthood, single to married and from life to death. It entails a prestigious ontological, social and psychological transition in life's cycle. From hallowed antiquity through

contemporary times people from different parts of the world celebrate multifaceted rites of transition ranging from conception, childbirth, christening, adulthood, marriage and burial rites. Each of these rites has its unique significance and symbolism. Though, rites of passage are common phenomenon among indigenous people of the world, but they are given special attention in African ontology and worldview in general. Okeke (2021) avers that, for traditional Africans, life is regarded as sacred; each stage of the human life is hallowed and revered. Ezenweke (2016) observes that the discussion of transition rites in African has enthralled the attention of many authors due to its tremendous significance in sustaining the idea of holistic development. Africans believe that life cycle begins from conception and culminates when an individual takes his last breath. Each stage of life indicates the level of progress or development in the lived experience of the human person. Rites of passage are based on the notion of sharing one's life and vision with the community, which is rooted in the mystery of life and death (Lebese et al, 2022).

The passage from childhood to adulthood among traditional African people is beyond biological and physiological changes experienced, rather it involves a complex pattern of personal and social changes, inherent in the experiences of young people within their family, peer, and school or communities that are shaped by the given history and culture (Weichold et al, 2023). This rite cut across genders and cultures. The three basic features of passage rites as identified by Arnold van Gennep are alienation, transition, and integration (Janusz and Walkiewicz, 2018). The method of alienation entails separation from one's family and assuming a different routine. This is where human development begins, and there are physical changes and a shift from childish behaviour to adulthood (Lebese et al, 2022). In this work, our central objective is to critically discuss the activities, significance and challenges of *Iwa Akwa* puberty rite in Dimneze community of Ihitte-Uboma, Imo State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the roles of *Iwa Akwa* festival in community building and development in Dimneze community, this festival presently is experiencing neglect possibly as a result of civilization and globalization. With the wake of Christianity in the community some traditional rituals performed during the festival are being regarded as superstitious and fetish. The cultural heritage of the people is evaporating from their memory as well as their long-preserved identity. This problem is further aggravated by rural-urban migration. The discourse on *Iwa Akwa* rite of passage is also losing its significance among academics. The decline in moral values and increased social vices pose threat to the existence of Dimneze community. This has necessitated the search for the possible cause(s) of this problem.

### **Methodology**

Considering the nature of the research problem the paper adopts the phenomenological method in investigating the subject. The essence of this approach is to highlight precisely, how a subject matter is perceived by the researcher. The Phenomenological method has to do with the study of the individual's personal experience, laying aside all that he had previously learned or heard about the subject under investigation. With this approach the researcher seeks to describe rather than explain his experience of the subject. The research is anchored on the theory of functionalism. By adopting this theory framework, the research tries to explain the overall function of *Iwa Akwa* festival to the people of Dimneze community. The research is basically secondary research. It adopts the qualitative method of gathering data. The data used in

this research are derived from existing literature on *Iwa Akwa* and the general view of rite of passage in African.

### **Review of Literature**

The discourse on rite of passage is widely analysed by authors from various parts of the world, but only a few have published articles on *Iwa Akwa* cultural ceremony among the Igbo people of Dimneze community. The few scholars who have painstakingly examined the subject matter approach it from different perspectives. Each scholar tries to examine the practice from the point of view that best suits his purpose.

In the article *The Evolving Face of Iwa Akwa*, Uzor (2013) examines the challenges surrounding the survival of the tradition in contemporary epoch with emphasis on the use of contemporary music and dance during the festival. Uzor (2013) observes that globalization enhanced through the use of new media technology has negatively influenced the cultural music and dance displayed during *Iwa Akwa* cultural festival among the Igbos. An examination of the objective reveals that the researcher was not basically concerned about the moral significance of the festival but how it helps preserve the tradition of the people which is the identity of the people.

In the article *Rites of Passage and Sustainable Development in Traditional Africa: Reflections for Contemporary Society*, Ezenweke (2016) examined the mediums of rites of passage laying emphasis on puberty and marriage rites and how they can bring about sustainable development. He also offered systematic ideas on how this practice can be revived to enhance the moral culture of youths in Nigeria. Ezenweke (2016) observes that this practice in contemporary Igbo society is experiencing a decline which he ascribed as the effect of globalization though its effectiveness for development and sustainability has been greatly appreciated. The consequence is that it shakes the foundation of African moral stool. Nevertheless, there is a significant limited literatures which investigate the cause of the decline in the practice of passage rites among traditional Igbos and the overwhelming negative consequences on ethical foundation of traditional Igbo culture in particular and traditional African at large.

Nwosu and Ihekwe (2022) in the article *Iwa Akwa Obowo Folk Media and Oral Performance Culture: Structure, Management and Characterization* toe the same line of thought as Uzor. From the perspective of theatre art, they view *Iwa Akwa* as a medium of preserving the people's cultural heritage. These authors observed that *Iwa Akwa* cultural festival despite undergoing serious extinction due to various factors, it still maintains its oral traditions. They hold the same conclusion as Uzor. However, these authors went further to state the significance of *Iwa Akwa* to the initiates and the community at large. They summarized the essence of the festival as something that is about responsibility and responsiveness.

In the article *Rite and Rituals of Iwa-Akwa in Igboland as the Gateway to Adulthood* Okeke (2022), examines the essence of the rites and the rituals performed during *Iwa Akwa*. He gave a comprehensive view about the practice of *Iwa Akwa* puberty rite of passage among the Igbos. He observes that *Iwa Akwa* is a passage rite celebrated or organized to induct young boys in the community into adult life, indicating a successful transition of the life cycle of the initiates. This cultural festival binds and unites the natives or indigenes, it brings to light the people's ancestry bond as well as traditional and culture practices. Confidential matter of the society, the historical origin of the people and their cultural beliefs are revealed to the initiates. The initiates are taught moral discipline, trained to be independent and tested to measure their state of endurance. Still pointing out the relevance of *Iwa Akwa*, Okeke (2022) asserts that the spirit of brotherhood

endemic among traditional Igbo youths creates the feeling of oneness and community bond. As active members of the community, it expected of them to uphold and pursue the objectives of the people as well as the values and norms of the society. Lastly, Okeke (2022) pointed out the religious as well as the cultural relevance of *Iwa Akwa*. For him, religiously, *Iwa Akwa* festival connects and links members of the community to the spirit realm and the world of lived experience. It reminds the people of their historical origin and identity, it also culturally enlightens them of the need for communal spirit.

Among the three articles reviewed on the subject under investigation the article of Okeke gave a holistic insight on the religio-cultural practice of *Iwa Akwa* puberty rite of passage among traditional Igbo of eastern Nigeria. This does not in any way negate the contributions of other scholars towards the growth of knowledge. Though the contribution of the rest scholars only place emphasis on its aesthetic value; viewing the practice of *Iwa Akwa* puberty rite of passage mainly from the perspective of aesthetics does not imply that these authors are ignorant of or deliberately down play the ethical and religio-cultural importance of the festival which are the fundamental objectives of the practice. However, an examination of the religio-cultural, economic, social and ethical, and aesthetic relevance of *Iwa Akwa* help create a balance in any research on the subject. Therefore, this research comprehensively examine the practice of *Iwa Akwa* festival in Dimaeze community.

### **A Brief Exposition of the people of Dimneze Community in Ihitte Uboma Imo State**

Dimeze community in Ihitte-Uboma Local Government Area, Imo state is an Igbo speaking Community. Nwaru avers that the Igbo people occupy the South-East zone in Nigeria. Igbo origin is steeped in controversy; some of the oral accounts by historians and anthropologists claim the Igbo are primordial people in South Eastern Nigeria. Imo state is one of the states created by the Federal Military Government in February, 1976. Ihitte-Uboma is strategically located on the eastern part of Imo State. The name Ihitte-Uboma, as a Local Government was not in existence until May 3rd 1989 when it became a local government. Formerly, the area was known as Etititi and then it comprised Obowo, Ihitte and Uboma clans. Today there are only two clans, Ihitte to the South and Uboma to the North. It covers a land area of over 109 square kilometres. The area experiences two seasons in a year, the dry and the rainy season. The Imo River which is one of the major rivers in the area is of great significance to the people as it is a source of livelihood to them. The soil in the area is regarded as one of the best because of its fertile nature. Ihitte-Uboma Local Government area of Imo State is known to be the “food basket” of Imo State with its rich cultivation and production in large quantities, of food and cash crops such as rice, cassava, palm oil, yam, vegetables, okro, akidi (Igbo native brown bean), and cocoyam amongst many others in large quantity. The land is very fertile for cultivation and some areas house other natural resources such as stones which confer economic advantage on the people. Without mincing words, the women in the area have remained resiliently active in every facet of the economy and are ensuring sustainable growth. Hence, their engagement in the economy, especially, agriculture and crop production are seemingly beyond subsistence.

The Dimneze people like other Igbo speaking community are blessed with diverse cultural heritages. They share the same religio-cultural beliefs and worldview with other Igbo speaking communities. However, in contemporary time their religio-cultural beliefs have been subjected to serious threats. Generally, the Igbo people have not only lost their maternal culture, which were either ignorantly destroyed by the early Christians and or carefully removed by the colonial masters to different parts of the world, but their festivals, religion,

tradition, norms and values, their total civilization has been badly eroded and perhaps this may have affected their behavior or their total response to their environment (Nwaru, 2015). Albeit, a lot of traditional Igbo substantial culture have been abandoned or modified, some of the cultural practices of the people still remain to be preserved.

### **An Exposition of the *Iwa Akwa* Cultural Ceremony of Dimneze Community in Ihitte-Uboma, Imo State**

*Iwa Akwa* (cloth wearing) cultural ceremony is an ancient puberty rite practice endemic among the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria. Among the Igbo people, *Iwa Akwa* (cloth wearing) cultural ceremony symbolizes an initiation into manhood. It is a transition rite which marshals young men into manhood or adulthood accompanied with rites and rituals. Though, it is a common cultural practice among the Igbo people, it is mostly celebrated and observed among the people of *Obowo*, *Ihitte-Uboma*, *Ehime Mbano* and *Ahiazu Mbaise* Local Government Areas of Imo state. It is generally said that the practice of *Iwa Akwa* among the Igbo people has its origin traced to the people of Obowo. Nevertheless, the historical origin of the practice itself is as old as the history of the Igbo people (Okeke, 2022). It is usually observed once every three years (triennial festival). Any adult male who dies without undergoing this ritual is considered to be a child, he would not be given a burial which befits an adult. *Iwa Akwa* is known as a cloth wearing ceremony because in the ancient times, people remained naked till they were declared adults, and given the *Aji* (Tree Bark) to clothe up. This “clothing up” formed the basis of *Iwa Akwa*, which signifies male maturity to an adult.

According to Nzewuba as referenced by Mbalisi (2021) this passage rite is for young men between the ages of 21 and 25 years. It symbolizes a mental and social development to engage in family life as a responsible adult and eligible to take up responsibilities. It is a cultural ceremony that involves the entire community though it is meant for young boys. When young boys that get to stated ages, their relatives or parent consider them fit for the rituals, likewise the leaders carry out investigation to ensure they are of age. The criteria that enable young boys take part in this exercise are simple; first they must be of the right age, their mother must be legally married according to the customs of the people and must be a member of the women association in the community. Their father must have also passed through the initiation in his time and the participant must not have any connection with *Osu* (outcast) (Okeke, 2022). It is expected of the boys to establish that they have an in-depth knowledge of traditions, customs and law of Dimneze community by singing a song or two which captures these things. The village expect them to be physically fit and exhibit courage and endurance as moral virtues. *Iwa Akwa* is generally valued for its exploration of metaphors and symbols through the reinforcement of myth, history and religion (Nwosu and Ihekwe, 2022).

When the leaders are done with their investigations, the boys meet with their contemporaries and their family, then proceed to prepare for the ceremony. The item required is only wrappers (George to be precise), other items are things for decorating the venue and these items are provided by the community. As part of the preparation for the ceremony the initiates a month before the event goes to his maternal home with gift items, to formally inform and invite them to the ceremony. Also before the event, the women of the community perform a ceremony known as the *Ibo Ama* (clearing of the ceremonial path) that leads to *Eke Umuihim* (the ancestral market place) on the *Eke* market day preceding the *Iwa Akwa*. However, it is imperative to note that the festival of *Iwa Akwa* is done differently on different market days of the partaking villages because the people believe that the gods of the village are happier during their market days, when they would be in the mood to render assistance to the people (Okeke, 2021). On the event eve, a track is marked at the ancestral market place by the age grade that will succeed the participants. Afterwards, railings are constructed around

the track, using tree branches and bamboo contributed by them. The railings preserve the track from unwanted entry. Iwa Akwa cultural festival is usually observed on a market day in the month of December or January. In many villages, *Iwa Akwa* is held on the last *Eke* market day of the year. Few hours to the parade, the Traditional apparel is spread out and suspended on tall supports, to indicate a participant's home.

The ceremony usually lasts for two days: day one their predecessors enlighten them on what to do. The event starts at the early hours of the day where they assembled at the village meeting point then proceed to the palace of the traditional ruler to seek his approval to commence the rituals. Later the initiates also proceed to the village square; the initiates are instructed to carry with them vessels to fetch water from the stream for the use of their predecessors. The task was to be carried out by each initiate without grumbling. Afterwards the initiates are told to clean the shoes of their predecessors. Once these tasks are properly done, the initiates are allowed to go home. While these exercises are on, at home relatives of the initiates will be preparing local delicacies for friends and well-wishers. The second day which is the day of the main event, in ancient time the initiates assemble at a spot in a single column, after the necessary spiritual cleansing rites and rituals at the village shrine the boys would process to the market square, singing aloud on high pitch and dancing, with their wrappers tied to their waist down to through their ankle. The initiates, wearing no shirts, will have their bodies decorated with white chalk (*nzu*) (Okeke, 2022). But, in contemporary time following the advent of Christianity the initiates assemble at the village square by 6.00am. Before the parade commences, members of the age grade that will succeed the participants move from home to home, in order to call out the initiates this is known as *Ikpọpụta*. The participants and their guests (family, friends and invitees) then proceed joyfully to join the parade. The parade of the initiates is called *Ima Mbara* in the local dialect. During the parade the initiate ties one end of the wrapper around the waist (or the elbow), and then allows the full length to spread on the ground. He also blows a whistle tied to a white hanky, which signifies peace. He is flanked by his guests and drummers, as he dances towards the ancestral market place.

Where the male is not physically present, he is represented by his mother, the first daughter or any elderly female relative. In any case, she carries his picture on her head. The *Awka Jooji* (George wrapper) is also wrapped on her body and not allowed to drop on the ground. At the market square, the initiates dance through the prepared track, with not more than four people accompanying each of them. At the exit of the track, the wrapper is wrapped on initiate's body and then he is lifted shoulder high, to the cheer and admiration of the entire village this art is called *Ibuli Elu*. The Eze, flanked by members of the Eze-in-Council, places his hand behind each initiate, and gives the Royal blessings. The initiate claims the blessings by replying *Isee!* (Amen). Immediately after the Royal blessing of the last participant, traditional cannons are lit. The number that is shot corresponds to the number of initiates who participated in the *Iwa Akwa* Parade. With the ceremony over, participants go back to their respective homes in individual parades, dancing and being cheered by their guests.

In sum, the activities for the day include; performing tasks dictated by their predecessors, spreading of wrappers at the entrance of their ancestral compounds, this is accompanied by the dedication of the wrappers by a religious head, followed by initiate's dressing of traditional attire and street matching to the venue of the ceremony. At the end of the ceremony at the village square the boys dispatch to their various homes with relatives to continue with entertainment of guest; relatives, friends and well-wishers. Successful participation indicates that the boys are ready or eligible to engage in family life and can part take in matters related to the

community welfare and development. The significance of the wrapper as earlier stated indicates that the boys before now were nude now have been clad. However, many families see the event as medium of showcasing their affluence which makes the event competitive.

### **The Significance (Functions) of *Iwa Akwa* Cultural Ceremony in Dimneze Community in Ihitte-Uboma, Imo State**

*Iwa Akwa* cultural ceremony could be described as an immaterial cultural practice. Intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith, that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (Nomishan and Sani, 2023). Evaluating the practice of *Iwa Akwa* festival through the lens of the functional theory, the festival plays significant roles in socio-cultural, and overall wellbeing of the community. The relevance of *Iwa Akwa* rite of passage might not be adequately appreciated if viewed only from its aesthetic value, a deeper reflection of the activities performed during this cultural festival reveals more than what meet the eyes. Generally, puberty passage rite prepares initiates for social responsibility, transforms them psychologically, and instill in them moral values (Sanou, 2013). Away from the colorful attires, folk dance and music which portrays the people's dynamic cultural heritage, *Iwa Akwa* cultural ceremony has ethical, epistemological, socio-cultural, economic and religious relevance to the initiates and the community at large. In this segment we shall discuss at length the various significance of *Iwa Akwa* cultural rite of passage.

**Economic Significance:** this festival in Dimnaeze Community in Ihitte-Uboma, Imo State has tremendous economic values to the people. During this festival the item required is mostly George wrapper and they are usually expensive, traders who deal on wrappers make reasonable sales during this period. Initiates from rich homes see the festival as a medium of displaying their affluence making the festival competitive in nature. With the influx of people from different locations the economic activities during the period usually take a positive turn. The demand for drinks and food stuff is usually high during the festival period.

**Socio-Cultural and Ethical Significance:** the socio-cultural and ethical relevance of *Iwa Akwa* rites of passage are overwhelming. The religio-cultural practice involved in this ceremony are to effectively prepare the initiates for the life of adulthood, married life, and to prepare them to be able to proffer solution to societal problems and groom the younger generation (Okeke, 2022). Uzor (2013) corroborates this stating that *Iwa Akwa* rite of passage creates in the minds of initiates the need to be responsible and what they must do as contributions to the growth of the society. The ceremony is aimed at community development, it is held in high esteem because it revitalizes the historical evolution, the religious beliefs and their myth. It also helps in preserving the cultural norms and values of the people. Nwosu and Ihekwe (2022) described *Iwa Akwa* as concern with responsibility and responsiveness. To the people of Dimneze community *Iwa Akwa* festival serves as a medium of preserving the cultural heritage of the people.

**Religious Significance:** Though in contemporary time the religious rituals performed during *Iwa Akwa* rite of passage has assumed a new dimension compared to what was obtained in time past, the veracity of the matter is that during this festival the people acknowledge the supernatural order. For Okeke (2022), religiously, *Iwa Akwa* festival connects and links the natives to the supernatural realm and genuine existent. During the initiates' visit to the shrine, the Dibia (Chief Priest) pour libation and offer kola nuts to the deities of

the land and commune with the spirit of their ancestors in the realm of the spirit. In the worldview of traditional Igbos there exist a mutual union between the living and the dead, during this festival the relationship is rekindled. Mbiti (1975) opines that the joy of the community is revitalized during the ceremony as there are activities to entertain people. It unites the people; the dead, living, and generation yet unborn, because it creates room for the initiates to enter into family life.

**Epistemological Significance:** The practice of passage rites generally has inherent epistemic value. Through the practice, the community transfers its age-long knowledge to the younger generation. This religio-cultural rite is founded on the belief of communal life and vision, grounded in the conundrum of life and death. The rite of passage plays an important role in the life cycles of African societies (Lebese, 2022). The people of Dimnaeze community and the Igbo people in general transmit their cultural values and norms to the next generation through puberty rite of passage like the *Iwa Akwa* rite of passage.

### **Iwa Akwa Festival in Contemporary Time: Challenges and Causes of Decline**

In Africa, the festivals used to mark the various traditional rites of passage are struggling to survive. The rich cultural heritage of the people which serve as means of identification and as means of uniting the people has been altered by modernity. Nwadiokwu, et al (2016) observe that in contemporary times following the advent of civilization many ethnic groups in Africa no longer celebrate their diverse traditional rites of passage. In some cases, these rites are done individually with little or no ceremony. For centuries, traditional Africans saw the rites of passage as means of sustaining all-round development. Ezenweke (2016) observes that the practice of transitional rites of passage in the new age or modern African societies is rapidly dwindling especial in Igbo speaking communities this is the effect of globalization regardless its effectualness for sustainable development. Basically, the two factors bedeviling *Iwa Akwa* cultural festival in Dimneze community are: civilization and globalization

**Civilization:** Civilization in this context involves western education and religious beliefs. The introduction of foreign religions and education in Africa has greatly hampered traditional African religio-cultural beliefs and values. History has it that Islam and Christianity are alien in Africa. The religious beliefs and teachings of these religions are not in tandem with the practices and beliefs in Africa, and its acceptance by the people has remodeled Africans' beliefs and values. Today, the people of Dimneze community no longer consult the chief priest of the land for prayers during *Iwa Akwa* rite rather prayers are offered by a Reverend Father (Christianity). Usually, the chief priest pour libation and offer kola nuts to propitiate the deities and to summon ancestral spirit in the spirit world. The essence of this act was to unite the living and the dead in line with the worldview of the people. Majority of the indigenes of Dimneze are Christians only a few still hold on to their traditional beliefs. Through formal education western worldview is indirectly promoted at the expense of African worldview.

**Globalization:** The world as known today has become a small community this is made possible through the use of the internet and new media technologies. Through the internet, different cultural beliefs and practices have diffused into other cultures. According to Uzor (2013) new technologies and social media platforms have enabled cultural exchange across the world to become increasingly rapid, dynamic and fluid. Consequently, the latest dances being danced in clubs in a specific country or region, can spread across the world within hours. This is one of the problems with *Iwa Akwa* cultural festival in Dimnaeze community. The traditional dance and music of the people in which their ethical principles and values are preserved have been replaced

with contemporary dances and music which have no moral value.

According to Uzor (2013), and Nwosu and Ihekwe (2022) *Iwa Akwa* cultural festival is a medium through which the Igbo people of eastern Nigeria project their traditional arts and values. However, globalization acts as a serious threat to the survival of *Iwa Akwa* festival. The younger generations find the art to be unattractive compared to contemporary hip pop music and dance. The essence of *Iwa Akwa* cultural ceremony is becoming defeated because the moral principles are enshrined in Igbo traditional music. While the internet has been used to spread western worldview to different parts of the world, not much have been done to spread and promote African worldview. Africans today choose to promote a culture that is foreign but abandon the rich tradition of their ancestors.

## **Conclusion**

The *Iwa Akwa* puberty rite of passage is all about responsibility and responsiveness. It is a means by which the traditional people of Dimneze community transfer their age-long moral principles and values from one generation to another. *Iwa Akwa* rite of passage in Dimneze community has important roles to play in the people's notion of the cycle of life. It is a period when young boys are taught the ethical principle of brotherliness and shared responsibility. During this period the boys involved are induced to adult life, they are enlightened on their responsibilities as adults and enlightened on what the society expect of them. Through this cultural rite initiates are exposed to the deep traditional beliefs, taboos and deities of the land. They are educated on the moral values of the people and the need to live a responsible life.

However, this tradition is coming in contemporary time following the advent of the infiltration of western worldview transferred through new technologies and social media platforms. As mentioned earlier in the work, the internet enables cultural exchange across the world to become increasingly rapid, dynamic and fluid. This cultural exchange has negatively affected the practice of *Iwa Akwa* cultural ceremony in Dimneze community. The moral decadence and social vices experienced in the community in recent time could be associated with the neglect of *Iwa Akwa* cultural ceremony. This research vehemently advocates the need to revitalize *Iwa Akwa* cultural festival.

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