



**AFRICAN CONCEPT OF HAPPINESS
IN THE LIGHT OF CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS
FALL APART*: A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH**

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Abstract:

The African concept of happiness, as explored through a hermeneutical reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, reflects a deeply relational and communal worldview. Happiness in African thought is not merely tied to individual fulfilment or material wealth, as often seen in Western perspectives, but is rooted in harmonious coexistence with others and the environment. For Africans, happiness arises from a balanced relationship with all forces in the hierarchy of beings, a notion which emphasizes interconnection and collective well-being. This contrasts with Western metaphysical views that tend to prioritize individual pleasure or material achievement. African happiness extends beyond this life, focusing on a state of blessedness in both life and the afterlife. Understanding this concept requires grasping the African notion of Being, which is seen as relational, where existence is defined by one's connection to others. Achebe's work exemplifies these ideas, showing how happiness is experienced through peaceful co-existence and the absence of egocentric attitudes. This study established the African philosophy of "Being-with," where happiness is an ontological experience derived from natural and collective existence, rather than self-centred pursuits.

Keywords: African concept of happiness, Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, hermeneutical approach

1. Introduction

The African concept of happiness is deeply intertwined with traditional socio-cultural values, a connection that Chinua Achebe masterfully illustrates in his novel *Things Fall Apart*. For Africans, happiness is not an individualistic pursuit of pleasure but a communal experience rooted in harmonious coexistence with others and the

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environment. However, the adverse impact of colonialism disrupted these values, leaving lasting scars on the African worldview, particularly in how happiness is perceived and experienced. This study explores the African concept of happiness by examining Achebe's depiction of these values and how they contrast with the impositions of colonial rule.

Before colonialism, African societies were structured around communal living and collective well-being. Happiness was understood as achieving harmony within the community and with the natural world rather than the pursuit of material wealth or individual pleasure. This perspective aligns with the African philosophy of "ubuntu," which emphasizes interconnectedness and humanity's shared existence (Mabovula, 2011). In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist Okonkwo's village, Umuofia, is a clear reflection of such communal values. Traditional practices, rituals, and celebrations formed the basis of happiness, as people found meaning in their roles within the community. Values like respect, honesty, and obedience were central to maintaining social harmony, and happiness was derived from fulfilling one's responsibilities within this structure (Lu *et al.*, 2001).

However, the arrival of colonialism shattered these foundations. Colonial powers imposed foreign systems of governance and values, often dismissing African traditions as primitive or inferior. As captured in *Things Fall Apart*, the colonial masters not only sought to control African resources but also their consciousness, relegating African cultural values to the margins. Achebe highlights how the colonial system portrayed Africans as people whose "*consciousness has not yet reached an awareness of any substantial objectivity*" (Osinubi, 2009). This view justified the colonial domination of African societies, further deepening the suffering and alienation of the African people. Colonialism also sought to redefine happiness, introducing Western ideas of progress, individualism, and material wealth as markers of well-being, which were foreign to the traditional African worldview (Nyengele, 2014).

In this context, Achebe's work becomes a critical lens through which the African concept of happiness can be understood. His novel provides a counter-narrative to colonial discourses, illustrating that the values Africans held dear, such as community, respect, and collective well-being, were already ingrained in their societies. These values were not introduced by the colonizers but existed long before their arrival. Achebe portrays the African experience of happiness as deeply relational, rooted in a shared sense of being and coexistence, what African metaphysics refers to as "Being-with" (Micheal, 2019). This contrasts with Western conceptions of happiness, which tend to focus on individual pleasure and material success.

The disruption of these values by colonialism caused significant trauma, as evidenced by the societal collapse depicted in *Things Fall Apart*. The loss of communal ties and the imposition of new values led to alienation, suffering, and a redefinition of happiness in African societies. Achebe's novel thus becomes a critical hermeneutical tool for understanding the African concept of happiness in the face of colonial disruption. It

reveals that African happiness is ontological, stemming from natural coexistence and the fulfillment of communal roles, rather than self-centered pursuits.

In essence, the African concept of happiness, as presented in *Things Fall Apart*, is deeply communal and relational, centered on harmonious coexistence with others and the environment. Colonialism disrupted this traditional understanding, introducing foreign values that undermined African society's structure and sense of well-being. Through a hermeneutical approach, this research seeks to reclaim the African understanding of happiness, emphasizing its roots in communal living and cultural values that predate colonial influence. Achebe's work serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience of African values despite the destructive forces of colonialism.

2. Aims of the Study

This study aims to highlight the cultural significance and necessity of the African concept of happiness through a hermeneutical interpretation of "being-with." In traditional African society, the community was the foundation of life, where individuals thrived through their relationships with others. However, contemporary society places increasing emphasis on individuality. Therefore, this essay seeks to draw from the past, reclaiming values that remain relevant to modern life. The goal is not simply to reiterate these traditional values, but to adapt them to the present context, aligning them with the hopes and aspirations of today's Africans. As such, it is asserted that "these ancient and traditional values need to be adapted to the hopes and aspirations of the men and women of Africa" in order to produce meaningful outcomes from this research. There is an urgent need for Africans to rediscover the relational nature of their existence. The African is a "*Being in harmony with reality*," and it is crucial to reignite the understanding that an African does not exist in isolation. To exist, in the African context, means more than merely occupying space; it involves standing in a meaningful relationship with all aspects of life, both visible and invisible. This research emphasizes the importance of promoting balanced and well-established interpersonal relationships between individuals. Additionally, it highlights the necessity of maintaining connections with God, humanity, nature, and cultural traditions, as these are the true sources of happiness for the African individual.

2.1 Research Objective

The major aim of this research was to determine the significance of communal relationships in shaping the concept of happiness in Igbo culture, as depicted in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

2.2 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study extends to various stakeholders. For scholars and researchers in African philosophy and literature, this study provides deeper insights into the African concept of happiness, contributing to ongoing discussions about African

identity, cultural values, and their relevance in modern society. By offering a hermeneutical interpretation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the research enriches the academic understanding of how traditional African values can inform contemporary life. For policymakers and educators, this study serves as a guide for integrating African cultural values into modern educational curricula and development policies. It emphasizes the importance of communal living, relational existence, and balanced relationships with the environment, which are vital for fostering social cohesion and harmony in African societies. This research can inform efforts to promote culturally relevant education and social policies that align with African heritage. Furthermore, for African communities and individuals, the study reawakens an understanding of happiness that is deeply rooted in relationships and communal values, providing a framework for addressing modern societal challenges. It encourages a return to principles of interconnectedness and harmony with nature, tradition, and others, offering a pathway to well-being that contrasts with individualistic, materialistic notions of happiness. This can be especially important for community leaders seeking to preserve cultural integrity in the face of globalization and modern pressures.

2.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research lies within the domain of African Philosophy, with a specific focus on the concept of happiness as it relates to moral philosophy in the African context. This study will delve into how happiness is understood and practiced within African societies, primarily through the lens of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. By examining Achebe's work, we aim to highlight the African conception of happiness, particularly how it is reflected in the communal values and relational existence portrayed in the Igbo culture. Although this research centers on Africa, it is crucial to recognize that Africa is not a monolithic entity. The continent consists of 55 countries, each with diverse cultures, languages, and traditions. Africa's complexity is further illustrated by its approximately 1,000 ethnic groups, each with its own unique cultural practices and philosophies. While there may be shared values and similarities among different African cultures, significant differences exist, and it is important to avoid generalizations about African philosophical concepts of happiness based on one culture. Thus, while we acknowledge the broader African context, the primary focus of this study will be on the Igbo culture as depicted in *Things Fall Apart*. This allows for a more in-depth and accurate representation of the African philosophy of happiness, rather than attempting to generalize across diverse African cultures. The study's scope is limited to the exploration of happiness within the Igbo community, understanding its moral and philosophical implications, and considering its relevance to contemporary African societies.

3. Literature Review

The African concept of happiness is deeply rooted in communal values, social harmony, and relational existence. This study explores these ideas through a hermeneutical

approach to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, situating African happiness within the broader philosophical framework of African metaphysics and moral philosophy. The literature surrounding African philosophy reveals a rich tradition of understanding human fulfillment not through individualism, but through interconnectedness with the community, ancestors, nature, and the divine.

African scholars like John Mbiti and Kwame Gyekye have emphasized that traditional African thought views the individual as inextricably linked to the community. According to Mbiti (1969), the famous dictum "*I am because we are, and since we are; therefore, I am*" captures the essence of African communalism, where a person's identity and happiness are derived from their relationships with others. Happiness, in this sense, is not defined by material wealth or personal achievement but by the quality of one's interactions and contributions to the well-being of the collective. Gyekye (1997) similarly argues that African moral philosophy prioritizes communal values over individual self-interest, asserting that the highest good is achieved when individuals work towards the common good of their society.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe illustrates this philosophy through the Igbo society's emphasis on unity, respect for tradition, and shared responsibilities. Characters like Okonkwo find their sense of identity and fulfillment through their roles in the family and village, yet the disruption caused by colonialism and the introduction of Western values shatter this communal harmony. Scholars such as Gikandi (2001) have examined how Achebe's narrative reflects the conflict between traditional African values and the encroaching individualism brought by colonial influence. Gikandi argues that Achebe uses *Things Fall Apart* to portray how the breakdown of the traditional African worldview, where happiness is deeply tied to community and the spiritual world, leads to social fragmentation and personal despair.

Furthermore, the African concept of happiness is often tied to metaphysical beliefs. The ontological framework in African thought includes not only relationships with other people but also with ancestors, the environment, and supernatural forces. This belief, as articulated by philosophers like Akampurira (2023), stresses that existence is relational; an individual's happiness depends on maintaining harmony with the various layers of existence, both visible and invisible. In this view, happiness is not simply an emotional state, but a condition of being that aligns with one's responsibilities to the broader network of life forces. Achebe's work reflects this ontological understanding, as characters perform rituals and maintain customs designed to appease ancestors and gods, viewing their well-being as part of a larger cosmic balance.

Contrastingly, the Western concept of happiness, which is often associated with individual pleasure, autonomy, and self-fulfillment, differs significantly from the African perspective. Scholars like Eidhamar (2021) and Dambrun and Ricard (2011) have discussed the dissonance between these two worldviews, noting that Western notions of happiness tend to center on individual freedom, material success, and personal achievement. This difference becomes especially evident in postcolonial African

literature, where characters, as seen in *Things Fall Apart*, grapple with the conflicting demands of individual desire and communal responsibility.

In essence, the African concept of happiness, as explored through Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and other philosophical works, is fundamentally relational, rooted in the interconnectedness of the individual, the community, and the spiritual realm. It challenges Western individualistic notions and highlights the importance of harmony, both socially and cosmically. This body of literature emphasizes that African happiness cannot be separated from the web of relationships that sustain life and identity within African societies.

3.1 Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is widely regarded as one of the most significant African novels of the 20th century, providing a profound exploration of the cultural, social, and political realities of pre-colonial Africa and the devastating impact of colonialism. Published in 1958, the novel has been the subject of extensive literary criticism, with scholars analyzing its themes of identity, tradition, and the clash between African and Western values.

At its core, *Things Fall Apart* offers a rich depiction of Igbo society, particularly focusing on its communal structure, traditions, and values. Critics such as Okonkwo (1985) have emphasized the novel's portrayal of the traditional African worldview, highlighting its complex social systems, religious beliefs, and rituals that were central to the Igbo community's functioning. The novel's protagonist, Okonkwo, embodies the struggle to maintain these traditional values in the face of inevitable change brought by colonial forces. Achebe masterfully illustrates the depth of pre-colonial African culture, challenging the Western narrative that often portrayed African societies as primitive or lacking in sophistication. Scholars like Jeyifo (2007) have argued that Achebe's work is not merely a nostalgic look at the past but a deliberate effort to reclaim African history from colonial distortions.

One of the novel's major themes is the clash between tradition and change. Okonkwo's rigid adherence to the customs of his forefathers and his resistance to colonial influence represent a broader cultural conflict. The arrival of Christian missionaries and British colonialists introduces new beliefs, institutions, and power structures that disrupt the existing social order. Scholars such as Madubuike (2022) have analyzed how this cultural collision leads to the disintegration of the Igbo community, symbolized by Okonkwo's tragic downfall. The novel portrays the destructive impact of colonialism, not just in terms of physical conquest, but in the erosion of cultural identity and communal cohesion.

Critics have also focused on the novel's examination of masculinity and power. Okonkwo's character is defined by his obsession with strength and success and his fear of being perceived as weak, much like his father, Unoka. This fear drives many of Okonkwo's actions, including his harsh treatment of his family and his eventual resistance to colonial authority. Feminist scholars like Powell (2008) have critiqued the

portrayal of gender roles in the novel, noting the marginalization of female characters and the reinforcement of patriarchal values. However, other scholars argue that Achebe presents a nuanced view of masculinity, revealing how rigid gender expectations contribute to Okonkwo's downfall and the eventual collapse of the Igbo society.

Another important aspect of *Things Fall Apart* is its narrative style and language. Achebe's use of English to convey African oral traditions, proverbs, and folktales has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Lynn (2017) and other critics have praised Achebe's ability to blend African linguistic elements with the English language, creating a distinct narrative voice that reflects the richness of Igbo culture while making it accessible to a global audience. Achebe's decision to write in English was a conscious effort to communicate African realities to both African and non-African readers, while simultaneously challenging the colonial monopoly on storytelling.

The novel's title, *Things Fall Apart*, itself is laden with meaning and has been widely analyzed in literary criticism. Taken from W.B. Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*, the title alludes to the breakdown of traditional structures and the chaos brought by colonialism. Scholars such as Kara (2023) have explored how Achebe uses this idea to comment on the broader historical forces at play in Africa during the colonial period, suggesting that the collapse of Igbo society is part of a larger narrative of African disruption and resistance.

Overall, *Things Fall Apart* is a landmark work that offers a dynamic portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo life, the devastating effects of colonialism, and the complexities of identity, power, and tradition. Achebe's novel continues to resonate with readers and scholars alike, serving as a key text in postcolonial literature and African studies. Through its exploration of cultural conflict, gender, and colonialism, *Things Fall Apart* not only critiques the legacy of European imperialism but also affirms the richness and resilience of African culture.

3.2 Happiness in Igbo Traditional Setting

The Igbos are one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are made up of more than two hundred independent territorial groups; each composed of one or more villages or dispersed residential groupings across the Niger to the Confines of Benin. The Igbos have as their objects of religious belief: God, non-human spirits and ancestors. The Supreme Being is Chukwu or Chineke. There are many other small gods/ spirits that the Igbo worship. The most important of all the spirits is Ani, the god of earth. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe presents a vivid portrayal of the Igbo traditional setting, particularly emphasizing the values, customs, and communal bonds that shape the people's understanding of happiness. In the traditional Igbo society depicted in the novel, happiness is intricately tied to community life, social harmony, and adherence to cultural norms. This conception of happiness contrasts sharply with modern, individualistic notions of happiness, where personal fulfillment and pleasure are often seen as primary. Achebe's depiction of happiness in the Igbo world reveals a deep connection to

communal relationships, religious practices, and a life in harmony with nature and tradition (Nduka & Ozioma, 2019).

The Igbo society in *Things Fall Apart* is a collective culture where individuals find happiness through their roles in the community, fulfilling societal expectations, and maintaining a harmonious relationship with others. This communal-based happiness is reflected in ceremonies, festivals, and rituals that foster unity and collective joy. For instance, the Feast of the New Yam, as described in the novel, is not only a celebration of the harvest but also an opportunity for the community to come together in thanksgiving, reinforcing the shared values of cooperation, respect, and unity (Sreelakshmi, 2023). Such communal activities exemplify how happiness in the Igbo traditional setting is rooted in collective well-being rather than individual achievements.

Moreover, Achebe portrays happiness as being linked to an individual's social standing and respect within the community. Okonkwo, the novel's protagonist, finds happiness in his success as a warrior, farmer, and leader, as these roles bring him honour and respect (Ahmad & Baig, 2015). His pursuit of these roles reflects the broader Igbo belief that personal fulfillment is achieved through contributing to the community and upholding its values. However, Achebe also explores the limits of this perspective. Okonkwo's relentless drive for success, driven by his fear of failure and weakness, ultimately leads to his alienation from his family and community. This suggests that while social standing is important, an excessive focus on personal achievement, at the expense of relationships and communal harmony, can undermine true happiness (Baumeister & Juola Exline, 1999).

Religious and spiritual beliefs also play a crucial role in the Igbo conception of happiness. The Igbo people in *Things Fall Apart* believe that happiness is tied to living in accordance with the will of the gods and maintaining a balance with the spiritual forces governing their lives (Facah, 2023). The Igbo cosmology is deeply intertwined with everyday life, and people derive happiness from the assurance that they are in harmony with the divine forces that protect their community. For instance, offerings and sacrifices to the gods, the reverence of ancestors, and strict adherence to customs ensure that the community remains in favor of the gods, which in turn brings peace and happiness (Asante & Nwadiora, 2007). This spiritual dimension underscores the idea that happiness, in the Igbo traditional setting, is not only a material or social phenomenon but also a metaphysical one, grounded in a harmonious relationship with the unseen world. In contrast, the arrival of colonialism and Christianity disrupts this traditional notion of happiness. The introduction of new beliefs and values destabilizes the communal and spiritual balance that underpins Igbo happiness. Achebe uses this disruption to highlight how the imposition of foreign values can erode the social fabric of a community and its ability to derive happiness from its traditions. The character of Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, serves as an example of how colonialism fractures the traditional understanding of happiness. Nwoye's conversion to Christianity represents a rejection of Igbo customs and a shift towards an individualistic notion of happiness, which ultimately causes rifts within the family and the community (Okolie, 2019).

In essence, *Things Fall Apart* offers a nuanced exploration of happiness within the Igbo traditional setting, emphasizing that it is a communal, spiritual, and social phenomenon. Achebe illustrates how happiness in this context is deeply rooted in one's relationship with the community, adherence to cultural traditions, and harmony with spiritual forces. However, the novel also reveals the fragility of this happiness in the face of external forces like colonialism, which challenge the foundations of Igbo society and its collective well-being. Through his depiction of the Igbo understanding of happiness, Achebe invites readers to reflect on the broader implications of cultural disruption and the loss of traditional values in a rapidly changing world (Anyanwu, 2018).

4. Research Methodology

This study used the hermeneutical approach. The hermeneutical method is an interpretative approach used to uncover deeper meanings and understandings in texts, often applied in the fields of philosophy, theology, and literature. It is rooted in the concept of interpreting human experiences, symbols, and language, with the goal of revealing the underlying meanings embedded in cultural, social, and historical contexts. Hermeneutics, therefore, goes beyond surface-level analysis, requiring a detailed examination of the relationships, contexts, and philosophies inherent in the subject matter. In relation to this research, the hermeneutical method is employed to interpret the African concept of happiness as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, with a particular focus on the traditional Igbo society's philosophical and moral underpinnings.

In this research, the hermeneutical method allows for a deeper exploration of how happiness is understood within the Igbo culture. Through this approach, the study analyzes the characters, events, and social structures in *Things Fall Apart* to extract the meanings associated with happiness and its communal nature in the Igbo setting. Hermeneutics also involves considering historical and cultural backgrounds, which is crucial in interpreting the traditional values depicted in the novel and how these values shape the concept of happiness. Since happiness in Igbo culture is intertwined with social harmony, religious beliefs, and communal values, the hermeneutical method enables the researcher to focus on these elements and interpret how they contribute to the overall conception of happiness (Ossai, 2024).

One of the key justifications for using the hermeneutical method in this study is its ability to interpret cultural meanings within a text. *Things Fall Apart* is not merely a novel but a representation of the cultural and philosophical worldview of the Igbo people. The hermeneutical method allows the researcher to bridge the gap between Achebe's literary depiction of Igbo life and the broader African philosophy of happiness. This method is particularly suitable because African philosophy is deeply rooted in oral traditions, symbolism, and communal experiences, all of which are vividly captured in Achebe's narrative. By using hermeneutics, the research can uncover how happiness is

not only a personal state but also a reflection of social and spiritual relationships, a key theme in Igbo culture (Raphael, 2023).

Additionally, the hermeneutical method is justified because it addresses the complexity of interpreting texts that reflect diverse cultural and philosophical frameworks. In Achebe's novel, happiness is not defined in Western individualistic terms but rather through a collective and relational lens. The hermeneutical approach allows the research to engage with this complexity, ensuring that the Igbo understanding of happiness is interpreted within its own cultural context rather than through an external or universal lens. This is crucial for achieving an authentic understanding of how happiness operates within the Igbo worldview, as well as how it contrasts with Western notions of individual pleasure and fulfillment.

In summary, the hermeneutical method is essential in this research for interpreting the cultural and philosophical concept of happiness in *Things Fall Apart*. It enables a deep, context-driven analysis of the Igbo traditions and values that shape their understanding of happiness. The method is justified by its capacity to interpret the meanings embedded in the novel, providing insights into how happiness in Igbo culture is linked to community, spirituality, and social harmony, as opposed to individual gratification.

5. Discussion

In traditional African society, happiness is fundamentally tied to the community. While the individual plays a role, their happiness is deeply embedded within the communal framework, which nurtures social bonds and shared experiences. Individuals cannot experience true fulfillment outside their community, as the communal ethos essentially determines their sense of happiness (Agulanna, 2010). However, this community-centered approach has faced significant challenges over time, particularly due to the influences of external forces. Majid (2000) highlights the impact of Islamic civilization and European colonialism, which have profoundly altered the traditional African societal structure, leading to a gradual shift from communal to individualistic perspectives.

It is crucial to recognize that not all changes brought by external influences were negative; however, the alienation from inherited values poses a significant challenge to African moral systems. In contemporary society, there is an increasing emphasis on individual achievement as a source of happiness, which diminishes the role of family and community in people's lives. Critics of the extended family system argue that it can reduce individuals to a state of subservience, overburdening them with the needs of others and eroding their personal identity (Ehrenreich, 2002). Some also contend that the system promotes nepotism and tribalism, which can destabilize nations (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2022). Despite these criticisms, the extended family system remains relevant, as it provides a safety net and emotional support for individuals, emphasizing the interconnectedness of lives within the community.

African thinkers such as Nkrumah, Nyerere, and Senghor have advocated for African socialism grounded in communal values, emphasizing that the essence of African

communalism remains vital for African unity and identity (Arum, 2021). They argue that the principal idea behind African socialism is, without a doubt, that of communalism, which fosters collective welfare and societal harmony. This perspective posits that a strong sense of family and community can help navigate the challenges posed by modernity while still honoring traditional values (Thomas, 2022).

While African socialism and the communal spirit have faced criticism as mere relics of tradition, it is important to clarify that African communalism is neither barbaric nor outdated. The progressive theories of African socialism proposed by Nyerere, Senghor, and Nkrumah are rooted in the principle of community as a fundamental aspect of African identity. These theories emphasize that society is an extension of the family unit, which plays a critical role in African social structures (Masolo, 2002). In this context, happiness is understood not merely as an individual pursuit but as a collective endeavor that involves nurturing relationships and contributing to the well-being of others.

As Chinua Achebe observed in *Things Fall Apart*, the disruptions caused by colonialism and modernization led to the fragmentation of African communal life. The “things” that fell apart include the disintegration of communal values and the rise of an individualistic, urban-centered lifestyle (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1991). This shift has resulted in disparate institutions and legal systems that often conflict with traditional customs and practices. Consequently, this disruption poses a threat to the continued existence and preservation of African moral heritage, which is built upon communal solidarity and shared values (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1991). Wiredu (1980) reiterated that modern African socialism must draw from this traditional heritage, recognizing the importance of society as an extension of the family and upholding communal principles in contemporary African life.

6. Conclusions

This study has explored the dynamic relationship between happiness and communal values within the traditional Igbo society as depicted in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It has become evident that happiness in the Igbo context is not merely an individual pursuit but is deeply rooted in the communal framework that emphasizes relationships, social responsibility, and mutual support. The research highlights that the historical disruptions brought about by colonialism and modernization have significantly altered this communal ethos, leading to a growing individualistic tendency that undermines the importance of community in achieving true happiness.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need to adapt traditional African values to contemporary contexts. While criticisms of the extended family system and communalism have surfaced, it is crucial to recognize the positive aspects of these structures, such as the emotional and social support they provide. The theories of African socialism proposed by thinkers like Nkrumah and Nyerere reiterate the importance of communalism in navigating modern challenges while maintaining a strong sense of identity and cultural heritage.

Ultimately, this research serves as a clarion call for a reevaluation of happiness within African societies, urging a return to the values that promote relational existence and community cohesion. By promoting a deeper understanding of happiness as a collective endeavor, African societies can cultivate a more holistic approach to well-being that honors both tradition and modernity. In doing so, the potential for achieving a sustainable and meaningful conception of happiness in contemporary Africa is significantly enhanced, paving the way for a society that thrives on shared values, mutual respect, and communal solidarity.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the understanding and practice of happiness within the Igbo culture and broader African societies. First, stakeholders, including governments and non-governmental organizations, should prioritize initiatives that foster community engagement and participation. Programs aimed at strengthening community ties, such as cooperative societies, cultural festivals, and communal projects, can help reinforce the communal values that underpin happiness in Igbo culture. Second, educational curricula at all levels should incorporate teachings about the traditional values of community, family, and social responsibility that characterize the Igbo worldview. By emphasizing the significance of collective well-being and relational existence, educational institutions can nurture a generation that values interconnectedness over individualism.

Furthermore, while criticisms of the extended family system have emerged, it remains a vital support network within Igbo culture. Therefore, efforts should be made to adapt this system to contemporary realities, ensuring it evolves in a way that addresses modern challenges while preserving its foundational strengths. This could involve developing community support services that reinforce familial bonds and provide assistance to families in need. Additionally, further research is needed to explore the dynamics of happiness and well-being in various African contexts. Academic institutions should be encouraged to conduct interdisciplinary studies investigating how traditional social values can be integrated with modern practices to create frameworks for sustainable happiness in African societies.

Moreover, promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogues can enhance mutual understanding and respect, given the impact of globalization and cultural exchanges. Such initiatives can promote shared values of happiness, peace, and coexistence, which are essential for building cohesive societies. Policymakers should also consider reforms that support the communal structures within African societies. This includes creating social policies that address issues of poverty, inequality, and social injustice, which often undermine communal harmony and individual happiness. Lastly, media outlets should play a proactive role in promoting narratives that celebrate community values, traditional practices, and the importance of collective happiness. By highlighting success stories stemming from communal efforts, the media can inspire a renewed appreciation

for the relational aspects of happiness. By implementing these recommendations, African societies, particularly within the Igbo context, can work towards redefining happiness in a way that honours both traditional values and contemporary realities, ultimately fostering a more harmonious and fulfilling existence for all individuals.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

The author is an experienced researcher and academic with a keen interest in exploring cultural philosophies, social ethics, and the dynamics of traditional African values. His work often focuses on how these cultural constructs intersect with contemporary societal issues, particularly within the framework of moral philosophy and community development. In addition to his academic pursuits, the author is actively involved in community engagement initiatives, focusing on promoting education and preserving cultural heritage. He holds advanced degrees that reflect his commitment to both academic excellence and practical leadership in public service. His passion for research, particularly in African philosophy and its relevance to modern life, drives his contributions to both academic discourse and community development programs.

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