

The role of apprenticeship system in the growth and development of Igbo entrepreneurship in Katsina City, Northwestern Nigeria, 1970–2011

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Abstract

This paper, employing a historical methodology, analyzes the role of the Apprenticeship System in the Growth and Development of Igbo Entrepreneurship in Katsina Metropolis from 1970 to 2011. It begins by demonstrating the push and pull factors of their migration to Katsina City. The central point was employment opportunities and an avenue for business enterprises, which enhanced their ability to develop their trade apprenticeship system for the sustenance and expansion of the business empire. However, the major argument of this paper is that the apprenticeship system monopolized Igbo business entrepreneurship in the metropolis, which enhanced its development and made the Katsinawa (Katsina indigenes) feel that the Igbo never desired them to learn their system of business. The resultant effect was that Igbo areas of business were always at-risk during crises, conflicts, violence, and wars as experienced between 1970 to 2011. The paper further argues that the anti-seriousness of Katsinawa in enduring the Igbo system of apprenticeship, in addition to the 'I don't care' attitude of Katsinawa/other migrant communities, enhanced their entrepreneurship. Many Igbo who graduated established their businesses within or outside Katsina metropolis. The paper undoubtedly concludes that this development created a condition of dependency on the Igbo for the supplies of certain commodities like motor spare parts, timber, building/furniture materials, and equally positioned them in a monopoly of the businesses. A condition of a predominantly Igbo business entrepreneurship, which created a situation of a mono-cultural economy, thereby enhancing their inter-group relations with various communities in Katsina metropolis.

Keywords: Igbo, Apprenticeship, Entrepreneurship, Trade, Katsina Metropolis

Introduction

Katsina city, which serves triple functions: administrative headquarters of Katsina Emirate, Katsina local government, and Katsina state capital, is located between an upland area of Latitude 12° 5' and 13° 22' North and Longitude 7°

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33' and 90 22' East.²As a whole, Katsina city is bordered by the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Kaita to the North (North-East), to the North-West by Jibia and Batsari, Batagarawa, to the South by Rimi, and the East by Mani.³ Furthermore, Katsina city is geographically located some 172 Kilometres north-west of Kano town and 260 Kilometres east of the city of Sokoto.⁴ Thus, Katsina city has been one of the major renowned urban centres of the northwestern part of Nigeria and hometown to popular military generals and political elite such as late Major General Hassan Usman (1933–1995), late Major General Shehu Musa (1943–1997), and late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua (1951–2010).⁵ According to Sani Abubakar Lugga, Muhammadu Ibrahim Kofar Soro, Jamilu Shehu, and Samuel Wycliff, since the 15th-century, several groups of migrants have been migrating to Katsina city for various reasons that were hinged on either push or pull factors.

A significant feature that characterized the arrival of these migrant groups was the promotion of intergroup relations through religion, commerce, and trade⁶ while other as a result of colonial and post-colonial factors such as the British colonial conquest and administration of Katsina Province (1903–1960) which created opportunities for Yoruba, and most especially the Igbo migrant communities who secured employment opportunities in Katsina city as colonial Government and firms as medical personnel, clerks, drivers, carpenters, Licensed Buying Agents (LBA) [to some European firms], contractors/producer agent and staff of United African Company (UAC), Paterson Zochonis (PZ), and GBO amongst others, while other opted as independent businessmen which led to the establishment and development of their entrepreneurship in the city.⁷ The aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), trade and commerce and family bonds. Coupled with cosmopolitan nature of Katsina city, tolerance and the famed hospitality of *Katsinawa* (indigenes), National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) Scheme, creation of Katsina State with Katsina city as the capital,

²Shehu, J. A Social and Political History of Katsina Metropolis, 1960–2007. PhD (History) Thesis, UsmanuDanfodiyo University, Sokoto, 2012. 1-4; Wycliff, S. "Democracy, Governance and Transformation of Katsina City in North-western Nigeria, 1999–2015." In *Democracy, Governance and Development in Nigeria: A Multidisciplinary Conversation*, edited by A. Tor, P. I. Ukase, and I. B. Thaddeus. 145-168. Ikpayongo: Boston Education Publishers, 2024.

³Wycliff, S. "Growth, Development and Changing Dynamics in Post-Colonial Katsina City, 1960–2015." *LAPAI Journal of Humanities* 12, no. 3 (2021): 312-328.

⁴Wycliff, S., and Katsina, H. S. The Development of Katsina State Civil Service, 1987–2022. *NIU Journal of Humanities* 8, no. 2 (2023): 67-78.

<https://doi.org/10.58709/niujuh.v8i2.1655>

⁵Falola, T and Genova, A. *Historical Dictionary of Nigeria*. The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009. 371-373 cited by Wycliff, S. & Abdullahi, Y. "Emir Muhammadu Dikko in the Service of British Colonial Administration and Katsina City of Northern Nigeria, 1907–1944AD." *LASU Journal of History and International Studies (Lajohis)* 7, no. 1 (2025): 199-220.

⁶Lugga, S. A. *Katsina College. Revised Edition*. Katsina: Lugga Press, 2004. 23-24; Kofar Soro, M. I. "A History of Hausa-Yoruba Relations in Katsina Metropolis, 1903–1999." M.A. (History) Dissertation, UsmanuDanfodiyo University, Sokoto, 2014. 1-3; Shehu, J. A Social and Political History of Katsina Metropolis, 1960–2007. PhD (History) Thesis, UsmanuDanfodiyo University, Sokoto, 2012. 1-3; Wycliff, S. "Katsina City in the Eyes of History: An Assessment of its Pre-Colonial, Colonial Growth, Development and Changing Dynamics C1500–1960AD." *LAPAI Journal of Humanities* 12, no. 1 (2021): 55-71.

⁷Wycliff, S. "A History of Igbo-Migrant Community in Katsina Metropolis, 1903–2011." M.A. (History) Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2016. 57, 72-73.

and most fundamental, the economic opportunities have all immensely created avenues and great opportunities in the emergence and growth of Igbo entrepreneurship security as well as the absence of business competition when compared to cities like Kaduna, Zaria and Kano.⁸ Hence, these privileges enabled the Igbo community to engage in various business enterprises, which they dominated, such as patent medicine entrepreneurs, food canteens and restaurants, commercial transport, but most fundamental were motor spare parts, books and stationery, timber, building and furniture materials, hospitality industry, private primary and secondary school business.⁹

Thus, to sustain and expand their business empire, the Igbo usually train their family, relations and friends as well as well-wishers of their kind of business. Besides, Igbo communities wherever they are found, particularly in Nigeria, their ancestral home, Ghana, and South Africa, their culture and identity have always been that of people who are business-oriented; entrepreneurs and profit-making. However, many scholars like Ahmed Bako,¹⁰ Ojimba Chinyeremaka Christian,¹¹ Douglas A. Anthony,¹² C.C. Ojukwu,¹³ F. N. Nwaugo,¹⁴ and J. S. Ifeyinwa¹⁵ who have done an extensive research on Igbo migrants in Northern Nigeria ignored the roles of Igbo Trade Apprenticeship System in the growth and development of Igbo Business Entrepreneurship, Networking as well as Business Empires which had helped in sustaining specialization in the various businesses which the Igbo were engaged in or diversified. So, even when the sole owner died, his biological children and wives could sustain the same business empire. On this note, this paper seeks to fill this gap left by the aforementioned scholars of Igbo-Migrant communities in various cities of Nigeria, with a focus on Katsina city from 1970 to 2011. Thus, the year 1970 marked the starting period of the study because it marked the end of the Nigerian Civil War and the return of the Igbo migrant communities to Northern

⁸"Forging Ahead as People." *Igbo Community Association (ICA) Maiden Edition. Igbo Day Magazine*, 2008:16-24; Bako, A. *Sabon Gari Kano: A History of Immigrants and Inter-group Relations in the 20th Century*. Sokoto: Usman Danfodiyo University Press, 2006.42.

⁹Wycliff, S. "Igbo-migrant community Enterprise in Katsina metropolis and Katsinawa Reactions, 1929–2011." *FUDMA Journal of Arts (FUDMAARTS)* 1, no. 1 (2018): 249-262; Wycliff, S. "The Question of Sabon Gari Phenomenon in Katsina Metropolis, 1903–2011." *International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies (IJIRAS)* 4, Issue 4, April (2017):139-143. http://www.ijiras.com/2017/Vol_4-Issue_4/paper_30.pdf

¹⁰Bako, A. "Social and Economic History of Sabon-Gari, Kano, 1913–1989." PhD (History) Thesis, Bayero University Kano, Kano.1-150.

¹¹Christian, O. C. "A History of Some Selected Igbo Entrepreneurship in Kano Metropolis, 1970–2004." Seminar Paper Presented at Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2018. 1-39.

¹²Anthony, D. A. *I Need to Get to Kano: The Unmaking and Remaking of an Igbo Migrant Community in Northern Nigeria 1966–1986*. Evanston: Illinois, 1996. 47.

¹³Ojukwu, C. C. "Globalization, Migration and Philosophy of In-word looking: The Contemporary Igbo Nation in Perspective." *Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 3, no. 3, March (2009):6.

¹⁴Nwaugo, F. N. "The Igbo Community in Kano (1913–2004): A Study of Intergroup Relations." PhD (History) Thesis, Nigerian Defense Academy, Kaduna, 2013. 1-200; Agazie, J. C. "Why Igbo's Are Nigeria's Chosen Tribe, Nigeria Masterweb Citizen News." October 14, 2012. January 9, 2020.

¹⁵Ifeyinwa, J. S. "The Role of Igbo Migrants in the Trading Activities in Zaria, 1927–2000." Seminar paper Presented at Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 3 December, 2014. 1-30.

Nigeria in order to claim their properties. While the year 2011 is the terming period because it marked it was the year that Nigeria experienced post-presidential election violence in most parts of the Northwestern parts of Nigeria following the emergence of Dr. Jonathan Ebele Goodluck Jonathan as the democratically elected president. The election violence that followed had a great negative impact on the Igbo migrant communities' apprenticeship system and entrepreneurship in Katsina city. Hence, this calls for scholarly analysis using primary and secondary sources of historical reconstruction of the past events. To this end, this paper is divided into sections. While the first section is on introduction, the second section focuses on entrepreneurship/entrepreneurs. The third examines the development of the Igbo Migrant Community Trade Apprenticeship System, against the fourth and the fifth sections, which are on the challenges militating against the Igbo kind of apprenticeship and entrepreneurship development, and then conclusion part.

Concept of Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurs

An entrepreneur, according to the Nigerian Institute of Management (Chartered) refers to: Firstly, a person who assumes the risk of and responsibility for a business venture for profit. Secondly, an individual who searches for, responds to, and exploits an opportunity for profit. Thirdly, a man or woman who creates a new firm and continues to run it until it becomes successful, and fourthly, a person who identifies a necessary change or business opportunity and exploits it with their own or borrowed resources into a successful enterprise.¹⁶ Hence, from these concepts, one can say that entrepreneurs are, therefore, agents of change, growth, and development since they involve themselves in accelerating the generation, dissemination, and application of innovative ideas. They ensure the efficient use of resources and expand the scope of economic activities. Besides, entrepreneurship has rightly been identified with the individual, as the success of an enterprise depends upon imagination, vision, innovativeness, and risk-taking. But all these depend so much on the kind of person trained in entrepreneurship. Moreover, entrepreneurship is a risk-taking factor that is responsible for the result in the form of profit or loss. This means that an entrepreneur develops and owns their enterprise. He is also a moderate risk-taker and works under uncertainty to achieve his set goals. He is innovative and persistently tries to create or improve on the things already created. He tends to persist in the face of adversity and strives to convert an adverse situation into an opportunity.

Entrepreneurs are said to be the brains behind the existing and consistent operations of successful small-scale businesses. The concept of entrepreneurship has been associated with several activities concerned with the establishment and operation of a business enterprise.¹⁷ Igbo

¹⁶Entrepreneurship (SMPE 104) Stage I. Nigerian Institute of Management (Chartered). Lagos: NIM (Chartered) Management House, n.d., 7-10; Eyeh, E. T. "History of Igbo Enterprises in Kano, Nigeria, 1960-2007." PhD (History) Thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2015. 9-10.

¹⁷Ile, N. M. *Entrepreneurship Development: The Nigerian Perspective*. Enugu: Chiezo Ventures, 2003. 11-24; Johnson, O. J., and Nafiu, A. T. "An Exploratory Study of Igbo Entrepreneurial Activity and Business Success in Nigeria as the Panacea for Economic

Entrepreneurial activities have been observed to be a sine qua non for the economy of Nigeria and the quality of life of the people at both rural and urban settings. Entrepreneurial activity is the enterprising human action in pursuit of the generation of value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets.¹⁸

However, the **Igbo** mode of **Entrepreneurship** was derived from Igbo (culture and Entrepreneurship. This simply means planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling other factors of production and the production process in the Igbo learning culture. Therefore, an Igbo entrepreneur is a person who not only coordinates other factors of production, but who, from time to time, seeks opportunities to make a profit through his innovativeness, creativity, customers' satisfaction, and efficient utilization of scarce resources in a consistent cultural pattern. Thus, Igbo entrepreneurs are visionary, enthusiastic, and result-driven. These are not far from the rationale behind their undertakings in high-risk businesses. Without policies and programmes suitable for backup and growth from any source, fountains are still made by these unique entrepreneurs in the Nigerian business environment. In the real fact, it is never gainsaying that people in rural and urban areas in Nigeria depend heavily on the Igbo entrepreneurs' initiatives, inventions, and efficient outcomes. The Igbo entrepreneurs have dominated Nigeria and even across the national boundary, such as South Africa, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali and Gambia, China, and so on.¹⁹

Furthermore, one can argue here that Igbo entrepreneurship could be said to have had its genesis from the conditions or state of affairs in which the Igbo found themselves after the Civil war (1967–1970). Before the Nigerian civil war, the Igbo passion for quick acquisition of wealth was not as in recent times. This was so because capital formation, which was essential and a precondition for any business venture, was not as easy as in the early 1990s of Igbo settlement in not only Katsina but Northern Nigeria as a whole. Thus, the Igbo youth of the pre-war period found it difficult to embark on any business that required substantial capital. Hence, after the war in 1970, a reasonable number of Igbo ventured into different business enterprises basically to earn a living. More and more Igbo apprentices were trained as such, the business which the *Katsinawa* took over in the absence of Igbo during the war period began to

Growth and Development." *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research* 3, Issue 9, September (2014):158-165.

¹⁸Ahmad, N., and Seymour, R. G. "Defining Entrepreneurial Activity: Definitions Supporting Frameworks for Data Collection." OECD, 2006. 30-34; Burduş, E. "Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship." *Review of International Comparative Management* 11, no. 1 (2010) :210-255; Maliga, S. "Igbos Dominate Economically in Lagos Because Yorubas Are Lazy." October 11, 2013. January 9, 2020. elombah.com; Onuoha, B. C. *Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship. 2nd Edition*. Port-Harcourt: African Entrepreneurship and Leadership Initiative, 2010. 34-35; Eze, A. "Unemployment: Nigerians Urged to Adopt the Igbo Business Spirit." *THISDAYLIVE*, November 5, 2012. www.thisdaylive.com/articles/unemployment-nigerians-urged-to-adopt-the-igbobusiness=spirit/129716/

¹⁹Udegbe, C. "The Igbos Have More at Stake in Nigeria." *Vanguard Newspaper*, July 26, 2013. www.vanguardngr.com/2013/07/the-igbos-have-more-at-stake-in-nigeria/; Olutayo, O. A. "The Igbo Entrepreneur in the Political Economy of Nigeria." *African Study Monographs* 20, no. 3 (1999):1-4.

change due to developments undertaken by the returnee Igbo, new Igbo businessmen and women, etc.

Nevertheless, the beginning of the Igbo learning business culture was the Igbo Trade Apprenticeship System (ITAS). The Igbo Trade Apprenticeship System was a kind of informal and unstructured training program, scheduled for an agreed period of time, which a person entered in order to acquire desirable aspects of entrepreneurship skill. The Igbo seemed to be the most capable in teaching world trade education through the development and automation of this ITAS.²⁰ The ITAS was a vibrant part of the Igbo business attributes that had for long shaped their mental and intelligent quotient about business success. The ITAS captured most of the skill above.

Worthy of note is that, Igbo migrants wherever they found themselves, believed so much in self-empowerment, self-employment and self-reliance. So, in order to keep the light burning, they trained their sons, daughters, family members and friends/extended family as well as other communities who had interest in the Igbo kind of entrepreneurship. However, the Igbo apprenticeship programme in Katsina metropolis was not quite significant during the colonial period to 1966 as compared to 1970 to 2011 when Katsina metropolis experienced the large influx of Igbo. The influx resulted in the training of various people as apprentices. From the 1920s to 1966 and even 1970 to 1987 (Table 1 and 2), most Igbo apprenticeship were limited to mostly the business proprietor family and the extended family. This was because the *Katsinawa* did not put much interest in the business and likewise they felt that it was strictly a business of the Igbo people. During this period, the apprentices taken were mostly people who did not acquire the so-called Western Education or were those who attended only primary and secondary schools. It was later that graduates of higher institutions were also found. It is important to draw our attention to the fact that apprentices who were taken during the colonial period to 1966 and also early 1970s were mostly based on the request of the master. But from 1971 through 1987 down to 2011, it was the parents of the apprentices and guardians and in addition, the *Katsinawa* and other immigrant communalities who developed interest that requested to be trained in the said businesses.²¹

Igbo Trade Apprenticeship System Agreement (ITASA)

Igbo Trade Apprenticeship System Agreement (ITASA) in Katsina metropolis and in any other part of Nigeria or across its shores involved agreement(s) which could be formal or informal as discussed below.

²⁰Wycliff, S. "Migrants, Community Associations and their Development Initiatives in Katsina, 1976–2019." *Orirun UNIOSUN Journal of African Studies* 3 & 4 (2022/23): 149-169. <https://unesconiosun.org/UJAS/Vol4.pdf>; Dibia, O. "Relevant Ideology: Master key To Igbo Development, 2013." January 9, 2013. www.gamji.com/article9000/NEWS9297.htm

²¹Interview, Chief A. Obi, 84 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 31/8/2024; Chief C. O. Ahononu, 53 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 9/9/2024; Chief E. Christian, 66 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 9/9/2024; Chief J. C. Uguagwu, 75 years, Ahmadu Bello Way, Katsina city, 7/11/2024; M. Ilanya, 70 years, Ahmadu Bello Way, Katsina city, 7/11/2024; I. Nnamanni, 60 years, Ahmadu Bello Way, Katsina city, 11/11/2024.

Informal Agreement

The informal Agreement was informal in the sense that oral/verbal agreement were made (agreement without any form of written documentation) between the master (proprietor or proprietress of the business) and the guardians or parent of the apprentice and the kinsmen i.e. in respect to how many years the apprentice would serve to acquire the business skills after which he would be settled at the end. At times, the age of the apprentice often determined the number of the years he or she was to undergo the apprenticeship. Thus initially, the system was informal but because of the problems that used to occur between the apprentice and the master, this was later changed to formal agreement. For instance, there were situations that the master would die before the apprentice finish the apprenticeship years expected and subsequently, the wife or the extended family of the diseased would refuse to settle the apprentice. Also, there were times when the master out of wickedness would fire or terminate the apprentice. Sometimes, the apprentice may decide to leave before the agreed years or due to selfish interest/ misbehaviour. As such, these led to serious cases and complains at the Igbo traditional institution, Igbo Community Association (ICA), and the Police Stations among other law enforcement agencies.²²

Formal Agreement

In this case, agreements were made in written form with the apprentice's guardians or parents and kinsmen and the copies of the agreement were circulated so that in case of any problem that might arise, there would be a written document or evidence to present or tender.²³

Apprentice Settlement and the Years of Apprenticeship

The years that an apprentice would serve to acquire the skills depended on the agreement made at the time; the age of the apprentice and the nature of the apprentice mattered a lot. In most cases, it did not exceed 1 to 12 years. Those who often reached 8 to 12 years were mostly those who were picked at the age of primary school to junior secondary schools. As such, for them to be settled, they must attain the age of 18years and above.²⁴

In terms of the settlement, it depended on the agreement put in the first place. Some since the agreement was made at the presence of the apprentice' guardians, parents and kinsmen, the settlement was also done in their presence. For instance, if it was at Anambra, Abia, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi or Delta States then the apprentice and the master had to travel down there for the send-forth and settlement. The settlements were of three types: The first one was, if the agreement demanded the master to just give money to the apprentice to start

²² Interview, I. Nnamanni, Katsina city, 13/12/2024; Chief J. C. Uduagwu, Katsina city, 12/12/2024.

²³ Wycliff, S. "A History of Igbo-Migrant Community in Katsina Metropolis, 1903-2011." 100-104.

²⁴ Wycliff, S. "Migrants, Community Associations and their Development Initiatives in Katsina, 1976-2019." 149-169.

the business (to buy the commodities by himself) so be it and then prayers were offered for God to bless the apprentice and the business to be established.²⁵ The second one was, if the agreement required the master to rent a shop for the apprentice at the place of the apprentice's choice and then give him money to buy the commodities, so be it and then prayers were offered for God to bless the apprentice and the business to be established²⁶ and then the third one was, the relationship between the master and the apprentice also determined the mode of the settlement i.e. if the apprentice was well behaved and the master indeed enjoyed his services, the master would not only give money to the apprentice, but also rent a shop for him at any place he (apprentice) chose, and also make shelves (where goods are kept or place for easy identification and location) on which the apprentice may only buy the commodities and put them inside the shop.²⁷

Hence, this was how the apprentice grows to be a master and would also bring other people as apprentices under him in order to train and settle them as well. So, it was a continuous circle through which a business empire was built. Of special note was the father-son and mother- daughter apprenticeship. In this system of apprenticeship, no formal or informal agreements were usually done. The father settled his son likewise the mother settled her daughter at the time she felt that it was²⁸ due or at their own conveniences. Although this often-caused family problems between parents and their children, and that was why quite a number of parents often preferred their children to be trained by other people other than them or their extended family.²⁹

More so, through the apprenticeship/mentoring system of members of their family, continuity in the business is often ensured by allowing one or two of the children of the entrepreneurs to learn the business (especially spare parts business), while the other children continued their education in tertiary institutions in or outside the country.³⁰ Those that learnt the trade were given responsibilities and authority by their father/mother. Children trained in this

²⁵Interviews, M. C. Benjamin, 70 years, Sha iskawa Quarters, Katsina city, 7/11/2014; E. Kalu, 36 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 13/11/2014; G. A. John, 50 years, Ahmadu Bello Way, Katsina city, 30/3/2015; N. John, 37 years, Ahmadu Bello Way, Katsina city, 1/4/2015.

²⁶Wycliff, S., and Uhere. O. V. "Igbo Community Association (ICA) in the Society of Northern Nigeria, 1913–2015AD: The Example of Katsina and Kano." Paper Presented at the 20th Annual International Conference of the Igbo Studies Association (ISA), Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois, United State of America (USA). May 11 – 13, 2023. 1-30.

²⁷Wycliff, S. "National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria: A Study of Igbo Corps Members in Katsina Metropolis." In *The National Youth Service Corps and Community Development Service in Nigeria*, edited by S. Ibrahim, O. E. Tangban, B. J. Audu, and M. Hamza. 167-188. Kaduna: Pyla-Mak Press and Publishers Limited, 2021.

²⁸ Mostly when the daughter has come of age or is getting married.

²⁹Interviews, E. Solomon, 43 years, Usman Nagogo Road, Katsina city, 11/11/2024; G. Okoli, Katsina city, 54 years, Usman Nagogo Road, Katsina city, 12/11/2024; A. Eze, 52 years, State Secretarial Ring Road, Katsina city, 4/4/2025; N. Onuma, M. Ilanya, 41 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 12/12/2024; T. O. Christopher, 60 years, Ahmadu Bello Way, Katsina city, 12/12/2024.

³⁰ Interview, Dr. Bello Sada, 67 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 1/4/2015.

way not only have experience about the trade but also developed sufficient authority to keep the trade going upon the death of the founder, which reduces family pressure to divide assets.

Apart from the need to involve the children of the founder of the enterprise in business, the prospect for business longevity and sustained growth of the enterprise also rested on other factors. First, the type of business for example, artisan and trading ventures were liable to liquidation during the life time of the founder due to lack of adequate record keeping and accountability. Secondly, the degree of bureaucratic organization, delegated responsibility and authority achieved during the owner's lifetime.

Thirdly, the existence of polygamy tended to accentuate pressure to divide responsibilities and share the assets upon the death of the founder of the enterprise.³¹ However, most of the entrepreneurs did not allow their children to engage in the business because of obvious reasons. First, was their inability to trust their heirs and pass on the detailed understanding and confidence of the business life to them (their sons and daughters). And also, to teach them the intricacy of the trade, the idea of allowing children to have access to wealth at a tender age would be unproductive because of its tendency to undermine motivation and discipline among children.

Worthy of note is the fact that, entrepreneurs with higher academic qualification enter the business by sending their wives to obtain degrees in higher institutions. After their wives graduated with better skills to invest in the entrepreneurship the life of the business changes better due to better professionalism applied into it. Entrepreneurs from Anambra and Enugu states were mostly associated with this practice. Two major reasons had been advanced for this orientation. First, is the belief among the entrepreneurs from Anambra and Enugu states that one cannot acquire wealth quickly by spending many years in school. Second and perhaps, the more important was the recognition and respect they give to title holders.³²

Important titles such as *Ogbuefi* (strong and wealthy man or an eminent person who has achieved his or her mettle killing or presenting cow to one's kinsmen, friends and well-wishers), *OputaObie* (Philanthropist or Benefactor) and *Eze - egi* (wealthy person or king of money) were usually given to persons who achieve greatness in business. Thus, to become rich and gain recognition, Anambra and Enugu entrepreneurs, more than other Igbo groups, went into entrepreneurship at a very tender age because for them, business is perceived as the shortest and surest way of getting rich. In this vein, some of the entrepreneurs resorted to sending their wives to school to assist them in the organization of their business, using proper accounting procedures.³³

³¹Forrest, T. *The Advancement of African Capital: The Growth of Nigeria Private Enterprises*. London: Edinburg University Press, 1994. 237-2378.

³²Christian, O. C. "A History of Some Selected Igbo Entrepreneurship in Kano Metropolis, 1970-2004." 18-19.

³³Wycliff, S.& Simon, B. "The Colonial Era and Its Legacy in Funtua Town of Northwestern Nigeria: A Historical Perspective Since 1915." *University of Africa Journal of Governance and Politics (UATJOGAP)* 1, no. 4 (2024): 25-42; Wycliff, S.& Ameh, H. G. "The Impact of Christian Missionary Activities on Funtua Town of Katsina State Since 1935." *Kaduna Journal of Humanities* 7, no.1 (2023):73-89.

Proprietor/Proprietress and Apprentice Responsibility/Commitment

In the colonial period down to 1970, Igbo business proprietors were the ones who used to request people to train as apprentices, of whom quite a number of them were their siblings, or younger brothers and sisters, and members of their extended family or their in-laws. It was later that parents, guardians of the Igbo, other immigrant communities in Katsina, and the *Katsinawa* requested that their children be trained in business.³⁴

In the area of or in terms of responsibilities and commitment, the proprietor/proprietress was expected to take the apprentice as their child. In other words, they were responsible for the food, clothes, and shelter of the apprentice up to the time of send-forth and settlement. But in respect to education, be it primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, it all depended on the agreement made at the initial stage. If it included sponsorship of education, then it would be done. In the same vein, business proprietors/proprietresses, especially those who cherished education, often did the sponsorship on their own accord. Meanwhile, the apprentice was expected to commit himself to the business to which he/she was undergoing training or acquiring business skills, as well as assist in domestic work at his/her master's or proprietors'/residence, where he/she also lived. Thus, these could be the paramount reasons why the Igbo system of apprenticeship was possibly different from that of the Yoruba and Hausa.³⁵

Under the Igbo apprenticeship system, parents/guardians of children with interest to acquire the basic skills (practice of craft) to become artisans paid fees since artisans were skilled manual workers who produced items that might be functional or strictly decorative, including furniture, clothing, jewelry, household items, tools, watch repairs or even machines such as handmade devices. Others included wiring/rewire, welding and panel beaters, auto-mobile mechanics, carpentry, electronic repairs such as radios and televisions among others.

Notwithstanding, Igbo artisan apprenticeship in Katsina metropolis was of two categories. One was when the apprentice had the capital and wanted to establish a business. In this case money was charge based on the agreement to enable him acquire the skills and it was expected for the apprentice to undergo at least 3 to 6 months training, at the end of which no form of settlement was given or made. This kind was applied only to businesses that were not associated with craft, manual labour or handwork especially mechanic, wiring, panel beater, wheel balance and alignment. But businesses that involved buying and selling i.e. sales of generators, tyres car battery, building and furniture materials, electronic/electrical materials, spare parts, boutique, bridal and decoration materials, books and computer accessories, provision stores etc. The second one is that which the apprentice would be brought to stay in the

³⁴Interviews, M. Benjamin, 70 years, Sha'Iskawa Quarters, Katsina city, 9/9/2014; J. Ifeagwa, 60 years, Sabon Layi, Katsina city, 10/9/2014.

³⁵Interviews, N. Ekwtosi, 43 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 20/11/2014; A. O. Ofordile, 65 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 22/11/2014.

masters' house pending the competition of the agreed years of apprenticeship after which he would be settled.³⁶

Igbo-Hausa Apprenticeship System

In the Hausa apprenticeship, the parent or guardian did not pay any money for the apprentice to undergo the training or to acquire the basic skills be it a craft, manual labour or handwork or the sales of commodity. That is why, the apprentice in some cases continues to serve under his master even when he was due for send-forth. The same applies even with the biological son of the master. This is a clear indication that there was no specific time that the apprenticeship ends; it all depends on the apprentice or the master to decide.

However, in terms of Igbo-Hausa Apprenticeship System in Katsina metropolis quite a number of *Katsinawa* underwent apprenticeship under the Igbo business men and women especially in patent medicine store, sales of building materials, electrical and electronics, timber and wood, industrial domestic gas, Iron and steel product, and in professions like carpentry and furniture, mechanic, car and electrical wiring, repairing of television and radio etc. (Table2). But upon all the apprenticeship which the *Katsinawa* underwent under the Igbo, they preferred to be placed under wages (to be paid daily) than to serve for some years and be settled; as the Igbo do to Igbo and other immigrant communities. Thus, this was associated with the fact that quite a number of them lacked patience in business. They wanted to make it in time or within a short period of time or possibly because they were not exposed to that kind of apprenticeship system. That was why most of them left the business even when they had the basic skills. No wonder, to a Hausa man more capital equaled to more wives but to Igbo man more capital is equaled to more investment and re-investment. Hence, most Hausa people that were successful business men and women were mostly politicians and government workers who easily obtained loan from banks to boost their business unlike the Igbo who depended mostly on their personal savings/capital which they invested and re-invested. These had prevented quite a number of them from obtaining loans from banks, and even if they had to, it must be within extended family or the Igbo community unions and associations.³⁷

The Igbo migrant enterprises and occupations in Katsina metropolis since the 1970s

Igbo people were known to have initiative and be industrious, with which to utilize every opportunity wherever they found themselves. That was why they were into quite several businesses and professions in Katsina metropolis. The Igbo entrepreneurs engaged in any enterprise that they found profitable. From the 1950s onward, many Igbo migrants came to specialize in various types of small-scale businesses (the latter on a very low technological level). A survey of

³⁶Interviews, E. Anyaegbu, 73 years, Murtala Mohammed Way, Katsina city, 12/9/2014; J. Ifeagwa, 60 years, Sabon Layi, Katsina city, 12/9/2014; Chief O. Onyia, 41 years, Sabon Layi, Katsina city, 12/9/2014.

³⁷Interviews, Chief J. C. Uduagwu, 75 years, Sabon Layi, Katsina city, 15/3/2025; Chief J. Umeagudosi, 58 years, Tsohun Tasha Round About, Katsina city, 15/9/2014.

small-scale industries in Katsina reflected a large number of repairers of cars, bicycles, and radios, battery chargers, welders, blacksmiths, bakers, tailors, and shoe repairers.³⁸In addition to watch repairs, panel beaters, and then specialists or dealers of textile materials and yards, spare parts, electrical and electronics, generator, bookshops, textile materials, furniture and building materials, plumbing materials, European or foreign clothes, etc. (Table 1 & 2).

Table 1: Igbo Enterprise and Occupation in Katsina Metropolis between the period 1920s to 1966 and 1970 – 2011

Igbo Men and Women Occupation/Business, 1920s - 1966				Igbo Men and Women Occupation/Business, 1970 -2011			
Igbo Men	No.	Igbo Women	No.	Igbo Men	No.	Igbo Women	No.
Teachers	35	Foodstuff	30	Teachers	359	Teachers	180
Clerks	20	Provision Store	30	Medical Doctors	13	Medical Doctors	06
Education /Admin Officers	12	Wrappers	15	Nurses	15	Nurses	50
Agent/Middlemen	20	Gwanjo	07	Bankers	30	Bankers	74
Secretaries	14	Children Clothes	08	Legal Practitioners	15	Legal Practitioners	05
License Officers	06	Food Canteen	10	Proprietors	473	Proprietors	30
Drivers/Transporters	39	Tailoring	16	Fashion& Design	22	Fashion& Design	56
Book-Keepers	04	Beans Cake	10	Boutique	259	Boutique	39
Accounting Officers	05			Interior Decoration	15	Decoration /Bridal Stuff	35
Photographers	05			Salon	30	Saloon	45

³⁸Anthony, D. A. *I Need to Get to Kano: The Unmaking and Remaking of an Igbo Migrant Community in Northern Nigeria 1966–1986*.163-164.

Bricklayers	10			Building Materials	80	Building/Furniture	20
Building Engineers	35			Bookshops	37	Bookshops	04
Carpenters	20			Foodstuff	07	Foodstuff	80
Textile Materials	45			Iron & Steel	30	Restaurants	23
Spare parts	38			Spare parts	38	Fast Food	12
Foodstuff	22			Mechanic	38	Food Canteens	19
Provision Store	28			Rewire/Wiring	25	Bean Cake	45
Patent Medicine Store	24			Panel Beater	34	Provision Store	38
Tailoring	15			Welder	13	Palm-Oil	41
Technicians	16			Alignment/Wheel Balance	08		
Petroleum	10			Carpenter/	19		
Product Dealers				Furniture			
				Technicians	22		
				Timber	30		
				Breweries	40		
				Domestic/Industrial Gas	25		
				Computer Accessories	15		
				Patent Medicine Store	16		
				Electronical/Electronics	56		
				Hospitality Industry	15		
				Poultry farming	02		
				Commercial Transportation	45		
Total	423		126		1,826		802

Source: Field Study, July 2014 – April, 2015.

From the above table, we can see that the number of Igbo migrants increased as time went by, and the Igbo diversified into various businesses, of which some are only done by women, while some are done by men, and then both women and men.

From the 1980s, most *Katsinawa* and other immigrant communities were attracted to some of the businesses that the Igbo dominated in Katsina city. As of 2011, the Igbo were few in businesses and occupations such as carpentry and furniture (upholstery), fashion and design, textile materials/yards and wrappers, auto-mobile mechanic, panel beaters and welders, repairers of television and radios, wiring/rewiring, bicycle spare parts, provision stores, palm-oil, beans cake (*Akara* business) and photography. However, in the area of building and furniture materials, spare parts, boutique, hospitality (Motel, Guest House and Hotel), Brewery, Foams, wheel balancing and alignment, tyre and battery, generators, electronics and computer accessories, books, canteens and shops, fast foods, restaurants, foodstuff, decoration and bridal to mention but a few, the Igbo remained the dominant operators, this is not connected to monopoly of the business and profit but because the host and the other immigrant communities had other lucrative businesses and occupations they which were engaged in such include *Achaba*, bakery business, sales of cars and motorcycles, and many others which most Igbo are not into them.

Table 2: Selected Igbo Enterprise and Occupations in Katsina Metropolis, 1971-2011

S / No	Name of Business Owners	Business Name/Occupation	Years & Months for Apprenticeship	Number of Apprentice Trained			
				Igbo	Hausa	Others North	Others South/West
1	Mr. Ifeanyi Nnamani	Domestic & Industrial Gas	4-5	17	25	5	-
2	Mr. Gabriel Okoli	Building Materials	2-5	10	15	-	-
3	Chief John Chukwuemeka Uguagwu	Electrician	2-10	2	10	2	1
4	Chief Charles Ositadimma Ahanonu	Electrical /Electronics	1-10	20	05	1	-
5	Mr. Eugene Alaegbu	Bookshops (Alamsco)	6-7	20	2	-	-

6	Mrs. Gladys Amaka John	Fashion& Design/Decoratation	3Months-1year	35	-	15	30
7	Mr. Muoghara Benjamin	Radio & Television Repair	2-3	3	10	-	-
8	Mr. Cletus Anyanwu	Banner Beater/Welder	2-3	8	2	-	-
9	Mrs. Ngozi Onuma	Beans Cake/Restaurant	2-5Months	5	3	1	-
10	Mr. Augustine Ofordile Obiora	Patent Medicine Store	5-6	8	2	-	-
11	Chief Emmanuel Anyaegbu	Wheel Balance/Alignment	4-7	5	10	20	20
12	Mr. Idika O. Eke	Carpentry and Furniture	2-4	15	60	10	
13	Mr. Godwin Onwudigbo	Bookshops/Stationeries	3-5	15	-	-	-
14	Mr. Lillian Godwin	Boutique Textile Materials	5-7	7	-	-	-
15	Mr. Atuchukwu Anulugw	Building Materials	5-6	5	8	-	-
16	Chief Anotony Obi	Iron & Steel	5-7	20	6	-	-
17	Mr. Mathew	Iron & Steel	5-7	15	20	-	-
18	Chief Jonathan C.	Generator & Plumbing	4-5	20	-	-	-

	Nwoso	Materials					
19	Mrs. EucheriaA makwe	Restaura nt & Catering	6-8 Months	10	10	25	15
20	Mrs. Lillian Godwin	Boutique & Interior Decoratio n	4-7	04	02	-	-
21	Mr. Godwin Onwudigbo	Bookshop & Stationeri es	4-5	15	-	-	-
22	Chief Emeka N. Anyadufu	Boutique	4-6	27	-	03	-
				286	190	82	66

Source: Field Study, July 2014 – April, 2015.

Looking at the above Table 1, it would be discovered that, Igbo business men and women had to certain level an open-door policy toward the training of *Katsinawa* and other immigrant communities into the various kinds of businesses in which they specialized on. But the central issue here is that most of the *Katsinawa* lacked the patience to go through the training from beginning to in finishing the apprenticeship, talk less of establishing the business; out of 10 *Katsina* apprentices only 1 or 2 could fully graduate; the rest of them usually dropped out. It was the other immigrant community apprentices that were constant patient and disciplined.

Challenges of Igbo Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurship in Katsina Metropolis

Igbo Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurship in Katsina metropolis was often associated with challenges firstly, most youth to this generation have a high taste for government or white colour jobs. This has made a lot youth to find it difficult to combine education and apprenticeship or government jobs and business. They all preferred office work. Today, this mentality has made the Igbo to be looked upon as people who have restricted the business to their families only and refusing to train other people. Secondly, some of the apprentices being trained often abandoned the business despite all the skills they hitherto acquired for business, government jobs or other forms of endeavours where they think they can make quick money. On the other hand, others left owing to absence of patience. All these affected the expansion of the businesses.³⁹Thirdly, other challenges were associated with forceful migration

³⁹Interviews, Z. Ishaya, 45 years, National Youth Service Corps Camp, Katsina city, 14/4/2015; F. Itoya, 65 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 15/4/2015; Interviews, Dr. E. Ernest,

out of Katsina due to violence and crises; especially in the years 2000 during the Sharia crises and 2011 during the post-presidential election violence when some apprentices brought especially from Igboland were forced to leave and never came back and others who trained left Katsina metropolis to other areas. Fourthly, in addition to that was the heavy tax imposed by Katsina State Board of Internal Revenue, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, and that of Local Government on Igbo business men and women who were struggling to establish businesses. These seriously affected the Igbo community in Katsina;⁴⁰ and fifthly and the worst, is the fact that quite a number of *Katsinawa* business men and women as well as artisans hardly paid their taxes as if it was only mainly for the immigrant communities or strangers.⁴¹ Thus, it was because of some of these reasons, that some of the Igbo migrants found it difficult to established their businesses and be opened (bearing in mind the profit they normally made from their business) to the Katsina State Board of Internal Revenue, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, and Local Government and likewise in training *Katsinawa* apprenticeship.⁴² The unfortunate thing is that several *Katsinawa* that were trained, or who acquired business skills from the Igbo migrants, used to collaborate with the landlord of the shop(s) where the Igbo artisans or businessmen rented to give them a quit notice to vacate the shops. In some cases, such landlords refused to collect the next rent when it was due for payment. This was done so that the Katsina apprentice would, in no time, occupy the shops to do the same kind of business or artisan work. This affected artisan businesses such as carpentry/furniture, interior decoration and sales of electronics/ electrical materials.⁴³

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has established the fact that Igbo entrepreneurship could be said to have its genesis from the condition or state of affairs in which the Igbo found themselves after the Civil War. Before the Nigerian Civil War, the Igbo passion for quick acquisition of wealth was essential, and a pre-condition for any business venture was not as easy as it was in the early 1990s of Igbo settlements in Northern Nigeria, including Katsina. But after the Civil War in 1970, a reasonable number of Igbo ventured into different enterprises basically to earn a living, and many Igbo trained their family and friends/relations in different kinds of businesses. Upon graduation, they settled and established their businesses there as well, built business empires/networks, and promoted a monopoly of such businesses in the metropolis. This, perhaps, made the *Katsinawa* feel that, Igbo dominated most of the lucrative entrepreneurships, thereby fixing exorbitant prices. Besides, the *Katsinawa* hospitality, which

57 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 6/11/2024; A. Eze, 68 years, Ahmadu Bello Way, Katsina city, 6/11/2024.

⁴⁰Wycliff, S. "Igbo – Katsinawa Relations in Katsina Metropolis, 1903–2011." *Kaduna Journal of Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2018) :142-161.

⁴¹Interviews, S. S. Mai Zare, 60 years, IBB Way, Katsina city, 13/2/2015; Alhaji S. Na-Funtua, 85 years, Unguwan Alkali, Katsina city, 13/2/2015.

⁴²Interviews, Alhaji A. Mai Hoto Yar'adua, 69 years, Usman Nagogo Road, Katsina city, 1/10/2024; Alhaji L. Dan- Halilu, 82 years, Kofar Marusa, Katsina city, 14/11/2024.

⁴³Interview, I. O. Eke, 52 years, Ring Road, Katsina city, 10/04/2015; M. J. Shehu, 61 years, Ahmadu Bello Way, Katsina city, 1/3/2015; A. Yar'adua, 69 years, Usman Nagogo Road, Katsina city, 2/3/2015.

provided a peaceful environment, security of lives and property, attracted as well as enabled migrant communities to settle down and establish other businesses and expand their empires through apprenticeships, own houses, work in the state, and also saw Katsina as their hometown(home away from home).

Therefore, all these were clear indications that if the Igbo should close their shops in the Katsina metropolis, perhaps 40–55% of Katsina entrepreneurship/economic activities would be affected, i.e., there would be scarcity of supply in all those commodities identified earlier on. This was witnessed in the year 2000 during the Sharia crisis and in 2011 during the post-presidential election violence, respectively. Also, there is always a scarcity of supply in all those commodities during Christmas and Easter periods when quite a good number of Igbo travel to the East to observe these events. More so, to a large extent Igbo have directly or indirectly contributed immensely to the economic growth and development of Katsina metropolis. However, the fact remains that the Igbo migrants were able to achieve what they did because of their enterprising skills, population, ability to foster unity amongst themselves, and provide to a large extent for their fellow brothers, and coupled with the non-challant attitude of *Katsinawa* toward some businesses, absence of early business competition, in addition to the peaceful atmosphere that Katsina metropolis provides as well as the hospitality of Katsina towards the Igbo and all other migrant communities. Sequel to the Ibo nature and perspective regarding business or making money at every given opportunity, thereby investing in land acquisition, building, acquiring knowledge, and a lot more, gave rise to the effect they had on Katsina city's economic and infrastructural development. These have greatly made the Igbo important and successful migrants in the history of Katsina city. It is also an undisputable fact that the Igbo were successful because they are patient, tenacious, and industrious despite the reaction/mentality of the *Katsinawa* toward Igbo-controlled key businesses, as well as the nature of their exploitation.