



## **OSTRACISM IN AGULU: A GUIDE TO CODE OF CONDUCT**

**Esther Ogochukwu Akpulu**

**Department of Igbo, African and Communication Studies  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka**

**08063010049**

**[eo.akpulu@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:eo.akpulu@unizik.edu.ng)**

**Abstract:** *Every society has some cultural values and ways of achieving sustenance of these values. To achieve the maintenance of these values which serve as a guide to people's behaviour, society uses various kinds of sanctions to serve as a deterrent measure to potential offenders. Ostracism is one of the sanctions used, though it is presently almost extinct. This academic exercise is poised to expose how Agulu people used to achieve social orderliness through ostracism. It is also to call for the revival of the practice as it helped to check-mate excesses in people's daily conduct. Scholarly works were reviewed to ascertain what other writers say about ostracism. The study used survey method to gather opinion of some elders in Agulu, to examine, among other things, the changes and the causes of the changes in the practice of ostracism. Also, the study adopts functionalist theory for analysis. After the analysis it was revealed that there are many challenges that brought about decline in the enforcement of ostracism in Agulu which include: the advent of Christianity, dishonest elders and leaders, urbanization, among others. It is believed that this research would benefit every member of the society as it would serve as a reminder to readers of this work to guard their social and moral principles as contradictions would attract sanctions. This study finds out that the practice of ostracism is no longer prevalent in our contemporary society. However, the research recommends revitalization of this value system as Igbo people both old and young are reminded that the community still has some degree of control over all.*

### **Introduction**

Before the advent of Western culture, Igbo people from South Eastern Nigeria enjoy communal living and frown seriously on any action that can threaten their peace and common good. From time to time, they used sanctions to achieve this. Sanction is a reaction of the society or a particular group of people to show their disapproval on any unacceptable behaviour of their member. It can also be actions to disclose acceptance



on any good conduct. This means that sanction can either be positive or negative and that it is used to show societal reaction on the behaviour of its members. In the days past, when there were no litigation processes, it was society that sanctions a culprit ranging from the clan, villages, communities to social organizations.

Every member of the community grows up to learn the good, desirable and acceptable conducts or ways of life of his people. Whenever anyone goes contrary to the conducts, he or she is sanctioned. For instance, Africans frown vehemently on murder. They believe that everyone is his or her brother's keeper, thus, anybody that kills his kinsman contrary to protecting him gets sanctioned. This is obviously what Achebe (1958:86) portrays in the case of Okonkwo who killed Ezeudu's sixteen year old son during Ezeudu's burial dance. Though it was done accidentally and Okonkwo being a warrior, it could not stop the justice of the earth goddess from taking effect. Okonkwo knowing the implication of what he did had to flee from his clan (Ụmụofịa) to Mbanta his motherland.

Also, people can get punished for theft, (especially one who is a notorious thief); invasion on a sacred place, crime against the earth goddess like uprooting a tuber of yam in its tendrils, among others. Sanctions can be in the form of ostracism, permanent banishment from the land, incarceration or death. One who gets any of the mentioned sanctions suffers shame, humiliation and rejection especially in the past when the social structure attached more importance on family and kinship. In the case of ostracism, the ostracized feels dejected and stigmatized as if he/she is a contaminating factor.

Agulu, the area of study of this work, is one of the towns in Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambra State. It is situated along Nise-Ekwulobia road. Agulu is a very big town and has many neighbouring towns which include: Nise, Agukwu, Mbaukwu,, Adazi-Nnukwu, Obeledu, Aguluzigbo, Nanka and Awgbu. It has twenty villages, these villages are organized into quarters as follow: Ebenato comprising of Ukunu, Isiamagbo and Uhueme, Ebeneshii made up of Amoji, Odidama, Okpu, Amaezike, Nneoha and Nwanchi. The Ebenato and Ebeneshii are sometimes grouped together and referred to as Ebeteghete, that is, nine villages. The other eleven villages are known as Ebemonu and they include: Obe, Obeagu, Nkitaku, Amatutu, Umubiala, Umoweale, Umunnwu, Umufite, Okpufite, Ifiteani and Nneogidi. These quarters organize themselves in a way that there is unity and stability. Generally, the entire villages share a cultural heritage that bound them together.



The area of this study is nine selected villages from the three quarters in Agulu. From Ebenato, Isiamaigbo was selected, Nneoha, Okpu, and Odidama were selected from Ebeneshii quarter while Nkitaku, Umunnowu, Umubiala and Nneogidi were selected from Ebemonu quarter. This research intends to highlight the role of ostracism as a means of maintaining social order by Agulu community.

### **Literature Review**

Some related literature on the topic of discussion were reviewed to add value to the study. Ostracism according to Wikipedia encyclopedia is a Greek word for osterakismos. It was a procedure under the Athenian democracy in which any citizen could be expelled from the city-state of Athens for ten years. Ostracism was often used preemptively while some clearly expressed popular anger at the citizen. It was also used as a way of neutralizing someone thought to be a threat to the state or a potential tyrant.

Wehmeier (2006:826), says that ostracism is “an act of deliberately not including somebody in a group or activity, the state of not being included”. This implies the denial of social interaction with the other members of the clan, village and community or other social group.

**To guide** according to Wehmeier (2002: 528) means to direct or influence somebody’s behaviour.” When somebody’s behaviour is influenced, the person would not do what he ordinarily would have done. In his own view, Procter (2002:630) says, a guide is “... a book or piece of information which gives advice of help on how to do or understand something”.

**Code of Conduct** is a set of moral principles or rules of behaviour that has general acceptance of a social group or society to direct their behaviour in any particular place or situation. Okodo (2009:110), writing on code of conduct says “... the Igbo law as coded in the tradition and custom is what they call meaning ‘the way it is done’. ‘Omenala’ is the Igbo-Africans’ code of conduct”. In Igbo cultural practices, there are dos and don’ts. The dos are upheld whereas the don’ts are unacceptable. Thus, statement like *Anyị esighị etu ahụ eme* (we don’t do it like that).

For the Igbo people, there is no book that contains their laws or code of conduct. Unlike the Europeans, they do not go to any law school to learn about their existing rules and laws. But every member of the Igbo society grows up and learns it



informally from his people. Ezech (1997:260) views same when he states "... because members of crowd share from the onset, latent norms and values, every member of the crowd quickly comes to know the code of conduct".

**Values:** There are many different meanings the word 'value' could have. It has a very wide ranged meaning and usage. This study takes value in its simple connotation as 'a thing of worth'. Something has value if it has some worth, and in this sense, Igbo people consider life worth living because they find certain things intrinsically valuable. Ezeani (1997:154) agrees with this when he says that, "In a narrow sense, terms like 'Good', 'Desirable, or 'worthwhile', are properly applied to the meaning of 'value'.

Many African writers have discussed African cultural value under various titles. J.A Sofola in Onwubiko (1988:20) listed some African cultural values as wholesome human relations, respect for elders, community fellow- felling , as reflected in communal land tenure and ownership, live-and-let-live philosophy. Onwubiko (1988:20) observes that the cultural values include "metaphysics of man, respect for elders, hospitality, kindness and brotherhood" are some of the cardinal African values before the advent of Western culture and civilization.

Okolo (1991:180) in his view states that values give man a distinct cultural personality and enable him make some certain contributions to the world knowledge, history and civilization.

Deakin (1994:4) asserts, "if there is one factor that helps to differentiate one society from another, it is the particular values to which importance is attached and the public and political responses to major issues that stem from them". More so, Nnonyelu (1997:6) says, "value is an intrinsic belief that something is good and desirable". Nnonyelu affirms that in Nigeria today, the craze for materialism in all its ramifications such like to live in duplexes, own state of the art cars, have millions of money in ones bank account are predominant values.

Other cultural values that are equally held in high esteem by Africans in general and Agulu people in particular include: sense of time, sacredness, religion and honesty, among others. These values guide and moderate human interaction and they are equally indispensable for the maintenance of order and peace in the society.



**Norms** are specific guidelines of behaviour based on values. Norms include the rules and instructions specifying what are expected of us at different situations. Haralambos and Heald (1980:5) agree with the above when they state that, “a norm is a specific guide to action which defines acceptable and appropriate behaviour in particular situation”. Really, there are specific guidelines which always state whether an action is acceptable in any given situation or not.

Norms can equally be seen as specific expression of value. Yankelovich (1981:86) opines that,

“Norms are social phenomena, referring to the unwritten rules and mores of a society, expressing its social authority”. Norms like Igbo–African rules and laws or the African traditions are not written in any book yet every member of each community grows up and learns them from the older generation as what is expected from every individual that belongs to a particular society. Yankelovich (1981:86) agrees with this when he says that “norms are social glue that keep us together from degenerating into the nightmare of solipsistic anarchy. Hobbies describes as “the war of each against all and all against each”.

Ezeh (1997:1996) says, “the emergent norm reflects shared conviction held by members of the group and is enforced or implemented by or through sanctions”. Many norms that once enjoyed universal support no longer do. Such norms like, women should not work if they have men who can support them; the main burden of marital fidelity should be carried by women, though they are far from obsolete, they are no longer as prevalent as they once were.

Historically, Sumner distinguished between two types of norms: folkways and mores. **Folkways** which is a term Sumner coined are social conventions that are not considered to be of moral significance by member of a group. This type of norm though it is considered an inappropriate behaviour, and one can get arrested for it. This is in line with what is obtained in the society today, there are some behaviours like being dishonest and not responding to greetings, though one does not get sanctions for them, at the same time, such acts are frowned upon.

Stark (2004:39) agrees that “norms are standards that define obligatory expected behaviour”. Sanctions imposed on violators of folkways are often relatively mild



expression of reprimand such as stares, frowns, laughter, throat clearing, or tongue clucking.

On the other hand, **Mores**, the second type of norm is a term Sumner borrowed from the Latin word for customs. Mores are norms which are more coercive than folkways and reflect strong held values and whose violation involves severe disapproval and strong societal reaction like incarceration, ostracism, or even death.

According to Glasberg and Neubeck (2005:114) who agree with Sumner that transgressors face imposition of shame, ostracism and sometimes exile,

Mores are more formal and important norms than folkways. They generally include behaviours defined as those that absolutely must or must not occur. Members of society view these norms as absolute because violation of them is believed to threaten the group's ability to function or its very existence. Violation of mores typically meet with more severe sanctions than do violation of folkways.

**Kindred:** According to Akwuba (1998:13), “after the nucleus family, is the *umunna*, that is, the kindred. In the literal sense of the word *umunna* signifies all the children begotten by one father”. He explains that kindred is actually the group of families with the same affiliation to the same ancestral father, and has more authority than the nucleus family. In a meeting of the families, for instance, or during a general assembly of the families to decide over anything, the kindred has the last word. Its decision is the final. It can persuade an individual or a particular nucleus family that composed it to rescind his decision, or even renounce its claim to something like land or an economic tree, or dispute as the case may be for peace and for common good.

This study adopts the theory of social order based on functionalist perspective. Functionalists believe that without collective conscience, shared values and beliefs, achieving social order is impossible and social order is crucial for the well-being of society (Trueman, 2015). One of the main concerns of the functionalist theory is to explain how social life is possible. Cole (2019) opines that through his study of the role of religion in primitive and traditional societies, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim came to believe that social order arose out of the shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices of a given group of people.



Tischler (2002:20) observes that, “functionalism views society as a system of interrelated structures or parts that function or operate together harmoniously”. He equally adds that the best known proponent of structural-functionalism is Talcott Parsons whose theory centered on the view that interrelated social system consisted of major areas of social life like the family, religion, education, politics, and economics. These systems were analyzed according to the function they performed both for one another and for the entire society.

Parsons in Ina (1977:545) states,

A society consist of interdependent parts each of which contributes to the maintenance of order and stability in the system as a whole. Society is able to absorb disruptive force and to maintain over all stability because it is constantly straining for equilibrium, or balance. Cultural patterns, particularly shared norms and values, hold the society together.

According to Cotgrove (1978:19), “functionalism, then sees society as a series of system, and subsystem which interrelate *with each other in much the same way that* the respiratory, digestive and circulatory systems of the body affect each other”. Haralambos and Heald (1980:521) agree that, “functionalism view society as a system that is as a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole”. These sociologists view society as a system that has different but connected parts that work and function together to achieve orderliness.

Moreover, other scholars that have made reasonable contributions in defining functionalism include Levin (1991:290) who explains that “Parsons founded structural functionalism and developed it as a general theory for explaining social order”. Cotgrove (1978:25) notes that

... functionalist perspective locates the basis of social order primarily in the integrative function of shared norms and values, its critics argue that this approach ignores or glosses over the conflicts of interest and pays insufficient attention to the role of coercion in maintaining order.





This definition implies that social order in any society is achieved when and if the principles that guide the behaviour of its members are functional. An idea, object, or action is functional when it contributes to the smooth operation of some system. Levin (1991:291) adds that “according to structural functionalism, then, system of social stratification contributes to the smooth operation of society. Inequality is functional, because even those who are not well compensated benefit from the stability of society”. Gidden (1991:361) is in support of the above view as he posits that “functionalism is the perspective that studies social instruction and practices, and their contributions to social reproduction”.

In addition, Haralambos and Heald (1980:528) note that, “Parsons view society as a system. He argues that every social system has four functional prerequisites- adaptation, goal-attainment, integration and pattern maintenance. These can be seen as problems which society must solve for it to survive”. They equally observe that the first functional prerequisites adaption refers to the relationship between the system and its environment. In order to survive, then, social system must have some degree of control over its environment.

From the above views, it is obvious that the functionalism theory holds that society as a system survives by exercising some degree of control over its members who work harmoniously to achieve social stability.

Procter (2002:998) maintains that to ostracize means “to avoid someone intentionally or to prevent them from taking part in the activities of a group because you dislike them or disapprove of something they have done”. This means preventing one from mingling with his people or a social group.

From the above assertion, it is obvious that in declaring someone ostracized, the victim may not necessarily be sent away from the community but he must no longer be include in the activities he was parking before the sanction. It also clears the confusion of some people who use ostracism and banishment or exile interchangeably. In banishment, one is sent away from the community, but when ostracized, the victim is merely avoided and excluded in the activities of his people.

Opata (2011:42) reveals that Opata family was ostracized by their parish priest for refusing to give their father exclusive Christian burial. The catholic faithfuls were banned from attending the burial ceremony. Eventually, those who attended the





funeral ceremony at Opata's family attracted sanction against receiving the Holy Communion.

Hendry (1999:152), posits that, "ostracism may also be a much more diffuse sanction, of course, and the avoidance of a person who offended in some way is a common occurrence in many societies". Hendry explain that in English for instance, there is an expression sending to 'Coventry' which is a relatively organized arrangement made by some people to cut off communication with another.

Africans believe that man is a social animal. They live and socialize with one another and denial of this socialization with others for any reason is not always comfortable and easy for the victim. Hendry (1999:151) aligns with this when he says that ostracism as a diffuse sanction is found among any group of people who live in face-to-face contact. According to him, "they are particularly effective in small-scale societies where it is difficult for people to move away if they fall out with their neighbours for these are the people whom one must meet constantly".

Since man has no instincts to direct his actions, his behaviour must be based on guidelines which are learned. For a society to operate effectively, therefore, these guidelines must be shared by its members. Without a share culture, members of a community would be unable to communicate and cooperate, and disorder and confusion would result. To avoid this confusion and disorder, every society holds strongly to its cultural values and norms.

According to William, et al (2000/2001) in William (2007:5)

Ostracism is typically defined as being ignored and excluded, and it often occurs without excessive explanation or explicit negative attention. Ostracism is often operationalized as a process that characterized as unfolding sequence of response endured while being ignored and excluded over several minutes, but field, diary and interview studies examine ostracism over days, weeks and years.

In addition, Leary, et al (2005) in William (2007:5), see ostracism as rejection, that is, typically operationalized as declaration by an individual or group or organization that they do not (or no longer) want to interact or be in the company of the individual. Leary views this rejection as something that does not typically involve a protracted episode, but occurs after interaction and separation. William et al (2000), Smith and



William (2004), Zadro et al (2004, 2006) as cited in William (2007:5) maintain that “a sense of belonging, control, and meaningful existence diminishes following ostracism”. Individuals ostracized were faced with deep humiliation as they are treated as unimportant to the society.

From the above review, it is clear that none of the above writers wrote on this particular topic of study. That is, they did not consider the practice of ostracism as particularly as a way of achieving social order, control and stability. It therefore proves, that this topic, to the best of the knowledge of the researcher needs to be worked upon, so the topic of this research deserves attention.

### **Ostracism in Agulu**

Ostracism is a practice or an act used by Agulu people to exclude somebody who has done what the community abhors from the activities of other members of the community. It is a primitive method of maintaining social order and control.

### **Procedure for Proscribing Someone Ostracized**

Prior to the advent of the Western culture that introduced litigation as a means of settling dispute and maintaining order, it is the elders of the kindred that settle dispute and take wise and sensitive decisions. It is believed that every member of the society or community knows the laws that govern his people. Consequently, if anyone goes contrary to the norms of the land, he or she outrightly faces the consequences. The community has its norms which are the specific guidelines that guard the members' behaviour. It is observed that every member is expected to learn and abide by the good character that they share among themselves.

Ostracism and banishment were integral to the Igbo religion and cultural practices. Agulu people use ostracism as a negative sanction and also as a way of neutralizing someone thought to be a threat to the community. It is called “*nsupu*”, or “*mmapu*” in the Igbo language. The duration varies from two to ten or fifteen years depending on the offence. From the data collected, everybody knows what the community frowns at and whoever incurs sanction will be ostracized by the entire community through the voice of the elders. By this, it is the elders that will pronounce the culprit ostracized. This is done usually whenever there is a case to attend to where they have the “*Izu umunna*” in the case of kindred. *Izu umunna* is an important gathering of the kinsmen where they deliberate on crucial matters that affect them.



Once ostracized, the culprit is not allowed to socialized or interact with other members of the community. In the olden days, the system was basically communal life and it was easy to ascertain virtually what each member does at any given time. Anyone who banded up with the culprit throughout the period of the sanction incurred his disqualification. This disqualification includes being denied of taking any title in the community or acquiring any honour. The ostracized may not be necessarily be banished in most cases and as the case may be but he or she is treated scornfully by the other members of the community as if he or she is an outcast. Throughout the period of the negative sanction, the ostracized cannot attend the clan, village or town's meeting. Nobody goes into his or her house for any reason. If he dies within this period, his kinsmen must not attend his burial. This is a major reason why in the days past, people are more guarded in their behaviour for nobody wants to incur the wrath of his kinsmen or community. These days, even Christian churches also control the activities of their members through ostracism. The Catholic faithfuls may attract sanction against receiving the Holy Communion.

### **Unacceptable Deeds that can lead to Ostracism**

a. **Rejection of kindred's decision:** Members of every society know what is uphold and abhor by the traditional norms of the land. But in any social interaction, there are bound to be conflict of interest. When there is misunderstanding between brothers or families, for instance, the elders of the kindred would resolve it by calling the two parties together, hear from both sides and give their unbiased judgment. The two parties are expected to agree with the judgment. If a party rejects a judgment without seeking a fresh adjudication, he would incur the displeasure of the community. Such action is seen as destabilizing and harmful to the community. The party might then be ostracized in various links such as discussing or dealing socially with members of the community until he succumbed to the wishes of the community for settlement. Elders then were people held in high esteem due to their honesty and integrity, and so, their judgments are deemed unquestionable.

b. **Dragging one's kindred to oath-taking:** If one takes his kinsmen to swear an oath before a deity, it is equally taken as harmful to the community and even if such a person succeeds, he would be eventually ostracized from taking part in activities of the community or his or her people until culprit appeases his or her people and reconciles with them. This is because the code of conducts demands that one should not take his or her kinspeople to oath-taking. The peace making is called communal reconciliation



that is “*igba orikọ*” in Igbo. The ostracized to be readmitted having repented of his grievances against his kinsmen would buy some items like yam and necessary ingredients to prepare it. He or she would also make available either cow, goat or cock as the case may be which would also be used to prepare the yam porridge. Kolanut and palm wine would also be provided and when they eat and drink together, it shows that the ostracized has been pardoned and readmitted into his kinsfolk.

**Theft:** A habitual thief who has been caught red-handed severally in the act of breaking into people’s house to steal is ostracized and banished from his kindred. Traditional Igbo religion favours banishing a serious offender instead of taking his life mainly to the fact that a man’s blood is sacred in Igbo cosmology. Rather than putting a habitual thief to death, he or she is simply ostracized and banished permanently from his kindred or for a certain number of years, since shedding his blood is a greater offence.

In the olden days, the culprit would be scorned and jeered by the crowd as he was being escorted out of the town. On getting to the town’s closest boundary with another town, the culprit would be pronounced banished from his kindred and community for a period of two to five years or more as the case demands.

d. **Murder:** The Igbo people believe that man is his brother’s keeper. In Agulu, if for any reason whatsoever someone murders his kinsman, contrary to caring for him, it is not only a crime but also an abomination. It is a dreadful sin against the powerful goddess “*Ala* or *Ani*”. This is not a case of someone being accused of poisoning his brother or kinsperson which might not have a clear evidence. Rather, when it is a clear murder case with eye-witness or witnesses such as killing with a gun or machet, by strangling or any physical attack that leads to death. The culprit would run out of the land to avoid mob action. The murderer goes on voluntary exile *Igba ọsọ ọchụ* for the abomination and may stay away permanently or for ten or fifty years as approved by the community. When he comes back, he would appease the land. In Agulu, the culprit through an intermediary (mostly a family member) would seek the help of his kindred chief priest who would then invite the people of Nri or Ọraeri. The Nri and Ọraeri people are the only towns that can perform the ritual rite of appeasing the earth goddess. This must be done before the culprit would be readmitted into his community. Before the readmission into the folk, the kin of the victim must give their consent.



In Umuowe Agulu, a woman was at the time of this research banished from the town for refusing to swear an oath in order to deny the accusation leveled against her, that she had a hand in her co-wife's sickness. When the village leaders had agreed on what to do to her, someone revealed the plans to her and she secretly ran out of the town. Consequently, she was declared banished and that not even her corpse would be allowed into village. This is because the code of conduct requires the accused to take an oath in order to prove his or her innocence.

e. **Killing of the sacred python:** The sacred python is called *Eke mmuṣo* in the Igbo language. Killing of this animal either deliberately or accidentally is regarded as violation of norms of the land. Such a person is ostracized until he performs necessary ritual which includes giving the sacred python a befitting burial as it is giving to a normal human being. It is a norm Agulu people hold strongly up till date, they do not kill python. The code of conduct demands that one shall even beg this animal to leave his or her house in case it comes into the house and not to kill it.

f. **Invasion of a deity's shrine (òkwú-arụsị):** Invading of deity's shrine is called "*iri ogo nzu*". In Agulu, there are people who are believed to have been consecrated to the community's deity. These people are called *Osu* the out-cast. They can go into the deity's shrine and take anything as it pleases them. But a free born cannot do so. Any free born that do so is automatically an out-cast. This section is partially irreversible because even when the ostracized has been readmitted after performing the necessary rituals, the community members would hardly have a blood relationship with such a person especially in terms of marriage. When the person died his kinsmen would not participate in his burial and funeral rites. The proper conduct is that no free born should invade the deity's shrine for any reason.

g. **Uprooting yam tendrils (*Ivọ jì*):** It is an abominable act to uproot a tuber of yam in its tendrils. It is considered an abomination *arụ*, such a person has sinned against the powerful earth goddess *Ala* or *Anị* which Africans believe is a deity responsible for reproduction. The violator remains ostracized until he or she performs the necessary ritual and appeases the earth goddess *Ikpuaru* before he or she would be readmitted into his community. The code of conduct in cases such as where a party violates an order by cultivating a piece of land under dispute, the complainant should approach the kinsmen for resolution instead of destroying the farm land, thus, uprooting the yam tendrils.



### **Change in the Present Day Ostracism in Agulu**

Ostracism in Agulu has undergone a lot of changes. Some of the changes are due to the following factors:

- a. **Advent of missionaries:** The coming of European missionaries contributed greatly to the change in the present day ostracism in Agulu. Though the church on her own condemns evil but there are some cultural practices that the Christians would preach against calling the traditionalists unbelievers. Shockingly, some church members would still go behind and do them in secret. The church condemns theft for instance, but would not ostracize a thief. Christians believe that if a thief repents and confesses his sins, God would forgive him and so man cannot judge him. But traditionalists believe that traditional type of social control through ostracism would serve as a deterrent to the culprit and other members of the society.
- b. **Size of population:** The society has grown from small and simple to large and complex society. It is easier to control the small and primitive society than the complex and large society. Most people in the simple society live communal life, and do the same thing most of the time, and as a result of their common life experience, they share almost identical values. They have small, thin settled populations, most relationship are primary; people know one another on an informal, face-to-face basis. Today, the society has grown larger and is more densely populated. Our people are scattered all over the world in search of greener pasture. And so, it is not easy to exercise primitive type of social control as it was in the days past. For instance, the woman that was banished from Umuowe Agulu, in October 2015, is presently staying in her child's house at Lagos. This would not have been easy in the olden days.
- c. **Cultural adaptation:** Prior to the advent of Western culture, African culture was homogenous, most people share similar norms and values. Presently, because of urbanization, culture is highly heterogeneous. Many subcultures hold different norms and values, when they relate and interact for instance in the schools, market and churches, there are bound to be changes. These new cultures that have been incorporated into many African cultures have weakened them in the course of modification.



d. **Dishonesty and insincerity:** This is another reason for the change in the present day ostracism in Agulu. Setting dispute among kinsmen is never reliable as in the days past when elders use their wisdom to decide cases with all sincerity and honesty. Any attempt to sabotage the truth in those days is disclosed and the master-minder severely punished. But in the present days, it is no longer obtainable. People prefer to go to the law court to settle their differences today because they believe that justice could no longer be obtained among the kinsmen. Another side of this is that people are afraid of saying the truth even when they know it, for the fear of intimidation and maltreatment. Consequently, things continue to go from bad to worse. The slogan today is “are you the only one that knows the truth? Go out and say it and see who will stand by you”. Eventually, the open truth would not be told.

### **The Effects of Ostracism**

This primitive method of maintaining social order and control has outstanding effects both on the individual (the ostracized or culprit), his people (especially immediate family members) and the society at large. When this practice was fully in force, Africans were still engaged in communal life. Then, individualism was alien. The social structure then attached much importance to family and kinship. As a result, it is usually very heart breaking and shameful to sanction somebody and exclude him from the activities of his people. Such a person feels dejected and alone in the world. The effect is so derogatory to the culprit. The family members of the ostracized can no longer boast of their family ego both throughout the period of the sanction and after. This is because he or she is usually taken to have dented their reputation and tarnish their image.

This important practice also has a positive effect on the society or community as it helps the community to have control over the behaviour of its members thereby achieving social orderliness.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The following findings were made at the end of the research:

- The study observed that the people do appreciate the practice of ostracism
- There are some that do not know much about ostracism because they were not bred in Agulu,





- There have been changes and causes of these changes in the practice of ostracism include among other things, the advent of Western rule and culture.
- The researcher found out that the government and church do not support ostracism especially the church unless it is on the issues that concern their faith,
- People believed that ostracism is obsolete; it is still in practice but not as prevalent as before.
- Most people are of the opinion that the practice of ostracism should be retained while few like Chief Emeka Ejidike of Amaezike village believes that it is no longer authentic as the Western method of social control and order has taken over.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

This research has been able to show how ostracism can enhance social order in the community as a traditional method of social control. It observes that ostracism helps to uphold and guide the conduct of the society members and equally preserves the norms and values of the community. The findings above revealed that man as a social animal needs the society just as the society cannot exist without man. In order to keep man's behaviour in check, ostracism like other sanctions should be encouraged.

This study holds that African culture is not rigid but always tries to accommodate its foreign counterpart but this should not be to the detriment of its African cultural norms and values. Modern ways of litigation have not helped or performed up to expectation because cases and judgements are manipulated as the influential and wealthy people use their wealth to buy almost all they desire. But spontaneous expressions of disapproval in the traditional method of social control do not give room for such manipulation. Today, truth is hidden, the sincere ones are humiliated and demoralized, dishonesty and insincerity are honoured and yet there is always cry for a better tomorrow. For peace and stability to be achieved, this study recommends that ostracism which has almost stopped should be revitalized and be fully enforced by every African community. Anthropological scholars should also be encouraged to study more on African values system to make sure that the practices do not cease to exist.



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## **Appendix**

### **Unstructured Interview**

Explain ostracism

What can one do to be ostracized?

Who declares one ostracized?

For how long can someone be ostracized?

Can the ostracized be readmitted?

Is there any ritual or purification before the ostracized is readmitted, and who is involved?

Is the practice of ostracism still prevalent? If not, why?



### **Interviewed Persons**

Mr. Simon Okoye 67 years, from Nneoha village Agulu

Mr. Pius Nnebedum 65 years, from Isiamagbo village Agulu

Chief Chinweoke Ozodu Christopher 95 years, from Nkikaku village Agulu

Chief Emmanuel Akpulu 86 years, from Isiamagbo village Agulu

Mr. Ndeche Vincent Ozoemene 87 years, from Umunnoku village Agulu

Mr. Uchenna Unegbunam 46 years, from Agulu

Chief Emeka Ejidike 50 years, from Okpu village Agulu

Mr. Solobi Ezeani 70 years, from Agulu

Anisiobi Onyedika 19 years, from Agulu

Godwin Okolo 38 years, from Agulu

Major Okafor Meenendu 78 years, from Odidama village Agulu

Mr. Martin Onyekanwu 60 years, from Agulu

Mr. Ebuka Udechukwu 33 years, from Agulu