# IMPORTANCE OF VALUES FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**
*This paper examined the importance of values for national integration in Nigeria. It pointed out the multiethnic nature, the pre colonial experience and inability of many Nigerian citizens to demonstrate national values of patriotism, tolerance, cooperation, honesty and obedience as part the problem of national integration. It is discovered in the paper that presently, value for wealth, materialism and ethnic loyalty are prominent among a number of Nigerians while civic values that can promote unity are relegated to the background. The paper revealed that value orientation is not a new development in Nigeria. Nigerian governments at various times have adopted both formal and informal means of inculcating national values in the citizens. However, these efforts yielded little or no result. The paper emphasized that the inculcation of values in the citizens will, to a large extent, guarantee national integration, peace and unity in the nation. Some of the approaches that could be adopted to develop*

*Keywords: National integration, Values, Unity, Citizens, Orientation*

## Introduction

Nations have replaced empires as basic unit of human political organization. However, nations just don't happen by historical accident; rather they are built by men and women with vision and resolve. According to Gambari (2008) nation-building is the product of conscious statecraft, not happenstance. He further asserts that nation-building is always a work-in-progress; a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention. Nation-building never stops and true nation-builders never rest because all nations are constantly facing up to new challenges Gambari (2008).

A crucial aspect of nation building is the task achieving national integration, According to Habermas (1989) national integration is vital to every society. Yet Nigeria is increasingly challenged by growing disunity among her component ethnic nationalities, as well as inequalities and social fragmentation. As the gap between rich and poor widens, so does the gap between cultures. Ifeanacho and Nwagwu (2009) observed that Nigeria's effort at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealized. They further argued that the history of democratization in Africa and Nigeria in particular has remained the history of national dis-integration. Nigeria is bedeviled by crises of several dimensions and magnitudes. These include forces of disintegration, ranging from militancy to ethno-religious disturbances. Corruption in high places, gross ineptitude of government at all levels, weak and mediocre leadership. There are also cases of reckless mismanagement of the scarce resources by government and the attendant and consequent hardship on the vast majority of Nigerians. As a result of these collective failures and resultant effects which include (decayed/decaying infrastructure, poor health care system, comatose energy sector, insecurity etc), the people now engage in a wave of negative values. All these erode the legitimacy and authority of the Nigerian state and complicate the process of national integration.

Today, the emergence and growth of ethnic militias as well as the Boko Haram insurgency constitute great threat to the stability and unity of the nation. According to Ekanola (2006):

> *Today, rather than integrating into a cohesive community with a common sense of national identity and destiny, citizens of Nigeria are returning more and more to primordial affiliations for identity, loyalty and security. Instead of forging a united front and presenting a concerted effort to face the challenges of development in an increasingly competitive and globalised world, Nigerians are busy waging ethnic and religious wars…P. 280.*

The highlighted socio-political background and the minimal emphasis on national-values in Nigeria are partly responsible for lack of patriotism, disunity, inter and intra-ethnic violence that characterize the Nigerian state. The predominant value system of wealth and material acquisition, ethnic and tribal loyalty are major obstacles to national integration and survival of Nigeria as a nation. This is the reason why Ugwuegbu (2004) argued that a community populated with people without appropriate positive value will not survive.

Nigeria cannot attain national integration for socio-economic development and transformations except the citizens acquire and demonstrate required values and traits. According to Isola (2010) any nation not grounded in non-perishable values cannot make progress. Nigeria's dreams of national integration, peace and development can only become a reality with the internalization of the values enshrined in the National Anthem and Pledge which reflect national value of honesty, obedience, loyalty, cooperation and patriotism (Ajere and Oyinloye, 2011). It is against this background that this paper examines the importance of values as means of promoting national integration in Nigeria.

**Theoretical Framework**
The basic assumption of the paper is that crisis affecting national integration is to be traced to general breakdown of values within the society. To elaborate on these we draw from theory of anomie propounded by Robert Merton. According to Merton (1968) widespread breakdown of society's norms occur when the values of society extols the pursuit of a goal but provides access to legitimate means of attaining that goal to a limited number of persons within that society. Those who are foreclosed from achieving that goal through legitimate means (by their social strata or class for example) try to relieve their sense of deprivation by adopting ways that conflict with societal norms. Some simply lose interest in societal goals and drift along while others resort to some form of deviant escape. (Merton 1968).

**The Concept of National Integration: The Nigeria Experience**
The word integration means "the bringing of people of different racial or ethnic groups into unrestricted and equal association, as in society or an organization". (Soukhanov 1996). Sanda, (1999) believes that national integration is the collective orientation of members of a society towards the nation and its society in such a way that micro-loyalties are not allowed to jeopardize the continued existence of the nation and its objectives, goals and ideals. These definitions suggest that for national integration to occur in a nation, a significant number of citizens must develop identification with the nation that supersedes identification with ethnic, cultural or religious group. They must acquire political awareness, share common norms and values and develop attitudes favorable to the display of integrative behavior among peoples of different groups.

Nigeria has more than three hundred ethnic groups with several Religions, languages and dialects. These groups exist in order to promote their specific group interests and wellbeing. It is a natural thing to find different social, economic and political groups existing side by side in a particular geographical location. The strength of such group is that what is lacking in one group is supplemented by the other. So, in the end the various groups benefit from mutual co-existence and co-sharing of resources. Therefore national integration in Nigeria will literally mean the bringing of the different ethnic, racial, religious, economic, social and political groups into unrestricted and equal association on national issues. The purpose of national integration is to build a united and strong nation

The problem of national integration in Nigeria dates back to pre-independence days. The British imperialists created the geographical and colonial enclave called Nigeria by bringing together several hundreds of ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups and communities which then had attained different levels of economic, social and political development. These strategies produced a state structure that was to become the servant of imperialism and all those metropolitan interests which owed their existence to the continuance of imperialism (Ekekwe 1986:26). According to Onwubiko in History of West Africa, "a unified Nigerian state allowed Lugard and his cohorts to pool together resources of Northern and Southern Nigeria and to develop commerce in the former by providing it with an outlet to the sea". This state structure did not necessarily emphasize integration. Rather it encouraged specialized regional production to meet the needs of the metropolitan economy. Shively (2003:62) noted this when he observed that Nigeria, like most colonies, was not constructed for internal coherence but rather for the administrative convenience of the British. While large British colonies like India and the Sudan had a single administrative system, Nigeria had two, one for the North and one for the South. It was almost as if these were two separate countries, held together only by a shared currency and transportation system. Many members of the Nigerian elite class in the 1950s and 1960s had their education and world outlook moulded by the regional institutions. Some had little or no understanding of their neighboring regions. Under these conditions, it was easy for prejudice and fear to thrive (Gambari 2008). During the period of the decolonization struggle, Nigerian nationalists from different regions fought each other as much as they fought the British colonialists. Nigeria never had a central rallying figure like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana or Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Instead, each region threw up its own champions.

From this historical legacy, therefore, regionalism has been a major challenge to nation integration in Nigeria. To their credit, however, the founding fathers of our nation tried to deal with this challenge by adopting federalism and advocating a policy of unity-in-diversity. Unfortunately, the lack of consolidation of Nigerian federalism around commonly shared values and positions means that this challenge of divisive historical legacy continues to undermine our efforts at nation integration (Gambari 2008).

The relative looseness of the Socio-economic and political relationship among diverse population that makes up the federation has engendered disunity and its associated problems The civil war of 1967- 1970, the June 12 1993 presidential election with its associated disorder and currently the killings by the Boko Haram sect. Hence, the Nigerian government has made some policies and programmes aimed at promoting national integration and unity. Some of these policies/programmes are: Federal character, NYSC, unity secondary schools, National Sports, Festival, National symbols, etc. However, the Nigeria socio-political experience, since

independence indicates that the much needed unity has not been achieved in Nigeria. Many Nigerians have loyalty to their ethnic and social groups than they have for the nation. As Mezieobi (1994) observed attachment of a Nigerian first to his ethnic group before the nation is a bane to Nigeria's national unity, national consciousness and socio-political integration.

**Values for National Integration and Unity**
Value is derived from a Latin word Valere or the French word Valoir, which means to be worth. Values are things or ideas we hold in high esteem or regard highly. As a concept values are beliefs or ideals which individuals, groups or societies hold dear and acceptable Okeke (1989). Amaele (2000) in turn defines values as standards of conducts, efficiency or worth which a society endorses, maintains and even transmits to her members in both present and future generations. It is these ideas, beliefs or understandings of members of the society that guide and are reflected in members' behavior. These ideals or beliefs are the basis of standards in public life. They may be derived from tradition, experience, and religion. They inform the morality of society and drive the design of institutions and their enforceability. According to Maduekwe (1979), "sound mind breeds sound people, and sound people build a sound nation". He goes further to maintain that values held by people help them to do good, say good things and above all love themselves and be able to do the same to others around them, because one can only give what he has to another person. It is true that value varies from place to place, society from society, but it is still true that there are values which are acceptable by every society of the world

In the Nigeria of today personal riches are valued above character and national success. Money is worshipped as the greatest thing in life regardless of how it is acquired. Embezzlement of public funds and other forms of corruption reign supreme. One very perplexing ill with this virulent specie called corruption in Nigeria is that the leadership of this country appears genetically incapable of reforming itself through disciplined and impartial implementation of tough measures to tackle corruption precipitately. Take for instance the ongoing Petroleum Subsidy Probe: the complicity/confusion/inconsistency of facts and figures of the various agencies/ parastatals of government and how it is being handled. In advanced countries, by now the wave of resignation letters, sack letters, arrests, prosecution, imprisonment and confiscation of the assets of certain people would have reverberated in many quarters. The quest for primitive accumulation of unwanted materials has eaten deep into the chequered consciousness of the average Nigerian, partly because the various ingredients that form our cultures have eroded into oblivion with time and people tend to worship money and possessions. Thus, our society at the moment is that in which people are judged not by the rational and humane values they bring to bear on the activities of life but on the sizes of their primitive accumulation as cars, mansions, wardrobes and bank accounts. The unchecked increase in geometric proportions of corruption and its concomitant affiliates is weakening the remaining structures of our society. It has undoubtedly given rise to other social malaises like militancy, kidnapping and terrorism to mention the most pronounced. Most worrisome of these is terrorism (Boko Haram), which hitherto was alien to Nigeria. Now its activities are dragging the Nigerian nation to the brink of collapse.

Attempt must be made to institute Nigeria's national values which are clearly articulated in the constitution, Nigerian national pledge and anthem but neglected in everyday life to become real guiding principles in public life. These values include, discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, self reliance and patriotism.

**Value Orientation and its Problems in Nigeria**
Value orientation is not a recent development in Nigeria. Nigeria as a nation made up of about 125 million people witness poor value orientation at almost all levels of human organization. According to Igwesi (2012), Corruption and stealing of money is official, youths disrespect the elders, there is no longer dignity in labour, and therefore hard work is abhorred as it is observed in our attitude to work and the numerous cases of cheating and malpractice in examinations. Thus he attributed this moral decadence to failed education system and ethnicity in the post independence era

On the breaking down of moral values in Nigerian society, the Oputa panel report in the News 2004:39 and the Week 2005:25 had this to say:

> *"We note the near total breakdown of the moral fabric of our society with much pain, sadness and regret. The impact of this breakdown can be felt right across the entire spectrum of the Nigeria society. Children in schools have no qualms in cheating in their examinations, school leavers have taken on to armed robbery in frustration, business and social life of the nation are weakened by the weight of intense corruption".*

Worse still, is the day light robbery of votes into political succession breeding political gladiators who exploit the instrument of state power to promote their personal agenda. Nigeria's political elites, as Sklar, Onwudiwe and Kew, (2006) have rightly observed, "vie for power and control over the vast spoils of office". These leaders have in common brazen disregard for the rule of law, lack of an independent judiciary and the legislature. There is ethnicity and nepotism because somehow they are means of survival and hence of material and social advantages to individuals, their families or relatives in this competitive own society. A Nigerian in position of power or some other advantage usually means a material life-line to his families or relatives. Indeed, it is common knowledge that those in high position in Nigeria give preference in contracts, for instance, to their own relatives or friends, qualified or not. The point of it all is that ethnicity and nepotism are valuable in the country because of the material and social favors they engender. It is this narrow selfish perspective of Nigerians that not only make economic development impossible but also makes politics a mere gamble. It becomes a theatre for competing selfish interests where the common good is often carted away as private property by individual politicians or group- political power more often than not is regarded as a tool for amassing wealth at the expense of the public good or as the common cliché has it, an opportunity to "share the national cake" it is a little wonder that there is no patriotism

In the same connection too, education has remained an important value to the Nigerians although it has increasingly become problematic. Many Nigerians particularly the young men are steadily abandoning the classroom for" business" and the use of school curriculum as means of value orientation and civic training is not without its own problems. In Nigeria, the school system and the society places undue emphasis on intellectual ability and certificate at the expense of skills and values. Internal and external examinations are cognitive based. Even when civic based school subjects are introduced into the school programme, they are either poorly taught or not well implemented. This may be attributed to the environment in which the teachers perform their roles. The school environment therefore is an important factor in the socialization process for value orientation and consensus in Nigeria. It is the schools through the teachers that ensure that the collective conscience is present in every individual. To effectively perform their functions, the Nigeria teacher needs to be rebranded

.The Nigeria teacher had suffered personality, image and social problems due to non payment or delayed payment of a very meager salary. His efforts to instill merit, hard work and discipline in the children were made ineffective and fruitless by a society that celebrates corruption,

material wealth, paper qualification and ethnicity (Asiegbu, 2000). The working environment of the teachers is ridiculous while the learning environment of the student is dehumanizing and debasing. Moral values which are worthwhile and desirable behaviours and attitudes will only be effectively inculcated if these situations are change

The wrong value system in the Nigerian society partly account for the failure of value orientation programme in the nation. The family where socialization starts has more or less abandoned its fundamental role of socialization and child-training in pursuit of social, political and economic gains. Conflict, separation and divorce characterize some of the present day Nigerian families. This has negative impact on the character and personality of the young ones. This is because the very first place of learning is the home. A child is a product of his immediate environment, which is the home (Adebowale, 2007). Consequently, the cherished values of love, respect, hardworking, patience and cooperation that the Nigerian child is expected to acquire are grossly missing.

Nwachukwu 2009 shading light to the historical development of value orientation traced previous regimes that have made effort to fight against indiscipline, lawlessness and corruption in the society. This malaise was to be fought using: War against Indiscipline (WAI) lunched by the Gen. Mohammed. Obasi (1998) reports that General Sani Abacha Administration adapted the War Against Indiscipline strategy with the addition of 'C' (WAI-C) to be called War Against Indiscipline and Corruption in 1994. Buhari in 1984;Mobilization for social justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) introduced by the Babangida in 1985;National Orientation Agency (NOA) by General Sani Abacha in 1993; Independent Corrupt Practices and other Offence Commission (ICPC) by General Olusegun Obasanjo; again in 2004 the Economic and Financial Crime Commission(EFCC) was  established by General Olusegun Obasanjo. These efforts of the government towards value orientation and national integration have not yielded much result in Nigeria.  Ajere and Oyinloye (2011) pointed out that Nigeria is heading for a state of anomie considering all forms of dysfunctions in behavior patterns among youths and adults.

**Inculcating Values in the Nigerian Citizens**
It is doubtless that Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources.  The reality of life, which unfortunately we have not seriously embraced, is that true and meaningful development of any society must begin with all round development of citizens. There can hardly be realistic meaningful development of any society when her citizens are intellectually, morally, spiritually, socially and physically deficient. Onipe, (2011) argue that the lack of national consciousness, patriotic orientation and manifestation of uncivilized acts had painfully led to social disorder and disorientation in the Nigerian society.  The need for appropriate means of developing values in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. This is the major thing that can guarantee national integration, peace and unity in the country
.
Therefore, what Nigeria needs as a starting point is re socialization or rebranding or value re orientation which ultimately should give her a new life and value system. In other words, Wrong values, wrong priorities, disordered and disoriented ambitions and goals are manifestations of ignorance; the result is false options in life.  The relevant values as indicated in our constitution, national pledge and anthem should inculcate in the people. Agents of socialization should be involved in value orientation programmes. Divergent approaches should be adopted to inculcate national ideals into the Nigerian citizens. In a focus group conducted by Ajere and Oyinloye (2011) the participating youths unanimously agreed that re-orientation programmes on core societal values through the mass media, religious houses and

other allied orientation agencies be established by the government. For instance, skill acquisition programme on core national values can be designed for religious leaders. Apart from the fact that such programme will bring leaders from various religious groups together, it will also expose them to core values that can promote unity. It will, at the same time, acquaint them with relevant information that would assist them to inculcate core national values in their followers.

Scholars, philosophers, have no second thought that education is a means to change people, their ideas and values. Both Durkheim (1947) and Parson (1951) identified the education system as one of the institutions that would bring about pattern maintenance in any society. The school therefore is an important factor in the socialization process for value orientation and consensus in Nigeria. In recognizing the role of the schools, the government would then see them as the ideological apparatus of the state. Character training should be given better priority in our school curriculum.

The Nigerian government should allocate required money for the development of human and material resources that are needed for character education. Martin Luther, cited in Akinjide (2006) expressed that the prosperity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenue, nor on the strength of its fortification, but it consists in the number of its cultivated citizens, in its men of education and character. Also, Family life education can also be integrated into all formal and semi-formal educational programmes in Nigeria. Such family life education programme should address the effects of family instability on the socialization of the young ones. Also, the various means and strategies by which the family could effectively inculcate values in its members should be analyzed through the programme. Adebowale (2007) further recommended that the local government, at the grass root, could have counseling unit for would be couples and homes experiencing problems.

**Conclusion**
The problem of lack of unity and integration in Nigeria emanated from the artificial creation of the country as a single geo-political entity. One of the major shortcomings of the colonialists is their failure to effectively integrate and orientate the people of Nigeria towards the sense of national identity and commitment to the development of a united nation. Ethnic politics, religious intolerance, terrorist activities, tribal conflicts and ethnic militias have, in the recent time, threatened the survival and continuity of Nigeria as a nation. The ingredients of building a strong and united nation are clearly missing in the lives of some Nigerians. Among the rank and file of the citizens, there are demonstration of negative values like intolerance, dishonesty, disobedience and other unpatriotic tendencies. This paper emphasized that if Nigeria is going to continue as a single nation, the development of core values in the Nigerian citizens is an urgent task. The Nigerian leaders and followers must acquire the values that would enable them to put the interest of the nation first before those of self, social, religious, political and ethnic groupings

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