

AHA – ANA – EKU: A PRINCIPLE OF LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This paper seeks to establish the theoretical explanation for Ahaneku, as an Igbo leadership principle. It holds that since community leadership among Igbos is mostly collegiate, an 'execute officer' can only succeed if he/she is popular. Ahaneku, which translates to beckoned/desired for positive influence (or simply one that is popular) connotes positive influence: phenomena that in measurable terms equate competence, discipline, emotional intelligence, integrity and prosociality. The theoretical framework: The Almighty Prosocial theory inter alia buttresses the principle as intrinsically motivated based on the core values of the Igbos and the belief by the leader in the overwhelming power of the Almighty to overwhelmingly reward selfless leadership/role behaviour. By applying well-designed narratives and mentoring, and by highlighting the high regard/esteem to which 'Ahaneku Leaders' are held (operant conditioning), this principle could be taught and learnt, and holds high promise for engendering harmony, positive organizational culture and citizenship behaviours, and high productivity.

Keywords: Ahaneku, Almighty Prosocial Theory, Prosociality, Community Leadership

Introduction

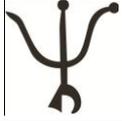
Psychologists are usually allured to research so as to analyze human overt and covert behaviours that are consequential to well-being, as well as to explain, predict and control same. Many a time, reasons for behaviour (motivation for instance) become so complex that they may not readily be subjected to laboratory experimentation, hence surveys, case studies, and logical theoretical explanations provide viable research options that facilitate the establishment of nexus among critical factors of human behaviour. In this connection, understanding why people differ sharply in composure and attractiveness from one office

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to another, or indeed why or how different leaders get motivated to win the admiration of their followers command the interest of Psychology.

In other words, Psychologists, especially of the Organizational, Forensic and Clinical specialties study role behaviour in juxtaposition with role expectations with a view to understanding factors that facilitate congruence often described as proper role performance or responsibility, or engender incongruence; often translated as failure or irresponsibility. While Organizational Psychologists appreciate the damage to industrial/organizational goals and life that could emanate from incongruence (dysfunctional role behaviour), Forensic Psychologists' interest stems from the fact that incongruence of role behaviour and role expectation may involve violation of either ethical or statute codes. Clinical Psychologists are hooked in since psychopathology and incongruent role behaviour have reciprocal cause and effect relationship.

Notwithstanding the wide acceptance of the belief that across races and countries, human behaviour could be accounted for using same principles, it is most logical that since there are biological differences (genetic for instance) across races, if genes are capable of adaption to consistent environmental forces (plasticity), and if biological endowment and environmental factors (which undoubtedly differ widely across the globe) interact to determine human behaviour, then there must be basic differences in motivation across enduring groups which may stem from norms and biological needs. This argument is straightened when viewed with cross-cultural psychology or psychopathology, and positive psychology in perspective. Psychology thus makes more sense and impact when it is so defined: when behaviour is studied, analyzed and understood in relation to 'native domicile'; in relation to cultural/traditional expectations and innate characteristics within an ecosystem. This approach underscores the need for psychological adjustment (through behaviour modification or cognitive restructuring for instance) by persons who change locations (migration) as well as the fittedness of psychological follow-up on migrants who must experience psychological acculturation to be able to live in harmony within the social ecosystem.



The foregoing gives impetus to the desire to front native paradigm of positive social dynamics, with a view to promoting cogent qualities that could facilitate harmony and organizational/community goal(s) attainment. Consequently, this discourse seeks to establish/highlight the nexus between Aha-ana-eku: an Igbo phenomenon aligned to positive psychology, and admirable role behaviour in leadership.

Aha-ana-eku

Ahaneku is an Igbo expression which irrespective of sub-dialect has the central message of 'widely known and desirable'. It is a representation of immense value. In Igbo upland parlance, Aha-ana-eku translates to one that is beckoned upon (to solve problems). Ahaneku therefore emerges not as a regular name but as an expression of positive achievement, especially positive influence on people's lives, just like 'Omelora'. However, unlike other names that emerge same way, Ahaneku particularly describes capable representation, mentorship, wise adjudication, and positive administration of social capital. In juxtaposition with the core Igbo values of industry, integrity and independence, Ahaneku represents the sought after, statesmanship, and wisdom in the management of public affairs. One so addressed or regarded must be positively influential: a role model (phenomenons).

In measurable behavioural terms, Ahaneku portrays a set of qualities that include, competence, discipline, integrity, emotional intelligence, loving and prosociality/altruism. These quantified, determine the level of congruence between leadership role expectations and leadership role behaviour, hence define acceptability, applaud and popularity of a particular role player (leader) among Igbos. It is no wonder therefore why Igbos have few acclaimed leaders.

May it be recalled that it takes the interaction of nature and nurture to develop personality and to imbibe adorable characteristics. It is thence logical that genetics and socialization

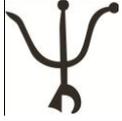
are key factors in the development of positive leadership credentials: Ahaneku. It could however be taken for granted that within a given ecosystem (native society), 'normal' genes are 'normally' distributed: wide spread, therefore it must be socialization and motivation that could make some people within such groups to stand out among peers. These factors form critical determinants of behaviour, and are equally engaged in positive psychology.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is a school in psychological research and theory that focuses on psychological states (like contentment and joy), individual traits or character strength (like intimacy, integrity, altruism, wisdom), and social institutions that make life most worth living (APA, 2007). According to Martin Selyman (cited by Positive Psychology.org.uk), positive psychology is the scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover and promote factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive, and it has three levels.

At the first level: the subjective level, positive psychology studies positive experiences like joy, wellbeing, satisfaction, contentment, happiness, optimism and flow. It is about feeling good, not doing well or being seen as a good person. At the next level (the level of traits and character), it seeks to identify the constituents of the good life and the personal qualities that are necessary for being a good person through studying human strengths and virtues, future mindedness, capacity for love, courage, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, wisdom, interpersonal skills and giftedness. The third level: at the level of group or community, positive psychology focuses on civic virtues, social responsibilities, nurturance, altruism, civility, tolerance, work ethics, positive institutions, and other factors that enable the development of citizenship and communities.

Positive psychology also concerns gathering knowledge regarding strengths and talents, high achievement in every sense, the best ways and means to self-improvement, fulfilling work and relationships, as well as the art of satisfying living. We must add quickly that positive psychology remains psychology. It only reframes or changes traditional questions



like what is wrong with someone to what is right; or from what is he not doing well to what is he doing well (positive psychology.org.uk).

Since at the level of the groups; positive psychology emphasizes such values as civility, social responsibility, work ethics, and fulfilling relationships (among others). It is logical that it emphasizes harmony. It could thus be paraphrased that the emphasis of Psychology is to establish and maintain intra and inter personal, intra and inter group, as well as physical and social environmental harmony. Harmony refers to a state of concord or congruence, as well as a state of peaceful existence, cordiality, balance or stability, and it can only be achieved when all faculties are in adequate functional states: when for instance in a social ecosystem, roles are responsibly and appropriately discharged. From this perspective, the hall mark of good leadership is sustained harmony in the group/organization and this is in tandem with the widely accepted view that physical and social environments interact with innate personal resources to determine predominant psychological characteristics of humans (Pesser& Smith, 2001).

In effect, leadership qualities such as competence, prosociality, integrity, work ethics and tolerance are the same emphasize of positive psychology which engender harmony. Ahaneku, the Igbo cultivation/expression of these qualities thus become ineluctably tied to harmony. It is both a prelude to communal harmony and a sustaining force for harmony.

Theoretical Framework

The Almighty Prosocial Theory: This theory inter-alia states that for a peaceful world to be realized, all or majority of the world's population have to regularly perform positive prosocial behaviour, which has to emanate from regular performance of positive prayers. According to Anazonwu (2017), it is the desire to solve 'overwhelming' human problems that motivates the positive prosocial prayers, which in turn facilitates the performance of

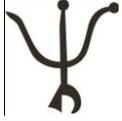
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positive prosocial behaviours; characterized by love, sharing, forgiveness, accommodation of other peoples, and the Good Samaritan attitude, among other virtues.

Although this theory was not propounded primarily as a theory of motivation, it has all the elements of a motivation theory for religious persons because the theory posited that PPP (Positive Prosociality Prayer) is said to the Almighty in the understanding that He is able to solve all problems, and reward benevolence. What is termed intrinsic motivation could therefore have germinated from the belief that this Almighty sees and rewards all prosocial behaviours. The performer of such behaviour in turn cares not about external rewards, rather continues in benevolence, tolerance, and other behaviours that engender peace and harmony even within the context of intergroup relations.

Indeed. Since Ahaneku as an Igbo orientation for exemplary statesmanship is not attributed to any material reward, or expectation of same, and since every human behaviour has a reason/explanation (everyone has a reason(s) for accepting or rejecting certain values and beliefs), then it is logical that Ahaneku is intrinsically motivated. Then, in the fancy of the Almighty Prosociality Theory, 'Ahaneku' could only be performed/imbibed by persons who believe in the overwhelming power of 'Chi-Uku, Chi-ji-ana or Agbala' (which translates to God through Jesus Christ for Christians) to reward overwhelmingly. It is then the expectation of sustained blessings from God and the hope of heaven that motivates such 'rare' leadership behaviour according to this theory.

From this perspective, inculcation of Aha-ana-eku is both desirable and possible. Humans, especially those within religious communities can inculcate the norms that objectively define Aha-ana-eku through the teaching of the Almighty's love, His promises to humans, and the relationship between solving other persons' problems and having the Almighty solve the problems (overwhelming problems) of the 'good' or the one who shows love, care, integrity and statesmanship in his/her role behaviours. In this regard, well-designed narratives, mentoring, and the respect/adoration accruable to the performer (operant conditioning) facilitate the inculcation and sustainability of positive role behaviour.



Summary and Conclusion

To explain, control, and predict human behaviour, Psychologists utilize knowledge gained through research of various forms. Some aspects of social dynamics may not yield to laboratory/controlled studies, hence theoretical analysis or survey become very acceptable methods of inquiry, especially in ex-post facto cases. Leadership role behaviour represent how a leader executes functions assigned to the office he or she occupies. It is a measure of the level of competence, communication (up and down), integrity and conscientiousness as well as keeping to the oath of office (for those whose positions require such oaths). Since human groups especially 'native domicile' differ significantly in genetic, physical and psycho-social qualities, psychology, especially psychology of motivation makes greater sense when these factors are put in perspective. This is also implied by positive psychologists who emphasize "the things" that work and accrue happiness and harmony. In this connection, Ahaneku, an Igbo expression of positive influence and desirability among a people, quantified by competence, discipline, emotional intelligence and prosociality becomes an alluring principle for public leadership.

The deduction is in tandem with the Almighty Prosociality theory of motivation which inter-alia implies that statesmanship, prosociality and selfless services only occur in an ecosystem if people believe that there is an Almighty who rewards benevolence and punishes malevolence. This theory thus explains Ahaneku as intrinsically motivated. The principle can be inculcated if communities emphasize love of the Almighty, His pleasure for the values of integrity, service to all humanity, the reward that follows the virtues, as well as the punishment that goes with contrary behaviour. This principle has high promise of engendering harmony and peace in organizations and communities.

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