



Dimensions of African Cultural Heritage on the Psycho-Emotional Development of Children: Modelling the Emerging Theory of Indigenous Emotion Regulation Adjustment by P F. Shey and Tani E. Lukong (2018).

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ABSTRACT

Issues connected with child development are appearing on national and international agendas with greater prominence and frequency. However, the international image of children is becoming increasingly homogeneous and Western-derived, with an associated erosion of the diversity of child contexts. The discipline of child development has long been criticised for its failure to appreciate the importance of culture in its formulations. To provide a useful picture of Africa's early childhood ideas and practices, an understanding of the indigenous patterns of childcare arrangements is required. In the African context, children play a critical role in their own development, and have a responsibility for their own 'self-education.' Indigenous pedagogy permits toddlers and youngsters to learn in participatory processes in the home, community, religious service, peer culture, and other activity settings through 'work-play' activities, with little to no explicit didactic support. They are expected to demonstrate competence and learning at key points of life, but often without direct instruction. The operative approach that facilitates a growth in emotional, intellectual and functional abilities is not instruction but participatory pedagogy. They take part in on-going activities as well as observing and learning from adults. This paper critically portrays the role of African cultural heritage in promoting context specific competences in children to adapt and effectively regulate their emotions. Ponderings and articulations of this paper are anchored on the emerging theory of indigenous emotion regulation adjustment by P F. Shey and Tani E. Lukong (2018). The author conclude that his role is to introduce a 'stutter' into a powerful international narrative, thereby creating a space for other ideas and perspectives, in this case from Africa, to be heard and considered. it reiterate the need for the Minority World to help the Majority World in its quest for child well-being, by supporting Africa's efforts to hear its own voices and seek its own way forward.

INTRODUCTION

Children grow up in a developmental niche as part of the broader culture. The socialization goals for emotion regulation aim to foster the development of culturally acceptable emotional behaviours which adhere to cultural values. The resulting cultural fit can be understood as cultural emotional competence (Friedlmeier & Trommsdorff, 2002). However, research on emotion regulation and related concepts is usually based on Western studies, usually of adult (student) samples from WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) societies (Heckman, J. J. and Masterov, D. V. 2004). Therefore, studying emotion regulation adjustment during childhood and adolescence in an indigenous setting should orient on new perspectives for socialization.

Research in early adolescents peer relations provides evidence suggesting that social competence is a necessary construct for cultural adjustment across the lifespan (Parker, 1998). Specifically, children's social and emotional adjustments have been linked to social competence within the general peer group, as well as within friendship relations. Theoretical assertions have associated the importance of healthy peer relations and social competence with social and emotional well-being in adolescence and later adulthood. Unfortunately, empirical investigation of this hypothesis is limited primarily to short-term longitudinal research across single developmental transitions (e.g. late adolescence to adulthood). This paper fills this gap with a long-term, follow-up in which the developmental significance of social competence and problem solving skills can be assessed Tani. E. Lukong, (2017).

Adolescence is a great opportunity for researchers to examine emotion regulation because of the physical, psychological, and social transformations that occur during this developmental stage. A major ability to adjust emotional developmental task involves acquiring. For example, learning to regulate anger or frustration through peer interaction, modelling and guided participation which allows individuals to persist at tasks even when they encounter obstacles to their goals (e.g. in a school or during cultural activities).

In contrast, there is little research particularly in Cameroon on how indigenous socialisation strategies are directly linked to early adolescence emotion regulation adjustment. The emotion self-regulation ability of early adolescents thus has not been examined systematically in previous studies. This book aimed to examine the interplay among specific indicators of indigenous strategies of socialization such as indigenous proverbs, and indigenous games within an eco-cultural setting which dictate emotion regulation adjustment with ardent attention on social competence and problem solving through an indigenised conceptual model of the

Nso people of Cameroon. Thus, social competence and problem solving skills are the main indicators of Emotion regulation adjustment that this study focused on.

AFRICAN CULTURAL HERITAGE: DANGERS OF EXTINCTION

Cultural heritage is disappearing from many African and Cameroonian communities often due to rapid changes in their lifestyle which is also hindering the process of transferring knowledge from the elders to younger members of the community. According to Shey and Lukong, (2018), there are four main factors that are contributing to the extinction of cultural heritage in Cameroon especially among the Nso people:

- 1) Local communities have not been sensitised to know how important is the knowledge they possess as they consider their own cultural heritage as backward and as a hindrance to them in accessing economic wealth;
- 2) Many communities do not know how to go about identifying and protecting their knowledge systems;
- 3) There are no specific national laws that help communities protect their knowledge systems in a way that reflects their traditions and customs;
- 4) The deterioration in the use of indigenous languages in everyday conversation.

As signatory to the UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding cultural heritage (2003), Cameroon is now required by Article 12 (section 1) of the convention to undertake an inventory of all the cultural heritage sites present in the country, which should be regularly updated. For this reason, there is need to map out existing types of cultural heritage in Cameroon to know their status and initiate measures for protection and enhancement.

There is therefore the need to re-emphasise the role played by culture in shaping what constitutes social behaviour within African cultures and Cameroon in particular. This need was echoed by the 1995 National Education Forum in Cameroon. According to the forum documents (Tchombe, M. T (2006)), the neglect of local and national cultural values especially as concerns languages, was named as one of the reasons, inter alia, that justified the holding of the 1995 National Educational Forum. The Forum focused on the definition of the place of national languages and cultures in the education system. As a follow up to the 1995 National Education Forum, Law No 98/004 of 14th April 1998 states in section 5 (1), (3) and (8) that the objectives of education shall be to train citizens who are firmly rooted in their cultures, but open to the world, and respectful of the general interest and common will; promote national languages and provide physical, sports, artistic and cultural training for the child.

More significantly, Cameroon's many ethnic groups have a well-developed and sophisticated folklore which embodies their history, traditions, world view and wisdom. Their legends recount the movement of people to and from the rift valley, into the highlands, the grasslands and the lake regions to their present settlements (Argenti, 2010).

The African continent is culturally complex and fluid with diverse cultures, natural environment and different ways of living, but sub-Saharan Africa is generally known for its rich oral traditions and proverbs which are the most widely and commonly used in this tradition of oral arts. Cultural value orientations concerning interpersonal relationships and emotions help to create and enforce norms concerning emotion regulation, which in all cultures serve the purpose of maintaining social order (Argenti, 2010).

EMOTIONAL REGULATION DURING CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENT

Personality and early experiences with caregivers lay the foundations for interpersonal relationships, and adolescence is the time when individuals first begin to test the stability of this foundation by establishing significant relationships outside of the family (Shey and Lukong, 2018). An adolescent's success in these new relationships is rooted in his or her ability to regulate emotional experiences, even as he or she spends increasing time away from direct contact with the caregivers who, in ideal circumstances, provide the foundations of emotion regulation.

Historically, there has been much debate about the function of emotions. For example, Hebb saw emotions as neural activation states without a function. However, recent research provides evidence that emotions are functional. Emotions have a facilitating function in decision making (Oatley and Johnson-Laird, 1987), prepare a person for rapid motor responses (Frijda, 1986), and provide information regarding the on-going match between organism and environment (Schwarz and Clore, 1983).

Emotions also have a social function. They provide us information about others' behavioural intentions, and script our social behaviour (Davis, P. M. 1991). Social functions of proverbs include (1) explain human behaviour, (2) serve as a guide for moral conduct, (3) explain social behaviour, (4) serve to ensure or criticize conduct, (5) give shrewd advice on how to deal with situations, (6) express egalitarian views, and (7) express finer human qualities or emotions, such as generosity. Thus, proverbs serve as a basic teaching tool and a fundamental means for approaching life for the oral culture.

In the past two decades, psychological research has started to focus more on emotion regulation (Thompson, 1990). In brief, emotion regulation is the process humans undertake in order to affect their emotional response. Recent neurological findings (such as bidirectional links between limbic centres, which generate emotion, and cortical centres, which regulate emotion) have changed the consensus that emotion regulation is a simple, top-down controlled process (Gross, J. J. (1998)

Emotion regulation is defined "as the process of initiating, avoiding inhibiting maintaining, or modulating the occurrence, form, intensity, or duration of internal feeling states, emotion related physiological, attentional processes, motivational states, and/or behavioural concomitants of emotion in the service of accomplishing affect-related biological or social adaptation or achieving individual goals" (Eisenberg & Spinard, 2004). These researchers highlighted the fact that children's effortful control, children's emotion regulation is common in developmental research. Effortful control has been found to be a measurable key component of emotion regulation (Erny, P. 1981).

Interest in emotion regulation has a long history, yet the field only began to emerge as an independent field of scientific study in the last decades of the 20th century (Gross, 1998). Since then, the field has grown exponentially, as is evident in the number of scientific publications, books, conferences, and training programs that are now devoted to the topic. The field of emotion regulation is no longer emerging, it is maturing. This maturation brings with it a shift. Different questions come into focus, novel questions arise, and different challenges come to the forefront. This special section reflects the shift that is taking place as the field matures.

Early contributions to the field of emotion regulation originated in the developmental literature (Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989), and were quickly pursued by research in the adult literature. Research on emotion regulation has continued somewhat independently within these two traditions since then (Thompson, 2007). This disconnect may have been due, in part, to the fact that, within each tradition, researchers were working on establishing emotion regulation as an independent topic worthy of attention. Several decades of research have resulted in an impressive body of knowledge and a deeper understanding of the nature of emotion regulation. This ripening of the field carries with it two important implications.

First, there is no longer doubt that emotion regulation has important consequences for health and adaptive functioning. Instead, the field is now ripe for bridging different perspectives by uncovering and evaluating the basic assumptions that are guiding each perspective. Since emotion regulation concerns the regulation of emotion, any theory of emotion regulation is necessarily

derived from basic assumptions about the nature of emotion. Such assumptions dictate the conceptualization of emotion regulation and the research questions that follow (Campos et al., 1989). To facilitate progress and integration, it is important to explicitly identify core assumptions about the nature of emotion and understand how they shape different programmes of research in the field.

Secondly, research on emotion regulation is no longer a subsidiary of research on emotion. Instead, research on emotion regulation now holds the promise of informing our understanding of emotion. As research in the field becomes more integrative and interdisciplinary it could potentially test assumptions about emotion. To illustrate the two points highlighted earlier, A large proportion of adolescents suffer different maladaptive problems such as depression, suicidal attempts (Burton, N. (2008), aggressiveness and antisocial behaviour (Straub, J. (2006). There is a clear and well established relationship between parental behaviours during their children's childhood and early adolescence and their children's maladjustment during late adolescence.

Children's emotional competence is a key skill-set in early adolescents, supporting children's development of social skills and affecting their risk for maladjustment. Emotional competence in early years consists of children's ability to express and regulate emotion consistent with cultural or societal expectations and children's ability to understand the causes and consequences of their own and others' emotions (Camras, & Witherington, 2006).

Social competence in early adolescents is best understood as children's ability to engage in social interaction, attain social goals, make and maintain friendships, and achieve peer acceptance (Parker, 2006). Emotional competence underpins children's social competence in that successful social interaction and friendship formation requires that children express and regulate their emotions appropriately while applying their knowledge of emotions to respond properly to peers' emotions and behaviours (Denham, 1990).

Conversely, delays or disruptions in early adolescents' development of emotional competencies have serious, negative implications for children's transition to peer contexts like college) (McCarthy & Chabay, 2000). Children with poor emotional competence and who lack social skills have more difficulty forming peer relationships and benefit less from the educational environment of school than do children with stronger emotional and social skills (Foster & Hester, 2000).

A growing body of evidence suggests that children's emotions and emotion-related processes influence emerging social competencies and emotional/behavioural maladjustment. For instance, socially competent children demonstrate appropriate

levels of positive affect during social exchanges, and such positive affect facilitates the initiation of social exchanges and friendship formation (Denham, 1990). Additionally, children who are able to adaptively regulate negative emotions and balance their expression of positive and negative affect maintain social relationships better (Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992) and are viewed as friendlier, less aggressive, and less sad by their teachers (Denham & Burger, 1991).

Emotionally competent children also are better liked by their peers (Denham, 1990) and are more likely to respond pro-socially to peers' emotions. In contrast, children who experience difficulties controlling their expression of negative emotion tend to have difficulty managing their anger during conflict situations, making them poor play partners (Denham et al., 2003). Likewise, children who express high levels of negative emotions are rated by teachers as less socially competent and are more likely to experience peer rejection (Denham et al., 2003). Clearly, children's emotions and emotional competence play a significant role in their relationships with peers.

Parents all over the world hold specific beliefs about proper care and handling of children (Pence, A. and McCallum M. 1994). These parental ideas or parental ethno theories (Super & Harkness, 1996) may be assumed to express conceptions on the nature of children, parenting, and development, specifying how to become a competent adult in a respective environment (Deeds & Chung, 1999). Thus, ideas about childcare practices are related to developmental goals. Although inter-individual differences are prevalent with respect to parenting goals and practices in every culture (Denham et al., 2003).

Independent and interdependent construal's of the self as individual value orientations are understood by developmentalists as specifying different developmental goals which are correlated with different socialisation contexts and parenting styles during different stages of development (Shweder et al., 1998). Parental ethno-theories may thus be conceived of as the mediating links between these cultural meta-models and behavioural contexts and practices (Harkness et al., 2000).

It may therefore be expected that cultural communities who differ with respect to these value orientations also differ with respect to the nature of parental ethno theories. Differences in cultural expectations for the timing of developmental milestones have further supported differences in the attention to behaviours which may be related to independent and interdependent value orientations (e.g. an early focus on cognitive achievements as compared to an early focus on social achievements; autonomous as compared to symbiotic relational orientations; (Harkness et al., 2000).

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN EMOTIONAL REGULATION: LESSONS FROM THE NSO OF THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

Culture provides meaning to intend and to actually demonstrated behaviours and its consequences including emotional responses; these interpretations affect future behaviour orientation. The main features of culture are a homogeneous set of shared values, norms, and beliefs. Since time immemorial Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs) were used by societies in Africa and the rest of the world for various purposes, depending on the needs of the society in question. Until recently, IKs were colonised by other knowledge's from outside indigenous communities Lukong (2015).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the advent of colonisation brought in foreign knowledges, the so-called "scientific knowledge" that denigrated IKs as unscientific, untried and untested for education and social development. African tribal groups are historically oral societies, where verbal modes of communication help people to point to what they meant and say what they could not put into written words. Theirs is a world where sounds carry ideas and images without any other intermediary in the process of communication. They picture ideas and images vividly in their mind's eyes rather than through letters and written words. This shows that the world of "orality" is a world of talk. One strong underlying factor behind the African oral custom has to do with the fact that the origins of most of the African tribal groups are involved in obscurity. As such, the commonly received accounts are for the most part purely legendary. Also, many of their languages were unwritten and all that is known is from traditions carefully handed down through traditional historians, who are family members and functioned as historical storage and transmission.

In a typical African family, the elders would gather the young people and children around the fireplace at night and narrate the stories, histories, and events that made them a proud and memorable people. Through these verbal arts, Africans transmit their beliefs, heritage, values, and other important information. So among the Africans, these forms of verbal arts are extremely important and effective means of communication, which have provided the following generations with wisdom.

In every cultural community, parents want to pass on strategies that will promote the survival of their children and foster their cultural competence (Keller, 2003, 2007). Socialisation strategies embody cultural curricula (Nsamenang, 1992) that represent the accumulated knowledge of prior generations within that environment. Socialisation strategies are hierarchically patterned. The most abstract level consists of socialization goals that

express the developmental achievements that parents aim at, such as becoming an autonomous, self-reliant individual and/or becoming a socially interrelated person who is able to maintain harmony in their relationships. Socialization goals are translated into a system of parental ideas beliefs (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008), or ethno theories (Super & Harkness, 1996). These ideas are expressed in behavioural strategies, consisting of contexts or activity settings with actual behavioural interactions and communications.

To understand emotional regulation adjustment in cultural context, we need to compare environments that differ in eco-social characteristics and reproductive strategies. It is assumed that different environmental conditions are represented in different cultural models. We expect that these differences are expressed in different socialisation strategies of emotion evaluation with consequences for children's development of emotion regulation. The Nso eco-social context is represented in traditional farming villages 'void of- Western world experiences of technological advancement. The economy is subsistence based with little economic diversity among families and clans. The population is small scale, with person-to-person interactions in a dense social network. Formal education, if at all available, is basic. Lifestyle is characterized by hierarchical family systems based on age, gender and communal work. Reproduction starts early and comprises of many offspring (Keller, 2007).

The Cameroonian Nso farmers represent such a traditional farming community. The average rural Nso family consists of about seven members with about three living children (Keller, 2007). Mothers' age at first birth is between 17 and 20 years (Argenti, 2010). Mothers have about seven years of formal education with fathers sometime seven less (Keller, 2007; Yovsi, 2003). Nso people are governed by Cameroonian national authorities but also reined by their own traditional rulers, who are organised along a strict hierarchy with the "Fon" representing the highest local authority.

Religious and philosophical concepts have their place within Nso traditional worldviews. Cosmovision, to a large extent according to a typical Nso indigene, dictates the way land, water, plants, humans and animals are to be used. It also prescribes how inhabitants are to behave, how decisions are taken, problems are solved. and how rural people organise themselves in meeting community goals. Obviously, Christianity, Islam and western education have influenced the cosmovision of the Nso people especially those with formal education. For the Nso people in the North West region of Cameroon, the human world, the natural world and the spiritual world are linked.

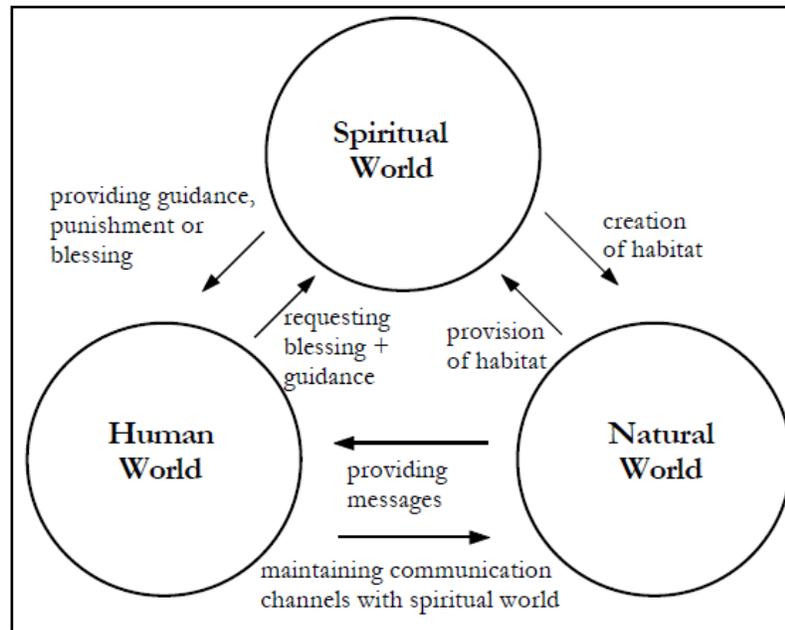


Figure 3: The Nso Cosmivision

Source: Tani. E. Lukong 2015 (developed from elders' Explanation of Nso cosmic order).

The natural world provides the habitat for the spirits and sends messages from the spiritual world to the human world. The spiritual world provides guidance, punishment and blessing to the human world. People therefore have to relate to both the natural and the spiritual world. Indigenous knowledge is thus intertwined with the Nso cosmic notion and adherence to their cultural values.

According to the Nso people, the spiritual world (Gods, spirits, ancestors), the human world (including spiritual and political leaders), and the natural world (sacred groves, ritual crops and animals, food items and cash crops) are interrelated. Often a hierarchy between divine beings, spiritual beings, men and women, and natural forces are frequently indicated. These cosmivisions give rise to several rituals in which elders, priests, soothsayers and spiritual leaders play a prominent role. This explanation is related to this study in that, virtually all principles and ways dictated by such natural rules as handed down from generation to generation shape not just parenting qualities, but also how children need to behave and relate with one another in a peaceful manner.

Emotions are closely interwoven with experiences, evaluations, and regulations of self, relationships, and situations. Thus, the socio-cultural context constitutes the meaning and the expression of emotions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The expression of positive emotionality can consequently be understood as the foundation of individual uniqueness and independence. On the one hand, while Emotional neutrality and control of emotional displays; on the other hand, can be understood as the

instantiation of social relatedness and interdependence. We therefore regard the expression of positive emotionality as a vital part of a socialization strategy toward autonomy. We expect that the expression of emotionality is not supported as a valued behavioural expression in the socialization strategy toward relatedness.

The interrelated value orientation that has been developed mainly with respect to East Asian cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) has also been identified in traditional rural areas across other parts of the world. Also traditional African cultures in general (Zimba, 2002) and the cultural community of the Nso in Cameroon in particular (Nsamenang, 1992; Nsamenang & Lamb, 1994; Tchombe, 1997; Yovsi, 2001) have been described in terms of a high appreciation of interrelatedness in their conceptions of relationships and competence .

The documentation of family life and socialisation patterns among the Nso cultural community reflects a high esteem of harmonious and hierarchically organized relationships between family members and a wide social reference group, mostly the village. Childcare is aimed at instilling acceptance of the moral authority of parents and obedience (Yovsi, 2001). Compliance, conformity, and respect are the major socialisation instructions (Yovsi & Keller, 2001). Mothers, especially primiparae, are often taught basic child psychology by elderly and experienced women or by their mothers-in-law. These instructions range from spiritual communication to health concerns, when, for example, body movements,

especially during sleep, are believed to express messages from the ancestors identifying specific signals of illnesses.

The infancy or 'wan' period sees the child under the strict surveillance and overprotection of the mother, siblings, grandmother, and other family and community members. The child undergoes traditional rituals as he or she proceeds through infancy (e.g. burial of the placenta, ritual messaging, bathing and oiling) which is believed to influence the life of the child and the mother.

The infant is carried almost the whole day on the lap, back and loins of his or her caretakers and co-sleeps with the mother and the other siblings. A special sensitivity exists towards negative signals of the child which are attended to immediately, mainly with breastfeeding. A major focus is being laid on motor stimulation which is supposed to contribute to the development of muscle strength and early achievement of motor milestones (Yovsi & Voelker, 2002; Super, 1981). Early motor competence is considered to support children's responsibility training enabling them to contribute early on to the subsistence of the family by performing daily chores.

From an African point of view, a sense of self is only attained through the community in terms of being interconnected and enacting one's social role (Nsamenang, 2006). Identity is defined in terms of status in lineage, clan, and community (Mbaku, 2005). Development is interpreted as the acquisition and growth of competencies required to fully engaging in society and family life. Children are expected to assume social responsibility as a primary value and children's competencies are defined in accordance with their social maturity. Intelligence is conceived as responsibility and social maturity, not an abstract, cognitive ability (Nsamenang, 1992b).

The majority of the Nso can be considered to represent a typical non-Western society, following an interdependent cultural model aiming at interconnecting individuals in the community. However, influences of the Western world are found in various domains as well. Whilst it is plausible to treat the Nso as a community extremely different from Western societies, it is at the same time necessary to take a careful look at variances within the Nso community. Social changes due to modern globalisation seem to have had an impact on the traditional family structure and gender roles. Shifting observed and described by Mbaku (2005) are a decrease in family size, an increase in female participation in the labour market, the emergence of new childrearing patterns influenced by Western ideas, and accelerated migration from rural to urban areas. The older generation believes that children should be seen but not heard, i.e. not question parental advice. The younger generation of Nso parents admit children to be

seen and heard, i.e. they allow children to have their own opinion.

In less than ideal developmental circumstances, emotion regulation may fail to develop adequately, and adolescents may find themselves in states of periodic or chronic dys-regulation that are implicated in adolescent internalising and externalizing problems. Morris and colleagues (2007) proposed a theoretical model that grounded emotion regulation between developmental circumstances and adolescent adjustment. Specifically, they emphasized the importance of emotion regulation as a mediating factor between multiple aspects of adolescent development (e.g. adolescent temperament, parenting, attachment, and observational learning) and adolescent adjustment (including internalising and externalizing symptoms; Steinberg, 2007).

Emotion regulation has been described as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon which develops through the integration of several behavioural and biological processes (Thompson & Goodwin, 2007). It involves intrinsic and extrinsic processes that operate to monitor, evaluate and modify emotional reactions, especially intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals. Intrinsic and extrinsic processes can be thought of as physiological, cognitive, behavioural, and social human processes, that represent individual response domains within an individual or in connection to his/her environment (Garber & Dodge, 1991). Therefore, the terms processes and domains within the emotion regulation framework become interchangeable. A number of theories address adolescents' socio-emotional development, but for the purpose of this book, we focus on the Emerging Theory of Indigenous Emotion Regulation Adjustment (Shey and Lukong, 2015).

THEORY OF INDIGENOUS EMOTION REGULATION ADJUSTMENT

P. Shey and Tani E. Lukong, (2018)

This theory is developed on the premise that, Cultures are not homogenous entities, and socialisation and developmental outcomes can comprise distinctive and relational facets depending on situational conditions (Shey and Lukong, 2018), The development of the proposed theory of emotion regulation adjustment reveals and presents yet another paradigm shift in conceptualising socialisation processes in a naturally and cosmic dimension. This model was developed mainly based on the findings revealed by the socialisation strategies exhibited by Nso people of the North West Region of Cameroon. The theory thus is consistent in explaining the link between major concepts of African Epistemology such as indigenous strategies of socialization and emotion regulation adjustment within a cultural setting. The indigenous theory of emotion regulation adjustment was consistently tested through the following hypotheses alongside

intensive ethnographic study among the Nso people. The hypotheses include:

- 1) Children's emotional competence can be represented as a cultural function consisting of children's emotional expressiveness, emotion regulation, and emotion understanding of indigenous values and norms.
- 2) Elders and Parents' socialisation behaviours through communal apprenticeship process significantly is related to children's acquisition social competence and contextually approved behaviours. Specifically, parents' supportive socialization behaviours will be positively related to children's social competence, negatively related to children's internalizing problems and externalizing problems within cultural settings.
- 3) Culturally supportive emotion socialisation behaviors will be positively related to children's emotional competence.
- 4) Children's emotional competence will be positively related to children's social competence, negatively related to children's internalising and externalizing unapproved cultural behaviours.
- 5) Children's emotional competence will mediate relationships between indigenous socialization strategies and emotion regulation adjustment

The theory posits that, cultural values and norms that enhance culturally acceptable behaviours are the first context in which children learn about emotions and serve as a rehearsal stage for children's developing emotional skills. These relationships are enhanced through contextual processes such as guided participation, role modelling, direct instruction etc. This proposed theory by the author or researcher is supported by an abundance of empirical work which has linked children's social, emotional, and behavioural adjustment both in terms of competencies and maladjustment with the quality of cultural parenting values received during the early childhood that promotes children's emotional, social, and even cognitive development during adolescence (Steinberg, 2007).

The major functions of culture is to maintain social order, cultures create rules, guidelines, and norms concerning emotion regulation because emotions serve as primary motivators of behaviour and have important social functions. The proposed indigenous theory of emotion regulation adjustment posits that, early adolescence like any life span developmental stage, relies tremendously on emotional competence, a key skill set embedded within the cultural milieu which helps in supporting children's ability to regulate their emotions through indigenous socialization strategies such as proverbs, traditional games, folktales, storytelling, legends etc.

These culturally sensitive strategies of socialisation were observed among Nso people as accelerators and

enhancers of social competence skills, problem solving skills and affecting their potentials for cultural adaptation and integration. Based on the study, emotional competence in early adolescence consisted of children's ability to express and regulate emotion consistent with parental/societal expectations and children's ability to understand the causes and consequences of their own and others' emotions.

Social competence and problem solving skills in early adolescence was best understood as children's ability to engage in social interaction, attain social goals, make and maintain friendships, and achieve peer acceptance through their constant engagement in the playing of indigenous games. Emotional competence underpins early adolescence social competence in that, successful social interaction with elders, parents and friendship formation requires that children express and regulate their emotions appropriately while applying their knowledge of emotions to respond properly to peers' emotions and behaviours (Shey and Lukong, 2018). Conversely, delays or disruptions in children's development of emotional competencies have serious, negative implications for early adolescence transition to peer contexts during indigenous games, storytelling, folktales, legends (Shey and Lukong, 2018).

Early adolescence with poor emotional competence and who lack social competence in areas of sensitivity to others' needs, humility, respect for elders, sense of appreciation, self-awareness, self-control, role modelling, collaborative spirit, sense of collectivity, sense of unity, tolerance, and care for elders have more difficulty forming peer relationships and benefit less from the educational environment of elders which is abundantly rich in cultural norms, values and enhance culturally acceptable behaviours than do children with stronger emotional and social competence and problem solving skills. (Shey and Lukong, 2018).

Accordingly, cultural values and norms that enhance culturally acceptable behaviours are the first context in which children learn about emotions and serve as a rehearsal stage for children's developing emotional skills. These relationships are enhanced through contextual processes such as guided participation, role modelling, direct instruction etc. This theory is supported by an abundance of empirical work which has linked children's social, emotional, and behavioural adjustment both in terms of competencies and maladjustment with the quality of cultural parenting values received during the early childhood that promotes children's emotional, social, and even cognitive development during adolescence (Landry, Smith, Miller-Loncar, & Swank, 1998; Landry, Smith, Swank, Assel, & Vellet, 2001).

Supportive cultural values of problem solving skills such as (avoidance, forgiveness, compromise, dialogue, solicit for elders) embedded in a positive affective indigenous environment predicts lower levels of

externalizing problems solving potentials. Though responsive, sensitive parenting and consistent supportive discipline are frequently studied dimensions of parenting, such general parenting practices have been proven as poor predictors of children's emotional competencies as outlined by (Tchombe and Lukong, 2015)..

Based on this theory, parents' responses to children's emotions are parenting styles embedded within the Nso culture, such emotion-related parenting behaviours were conceptualized as part of parents' emotional socialization patterns learned from indigenous knowledge system. Parents socialize children's emotions through their responses to children's emotions, their discussion of emotion, and by providing models of how to express and regulate emotions. Nso cultural parenting values teach children through indigenous socialization strategies, emotional competence and reduce children's risk for emotional/behavioural maladjustment by teaching children how to understand and adaptively manage/express emotions in a variety of situations.

Alternately, adolescence who fails to learn cultural values and norms through proverbs and indigenous games, their emotional competence are likely to have poorer social competence, problem solving skills and greater emotional/behavioural instability. Therefore, emotional competence according to the theory involves the ability to recognise and understand one's contextual emotions and the emotions of others as well as the ability to regulate, express, and use one's emotions in culturally/socially appropriate, adaptive ways. (Shey and Lukong, 2018).

The theory further states that, If adolescence emotional competence mediates the impact of indigenous emotion-related socialisation practices on adolescence social competence and problem solving competence, then intervention efforts that enhance both emotion-related cultural emotional competence may be most successful in promoting children's social competence, problem solving skills and reduce risk for emotional/behavioural problems.

Figure 4, depicts the emerging theory guiding the present investigation and specifies how indigenous socialisation strategies enhance emotional competence in adolescence. Specifically, Nso cultural values model emotional competences, that are supportive and encouraging strategies in response to their children's emotions, help their children understand emotions and are more culturally/socially competent with fewer emotional / behavioural problems. Nso elders and parents socialized adaptive emotional expression, emotion regulation skills, and emotional understanding through proverbs, storytelling, myths, legends, cultural music and dances, cultural festivals, and indigenous games which demonstrate greater emotional competence among their children. Higher levels of emotional competence through social competence and problem solving skills, supports children's social competence, such that, emotionally competent children should be better able to compromise, share, and maintain positive interactions with peers and have fewer adjustment problems within their cultural settings. (Shey and Lukong, 2018).

Indigenous socialisation strategies among Nso people (oral tradition) are key constituent of children's everyday life and the means through which they participate in the process of knowledge production and transmission. Through interpretation of oral tradition, children produce knowledge and are able to regulate their emotions effectively in the process of socialisation, during interaction, children transmit knowledge in adherence to their specific cultural values that promote not only emotion regulation adjustment, but also contribute to their holistic development within the ecological setting. In this process, children make oral tradition part of their everyday life and understand their social world through it. It was also revealed that, rural children are embedded in intricate cultural practices, social orders and practices of generation-based division of labour and social responsibility. (Shey and Lukong, 2018). At the heart of the theory is the emerging concept of "Interdependent Reciprocal Determinism". This concept is an integral part of the emotion regulation adjustment theory which described the stage of emotion regulation adjustment alongside mechanisms that aid in procuring the optimal stage of "cultural selfhood".

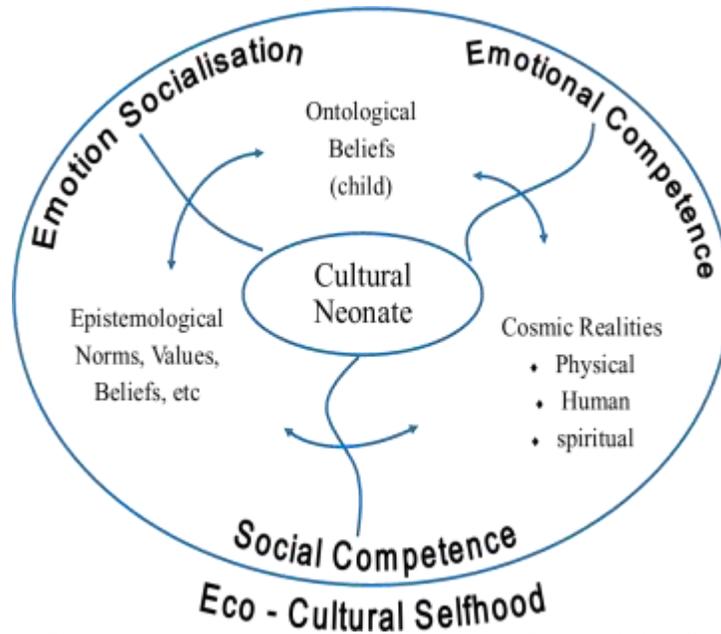


Figure 5: "Interdependent Reciprocal Determinism".
(Shey and Lukong, 2018)

Shey and Lukong, 2018, through the concept of Interdependent Reciprocal Determinism, recognizes the prominence of communal relationships that occur amid social competence, emotional competence and emotion socialisation. The discrete (cognitive), and the eco-cultural dynamics stimuli in understanding how individuals learn to adhere to cultural norms, and values. To him, emotional competence in childhood consists of children's symbiotic/interdependent ability to express and regulate emotions consistent with cultural/parental/societal expectations and children's ability to understand the traditional sources and significances of their own and others' emotions (Shey and Lukong, 2018). Thus, Social competence in childhood is best understood as children's ability to engross in social interaction, attain cultural goals, make and maintain friendships, and achieve communal and peer acceptance. Emotional competence which underpins children's social competence is based on successful cultural interaction and friendship formation through indigenous socialisation dynamics which requires children to express and regulate their emotions properly while applying their mastery of indigenous knowledge on emotions to respond properly to emic realities (Shey and Lukong, 2018).

Conversely, delays or disruptions in children's development of emotional competencies have serious, negative implications for children's transition to eco-cultural selfhood and peer contexts like the exhibition of knowledge acquisition in traditional routines, norms and values that shape the Nso people understanding of the cosmos metaphysical (ontology) and the cultural cosmology which emanates from the **physical, human/social and spiritual situations** of indigenous Nso societies. We must however note that these three

indigenous contents do not exist in isolation. Children with poor emotional competence who by extension lack the true acquisition of indigenous socialization skills have more difficulty forming not only peer relationships but communal dynamics of cultural integration and thus cannot perform certain traditional rite and rituals. Those are called cultural neonates (Lukong, 2018).

According to the theory, Parents, compound heads, cultural diviners, chiefs etc socialise children's emotions through their responses to children's emotions, their discussion and understanding of emotion, and by providing models of how to express and regulate emotions based on contextual priming and initiation to ontological beliefs (Shey and Lukong, 2018). Quite possibly, Nso communities that specifically teaches children cherished ontologies about cosmic dimension deemed relevant for the acquisition of eco-cultural selfhood both promotes emotional socialisation, social competence, emotional competence and reduces children's risk of becoming cultural neonates for the rest of their lives. It is imperative to note that the concept of cultural neonate is not developmentally restricted to a particular age. Adults like children could be considered cultural neonates. This stage is characterize of poor emotion regulation adjustment, which is vivid in lack of symbiotic/interdependent priming. Therefore teaching children how to understand and adaptively manage/express emotions in a variety of eco-cultural situations is imperative for eco-cultural selfhood. Consecutively, indigenous communities who fail to foster children's emotional competence are likely to have children who are cultural neonates (Shey and Lukong, 2018).

Therefore, the theory of Emotion Regulation Adjustment addresses how, throughout an eco-cultural milieu, children are co-participants in social and cultural life. The theory anchors human aptitude to regulate contextual emotions as partly determined by the social ecology in which the development occurs and by how the human being learns and develops through the understanding and adherence to the world around them. A major concept of Emotion Regulation Adjustment theory is **Interdependent Reciprocal Determinism**, defined as the ability to emotionally regulate culturally satisfactory behaviours which largely depend on symbiotic/interdependent contextual understanding (Attention) of the ancestral forces emanating from the physical, human/social and spiritual situations. The interaction between emotion socialisation, social competence and emotional competence are culturally interdependent (Shey and Lukong, 2018). The process depicts individual development as a function of more social and with less biological tenets. The non-exclusion of nature assumes that biology to a lesser degree underpins Interdependent Reciprocal Determinism.

The biological camaraderie that the human species share in the genetic code plays out into a mystifying diversity of specific individuality across eco-cultures. Thus, contextualist theorists stress how different emic pathways and intelligences are situated in the socio-ecological contexts and cultural systems in which children are nurtured. The empirical grounding of this theory is based on data from the Nso people of Cameroon, with supportive evidence in other parts of Africa. For example the universality of social ontogenesis offers an innovative impetus to conceptualize and generate developmental knowledge that empowers. It is a learning paradigm that permits the study of human development in the context of children's engagement of cognition when they are participants in cultural communities. This can expand visions and databases beyond restrictive Eurocentric grids (Nsamenang, 2005). The embedded knowledge, skills, and values children learn from these curricula are not compartmentalized into this or that activity, knowledge, or skill domain, but are massed together as integral to social interaction, cultural life, economic activities, and daily routines (Nsamenang, in 2005).

According to Shey and Lukong, 2018, the theory of indigenous Emotion Regulation Adjustment is based on five emic stages. These stages are interrelated and interwoven. The usage of developmental ages to connote various stages is simply for comprehension purposes. Indigenous stages of emotion regulation adjustment are not static. A child or an adult at any stage could demonstrate tenets of other stages. Spiritual-transitional ceremonies are evident in all the five stages. These are:

- 1) Spiritual initiationhood
- 2) Communal apprenticeship

- 3) Symbiotic/interdependent attention
- 4) Cosmic authentication and
- 5) Eco-cultural selfhood

Stage One: (Birth to Approximately 7years) Spiritual initiationhood

According to the emotion regulation adjustment theory, there are symbolic routines and repetitive activities and actions through which Nso People make connections with what they consider to be the most valuable dimension of life (cosmic realities eg ancestral interventions). They are associated with significant events or places in individual and communal lives. Spiritual initiations/rituals set aside specific times and places and provide us opportunity to ponder their meaning and to connect emotionally. Such spiritual meaningfulness include: birth/naming rites, adulthood rites, marriage rites, eldership rites, and ancestorship rites. Through such initiations, Nso children are accepted and dedicated to the ancestral world using the newborn name to connote blessings, cohesion, love, peace, etc. According to this theory, the process of spiritual intuition is a lifelong one which is interwoven in the other processes.

Stage Two: (8 to approximately 20years) Communal Apprenticeship

This is a stage in which neophytes advance their skills and understanding through participation with more skilled partners in culturally organized activities. The extended value of the apprenticeship prototypical is that it includes more people than a single expert and a single novice: the apprenticeship system often involves a group of novices (peers) or elders who serve as resources for one another in exploring the new domain and aiding and challenging one another. The existence of the traditional Nso children's indigenous games and songs, folktales, myths, stories and proverbs have greatly contributed in a holistic development of children through the Apprenticeship process, which is the understanding, modeling and reproduction of contextually relevant knowledge system.

Stage Three: (21 to a pproximately 45 years) Symbiotic/Interdependent Attention.

According to this theory, this stage refers to the indispensable Social interactions and channels of message transmission about acceptable behaviours amid the Nso clan. Members of Nso ethnic group speak the same language (Lamnsó), which is usually adopted in the transmission of cultural practices, norms and values. In this case the value of knowing (attention) not only how children grow up thinking, but also feeling and acting in a given society cannot be overemphasised. Children must be able through this process to pay attention, understand and target developmental phenomena in context.

Stage Four: (46 to approximately 50years) Reproduction Authentication

In stage four, individuals show cultural capabilities in order to reproduce the appropriate or contextually approved behaviours. Indigenous socialisation abilities are able to transform a cultural neonate into a cultural selfhood. Despite the fact that the individuals have maintained a mental picture of the learned cultural knowledge, ontologies and cosmic realities, approved behaviours are performed correctly. Lastly, by observing and deliberately doing exercises against certain behaviors, individuals can facilitate the learning process, at least can start the necessary cultural enhancement through the rites of adulthood, marriage and eldership in the community.

Stage Five: (51 years -death) Eco-cultural selfhood

This is the most advanced stage of Emotion Regulation adjustment that relies on cultural adaptation. Eco-cultural selfhood the optimal stage of peer emotion regulation contexts. It is a stage with a totality of maximal understanding or harmonious social competence, emotional competence and emotional socialisation. It is an exhibition stage of knowledge acquisition in traditional routines, norms and values that shape the Nso people understanding of metaphysical realities (ontology) and the cultural cosmic beliefs which emanates from the **physical, human/social and spiritual situations** of indigenous Nso societies.

The idea of the Indigenous Emotion Regulation Adjustment Theory combines the three elements of Africanhood (epistemology, ontology and cosmology) into a framework for thinking about children and adult regulation of emotion in cultural context (Shey and Lukong, 2018). It can be used to organise information about children's social, cognitive and personality development and to focus investigations for improving the lives of children and families. Although it is not a theory of development per say in the formal sense, the Indigenous Emotion Regulation Adjustment Theory provides a framework for understanding how cultures guide the process of emotion development. By using this structure, it is possible to see how the cultural environments of particular children are organised-to see how the culture is presented to the child at any particular time. This theory adds to the many Africentric reflections in explaining development from an eco-cultural perspective. Zukow (1989) laments "It is unclear if developmental psychology that is ordained for universal applicability has matured beyond excluding "95% of the world's children". It is apparently clear that Eurocentrism of the discipline pulls Africans "away from their roots, away from their own knowledge, and away from their own knowledge holders, into a crevasse of dependency on others whose values and understandings have been shaped in very different cultures, histories and

environments". Indigenous psychologies have a task to stand to enrich the discipline if developmental researchers could perceive their role first and always as a learner. Accordingly, we have proposed a theory of indigenous emotion regulation adjustment as a learning posture (Lukong, 2018) "to stir up interest and systematic exploration of distinctly indigenous patterns of development so that developmental research in Third World contexts may fertilise and expand the visions, methods, and knowledge of psychology beyond current (Western) moulds" (Nsamenang, 1992).

CONCLUSION

This article articulates the relevance of indigenous knowledge systems, with particular reference to Nso socialisation dynamics as a yardstick for emotion regulation adjustment. It discusses the concept of indigenous knowledge systems and how it affects emotional regulation within African societies. Particular reference is made to emotional regulation within childhood and adolescents, with the necessity of social adjustment within childhood as a stepping stone for what happens during adolescence. The paper emphasises on the decline in the use of African indigenous knowledge systems and little research that has been carried on this topic. Based on experiences from research amongst the Nso people of Cameroon, there is therefore to understand emotional regulation from an Africentric perspective, guided by theoretical perspective "*Indigenous theory of Emotion Regulation Adjustment*" that is grounded within social orientations that are contextual and relevant to Africans.

These possibilities should not be considered in isolation from other perspectives but should form part of a respectful, generative process that opens new channels for discussion and dialogue. Our role, we believe, has been to introduce a 'stutter' into a powerful international narrative, to create a space for other ideas and perspectives, in this case from Africa, to be heard and considered. The purpose of the stutter is not to exclude, but to include ours is not an isolationist argument. The argument, instead, is for recognition and inclusion of diversity. There is much the Minority World can do to support the Majority World in its quest for child well-being, for funds and influence reside in the West in disproportionate quantities. Those powers should not be used to 'show the way' (the legacy of Social Darwinism, colonisation, and far too much of the development movement), but to support Africa's efforts to hear its own voices, among others, and to seek its own way forward. It will find that way through children who understand and appreciate multiple worlds, through young scholars that frame their own contextually sensitive research questions, and through leaders that appreciate the riches of the past, as much as the possibilities of the future.

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