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Editorial

This edition of *NIU Journal of Humanities* touches on Social Philosophy, Social Psychology as well as Language and Literary Studies.

The first part of the Journal focuses on Social Philosophy. Using Nigeria as a case study, one of the papers in this section empirically argues that democracy and national security are intertwined, and that addressing the theoretical issues underlying these concepts is crucial for ensuring the country's stability and prosperity. It argues that a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between democracy, security, and development is necessary to overcome the challenges facing Nigeria and to build a more secure and democratic polity.

Papers in the second section are on Social Psychology. Using Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria as case studies, one of the papers in these sections argues theoretically and demonstrates empirically that frequent disruptions of school academic activities due to the fear of kidnapping was among factors responsible for the decline in girl-child enrollment, hence, there is urgent need to address this critical issue. It is therefore recommended that security outfits around the schools' premises should be increased to protect girls from bandit attacks and ensure a safe environment for learning activities.

One of the papers, in the last section on Language and Literary Studies, evaluates the extent to which Igbo language and sign language are accessible within key institutional domains in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study reveals that meaningful linguistic inclusion requires institutional policies that support both indigenous spoken languages and sign language. It is believed that such measures will improve communication access, social participation, and civic inclusion for marginalized linguistic communities in Lagos.

This issue of *NIU Journal of Humanities* features many empirical and theoretical based articles which can be of great benefit to every reader.

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Part One
Social Philosophy



Socioeconomic Dynamics of Migrant Remittances and Nutritional Well-Being among Rural Esan Households in Southern Nigeria

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Abstract. The relationship between migrant remittances and household nutritional well-being has become an important lens for understanding livelihood transformation in developing societies. Among the Esan of southern Nigeria, this nexus remains underexplored despite growing migration and dependence on external income. Existing studies often emphasize economic outcomes, neglecting how remittances reshape everyday feeding behaviour and nutrition. Despite the improvement in current research there is paucity on current study this seeks to interrogates how remittance flows influence dietary practices and nutritional security among Esan households in Edo State. Adopting a cross-sectional and an expository research design, the study employed a Triangulation of both Quantitative and qualitative approach to generate the required information through the use of questionnaire and an in-depth interview guild was complementarily utilized on 726 respondents who were systematically selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure across two clusters in Esanland. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Findings reveals that migrant remittances exert a substantial but differentiated influence on household nutritional status as well as wellbeing among Esan communities. Secondly, socio-demographic factors such as age, occupation, and social status influences household perceived utilization of remittances in enhancing dietary diversity, food quality, and affordability, based on the above, conclusion and advocacy was deduced

Keywords: Nutrition, Wellbeing, Remittances, Food security.

1. Introduction

Nutrition represents a core requirement for human survival and socio-biological development, referring to the systematic processes through which the body obtains, metabolizes, and utilizes food to sustain growth, generate energy, repair tissues, and preserve optimal physical and mental functioning. Effective

nutrition relies on the adequate intake, digestion, absorption, and utilization of essential nutrients, including carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water. Despite its centrality to well-being, malnutrition persists as a major global public health challenge, with rural populations bearing a disproportionate burden due to structural, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities. Recent evidence indicates that about 33.3 percent of rural adults experience moderate to severe food insecurity, compared with 26 percent in urban settings. In sub-Saharan Africa, structural inequalities, poverty, weak infrastructure, and limited dietary diversity contribute to persistently high levels of child stunting and wasting, often surpassing national undernourishment averages such as those reported in Nigeria (Adeyanju & Fadupin, 2024; UNICEF, 2024).

Within this context, migration has emerged as a significant socioeconomic strategy for household survival and welfare enhancement. The movement of persons across local and international boundaries generates remittance flows in the form of money, food, and material support to households in migrant-sending communities. These transfers reshape household economic capacities and consumption patterns. By augmenting income, remittances improve access to diverse and adequate food, thereby strengthening nutritional well-being. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that remittance-receiving households allocate more resources to food and health needs, resulting in improved nutritional outcomes (Babatunde, 2018; Davis & Brazil, 2016; Alenkhe, 2011). Consequently, migrant remittances operate as a critical socioeconomic mechanism linking migration processes to nutrition security in vulnerable rural households.

Nutrition constitutes a foundational household necessity, closely linked to livelihoods and overall well-being. Scholars such as Yuri, Urama, and Urom (2018) and Ndisika (2018) observe that migrants routinely transmit financial and material resources to

support the needs of relatives in their places of origin. These remittances serve not only as economic transfers but also as social instruments that sustain familial ties and enhance household food security, extending their influence beyond the immediate family unit to broader community welfare (Sadoh & Alenkhe, 2014). In many developing contexts, however, pervasive poverty continues to undermine access to adequate and nutritious food. In Nigeria, worsening economic conditions, rising food prices, and income instability have intensified vulnerabilities to hunger and malnutrition (Isenyo, 2016).

Although remittances are widely assumed to cushion households against food insecurity, their actual contribution to nutritional well-being remains uneven and context-specific. The ways in which remittance income is allocated, the stability of transfers, and existing socioeconomic constraints may mediate their effectiveness in improving diet quality rather than merely increasing food quantity. Despite the prominence of migration in southern Nigeria, particularly among the Esan people who constitute the second-largest ethnic group in Edo State (NPC, 2016), empirical evidence linking remittance flows to concrete nutritional outcomes in rural Esan households is limited. This gap raises critical questions about whether migrant remittances translate

into sustained improvements in nutrition or simply provide short-term coping mechanisms. Consequently, examining the socioeconomic dynamics through which remittances shape food security and nutritional well-being among rural Esan households becomes both timely and necessary.

2. Research Methodology

A cross-sectional survey and expository research design was adopted for the study as it seeks to examine Esan rural household members who maintain regular contact with family members residing outside their home communities as well as their remittances influence on their nutritional status and wellbeing. The research was conducted across sixteen purposively selected communities within two Local Government Areas (Esan West and Esan North-East) in the Edo Central Senatorial District of Edo State. 726 respondents were systematically selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure across two clusters in Esanland. Also, household Head were interviewed using purposive sampling. Data collected were analysed using an descriptive statistic for the quantitative and for the qualitative data, thematic content analysis was adopted to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the study findings

3. Findings

Variables	Response categories	Esan North East (n=348)	Esan-West (n=378)	Total (n=726)
Age	21-30	1 (0.3)	31 (8.2)	32 (4.4)
	31-40	18 (5.2)	47 (12.4)	65 (9.0)
	41-50	94 (27.0)	144 (38.1)	238 (32.8)
	51-60	144 (41.4)	111 (29.4)	255 (35.1)
	61-70	74 (21.3)	35 (9.3)	109 (15.0)
	70+	17 (4.9)	10 (2.6)	27 (3.7)
	<i>Mean Age</i>			
Sex	Male	181 (52.0)	202 (53.4)	383 (52.8)
	Female	167 (48.0)	176 (46.6)	343 (47.2)
Highest Level of Education	No formal education	89 (25.5)	81 (21.4)	170 (23.4)
	Primary Six	65 (18.7)	48 (12.7)	113 (15.6)
	SSCE	50 (14.4)	73 (19.3)	123 (16.9)
	OND	41 (11.8)	48 (12.7)	89 (12.3)
	HND/BSc	64 (18.4)	70 (18.5)	134 (18.5)
	MSc	23 (6.6)	37 (9.8)	60 (8.3)
	PhD	16 (4.6)	21 (5.6)	37 (5.1)
Marital Status	Single	33 (9.5)	61 (16.1)	94 (12.9)
	Cohabiting	21 (6.0)	30 (7.9)	51 (7.0)
	Married	225 (64.7)	227 (60.1)	452 (62.3)
	Divorced/Separated	31 (8.9)	39 (10.3)	70 (9.6)
	Widowed	38 (10.9)	21 (5.6)	59 (8.1)
Occupation	Unemployed	42 (12.1)	86 (22.8)	128 (17.6)
	Student	-	4 (1.1)	4 (0.6)
	Self-employed	191 (54.9)	161 (42.6)	352 (48.5)
	Civil servant	86 (24.7)	98 (25.9)	184 (25.3)
	Banker	13 (3.7)	13 (3.4)	26 (3.6)
	Religious leader	13 (3.7)	11 (2.9)	24 (3.3)
	Others	3 (0.9)	5 (1.3)	8 (1.1)
Position in the Household	Husband	132 (37.9)	128 (33.9)	260 (35.8)
	Wife	109 (31.3)	108 (28.6)	217 (29.9)
	Daughter	43 (12.4)	63 (16.7)	106 (14.6)
	Son	54 (15.5)	76 (20.1)	130 (17.9)
	Other	10 (2.9)	3 (0.8)	13 (1.8)
Religion	Christianity	205 (58.9)	217 (57.4)	422 (58.1)
	Islam	66 (19.0)	86 (22.8)	152 (20.9)
	African Traditional Religion	77 (22.1)	75 (19.8)	152 (20.9)
Monthly income	Less than N15000	37 (10.6)	35 (9.3)	72 (9.9)
	N15000 – N20000	50 (14.4)	66 (17.5)	116 (16.0)
	N20001 – N40000	47 (13.5)	73 (19.3)	120 (16.5)
	N40001 – N60000	40 (11.5)	63 (16.7)	103 (14.2)
	N60001 – N80000	66 (19.0)	48 (12.7)	114 (15.7)
	N80001 – N100000	69 (19.8)	47 (12.4)	116 (16.0)
	N100000 and above	39 (11.2)	46 (12.2)	85 (11.7)

Table 1: Distribution by the socio-demographic data of respondents

NB: Figures in parentheses are in percentage (%)

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents from the household survey. The mean age of respondents was 50.24 ± 9.93 years, indicating a predominantly middle-aged population. Age distribution shows that most respondents in Esan North East (41.4%) and Esan West (38.1%) were within the 41–50 age bracket, representing about one-third (32.8%) of the total sample. The youngest cohort (21–30 years) was least represented, accounting for only 0.3% in Esan North East and 8.2% in Esan West. Sex composition was relatively balanced across the two LGAs, with males constituting 52.0% in Esan North East and 53.4% in Esan West, while females represented 48.0% and 46.6% respectively. Educational attainment indicates that a substantial proportion possessed tertiary qualifications, particularly HND/BSc (18.4% in Esan North East; 18.5% in Esan West) and MSc (6.6% and 9.8%). Nevertheless, about one-quarter of respondents reported no formal education (25.5% in Esan North East; 21.4% in Esan West).

Marital status shows marriage as the dominant category, comprising 64.7% of respondents in Esan North East and 60.1% in Esan West. Singles and divorced/separated respondents were more prevalent in Esan West than in Esan North East. Occupationally, self-employment predominated in both areas (54.9% in Esan North East; 42.6% in Esan West),

though unemployment was higher in Esan West (22.8%) than Esan North East (12.1%). Within households, respondents were mainly husbands and wives. Christianity emerged as the major religion, followed by African Traditional Religion. Income distribution indicates concentration within the ₦20,001–₦40,000 and ₦60,001–₦80,000 brackets, while the lowest earners (<₦15,000) constituted the smallest share in both LGAs.

Variables	Response categories	Esan North East (n=348)	Esan-West (n=378)	Total (n=726)
Number of Household members that migrated	1-3	318 (91.4)	320 (84.7)	638 (87.9)
	4-6	29 (8.3)	47 (12.4)	76 (10.5)
	7 and above	1 (0.3)	11 (2.9)	12 (1.7)
Types of migration/ remittances they engaged in	Internal	206 (59.2)	296 (78.5)	502 (69.2)
	International	135 (38.8)	74 (19.6)	209 (28.8)
	Both internal and international	7 (2.0)	7 (1.9)	14 (1.9)
Relationship with the migrant	Father	20 (5.7)	49 (13.0)	69 (9.5)
	Mother	9 (2.6)	49 (13.0)	58 (8.0)
	Brother	90 (25.9)	67 (17.7)	157 (21.6)
	Sister	42 (12.1)	43 (11.4)	85 (11.7)
	Son	74 (21.3)	70 (18.5)	144 (19.8)
	Daughter	46 (13.2)	30 (7.9)	76 (10.5)
	Cousin	49 (14.1)	39 (10.3)	88 (12.1)
	Distant relatives	18 (5.2)	31 (8.2)	49 (6.7)
Duration the migrant has been away	Less than a year	92 (26.4)	104 (27.5)	196 (27.0)
	1-3 years	61 (17.5)	115 (30.4)	176 (24.2)
	3-5 years	89 (25.6)	72 (19.0)	161 (22.2)
	5 years +	106 (30.5)	87 (23.0)	193 (26.6)
If the migrant call home regularly	Yes	218 (62.6)	268 (70.9)	486 (66.9)
	No	130 (37.4)	110 (29.1)	240 (33.1)
The frequency of migrant calling home	Daily	102 (29.3)	155 (41.0)	257 (35.4)
	Weekly	140 (40.2)	82 (21.7)	222 (30.6)
	Bi-monthly	70 (20.1)	35 (9.3)	105 (14.5)
	Monthly	23 (6.6)	54 (14.3)	77 (10.6)
	Anytime	13 (3.7)	52 (13.8)	65 (9.0)
If the migrant often visits home	Yes	130 (37.4)	234 (61.9)	364 (50.1)
	No	218 (62.6)	144 (38.1)	362 (49.9)
The migrant has sent home items in the last one year	Yes	246 (70.7)	284 (75.1)	530 (73.0)
	No	102 (29.3)	94 (24.9)	196 (27.0)
Amount remitted in the past one year	Below N100, 000	35 (22.0)	22 (15.6)	57 (19.0)
	N100,001-N200,000	52 (32.7)	23 (16.3)	75 (25.0)
	N200,001-N300,000	21 (13.2)	12 (8.5)	33 (11.0)
	N300,001-N400,000	9 (5.7)	3 (2.1)	12 (4.0)
	N400,001-N500,000	6 (3.8)	12 (8.5)	18 (6.0)
	N500,001-N600,000	3 (1.9)	15 (10.6)	18 (6.0)
	N600,001-N700,000	-	7 (5.0)	7 (2.3)
	N700,001-N800,000	6 (3.8)	5 (3.5)	11 (3.7)
	N800,001 +	27 (17.0)	42 (29.8)	69 (23.0)
The frequency with which migrants send money and items back home	More than 3 times	44 (29.9)	38 (23.8)	82 (26.7)
	2-3 times	81 (55.1)	91 (56.9)	172 (56.0)
	More than 1 time	22 (15.0)	31 (19.4)	53 (17.3)

Table 2: Distribution by Social Relationship with Migrant

NB: Figures in parentheses are in percentage (%)

The analysis of Tables 2 reveals households' social relationships with migrants. The findings indicate that most households in both Esan North East and Esan West had between one and three migrant members, accounting for 91.4% and 84.7% respectively. Only a small proportion reported four to six migrants, while very few households had seven or more migrant members (0.3% in Esan North East and about 2.9% in Esan West). Regarding migration type, internal migration predominated across both LGAs, representing 59.2% of migrants in Esan North East and 78.5% in Esan West. International migration was less common, accounting for 38.8% in Esan North East and 19.6% in Esan West, while only marginal proportions combined internal and international mobility.

In terms of kinship ties, brothers constituted the largest category of migrants (25.9% in Esan North East; 17.7% in Esan West). Fathers, sons, and daughters also featured prominently, whereas mothers, sisters, cousins, and distant relatives were comparatively fewer. Duration of absence shows that most migrants had lived away for over five years (30.5% in Esan North East; 23.0% in Esan West), followed by those away for one to three years. Communication patterns indicate sustained social ties, as most households reported regular contact with migrants (62.6% in Esan North East; 70.9% in Esan West), with weekly communication being the most common. Visiting behaviour differed significantly: most migrants in Esan West visited home frequently (61.9%), whereas the majority in Esan North East did not (62.6%).

Remittance behaviour was widespread, with over two-thirds of households receiving money or items in the preceding year (70.7% in Esan North East; 75.1% in Esan West). Amounts commonly ranged between ₦100,001–₦200,000 and ₦200,001–₦300,000. Transfers below ₦100,000 also constituted notable shares. Remittances were typically sent two to three times annually, followed by households receiving transfers more than three times within the year.

Table 3: Changes Resulting from Remittances on Current Nutritional Status of Esan Households with at least one Migrant

Variables	Response categories	Esan North East(n=348)	Esan-West (n=378)	Total (n=726)
Remittances from migrant affects the household feeding	Yes	211 (60.6)	241 (63.8)	452 (62.3)
	No	137 (39.4)	137 (36.2)	274 (37.7)
State how remittances affected the household feeding	Feeding more regularly	17 (8.1)	16 (6.6)	33 (7.3)
	Availability of more food	31 (14.7)	31 (12.9)	62 (13.7)
	Eating of variety of meals	76 (36.0)	96 (39.8)	172 (38.1)
	Changing diet	25 (11.8)	30 (12.4)	55 (12.2)
	Feeding well/better	24 (11.4)	27 (11.2)	51 (11.3)
	Access to resources for food	26 (12.3)	15 (6.2)	41 (9.1)
	Increase in food quality/quantity	12 (5.7)	26 (10.8)	38 (8.4)
Before remittances, daily meal variety was not achievable	Yes	243 (69.8)	290 (76.7)	533 (73.4)
	No	105 (30.2)	88 (23.3)	193 (26.6)
There are changes now resulting from remittances	Yes	160 (65.8)	192 (66.4)	352 (66.2)
	No	83 (34.2)	97 (33.6)	180 (33.8)
State the changes	Improved food quality	70(20.2)	53(14)	123(35.0)
	Enhanced food affordability	49(14.1)	58(15.4)	107(30.5)
	Adequate nutritional rich diet	38(10.9)	83(22.0)	121(34.5)
Food intake is richer and better due to remittances	Yes	179 (51.4)	190 (50.3)	369 (50.8)
	No	169 (48.6)	188 (49.7)	357 (49.2)
If yes, Please explain	Regular daily meal variety	34 (9.8)	53 (14.0)	87 (12.0)
	Better meal	1 (0.3)	18 (4.8)	19 (2.6)
	Better quality meal	51 (14.7)	21 (5.6)	72 (9.9)
	Complete diet	30 (8.6)	30 (7.9)	60 (8.3)
	More proteinous meal	53 (15.2)	66 (17.5)	119 (16.4)

NB: Figures in parentheses are in percentage (%)

Results from the table present the distribution of respondents according to changes in nutritional outcomes associated with migrant remittances among Esan households with at least one migrant member. Findings indicate that remittances significantly shape household feeding practices in both Esan North East

and Esan West. Specifically, 60.6% of respondents in Esan North East and 63.8% in Esan West acknowledged that remittances influence household feeding patterns, while a smaller proportion expressed contrary views. In terms of mechanisms, remittances were widely perceived to enhance dietary diversity

and food availability. A large share of households reported increased consumption of varied meals (38.1%) and improved food availability (13.7%). Others noted changes in diet composition (12.2%), better feeding practices (11.3%), greater capacity to purchase preferred foods (9.1%), and improved food quality and quantity (8.4%). Only a few respondents indicated more regular feeding as the main effect.

Before receiving remittances, most households lacked daily meal variety. Evidence shows that 69.8% of households in Esan North East and 76.7% in Esan West did not enjoy diverse meals prior to migrant support, underscoring existing nutritional constraints. Following remittance inflows, 66.2% of respondents reported noticeable changes in dietary habits, suggesting that remittances contribute to the modification of food consumption patterns. Post-remittance improvements were mainly reflected in enhanced food quality (35.0%), improved affordability of nutritious foods (30.5%), and greater access to nutritionally rich diets (24.0%). A smaller proportion emphasized strengthened food security (10.5%), indicating improved availability, access, utilization, and stability of food supplies.

Perception of nutritional improvement was moderately positive. About half of respondents in both Esan North East (51.4%) and Esan West (50.3%) believed that their food intake had become richer and better due to remittances, whereas nearly half remained unconvinced. Among those perceiving improvement, the dominant reasons included increased consumption of protein-rich foods (16.4%), regular meal variety (12.0%), and better-quality meals (9.9%). Others cited access to complete diets (8.3%). Overall, while remittances enhance several dimensions of household nutrition, perceptions of benefit vary across socio-demographic contexts and expectations.

In corroboration with the above findings, respondent gave determinant for their narratives on the changes or no change in their nutritional habit despite the initiation of migrant remittances. This ranges from factors such as Age, occupation, non-active service and social status influences the participant responses. On the positive response from participants, respondents stated that age, occupation and social status play key role in influencing the respondent's narrative on the subject matter.

Age

On the ground of age, there may seem to be no changes on the household head but on the household members the narrative seems different as a respondents said:

I am an old man who is closer to where he is going to than where he is coming from. Food to me now is never a priority as I hardly eat huge chunk of food especially considering my health. However, with my children money I eat what I want especially fresh vegetable, fish and other things that will help prolong my health. But my household members are feeding well and better because their siblings outside is sending them money for their upkeep. (IDI – Male Retired civil servant- Esan North East- 2023)

From another participant, the narrative shows that remittances from children critically supports the family's sustenance and dignity amid economic hardship. He noted that:

The money they (my children) sent to me has been of great help in my household feeding as well as our daily upkeep. My son knows how the situation is at home and they help me to cover the disgrace of not only getting quality food to eat but in varieties. especially this critical time where the government is not helping matters. (IDI- Male Pensioner- Esan North West - 2023)

Social Status

Social status is a determinant to the responses of respondents on the influence of remittances on current nutritional status of household members. As a respondents said:

My son, no amount of money is too much, when it comes to feeding. I have many households to feed and my income cannot carry it but the support from my children especially the ones overseas, have made it easier for me to carry on without complain. The amount of money we spend on feeding is no small amount. We buy bag of rice every month, not the soup ingredients, nor other food items like yams, beans, etc. look at me I eat certain food due to my health and based on doctors' prescription, so plantain, wheat, beans etc. are the kind of food I eat and it has been easier getting it with the money from my children. So, I can say that my feeding habit have been duly improved due to the money from my children outside the state. (IDI-Elder Stateman and Politician- Esan West-2023)

In a similar response, a participant gave his narrative that the daughter's migration and subsequent financial support have significantly alleviated the burden of feeding and improved the diet for the retired participant household. It was narrated that:

My son, as a retiree and position in this community. things are pretty tough and the travelling of my children (especially my daughter) came at the right time. Upon retirement, feeding my household was not

an easy task and the burden was becoming increasingly too much, until she travelled. Her support for our feeding is greatly helpful in quality and quantity by enriching our diet/meal to a great extent. She has taken the burden off my shoulder (IDI- Retired Male Civil servant- Esan West-2023)

Occupation

Occupation is also a determinant that influences the perception of the participant toward the influence of remittances on nutritional status as well as the feeding habit of household members. In this, a narrator suggests that while financial support from relatives abroad has been consistent, it has not significantly altered their already satisfactory feeding habit. In his word:

My son, as men grow old, they eat less. Whether they have the money or not. My relative oversea have been sending money home for our welfare and upkeep which covers feeding. I may say there is no significant change in the feeding habit in my household because we are feeding well before they left and we are still feeding well now (IDI – Farmer-Esan North East-2023)

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study reveals that migrant remittances exert a substantial but differentiated influence on household nutritional status as well as wellbeing among Esan communities. While remittances generally enhance dietary diversity, food quality, and affordability, their effects are mediated by socio-demographic factors such as age, occupation, and social status. Households with greater dependency and social obligations experience stronger nutritional gains, whereas those already food-secure report marginal change. Overall, remittances function as an important livelihood strategy, improving nutritional wellbeing while reflecting existing social and economic heterogeneity.

Based on these, the study advocates the following:

- Government and development agencies should integrate nutrition education into rural livelihood programs to help households utilize remittances more effectively for balanced and nutrient-rich diets, especially for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.
- Governmental should enact Policies that encourage households to channel part of remittances into small-scale agriculture and food-related enterprises such as home

gardening, poultry, food storage. thereby improving long-term food security beyond short-term consumption gains.

- Local governments should expand livelihood support and social protection schemes for households without migrants to reduce nutritional inequality and ensure broader access to quality food, since remittance benefits are socially differentiated.

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Theoretical Issues in Nigeria's Democracy and National Security

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Abstract. Nigeria's democratic journey has been marked by numerous challenges, raising concerns about the efficacy of its democratic system in ensuring national security. This paper examines the theoretical issues underlying Nigeria's democracy and national security, highlighting the complexities and contradictions that have hindered the country's progress. The liberal democratic theory, which emphasizes individual rights, free markets, and good governance, has been the dominant framework guiding Nigeria's democratic experiment. However, this theory has limitations in addressing Nigeria's security challenges, particularly in the context of deep-seated ethnic and regional divisions. The securitization theory, which posits that security is a socially constructed concept, offers valuable insights into Nigeria's security landscape. The paper explores how various groups and interests have securitized issues like terrorism, kidnapping, and communal conflicts, often to the detriment of human security and democratic governance. Furthermore, the paper analyzes the impact of ethnic and regional politics, corruption, and weak institutions on Nigeria's democratic consolidation and national security. These factors have undermined the state's capacity to provide security and deliver public goods, creating an environment conducive to insecurity and instability. The paper concludes that Nigeria's democracy and national security are intertwined, and that addressing the theoretical issues underlying these concepts is crucial for ensuring the country's stability and prosperity. It argues that a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between democracy, security, and development is necessary to overcome the challenges facing Nigeria and to build a more secure and democratic polity.

Keywords: Democracy, Liberal Theory, Securitization, Regional Politics and Corruption.

1. Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has been grappling with numerous security challenges,

including terrorism, kidnapping, and communal conflicts (Akinola, 2018). These challenges have raised concerns about the efficacy of Nigeria's democratic system in ensuring national security. Since its transition to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has made significant strides in consolidating its democratic institutions and promoting economic development. However, the country still faces significant security challenges that have undermined its democratic progress and hindered its economic growth. The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in 2009, has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and the displacement of millions of people (Adebanwi, 2017). The conflict has also had a devastating impact on Nigeria's economy, with estimates suggesting that it has cost the country over \$9 billion in lost revenue (Oyewole, 2019). The security challenges facing Nigeria are complex and multifaceted, and they require a nuanced understanding of the theoretical issues underlying the country's democracy and national security. This paper examines the theoretical issues underlying Nigeria's democracy and national security, highlighting the complexities and contradictions that have hindered the country's progress. The paper argues that Nigeria's democracy and national security are intertwined, and that addressing the theoretical issues underlying these concepts is crucial for ensuring the country's stability and prosperity.

2. Liberal Democratic Theory and Nigeria's Democracy

The liberal democratic theory, which emphasizes individual rights, free markets, and good governance, has been the dominant framework guiding Nigeria's democratic experiment (Diamond, 2015). This theory posits that democracy is the best form of government for ensuring individual freedom, promoting economic development, and maintaining national security. However, this theory has limitations in addressing Nigeria's security challenges, particularly in the context of deep-seated ethnic and regional divisions. Nigeria's democratic system has been characterized by weak institutions, corruption, and ethnic and regional

politics (Adebanwi, 2017). These factors have undermined the state's capacity to provide security and deliver public goods, creating an environment conducive to insecurity and instability. Furthermore, the liberal democratic theory's emphasis on individual rights has been criticized for neglecting the collective rights and interests of Nigeria's diverse ethnic and regional groups (Nwankwo, 2019). Nigeria's adoption of liberal democratic theory has been marked by challenges. The theory emphasizes individual rights, free markets, and good governance, but Nigeria's diverse ethnic and regional groups often prioritize collective interests over individual rights (Adebanwi, 2017). This has led to tensions and conflicts, undermining democratic consolidation. One of the key challenges facing Nigeria's democracy is the tension between individual rights and collective interests. The liberal democratic theory prioritizes individual rights, but Nigeria's diverse ethnic and regional groups often prioritize their own interests over national interests (Suberu, 2018). This has led to conflicts and tensions, undermining democratic governance.

Another challenge facing Nigeria's democracy is the weakness of institutions. The country's institutions are often weak and ineffective, failing to hold leaders accountable for their actions (Adeoye, 2019). This has led to corruption and abuse of power, undermining democratic governance. The liberal democratic theory also emphasizes the importance of free markets and economic development. However, Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on oil, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil has significant implications for the country's economy and democracy (Oyewole, 2019).

In conclusion, liberal democratic theory provides a foundation for Nigeria's democracy, but the country's unique context and challenges require adaptations to the theory. Nigeria's leaders must prioritize collective interests, strengthen institutions, and promote economic development to ensure the success of democracy in the country.

3. Securitization Theory and Nigeria's Security Landscape

The securitization theory posits that security is a socially constructed concept (Buzan, 1991). In Nigeria, various groups have securitized issues like terrorism, kidnapping, and communal conflicts, often prioritizing state security over human security (Oyewole, 2019). This has led to militarization and undermined democratic governance. The securitization of security issues has had significant implications for Nigeria's security landscape. For

instance, the military's response to Boko Haram has been criticized for prioritizing state security over human security, leading to human rights abuses (Adebanwi, 2017). Similarly, the government's response to communal conflicts has often been securitized, leading to violence and displacement (Suberu, 2018). The securitization of security issues has also led to the militarization of Nigeria's security landscape. The military has played a dominant role in addressing security challenges, often undermined democratic governance and human security (Akinola, 2018).

The securitization of security issues has also had significant implications for human security in Nigeria. The prioritization of state security over human security has led to human rights abuses and undermined the protection of civilians (Nwankwo, 2019). For instance, the military's response to Boko Haram has led to the displacement of millions of people, exacerbating humanitarian crises. The securitization of security issues has also had significant implications for Nigeria's democracy. The prioritization of state security over human security has undermined democratic governance and accountability (Oyewole, 2019). For instance, the government's response to security challenges has often been characterized by emergency measures, undermining democratic institutions and processes. In sum, the securitization of security issues has had significant implications for Nigeria's security landscape. The prioritization of state security over human security has undermined democratic governance and human security, highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach to security.

4. Ethnic and Regional Politics and National Security

Nigeria's ethnic and regional politics have contributed significantly to the country's security challenges. The country's diverse ethnic and regional groups often prioritize their own interests over national interests, creating tensions and conflicts that undermine national security (Suberu, 2018). Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups, each with their own unique culture, language, and identity. The three major ethnic groups - Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo - have historically dominated the country's politics, leading to tensions and conflicts with other ethnic groups (Adebanwi, 2017). The country's regional politics have also contributed to security challenges. The north-south divide has been a major source of tension, with the north often feeling marginalized and the south feeling dominated (Oyewole, 2019).

The ethnic and regional tensions have had significant implications for national security. For instance, the Boko Haram insurgency in the north has been fueled by ethnic and regional tensions, while the communal conflicts in the Middle Belt have been exacerbated by ethnic and regional politics (Akinola, 2018).

The country's ethnic and regional politics have also undermined the effectiveness of security institutions. The military and police have often been accused of ethnic and regional bias, undermining their ability to address security challenges (Nwankwo, 2019). The consequences of ethnic and regional politics on national security have been severe. The country has experienced a rise in ethnic and regional militias, leading to increased violence and instability (Suberu, 2018).

The country's economy has also been affected, with the insecurity undermining investment and economic growth (Adeoye, 2019).

Addressing the challenge of ethnic and regional politics requires a nuanced approach. The government must prioritize national interests over ethnic and regional interests, promoting a sense of national identity and unity (Oyewole, 2019). The government must also address the root causes of ethnic and regional tensions, promoting economic development and addressing issues of marginalization and exclusion (Akinola, 2018).

5. Corruption and Weak Institutions

Corruption and weak institutions have been major challenges to Nigeria's democracy and national security. Corruption has undermined the state's capacity to provide security and deliver public goods, creating an environment conducive to insecurity and instability (Adeoye, 2019). Corruption in Nigeria takes many forms, including embezzlement, bribery, and nepotism. The country's oil sector has been particularly prone to corruption, with billions of dollars in oil revenues being siphoned off by corrupt officials (Nwankwo, 2018). Corruption has had a devastating impact on Nigeria's economy and security. It has undermined the government's ability to provide basic services, including security, healthcare, and education (Adebanwi, 2017). Corruption has also contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. The lack of effective governance and the prevalence of corruption have created an environment in which criminal groups and terrorists can thrive (Oyewole, 2019). Nigeria's institutions are often weak and ineffective, failing to hold leaders accountable for their actions. The country's judiciary, legislature, and law enforcement agencies have been criticized for their lack of

independence and effectiveness (Suberu, 2018). The weakness of Nigeria's institutions has had significant consequences for the country's security and democracy. It has undermined the rule of law, creating an environment in which impunity and corruption thrive (Akinola, 2018). Addressing corruption and weak institutions requires a comprehensive approach. The government must strengthen institutions, promote transparency and accountability, and ensure that leaders are held accountable for their actions (Nwankwo, 2019). The government must also promote economic development and reduce poverty, addressing the root causes of corruption and insecurity (Adeoye, 2019).

6. The Impact of Globalization on Nigeria's Democracy and National Security

Globalization has had a significant impact on Nigeria's democracy and national security. On the one hand, globalization has brought opportunities for economic development, democratization, and access to global markets (Adebanwi, 2017). However, globalization has also posed challenges to Nigeria's democracy and national security. The country has faced increased exposure to global security threats, including terrorism and cybercrime (Oyewole, 2019). Increased economic opportunities: Globalization has opened up new markets and opportunities for Nigeria's economy, promoting economic growth and development (Adeoye, 2019). Democratization: Globalization has promoted democratic values and principles, contributing to Nigeria's transition to democracy (Nwankwo, 2018). Access to global markets: Globalization has provided Nigeria with access to global markets, promoting trade and investment (Suberu, 2018).

Security threats: Globalization has exposed Nigeria to global security threats, including terrorism and cybercrime (Akinola, 2018). **Economic dependence:** Globalization has made Nigeria's economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global markets, exacerbating economic instability (Adebanwi, 2017). **Cultural homogenization:** Globalization has led to the spread of Western culture, threatening Nigeria's cultural identity (Oyewole, 2019).

6.1 Impact on National Security

Increased security threats: Globalization has increased Nigeria's exposure to global security threats, including terrorism and cybercrime (Akinola, 2018). **Weakened state capacity:** Globalization has weakened Nigeria's state capacity, making it difficult for the government to address security challenges (Nwankwo, 2018).

Increased inequality: Globalization has exacerbated inequality in Nigeria, creating social and economic tensions that undermine national security (Suberu, 2018). Globalization has had a complex impact on Nigeria's democracy and national security. While it has brought opportunities for economic development and democratization, it has also posed significant challenges to the country's security and stability. To address these challenges, Nigeria must develop a comprehensive strategy that promotes economic development, strengthens institutions, and addresses security threats.

7. The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Democracy and National Security

Civil society plays a crucial role in promoting democracy and national security in Nigeria. Civil society organizations (CSOs) have been at the forefront of advocating for democratic reforms, promoting transparency and accountability, and addressing security challenges (Adebanwi, 2017).

7.1 Promoting Democracy

Advocacy and Activism: CSOs have been instrumental in advocating for democratic reforms, including electoral reform, constitutional review, and anti-corruption efforts (Nwankwo, 2018). **Civic Education:** CSOs have promoted civic education, empowering citizens with the knowledge and skills to participate in democratic processes (Oyewole, 2019). **Monitoring and Evaluation:** CSOs have monitored government activities, promoting transparency and accountability (Suberu, 2018).

7.2 Promoting National Security

Conflict Resolution: CSOs have played a key role in resolving conflicts and promoting peace in Nigeria (Akinola, 2018). **Security Sector Reform:** CSOs have advocated for security sector reform, promoting professionalism and accountability in the security services (Adeoye, 2019). **Community Engagement:** CSOs have engaged with communities, promoting social cohesion and addressing security challenges (Nwankwo, 2019).

8. Challenges and Opportunities

Funding and Capacity: CSOs face funding and capacity challenges, limiting their effectiveness (Adebanwi, 2017). **Government Relations:** CSOs often face challenges in their relations with government, including restrictions on their activities (Oyewole, 2019).

Collaboration and Coordination: CSOs need to collaborate and coordinate their efforts to maximize their impact (Suberu, 2018). Civil society plays a vital role in promoting democracy and national security in Nigeria. To maximize their impact, CSOs must address their challenges and opportunities, including funding and capacity constraints, government relations, and collaboration and coordination.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria's democracy and national security are intertwined, and addressing the theoretical issues underlying these concepts is crucial for ensuring the country's stability and prosperity. The liberal democratic theory, which has guided Nigeria's democratic experiment, has limitations in addressing the country's security challenges. The securitization theory offers valuable insights into Nigeria's security landscape, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of security. Addressing ethnic and regional politics, corruption, and weak institutions is crucial for building a more secure and democratic polity.

The paper recommends that Nigeria's democratic institutions be strengthened to ensure that they are effective in addressing security challenges and promoting democratic governance. Efforts need to be made to address ethnic and regional politics, which have undermined national security and democratic governance. Nigeria's security approach needs to prioritize human security, rather than just state security. Corruption needs to be addressed, as it has undermined the state's capacity to provide security and deliver public goods.

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The Role of Myths in Indigenous Etche Society

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Abstract. In traditional Etche society, the curiosity to ascertain the abode of man and his place around his world; his nature of existence, however, form the basis of the role of myths in indigenous Etche society as a road map to the above scenario. The paper posits that myth intimates the people with the idea of the emergence of man into his very abode and the ontological relationship with the supersensible realities. The paper also contends that through myth the peoples' curiosity about the nature of their existence and interpretation and definition of their place in their environments satisfied their inner thoughts. Data for this study were collected from two major sources (oral interviews; report of the elders and handed down tradition from the repository of custom and traditions of Etche) and secondary sources (published materials). The study also adopts descriptive approach to interpret and analyze the role of myths. Finding reveals that myth has helped the indigenous Etche to interpret the world around them.

Keywords: Etche, myth, indigenous Etche society.

1. Introduction

Generally, it is believed that till date, no one can give a vivid account about the origin of myths. In other words, myths, here, can be regarded, or rather believed to be the first seat of wisdom ever existed in human history that offer explanations about how the world came into existence. That is why myth here is regarded as the road map that guides and provides appreciable answers for the purpose of man's existence and the nature of his immediate environments. Thus, it is myth that satisfies wisely man's inner-feelings, curiosity and his thoughts about the mysteries surrounding the universe, his outward experiences beyond his wildest imaginations.

Therefore, it could almost be said man here that the confidence and reassurance for man to engage as many exploits as possible within the ambit of his space can be attributed to myth. Therefore, what is more, here, is

that myth is real and not mere fantasies because it has been in existence especially at a time when modern science was completely lacking in human history.

1.1 Etche Background

Etche is one of the twenty-three Local Government Areas that make up Rivers State. It is located at the Northern part of Rivers State having boundaries with Ngor-Okpala Local Government Area of Imo State in the North, as well as Abia State in the East (Nwiji, 2012, p. 68). According to Etche socio – political organization, Etche is made up of five outstanding clans. The clans are Mba, Okehi, Ozuzu, Igbo Agwuruasa and Ulakwo Umuselem. The essence of this is for ease administration (Amaele, 2000, p. 1). The people of Etche speak Etche language which is one of the languages spoken in Rivers State (Ndimele, 2003, p.11). The climate of the area follows as regular circular since it is located within the tropical rainforest of Nigeria. It rains more or less heavily from March to October and it is relatively sunny and dry from November to February. The topography is fairly uniform. It consists of a flat plain, threaded with fresh water rivers and streams. Their economic activities include farming, hunting, palm-wine tapping, distilling of local gin, etc (Amadi and Uwom, 2004, p. 58).

With regards to their religious life, there is unshaken believe in the existence of a Supreme Being to which the people refer to as Chineke (the God who created everything in the universe). Etche, like other traditional African societies do not approach Him directly rater He is approached and worshipped through the pantheon of divinities (Amadi and Uwom, 2004, p. 3).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The place of myths in traditional Etche society over the years cannot be overemphasized. Myths has helped the indigenous Etche not only to recognize their place

within the ambit of their immediate world, but also to interpret that which is embedded in their cosmology through which the people conceived the world around them.

However, as important as myth seems to be in the socio-religio-economic life of the people, its importance appears to have continued to escape the attention of scholars, leading to a dearth of scholarship. In consequence of this, repositories of custom and traditions of Etche appears to be phasing out due to event of death. Therefore, this study will document for posterity the importance of myth in the religious life of the people for education and information. Two Factors motivated the researcher's interest in pursuing this study. First, as earlier stated, was to document for posterity the role of myths in indigenous Etche society especially in this era of rapid change and cultural globalization and the second was to explain the importance of myths in the religious life of the people.

2. Research Methodology

This study was carried out as interview-based research. Two types of oral investigation procedures were utilized viz:

Reports of repositories of custom and traditions of Etche about importance of myths in the religious life of the people.

Handed down tradition about meaning of myths relating to socio-religio-economic life of the people.

There were certain issues that were taken into account in selecting the interviewee's and some of the considerations are: the position of the informant in the society; the cultural organization he/she belongs to and the position or title he/she holds; the level of the interviewee's cultural affinity. Those who were culturally rooted in the practices of the local community were found to be better versed in the tradition and cultural practices of the people.

3. Conceptual Clarification

3.1 Myth

Myth has come to mean different thing to different scholars. That is why the term 'myth' has been given various definitions by different scholars. Added to this is that it is difficult to give a vivid account of how the world myth originated, as earlier stated. In any case, the examination of some definitions proffered by scholars will enable us have a glimpse of what myth is all about.

The word 'myth' comes from two Greek words "mythos" which is translated to mean "fable", tale;

speech' or 'talk; and'meeth' which equally meant stories, that were false and was already obsolete in use before sixteenth century (Hagg, 1957, p. 71).

By definition, therefore, myths according to Ugwu (1996) are traditional stories of unknown origin handed down from earliest times". (p. 34). In much the same vein, myths are regarded as common traditional stories involving the Supreme Beings, divinities, ancestors, heroes and they offer explanation of some mysterious occurrence or phenomena (Hornby, 2000, p. 485).

Similarly, Adesina (2005) defines myth as a story, handed over from earlier generation to the later generation especially beliefs about early histories of race, explanation of natural events such as the season (p.15). Wudrock (1963) sees myth as fanciful and imaginative stories that operates on natural phenomena in terms of anthropomorphic beings (p. 226).

Technically, for Tasie (2012), it means a tale imaginatively describing or accounting for natural phenomenon or it is a means of explaining some actual or imaginary reality which is not adequately understood and so cannot be explained through normal description (p. 5). For Abanuka (1999), myth is a simple human attempt to explain in symbolic language the origin of the world, human discoveries and inventions, suffering and death, which the community accepts as belonging to it (p. 5).

3.2 Characteristics of Myth

To give a definition which covers the understanding of myth in general seems difficult. The reason for this difficulty seems obvious. First, the origin of myth is obscure. In addition to this is that myth is not usually dated nor has it any given author or number of authors who are definitely acknowledged. In addition to this is that myth is narrated anonymously. Its message is dogmatically formulated and is characteristically so forcefully and acceptance. In addition, myth is open to various interpretations; is not narrated in logical or coherent terms (Abanuka, 2005, p.1).

Consequently, myth generally is concerned with extraordinary things and events; one of the richest sources of inspiration for literature, drama and art throughout the world. Myth lacks scientific or empirical evidence (Adesin, 1997, p. 115). Explaining further, Weneka (1997) noted:

Myth is everything and nothing at the same time. It is the true story or false one, revelation or deception, sacred or vulgar; real or fictional, symbol or tool,

archetype or stereo-type. It is either strongly structured and logical or emotional and pre-logical, traditional and primitive or part of contemporary ideology (p. 91).

3.3 Types of Myths

Since myths are modes through which man explains the origins and functions of his universe, they are bound to be as many types of myths as there are different situations affecting man. Among the most important types of myths, the following are most common.

3.3.1 Cosmological myths

This type of myth is concerned with the creation of the cosmos (universe). Such can as well be referred to as creation myths. Essentially, they serve etiological purpose by explaining the coming into being of man then sun, moon, stars and other created orders. They are very common in both primal and advanced cultures. Frequently, they speak of the act of creation as of fashioning out of the earth out of raw materials that was already present. In most African cosmogonies, the earth and water are regarded as pre-existent, out of which other creatures emerged. It was after the creation of the world that gods and men appeared. Another important type of cosmological myth is that which describes the end of the world. For example, **Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian and Islamic myth** all picture the present world ending in a final battle between good and evil, after which, judgement consigns man to either the paradise or hell for perpetual enjoyment or suffering respectively. Some of such creation myths talk of how the primordial relationship between man the creator's behest. The end result and relevance of this myth is found in its aetiological purpose of explaining how sin came into the world (Weneka 1997, p. 95). Following this is the **Mossianic and Millenarian myths**.

The rational explanation for the existence of this myth is the natural inclination among human beings to hope for a new better world in most civilizations. Many messianic and millenarian religious movements which flourished in Mela-nesia, Africa, South America and the Caribbean as from the twentieth century were all preceded by such myths. That is why the movements centre on prophetic leaders, often emphasizing the return of the dead at the renewal to come, (Like the Rastafarian movement of Jamaica which believes in a future repatriation of members to Africa, the believed home of all black race (Weneka, 1997, pp. 95 – 96). Following closely is the founders of Religion's myth. Although the founders of great religions (Jesus,

Mohammed, Confucius, Siddharta Gaudama, Moses, etc) are generally said to have had actual existence, there is no denying the fact that information regarding their birth and early childhood are often couched in legendary terms that have mythological features. Their accounts state categorically realities that could not be known in any ordinary fashion or which raise the founders above ordinary historical conditions. Also, couched in the same mythological narrative is the religious experience (the call) they encountered with the object of worship through which the doctrine of the new religion was formulated. The same is true of many other religious figures, prophets, saints and gurus. Best example here is the narrative about Jesus' virgin birth (p. 96).

In addition to this is the **life-crisis myth**. Certain stages in the life of man are regarded as periods of life crisis because generally, they are crucial events in human life as the mark the passage of an individual from one stage of existence to the next. The stages are birth, puberty, marriage and death. Each stage is marked with symbolic rituals. And so, myths are created to explain their origin and purpose. For example, there are myths to explain how and why death became the lot of mankind. In some ancient religions, like those of Egypt and Greece, each of the life stages is said to have a god behind it. The transitory stages are symbolized in the ancient Mediterranean mystery religion of Egypt and Greece by the myth of the death and resurrection of Osiris and Persephone (pp. 96 – 97).

Following closely is the **Hunting and Agricultural myths**. Hunting and gathering no doubt remain the earliest occupation of man, far earlier than the practice of rudimentary agriculture by man. Myths associated with hunting and gathering revolve around animals and the hunt. For example, the animal is regarded as both a symbol of violence the human break-away from the world of nature and a symbol of intimacy – the human desire to be integrated into the world of nature. The myths also reflects the common beliefs that each specie of animals has a guardian spirit which must be placated before the animal is hunted and that certain animals are totemic ancestors of certain tribes or clans. In agricultural societies mythical forms take on the character of seasonal rites, celebrating planting and harvesting. Female symbolism is prominent in such myths because of an analogy often drawn between the fertility of grains and that of women. That accounts for the many female goddesses such as corn and yam goddesses. Best examples include the Egyptian (Sis), the Greek Demeter and the Roman Ares as well as so many African female and Agricultural goddesses (p. 97).

In addition to this are the **time, and Eternity myths** of no less important are the time and Eternity myths. As the name implies, these are myths and mythologies which concerned themselves with the relationship between time and Eternity on earth. It appears apparent regularity of the heavenly bodies (sun, moon and stars) long impressed man in every society. And some man from the primordial times evolved myth explaining their origin, operations and purpose or positions in creation. Usually, some figures of symbolic importance such as '4', '7] and '10' are used to delineated their location courses, essence, size and age (pp. 97 – 98).

3.4 Theories of Myths

3.4.1 Euhemerus Theory

An early philosopher called Euhemerus propounded this theory which was named after him. He maintained that myths are based on historical facts. In addition, scholars have to remove supernatural elements in myth to meet the fact. That is why some scholars called this theory historical eliminative theory (i.e to remove supernatural elements from myth). However, the modern scholars have considered this theory to be weak because there is no enough historical evidence to determine whether a mythical figure ever existed.

Following this is the **Tylor's theory**. Sir Edward B. Tylor, an anthropologist established that myths were the product of earlier people's belief in soul and spirit generated by dream. Interpretation of myth from the dream experience raises questions of the universality of certain mythical elements. Hence the first idea of man about supernatural was his belief that he has a soul which abodes in the body while the body sleeps, the soul can travel freely near and far. Man believes that the soul controls natural events like earthquakes, destructive flood, etc, and can accept his prayer for protection or special favours. Tylor considered animism as the first step in the development of human thought and thus the beginning of myth.

In addition to this is **Rudolf Otto's theory**. He was a historian of religion and he considered religious element as the source of myth. He went further by saying that myth and symbols-non-expressions of religion – derived from a specific religious sense which is called *Numinous* which he established is present in all human existence.

Following closely is **Raffaello Pettazzoni's theory**. He was also a historian of religion. Thinking faculty is considered by him as a mode of myth. He went further

to say that mystical thinking is logical and illogical surrounding the totality of mode of human awareness. Having combined historical facts and psychological insight that are neither Freudian nor Jungian, Pettazzoni explained that myth arose from the human situation in a particular cultural historical context.

Following this is **Bronislaw's Theory**. Bronislaw Malinowski was an earlier 1900s psychologist who believed that psychological conditions led man to create myths. According to him, man recognizes that frontier exist between what man can and what he cannot explain logically. Thus, myths are created to explain the frontier that cannot be known. Consequently, myth strengthens tradition by basing it on the reality of initial primordial events. Malinowski's theory disagreed with Tylor's claims that myths began as pre-scientific attempt to explain dreams and natural occurrences.

3.5 Examples of Some Myths of Creation in West Africa

3.5.1 Yoruba Myths of Creation

In their myth of creation, they have it that in the primordial times or timeless pre-history, the Supreme Being "Olodumare" with his numerous divinities lived in the far-removed heaven. These divinities include Orisa-nla (also called Obatala), the arch-divinity and deputy of Olo-dumare in the ordering of things, Orunmila (also called Ifa) the deputy of Olodumare in matters of knowledge, and Esu, the inspector of rituals.

According to this myth, the world this time was null and void and of course a very watery, mastery waste an endless stretch of water and wild marshes. During this period, the divinities on delegation by God usually come down from heaven on the wild marshes to perform their hunting activities. They descended on it with the aid of spider's web. On a more serious thought on how to remedy the situation. Olodumare summoned Orisa-nla and commissioned him to create, equip and mould the physical form of man. To get this done, He gave Orisa-nla a leaf packet of loose earth (or snail shell full of sand), and for his tools he was given a white hen and a pigeon to spread the earth (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979, p. 55). Acting on the instruction of Olodumare, Orisa-nla descended upon the watery waste. On getting to a particular spot on the watery marshy void, he poured out the loose earth, and dropped the birds where he had thrown the sand. The birds began immediately to scratch at the sand and scatter it on the marshy waste. And wherever the earth was scattered became dry land. However, the loose earth was scattered unevenly, and there emerged hills,

valleys and mountains. When this first phase of creation was completed, Olodumare instructed His bailiff, also known as His inspector of works, the Chameleon, to go and inspect the work which Orisa-nla had earlier reported to Olodumare was completed. After two visits to the spot, the Chameleon reported back that Orisa-nla's work was perfectly done. Orisa-nla was again commissioned to equip the earth. The birds were to be increased and multiply and serve as food while certain trees were to be planted to supply drinks.

Furthermore, a man called Oreluere was created to head the beings who should inhabit the earth. This was of course the genesis of human habitation of the earth. People began to increase and multiply, but they did not have enough water for use. Orisa-nla, therefore, appealed for more water, and Olodumare sent rain. Orisa-nla was further commissioned to mould man's physical parts from the dust of the earth. He could, however, do this accordingly as he liked it. That is to say that he could make human figures perfect or defective, white or black, shapely or deformed. But it was Olodumare's prerogative absolute concern, to make the physical form of a living being by putting in it the essence of being or life. On one occasion, Orisa-nla tried to spy Olodumare at work, to know how the lifeless forms became living beings. Olodumare saw this conspiracy and forestalled him by making him fall into a deep sleep only to wake and find all forms in the stock become human beings.

3.6 Myths of the Coming of Death

A version of this myth which is found in many African societies with some variations in detail, stresses that at the beginning, there was no death in the world. At a time when men began to die, they were very worried and decided to send a dog to tell God that when men die they should be restored to life. Meanwhile, a toad who had overheard the message, and driven by jealousy because he was not chosen to carry the message because of his slow movement, also set out for God's place with the intent to frustrate in man's plans. On the way, the dog fell asleep. Although, some versions would say that he stopped to lick palm oil, still other versions say that he waited to get some food from a woman he found cooking for her child.

However, the toad overtook him and reached God first and told him that men desire that when they die they have no desire to return to the world again (Metuh, 1987, pp. 43-44).

3.7 Functions of Myths

For the pre-Literate culture, myth fulfills indispensable functions that is, it expresses, enhances and codifies their belief systems. It also safeguards and enforces as well as vouches for the efficiency of rituals, in addition to containing practical rules for the guidance of man. And so myth to them is a vital ingredient of human civilization. The stories contained in myths are to them statements of primeval greater and more relevant reality by which the present life and activities of mankind are determined. The knowledge of myth supplies man with the motif for ritual and moral actions as well as indications as to how to perform them (Weneka, 1997, p. 98)

Essentially, therefore, myth serves aetiological purpose. That is, myth explains or tells how something came into existence, not only the world, plants and animals, but also how a pattern of behaviour, an institution, a manner of working was established. Also, myths help man to manipulate and control events and phenomena. This is because by knowing the myth, one manipulates them at will. Through myths the history of the acts and deeds of the supernatural is transmitted to us, and it is myth that legitimizes and sanctifies such stories. In other words, such stories are considered to be absolutely true because they are concerned with realities, and sacred because they are the work of the supernatural (Weneka, 1997, p. 98).

3.8 An Analysis of the Role of Myths

One major role of myth in traditional Etche society is that the origin of the people, their believed area of migration, example, from ancient Benin kingdom and all the places they sojourned were explained out in myths. Thus it is myth that explain how Igbodo Etche became the first Etche settlement upon migration from the ancient Benin Kingdom. Another remarkable role of myth here is that it explains the sacred nature of *Uzo-Ubi* (the access road to farmlands) and how and why certain sacrifices and rituals are performed at such sacred spot. For example, it is where *Alu-Ubi* (deity in charge of farmland) receives sacrifices before sharing the follow land for cultivation (Amadi Livinus, 05/02/2026, oral; interview). Thus, it is myth that explain what the *Uzo-Ubi* signify in the religious life of the people. For example, it symbolizes the meeting points of the spirits and other patron gods of land (Amadi and Uwom, 2004, p. 160).

In addition to this is the gender role. In traditional Etche society, it is myth that define gender roles for men and women. For example, it is myth that explain how and why men should till the land for planting of yam; stake the yams on the *ekwe* (Yam barns); and as to how and why cassava should be planted and

harvested by women (Amadi, John, 10/02/2026, oral Interview).

Another important role of myth in traditional Etche is that it explains why certain days such as *Eke*, *Orie Afor* and *Nkwo* are sacred; and why such days are set aside for the worship of divinities. For example, *Nkwo* (the first day in Akpoku traditional week) is earmarked for the worship of *Ushi* deity of Akpolu Etche while *Afor* (the first day in Umuoye traditional week) is the sacred day of *Afor-Ukwu* deity of Umuoye Etche. Thus, it is myth that explain how and why certain activities and occurrences such as farming, fighting or death are considered to be taboo in such days. For example, in Etche, death on *Eke* is regarded as bad death as no one is buried either (Njoku Alfred, 10/02/2026, oral interview).

In addition, it is myth that explain why a man should not discard or thrown out his wife(s) properties or belongings such as *ekigwe* (tri – pod), *igbeb – akwa* (box wrapper) no matter the level of provocation, misunderstanding or quarrel; and what such act signifies. For example, in Etche such act signifies divorce. Another important role of myth in traditional Etche that it explains the sacred nature of the *Ofo* (tree). Generally, *Ofo* as Ejizu (1986), explains is a sacred piece of stick believed to be imbued with spiritual or ancestral power (p.16). in Etche, *Ofo* is not only believed to be ritual object but also feature prominently in Etche ritual. Here, how and why such material. object is not used as firewood and building is made explicit in myths (Nweke Friday, 10/02/2026, oral interview).

4. Conclusion

This essay examined the role of myth in traditional Etche Society. In traditional Etche , myth is believed to be the first indigenous Etche seat of wisdom which had been in existence at a time when the art of reading and writing were absolutely lacking in history. Here, worthy of note, in analyzing the role of myth in traditional Etche is that it revolves round the people’s beliefs which are deeply embedded in their cosmology through which the conceived the world around them.

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Contextual Analysis of *Θεραπεία* (Healing) of the Demon-Possessed Man in Gerasene (Luke 8:26 – 39): Implication for Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria

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Abstract. Health is a factor that each and every person longs for. There are other ways of defining health. These include having a healthy body, mind, and spirit. On a similar note, a discourse about health related to the social, mental, spiritual, and bodily aspects of a person is only relevant when viewed from the perspective of Christian salvation. Jesus Christ emphasized healing during his mission to the world as a fulfillment of his command to his disciples to preach the gospel and heal the sick. For the purpose of finding out the level of compliance with Jesus' command regarding healing, the cure of the Demon-possessed Man in the Gerasene in Luke 8:26-39 was studied from the perspective of the Nigerian situation. This study employed exegesis and hermeneutic methods. A descriptive survey technique was also employed. It was found out that the healing process of the Christ Apostolic Church is compliant with the healing doctrines of Jesus Christ. It is therefore suggested that the healing process and doctrines employed by Jesus Christ as described in Luke's Gospel be followed to the letter by the leadership of the Church.

Keywords: *θεραπεία* (Therapeia), Health, Healing Miracles, Luke 8:26-39, Salvation

1. Introduction

The right to health is a basic right for all people, and "health for all" is a concept that is incorporated by the World Health Organisation in connection with the International Conference on Primary Health Care held in Alma-Ata, in what is now Kazakhstan. Health encompasses complete physical, emotional, social, and spiritual wellness. Disease is "some deviation from normal functioning" and has beneficial effects in regard to an individual's state of health or when an individual is distressed (Rao, 2009: 45-50). A healthy person must lack any social (poverty), mental, and physical (objectively identifiable) impairments. Likewise, a person who is free from diseases, illnesses, or sicknesses must not only be in a balanced condition

but also must not be known to be suffering from any ailment that makes him or her feel uneasy or awkward. Notwithstanding its inclusiveness, the notion of health is also fraught with difficulties in making a determination that a person is in "a complete state of health." Restoration of what is broken between people and the universe at large and between people and people can also be a function of the healing process.

Moreover, there exists a relation between people and the environment. The way and manner each person lives as a human is affected by this relation (Akintunde, 2017: 23-28). Imbalance, whether it is internal or external, is usually the root cause of diseases or poor health. Jesus made sure that people who were healed from physical ailments were also restored spiritually. Most healing miracles, whether before or after the healing, resulted in a profession of faith in Jesus. Moreover, a person is made whole or healed if his or her physical, mental, or spiritual well-being is restored. In the Bible, even if one's soul prospers, God's greatest wish is that the person is healthy (III John 2). God, in his supernatural power, heals people either with or without the help of technology. Some of Jesus' healings were done in a faith-healing manner (Oderinde, 2019: 113-115).

There is a very significant relationship between faith and healing. In the relationship between faith and healing, both concepts work in collaboration, and faith is both the basis and the catalyst of the process of healing. It is worth stating that faith heals, and that faith and healing have a very significant relationship in the sense that faith is the key that unlocks the most hopeless of situations. Faith is needed in the process of healing. It's only faith in Jesus and in his name that is able to work the miracle of healing (Oshun, 1981: 119). Since the study is focused on the analysis of the concept of *θεραπεία* in the Gospel of Luke 8:26-39 and its application Republic of Nigeria, the study is thus guided by both the divine and human reaction towards the health challenges or sickness, and diseases

that seriously threaten the very existence of humanity and God's original intention for the life of a human being, which is to live in good health.

2. Exegesis of the Healing of the Demon-Possessed Man in the Gerasene (Luke 8:26 - 39)

The deliberate allusions to the boat journey that begins in verse 22 integrate the story of Jesus and the Gerasene demoniac into its surrounding text. After Jesus and his disciples had sailed across the lake as planned, they found themselves "αντιπέρα τής Γαλιλαίας" or "opposite Galilee" and "έξελι Ότι δέ αύτώ σπι τήγγην", respectively, and "stepping out on the land." They will be embarking on their return journey at the end of this part. Although this story unit can be seen as a part of a series of events that are connected by a series of allusions to a journey, this story unit's midpoint and understanding of the reason for Jesus' planned trip (v. 22) foreshadow its importance in this series of events (Omotoye, 2013: 87). In relation to this importance, Akintunde, (2012) wrote that "the first observation of consequence is the phrase that appears to make up the melody of this paragraph because it is repeated so often and in so many different similar instances."

The salient characteristic of the figure who appears alongside Jesus in this narrative is that he is both bound to and freed from the power of demons (4:18-19). If we can pick out the melody in these variations of the theme, then the counter-melody would be in the indications that this marks the first entry of Jesus in predominantly Gentile territory (Casey, 2017: 2). In this particular scene, the term "αντιπέρα τής Γαλιλαίας" "opposite Galilee" is more than just a geographical point, although it is significant at this level because it marks a border crossing characteristic of this part of the third gospel Jesus is about to undertake. Indeed, Gentiles are coming to him (6:17), but Jesus' first and final journey within the nation of Gentiles is about to occur and will soon become apparent. There are a number of indications which point to Jesus' present whereabouts among the Gentiles, and geography is the most obvious one among them. The economy of the area is heavily affected by its newfound fame because of this unclean, the demon is also called an "unclean spirit" (v. 29), lives among tombs (v. 27), and there are pigs and a swineherd in the area (vv. 32-35).

Furthermore, Josephus thinks that the epithet employed for God in the first words of the possessed is acceptable within the larger Gentile world of the Romans (Akintunde, 2012: 45). Fundamentally

speaking, this narrative revolves around Jesus' mission to overcome obstacles and his particular gift of salvation to the world of Gentiles. This particular focus is quite significant in terms of the broader narrative framework in which this narrative is couched in that Luke shows how the application of what has been learned in terms of the Sower narrative (8:4-21) has been relevant to the world of the Gentiles. This is a man who has been possessed by demons in the past but has been saved subsequently. He acts in a manner consistent with a follower and is the very first-person Jesus commissions to spread his missionary work on the basis of his own experiences in his past. This may not be very surprising in a gospel in which God's purpose is to give everybody a sense of complete salvation. It should not be lost in one's analysis that God's purpose shall not be realized in this third gospel in that his purpose shall instead be realized in his second book, Acts. It is quite significant that Jesus has not been very successful in this particular region known as "opposite Galilee," in that this particular demoniac has been proclaiming in a very overt manner God's presence in Jesus to everybody in this particular region.

God's purpose has to be contrasted with Jesus' immense acceptance in this particular region in terms of its populace, in that they were overwhelmed with a sense of utter terror, in that they asked to be excised from their particular nation, in that they wanted to get away from this particular nation in Luke's rendering of this episode is a testament to his detail-oriented and theatrical narrative style. While the text of verses 26 to 30 seems to be confusingly disjunctive, leaping around in terms of its narrative chronology to emphasize the speed with which Jesus and the possessed man meet, in an attempt to harmonize the man's behavior with the purpose of Jesus' mission, it must be added to the parallels above that the man is a Gentile and, more importantly, at the end of their encounter, begs to go along with Jesus and his disciples on their journey (v 38).

Jesus had momentarily left Galilee and entered a region that had a significant amount of Hellenistic influence. Jesus is described in the gospel of Luke as meeting a guy whose dwelling was among the tombs, which was a region of impurity for the Jews. Jesus is in the company of Gentiles and is in the same space as a herd of pigs. Jesus has gone beyond his own questionable activities in this situation. His previous journeys had led him to significant meetings with individuals who were outside the accepted scope of what was considered proper either due to ritual or behavioral issues. The third gospel writer employs three techniques in order to reach his aim: the rearranging of the sequence of the events that

comprise the story, the use of asides in the story, and the use of graphic details. The third gospel writer also employs the use of social deviance that is specific to his cultural traditions in order to describe the condition of the guy. It is not unusual for storytellers to rearrange the sequence of the events that comprise the story, nor is it unusual that the sequence of the story may have actually happened in a different order; in fact, the use of both is a crucial part of the storyteller's job. Information may be withheld or released when the time is appropriate in the retelling of stories of all kinds in order to shape the story being told in the way that the storyteller wishes the story to be received and understood (Lohmeyer, 2018: 56). Luke allows one flashback in order to explain the nature of the man from the city (v27). He thus allows the audience to take interest in the man immediately. Can you say he is of the city? Why hasn't he come? He has demons, the snappy answer too.

The narrator turns to address his audience in a narrative aside in verse 29. The lack of respect this man received from the city is again emphasized in this situation. Unhinged and mad, he was bound up for protection like a dangerous animal, a menace to society as Luke observes, containment policies have been unsuccessful, and this underlines the strength of evil forces at work inside him even more strongly. There could be no greater example of the destructive power of evil in this man than this: "He lived in tombs and was separated from society; in effect, he was dead." Moreover, the dialogue between the possessed and Jesus was seen as a kind of massive power play since using someone's name was seen as a kind of control over that person. Rather than leaving the man immediately, this particular demon attempts to reason with Jesus and even possess him. The name of the demon, Legion, short for a legion in Latin, which refers to a military unit of about 5,600 men is asked for and obtained by Jesus, the counterspy (Hodgson, 2015:112).

The narrator explains the definition of a counterspy in relation to this co-text immediately, assuming a kind of response by the demons that implies "many" demons were inside the guy. This is the last battle between good and evil, and Jesus is victorious. Not only is Jesus's power and authority expanded to include the Gentiles, but so too is his compassion. The only thing left is to find a way to reconcile what is seen as the strength of this demonic force and what is understood about Jesus's authority in this particular situation (Kato, 2015: 24). The plea made by the demons in Luke 8:31-33 shows that they recognize Jesus' pre-eminent power, supposing that they know Jesus has the ability to cast them into the abyss. They

are now trying to get out of the abyss, that prison of punishment meant for demons, just as they had used their strength to get out from the chains and bands of those who were trying to control their host, the demoniac (v 29). Though it may be almost redundant to their importance to this narrative, the inclusion of the pigs further cements that this event occurs on Gentile soil. Instead, they are introduced through the devils' compromise. Just as it was with the demoniac before him, Jesus allows the devils to enter the pigs, causing them to be "driven" (v. 29) to their own destruction. While the demoniac was sentenced to an after-life through their impact on his life, they are driven to their death (Babajide, 2014: 360).

In verses 34–37, the presence of swineherds meant that eyewitnesses could give testimony regarding the mad behaviour and ultimate death of the pigs. Additional testimony regarding what Jesus had done for this man is offered by their return to the city (from whence this man came, v. 27). Thus, a need arises to understand what is meant by this repeated phrase "what had happened." This reference to this being the man who was demonized but is not anymore is a significant part of this narrative in Luke (vv 35–36). Different methods of stating what this man has undergone in terms of what he has been through in his reversal are offered through descriptive phrases used to describe what these men saw (Elwell, 2016: 140-42). His relation to Jesus demonstrates his composed character, contrary to what he had been like. It also demonstrates his discipleship and submission to Jesus. Luke's description of the ex-demoniac as a disciple and a pupil sitting at the feet of Jesus. His clothing now demonstrates his acceptability; just as his nudity had formerly demonstrated his lowliness and distance from the rest of the population. His crazed life had ended and had been replaced by self-control and respectability. These qualities assist in the search for the complete meaning of the extent of the salvation that he had experienced. All of the above is contained in the explanation of the transformation that had occurred in the life of the ex-demoniac (Baeta, 1997: 19). The transformation they see in the former demon-possessed man is the reaction of the people who have come from the neighboring country.

In the Gospel, the reaction of the people when faced with the supernatural events is expected to be fierce; fear, however, is not a constructive one. They have managed to gather people from the country as well as the city (v. 34); all the people in the area have agreed on one thing. They reject Jesus because of fear. Is it for money, as in the Acts which are similar to it (Acts 16:16,19)? The only reason Luke gives for fear in this co-text, and it does not seem as though the destruction

of the pigs has anything to do with fear (Dairo, 1995:52). Jesus has rejected the good news sales pitch; he departs from the scene. These people do not seem to believe in anything, unlike the men in the boat (8:22-25), in spite of the ample evidence of the divine work in the shape of the transformed friend. (Wright, 2018:339). Luke records this dialogue between Jesus and the man in lines with verses 38-39, when Jesus has already left. Jesus' baptism as recorded by Luke has been noted for its dramatic flair (3:18-22). In including a small anachronism in this narrative, Jesus achieves a setting from which all distractions are removed. "the way in which the final conversation between Jesus and the ex-demoniac was picked up by the camera because of the nature of the extraordinary commission Jesus gives to this man, and because he asks to be 'with him,' he asks for the same status with Jesus that the twelve and the women who comprise Jesus' group have (8:2)." Jesus brings man back to his house and gives him a task to perform for the city (Maxwell, 2016: 78-82). Apart from healing his bodily and psychological aspects, he also heals his vocational or psychosocial aspects as well as his religious aspects. He is given a commission to return to society.

Luke records his commission as follows: "he went and proclaiming how much Jesus had done for him," "return and tell the story of how much God has done for you." Jesus then goes on to give this ex-demoniac "the narration" of the great deeds of God, which is exactly what Luke was doing in writing the Luke-works. Moreover, this "narration" is defined as proclamation through the juxtaposition of these similar words in Luke (4:18; 8:1), which is what Jesus had been doing throughout his public ministry. Moreover, it is crucial to the narrative for this dude to understand the mandate to proclaim God's activity as a mandate to proclaim Jesus' activity. This dude, this Gentile, whose life was defined by many demons and was subhuman in every possible way, recognizes Jesus as the mediator through whom God's salvation intent was being fulfilled, in contrast to the disciples who were consumed by fear in the previous episode in the boat (Luke 8:22-25) (Barth, 2019: 348).

3. Practice of Healing in the Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria

One of the greatest advantages to the followers of Jesus is "Cura divina," or divine healing. Of course, it would attract a large number of people in West African nations where there are very few hospitals and where expensive care is simply unaffordable to most people. Indeed, "the most common reason why people attend African Indigenous Churches, particularly C.A.C., is because of illness." There are countless accounts of

people testifying to their miraculous healings, their sound health, and their answered prayers. Often times, they claim that they sought care from a hospital or a traditional healer first. After they failed to find relief from the foreign doctors and herbalists, they turned to an indigenous church (Ackroyal, 2012: 84). Within the Christ Apostolic Church, there exist healing days (normally every Wednesday and Friday). There exist healing services daily. The sick were sometimes required to stay in a particular apartment within the pastorium when under treatment in a church; spiritual or faith homes also serve as a clinic and a prenatal for pregnant women. Abogunrin (2018) listed the essential article of faith of the C.A.C under Article (xii) section i. Unlike some other churches, the C.A.C does not support medical treatment within and without the hospital.

Unlike some of the Aladura churches, the C.A.C does not support traditional healing using such items as green water, banana stems, or whatever, as a supplement to healing its ailing members. Crucially, the healing treatment that a sick individual needs is very simple. It is as follows: confessing one's sin, since one believes that sinners or wicked people cause illness; the laying of hands on the sick; anointing the sick with olive oil, if need be, with sanctified water used for both washing and drinking; praying for the sick with faith; confidence and authority thus: "Iwo aisan mo pase fun o, ni oruko Jesu, jade kuro lara re; ko ri bee; ogo ni fun o oluwa nitori pe o ti se" (you sickness in the name of Jesus, I command you, come out of the patient; it shall be so, glory be to you Lord, because you have done it). Besides the use of the "name of Jesus" in healing, C.A.C also heals the sick through the use of the "Power in the Blood of Jesus" that is, "Ni Agbara Eje Jesu." Members of C.A.C also use "sanctified" water in healing as well as driving away evil spirits in their environment, thereby making poison useless.

Oshun (1981) elaborated that some of the opponents of the C.A.C have been opposed to the ways of healing the sick in the church. They argue that in the didactic ways of prayer for the sick, the prayer-man/woman tends to compel God to heal. This position cannot be upheld, as the prayer-man/woman is only exercising the same authority that Jesus Christ had bestowed upon all believers. There is also the position that members of the church should not be coerced into giving up the use of medicines and the services of doctors and paramedical personnel; that the sick should be assisted to regain his health "through every possible and right means". The response is not very difficult. The divine healing is the accomplishment of the Bible's declaration that prayers made in faith

would both heal any believer who is ill and also restore to him his health. What other means do we require aside from faith? Perschbacher (2019) added that one of the significant aspects of the Great Revival of 1930 was the enthusiastic response of the people and the glorious display of the power of God's healing and salvation. The listeners in each centre received the word of revival, trashed their homes, and brought the things that the Lord forbids to the revival on their own.

As a result, the warm reception given to the Great Revival in the town, the miracles performed by Joseph Babalola in the place ultimately far outstripped those performed at Oke-Ooye, three months earlier. At Oke-Bola, a leper was healed; the lame jumped for joy; the deaf heard with their ears open; the blind regained their sight; the dumb could speak; the mental patient were perfectly cured; children were cured of convulsion. The list could go on and on. The healing work performed by Joseph Babalola in the town was so profound that evil spirits, themselves, acknowledged the spiritual supremacy of Joseph Babalola. At Oke-Ooye, Ilesa and Oke-Bola, Ibadan people possessed by witches and wizards had to fall down, rolling on the ground for their evil spirits to submit; in obedience to divine directive, left their victims without much fuss (Barth, 2019: 189-197).

4. Conclusion

One must be cautious in order to avoid a theological problem in case people of this era are to strictly apply the Lucan idea of demon possession to a true scientific definition. Time differences are not only a problem in regards to such ideas, but there remains a large technology gap, and this has yielded some understanding of some feature of the world which was felt in Biblical times as a mystery. The explanation of demonic possession in terms of disassociated psychic states, hysteria, fragmented selves, and multiple personalities, comes from science. There is no doubt that while some of these problems have natural causes, there are causes which come from spiritual beings. One should not discard the whole Lucan idea of Demons as a ruse. This phenomenon, therefore, cannot be fully explained by scientific and psychological terminology. Nobody has sufficient information regarding the world of spirits and the activities of demons to refute the phenomenon of demonic possession. The phenomenon of demonic possession is normally rejected on the basis of science and secularization, but it appears that the description of demons by Luke is a copy of the African tradition.

5. Recommendation

The following recommendations were made:

- a. As Jesus Christ did, the Church must give healing a higher priority, it is a ministry and should be viewed as a part of the gospel message.
- b. To ensure the survival of the mission hospitals, additional funding should be channeled to these institutions. The Church should set a good example by offering some of the basic amenities in the form of the mission hospitals, just like the missionaries did in the past.
- c. The government should come forth to improve the existing health facilities as well as construct new ones to meet the aspirations of the people to have the best health possible.
- d. If the poor majority are to be able to access health facilities, the government must offer a subsidy towards the cost of health care.

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Revitalizing Velvet: The Making, Unmaking, and Remaking of African Heritage in Yoruba Communities in Nigeria

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Abstract. Clothing is one of the basic needs of men. The Yoruba people are known with different types of indigenous types of cloth. The most popular is Aso Oke. However, with the introduction of Velvet to West Africa through Portuguese trade in the sixteenth century A.D. as revealed by Akinwumi and Adeakin (2009). The Yoruba people came in contact with Velvet fabrics, embraced it for use during both important social and traditional ceremonies such as; traditional weddings, burial of the aged, house warming and age passage among other. At a point in time according to Akinwumi and Adeakin (2009) Velvet almost seize the center stage from Aso Oke the acclaimed Yoruba number one traditional wear. Five objectives were set to guide the study and Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. One hundred and fifth respondents were randomly selected from Osun, Ondo and Oyo State which was 000.882% of the total population of the study area. A well-structured and validated questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The data collected statically analyzed using simple percentage and mean. Findings of the study reveal that, the perception of people on velvet fabric in contemporary fashion among Yoruba people is positive. The use of velvet fabric (aran) by important personality or celebrity, Model and use as aso-ebi, Velvet fabric (aran) has the capacity to make people look rich and gorgeous if it is made trendy and spiced up by the fashion designer. The study concludes that one of the surest ways to sustain the use of Velvet among the Yoruba people is ensure its use to combine its with other suitable factory-made fabrics to create trendy styles beyond local boundaries.

Keywords: Revitalizes, Velvet, African Heritages, Yoruba Communities.

1. Introduction

Clothing is a general need of man. Among the Yoruba people, Aso Oke was reigning as number one cloth for ceremony but a time came during the introduction of Velvet, Velvet almost seize the centre stage from Aso oke because it was also used for celebration of burial ceremony, birthday, housing warming, retirement, celebrating, traditional and social events and so on Velvet is a fabric that is very common in the olden days and is very important cloth among Yoruba people. They struggle to have it at all cost; it is worn by the rich and nobles people to many occasions. It is very expensive that only a few people can get it and people who cannot afford it, borrow it from those that have when they have important ceremony to attend.

Velvet fabrics are valued in an attempt to preserve and maintain the existence of a unique and established cultural behaviour within a society. For instance, traditional ceremonies, annual festivals and other related occasions have made popular the use of traditional fabric within and outside the country. In such periodic occasions Velvet fabrics become strong means of expressing ideas and belief systems in a traditional setting. Often times such textile materials become powerful tools for cultural communication among members of Yoruba ethnic group.

Many African communities lost to obscurity a number of practices which were caused among others by the factors of modernity and culture contact (Osoba, 1976). Akinwumi & Adeakin attempts at unraveling knowledge about the forgotten aran fabric by adopting information from Odu Ifa verses and from elder-informants. We discovered that aran fabric was originated by a man called Aran, who was believed to be one of the great textile professional migrants in Ile-Ife when the town expanded between the ninth and twelfth century A.D.

Velvet is a type of woven tufted fabric in which the cut threads are evenly distributed, with a short pile, giving it a distinctive soft feel. By extension, the word *velvety* means "smooth like gold". In the past, Velvet was typically made from silk. Today, Velvet can be made from linen, cotton, wool and synthetic fibers

Velvet can be made from several different kinds of fibers, traditionally, the most expensive of which is silk. Much of the Velvet sold today as "Silk Velvet" is actually a mix of rayon and silk. Velvet made entirely from silk is rare and usually has market prices of several hundred naira per yard. Cotton is also used to make velvet, though this often results in a less luxurious fabric. Velvet can also be made from fibers such as linen, mohair, and wool. A cloth made by the Kuba people of the Democratic Republic of Congo from the raffia palm is often referred to as "Kuba velvet". More recently, synthetic Velvets have been developed, mostly

from Polyester, Nylon, Viscose, Acetate, and from either mixtures of different synthetics or from combined synthetics and natural fibers (for example viscose mixed with silk produces a very soft, reflective fabric). A small percentage of spandex is sometimes added to give the final material a certain amount of stretch hence called "stretch Velvet".

Akinwumi & Adeakin (2009) that Velvet was first brought to west African through Portuguese trade in the sixteenth century A.D. from that time the on the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria had opportunity of acquiring this expensive prestige fabric as dress materials. Few qualities were available to them in sixteenth century through the nineteenth century (1904). A large quality became available from the early decades of the twentieth century. The Yoruba gave a local name aran to the imported velvet because of the shining and lustrous surface which had partial semblance of Yoruba Aran which was known called ogudu, odu and aso mononmonan.

Samples of imported velvet Fabric



Fig. i Kembe, A big Yoruba trouser for men



Fig. ii Dansiki – Top for men mini agbada



Fig. iii A man wearing Abeti Aja (cap)



Fig. iv The Woman sitting on the right used (Velvet) Aran as Wrapper

They so much cherish this fabric that they provide storage facilities for it such as drum made with iron, clay pot, calabash because these were the facilities available for them, there were no hand luggage's and suit cases unlike this contemporary times. For better preservation to keep it from pest they put camphor to chase away the pest such as cockroach termite, rat etc in order to last for a longer period of time. The Yoruba people's love Velvet has a cultural heritages clothing's material to be used and passed down to the younger generation is expressed in the following song.

Aran onide ni aran omo mi o
 Aran onide
 Aran onide laran omo mi o
 Omo mi tete waye kowa fi aran da kaba
 will use stonned velvet to make gown
 Aran oni de

Stonned velvet is my child velvet
 Stonned velvet
 Stonned velvet is my child velvet
 My child come to this world early so that you
 Stonned velvet

Objectives were set to guide the study; the research questions helped in the findings of the study. Relevant literature were reviewed under the following: History of Velvet fabric, Types of Velvet Fabrics, History of Velvet among the Yoruba people, Types of Velvet fabrics used among the Yoruba, people traditional usage of velvet fabrics, The Decline in use of Velvet fabric, The Resurgence, Rethink of the Use of Velvet among the Yoruba people. Survey research design was adopted for this study. Oral interview and a well-structured questionnaire were the research instruments while descriptive statistics of simple percentage and Mean were used for analyzing the data collected. Data collected were discussed, conclusion and recommendation were made accordingly.

Statement of the problem

Basis for the survival of Yoruba traditional culture lies in Yoruba people ability to understand and become increasingly determined to accept wholeheartedly the previous product such as velvet used in environment. Among Yoruba people nowadays, there appears to exist the feeling of loss of traditional heritage. This attitude has adversely affected to some degree, the usage of Velvet fabric (aran). A moment of crisis in which eagerness, determination and insecurity are mingled with changes in fashion. Many have never seen or touched a genuine piece of original velvet fabrics which needs a platform on which to stand and regain its prestige. The problem therefore how is that, as cultural rejuvenation has been recognized as a necessity in any society, it becomes necessary to curb a total drift from the main stream of a people's traditional wears.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to:

- establish the demographic characteristics of the Yoruba people who used Velvet fabric.
- determine the level of usage of Velvet fabric among Yoruba people
- examine the perception of people on Velvet fabric in contemporary fashion among Yoruba people.
- identify the changing nature of future demand for Velvet fabric in combination with other fabrics in the Nigerian fashion scene.
- examine how Velvet was brought back of existence and its recent use.

2. Literature Review

2.1 History of Velvet Fabric

Because of its unusual softness and appearance as well as its high cost of production, velvet has often been associated with nobility. Velvet was introduced to Baghdad during the rule of Harun al-Rashid (786–809) by Kashmiri merchants and to Al-Andalus by Ziryab. In the Mamluk era, Cairo was the world's largest producer of velvet. Much of it was exported to Venice (whence it spread to most of Europe), Iberia and the Mali Empire. Mansa Musa, the ruler of the Mali Empire, visited Cairo on his pilgrimage to Mecca. Many Arab velvet makers accompanied him back to Timbuktu. Later Ibn Battuta mentions how Suleyman, the ruler of Mali, wore a locally produced complete crimson velvet kaftan on Eid. During the reign of Mehmed II, assistant cooks wore blue dresses (câme-i kebûd), conical hats and baggy trousers made from Bursa velvet.

King Richard II of England directed in his will that his body should be clothed in Velvet to in 1399. This indicates that, Velvet has been a robe for the royal.

2.2 Types of Velvet Fabric

Chiffon (or transparent) velvet: very lightweight velvet on a sheer silk or rayon chiffon base

Crushed: lustrous velvet with patterned appearance that is produced by either pressing the fabric down in different directions, or alternatively by mechanically twisting the fabric while wet.

Embossed: velvet on which a metal roller has been used to heat-stamp the fabric, producing a pattern.

Lyons: a densely woven, stiff, heavier-weight pile velvet used for hats, coat collars and garments.

Plain: velvet commonly made of cotton with a firm hand.

Velveteen: a type of imitation velvet It is normally made of cotton or a combination of cotton and silk. It has a pile that is short (never more than 3mm deep), and is closely set. It has a firm hand and a slightly sloping pile. Unlike true velvet, this type has greater body, does not drape as easily, and has less sheen.

Cotton – Cotton velvet is highly durable, but lacks much of the luxuriousness of other varieties of velvet, and its colors tend not to be as deep or rich

Silk – Silk velvet is one of the more expensive kinds of velvet, and is usually shinier and softer than the cotton variety

Nylon/rayon blend – Nylon/rayon blend velvet has much of the feel and drape of silk-based velvet, but is usually much less expensive; also, it is easier to care for than silk velve.

Polyester/spandex – Polyester/spandex velvet (often called "stretch velvet") can be made of polyester with a small percentage of spandex to allow it to stretch in one or two directions

Viscose – In terms of quality, viscose velvet is more similar to silk velvet than cotton velvet.

Laye olugbon mo da iborun meje	At olugbon's regime I cut seven scarf
E o maa ko yi Lorin	You will sing this as song
Laye aresa mo da iborun mefa	At Aresa's regime I cut six scarf
E o maa ko yi Lorin	You will sing this as song
Laye aremu, emi re Togo	At Aremu's regime I went to Togo
Mo ra aran ,mo ra sanyan baba aso	I bought Velvet, I bought Sanyan The father of clothes
Afole eni pe igba yi o dun	Only the lazy He who say this town is not sweet
Ko ya wa ona ko gba ojo lo	Should find a way and go to the bush.

According to Akinwumi & Adeakin (1990) state that in addition to using local clothes, the Yoruba particularly its ruling class for some time now has had access to the supply and use of certain European textiles materials. The clothes which included linen and woolen materials were brought into west Africa coast in the sixteenth century. The imported clothes were first distributed into Yoruba country through the Benin and Ijebu traders who cleared the goods at the Benin river.

According to barbot and Dapper, the seventeenth century textiles merchandise include cloth of gold and silver carlet and red clothes, glazed Chintzens with large flowers, gold and silver brocade, calicocs and red Velvet. From among the imported clothes velvet appear to be the most expensive and highly ranked. Ryder proffers that Velvet was one of those fabric "almost certainly destined for the ruling class".

During the second half of the nineteenth century cheap imitation prints of eastern textiles produced mainly from Manchester flooded the African market. Many Yoruba then patronised the cheap prints because they could not afford to pay for the comparatively expensive local clothes (Akinwumi,1990). As a result of these there is decline in the use of velvet and other expensive imported fabric

2.3 Types of velvet fabric among Yoruba

There are different types, designs and textured of velvet fabric among Yoruba, there are two types of velvet fabric among which are:

- (1) High quality
- (2) Low quality

History of Velvet among Yoruba

As Yoruba people cherish the use of people indigenous clothes such as Aso Oke, Sanyan, Etu, Alaari, so also they cherish European textiles such as Damask, Velvet, Jacquard, Lace etc. Yoruba people cherish Velvet fabric most that they compose different song to show how convenient the tenure or regime of the present king ruling that time and to express their pent chat and love for it as cultural costume used by the royal and nobles, they have this song.

There are different textured design which are:

- (1) Animal design
- (2) Floral design
- (3) Stoned design (Aran onide)

Velvet Fabrics are expected to be worn by Yoruba men and people throughout Southwestern Nigeria which basically include contemporary Ekiti, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Lagos states. Yoruba people in parts of Kwara, Kogi and Edo states too are not left out of this narrow-stripped material but Velvet Fabrics did not gain as much ground in this part of the country. Common fashion styles often used Velvet Fabrics for buba and iro (top and wrapper), gele (head gear), agbada (large gown) and buba and sokoto top and trousers) (National Museums, Liverpool, 2008).

Although the origin of textiles productions and usage in Nigeria, most especially among the Yoruba remain unknown, there are evidences of Yoruba's long use of textile a apparel as reflected in ancient sculptures, which has been dated back to the 10th and 12th century A.D. Fagg (1977) mentions that these sculptures depict the use of accoutrements which include loin cloth, cap, sashes, hunter uniforms and others. He, also suggests that materials used for the manufacture of these clothing are derived locally because, they are similar to that of today's traditional Yoruba hand woven strip cloth 'Aso-Oke'. While relative dating of the local production of Aso-Oke among the Yoruba remains difficult due to its ephemeral nature of documentation at these periods.

Krigger (2010), in his own assessment, tries to defer from other scholars, when he claims that the earliest

use of textiles made from men's loom among the Yoruba came via the introduction of Islam to Kano through Nupe, and later to Yoruba land in the 15th century. However, the diffusion theory used by Krigger (2010) to establish the evolution of weaving among the Yoruba is tenable considering Picton's comments in Ademuleya (2002) that 'the distinctiveness of the West African narrow strip loom (Yoruba inclusive) is a pointer to an independent tradition. He thus cautions against the popular speculations that there must have been only one point of origin or source of inspiration; it could, therefore, be argued that the Yoruba production of textiles, aso-oke in particular, could have been developed by the Yoruba before contact with the outside world. Furthermore, since the radio carbon dates confirm earlier existence of these sculptural pieces of between 10th and 12th century date, which was prior to the introduction of Islam or contact with the Nupe people in the 15th century, one can conclude that the Yoruba's use of textiles as apparel or as clothing is an ag-long tradition.

2.4 Traditional Usage of Velvet fabrics

Yoruba people generally use Velvet fabrics in a number of ways which can be casual or ceremonial. Aremu, (1982); Asakitipi, (2007; 101-115). Oyelola (2004: 132) mention that aso-oke is reserved for special occasions where formal and dignified dressing is required. Yoruba people use Aso-Oke as girde (oja) to strap babies), (wrapper) iro head-tie (gele) buba (blouse) and (ipele) or shawl iborun which is usually hung on the shoulder of the user. Yoruba men use velvet fabrics in the ancient times as work dress on their farms and they also use it for social, religious and traditional ceremonies. They wear a complete dress consisting of sokoto (trousers), buba (top), agbada (large embroidered flowing gown) and fila (cap). Aso-oke is highly valued as special gift for dignified people, Clapperton (1826; 13, 16) reports that he collected a gift of aso-oke from Alaafin Abiodun in old Oyo in 1920, while Amubode, (2001;109) confirms the importance of Aran as wedding gift for the bride's family in Yoruba land in addition to being used to placate the witches Aran is also used as aso-ebi (family commemorative cloth) among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria. Aran connotes the wearing of a chosen or commissioned cloth as a uniform dress to commemorate or celebrate an event or occasion.

Judith, (1999:180), and Aremu (2006:18) explain that Velvet fabrics is seen as strong expression of communal, solidarity and love. Aso-Oke is also used for religious purposes as egungun costume. Egungun

is an ancestral worship among the Yoruba, which refers to 'masked men' who represent the spirits of the living dead (Idowu, 1962; 93). Egungun costumes vary among communities. Some communities like the Oyo use aso-oke in elaborate costumes that have a long trail behind them. A new strip of aso-oke is added to the egungun costume to add up to its beauty every year which implies that the age of an egungun can be calculated from the strips. Velvet Fabrics is also used as a sacred cloth by the ogboni society among the Ijebu-Yoruba. it is referred to as velvet fabrics, an insignia of the cult of Ogboni people. It is used to cover some religious objects e.g. ere-ibeji, osanyin, edan and used as shrine decoration.

Velvet fabrics is also used for the making of hunter's shirt and knickers (gberi ode) which is attached with many charms and amulets. Chief Odetola mentions that a type of aso-oke was used as spirit-protected covering among the Yoruba. Charms inform of wristlets are also made from aso-oke when combine with the skin of the alligator, and supported with some rituals and incantations which the Yoruba people refer to as "ifunpa" (armlet) or "ounde" (waist band). In an attempt to protect 'abiku' (believed to be a "spirit-child" with the ability to die severally and be born again by the same mother. Ashes of aso-oke are usually combined with other magical substances in making protective charm to break this cycle of death and rebirth. He concluded that for couples to remain happy in their marriage, the Ifa priest prescribes for this couple the use of aso-oke dress for use in the traditional ceremony.

2.5 Decline in Use of Velvet fabrics

It is a believed that the British policy in Nigeria from 1886 was design to knock down the home industries in other to guarantee continuing importation of British made goods to her colonies which Sir Lord Lugard implemented. These policies, which sought markets for the British goods at the expense of the textile industries in 1904 recorded the beginning of decline in the production and patronage of Local textile industries (Okeke 2005), As a result of these colonial policies on the Hausa, Nupe and the Yoruba textiles with smuggling activities along Nigeria coastal towns and land boarders became a major improvement to the growth of the velvet textile industries in another country. Available written and oral records show that from the pre-independent Nigeria up to 1976 (the time of oil boom) locally produced cotton served the cottage industries and contributed to their growth which positively improved the nation's economy. The introduction of cotton cloth and European-style garments in the early years of 1900 changed the

consumption patterns and created stiff competition for the indigenous textile industries. In addition, availability of fairly used cloth, known as ‘aso oyinbo’ (Whiteman’s cloth) among the Yoruba had negative impact on the indigenous textile productions and dress traditions.

By the beginning of the twentieth century through the mid-half of the period, the British textile merchants flooded Yoruba markets with textile materials. Of the sort including Velvet. Many monarchs include lesser chief acquired Velvet dress. They appeared very often in Velvet dress to social events during the period. Consequently, Yoruba monarchs relied more on the patronage of imported velvet right from the sixteenth century. This stance commenced the gradual eclipse of Aran and by the early decades of the twentieth century when there was unrestricted access to the deluge of available Velvet, Aran finally bowed out of production and patronage.

Renne (2015) observes that factory printed cloth has broad spectrum of colours and designs like Velvet; they are lighter in weight, more comfortable to sew, wear, and care for. For these reasons imported Damasks, Velvets, Satins and Silks gained popularity as prestige garments while indigenous cloth was rejected.

The use of Aran as masquerade costume was popular in the ancient times among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. Though, the introduction of Christianity and other foreign religions to Yoruba land have washed away many masking traditions which earlier sustained Aran production,

2.6 The rethink and reused of Aran Velvet in Contemporary Times

Clarke (1966) confirms that Velvet fabric readily accepted the new fibers and industrial dyes introduced by the British trading firms. The introduction of these imported Velvet fabrics brought a change in Aso-Oke structure, visual and textural qualities. From 1960 onward, Velvet fabric became softer with lustrous look, which was actually missing in the traditional ones. The importation of foreign textiles into Nigeria during the colonial era, injected into Velvet fabric new

designs, which encouraged people to imitate them creating lace designs by creating beautiful and weft flow on fabrics as demanded by their new patrons. These new Aso-Oke types are what Aremu (1982:4) refers to as ‘Aran’ which Oyelola (2004; 15) refers to as “open work”. They resemble the modern-day Spanish cloth, which is now in vogue among the elites. The importation of European textiles to Nigeria influenced the structural nature of Aso-Oke and redefined its surface and textural quality. It also generates new knowledge and production skills. In addition, foreign motifs such as ball, diamond, computer, star and other fabricated objects now appear on Aso-Oke, which gives it a global representation. Small stripes of imported lurex fiber were added to cotton warps to create a new look in Aso-Oke, which gradually became the characteristics of the cotemporary velvet fabric making it more shining in outlook from where they derive their names "shain-shain".

Aran has been tested and confirmed as a good material for home furnishing. Aran can be used for home furniture to make upholstery and other interior decorations, e.g. bed spread, throw pillows, pillow cases, lamp shade (Komolafe, 2005). The report of Ojo (2006;113) also confirmed the use of “aran” as room dividers, blinds, bed spread table covers, foot rests among others. Today, a very good mix of “aran” with leather can provide a very good appliqué that will appeal to the sensibility of the people. If fifty percent of homes in the southwestern Nigeria should start commissioning such today, it will go a long way in solving the problem of youths’ unemployment in Nigeria.

Something can still be done to salvage the demand of aran for religious use. In view of this, the catholic mission has incorporated aran and other traditional hand-crafted textiles as part of the priests’ regalia. This is a good development for the survival of aran production and use. With time, church choirs will also form part of the users. The use of aran as troupe costume for our contingents going on international outings should be encouraged in other to project our image abroad and popularize the traditional fabric. Velvet is different contemporary attires.



Sources: Mrs OGD 2025

3. Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study.

3.1 Population for the Study

The population of the three states for the study is about 17 million, 150 people which is 000.882% of the population were used for the study from the three states.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study comprised of one hundred and fifty (150) people from the total population. They were randomly selected from Ondo, Osun and Oyo States. The people were randomly selected through simple random sampling technique.

3.3 Instrument for Data Collection

The research instruments were interview and questionnaire. The interview was used to obtain relevant information on the rejuvenation of the use of velvet fabric among Yoruba people in the selected states. A structure questionnaire was the second instrument for data collection from the responded.

3.4 Validation of Research Instrument

Questionnaire for the study was validated by two senior lecturers in the Department of Home Economics for face and content validation. Their suggestions and comments were used to correct the instrument used for the study.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Oral interviews and administration of questionnaire to the respondents were the method of Data collection.

3.6 Data Analysis

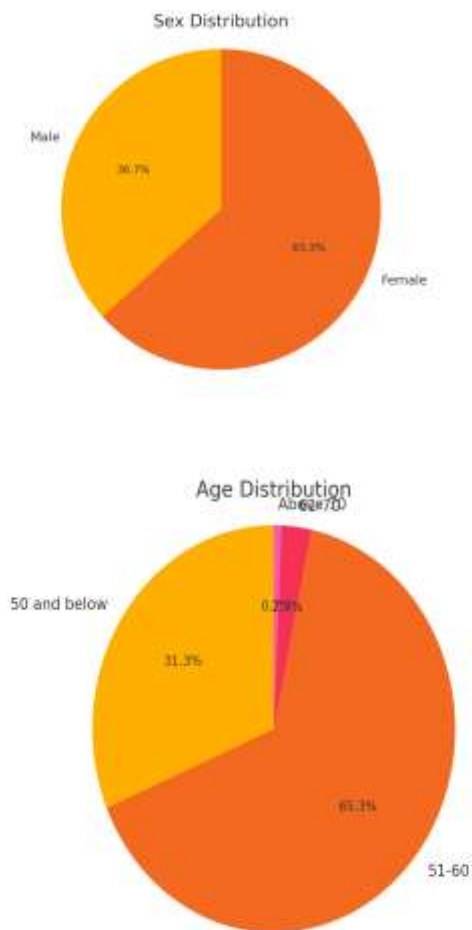
Descriptive statistics of simple percentage was used for data analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Results

i

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents



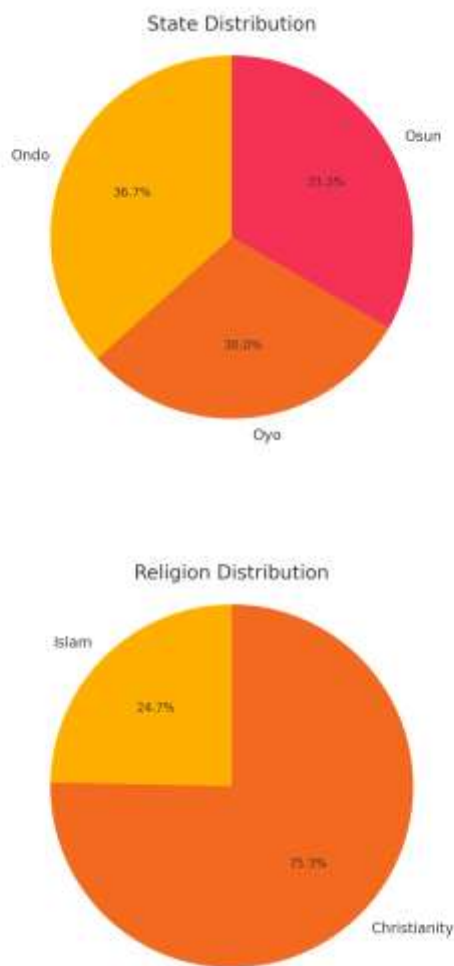


Table above revealed that 36.7% of the respondents are male while 63.3% are female, this shows that more female participated in the study. The age range of the respondents revealed that 31.3% of the respondents are 50 years and below, 65.3 are within 51-60 years, 2.7% are withing 61-70 years and 0.7 are above 70 years. 55% of the respondents are selected from Ondo state, 30% are from Oyo State and 33.3% are selected from Osun State. Also, based on religion, 24.7 are Muslims while 75.3 are Christian.

Table 2: Showing the mean score on the level of usage of velvet fabric among Yoruba people

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Me'an	•Decisions	
1	Velvet fabric (aran) is traditional attire which is best described as "cloth for the Rich	120	20	7	3	3.71	Agreed	
2	Velvet fabric (aran) are not used again s	10	24	40	76	1.78	Disagreed	
3	Velvet fabric (aran) is not in vogue	79	45	16	10	3.29	Agreed	
4	My family and I have used Velvet fabric (aran)	66	45	35	4	3.15	Agreed	
5	Value is attached to Velvet fabric (aran) because it can be purchased easily, re-used and recycled. It is worn on both traditional and social occasion	54	74	20	2	3.2	Agreed	
	Cluster mean	3.03						

N=150

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A = Agree , D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree Decision Value for Remark: Disagree = 0.00-2.49, Agree = 2.5-4.00

Results presented in Table 4.2 showed the mean of respondents on the level of usage of velvet fabric among Yoruba people. Result showed that the mean score range from 1.78-3.71. The cluster mean of 3.03 indicates that the level of usage of velvet fabric among Yoruba people is high.

Table 3: Showing the mean score on the perception of people on velvet fabric in contemporary fashion among Yoruba people

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decisions
1	Velvet fabric (aran) is appreciated as Agbada, Buba, Sokoto, Fila, Iro, Iborun and Gele	106	38	0	3	3.65	Agreed
2	Velvet fabric (aran) are also appreciated outside the country as imported gowns, trousers, tops and jacket.	99	41	7	3	3.57	Agreed
3	Velvet fabric (aran) is costly	76	61	10	3	3.4	Agreed
4	Velvet fabric (aran) is a culture and tradition cloth, only for local and old people	88	33	21	8	3.34	Agreed
5	All Velvet fabric (aran) produced have values which reflect in their quality, colour and name	104	30	16	6	3.63	Agreed
	Cluster mean	3.52					

N= 150

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A = Agree , D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Decision Value for Remark: Disagree = 0.00-2.49, Agree = 2.5-4.00

Results presented in Table 4.3 showed the mean of respondents on the perception of people on velvet fabric in contemporary fashion among Yoruba people. Result showed that the mean score range from 3.34-3.65. The cluster mean of 3.52 indicates that the perception of people on velvet fabric in contemporary fashion among Yoruba people is positive.

Table 4: Showing the mean score on the changing nature of future demand for velvet fabric in combination with other fabrics in the Nigerian fashion scene.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decisions
1	Velvet fabric (aran) is lighter and enjoys the endearment of fashion designers who use it for various styles and mixtures that have the capacity to attract the people	76	50	15	9	3.29	Agreed
2	Velvet fabric (aran) combined with other fabric and can be use it for variety	56	44	27	23	2.88	Agreed
3	Redesigning of Velvet fabric (aran), people may use it more	65	59	23	3	3.24	Agreed
4	The increase in demand for Velvet fabric (aran) is as a result of its durability	57	43	32	18	2.93	Agreed
5	Velvet fabric (aran) is valued because they are culturally important and relevant in Yoruba society	124	20	6	0	3.79	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	3.23					

N=150

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A = Agree , D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Decision Value for Remark: Disagree = 0.00-2.49, Agree = 2.5-4.00

Results presented in Table 4.4 showed the mean of respondents on changing nature of future demand for velvet fabric in combination with other fabrics in the Nigerian fashion scene. Result showed that the mean score range from 2.88-3.79. The cluster mean of 3.23 indicates that the changing nature of future demand for velvet fabric in combination with other fabrics in the Nigerian fashion scene is also positive

Table 5: Showing the mean score on how velvet was brought back to existence and it is used recently

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Velvet fabric (aran) making industries in Nigeria are re-emerging due to renewed interests in the fabric	98	41	6	5	3.55	Agreed
2	Increase in the use of velvet fabric (aran) by important personality or celebrity makes the use of velvet fabric (aran) centres on stages again »	62	49	34	5	3.1 • 1	Agreed
i	Model who was always on the media and fashion consciousness of the people	89	59	2	0	3.58	Agreed
4	Velvet fabric (aran) is more favoured now because it is what people use for aso-ebi	101	39	10	0	3.61	Agreed
5	Velvet fabric (aran) has the capacity to make people look rich and gorgeous if it is made trendy and spiced up by the fashion designer	102	30	18	0	3.56	Agreed
	Cluster mean	3.48					

N=150

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Decision Value for Remark: Disagree = 0.00-2.49, Agree = 2.5-4.00

Results presented in Table 4.6 showed the mean of respondents on how velvet was brought back to existence and it is use recently. Result showed that the mean score range from 3.1-3.61. The cluster mean of 3.48 indicates that velvet was brought back to existence and it is use recently

5. Discussion of Findings

The result in table 2 revealed that Velvet fabric (aran) is traditional attire which is best described as "cloth for the rich, Velvet fabric (aran) is used among Yoruba people, but Velvet fabric (aran) is not in vogue Value is attached to Velvet fabric (aran) because it can be purchased easily, re-used and recycled. It is worn on both traditional and social occasion. Therefore, the level of usage of velvet fabric among Yoruba people is high.

The result in table 3 revealed that Velvet fabric (aran) is appreciated as Agbada, Buba, Sokoto, Fila, Iro, Iborun and Gele, Velvet fabric (aran) are also appreciated outside the country as imported gowns, trousers, tops and jacket but Velvet fabric (aran) is costly. Velvet fabric (aran) is a culture and tradition cloth, only for local and old people and All Velvet fabric (aran) produced have values which reflect in their quality, colour and name. Thus, the perception of people on velvet fabric in contemporary fashion among Yoruba people is positive

The result in table 4 showed that changing nature of future demand for velvet fabric in combination with other fabrics in the Nigerian fashion scene because Velvet fabric (aran) is lighter and enjoys the endearment of fashion designers who use it for various styles and mixtures that have the capacity to attract the

people, Velvet fabric (aran) combined with other fabric and can be use it for variety, Redesigning of Velvet fabric (aran), people may use it more. The increase in demand for Velvet fabric (aran) is as a result of its durability and Velvet fabric (aran) is valued because they are culturally important and relevant in Yoruba society.

Table 5 result revealed that velvet was brought back to existence and it is use recently through industries re-emerging due to renewed interests in the fabric in Nigeria, increase in the use of velvet fabric (aran) by important personality or celebrity, Model, use for aso-ebi and Velvet fabric (aran) has the capacity to make people look rich and gorgeous if it is made trendy and spiced up by the fashion designer.

6. Summary

The study was carried out to investigate Revitalizing Velvet: The Making, Unmaking, and Remaking of African Heritage in Yoruba Communities in Nigeria. In an attempt to carry out this research work One hundred and fifty respondents were randomly selected from Osun, Ondo and Oyo. A well-structured questionnaires and oral interview were the instruments for data collection. The data obtained were statistically analyzed using simple percentage and mean. The result of the research showed the level of usage of Velvet fabric among Yoruba people is high and the perception of people on Velvet fabric in contemporary fashion among Yoruba people is positive. Regular washing and ironing of Velvet fabric Aran will make it durable and washing machine can be employed for Velvet fabric Aran. Due to renewed interests in the fabric, there has been increase in the use of velvet fabric Aran by important personality or celebrity,

Models, use as Aso-Ebi and Velvet fabric Aran has the capacity to make people look rich and gorgeous if it is made trendy and "spiced" up by the fashion designer.

7. Conclusion

This study has given fresh insights into the rejuvenation of the use of velvet fabrics among Yoruba people. The findings have shown that, the use of velvet fabric Aran is rejuvenated due to its use by important personality or celebrity, Models and used as Aso-Ebi. Therefore, the Yoruba people, and Nigerians in general, must go back to the drawing board and continue the use of velvet fabric Aran as a show of our traditional and clothing cultural heritage.

Recommendations were made based of the set objectives of the study:

- The Yoruba people in the study area Ondo, Oyo, Osun should continue to use Velvet for the celebration of important ceremonies (where applicable) that is where "aso-oke" does not fit in.
- The study recommends that as revealed by the study, Yoruba people should continue to have a positive attitude towards the use of velvet since it has been associated with them for more than five centuries.
- The study concludes that one of the surest ways to sustain the use of Velvet among the Yoruba people is ensure its use to combine with other suitable factory-made fabrics to create trendy styles.
- Since the resurgences of the use of velvet as another alternative clothing items for the celebration of social event, fashion designer should produce more creative designs that could be appreciated beyond local boundaries.

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Revisiting Ecological Precarity in Southeastern Nigeria and the Igbo Poets' Response

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Abstract. This paper examines the intersection of ecological degradation and poetic response in Southeastern Nigeria, focusing on how Igbo poets engage environmental crises through literary imagination and advocacy. Drawing on Reed's culturally grounded ecocritical model, the study explores how selected poems articulate ecological precarity and construct an indigenous ethic of environmental sustainability. Four poems were purposively selected and subjected to close textual analysis to assess their ecological orientation and symbolic structure. The analysis demonstrates that Igbo poets move beyond aesthetic celebration of nature to critically interrogate its degradation, transforming poetry into a site of environmental consciousness and ethical reflection. Environmental decline is represented simultaneously as material devastation and moral rupture: gully erosion is metaphorically rendered as a corporeal wound upon the land; polluted rivers signify spiritual desecration; and biodiversity loss is attributed not only to ecological pressures but also to culturally mediated neglect shaped by aesthetic bias and symbolic prejudice. Through nuanced poetic devices, Igbo poets recast environmental concerns as a disruption of reciprocity between humans and the natural world. Sustainability is therefore framed not as a purely technocratic intervention but as a moral imperative grounded in indigenous cosmology. The study concludes that Igbo ecopoetry constitutes a significant indigenous contribution to environmental thought, advancing a model of sustainability rooted in relational balance, communal accountability, and ethical renewal. Igbo poets thus emerge not only as chroniclers of environmental crisis but as critical agents in shaping an environmentally conscious cultural imagination.

Keywords: Ecological degradation, Environmental realities, Igbo poets, Sustainability, Southeastern Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Environmental degradation remains one of the most pressing challenges confronting contemporary Africa. Across the continent, the pressures of rapid urbanisation, population growth, and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources have intensified ecological instability. In Southeastern Nigeria, this crisis manifests most visibly in escalating environmental degradation, posing severe risks to human safety and well-being. This includes issues such as persistent flooding, the destruction of natural habitats, soil degradation, and aquifer depletion, all exacerbated by climate change impacts (Kalu and Zakirova, 2019). These environmental disruptions imperil not only the physical landscape but also the cultural, spiritual, and existential foundations of Igbo communities.

The Igbo people of Southeastern Nigeria, whose cosmology is deeply rooted in environmental interconnectedness, have experienced the collapse of both ecological and cultural systems due to these environmental pressures. While these concerns are often addressed within scientific, policy-oriented frameworks, and environmental studies, literary texts particularly indigenous poetic traditions offer critical insights into how environmental crises are experienced, interpreted, and contested at the cultural level. Despite growing scholarship on African ecocriticism, the ecological dimensions of Igbo literary works remain comparatively underexplored. Much literary analysis has focused on themes of colonialism, identity, gender, politics, and cultural revival, often sidelining the environmental dimension. Against this backdrop, this study therefore seeks to fill that gap by examining how Igbo literature articulates environmental concerns and advance a culturally grounded quest for sustainability in Southeastern Nigeria.

Igbo poets in particular have persistently engaged these ecological transformations through creative expression. Their poetry constitutes an important archive of environmental consciousness, documenting lived experiences of ecological trauma while articulating culturally grounded visions of sustainability. Notable Igbo ecopoets, including Obienyem, Nzeako, Ubesie, Maduekwe, Chukuezi, and Ikwubuzo, have made environmental issues central to their literary creations. They deliberately craft literature to stimulate public awareness and propel debates concerning the environment. Thus, the study explores how Igbo poets reflect and respond to environmental degradation. It investigates how ecological crises are represented, how indigenous cosmology shapes environmental perception, and how poetic strategies function as forms of environmental advocacy. By drawing from selected poems, the study aims to demonstrate that Igbo poets construct a literary ecology of resistance – one that calls for environmental responsibility grounded in indigenous epistemologies. Their contributions are essential in highlighting instances of environmental degradation within creative narratives and advocating for change.

1.1 Environmental Realities and Issues in Southeastern Nigeria

Southeastern Nigeria constitutes one of the country's six geopolitical zones and is predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group. The region comprises five states: Abia State, Anambra State, Ebonyi State, Enugu State, and Imo State. According to the 2006 national census, the zone had a population of approximately 16.32 million people, composed of 8.31 million (50.92%) males and 8.01 million (49.08%) females; a near-equal gender distribution (NPC, 2006; Ike, 2017). Given subsequent demographic growth trends in Nigeria, current population figures are likely significantly higher, thereby intensifying pressure on land and ecological resources.

Geographically, Southeastern Nigeria lies between latitudes 4°10'N and 7°08'N and longitudes 5°30'E and 9°27'E. Its location within the humid tropical rainforest belt confers relatively high temperatures throughout the year, with an average of approximately 80°F (about 27°C). The region experiences a tropical climate characterised by two principal seasons: a rainy season, typically from April to October, and a dry season, generally from October to March. A distinct harmattan period -marked by cool, dry, dust-laden northeast trade winds from the Sahara which usually occurs between December and January, sometimes extending into February. However, climate variability associated with global climate change has increasingly

disrupted established seasonal patterns, producing irregular rainfall distribution, extended dry spells, and heightened rainfall intensity. Ecologically, the region encompasses tropical rainforests, river systems, wetlands, and fertile agricultural land. Traditionally, its soils have supported the cultivation of staple crops including cassava and yam. Yet, despite its agricultural potential, Southeastern Nigeria is widely regarded as one of the most environmentally vulnerable regions in West Africa. High annual rainfall, undulating topography, fragile sandy soils, and exceptionally high population density combine to create structural ecological fragility. Scholarly analyses consistently identify land degradation, soil erosion, deforestation, and climate-related impacts as defining environmental challenges in the region (Ike, 2017; Kalu and Zakirova, 2019; Joe-Ikechebelu et al., 2023).

Erosion and flooding represent the most severe and emblematic environmental crisis in Southeastern Nigeria. The region is widely recognised as Nigeria's epicenter of gully erosion, with thousands of active sites distributed across the five states. Empirical assessments indicate that Anambra State alone hosts several hundred major erosion sites, followed by Abia State, Imo State, Enugu State, and Ebonyi State. In his statistics, Anolu (2015) avers that Anambra, Abia, Imo, Enugu and Ebonyi states have over 750, 650, 500, 400 and 250 major erosion sites respectively. He further notes that the above gully figure is without smaller and young gullies which shall with time definitely progress to major gullies. These figures exclude numerous minor and emerging gullies that are likely to expand over time.

The formation and expansion of gullies are driven by the interaction of intense seasonal rainfall, highly erodible sandy soils, steep and dissected terrain, deforestation, inadequate drainage infrastructure, and poorly regulated land-use practices. Recent studies demonstrate that erosion in the region is structural rather than episodic (Egboka, 2004; Ezezika and Adetona, 2011; Nwagbara et al., 2015; Iwuchukwu et al., 2023). Once initiated, gullies expand rapidly, permanently removing arable land, undermining transportation networks, and destabilising residential structures. Entire communities have experienced displacement as homes, roads, and farmlands collapse into deep erosion channels. Communities such as Agulu, Nanka, and Oko in Anambra State have become emblematic of this crisis, facing recurrent landslides and severe infrastructural damage. The persistence of gully erosion underscores the urgent need for integrated watershed management, sustainable land-use planning, and climate-adaptive engineering interventions.



Figure I: A typical gully site in Southeastern Nigeria

Source: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-east/452915-special-report-communities-groan-as-erosion-ravages-farmlands-threatens-food-security-in-south-east-nigeria.html>

Beyond land degradation, environmental pollution - encompassing air, water, and soil contamination constitutes a significant and measurable concern. Although Southeastern Nigeria is less industrialised than the oil-producing Niger Delta region, rapid urbanisation has generated substantial ecological pressures in major cities such as Aba, Onitsha, Owerri, and Enugu. Key pollution sources include inadequate solid waste management, agrochemical runoff, untreated sewage discharge, vehicular emissions, quarrying, and small-scale mining activities (Agbebaku, 2015). River systems including Njaba River, Urashi River, and Imo River have experienced declining water quality due to sedimentation, waste disposal, and chemical contamination. These processes compromise aquatic ecosystems and reduce the availability of safe water for domestic and agricultural use.



Figure II: A collage showing environmental pollution in Onitsha and Imo state respectively.

https://www.oceansplasticcleanup.com/Oceans_Seas_Rivers/Imo_Nigerian_Rivers_Plastic_Waste_A_To_Z_Index_Top_Ocean_Polluters.htm

<https://tribuneonlineng.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/onitsha-pollution2.jpg>

Air pollution is particularly acute in commercial hubs. Studies have identified vehicular emissions and the widespread use of gasoline-powered generators as primary contributors to degraded air quality (Kalu and Zakirova, 2019). Onitsha has recorded extremely high concentrations of particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), with reported annual averages far exceeding the World Health Organisation's guideline limits. PM10 refers to inhalable coarse particles (between 2.5 and 10 micrometers), while PM2.5 consists of finer particles capable of penetrating deep into the lungs, increasing risks of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Similar air quality concerns have been documented in Aba and Umuahia. These pollution

burdens disproportionately affect low-income urban populations, reinforcing the nexus between environmental degradation and socio-economic vulnerability.

Deforestation constitutes both a driver and consequence of environmental instability in Southeastern Nigeria. Forest clearance for subsistence agriculture, fuelwood extraction, urban expansion, and infrastructural development has significantly reduced vegetation cover across the region. Case studies from forest reserves in Anambra State, including Ezekoro Forest, document measurable declines in tree density and canopy cover (Joe-Ikechebelu et al., 2023). The

loss of vegetative cover diminishes soil cohesion, increases surface runoff, and accelerates erosion processes. Moreover, the erosion of indigenous environmental governance systems has compounded ecological decline. Historically, Igbo communities maintained sacred groves and culturally regulated land-use practices that functioned as conservation mechanisms. The weakening of these traditional institutions, alongside demographic expansion and market pressures, has reduced community-based environmental stewardship (Obiakor et al., 2018).

Overgrazing is also an additional and increasingly visible dimension of environmental degradation in Igbo land. The expansion of livestock production by local farmers driven partly by growing urban demand for meat has intensified pressure on fragile ecosystems. In many rural communities, grazing practices exceed the natural regenerative capacity of grasses and herbaceous vegetation. Critically, post-grazing land management measures such as reseeding, rotational grazing, or controlled pasture rehabilitation are rarely implemented. As a result, vegetation cover is progressively depleted, exposing topsoil to direct solar radiation, heavy rainfall, and erosive surface runoff. Given the region's sandy and easily erodible soils, overgrazing compounds existing land degradation and contributes to declining agricultural productivity and gully formation. In addition to locally managed livestock systems, the expansion of transhumant pastoralism particularly free-range grazing by Fulani herders has generated environmental and socio-ecological tensions in several Igbo communities. Unregulated grazing routes frequently traverse farmlands, fallow plots, and forested areas, leading to trampling, vegetation loss, and the destruction of both cultivated crops and natural flora. Continuous grazing without spatial or temporal controls inhibits ecological recovery, diminishes biodiversity, and alters species composition within affected landscapes.

2. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research design grounded in literary textual analysis. It integrates close reading of selected Igbo poems with interdisciplinary environmental scholarship to establish the relationship between poetic representation and ecological realities in Southeastern Nigeria. The primary corpus comprises four (4) poems purposively drawn from three poetic texts namely: Ubesie's "Uṣu" in *Akpa Uche* (1975); Maduekwe's "Mgbomgbo" and "Okukọ Abuke" in *Nka Okwu* (1979); Ikwubuzo's "Njaba" in *Okpọkọbara* (2005). The selection criteria were based on their explicit

thematic engagement with identifiable ecological crises; sustained deployment of indigenous cosmological symbolism; and representativeness within the trajectory of modern Igbo poetic production. These criteria ensured both thematic coherence and literary significance within the corpus.

Secondary sources including scholarly literature and environmental data on Southeastern Nigeria were examined to establish the empirical grounding of the study. Particular attention was given to documented ecological challenges such as gully erosion, river pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity decline. The integration of environmental data enables a correlation between poetic imaginaries and verifiable ecological conditions. Analysis interrogates how ecological degradation is moralised, how cosmological disruption parallels environmental decline, and how poetic strategies function as forms of environmental advocacy. Interpretations are framed through Igbo relational ontology and ecocritical theory in order to elucidate the environmental ethics and cosmological assumptions embedded in the texts.

3. Theoretical Framework

Ecocriticism is chosen as the study's analytical framework due to its relevance in addressing and ethically engaging environmental concerns. Ecocriticism interprets texts as cultural responses to ecological conditions, revealing how literary art mediates human-nature relationships (Buell, 1995; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; Garrard, 2012). However, not all ecocritical models sufficiently account for intersection between indigenous worldviews and environmental realities. While ecocriticism broadly enables the exploration of literary responses to environmental concerns, many of its mainstream formulations are rooted in Western epistemologies that risk marginalising indigenous ecological perspectives. Reed's (1997) model is particularly apt for analysing Igbo eco-oriented poetry because it offers a culturally grounded, ethically engaged, and spiritually attuned framework. Central to Reed's approach is the belief that environmental texts must be read within the specific cultural and ecological contexts from which they emerge. This aligns seamlessly with Igbo cosmology, where the natural environment is conceived as an active benevolent, therapeutic, sublime, and spiritual entity in constant interaction with human. Unlike other ecocritical models, Reed's approach respects indigenous ontologies, enabling a reading of Igbo poetry that captures the significance of the environment, the moral obligations toward nature, and the deeply rooted environmental ethics embedded in literary traditions.

Moreover, Reed's emphasis on place-based interpretation allows for critical engagement with the ecological realities specific to Southeastern Nigeria as represented in selected Igbo poems. By foregrounding the indigenous ecological specificity of the Igbo world and its literary expressions, this theoretical model enables the study to trace how poets use nuanced poetic devices to articulate ecological issues and advocate sustainable environmental practices. Thus, this approach provides a culturally grounded and ethically robust foundation for the study.

4. Environmental Concerns in Selected Poems and Igbo Poets' Quest for its Sustainability

Igbo poets' engagement with the natural environment transcends pastoral admiration and relevance to a profound articulation of ecological anxiety. Their works register deep ecological anxiety, foregrounding the fragility of landscapes across Igboland and dramatising the lived consequences of environmental degradation. It also constitutes a sustained poetic

Sòro m̄ gáruo Àgùlù na Nanká,
Ebe ọnya dī ukwu tārà ala!
Ọ bughī ọnya ntà ka ala ahu nà-arịà,
Ọ bụ ọnya àkwùma na-agba ọbàrà...
(Nka Okwu, pp. 42-44)

(Follow me to Àgùlù and Nanká,
Where a great sore plagued the land!
It is not a minor sore that happened to the land,
It is a bleeding yaws...)

The poet's metaphoric description of the land as a festering sore: *Ọ bughī ọnya ntà ka ala ahu nà-arịà, ọ bụ ọnya àkwùma na-agba ọbàrà* (It is not a minor sore that happened to the land, it is a bleeding yaws/pus) literally portrays the land as a wounded organism. This metaphor encapsulates both the physical devastation of the land and the psychological trauma of the people who inhabit it. The imagery transforms gully erosion into a symbolic wound, a festering injury that corrodes not only soil and vegetation but also erodes the very foundations of communal life.

Scientific and historical data reinforce the gravity of this poetic depiction. The Agulu-Nanka erosion complex lies within the Awka-Orlu uplands, a region characterised by gently undulating topography with slopes ranging from 20-50 degrees and scarp points reaching 50-70 degrees. Originally covered by dense vegetation, the area has undergone extensive anthropogenic deforestation, leaving predominantly secondary regrowth. The tropical humid climate marked by approximately eight months of intense rainfall annually further accelerates soil instability. According to Ajaero and Mozic (2010), the erosion zone spans multiple communities, including Agulu, Nanka, Ekwulobia, Oko, Amaokpala, Ezira, and Ogboji, affecting an estimated 2.5 million residents. Earlier research by Egboka and Okpoko (1984) traces the origin of the Agulu-Nanka gully system to around 1850, noting its expansion to approximately 1,100 km² and an alarming annual advancement rate of 20-50 meters. These statistics substantiate Maduekwe's metaphor: the "bleeding sore" is neither hyperbolic nor symbolic excess but an empirically verifiable catastrophe.

Ecologically, gully erosion entails the stripping of fertile topsoil, destruction of vegetation, alteration of hydrological systems, and long-term soil infertility. The removal of arable land undermines subsistence agriculture – the economic backbone of rural Igbo communities. Farming in places like Agulu and Nanka is not merely an occupation but a cultural practice embedded in lineage, inheritance, and seasonal ritual. When farmland becomes uncultivable, food security declines, household incomes shrink, and intergenerational continuity is disrupted. The erosion of soil thus parallels the erosion of social cohesion.

Contemporary journalistic accounts further illuminate the crisis. Reporting in *Premium Times*, Iruoma (2021) recounts the testimony of a farmer from Agulu who lamented that she has been unable to cultivate her four hectares of farmland

interrogation of ecological precarity and environmental injustice. Through imagery of eroding landscapes, destabilised ecosystems, and diminishing biodiversity, these poets simultaneously celebrate the vitality of nature and expose the socio-environmental crises that imperil its continuity.

Among the most poignant ecological crises bemoaned by Igbo poets is menace of gully erosion, which has reduced large portions of Southeastern Nigeria into zones of environmental despair. This phenomenon has destroyed fertile farmlands, homes, and roads disrupting not only the environment but also endangered livelihoods and cultural rhythms of rural life across Igboland. For agrarian communities whose cosmology and economy are intimately tied to the land, such degradation signifies not merely environmental loss but existential dislocation. A striking poetic representation of this crisis appears in Maduekwe's "Mgbomgbo" in *Nka Okwu* (1979, pp. 42-44), which draws attention to the erosion-ravaged communities of Agulu and Nanka in present-day Anambra State, Nigeria. The poet invites the reader into a landscape marked by devastation:

for over five years due to the inaccessibility and destruction caused by advancing gullies. According to her “each rainfall, worsens the gullies, further cutting off access routes and disrupting livelihoods.” Similarly, coverage by *Daily Trust* (Elekwe, 2023) documents local recollections of how minor streams gradually evolved into vast ravines that have swallowed homes and displaced families. These narratives underscore the progressive nature of the disaster: what begins as a narrow channel can, through neglect and environmental mismanagement, evolve into a community-wide calamity.

Governmental acknowledgment of the severity of the situation reinforces these accounts. During a roundtable meeting with the Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project in Awka, Governor Chukwuma Soludo identified Agulu, Nanka, and Oko as epicenters of active erosion sites. Reports published by *The Cable* (2025) indicate that lives have been lost, properties worth millions of naira destroyed, and institutions such as Federal Polytechnic, Oko placed under serious threat, with segments of infrastructure already collapsing into expanding gullies.



Figure III: An image showing the impact of gully erosion in Agulu-Nanka area in Anambra

Source: <https://www.thecable.ng/tackling-erosion-menace-in-anambra/>

These practical and verifiable testimonies lend factual weight to Maduekwe’s portrayal in his poem. They reveal that the impact of this environmental crisis is not only ecological but also socioeconomically severe, displacing families, disrupting agriculture, and intensifying rural poverty. Roads washed away by erosion isolate communities, cutting them off from markets, schools, and healthcare facilities. Entire communities live with the fear of sudden collapse during heavy rains, leading to forced migration. In poetic terms, such dislocation signifies the fragmentation of the communal body, where the rupture of the land parallels the disintegration of cultural life.

In “Njaba”, Ikwubuzo (*Okpokōbara*, 2005, p. 33) advances an eco-poetic meditation on flooding, water pollution, and the desecralisation of aquatic landscapes in Southeastern Nigeria. The poem moves beyond descriptive lamentation to articulate a culturally embedded environmental ethic in which ecological damage constitutes both material devastation and cosmological disorder. Through apostrophe, rhetorical interrogation, proverbial wisdom, and ritual symbolism, Ikwubuzo reframes environmental degradation as a crisis of relational ontology – an erosion not only of water quality but of moral equilibrium.

The Njaba River which is dominant motif in the poem, is a geographically and culturally significant waterway within the Niger Delta Basin. It is a major tributary of Oguta Lake in Imo State, meanders through several towns including Isu Njaba, Amucha, Ekwe, Okwudor, Awo-Omamma, and Izombe, before emptying into the lake (Onu and Opara, 2012; Ejiagwa et. al., 2018). Beyond its hydrological importance, the river occupies a central position in Igbo environmental thought. This river is central to the environmental consciousness of the Igbo people, not only because of its economic and hydrological significance, but also due to its cosmological and spiritual symbolism. Within Igbo cosmology, rivers such as Njaba are revered as sacred entity, custodian of moral order, and ancestral presence.

Ikwubuzo structures the poem as an apostrophic lament, directly addressing the river in tones that interweave reverence and grief. The opening stanza deploys a catalogue of kinship appellations:

Nwanne Urashì	(Sibling to Urashi River)
Àgbatàobi Imò	Neighbour to Imo River
Enyi Anyim Atlantik	Friend to the Atlantic Ocean
Ójèzürüwà	One who traverses the world)

(*Okpokōbara*, 2005, p. 33)

The kinship terms – *nwanne* (sibling), *àgbatàobi* (neighbour), and *enyi* (friend) encode a principle of relational ontology foundational to Igbo metaphysics: all entities, animate and inanimate, participate in an interconnected web of reciprocity. Each epithet expands Njaba’s identity beyond a static geographical feature, an entity whose essence flows across local (Urashi, Imo River) and global (Atlantic Ocean) spaces. However, this affectionate invocation shifts

to interrogative anguish, as the poet laments the river's level of degradation and indicting communal complicity. The subsequent stanzas are structured around a sequence of rhetorical questions that probe the river's altered condition:

Gini gbarùrù gị ihu?	(What ruffled your face?	
Ọnye kpasuru gị iwe?	Who provoked you to anger?...	
Ọ bụ Isunjàba	Is it Isunjàba	
Èbe i dotere isi?	Where you laid your head?	
Ọ bụ Amùcha?	Is it Amùcha?	
Okwùdò na Èkwè	Okwùdò and Èkwè	
Ebe ị kwàrà òkpò?	Through which you flow?)	
Ọ bụ n'elu ide a	Was it on this flood	
Ka m gbàra igwe mmiri	That I once swam joyfully	
Ọ bụ n'ime uzuzu à	Was it within this sandy surface	
Kà m kpòrò ùmị azụ?	That I swam as a fish?	
Ọ bụzi n'akùkù eze nwaanyi à	Is it beside this water goddess	
Egwu ekweghị guzo	Where one dreaded to stand	
Kà ụmụazị na-àma ụkwa?	That children now wash off the detritus of breadfruits?	
Ọ zị n'elu okwute à	Is it upon this rock	
Anyà ahughị ebe o zoro	Whose hidden location no eye has seen,	
Kà ndiòmù na-àsà akwà?	That the women now wash their clothes?	
Ụkwu jie agū	If the leopard's foot gets broken	
Mgbàdà àbịara yā ugwo.	The antelope comes for recompense	(Okpokòbàrà, 2005, p. 33)

These interrogatives perform several functions simultaneously. Structurally, they generate rhythmic insistence; emotionally, they convey grief; ethically, they imply culpability. The degradation of the river is personified as an injury or offense inflicted upon a sentient being. By asking "Who angered you?", the poet suggests that ecological collapse is neither accidental nor purely natural but emerges from human negligence, exploitation, or mismanagement. In the third stanza, the lament becomes deeply personal as the poet recalls with great nostalgia his childhood intimacy with the river. The contrast between the remembered purity of the river with the present condition marked by *uzuzu* (silt and sandy residue) reflects ecological decay. This juxtaposition dramatises sedimentation and pollution as tangible markers of decline.

Ikwubuzo further heightens ecological dissonance through the juxtaposition of sacred and profane imagery. References to a water goddess and to a hidden, consecrated rock evoke ritual geographies once governed by taboos and communal restraint. Against this sacred backdrop, he depicts mundane activities: children washing breadfruit debris and women laundering clothes in spaces formerly imbued with awe. The imagery does not only document everyday life rather it signals the erosion of ecological reverence – the paradox of a river once venerated as life-giving now rendered toxic. Actions once regulated by spiritual consciousness now unfold with unreflective familiarity, symbolising a desecrated environment. The river's pollution thus signifies both ecological contamination and spiritual desecration. The proverbial lines concluding the stanza: *Ụkwu jie agū / Mgbàdà àbịara yā ugwo* (If the leopard's leg gets broken / The antelope comes for recompense) function allegorically. In Igbo proverbial logic, animals encode moral hierarchies and ecological insights. The leopard (*agū*) a powerful and territorial predator symbolises nature's wounded majesty, while the antelope (*mgbàdà*) a gentle herbivore signifies the smaller entities emboldened by imbalance. The trapped leopard (*agū*) and the opportunistic antelope (*mgbàdà*) demanding recompense are metaphorical representations of nature's suffering when exposed to certain undue conditions/state. In sum, the poet intention in these descriptions/imageries is to capture the loss of the ambience, awe, and perplexity that once defined this natural phenomenon as a result of the current state of despoilation.

In the final stanza, the poet shifts from mourning to urgent hope, transforming despair into a call for restoration and cosmological renewal. This transition is not merely emotional; it is ideological, signaling a deliberate appeal for restoration of cosmological balance. The imagery of "Ọze gwùrùgwùrù" (One who makes a rumbling sound) and "Ọgba wàràwàrà" (One who runs swiftly) reactivates the elemental ideophones of the poem, invoking water as agent capable of renewal despite the fact that its vitality has been compromised. By commanding the river to "rebound" and "fill up again," the poet imagines ecological revival as a collaborative process between humans and the natural world. Central to this invocation is the call for the return of *Eke Njàbà* (the sacred python associated with the river) which symbolises a full restoration of the river. Its absence signifies ecological rupture; its return promises both environmental healing and cultural rebalancing. Thus, the plea for the python's return carries symbolic urgency: ecological degradation is intertwined with cultural loss, and restoration must address both dimensions.



Figure IV: Recent image of the Njaba River

https://web.facebook.com/groups/725679167452427/posts/9007975319222729/?_rdc=1&_rdr#

Aside soil erosion and hydrological degradation, Igbo poets also confront a more insidious ecological crisis: the gradual loss of biodiversity. In their poetic imagination, biodiversity represents the variety and balance of life forms that ensure ecological stability and the continuity of natural processes essential to human survival. Igbo poets frame its deterioration as a consequence of human negligence, indiscriminate exploitation, and culturally conditioned prejudice toward species deemed undesirable or insignificant. Maduekwe’s “Òkukò Abùke” exemplifies this ecological consciousness through its focus on the near extinction of *abùke* (short-winged chicken), a species of domesticated poultry once prevalent in Igbo communities. Unlike well-feathered and visually appealing domestic fowl, the *abùke* is characterised by sparse plumage, truncated wings, and what is often perceived as an awkward or unattractive appearance. Its physical peculiarity renders it socially marginalised within poultry-rearing practices, leading to neglect in breeding and, consequently, to its gradual disappearance. The poem’s opening lines foreground this disappearance:

Ha dịzị oke ụkọ n’oge ùgbu a “They are very scarce these days”
 Anya adighị àhụkwadị ha mà otù. They are hardly seen around
 Òkukò à ibè ya kpòrò dibjà... (p. 32) This chicken others refer to as medicine man...”

Here, the poet’s diction underscores the species’ disappearance and rarity. Scarcity here is not merely demographic but symbolic: a species fades not only from farms but from communal memory. The reference to the chicken as *dibjà* (medicine man or spiritualist) is particularly significant. In Igbo cosmology, animals and humans alike may be assigned symbolic identities that exceed biological classification. The label *dibjà* evokes ambivalence – simultaneously reverent and suspicious. By associating the *abùke* with esoteric or mystical connotations, the poem reflects a cultural mechanism whereby physical difference is conflated with strangeness or spiritual ambiguity. Maduekwe thus, exposes the stigma associated with difference and the cultural tendency to equate physical peculiarity with the mystical or diabolical. This association metaphorically accentuates a broader pattern in which aesthetic and cultural prejudice shape ecological outcomes. Such stigmatisation contributes to ecological neglect: species that fail to meet aesthetic expectations are neither valued nor preserved. In the third stanza, the poet’s concern intensifies through rhetorical questioning:

Kà mgbu ọkukò ò biela ha ajọ aka? (Could it be that a deadly poultry disease has struck them?)
 Orịà ojọọ à asachapụkwalà abùke a? Has this terrible epidemic wiped out the short-winged chicken?)

The inquiry into disease as a possible cause reflects anxiety over ecological imbalance. However, the rhetorical structure suggests that the threat may be deeper and more systemic. The poem reveals that biodiversity loss is not always the result of catastrophic disease or habitat destruction; it also arises from subtle patterns of preference and neglect. When communities prioritise certain breeds for commercial or aesthetic reasons, less favored species gradually vanish. Extinction, in this sense, becomes a

socially mediated process. An appeal for spiritual intervention: *Dibjà ahụ b́jara Iyi Enu chuo àkwùma; ùdị ya ọzọ b́ianu chụọ orịà ọkukò à* (The medicine man that came to *Iyi Enu* to stop *àkwùma*; should come again and get rid of this epidemic), symbolises a desire for the survival of their destruct species of chicken, a quest for environmental restoration, positioning ecological well-being within the Igbo spiritual framework that links human, natural, and metaphysical harmony. Even amid the threats, the

fourth stanza introduces hope. Maduekwe expresses confidence that the *abùke* species is not entirely extinct: *Ò dighị ka ọrịa o gbuchaala abùke a, ebe ndị ọzọ fọduru, ọ ga-afọkwal! Lèe, ọ buladi ọkukò ayaghiriya dīcha!* (It doesn't seem like this epidemic had wiped out all the short-winged chickens, some must still remain/ See, even the frizzle chickens still exist!). The reference to *ọkukò ayaghiriya* (frizzle chickens) broadens the scope of concern to encompass other rare or unconventional breeds. By juxtaposing the *abùke* with another marginal species, the poet underscores the fragility of biodiversity as a whole. The survival of one rare breed becomes emblematic of hope for ecological continuity. His nostalgic recollection of the its awkward gait in the concluding stanza: *Kemgbè m hùdèwerè ya na ọsọ kpukpuke ya! Ọ gbaa o kweghị ya, ọ sụọ ike n'àla,* recast the short-winged chicken not as an oddity but as a species worthy of affection and protection. In essence, Maduekwe's recollection transcends mere observation; it is an ecological advocacy for the preservation of a species fading from both physical and cultural memory.

Ubesie's poem titled "Ụsụ" extends this ecological discourse by centering on the bat, another species culturally burdened with negative stereotypes. While other poems foreground species marginalised for aesthetic reasons, Ubesie addresses a more complex form of ecological exclusion rooted in inherited cultural bias. Through a quasi-dramatic voice that grants the bat reflective consciousness, the poet destabilises entrenched stereotypes and reframes the animal as a dignified, adaptive being navigating human hostility. In many Igbo communities, bats are associated with mystery, ambiguity, and, at times, malevolence. Their nocturnal habits, inverted posture, and hybrid physical features (mammalian bodies with winged flight) render them symbolically liminal creatures that defy categorical boundaries. Rather than affirm these inherited suspicions, Ubesie subverts them. The bat's preference for nocturnal existence is presented not as an affinity for darkness but as an enforced adaptation: *Ụsụ mà kà ya sì dī njō wèrè àbàlì àkpa/ Ọ bughị nà àbàlì àmaka n̄kè nà o jì ya àkpa.*

Here, the intrinsic behavior of the bat reframed it as socially conditioned. The bat's retreat into nocturnal space becomes a strategy of survival for minimising exposure to persecution rather than an emblem of darkness. The poem thus foregrounds how human misperception reshapes animal habitats and behavioral patterns. Ecologically, such forced adaptations mirror real-world phenomena in which species retreat into marginal or less optimal environments to evade human disturbance. The bat becomes emblematic of life forms

compelled to contract their ecological range under anthropogenic pressure.

Ubesie intensifies this critique through rhetorical interrogation: *Ụsụ ana-adị njo mà ụmụ ụwa àna-èrì yā eri?* (If the bat is truly evil, why do people eat it?) This question exposes a fundamental contradiction within communal logic. In Igbo society, food taboos are typically governed by spiritual and moral considerations; animals believed to be spiritually dangerous or contaminated are avoided. The routine hunting and consumption of bats therefore undermines claims of their inherent malevolence. The poet exposes demonisation as a rhetorical pretext that legitimises exploitation rather than reflects genuine metaphysical conviction. Once labeled "vile," the species becomes expendable, hunted without ethical restraint. Through this irony, Ubesie critiques the moral inconsistency embedded in cultural prejudice. The bat is stigmatised symbolically yet valued materially as food. This duality reveals how symbolic narratives can coexist with utilitarian practices that accelerate species decline. The poem thereby links discourse to ecological consequence: misrepresentation enables overexploitation.

In its closing stanzas, the poem dramatises ecological distress. The bat is depicted as hounded in daylight and pursued at night, deprived of refuge and rest. The imagery conveys relentless pressure, evoking a habitat saturated by human intrusion. This imagery mirrors contemporary ecological concerns regarding habitat encroachment, deforestation, and overexploitation push wildlife toward ecological stress and eventual disappearance. By urging the people: *Ụmụ ibè hapunụ usụ kà o zìonụ ike* (You people, leave the bat so that it will rest), Ubesie makes a direct plea for environmental restraint and respect. The imperative voice transforms poetic reflection into communal injunction. "Rest" here signifies more than physical repose; it implies ecological reprieve – space for reproduction, regeneration, and continuity. Importantly, Ubesie's strategy is neither sentimental nor purely defensive. He does not romanticise the bat; rather, he restores it to ecological normalcy. By stripping away superstition and exposing logical inconsistency, he repositions the bat as an ordinary, harmless component of the ecosystem, performing its natural functions within a delicate web of life. In doing so, Ubesie calls for a cultural re-evaluation of inherited biases that distort ecological perception.

5. Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that selected Igbo poems articulate a coherent and philosophically

grounded ecological consciousness in which environmental degradation is represented as both a material and moral crisis. Across the analyses, ecological challenges such as gully erosion, water pollution, flooding, and biodiversity loss are not treated as isolated environmental phenomena but as multidimensional disruptions affecting land, livelihood, spirituality, and communal identity. The poets portray ecological damage as a rupture in the reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural world, thereby framing sustainability as an ethical imperative rather than a purely technical concern.

A key finding is that Igbo ecological poetry operates within a relational ontological framework. Nature is consistently personified and addressed as kin, moral agent, and participant in communal life. Rivers, land, and animals are not inert resources but interconnected beings within a shared cosmological order. Environmental decline is thus interpreted as a breakdown of reciprocity and reverence. The degradation of sacred landscapes and waterways signals not only ecological imbalance but also cultural and spiritual disorientation. The study further reveals that biodiversity loss is frequently linked to cultural perception and symbolic prejudice. In the poetic representations of marginalised species such as the short-winged chicken and the bat, extinction is shown to arise not only from disease or habitat destruction but from aesthetic bias, stigma, and selective valuation. Species deemed unattractive, strange, or symbolically ambiguous become neglected and overexploited. By exposing contradictions in communal attitudes, particularly the simultaneous demonisation and consumption of certain animals, Igbo poets challenge anthropocentric hierarchies and call for a reassessment of inherited narratives that justify ecological disregard.

Stylistically, the poets employ metaphor, apostrophe, rhetorical questioning, proverb, and other poetic techniques to transform ecological observation into ethical advocacy. These devices intensify emotional engagement while embedding environmental concerns within familiar cultural logic. Importantly, although the poems register profound anxiety over environmental decline, they do not culminate in despair. Instead, they gesture toward restoration through appeals to restraint, healing, and renewed reverence. Sustainability is imagined as achievable through moral recalibration and cultural self-reflection. In conclusion, Igbo ecopoetry emerges as a significant indigenous contribution to environmental thought. It advances a model of sustainability rooted in relational balance, communal accountability, and respect for all life forms. By integrating ecological

awareness with cultural and spiritual frameworks, these poems affirm that environmental restoration is inseparable from ethical renewal. Igbo poets therefore function not merely as chroniclers of ecological crisis but as critical agents in shaping a consciousness oriented toward environmental balance and harmony.

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Self-heroification, Demystification, and Villainisation in the 1994 Rwandan Genocide Memoirs: A Study of Paul Rusesabagina’s *An Ordinary Man: The True Story Behind Hotel Rwanda* and Edouard Kayihura’s *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story... and Why It Matters Today*.

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Abstract. This paper explores the dynamics of self-heroification, demystification, and villainization as portrayed through a counter discourse between Paul Rusesabagina’s *An Ordinary Man: The True Story Behind Hotel Rwanda* and Edouard Kayihura’s *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story... and Why It Matters Today*. “Self-heroification” in this paper refers to the act of presenting oneself as a hero, often through self-aggrandisement and selective narration, while “demystification” and “villainization” are understood as the deconstruction and critical reassessment of self-fashioned heroism. These interrelated concepts are examined through the theoretical lenses of New Historicism and Narratology. By analysing the narrative techniques employed in both memoirs, this paper explores how the authors, as individuals, construct/reconstruct (framing) personal accounts (memory) of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and simultaneously deconstructing each other’s narratives of the genocide. The research involves a close reading of the selected texts with particular focus on how diction, narrative structure, and authorial bias shape the construction of Rusesabagina as either a heroic savior or a self-serving controversial figure. My findings suggest that the two memoirs, while valuable historical sources, are inevitably influenced by the subjective perspectives of their authors, resulting in contrasting interpretations of the same historical event. This research emphasises the need for critical engagement with personal narratives in post-genocide literature on the 1994 Rwandan genocide and underscores the complexities of memory, trauma, and identity in reconstructing history. Ultimately, the study contributes to broader discourses on representation in African Literature and genocide studies, highlighting the vital role of perspective in shaping historical storytelling.

Keywords: Memory, Demystification, Heroification, Rwanda Genocide, Villainization.

1. Introduction and Background Context

This paper interrogates the self-heroification of Paul Rusesabagina in his memoir, *An Ordinary Man: The True Story Behind Hotel Rwanda*, (henceforth *An Ordinary Man*) and his demystification and villainization in Edouard Kayihura’s memoir, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story and Why It Matters Today* (henceforth *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*). The study analyses the narrative style deployed by both authors in their memoirs to memorialise the events that occurred during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide through their varying and unique perspectives. Paul Rusesabagina is a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and also a Rwandan human rights activist. He worked as a hotel manager for the *Hotel des Mille Collines* located in Kigali during a time when Hutu and Tutsi refugees, fleeing the Interahamwe militia during the Rwandan genocide (Beloff R Jonathan 39), were accommodated in the facility. An account of Rusesabagina’s self-proclaimed heroic actions during the genocide was later depicted in the 2004 film, *Hotel Rwanda*, and this led to his claim to fame in the subsequent years after the film’s release. His memoir, *An Ordinary Man* details his life and upbringing before the genocide, the agonising days of the genocide and his life as a survivor and activist advocating against the atrocities that permeated the genocide. However, his recent trial and conviction in 2021 in relation to terrorism, despite winning award as a humanitarian hero, indicates that heroism can be interrogated from multiple perspectives (Belloff 40).

Edouard Kayihura, human rights activist, survived the 1994 Rwandan genocide and, like Rusesabagina, Kayihura spent the harrowing 100 days of the genocide at the *Hotel des Mille Collines*, which he recounts in his memoir, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*. According to Filip Reyntjens, before his relocation to America, Kayihura worked as a prosecutor in charge of the department of the prosecutions of the genocide crime and crimes against humanity before the Tribunal of the First Instance of Kigali to bring those responsible for the genocide to justice (11). His memoir narrates the fear, desperation, and resilience of those trapped within the hotel during the genocide (Jennings Kathleen 2025; Paolo Tripodi 2023). More importantly, Kayihura's narrative not only challenges the glamorised persona of Paul Rusesabagina, who has been portrayed as a hero in the film *Hotel Rwanda* and in Rusesabagina's memoir, but also gives an account of the events that went down at the hotel during the genocide. Thus, Kayihura's memoir provides a distinct perspective that paints Rusesabagina as a complex character with questionable motives and undeserving of the hero title portrayed in the film.

As has been pointedly reported by critics and historians, the origin of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 dated back to the colonial period. The Berlin Colonial Conference of 1884-1885 apportioned Rwanda to Germany. The Germans then favored the Tutsi over the Hutu. After the First World War, Rwanda was awarded to Belgium by the League of Nations. The Belgian government also made the Tutsi predominant, disregarding ethnic tensions and the growing frustrations of the Hutu majority (Donatien Nikuze 2014; Van Haperen 2025). After independence, the Hutu, as the majority, came into power and reinforced tyranny against the Tutsi, causing about 300,000 of the Tutsi to flee to Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi. Many Tutsi were killed, and their property was confiscated by the Hutu-led Rwandan government. Due to the existing tensions, the assassination of President Juvenal Habyarimana on April 6, 1994 led to a 100-day massacre of the Tutsi by the aggrieved Hutu militia, which led to the death of about 500,000 to 1.2 million victims (Van Haperen 2025; Saaida Mohammed 2024; Rawnak Miraj U Azam 2025).

2. Memoirs, New Historicism, Narratology and the Portrayal of the Rwanda Genocide

According to Susan A. Crane, The genre distinctions on which professional identities are based indicate that self-exposition and self-referential narrative belong to the realm of memoir, autobiography, or fiction. When historians write

memoirs, they bring their skills to bear on themselves and thus on the *ego-histoires* they write" (435).

Indeed, memoirs are not entirely objective, as they are based on a 'self-referential' account of events. As a form of historical documentation, therefore, Memoir offers a unique creative perspective on life-writing because it is laden with subjectivity, inaccuracy, and bias. Even though this might seem to lessen its value as a sub-genre of prose writing, compared to fiction Memoir gives insight into the lived experiences of people whose views may not be found in official historical sources. It is not in doubt that, memoir humanises and gives a nuanced understanding of historical events, which is the reason critics often read it with critical awareness. As a subgenre of literature, memoir has also served as a testimonial narrative because it is a subgenre of nonfiction that focuses on a defined thematic scope in the life of the author. Overall, memoir often provides the platform to see the interconnection between literary narrating of truth and creative framing of memory. Within a subjective non imaginative framework, memoir in this regard serves to construct or reconstruct or re-enact history and events and, by this token, human experiences are memorialised.

Since the end of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, memoir has provided a platform for individuals to not just memorialise the 1994 Rwandan war and genocide but to outrightly weave truthful and emotional perspectives into the meaning of genocide as a discourse (see Richard Dowden 283-290; Nicki Hitchcott 48-61). David Mwambari observes that Rusesabagina and Kayihura, both survivors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, shared conflicting perspectives on the war in their memoirs noting especially that, Rusesabagina and Kayihura's experiences are mainly subjective, since their perspectives were shaped by their awareness at the time (21-22).

Thus, the deployment of conceptual elements from New Historicism and Narratology in this paper is to bolster the analysis of Rusesabagina's and Kayihura's presentations of narrative and counter-narrative of the Rwandan genocide. I agree in this paper with Stephen Greenblatt, foremost New Historicist, who argues on the "textuality of history" positing that a text is a product of the time it is produced and its meaning is shaped by the power structure and social "negotiations" surrounding its production. For instance, it is my argument that the memoirs under study are more than a recollection of personal memories of the war and the genocide. Rather, from the viewpoint of new historicism, the two accounts are

competing historical documents because the idea of a single objective or monolithic perspective to what actually played out in the course of the genocide does not exist. Indeed, Kayihura's *Inside the Hotel Rwanda* provides a counter historical perspective to Rusesabagina's account of not only about himself and the role he played but, more importantly, about the entire experience of the genocide captured in *An Ordinary Man*. This suggests that each of the memoirs participates in the discourse of the genocide as sub set of the general discourse on the 1994 Rwandan genocide. It is of interest that Rusesabagina's memoir is a narrative that draws its entire subjective perspective from the Western neoliberal discourse of the concept of heroism. The idea of Rusesabagina as the hero is well portrayed in *An Ordinary Man* and the filmic representation of such heroism is well amplified in the film *Hotel Rwanda*. Nurayn Fola Alimi observes that the vital ingredients that shape the contextuality of the film, *Hotel Rwanda* has been regarded as fitting in the category of films Michelle Brown and Nicole Rafter describe as "form of public criminology" (129). But Kayihura's memoir on the same subject matter of the Rwandan genocide provides a subversive counter-historical account, which triggered a reassessment of Rusesabagina's self-heroism in the film *Hotel Rwanda* and later his arrest and trial by the Kagame administration in 2021.

However, since the whole interest of new historicism is to look outwards at the society and its role in the production of the text as broadly deployed in this study, it would only make sense to also attempt to see how the two memoirs have placed each other in contradistinction within the discourse of the Rwandan genocide. In other words, it is pertinent to analyse the internal structure of the memoirs in order to synthesise the narrative strategies deployed by the two memoirs (narratology) with the textuality of history (new historicism). Indeed, a synthesisation of new historicism and narratology as the theoretical platform for analysing the subject matter of self-heroification, demystification, and villainisation will ensure an exhaustive interrogation of personal emotion and trauma of the Rwandan genocide and how these metamorphose into political and historical capital through the memoirs. Hence, in this paper, the narrative style employed by both Rusesabagina and Kayihura in their memoirs on the Rwandan genocide, as well as issues pertaining to self-heroification, demystification and villainization in these narratives, are analysed and interrogated. The paper also examines how the historical, cultural and literary contexts of *An Ordinary Man: The True Story Behind Hotel Rwanda* and *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story and Why It Matters Today*

morph into the overall meaning emerging from the works' narrative of the Rwandan genocide. Through a close reading method, data are generated qualitatively from the texts in order to highlight their narrative structure and demonstrate how the elements are constructed and work together to create meaning from the intertextual dialogue between the texts. Thus, concepts in New Historicism and Narratology are broadly employed weaved into contextual dialogic process in the analysis of the discourse and memorialization of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

3. *An Ordinary Man: The True Story Behind Hotel Rwanda: A Distinguished Background to Self-heroification*

While suggestively emphasising humility, the title of Rusesabagina's *An Ordinary Man* paradoxically functions as a vital rhetorical strategy that allows a privileged and distinguished construction of the author's self-heroification story within the memoir. A deconstruction of the title reveals that the sentiment of "an ordinary man" in the title is deployed to set the tone for a narrative grounded in relatable human experience rather than extraordinary acts of a heroic figure. Altogether, a close look will show that the title is a deliberate and profound narrative choice; in other words, despite its self-acclaimed simplicity, the title reveals a complex interplay of meaning and intent. To begin with, certain linguistic elements in the title of Rusesabagina's memoir, *An Ordinary Man* make it appear simple even as they actually introduce the ambiguity to the construction of heroism in the text. First, the title asserts the image of the author as a common man ("An Ordinary Man") and second, it purports that Rusesabagina's memoir is a true account ("The True Story") of the scenario that played out in Hotel Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. The indefinite article "an" in the title frames Rusesabagina as one out of many ordinary people, playing down any notion of intrinsic heroism. This further suggests that his actions during the Rwandan genocide did not arise due to a preconceived notion of exceptionality. Thus, by emphasising his ordinariness, the image of the author, Rusesabagina in the title of his memoir on the 1994 Rwanda genocide is subtly amplified; his heroic actions and the truth about his activities are framed and sentimentalised against the backdrop of his being "an ordinary man."

It is not also surprising that the opening paragraph of *An Ordinary Man* contradicts the notion of ordinariness suggested by the title. The memoir opens with a deliberate attempt to self-assert:

"My name is Paul Rusesabagina. I am a hotel manager. In April 1994, when a wave of mass murder broke out

in my country, I was able to hide 1, 268 people inside the hotel where I worked” (4).

This description of himself underscores a conscious attempt to downplay his privileged position of authority, power and importance as opposed to being an ordinary employee. As this statement suggests, while the account of the genocide is factual and believable, it ironically introduces a sentimental protagonist whose actions transcend the ordinary, foreshadowing the linguistic choices employed by Rusesabagina throughout the memoir to shape his distinguished heroic narrative. This point is further strongly illustrated by Rusesabagina’s presumptive assertion:

“Today I am convinced that the only thing that saved those 1, 268 people in my hotel was words, not the liquor, not money, not the UN. Just ordinary words directed against the darkness” (10).

His emphasis on “only thing” reinforces a narrative of him as a singular hero whose efforts saved all the people in the hotel, potentially downplaying the contribution of other unacknowledged factors and individuals, which Edourd Kayihura emphasises in *Inside Hotel Rwanda* in a counter-discourse. In the concluding lines of his introductory chapter, Rusesabagina revisits the ordinariness expressed in the memoir’s title thus:

“I am not a politician or a poet. I built my career on words that are plain and ordinary and concerned with everyday details. I am nothing more or less than a hotel manager, trained to negotiate contracts and charged with giving shelter to those who need it. My job did not change during the genocide, even though I was thrust into a sea of fire. I only spoke the words that seemed normal and sane to me. I did what I believed to be the ordinary things that an ordinary man would do. I said no to outrageous actions the way I thought that anybody would, and it still mystifies me that so many others could say yes” (31).

But while asserting that he was neither a “politician nor poet” and merely a “hotel manager”, his self-proclaimed remarkableness is complicated by the inherent privilege and influence associated with managing the *Hotel des Mille Collines* in the Rwandan society at the time of the war.

In addition, Rusesabagina’s claim that his use of “plain and ordinary words” was the singular key to survival warrants critical scrutiny, as it risks oversimplifying the significant privilege and social asset and privileges he possessed while attributing his survival solely to rhetorical skill. While communication and negotiation are undoubtedly crucial in the circumstance, framing language as the sole means of salvation risks diminishing the complex realities of the genocide and

reinforcing a narrative that overstates Rusesabagina’s individual influence in safeguarding the hotel’s occupants. Besides, Rusesabagina’s assertion that “I did what I believed to be the ordinary things that an ordinary man would do” (32) reinforces the perceived heroism of his actions. By framing his conduct as typical of any “ordinary man”, he paradoxically elevates himself as an exceptional moral figure that rose above fear and complicity in extraordinary circumstances, thereby solidifying a self-image rooted in quiet virtue. Moreover, his mystification at others’ willingness to say “yes” to violence underscores a deliberate moral positioning within his narrative. Even though this reaction is understandable in the given context, it inadvertently elevates his moral stance, potentially oversimplifying the intricate ethnic, historical, economic, political, social, and psychological forces that incited the widespread violence and presenting a moral polarity that may not have fully captured the complexity of the situation.

As a quintessential characteristic of a memoir, Rusesabagina’s recounting of his childhood in rural Rwanda works as a significant narratological strategy that entrenches the framing of his self-heroification. His place of birth, “a steep hill” is far removed from the urban setting of the *Hotel des Mille Collines* and the immediate context of the genocide, yet, Rusesabagina’s graphic depiction of his rural and rustic background is a narrative strategy to underscore his extraordinary courage and to construct his image as a hero:

“I was born on the side of a steep hill in the summer of 1954. My father was a farmer, my mother his helper. Our house was made of mud and sticks. We were about a mile away from the nearest village. [...]. We would have been considered quite poor, of course, when viewed through the lens of a European nation, but it was all we knew, and there was always plenty to eat. We worked hard, and I grew up without shoes. But we laughed a lot. And I knew there was love in my family before I knew the word for it” (42).

This narrative establishes a foundation of relatable ordinariness as it emphasises Rusesabagina’s connection to traditional Rwandan culture, values and lifestyle. By portraying his upbringing as humble and his childhood as unexceptional, Rusesabagina sets the stage for the extraordinary circumstances that he faces later on. It is a deliberate construction of events which foreshadows the interpretation of his subsequent actions during the genocide, suggesting that his heroism emerged from deeply ingrained principles cultivated in his “ordinary” beginnings. For instance, a significant aspect of Rusesabagina’s childhood was his early exposure to the act of negotiation. He

recounts stories of elders settling disputes amongst fellow villagers through simple dialogue and what he recalls as “the most important part of justice on the grass: the two aggrieved men were required to share a gourd of banana beer as a sign of renewed friendship” (48) in his memoir. By highlighting this early learning, Rusesabagina asserts the notion that his later diplomatic acts during the genocide were not sudden but a result of his cultural affiliations and his internalisation of a deeply rooted moral practice.

Moreover, Rusesabagina constructs a multi-layered self-image in his memoir, drawing on his actions and elements of self-representation, notably the symbolic significance of his name and his early association with the church, to shape his self-proclaimed heroic narrative. His surname, Rusesabagina, meaning “warrior that disperses the enemies”, functions as a literal reflection of his protection of those sheltered at the *Hotel des Mille Collines* from the génocidaires. In addition, his first name, Paul, evokes biblical allusions, particularly the Apostle Paul, known as “the great communicator of the New Testament” and described by Rusesabagina as “the man who described himself in one of his letters as being ‘all things to all people’” (62). This parallel is a narrative strategy deployed by the author to subtly aligns himself with the Apostle, suggesting that he, too, became a crucial figure for those he saved. Although not clearly emphasised, the significance of his name works as a form of narrative foreshadowing that he uses to carefully hint at his future heroic actions during the genocide. Rusesabagina’s early aspiration to also become a “churchman”, although not the path he ultimately chose, adds a crucial dimension to his self-proclaimed heroic narrative. He reflects: “I have since come to realize that those years studying to be a churchman were not wasted at all. It was where I acquired knowledge that helped to shape my future. I gained an even greater understanding of human beings— what motivates them, where their failings are, where the good might be found that can trump the evil inside” (63).

Rather than a failed endeavour, he presents this period as formative, cultivating intellectual skills vital for his future. He notes that the ministry teaches persuasive communication, stating, “Learning to be a preacher makes you a better talker” (63), a skill central to his diplomatic survival tactics during the genocide. Furthermore, this connection to the church subtly positions Rusesabagina as someone with inherent ethical grounding, aligning his choices during the genocide with established moral authority.

Finally, as the general manager of the Hotel Diplomes, he continued to hone his skill in hospitality and impeccable customer relations, an experience that exposed him to a diverse range of people, foreshadowing the distinct interactions he would later navigate during the genocide. He states: “I met many people in Rwanda whose racial ideology I couldn’t stand, but I was unfailingly polite to them, and they learned to respect me even though our disagreements were obvious. This led to a priceless realization for me. Someone who deals can never be an absolute hard-liner. The very act of negotiation makes it difficult, if not impossible, to dehumanize the person across the table from you” (65).

In essence, his professional training in making guests feel valued became a vital and unexpectedly effective tool during the genocide. This ability to maintain precarious yet necessary relationships, even with those holding dangerous ideologies, allowed him to navigate future volatile encounters with the génocidaires.

Having established the foundation of Rusesabagina’s professional skills in diplomacy and fostering beneficial relationships, it is crucial to understand the tragic event that thrust him and his honed abilities into an inconceivable field: the Rwandan genocide. In April 1994, following the assassination of Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana, the country was plunged into chaos almost overnight. Rusesabagina recounts;

“I know with certainty that you will find nobody living in Rwanda today who does not remember what they were doing in the early evening hours of April 6, 1994, when the private jet of President Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down with a portable missile as it approached for landing at Kigali Airport” (56).

Rusesabagina notes that in the first hours after the violence erupted, *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTL) shifted from threats to explicit instigation of murder. The broadcasts instructed Hutu listeners to “clean your neighbourhood of brush” and to “cut the tall trees”, coded phrases that meant to kill Tutsi and their Hutu sympathizers (57). He emphasises how “fantasy had become reality”, as the station openly encouraged the slaughter of neighbors. This rapid transition from propaganda to direct commands to commit genocide reveals the horrid speed with which ordinary citizens were made into agents of mass violence. In the following days following the president’s death, organised militias, namely the Interahamwe, initiated systematic killings that targeted Tutsi and moderate Hutu with inhuman efficiency. Rusesabagina vividly describes the widespread killings of the Interahamwe militia as they

set up makeshift roadblocks using bamboo poles, burn-out vehicles, and, later, appallingly, human corpses. Ethnic identity checks became deadly, with Tutsi and moderate Hutu brutally killed on the spot. Rusesabagina recounts how “doctors were pulled out of their homes and shot in the head” while “schoolchildren were hit on the head with wooden planks” and the elderly “thrown down the waste holes of outhouses and buried underneath a cascade of rocks”. His grim depiction captures the collapse of social order and the prevalent brutality that characterized the first days of the genocide.

An interesting narrative moment in *An Ordinary Man* that extends Rusesabagina’s self-heroic performance occurs when he chooses to shelter his Tutsi neighbors and negotiate with the soldiers’ intent on murdering them. When the soldiers arrived on the morning of April 9 to escort him to the Hotel des Diplomes, Rusesabagina quickly insisted that his “family” (a broad term he uses to include his neighbors) accompany him. His account underscores his quick-thinking skills as well as his ability to be a decisive leader in moments of duress. The ensuing roadside confrontation, amidst evidence of mass slaughter, became a test of his negotiation skills. Noting a critical hesitation in the captain’s averted gaze, Rusesabagina exploits this weakness firstly through moral persuasion:

“Look, is this really the enemy you are fighting?” I pointed out a baby in a mother’s arms. [...] You are what? Twenty-five years old? You are young. Do you want to spend the rest of your life with blood on your hands?” (72)

And ultimately, when morality fails, he appeals to the captain’s greed instead; “we began to talk in terms of cash. It seems strange to say, but putting a price on lives was like a kind of sanity compared to the murders he had been suggesting” (74). His calculated deployment of communication, shifting tactics from appealing to conscience to material incentive, is to highlight his resourcefulness in the face of impending danger. Furthermore, his insistence on honoring the bribe, despite the opportunity to renege once safe, functions both as a pragmatic strategy to prevent retaliation and as a reinforcement of his self-image as a man of integrity. Basically, Rusesabagina’s reflection on his personal ability to “negotiate with evil” further solidifies the narrative of his self-fashioning as an ‘ordinary man’ made heroic by circumstance.

Furthermore, Rusesabagina clearly positioned external forces or representatives, such as the UN peacekeepers, as “useless. This nullifies the possibility that the UN or any external actor contributed any

commendable act of heroism to protect or save the people sheltered in the hotel. Rusesabagina condemns the UN agents as “well-meaning but useless” and portrayed them as individuals unwilling to help. He argued that his friend, Commander Habyarimana, brought five policemen whose fragile protection was better than what the UN officers offered (75). He also acknowledges that General Dallaire was willing to help but was crippled by the UN’s hierarchy of authority and “foolish orders” that prevented them from acting decisively (76).

These rhetorical moves align with Rusesabagina’s broader strategy of self-heroification as he implicitly suggests that, unlike Dallaire, he did not yield to inept authority but took morally courageous risks to protect the vulnerable. By depicting the UN as creating a “fatal illusion of safety” and describing it as “worse than useless”, Rusesabagina bolsters the narrative of his indispensability. Ultimately, his story not only condemns the failure of the international body but also works as a foil against which his actions appear moral, practical and effective in a world crippled by systemic cowardice.

Finally, in the closing passage of his memoir, Rusesabagina blends humility with self-heroification, reflecting on his actions during the Rwandan genocide while reinforcing his heroic narrative. He acknowledges that the opportunity to make a significant difference is fleeting, and yet claims that through his ordinary skills as a hotel manager, skills such as negotiation and providing shelter, he was able to protect lives for seventy-six days. By describing his efforts as a “fragile defence”, he frames his actions as driven more by circumstantial fortune and his training than by intrinsic heroism, allowing him to present himself as a man merely doing his ‘ordinary’ job in an extraordinary situation. However, his closing Rusesabagina’s conclusion reveals an interesting logic:

“Wherever the killing season should next begin and people should become strangers to their neighbors and themselves, my hope is that there will still be those ordinary men who say a quiet no and open the rooms upstairs” (231).

This statement subtly elevates his actions to a level of moral heroism, suggesting that while his actions were not exceptional, they were inspirational. The blend of humility and moral self-justification serves as both a form of resolution for his morally ambiguous choices and a subtle assertion of his heroic status. Ultimately, Rusesabagina frames his actions as a universal ideal, positioning himself as both a relatable figure and a symbol of moral resilience.

4. Rusesabagina's Demystification and Villainization in *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*

In the introductory chapter of *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*, Edouard Kayihura asserts a forceful abrogation of the widely accepted image of Paul Rusesabagina as a humanitarian hero. He writes: "I knew Paul Rusesabagina. All the people who survived inside the *Hotel des Mille Collines* during the genocide knew Paul Rusesabagina. No one among us has ever thought of him as altruistic, let alone heroic. On the contrary, of all the people who were within the hotel during the genocide, he would quite possibly be considered the furthest from a hero any of us could imagine" (5).

Kayihura explicitly challenges the dominant narrative established by the film *Hotel Rwanda* and Rusesabagina's own memoir. This blunt opening works as a discursive rupture, aligning with Michel Foucault's theory that power is exercised through discourse and that truth is socially constructed rather than objectively discovered. Rusesabagina's dominant self-heroification narrative, reinforced by media, international awards, and cinematic dramatisation has elevated Rusesabagina as a symbol of moral fortitude. Conversely, Kayihura's introduction reframes him as a "war profiteer" and a "friend to the architects of the genocide", implicating him as complicit in systems of violence and survival economics, rather than a figure of resistance. To be sure, Kayihura's immediate and candid condemnation establishes his narrative as a crucial counter-discourse. It strategically reclaims narrative authority from international myth-makers and Rusesabagina's self-representation, returning it to the survivors. This approach compels the reader to reevaluate both Rusesabagina's celebrated image and the broader notion of heroism within the context of survival during the genocide.

It is pertinent to note that Kayihura's narrative strategy is essentially hinged on the deployment of contrast rhetoric. He draws a sharp contrast to Rusesabagina's memoir by distancing himself from any personal claim to heroism in *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*. He writes, "I say this not because I believe myself to be a hero of this episode in time. I am merely a survivor" (6). This assertion functions as a deliberate rhetorical tactic to redefine the ethical framework of Kayihura's memoir. Rather than promoting a narrative that centres on a single saviour, Kayihura focuses on the shared struggle for survival within the hotel. His refusal to claim heroism, thus, underscores his intent to bear witness and offer an alternative perspective on the genocide, not to elevate himself. He, indeed, presents

a definition of heroism grounded in "self-sacrifice" and the "selfless pursuit of justice and right", acknowledging, however that, while some were in positions to act heroically, he was not among them: "I was not tested in that way, and for that I make no excuse or apology" (15). Through this, Kayihura implicitly critiques Rusesabagina's self-portrayal, rejecting an aggrandised version of events that elevates individual narratives at the expense of collective memory and experience. Thus, this reframing aligns Kayihura's narrative with the promotion of ordinary survivors' experiences. Rather than a performative identity, heroism emerges in Kayihura's narrative as a rare and often silent form of courage. Finally, Kayihura ends his introductory chapter with the words, "His voice has been heard. Now is the time for the voices of the other survivors" (18). With this line, he establishes a clear boundary between the dominant narrative shaped by Paul Rusesabagina and the marginalized perspectives of other survivors of the *Hotel des Mille Collines*. In doing so, also, Kayihura challenges the assumption that the history of the Rwandan genocide can be fully understood through a single account.

In *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*, Edouard Kayihura's journey to the *Hotel des Mille Collines* is not marked by grand gestures or bold heroics, but by the desperation-fueled decisions that defined survival during the Rwandan genocide. His account challenges the simplistic narrative that assigns rigid roles of victims and heroes by illustrating how small acts of defiance particularly by certain individuals played a vital role in saving Tutsi lives. One of such acts came from Pascal Hitimana, a Hutu friend whom Kayihura describes as one of the few good people "who saw beyond the madness and had a civilized, decent sense of humanity", especially during a time when aiding a Tutsi could amount to a death sentence.

After the president's assassination triggered the genocide, Kayihura's initial attempt to erase any evidence of his Tutsi identity by destroying documents and music, which he described as "subversive", reflects the absurd cruelty of a time when ethnicity alone could result in execution. "My very existence as a Tutsi was now a crime", he reflects, underscoring the idea that his survival depended not on concealing his identity, but on the humanity of people like Pascal, who were willing to act in defiance of genocidal hysteria. Pascal's decision to shelter Kayihura was not inherently heroic, but it carried tremendous significance. He helped him despite the danger, escorting him through backyards and abandoned homes, and even performing a final act of deception at a roadblock: "Please don't kill him! He is ours!" By

pretending Kayihura was Hutu, Pascal risked his own life to protect another. Kayihura does not romanticise Pascal's actions; rather, he recognises their complexity. Pascal's assistance may have been driven as much by fear as by moral conviction, as revealed in his own words:

"I am afraid, Edouard. They threatened my wife. I fear I cannot protect her. That is my first and most important job. I'm sorry, but the longer you stay here, the more danger she and I are in. They are going to kill us all" (68).

Despite this, Kayihura still acknowledges Pascal as one of the unsung heroes of the genocide, someone whose actions carried no promise of fame or reward, yet exemplified the moral backbone of resistance in a collapsing society. Kayihura's arrival at the hotel is not marked by triumph, but by harrowing relief and lingering dread even in the presence of UN peacekeepers whose protection offered only symbolic safety. His statement, "Thank God I will die with other people" (76), captures the futility of survival even within a supposed sanctuary. Ultimately, Kayihura's narrative suggests that true courage lies not in those who are celebrated as heroes but in individuals like Pascal, whose subtle bravery has been overlooked by popular memory.

The emphasis on subtle, often conflicted heroism stands in stark contrast to the dominant narrative popularised, for instance, by the Film *Hotel Rwanda* and reinforced in Paul Rusesabagina's memoir *An Ordinary Man*. Kayihura challenges this portrayal not by entirely dismissing Rusesabagina's role, but by exposing the deeper complexities surrounding his emergence as the hotel's figurehead. A significant episode is the dispute over the hotel keys, which both men recount differently. According to Kayihura, Pasa, the de facto manager before Rusesabagina's arrival was troubled by Rusesabagina's abrupt assumption of power. He is quoted as saying, "He just showed up and asked me to hand over the keys!" (89), expressing both anger and surprise. Pasa complies only after Rusesabagina presents a fax from Sabena headquarters. This moment becomes a crucial framework for dissecting the conflicting claims to legitimacy and leadership. In contrast, Rusesabagina describes his handover as a battle for order and survival rather than an opportunistic usurpation. He also references an employee under the pseudonym "Jacques", which is likely a veiled reference to Pasa, whom he portrays as unserious and potentially dangerous, accusing him of debauchery and possible collaboration with the génocidaires. This portrayal frames Rusesabagina as the lone protector safeguarding hotel occupants from internal threats,

and so, the conflicting accounts underscore how power and authorship influence who is remembered as a hero or villain. In Kayihura's account, Pasa is more than a villainous caricature; he is a diligent worker resisting perceived opportunism. By reinterpreting Pasa's role, Kayihura highlights how historical memory is often shaped by dominant narratives rather than by those who may have had a more significant impact.

A notable divergence also emerges where Kayihura's *Inside the Hotel Rwanda* serves as counter discourse to Rusesabagina's *An Ordinary Man* in their respective accounts of how resources and finances were managed at the *Hotel des Mille Collines* during the genocide. In this textual dialogue Rusesabagina portrays himself as a selfless protector of those rendered vulnerable by the violence. He repeatedly asserts that monetary contributions were neither solicited nor demanded, and that even the affluent individuals offering promissory notes were afforded respect and empathy. As Rusesabagina recounts, "nobody was asked for money". In his narrative, Rusesabagina further claims that the hotel is redefined not as a commercial establishment, but as a haven where survival was imperative and financial gain nonexistent: "We charged no money for rooms. [...]. To take cash away from anyone would also be to strip them of money they might need to bribe their way out of being murdered" (97). Conversely, however, Kayihura offers a significantly different account. According to him and other survivors at the hotel, Rusesabagina imposed charges for accommodation, even on the hotel employees who, like the refugees, had nowhere else to go. Kayihura recalls that some refugees were issued invoices and instructed to either pay or vacate their rooms. Pasa, a hotel staff member, expresses his outrage at the shift from collective survival to managerial exploitation. He is quoted in *Inside the Hotel Rwanda* by Kayihura thus:

"Now he wants to charge the hotel employees! We are stuck here. We cannot go home. If we try to leave here, we will be killed. We must stay here as well as sleep here. He wants to charge us for our rooms! He wants to charge us for food! Not only that, we are no longer getting paid! How can we pay him when he is not paying us?! It is like a form of slavery" (123).

Kayihura further recalls a formalised system allegedly implemented by Rusesabagina, whereby refugees facilitated by an employee of the Bank of Kigali were made to withdraw funds from their personal accounts in order to pay the hotel. Conceding that these financial transactions may have indirectly contributed to their survival, Kayihura reflects thus:

"Frankly, in this time of our circumstance-imposed imprisonment inside the hotel, our only real need for

money was to ward off Paul Rusesabagina, who by now was threatening to evict us from the hotel unless we paid for our lodgings” (131).

These conflicting narratives underscore how power and resources were managed in a time of extreme crisis. While Rusesabagina presents himself as a principled protector untouched by capitalist or political motives, Kayihura contends that he was willing to exploit people’s desperation for financial gain. These opposing depictions therefore go beyond mere differences in memory or interpretation; they highlight the broader question of whose rendition of historical truth will ultimately be recognised and accepted.

Another deeply polarising aspect of the conflicting portrayals of Paul Rusesabagina concerns his alleged relationship with members of the genocidal regime. In *An Ordinary Man*, Rusesabagina depicts himself as a pragmatic negotiator who relied on diplomacy and personal connections to protect the refugees inside *Hotel Milles Collines*. He underscores the moral complexity of his position, engaging with the génocidaires purely out of necessity, framing these interactions as strategic, morally displeasing, but ultimately justified. Kayihura, conversely, offers a far more critical assessment. From his perspective, Rusesabagina’s proximity to key génocidaires, namely Georges Rutaganda, Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, General Augustin Bizimungu, and Froduald Karamira, appears less as reluctant diplomacy and more as evidence of shared political ideologies. Kayihura and other survivors recall witnessing Rusesabagina socialising with these men, including individuals directly responsible for orchestrating the genocide. These encounters, described by eyewitnesses, resembled social gatherings rather than tense negotiations, characterised by familiarity and even camaraderie:

Many others inside the hotel, including embassy employee Wellars Gasamagera, young student Jean Pierre Nkurunziza, and our friend Alexis, who worked at the hotel, noted the close relationship between Bagosora and Paul Rusesabagina. They told tales of seeing the two sitting together, laughing and drinking as if nothing was wrong with the world. Afterwards, Rusesabagina would strut around, speaking as if he and the colonel were good friends and equals—powerful, important men who liked and respected each other” (152).

While Rusesabagina might argue that such relationships were the price of survival, Kayihura suggests that they were not mere transactional alliances but ideological alignments. He implies that

Rusesabagina’s membership in the extremist MDR-power party, known for promoting anti-Tutsi rhetoric, offered him protection and insider status. This affiliation, according to Kayihura, shielded Rusesabagina from harm and further fueled suspicions about his true loyalties. He reflects, as long as Paul was a member of MDR Power, nobody could threaten him or kill him:

“Judging by his actions, by the way he was exploiting us and mistreating us so mercilessly, we could only speculate that the reason he was sharing beers with those killers was that they shared the same ideology” (140).

Furthermore, Kayihura notes the disturbing possibility that the refugees were inadvertently financing their own demise. He recounts how Rusesabagina purchased luxury items from Georges Rutaganda, one of the primary architects of the genocide, using funds provided by those sheltering in the hotel. This detail adds another layer to Kayihura’s critique of Rusesabagina, seeing as he was not only associated with the génocidaires, but may also have enriched them financially during the genocide. As genocidal leaders lounged comfortably within the hotel, seemingly unbothered by its function as a supposed safe haven for Tutsi and moderate Hutu, it is implied that Rusesabagina not only failed to shield the refugees from the psychological trauma of their presence but also enabled and normalised their access to the hotel. Ultimately, the distinction between the two accounts lies in their respective analyses of power and proximity. Rusesabagina presents himself as a man torn between moral compromise and humanitarian obligation. Kayihura, conversely, portrays him as someone who benefited from a system that facilitated mass murder of Rwandans and who used his limited power not to protect but to exploit the vulnerable. These divergent narratives challenge the simplistic dichotomy of hero versus villain, instead revealing the unsettling possibility that survival itself can become a manipulated performance, one that obscures more than it reveals.

Moreover, in his account, Kayihura portrays the United Nations as a vital and protective presence during the Rwandan genocide, particularly at the *Hotel Milles Collines*, which he describes as a “de facto protected site” and “an isolated outpost of peace in the gruesome violence”. He emphasises the active and constant presence of the UN peacekeepers, noting that they maintained their own office within the hotel and that personnel were stationed there at all times. This acknowledgement betrays Rusesabagina’s downplaying of the symbolic role the UN Peacekeepers played through their presence while

genocide raged. Finally, in *Inside the Hotel Rwanda* Edouard Kayihura offers, toward the end of his memoir, a powerful and corrective perspective on the narrative popularised by the international acclaim surrounding Paul Rusesabagina. He argues that the survival of those who sought refuge in the *Hotel des Milles Collines* was not the result of a single man's actions, but rather the outcome of multiple forces working together, namely the UN peacekeepers, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), well-connected and generous fellow refugees, and parts of the international community. Kayihura explicitly rejects the notion that Rusesabagina was their saviour, stating: "Had Paul Rusesabagina never lived, every one of us who took refuge in that hotel and is still alive would still be alive" (245). This reframing decentralises Rusesabagina's role and underscores a broader, collective effort in ensuring survival. Kayihura emphasises the presence of many small heroes, ordinary individuals who acted with courage amidst the horrors of the genocide. He writes: "We were there. We lived to tell the story, the truth. Ours is a tale of many small heroes, many more ferocious villains, and a few petty irritants" (248). Overall, in reflecting on post-genocide Rwanda, Kayihura's memoir presents a society that has learned to speak out, challenge lies, and demand accountability. For Kayihura, true heroism lies not in fame or recognition but in daily acts of courage and integrity. As he states: "Like our experience in the hotel, it is not necessary that the world know our names or even that we all know one another's names, but that we act heroically each and every day. Acting together, we all can be heroes" (267).

Ultimately, his message is one of empowerment, whereby ordinary Rwandans, standing up for truth and justice, embody a form of heroism more meaningful than the myth of a lone saviour.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the conflicting accounts of the Rwanda genocide provided by Paul Rusesabagina and Edouard Kayihura demonstrate how memoirs are tools for conveying subjective memories. The memoirs demonstrate that truth in historical accounts depends on the interpretations of individuals giving the testimonies. This paper has demonstrated how Rusesabagina framed his pre-war experiences and his roles during the war to create a hero out of himself due to his acts of hospitality and negotiation. Contrarily, Kayihura's account demystifies the hero Rusesabagina created and recasts him from a selfless savior into an opportunist and extortionist. The memoirs of trauma show how historical revelations do not function as

objective historical records but as personal instruments of identity-formation and moral justification. The analysis helps to recognize the importance of a synthesis of multiple or contradictory perspectives. It emphasizes the need to reject a monolithic truth about the roles of human and organisation agencies during a genocide.

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Reflecting on the “No Victor, No Vanquished” Slogan of Maj. Gen. Yakubu Gowon, Within the Context of Post-Civil War Peace- Building in Nigeria

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Abstract. Between 1967 and 1970, the geo-political entity called Nigeria was engulfed in a bloody war in which thousands of lives were lost and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. It was a war defined mainly by the determination of Nigerian government under Maj. Gen. Yakubu Gowon to force a reunion on the secessionist Biafra under the leadership of Maj. Gen. Odumegwu Ojukwu. While the apologists of the secessionist Biafra prefer to call the war Nigeria- Biafra war, for, to them, "there was a country", the Yakubu Gowon leadership of the Nigerian nation described it merely as Nigerian civil war which ended with "No Victor, No vanquished" slogan. However, the post-war peace building efforts which was anchored on the principle of '3Rs' - Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and reconciliation left much to be desired. Relying mostly on secondary sources of data collection, this study investigates the reality or otherwise of the "No Victor, No vanquished" slogan viz-a- viz the application of the 3Rs within the context of post-war peace building efforts in Nigeria, particularly in Igboland. The paper concludes that the slogan as well as the principle of '3Rs' was not strictly adhered to. It is obvious that Nigerian government failed in many instances to fully implement the policy of '3Rs' in the true sense of it. The study concludes that the general infrastructural deficit in Igboland, which was the major theatre of war and the failure to harness the potentials of young Igbo technologists and scientists, and converting their expertise into national development, is not only a pointer that Biafrans were treated as the vanquished of war, but also is the major cause of the nation's underdevelopment.

Keywords: Peace, Development, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Reconciliation, infrastructure.

1. Introduction

The quotation, "No Victor, No Vanquished" entered into Nigeria's military and political lexicon in 1970, as a statement credited to the then military Head of State, Maj. Gen. Yakubu Gowon. It was a mantra perceived by many to have concealed an underlying euphoria that the three years bloody war had ended on the one hand, and that the Biafrans have been defeated at last on the other hand. There seem to be an ongoing debate among scholars on Nigeria- Biafra War which tend to obstruct a broader understanding of the war, that many regard as the first major conflict in independent Africa, and the only Cold War secessionist crisis. While this study strives to extricate itself from being swayed by the numerous personalized account of the war as espoused by some writers who were either actively or passively, directly or indirectly involved in the war, it however, attempts to contribute to the debate by juxtaposing the "No Victor, No Vanquished" mantra against the practical realities of the war in terms of government policies and programmes during and after the war, and the impacts of such policies on both Biafra, on one hand, and the larger Nigerian state on the other hand. The study is motivated by the dearth of materials in available literature that take specific look at the '3Rs'- Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation as it concerns the former combatants, especially those from the secessionist state of Biafra. This study attempts an interrogation into how former Biafran soldiers and civilians were reconciled, reintegrated, and rehabilitated into Nigerian society, and the challenges thereof.

Overview of the War and the Gowon/Ojukwu Factors.

When conflict is analysed from individual level, it reveals to a great extent how personal ideocinocracy of individual leaders can determine, to a reasonable extent the possibility of war or conflict. In other words, the action of states or nations is a direct reflection of

ideologies and philosophies of individual leaders that rule such state. This calls to mind the circumstances that surrounded the emergence of Yakubu Gowon as Nigeria's Head of State in 1966. When Yakubu Gowon, then a Lt. Col, assumed leadership at thirty-one in July 1966, he was apparently one of the youngest Heads of State in the world. Like Ironsi, he took over the reins of government in no less a tense political atmosphere which in the case of Gowon, subsequently degenerated into a civil war from 1967-1970.

The bloody coup of July 29, 1966 that ushered in the regime of Yakubu Gowon, claimed the lives of his boss, Gen. Ironsi and unaccountable military officers mainly of Igbo extraction. Put more succinctly, Otohagwa observes that a clear survey of all that took place on that day of great bloodshed in Nigeria reveals that the coup was a revenge from the military personnel of Northern Region (backed by their civil society) against the Easterners. The pogrom which heralds the coup itself had climaxed in the ambiguous killings, and further exacerbated tribalism among the Ibos and Hausas. As a prelude to the civil war era, several Igbo living in the north were massacred in their numbers. The northern elites and top military officers frowned at the emergence of Maj. Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi at the demise of the first republic. They interpreted the overthrow and death of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa as a calculated attempt by officers of eastern Nigeria to capture the reins of power from the North. Such perception could hardly be faulted considering the fact that the said coup that ended the first republic was led by Maj. Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, a supposed Igbo man. Little wonder then that there was a counter coup in July 1966 with which the northern elements in the military carried out a reprisal attacks on the Igbo and took over power. It was under this tensed atmosphere shrouded with ethnic sentiment and mutual tribal suspicion that Yakubu Gowon emerged Head of Nigerian State.

It is, however, instructive that the emergence of Yakubu Gowon runs foul of conventional practices in military appointment base on hierarchy of seniority. If not for any other thing, some military officers, like Brig. Babafemi Ogundipe, were senior in rank to Yakubu Gowon who was then a colonel before his emergence as Head of State. Secondly, some members of the Supreme Military Council like Odumegwu Ojukwu were excluded in the consultative meeting where the choice of Yakubu Gowon was made. All these points to the perceived desperation of northern elements to take over power willy-nilly. It is therefore on this premise that apologists of secessionist Biafra averred that the government of Yakubu Gowon was

not capable of protecting the generality of Nigerians, particularly the Igbo as they were being marginalized, maimed, killed, and were secretly eliminated by the Hausas in the Northern Nigeria. Put differently, it was a case of genocidal attacks against the Igbo people who had no other option than to return to their ancestral homes in eastern Nigeria.

It is on the strength of the above assertion that the Ojukwu factor and personality loomed large, at least within the Biafran enclave. A flamboyant enigmatic personality whose social status and academic background imbued with uncommon attribute of boldness and sterling leadership qualities, Ojukwu's radical disposition became visible from the first day he enlisted into the Nigerian army. As a thorough breed soldier, he rose through the ranks to become the Military Governor of Eastern Region of Nigeria at a time when the Nigerian military has become polarized along ethnic lines, climaxing into mistrust and divided loyalty among the military personnels. What followed was that insurrection of high magnitude engulfed the Nigerian State. Odumegwu Ojukwu who was then the Governor of the Eastern Region refused to take instructions from Yakubu Gowon. After series of diplomatic steps, and peaceful negotiations failed to resolve the impasse between the two leaders, the use of force could no longer be avoided. Thus, between May 3, 1967 and July 6, 1970, the Federal republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Biafra were engaged in a fierce and bloody war. It is worthy of note that the war would have been averted if due military process based on seniority was followed in choosing Aguiyi Ironsi's successor.

2. Igboland as Theatre of War.

Following the collapse of the Accord reached in Aburi, Ghana between the federal government of Nigeria and the Biafra team led by Odumegwu Ojukwu, the conflict metamorphosed into a shooting war on July 6, 1967 amidst confusion in governance within the Biafran territory. The confusion was brought about by calculated attempts to reduce Col Ojukwu's powers and area of influence. Earlier in May, 1967, Federal Government under Col. Gowon had announced the creation of twelve states out of the existing four regions. Under the new arrangement, the core Igbo territory of the defunct Eastern region now came under the East central State with Mr. Ukpabi Asika as Sole Administrator. Expectedly, Ojukwu refused to recognize the state creation exercise and continued to hold sway as the de facto leader of Eastern Nigeria. What this meant, was that the Igbo territory now came under two separate administrations: the existing authority under the leadership of Col. Ojukwu and the

new East Central State which had Mr. Ukpabi Asika as Sole Administrator. There were yet parts of Igboland that were still located within Rivers, Southeastern and Midwestern states as newly constituted by the state creation exercise. This further complicated the task of governance.

In the ensuing war, Igboland and the entire Eastern Nigeria was the only theatre of war. In the face of gruesome murder of Igbo population as a result of severe bombing and heavy military presence in the entire eastern region, there were far reaching negative consequences on the Igbo population. Igbokwe acknowledges the fact that up to one million lives may have been lost from deaths resulting from combat, starvation, disease or even shock. Ojukwu himself puts it this way; The war came reluctantly. That a conservative estimate of 50,000 unarmed people from a specific area of the nation were massacred is a fact. That I urged them back to the north and they were subjected to an even greater massacre was also a fact. That I was the foremost advocate of reconciliation between the vicious and his victim is also a historical truth. And so, chased back to their homes, the alternative as perceived by the Igbos was to resist and I stood at their head to resist. The general atmosphere of insecurity occasioned by the war was not conducive for socio-economic activities. Thus, the socio-economic activities of the entire Igboland came into a halt in the face of severe air strike and raid by the federal troop. Life was miserable for the entire Igbo population as a result of the collapsed economy of the area which depended majorly on food production and commercial activities.

To make matters worse, the federal government of Nigeria as part of its war strategy placed an economic blockade on Biafra, right from the inception of the war in 1967. The Blockade was placed on June 1, 1967, essentially to prevent the export of palm produce and crude oil so as to destroy the economic basis of the secessionist Republic, seen as a potent weapon for achieving quick victory. Indeed, the strategy worked as the economic foundations of Igboland was crumbled throughout the war. With virtually nothing coming in from outside, the people of eastern Nigeria were forced to produce all they needed. The result was large Scale frustration, hardship and poverty, as the resources of the food producing areas already under pressure due to insecurity, became over stretched and obviously gave up in the face of grave challenges resulting in food shortage.

As the adverse effects of the war became more severe with each passing day, the Biafra leadership began to develop strategies for war time survival. In the first

place, efforts were made to urgently address the issue of food shortage. In the light of this, rehabilitation commission and Food Directorate was created by the Biafran leadership. The mandate of the Food Directorate was to achieve self-sufficiency in food production through direct farming. Large expanse of lands were acquired in the hinterland where the directorate cultivated food crops to avert or atleast reduce the ravaging hunger in Igboland. Local farmers were equally persuaded, through the Biafran Information Service, to embark on extensive food crop production in order to cover the gap in food supply created by the economic blockade. Adequate publicity and recognition were given to farmers and craftsmen who contributed to the war effort.

Similarly, military personnels, craftsmen and traders were encouraged, motivated and given recognition to practice their enterprises that would enhance economic development during the war. Ogbudimkpa observes that Biafran Land Army was constituted to mobilize people towards effective food production. By using initiative resourcefulness, ingenuity, hard work, and trust in God, the Land Army was able to attack every available piece of land to produce yams, maize, okro, groundnuts, beans, cassava, plantain, cocoyams etc. The essence was to achieve massive food production to cushion the effect of the economic blockade with its attendant food shortage in Igboland.

At the onset of the war, Col. Ojukwu had through his international contacts envisaged tremendous support from major world powers that strongly believe in the principle of self-determination. Unfortunately, only few countries recognized Biafra during the war namely: Gabon, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, Haiti and Zambia. With the exception of France, most developed Nations of the world as well as OAU member states threw their weight behind the federal republic of Nigeria through logistics, material and military supports. With the blockade slammed on Biafra, the Biafra army soon ran into shortage of arms and ammunition. And in the face of severe ground and air bombardment on them, the Biafrans had no choice than to resort to emergency production of arms and ammunition using local resources. Thus, the Biafran government constituted some of the best scientists and technicians of Igbo extraction into the Research and Production Board (RAP).

It was observed by Ikechukwu that the Research and Production Board (RAP) relied mainly on local resources and content to delve into all areas of production, from the building of refineries to the production of home-grown wine. The local arms industry developed by RAP was specifically for the

situation as was unsophisticated compared to contemporary standards. Nevertheless, the Biafra hand-made grenades, *Ogbunigwe* (Igbo name for bomb) rockets, and guns kept Biafra steady on the war fronts after they lost access to external sources. That local arms industry was able to sustain Biafran army throughout the three-year war with a level of effect on the federal troop, shows that the indigenous arms manufacturing industries in Igboland had evolve significant innovations in technology. At this stage, the blacksmith industry that had flourished in Awka and other parts of Igboland was harnessed for war-time manufacture of arms and ammunitions. Unfortunately, all of these innovations were crumbled during the war. The war time technological and industrial foundations of Igboland were totally destroyed by the federal troop and no recourse was made to them even after the defeat of Biafra.

2.1 Post War Igboland: Interrogating the '3Rs'.

The principle of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation was introduced by Col. Yakubu Gowon, at the end of the war, as a conscious post-war policy to keep the Nigerian state united and stable. The '3Rs', premised on the concept of "No victor, No Vanquished" was to kick-start the process of rebuilding Nigeria, both economically, politically, and infrastructurally. Perhaps it is important to examine the meaning of the three concepts above. Ikechukwu opined that the idea of reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation have essential common features. In general parlance, reconstruction connotes the process of changing or improve the condition of something or the way it works, the process of putting something into the state it was before; the activity of building again something that has been damaged or destroyed. Rehabilitation connotes the process of helping someone to have a normal, useful life again after he/she has been deprived for a long time; to begin to consider that someone is good or acceptable, after a long period during which he/she was considered bad or unacceptable; to return a building to its previous good condition. Reconciliation represents an end to a disagreement and the start of a good relationship again, the process of making it possible for two ideas, facts, etc, to exist together without being opposed to each other.

The above explanatory framework is quite apt in describing the intents and purposes of the '3Rs' enunciated by the Federal Military Government, led by Yakubu Gowon, to drive home the 'No Victor, No Vanquished' declaration, which marked the end of Nigeria-Biafra war. These pronouncements were greeted with high optimism that the magnanimity of

the federal government will guarantee post-war recovery, mutual co-existence, and overall socio-economic and political developments of Nigeria. In fact, St. Jorre who referred to the war as 'The Brothers War' remarks that this was probably the only armed conflict of its magnitude in history, perpetrated with so much viciousness and bitterness, where no reprisals, trials, or executions occurred.

However, a cursory perusal and thorough scrutiny of the federal military government's pronouncement reveals that it was more sensational than real, while the policy of '3Rs' were not realized, at least in the eastern region that was theatre of war. There is indeed a big question mark hanging on the head of Gowon's administration as regards the sincerity of purpose in his 'No Victor, No Vanquished' mantra viz-a-viz his implementation of the '3Rs' policy. Much as the various harsh policies of war era ranging from economic blockade, expulsion of humanitarian organizations perceived to be assisting Biafran population, could be understood as measures taken to ensure quick and timely defeat of the Biafran side. However, some of the post-war policy trust of Gowon's administration left imprints of bias against the defeated Biafran people. How can one explain the post-war enactment of the Public Officers (Special Provisions) Decree No. 46 of 1970? This is one decree that prevented senior Igbo civil servants and public corporation personnel from being reabsorbed on the grounds that they were accomplices who had aided Biafra's war effort. Can this be said to be in the spirit of genuine reconciliation? Pursuance to the above decree, Gowon administration ensured that top-ranking civil/public servant from the East central state were either dismissed or compulsorily retired from the federal civil service, military and paramilitary agencies. Paul Obi-Ani re-echoed the adverse effects of the Decree No. 46 of 1970 when he states that Decree No. 46 of 1970 succeeded so well in accomplishing its hidden objective of marginalizing the Igbo and frustrating most of them who had devoted their time and energy in ensuring the progress of this country.

Another policy of Gowon's led administration that has been criticized for jeopardizing the national reconciliation process was the promulgation of indigenization Decree of 1972. This decree made provision for foreign companies in Nigeria to sell part of their shares to Nigerians to ensure that such companies and enterprises are owned and controlled majorly by Nigerians. While this effort at indigenization of companies and enterprises in Nigeria was viewed as a welcome development, the choice of the immediate post-war period, when the Igbo had

been economically emasculated by war-time economic realities could not have been in good faith. The policy came at a time when the Igbo had been incapacitated from full-scale involvement in the indigenization and other economic programmes of the government. Thus, it was viewed by apologists of the Biafra secessionist agenda as a deliberate effort to exclude people of Igbo region from deriving the full benefit of the Indigenization policy of the federal government.

At the end of the war, the federal government set up National Commission for Rehabilitation (NCR) to work in conjunction with Nigerian Red Cross Society for the purpose of providing relief material and medical attention for the numerous Igbo population who were sick, homeless and malnourished. Unfortunately, these provisions were grossly inadequate due to government ineptitude. It was alleged that Gowon's administration was selective of the humanitarians and countries permitted to give relief materials or aids to the stranded Igbo population for reasons of having supported Biafra Republic during the war. St. Jorre captures it more succinctly; All the countries like France, South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia which had Supported Biafra were told to keep their aid and stay out. Relief organizations in a similar position, notably caritas and the World Council of Churches, were also barred. let them keep their blood money Gowon cried. 'Nigeria will do this itself. The Catholic priests and nuns in the enclave were gradually rounded up and expelled. They came to no harm physically but their removal left a crucial gap in a rapidly deteriorating relief situation. The blacklisting of countries and humanitarian organizations and barring them from participating in the post-war rehabilitation efforts has been interpreted by many as a continuation of Gowon's war-time strategy of starving the Igbo to submission. This explains why more and more Igbo people continued to die even after the war due to inadequate food and medical supplies.

Similarly, the fate of Biafran soldiers who sustained severe injuries was a source of concern to many at the end of the war, It has been recorded that in Owerri Division alone, there were two hundred ex-Biafra soldiers blinded during the civil war who could not receive appropriate medical attention. Also, the East Central State Commission for Rehabilitation identified 6,000 amputees who needed assistance. These figure does not include the numerous ex-soldiers that sustained spinal cord injuries and other life-threatening deformities. These victims were initially accommodated at the Government Technical College in Enugu with little attention, medication and food provided by the Medical Corps of the federal

troop. With the passage of time, these war victims were resettled at Oji River within a facility named "Wounded Soldiers Camp". However, the condition of the ex-soldiers did not improve.

Those who survived the war and are healthy were not re-absorbed into the Nigerian military, those who were deformed and disabled were not properly catered for. Thus, the Ex-Biafran soldiers were thus, left to bear their pains like the vanquished. No recourse was made to the orphans and those who lost contact with their parents as a result of the war. All these people were left at the mercy of charitable organizations and humanitarian aids agencies who had to close in the gap without government support let alone incentive. With this scenario, it becomes difficult to convince an average Igbo man that the rehabilitation policy of federal government of Nigeria was real.

Next is the policy of Reconstruction as it regards the educational, industrial, agricultural, health care, housing, communication, commerce and financial sectors in Igboland. As mentioned earlier, all the above facets were kick-started or received a boost during the war in response to the exigencies of war. Unfortunately, all the advancements recorded in the above sectors, were set decades backwards as a result of massive destructions that characterized the war. The education sector had a serious setback during the war as schools were closed down throughout the three academic years as a result of hostilities and insecurity that characterized the period. Physical infrastructure were devastated and shattered by bombing and air raids. Library and laboratory equipment's were either destroyed or looted.

At the end of the war, the task of rebuilding schools to enable early resumption of pupils and students rested squarely on the East Central State government. In the face of federal government ineptitude or insensitivity towards the Igbo, the East central State had to appeal to spirited individuals and humanitarian organizations. The financial support from humanitarian organizations particularly UNICEF quickened the pace of reconstruction of a large number of the schools. The contribution of UNICEF in this regard in East Central State during the period 1970 1972 amounted to N2.4million.

Similar gesture applies to the Agricultural, commerce and industry, communication, health and housing sectors, all of which were bombarded and completely devastated during the war. On the basis of the economic emasculation of Igbo industrialists and business-men, and against the backdrop of lingering uneasiness arising from federal government's

lukewarm attitude towards reconstruction of destroyed business premises, companies and industries in Igboland, there was lack of confidence in some cautious investors who for fear of possible conflict escalation in Igboland were reluctant to invest in Igboland. Only a combination of state government's interventions and indigenous industrialists of Igbo extraction kick started a new move to reconstruct and revamp the various sectors of economic lives in post war Igboland.

The situation perhaps would have been different if Gowon's administration had been more receptive to humanitarian organizations and other countries willing to deliver relief materials to Igbo victims of war. Nigeria's socio-economic and industrial attainments would have been better today if conscious efforts were made by Gowon administration to rebuild or reconstruct Igbo's industrial achievements that were shattered by the war. It is a common knowledge that Igbo's technological and industrial achievement, though borne out of the exigency of the war, had reach a level of sophistication before it was uprooted and dismantled by the war. The best Gowon's administration could offer was to collate and assemble the relics of such technological inventions at the National War Museum, Umuahia, without identifying the brilliant Igbo scientists and technologist that invented such war equipments.

In the face of economic blockade enforced by Gowon's administration, great ingenuity and unprecedented innovations were achieved by Biafra technologists. Biafra scientists from the Research and Production Unit developed a great number of rockets, bombs, and telecommunications gadgets, and devised an indigenous strategy to refine petroleum. Unfortunately, the intelligence and technological prowess of the Igbo scientists and technicians could not be harnessed by Nigerian government, even after the defeat of Biafra. The knowledge and expertise of these Igbo scientist was urgently needed in post-war Nigeria to advance the nation's industrial growth. But this could not happen due to jealousy and deep-rooted hatred against the Igbo of eastern Nigeria. Hence Nigeria has remained a backward state scientifically and technologically.

It is in the light of the above that Paul Obi-Ani argues that Nigeria did not take advantage of the Biafran technological innovation at the end of the civil war. The Igbo people who developed some local hardwares like rockets, explosives, anti-aircraft guns, the *ogbunigwe*, land mines and anti-tanks weapons were not encouraged to improve upon these military hardwares. Bad enough, after the overthrow of Gowon

in 1975, subsequent military regimes which were equally dominated by northern elements in Nigeria military did not attempt to address the 'Igbo question'. No regime deemed it necessary to recall the Biafra war files, to atleast acknowledge the Igbo scientists and technologists who manufactured the Biafran weapons that were deployed during the war. No doubt, a little encouragement from Nigerian government would have boosted the Igbo technicians to put Nigeria on the path to technological advancement in the manufacturing of military hardware needed to launch Nigeria into the realm of super power politics. Instead, stricter measures were put in place to systematically marginalize the Igbo. It has been argued that the stigma of rebellion has always been as an excuse to deprive, and marginalize the Igbo of Nigeria. Following the neglect of Igbo scientists, technologies and technicians; and against the backdrop of obvious continuous marginalization of Igbo people, there was a renewed consciousness among the Igbo for self-preservation. This can be seen from the emergence of numerous Pro-Biafran organizations.

3. Conclusion

This paper has been able to examine the "No Victor, No vanquished" proclamation of Yakubu Gowon at the end of Nigeria-Biafra war, within the context of intra-state conflict that has characterized post-independence existence of most African countries. The paper observes that the war carried with it, symptoms of genocidal attacks on the Igbo of eastern Nigeria, which culminated in the death of over three thousand people of Igbo extraction as the eastern region was the only theatre of War while it lasted. Although Gowon, proclaimed a "No Victor, No Vanquished", at the end of the war, the policies of his administration, within the context of the '3Rs', and the attitude of his administration towards the Igbo people proved otherwise. Subjecting such proclamation and the implementation of the '3Rs' to critical analysis, it becomes apparently clear that the administration of Yakubu Gowon did not realize the full potentials inherent in the avowed policies of reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. In the area of reconciliation, our research effort revealed that no significant reconciliation has been achieved. The various components of the Nigerian society is still as divided as they were prior to the civil war. National values and patriotism have been sacrificed on the altar of ethnicity and tribal loyalty. This explains why the "Igbo question" has not been effectively addressed. The perceived or real marginalization, hurt, injustice and hatred against the Igbo, as conceived before the civil war are still very visible in the post-war era. And this has culminated in the proliferation of neo-Biafra

separatist groups and movements among which are; Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Youth Congress (BYC), Biafra Liberation Council (BLC), Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) Coalition of Biafra Liberation Group (COBLIG), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and Eastern Security Network (ESN). All of these groups either seek to attract federal government attention to the predicament of the Igbo group since the end of the civil war, or agitate for continuation of outright secession of Biafra.

Similarly, the idea of rehabilitation is far from being realized in the immediate post-war era. Our finding revealed that war veterans of Biafra extraction were not adequately integrated into the Nigerian Society after the war. This research effort revealed that former Biafra soldiers who suffered one form of injury or the other, in the course of the war were neither appropriately catered for, nor fully re-absorbed into the Nigerian military after the war. Evidence abounds of federal government's ineptitude towards the plight of Igbo victims of war. The various obnoxious military decrees, like decree No. 46 which contains harmful provisions, are eloquent testimonies of ill-treatment meted out to former Biafran soldiers, and civilians alike. Such verifiable discontent could not allow for proper rehabilitation and reintegration of all segments of the Nigerian society in the post-war era.

If there is any sphere where government's failure is easily noticeable, it is in the reconstruction policy. War, especially intra-state war like that of Nigerian case under study, comes with its negative and positive effects. The ability of the actors to leverage on its positive effects is what makes the difference. America, for instance emerged from the civil war of the 1950s, with a radical reconstruction programme which resulted in the rise of big businesses and industrial growth. It was this feat that gave America the vantage position in world affairs, which eventually saw America emerging as a World Power after WWI and WWII. Similarly, Russia found its path to industrial growth after the 1917 revolution. Again, the French Revolution of 1789 put France on the path of industrial recovery and growth.

Unfortunately, in the case of Nigeria, similar lessons were not learnt, neither were there conscious efforts to convert the positive effects of the war (no matter how little) into national growth. It is regrettable that the federal government of Nigeria did not take full advantage of the scientific and technological innovations of the Biafran Research and Production Board (RAP) to navigate the country on the path of industrial growth and development. Prof. Felix Oragwu, who was the head of Biafra Research and

Production (RAP) is still alive. It is on record that Biafra RAP developed *Ogbunigwe*, and successfully processed palm oil to power jet airplane throughout the war. It is instructive to lay emphasis on the Biafra RAP innovations and invention, as such novel ventures had one hundred percent local content. A feat that had never been achieved in Nigeria before the war. One would have expected that in the true sense of post-civil war reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, the federal government would assemble all such technologists and technicians who excelled in such novel inventions, and encourage them with incentives to develop a road map for Nigeria's industrial policies. Such efforts would have quickly healed the wounds, fostered greater integration, inculcated the spirit of patriotism, and above all, put the country on the path of industrial growth.

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An Anthropological Perspective to *Igo Oji* (kola nut invocation) among the Igbo People of Nigeria

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Abstract. One of the outstanding features that mark Igbo culture is the kola nut. In the traditional mould, the kola nut goes through a noticeable ritual termed *igo oji* or the kola nut invocation before it is eaten. Research have been carried out by Igbo scholars on the kola nut custom, especially in relation to its use and typology, but inadequate attention has been paid to the invocation. Hinged on the standard form of the kola nut invocation process, the present study therefore examines the invocation process with a view to delineating the nature of the invocation, the structure of the invocation and the manner of language used in the invocation in contemporary times. Twelve male adults were interviewed for this study. The choice of only males is based on the fact that in patriarchal Igbo society, kola nut is actually the business of men and so men are the custodians and repositories of knowledge about the kola nut. The researcher equally observed the custom of *igo oji* in three different occasions. Information gathered from the interviewees and the observations made, formed the data for this study. Analysis of data shows that, in general, the process of *igo oji* is no longer strictly adhered to due to reasons of changes in religious inclination and orientation among the Igbo. Christian religion which most Igbo embraced is the major reason behind the shift in the traditional procedure for kola nut invocation. The three-pronged structure of the invocation is no longer followed, and the language of invocation has fallen from the poetic to the prosaic, with all the adverse implications to Igbo language. It is recommended that, to avoid conflict and disputations, Christians should restrict themselves to *ekpere oji* (prayers over kola nut) while traditionalists should continue with *igo oji* (kola nut invocation)

Keywords: Kolanut, *Oji* Igbo, Culture, Religion, Lobes

1. Introduction

Cultures all over the world are known for one or several symbols or another that makes them unique in a positive way. One of the major elements of the Yoruba culture is the talking drum called *dundun/gangan*, the *aso oke* hat known as *fila*, the *gele* 'headtie' worn by women and *agbada* 'traditional cloth' worn by men. In the area of food, the Yoruba *amala* and *ewedu* stand out among others. A major element of Hausa culture is the *kulikuli*, a fried snack made from peanuts and spices, *tuwo*, a thick pudding made from maize, guinea corn or millet, *kosai*, food made from beans and fried in palm oil and *koko* porridge made from millet or maize; others are *hula* or *bama cap*, a head gear, and the *babaringa*, which is like the Yoruba *agbada* worn by men. The Tiv are mainly denoted by their black and white fabric and hat known as *A'nger*. The Edo/Bini are prominent for their black soup known as *omoebe*. The Efik/Ibibio are known for their traditional vegetable soups known as *afang*, *atama*, *Edikang ikong*, and some others. Among the Igbo, the salient aspects of the culture are seen in both fashion and cuisine. While their men are denoted for their traditional cloth and red cap, *isiagu* and *okpu mmee*, the women are known by their special head gear and double wrapper tied around the waist, *ichafu* and *ukwu akwa*. In terms of cuisine, Igbo is generally known for such soups as *ofe nsala* (white soup), *ofe onugbu* (bitter leaf soup), among others. However, one of the symbols that is used to delineate Igbo culture is the food or seed known as *oji* 'kola nut'. Although, it is mainly eaten as snack by the Hausa, it is used for so many social and ritual purposes among the Igbo.

Some of the uses of the kola nut among the Igbo include, receiving guests, morning invocation to gods and ancestors, prayers during traditional marriage rites and traditional festivals, making covenants or agreements between people or communities, pouring

libations and sacrifices in shrines, and virtually every function among the Igbo. One of the common maxims that underline the importance of the kola nut among the Igbo is *onye wetara oji wetara ndu* 'He who brings kola nut brings life', which is commonly said during festive occasions, thus equating kola nut with life. In the perspective of the Igbo, the kola nut is not just a seed or food to be eaten casually or arbitrarily, but a seed that symbolizes life and therefore eaten after observing certain rituals or prayers. It is very hard to see an Igbo buy a kola nut and start eating it as snack. It can be rightly adduced that, any kola nut eaten by an Igbo may have passed through certain rituals of prayers or invocation. Due to the fact that it is not seen as snack, it could be broken into smithereens to reach as many people as possible in a gathering, hence the saying *oji ezughi, mbo aka o jere ebee?* 'If the kola nut is not sufficient, where did the finger nail go?' It is for this extrinsic reason that the Igbo see the kola nut as a spiritual food, that they note that: *oji bu nri mmadu na mmuo* 'kola nut is food for humans and spirits', meaning that it is only kola nut that is shared by both human beings and spirits. Although chickens, goats and other animals are offered to gods, the kola nut stands out; while the kola nut can be offered alone, no animal can be offered alone without the kola nut. Even during animal offerings, the kola nut takes precedence.

An essential feature of the kola nut custom among the Igbo is the invocation that attends it referred to as *igo oji*. In traditional Igbo society, before eating the kola nut, an elder will offer it to the gods and ancestors; such offering is couched in prayers to the Supreme Being, *Chukwu*, the land, *ala*, and the ancestors, *ndiichie*. The invocation is actually the process of summoning the spirits to participate in the kola nut event. This invocation is an art in itself masterfully crafted and delivered by elders and orators in figurative locution laden with proverbs, idioms, innuendoes and other metaphorical expressions. Notably, the invocation is not evinced in simple prose, for two reasons. First, for whatever reason that necessitated the use of the kola nut, it is a gathering of adult males, who culturally use higher language. Secondly, and more importantly, given the trajectory of the offering, the invocator is not only addressing humans but spirits who are usually approached with deeper forms of the language. It should be emphasised that it is not every adult Igbo that has the skill to offer kola nut; the skill is actually transmitted from generation to generation, as children learn from their fathers or other elders in the community, until, over time, they achieve sufficient mastery of the art. Incidentally, in contemporary time, the traditional way of offering kola nut is no longer the same, just like every other aspect of the Igbo culture affected by

modernization. Although the kola nut culture among the Igbo has defied modernization, same cannot be said of the way and process of its offering in the present time.

Based on the construct above, the present study focuses on the kola nut custom among the Igbo, by examining if invocations are still made during the kola nut event, the present structure of the kola nut invocation (to be interchangeably used with the blessing of kola nut), and the manner of language used during the invocation. Beyond addressing these issues, this study is poised to ascertain the reason(s) behind the departure from the traditional way of breaking kola nuts and its effects on the Igbo language and culture. For an easier understanding of this study, a look shall be taken at the origin of the kola nut, what kola nut means to the Igbo, as well as works done on the subject.

2. Etymology of kola nut among the Igbo

There exist several myths surrounding the origin of Igbo kola nuts (to be used interchangeably with *Oji* hereafter) and its adoption as a sacred fruit among other fruits in Igboland. Ogbalu (1981) traces the origin of *Oji* to an old man's visit to the Supreme Being, *Chukwu*. *Chukwu* asked the old man to enter his big house where he, *Chukwu*, keeps varieties of fruits and select the one he, the old man, likes. The man chose *Oji* and went home with it. The man planted the *Oji* according to *Chukwu*'s instruction; when the *Oji* tree grew, he held it sacred because it came from *Chukwu*. Ogbalu (2019) shares same view, but added that "... when *Oji* tree started yielding fruits, our forefathers started using the seed to welcome their guests as *Chukwu* had used it in welcoming them (p.38).

The above myth has a link with divinity. The Igbo forebears copied what *Chukwu* did with *Oji*, that is, offering it to a guest, and handed same down to their children, hence, the Igbo use of *Oji* to commune with divinity and welcome guests. Other myths have it that *Chukwu*, himself, planted *Oji* as the first tree in Igbo land, so that its fruits serve as fruits for both gods and men. On the other hand, a myth has it that gods lived on kola nut trees (see Kanu, 2020). The sum of it is that the Igbo have a strong belief that *Oji* is connected with divinity, hence, their celebrating it before breaking and eating it. It is equally for the same reason that they have some taboos that surround the sacred nut. For instance, women do not climb kola nut tree not to think of plucking it; women do not bless it in the presence of a man or use its dried sticks as firewood. Furthermore, it is a taboo among the Igbo for someone

to steal kola nut. Kola nut must also be blessed and broken before it is eaten. During the breaking of kola nuts, silence is maintained. The silence is not just in honour of the kola and divinity that will be communicated with through the kola; it helps the audience to pay rapt attention to the prayers so that they know when to play their part by answering *isee*, which serves as a seal to the prayers.

In support, the work of Obineche (2017) based on the history of kola nut as a significant socio-cultural symbol of identification of Igbo origin of hospitality, unity and integration reveals that *Oji Igbo* is valued in Igbo tradition and its sacredness is attached to the foundation of Igbo origin. Similarly, the work of Nwadiakor and Eze (2021) on historical and phenomenological inquiry into the meaning and symbolism of Igbo kola nut and palm wine reveal that the sacredness of kola nut can be traced to Igbo origin; however, external factors have adversely affected the symbolism of kola nut among the Igbo.

2.1 The Igbo and kola nut

Kolanut can simply be defined as the seed kernel of a large African tree grown commercially around the world, particularly in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Brazil and other parts (Obineche, 2017). Kola nuts are of different sizes, and colours, and they perform sundry functions for different ethnic groups. Anidobe and Uzoakor (2010, p. 1) note that “In Nigeria, up to twenty species of kola are recognised.” Even though there are different species of kolanuts, every ethnic group has its own level of attachment to it. Uchem (2001, p. 60) avers that there is a popular national adage developed around kolanuts thus: “The Yorubas grow the kolanut, the Hausas eat it, but the Igbo celebrate it.” This is to say that kolanuts mean different things to different people. It also affirms the importance the Igbo attach to it.

The Igbo uphold kolanut as a sacred nut. They have their own specie of kolanut, called *Oji Igbo* that is *colacuminata*. It is this particular specie of kolanut that they celebrate and use for all their occasions. On Igbo kola nut, Ezeifeke and Chinyeaka (2019) submit that:

It is a nut imbued with both physical and supernatural powers, and performative utterances during the breaking ritual are believed to possess the potency of spiritual preservation (p. 130).

The Igbo actually have a strong belief that kola nut is not an ordinary nut, hence, the reason behind their ritualising it. The Igbo do not just get kola nut and eat it, they rather perform both linguistic and paralinguistic actions before eating it. This is to say

that the breaking of kola nut has its own procedure which is considered very important. Kola-nut is, to say the least, the closest companion to the traditional Igboman (Nnabuihe, 2018). Continuing, Nnabuihe (2018) explains that the traditional Igboman’s relationship with *Oji* starts from the womb and continues till his death; this, he said, is because “There is hardly anything a traditional Igboman would do all through his life that kolanut would not be presented (p.152). The presentation of kola nuts in every occasion shows indeed how important the nut is to the Igbo. Ogbalu (1979, p. 55) affirms the dual function of *Oji* when he states that: “*oji na-egosị obioma mmadu nwere n’ebe ibe ya no, ma o bu n’ebe chi ya no*”. ‘Kolanut shows a good heart one has towards his fellow man or towards his *Chi*’. This is to say that the Igbo offer kola nuts both to their *Chi* and to their fellows. Nzeakor (2002) shares the same view with Ogbalu, but adds that:

O bu ezie na oji di nta ma o na-arụ ọrụ di ukwu n’ala anyi, na-egosị obi oma mmadu nwere n’ebe mmadu ibe ya no, n’ebe ihe kere mmadu no na n’ebe ndi ichie na ndi nwuru anwu kwesiri icheta echeta no... ebe oji di, nsopuru, ugwu na obi ocha di ya. (p.3).

‘It is true that kola nut is small but it does a great job in our land, shows good heart a person has towards his fellow man, and the creator and on the ancestors and the dead who are worth remembering... where there is kola nut, honour, prestige and clean heart is there’.

The above excerpt amplifies the importance of kola nut. The Igboman relates with his fellowmen, creator, and ancestors through kola nut, hence the honour and prestige accorded it. The Igbo relates with his fellowman by offering him kola nut to welcome him; his creator by praying to him with kola nut; his ancestors and the dead worth remembering by inviting them in the blessing of kola nut and giving them their own portions when the breaking is done. It is based on the above relationships that the Igbo assert that *aka ruru aru adighi emetu oji* ‘a soiled hand does not touch kola nuts’ (see Ubesie,1979). The Igboman’s attachment to *Oji* is further justified by his belief that “Spirits or gods, to whom prayers are directed do not accept them unless they are made through a connecting medium of Igbo kola” (Obiajulu & Nnajofofor, 2017, p. 87). The Igbo are very religious group of people and they will do everything possible to make sure that their prayers are heard.

The name given to the kolanut is founded on the cotyledons inherent in it which eventually suggests its functional and ceremonial suitability (Nwadiakor & Eze, 2021). The above explanation brings to the fore, another important point on the use of the sacred nut. The lobes determine its name, significance, purpose

and appropriateness. This is to say that the lobes in a kola nut determine the name given to it. It is also the number of lobes in *Oji* that settles if it will be used for a particular occasion or not, and if it is suitable for consumption or not.

The Igbo consider one-lobed kolanut as *Oji ogbi, Agbara/Mmuo*. The first name *Oji ogbi*, (dumb kola nut) suggests that the kola nut did not say a thing, therefore it belongs to the gods, or seen as an evil omen and thrown away (Ezeifeka and Chinyeaka, 2019), or belongs to *Chukwu* (Kanu, 2022). The strangeness of the one-lobed kola nut explains the reason it is not used for rituals among the Igbo. A two-lobed kola nut is also perceived as the one-lobed kola nut. According to scholars, (Nwadike in Uzọalo, 2017; Obiajulu & Nnajiifo, 2018) the spirits do not accept such kola nuts and they are not used for rituals.

Three-lobed kola nut called *Oji Ikenga /Dike* is exclusively meant for men who are great achievers. It is very symbolic among the Igbo and symbolizes three male children (Nnabuihe, 2008) or the tripartite aspects of man in Igbo psychology namely; *Arụ* 'Body'; *mkpuruobi/uche* 'soul/mind' and *mmuo* 'spirit' (Obiajulu & Nnajiifo (2017). This is to say that everything that makes a human being is fully represented in the three lobed kola. However, Ezeifeka & Chinyeaka (2019, p. 129) argue that "three is a significant number in Igbo but not a lucky number". In support, Nwadior & Eze (2021, p. 82) citing Agha (2010), note that "...kolanut with three lobes [sic] are regarded as defiled kolanut and is never eaten, as it symbolised bad omen. The Igbo proverb has it that "oji gbara ato ji ubochi ugwo" (a three-lobed kola nut is a debtor to the four market days) hence some titled man [sic] will not eat it. All these points to the fact that even though kola nuts are accepted among the Igbo, the significance of the lobes is subject to various interpretations.

A four-lobed kola nut is celebrated virtually among every area in Igboland. While some call this kola, *Oji afia naano ubosi ano* (four markets four days' kola). Others call it *Oji udo na ngozi* (kola of peace and blessing). The number four is very symbolic among the Igbo. Apart from the fact that it marks four market days which Igbo count for a week, it stands for completeness. On four-lobed kola, Obiajulu and Nnajiifo (2017) argue that:

Both the male and female face each other, not in a confrontational manner, not in a remonstrative posture, but in a manner that smacks of coming together of negative and positive polar conditions for the purpose of producing a new being creative light

and power of life, the light of a father and the power of a mother... (p.89).

Nnabuihe (2018) supports the above claim when he notes that the four-lobed kolanut predicate two males and two females' children. Among the Igbo, a family with such combination of children is said to be complete. Five-lobed kolanuts and more are very acceptable to the Igbo. They signify great things and good things to come. On the issue of sex in such lobes, Nnabuihe (2018, p. 162) gives an elaborate explanation when he notes that:

Apart from the three-lobe kola *Ikenga*, that contains all males, kolanut hardly contains more than two male lobes irrespective of the number of lobes in it. This explains why the Igbo uphold polygamy but do not tolerate polyandry. Being a people who long to have many children through the institution of marriage, the Igbo permit a man to marry more wives... This is to create the opportunity for all women to get married...

The long explanation justifies polygamy among the Igbo. The fewer number of male lobes to female lobes is further justified by the Igbo saying that *nwoke di uko* (man is scarce). The Igbo see polygamy as a way of ensuring that their young ladies are customarily married, thereby discouraging harlotry and single motherhood.

Discussions so far are pertinent; for they arm the person that will bless and break the kola nut with enough knowledge on what to do and what to refrain from. Although the presentation, blessing and breaking of kola nut may differ slightly in different Igbo culture areas, there are still some key things that remain the same for all Igbo. The environment goes a long way in determining who presents the kola nut. If it were to be at home, a man's wife or son brings the kola nut to him to present to visitors. If it were a gathering, the host will present the kola to the oldest man based on the Igbo belief that an old man is closer to the ancestors. The Igbo believes that *Okenye kwachaa akpiri, ndi mmuo egewe nti* 'when an old man clears his throat, the ancestors pay attention'. Duru (2016, p. 66) attests that:

Prior to the blessing of kolanut, one significant thing that must be observed is that it moves from hand to hand. First, the elders of the land owners ... are shown the kola and from there it goes round to other relevant persons, as the tradition provides. After the movement of the kolanut, it is returned to the title holder before blessing.

The movement of kola nut from hand to hand is a form of headcount among the Igbo. In some places, the movement is done according to kin relationship. Once

the kola gets to a person, he touches it to show his consent. The kola nut is returned to the oldest man or the title holder for blessing and breaking. The blessing of kola nut has its own procedure. It is not just the kind of general prayer done in contemporary time. Uchendu (1965) aptly notes that:

A typical prayer calls on the creator, the ancestors, and all friendly spirits to “eat” kolanut. It demands good health, wealth to nourish it, progress for all, and peace to the village. It calls on the wicked and the sorcerers to meet their disastrous end (p. 74).

The excerpt defends the reason behind the raising of the kola nut when blessing it. The first to be acknowledged is the creator, hence, the raising of the kola to honour him. The invitation to the kola moves in hierarchies, from the creator to the divinities such as *ala*, the earth goddess, the ancestors, then, friendly spirits. It is believed that it is only when these spirit beings are present that one can make his demand. A look at the demands equally shows a good sequence - good health, wealth, progress and peace. It is only the healthy that will enjoy his wealth and make good progress. Peace is equally important for without it, a man’s joy will not be complete. The interest of all is also part of the petition. The prayer did not forget the wicked spirits. If these spirits are not addressed, life will remain difficult for the people. Nwala (2010, p.211) specifically notes that in the kola nut invocation, visitors are wished safe journey home even as the host and his family remains in peace. When the prayer is going on, those in the environment play their part by echoing ‘*isee*’. This response shows their consent to the prayers. It also acts as a seal to the prayers. Ezeifeke and Chinyeaka’s (2019) aver that the breaking of kola nut is a strong speech event. The reference to *igo oji* as a ‘strong speech event’ implies that, given the setting, the nature and manner of language used is not ordinary. The language is usually poetic so as to align with the participants, particularly the deities. Kanu (2022, p.44) shares the above idea when he states that: “During prayers, *Chukwu* is invoked with incantations garnished with proverbs and prayers...” the is to say that the act of blessing kola nut requires a good speaker who understands appropriate use of proverbs.

It is after the *igo oji* that the kola nut is broken. Basden (1921, p. 226) describes an easier way to break the nut when he notes that nut can be “held bottom and upwards and the thumb nails pressed firmly into the natural lines of division”. It is worth noting that kola nuts are broken long according to their natural lines. This pattern of breaking it is very symbolic as it stands for long life. It also gives a clearer insight into the Igbo aphorism that *onye wetara oji wetara ndu* “S/he who

brings kola nut brings life. The Igbo make every effort to see that everyone partakes of the kola nut, no matter how large they are in number. It is based on this that the Igbo say: *a na-asị na oji ezughị, mboaka o jere ebee?* ‘How can you say that the kola nut is not sufficient, where did the finger nails go?’” The saying is to further establish the need for all to partake in the blessed kola nut which signifies life, even if it means using the finger nails to break it into smaller pieces.

Igo oji is one of the cultures the Igbo still hold very dearly. Ogbalu (1979, p.54) insists that “*Oji bu otu n’ime omenala Igbo nke ndi ocha na-enweghi ike ichu n’ala Igbo*” (kolanut is one of the traditions which the Europeans could not destroy in Igboland). This assertion is still very strong for despite contact with other ethnicities and their religions, the Igbo still maintain the culture of *igo oji*.

Discussions so far point to the significance of kola nut among the Igbo. A look shall now be taken at some other research works done on Igbo kola nut.

3. Literature

Earlier works done on Igbo kola nuts concentrated on what kola nut is to the Igbo, its significant, taboos, advantages and disadvantages (see Ogbalu, 1979;81, Osuagwu 1979, Ekwealor, 1998, and Nzeako, 2002, Ubesie, 1979). However, there exist some more recent works on Igbo kola nut.

The work of Obineche (2017) is a reminiscent of the history of kola nut as a significant socio-cultural symbol of identification of the Igbo origin of hospitality unity and integration. His finding shows that *Oji Igbo* is more valued in Igbo tradition where its sacredness is attached to the foundation of Igbo origin.

Ezeifeke and Chinyeaka’s (2019) study is on speech act analysis of the utterances that precede the breaking of kola nut in selected cultural events. Their findings reveal that different speech situations have different participants who enact different acts. The acts have effects on both man and supernatural beings who are part of the events. Their conclusion has it that kola nut is a strong speech event which connects the living and the dead in Igbo culture. They maintain that civilisation and Christianity cannot destroy the kola nut ritual among the Igbo.

Kanu’s (2022) research has to do with Igbo kola nut and *Igwebuiké* philosophy. His result shows that kola nut expresses *Igwebuiké* philosophy which is the operative condition of the Igbo worldview. The work of Nwadiakor and Eze (2021) is on historical and phenomenological inquiry into the meaning and

symbolism of Igbo kola nut and palm wine. Their findings reveal that the sacredness of kola nut can be traced to Igbo origin; however, external factors have adversely affected the symbolism of kola nut among the Igbo.

The present research is different from the earlier ones based on the fact that it takes a look at kola nut through ethnolinguistic perspective with a view to finding out if invocations are still made during the kola nut event, the present structure of the kola nut invocation, the manner of language used during the invocation, the reason(s) behind the departure from the traditional way of breaking kola nuts and its effects on the Igbo language and culture.

4. Research Methodology

The researcher gathered data for this study through a mixed method. Materials from the library and internet that have to do with kola nuts were gathered/downloaded and read. The researcher, who is an Igbo, relied also on her intuitive knowledge of Igbo language and culture. With the assistance of three male and three female research assistants, the researcher was able to get recordings of blessing and breaking of kola nuts in different marriage functions in Alor, Idemmili South, Anambra State. The researcher, who has watched time and again, with keen interest, the traditional blessing and breaking of kola nuts from some senior colleagues, Professors Nnabuihe and Okoro, at the University of Lagos, recorded the procedure and equally met them for an interview session on Igbo kola nut. Out of about nine recordings on blessing and breaking of kola nut, only three were selected based on the fact that the recorded voices were clearer. The three also covered the Christian and traditional blessing of the sacred nut. The blessing and breaking of kola nut which were done in Igbo were translated into English language and this formed the data for this study.

4.2 Data Presentation

Here, data gathered for this study are carefully presented. Data I is the first recording of *igo oji* in a marriage ceremony. Following each Igbo rendition is an English translation. The Igbo sentences are numbered to aid the analysis of the data.

Data I

Ndị Ogo anyị, ekelee mụ ụnụ ooo! 1
(Our in-laws, I greet you ooo!)
Geenụ ntị ofuma 2
(Listen attentively)
Eji m oji n'aka n'afa 3
(I am holding the kola nut on behalf of ...)

Wee na-asị na mmemme taa na aka Chineke dī ya ...
4

(I am saying that the hand of God is in today's celebration...)

O wee mee anyị, anyị na-awa oji a 5

(And he made us, and we are breaking this kolanut)

M wee na-asị Ada anyị na ogo anyị nwoke 6

(And I am saying to our daughter and our in-law)

Chineke ya-enye ụnụ udo na ifunanya ... 7

(God will give you peace and love...)

Anyị na-asị na ụnụ ya-amuta nwoke mta nwaanyi ee
8

(We are saying that you will give birth to male and female, yes?)

Ụnụ mụlụ one ụnụ ya-azụ, ụnụ azụo ha nkeoma
9

(You will give birth to the number you can train, and you train them well)

Chineke ya-enye anyị ogonogo ndu 10

(God will give us long life)

A sị onye chuo, o rie ee 11

(It is said that whoever works, eats yes?)

Ụnụ na-eje obodo oyibo, ụnụ ana-anata 12

(As you travel outside the country, you will be coming back)

Anyị nọ n'ụnọ anọlụ na-ekpelu ụnụ ekpele 13

(We at home will stay and be praying for you)

Ka Chineke gozie anyị nine bịara ebe a n'aha Jizos
Kraist bụ onye nwe anyị 14

(Let God bless us all that came here in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord).

Response – Amen!

The speaker in the first line, greets the in-laws, which is in tandem with Igbo tradition. It is one of the ways of letting someone know that s/he is welcome. In the second line, the speaker commands his audience to listen attentively. Such command shows that he had something very important to say or tell them. In the third line, the speaker announced that he was holding the kola nut; this is a subtle reminder to the audience who were not paying attention (as suggested in the second line) to be mindful of his presence. Holding the kola nut is like holding a wand of authority to speak which implies that the audience must show respect for the kola nut and listen attentively. This authoritative symbol of the kola nut is synonymous with the 'Conch' in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. In the novel, the conch (a shell) became a symbol of order during meetings among the boys, in the island, meaning that one can only speak if he had the conch. In the data above, the speaker called for order by notifying the inattentive audience that he was holding the kola nut, meaning that having the kola nut conferred on him the right and authority to speak. The speaker proceeded to acknowledged the hand of God

in the celebration in line four. It is the help of God that kept them all, hence, their breaking the kola nut as he noted in line five. Line six is directed to the couple. The speaker's use of *Ada anyi* 'our daughter' in this line shows that he is from the bride's family. The seventh line is a prayer for peace and love between the couple. The prayer continues in line eight, and it is for procreation – male and female children. Line nine is an advice for the couple to give birth to the number of children they can afford to train very well. In line ten, the speaker prayed for everyone, asking for long life. He expressed his expectation in line eleven: it is only someone who has planted something that enjoys the harvest. Line twelve is also a prayer for the couple, that they will be travelling outside the country, where it is believed that there is greener pasture, but as they travel, they will not forget home. On the part of those at home, their work is to pray for them. In the last line, fourteen, the speaker prayed for God's blessings on all and the people responded by answering 'Amen' to the prayers.

Data 2

The following data is also a recording from a marriage ceremony. The kola nut is blessed thus:

(Akpomoku) Otuto dīlī Jeeso - (nzaghachi) Na ndū ebeebe, Amen 1

((Call) Glory be to Jesus - (Response) forever Amen)

Ọ ọ nwadīana m bụ ... bjalū kpọlū nwaanyī 2

(It is my sister's son that is ...that married a wife) Ekpele m na-ekpe bụ na ọ ga-adīlī fa mma 3

(My prayer is that it will be well with them) Fa ga-amūta nwoke mūta nwaanyī 4

(They will give birth to male and female) Mūọ one ha ga-azūnwu eeh 5

(Give birth to the number that they can take care of eeh)

Eee m ha zūchaa ūmūazi, ūmūazi azūbakwa ha 6

(Eeem, when they are done training the children, the children will take care of them)

Ije anyī bjara ebe a, ọọ ije mmīlī ... 7

(Our visit here, it is a way to the stream)

So, na ndī ọgọ ayī ọ ga-adīrī ayī na unū mma 8

(So, our in-laws, it will be well with you and with us) Nwadiana ga-abja bjakwute unū bjakwutekwooyī 9

(Grandchild will come, come to you and come to us.)

So, na agamnihu ka anyī na-ayo

10

(So, we plead for progress)

Na-ayo Chineke, O ya-anyechasī anyī ogonogo ndū na ahūisiike 11

(We pray to God, he will give us long life and good health.)

Anyī afūkwasiyanū ūmūdiana a ga-amūtasīkwa 12

(We see the grandchildren that will be given birth to) ūmūdiana afūkwasiyanū ndī nna ha ochie, ighotago? Fūsiya ūmūnne ha 13

(Grandchildren will see their maternal grandparents. You understand? See their kin.)

So na m onyenweanyī, oge adīhōzi ... Ka Chineke gozie ọjī a n'aha Jizos Kraist bụ onye nwe anyī.

14

(So that our lord, there is no time... Let God bless this kola in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Response – Amen!

In the above data, the speaker, in line one, started with praise to Jesus. This kind of praise is peculiar to the liturgy in the Roman Catholic Church. He introduced himself in line two by stating his relationship with the groom; he is a maternal uncle to the groom. In line three, he prayed that it will go well with the couple. The prayer continues in line four where he prayed for them to have children – male and female. He equally added in lines five and six that the couple should give birth to the number of children they can afford to train and when they are done training them, the children will in turn take care of their parents. Line seven describes the kind of journey the marriage is, which is likened to the path to a stream. Line eight is a prayer that all will go well with the in-laws, while line nine is for both families, that both families will be blessed with grandchildren. Progress is prayed for in line ten while long life with good health is the plea, so that they, the maternal family will see their grandchildren as line twelve shows. The prayer continued in line thirteen, which is that the grandchildren will see their maternal uncles and other kin. The speaker called on God, in line fourteen, acknowledged that time was not on their side, that is to say that he would have said/prayed for more things if they had the time. All the same, he requested that God should bless the kola nut in Jesus Christ's name. The people present responded by echoing 'Amen', which serves as a seal in Christian faith.

Data 3

The following data is abridged for lack of space. It is a recording of the blessing of kola nut in a meeting at the University of Lagos. The prayer is as follows:

(Akpòmoku) Chaa chaa chaa chaa nzukòòò -
(nzaghachi) Ugwu! 1.

(Call - Chaa chaa chaa chaameeting
Response - prestige!)

Ndị Mbaise ... Akala ... Alor ... lekwanụ oji ooo
2.

(People of Mbaise... Akala ... Alor ... see kola nut
ooo)

Oji a anyị ji n'aka gbara anọ, e kewaa ya, ìbùọ ka ọ wụ
3.

(The kolanut we are holding has four lobes, when
divided, it is two)

Ihe ọ gbasa bụ nwoke na nwaanyị... 4
(It concerns male and female...)

Chukwu Okike abjama, anyị ekeneka gị ooo5

(*Chukwu Okike abjama* (God, the all-knowing
creator), we thank you very well ooo)

Chukwu Okike abjama, anyị ekenechaa gị ooo
mmamma n'ụbọchị taa 6

(*Chukwu Okike abjama*, we thank you very much
today)

... Ọfọ na ogu ka e ji agọ oji 7

(... we use *ọfọ* na *ogụ* (symbols of justice and equity)
to bless kolanut)

Ihe anyị ji ebe a wụ nzu 8

(What we have here is *nzu* (kaolin))

Ụcha ụcha ka anyị dị wee bịa ooo 9

(We came clean ooo)

Anyị atụhọ ilulo tugide mmadụ ibe anyị.

10

(We did not think evil of our fellow man ...)

Isi kotere evu ka evu ya-agba ...

11

(the head that hooks the gadfly will be stung by the
gadfly)

Chukwu Okike abjama ... anyanwụ lekwa oji ooo

12

(*Chukwu Okike abjama* ... *anyanwụ* (sun) see kola nut
ooo)

Ala ... mmụọ jikọtara ala na àfọ, ihe a bụ oji ...

13

(Land ... the spirit that holds the land and *àfọ* (market
day) together, this is kola nut...)

Eke, anyị sị gị bịa were oji ...

14

(*Eke* (market day), we invite you to come and take kola
nut)

Ndị mmụommiri niile ... Nkwọ, anyị sị gị bịa were oji

15

(All the water spirits ... *Nkwọ* (market day), we invite
you to come and take kola nut)

... Eke, Afọ, Nkwọ... taa bụ Orié, zukọnụ n'Oríe

16

(... *Eke*, *Afọ*, *Nkwọ* ... today is *Oríe*, meet together on
Oríe)

Oríe bụ ikuku ... ikuku bụ Onyeozí ... 17

(*Oríe* is wind ... wind is a messenger)

Chukwu Okike Abjama ... sị Orié nyezuchaa ... ihe
mmamma ooo 18

(*Chukwu Okike Abjama* ... tell *Oríe* to give ...things
very well)

Ihe ọbụla bụ ihe ọjọ Orié regbuchaa ya ... 19

(Whatever thing that is bad, *Oríe* should burn it off
completely)

Mezichaara ... Hazichaara anyị ihe mmamma20

(keep very well ... arrange things for us very well)

Ezumezu alaIgbo niile ... ala Odua, ala Legọọsị ... bía
were oji 21

(The whole of Igboland... land of Odua, land of
Lagos, come and take kola nut)

... Ala Igbo ga-adịdo ruo oge ebighiebi 22

(... Igbo land will last for ever)

Ala Yoruba ga-adi, anyị ga na-emekọrịta ruo oge
ebighiebi 23

(The land of Yoruba will live; we will continue to
relate with them forever)

... ndi egede ... ndi nwe ala ... ndi ichie ala Igbo niile

... Yoruba niile ... anyị sị unu zukọ bía were oji ...24

(... the old ... owners of the land ... the forebears of
the entire Igboland... entire Yoruba land ... we invite
you to meet and take kolanut)

... ugwu ka m ji wee kpọkuo unu 25

(... I called you in honour ...)

Ka ekpere anyị rezie n'Ọfọ ... Iseee 26

(Let our prayers be effective with *Ọfọ* ... Iseee)

The first line in this data calls the meeting to order in a traditional way. The second line invites the towns of the meeting members to the presentation of kola nut. In line three, the speaker acknowledged the number of lobes the kola nut has and stated its significance which extends to line four. In lines five and six, he gave honour to *Chukwu Okike Abjama* God, the all-knowing creator. Line seven states categorically what is needed in blessing kola nut among the Igbo - *Ọfọ* 'staff of authority' and *Ogu* 'the spike of justice'. He presented *nzu* (kaolin), which is symbolic of a clean heart. Lines eight and nine show the significance of kaolin, which is hearts. In line ten, the speaker continued to state their innocence, noting in line eleven that it is only trouble makers that are engulfed with trouble. In lines twelve to sixteen, the speaker called on *Chukwu* and his agents to behold the kola nut, he specifically mentioned the market day the day fell on which was *Oríe*. In lines seventeen to twenty, he stated the assignment of *Oríe* market day and prayed that it destroys every evil and brings everything good. In line twenty-one, the Igboland, Yorubaland and specifically, Lagos land where the blessing of the kola nut took place were all invited to eat kola nut. Lines twenty-two and twenty-three, are prayers for longevity of Igbo and Yoruba and good relationship

between the two ethnic groups. In lines twenty-four and twenty-five, the forebears of the land were invited in honour to meet together and eat kola nut. The last line, twenty-six, is the conclusion. The speaker prayed for the effectiveness of the prayers in line with *Ofo*, the traditional seal, and the people present answered *Isee* 'so be it' which signifies also, a seal of approval to the prayers.

5. Discussion

The discussion of findings will follow the trajectory of the research objectives, with respect to the inquiry on whether the practice of *igo oji* has survived, followed by the process or structure, and the manner of language used in the art. Underlying these two inquiries is the fact that the kola nut custom is one of the Igbo customs that have survived the intrusion of Christianity and Westernisation into Igbo culture. Although the tradition of using kola nut is still very much alive in Igbo functions, the data so far show that it hardly follows the traditional procedures and convention, in both the offering and invocation and in language use.

First, is the fact that the invocation is almost completely left out of the offering; it is just a mere prayer bereft of the invitation to the deities to partake in the eating of the kola nut. In data 1 and 11, prayers were said by the speakers to the Supreme Being for various reasons, particularly blessings to the living. However, the speakers did not invite the Supreme Being to partake in the eating of the kola nut, as was practiced in times of yore. It is only in data 111 that shows semblance of the ideal invocation where the deities stemming from *Chukwu okike Abiama* (Supreme Being) to *Ala*, (earth goddess) *ndiichie*, *ndiegede* (ancestors) and *Eke, Ori, Afo, Nkwo* (the four Igbo market days) were summoned. The difference is that, in data 1 and 11, the speakers merely asked God to bless the living in sundry ways, but in data 111, the speaker made an open invitation to the deities to come and partake in the kola nut event. It bears repeating that *igo oji* (kola nut invocation) is different from *ikpe ekpere* (prayers). Evidently, the difference can be clarified by the religious orientation of the speakers; while speakers in data 1 and 11 were orthodox Christians, the speaker in data 111 was an Igbo traditionalist. Apparently, Christians refrain from *igo oji* due to the implications of idolatry based on the understanding and belief that the ancestors have no relationship with the living, which is in contrast with the belief of the traditionalists that the ancestors are ever with us, although dead. On this vexed subject, interviewees from varied belief systems provided different accounts. While Igbo Christians admit the importance of the kola nut and the part it plays in Igbo

culture, they strongly disagree on the need to follow the traditional pattern as regards inviting the gods to eat the kola nut not to think of breaking it and giving the gods their share. On the contrary, the traditionalists argued strongly that since kola nut is a female nut, given to our forebears by *Chukwu Okike Abiama* it is necessary to offer it to the gods and also invite them to partake in the breaking and eating, hence *igo oji*. They contend that one must follow the right procedure for offering and breaking it. They argue strongly that instead of breaking the sacred nut in the Christian way, the Christians should forget about it and use other substitutes like garden eggs, biscuits and soft drinks to say their prayers. The traditionalists envisage also that if the Christian pattern of blessing and breaking of kola nut continues, Igbo youths and their successors will in no distant time forget the origin and values of kola nut in Igbo culture.

In terms of the traditional structure of *igo oji*, the data shows that, among the three data presented, the order is not strictly followed. Although there are variations in the organisation of the ideas or content in kola nut invocation, there are three basic components; first is the *mmacha okwu* (introductory phase) where the speaker uses his creativity and skill to deliver some relevant maxims and proverbs to clear the way for accessing the spirits. This phase is followed by the *mkpoku* (the invocation) where the speaker summons the deities to validate the event with their presence. The third phase is the prayers said by the speaker on behalf of the audience, which signals the end. Before the prayers, the speaker declares his innocence. This is referred to as *itu ogu* (declaration of innocence). Here, the speaker takes time to express his innocence and declares that any evil he thinks of another should befall him. He equally prays same for his enemies, that any evil they plan against him and his household should return to them. A critical look at the three data shows that none of them complied strictly with the standard structure. The speaker in data 1 used greetings to the audience as introductory remark, while the speaker in data 11 used a Catholic liturgical expression and an introduction of himself as introductory remark. The speaker in data 111 used a variant of a popular Igbo call-greeting form '*Igbo kwenu!*' used mainly during large gatherings as introductory remarks. It is pertinent to note that this particular Igbo call-greeting form is not used during *igo oji*; it is mainly used during speech events, where a speaker uses it to greet and also to arrest the attention of the audience. It needs be pointed out that, as important as greetings are in Igbo culture, there is no place for greeting of people or introduction of self during kola nut invocation. Usually, guests have already been received with greetings before the kola nut is presented; attention is now focused on the

summons to the gods and deities and the prayers for the gathered audience in the setting. Evidently, none of the speakers used *mmacha okwu* as introduction in the events. The non-use of *mmacha okwu* is a major limitation in the art of *igo oji* in the data.

The second phase of the kola nut invocation is *mkpoku*; it is only the speaker in data III that complied with this by summoning the deities to partake in the kola nut event as was fully explained in the first section of the discussion; the (non)compliance with this aspect of *igo oji* is implicated in the religious orientation of the facilitators or speakers. The third and last phase is the prayers said by the speaker on behalf of the audience; the data shows that all the speakers complied with this aspect of *igo oji*. In Data I and II, the speakers made prayers to the Christian God for love, peace, progress, grandchildren and good relationship with kin but they made no mention of evil men or enemies. The prayer did not strike a good balance as *itu ogu* was conspicuously missing. Although the Christian faith believes and preaches the forgiveness of one's enemies, they still pray against the stubborn ones. It is only when God deals with the stubborn enemies that the person enjoys good progress. It must be noted that in samples I and II, both speakers prayed for everyone. This is well understood because it is a large gathering and people will not be called one after another to ascertain their towns or ethnicity so that they be mentioned in prayers. The speaker in data III took time for *itu ogu*. In lines eight to ten, he declared their state of innocence while in line eleven, he prayed against their enemies. He proceeded to pray for all good things to come to people at the meeting by pleading that *Chukwu Okike Abjama* tells *Orie* to bring them. He pleaded also that *Orie* should burn off every evil. The prayer recognizes that evil needs to be dealt with so that people enjoy their lives. It must be noted, the mention of *Chukwu Okike Abjama* and *ala* among other gods in the prayer of the speaker in Data III. The Igbo hold the two gods in high esteem. Udechukwu (2017) notes that:

Male and female gods and goddesses, such as Chukwu and Ala, governed the lives of people. Chukwu was the masculine "Supreme Being" of all creation and actions, and "Ala" Feminine deities was the "great mother goddess". Chukwu and Ala seem to represent the father and mother of a human household (p. 88). It is based on this belief that anyone who blesses and breaks the kola in a traditional way recognises the two gods. He prayed for the entire Igboland and the land of sojourn – Yoruba, and Lagos specifically. The Igbo are known as *Oje Mba enwe iro* 'A traveller does not have enemy'. In his/her description of the Igbo, Aniga (2023, p. 154) notes that they "... are fearless. They do not fear to migrate". Based on the Igbo nature of

migration, they seek the peace of the owners of the land they sojourn to. This belief justifies the prayers for Yoruba land and specifically, Lagos. Data I and II ended the blessing of the kola nut in the same manner, which is in the name of Jesus Christ, but not so with Data III which ended by pleading the efficacy of the prayers through the Igbo staff of office, *Ofo. Ofo*, among the Igbo is very symbolic. It acts as a seal to prayers/agreement.

A very critical look at the prayers in Data I and II shows that they are laden with elements of Igbo culture and belief, such as praying for a couple to have both male and female children, to travel and return to their traditional home, good kin relationship and an attestation that marriage is a path that leads to the stream. All these fall in line with Igbo culture. The Igbo are happier when there is a balance in the sex of their children. A male child will give them direct grandchildren. A female child gives them grandchildren referred to as *nwadiani*. Each set of grandchildren has their relationships/duties towards their grandparents (see Oyeka, 2022). It is the prayer of many Igbo to travel out of their hometown, earn better than they would have earned at home, visit home often to show their evidence. Aniga (2023, p. 153) maintains that "the Igbo man travels around in order to become much richer and come back home as a better man for his people to respect and love". The love and respect come when those at home see the evidence their kin brought home which will be beneficial to them. The Igbo believe that *akụ ruo ulọ a mara onye kpatara ya* 'when wealth reaches the home, the person that made it will be known'. For the Igbo, *ndi nọ n'ulo nọoro ndi nọ n'ezị, ndi nọ n'ezị nọdurụ ndi nọ n'ulo* 'those at home are representing those outside and those outside do same for those at home'. This is the reason why those outside usually travel back with gifts for those at home for they know that they are there to represent them and as they travel back, those at home give them some fresh delicacies that they cannot get in foreign lands where they sojourn. For good kinship relationship as seen in the prayers, the Igbo believe that no matter how well you relate with others, when one is in a very difficult situation, it is his/her kin that will show up when friends have left. It is based on this belief that the Igbo say that *Ozu sibe isi, enyi ka nwanne alaa* 'When the corpse starts stinking, a friend that is closer than a brother leaves'. The explanations so far serve as confirmation that the prayers in Data I and II are in line with Igbo belief system. Even though certain Igbo cultural elements are present in the prayers for kola nut in Data I and II, it was also observed that the paralinguistic aspects of lifting the kolanut up to *Chukwu Okike Abjama*, lowering it a bit to show *ala* and other gods were missing too, likewise

the responses like *Isee! O di n'ofọ. Otu a ka o di* 'It is so'. Even though the second speaker had interjections of the English word 'so' during his prayers, the prayers were at least mainly done in Igbo language. The Igbo believe that *Oji adighi anu Oyibo* (kolanut does not understand English language). This assertion is based on the belief that kola nut event is a spiritual session that brings into communion the human, the deities, and the ancestors who had no knowledge of any other language aside Igbo; therefore, there is no place for any other language irrespective of its status.

The third aspect of the inquiry, based on the objective of the study is the language of *igo oji* among the Igbo. The three data presented indicates that the speakers used mainly simple prose in their presentations, rather than the poetic language that defined *igo oji* in the past. While praying, the speaker in data 1 used one solitary figurative expression *A si onye chuo, o rie ee* 'It is said that if one works, he also eats' which he used to stress the importance of one reaping the fruits of their labour. He used the aphorism to beseech God to bless the efforts of the couple. Similarly, while praying, the speaker in data 11 used one solitary maxim *Ije anyi biara ebe a, o o ije mmili* 'Our journey here, it is a journey to the stream', implying that marriage is a constant relationship and not an occasional one. Notably, the Igbo see marriage as a path to the stream, contrasted with the path to the jungle for firewood. In the traditional Igbo world, people go to the stream very early in the morning and late in the evening to fetch water based on the fact that they did not have big reservoirs for keeping water as people do today. Consequently, the path to the stream is always very busy, clean and clear as against the path to the bush that is always thorny (see Oyeka 2023). The speaker used this maxim to stress that the two families and communities brought together by marriage will always find reasons to relate in a mutual way. In no different manner, the speaker in data 111 used a solitary figurative expression *isi kotere evu ka evu ga-agba* (the head that hooks the gadfly will be stung by the gadfly) implying that any one that initiates trouble will be visited by trouble or consumed in their own troubles. This idiom is anchored on the Igbo belief that one reaps what he sows '*Mkpuru onye kuru ka o ga-aghoru*'. It is worth noting that such poetic expressions are the norm in traditional breaking of kola nuts.

Incidentally, the data shows that the three speakers did not use sufficient poetic expressions in their delivery. If the speakers in data 1 and 11 can be excused for their religious (Christian) background, the speaker in data 111 who is a traditionalist is inexcusable. There is little doubt that the language use in the art of *igo oji* has been watered down to mainly the prosaic; the treason

for this depletion of linguistic resource is traceable partly to modernity and partly to infrequency in the opportunities for *igo oji* as well as infrequency in the use of Igbo in interactions. A lot has been said about the negative impact of modernization on indigenous cultures around the world, including Igbo. Part of that is that whereas opportunities for presentation of kola nut still persist such as visitations and cultural events, the kola nut is no longer stored in homes as it were; in the traditional setting, women bought kola nuts and stored them at home in readiness for guests. They are wrapped in certain leaves that ensure their preservation. Immediately a guest arrives, the *dibiulo* 'head of the family' will confidently alert the wife to bring kola nut for the guest. It is hardly the case that kola nut was not in the house of an adult Igbo. In the present time, in the place of kola nut, many Igbo store and present fruits such as garden egg or bitter kola, while some present soft drinks or even alcoholic beverages which are preserved in refrigerators. Since these alternatives are not kola nut, they are not revered as kola nut and therefore not used as offerings to deities. Rather, mere prayers are said before they are eaten.

Added to this is the issue of insufficient use of Igbo during interaction, which over time has led to language attrition. Presently, Igbo conversations are replete with English-Igbo or Igbo-English code-switching or code-mixing, to the point that, sometimes, one wonders if the person is speaking English or Igbo. Language attrition implies the dropping of aspects of a language as a result of insufficient use of the indigenous language and the more frequent use of another language, in this case, English. One of the aspects of Igbo that has suffered attrition is figurative expressions, particularly proverbs. The fact about proverbs and other idiomatic constructs is that, constant usage keeps them alive in the memory of people while non-usage limits consciousness in them and makes them difficult to retrieve from memory. Nwagbo's (2016) research on orality in the contemporary period and settings revealed that children are no longer as exposed to proverbs as their parents when they (parents) were children, meaning that many adult Igbo are averse to using proverbs in their utterances, and leading to non-transmission of same to their offspring. The limited use of Igbo proverbs presents a problem to the vitality of Igbo. If, as Achebe (1958) asserted, that proverb is the oil with which Igbo eat words, the limited use of same implies that words are no longer as rich as they used to be, and in effect, conversations in Igbo are no longer as fluid and enjoyable as they used to be.

6. Way forward

In present day Igbo society, there are two opposing sides on the issue of kola nut invocation; the traditionalists and the Church. While the traditionalists insist on the old ways of *igo oji*, Christians prefer some modifications based on the issue of deities and ancestors which is not acceptable to them. However, a common ground shared by both parties is the importance of the kola nut, as a seed/food used for welcoming guests both in domestic settings and in gatherings, festivals and sundry occasions. In terms of the rigid positions of both parties, it is posited that, like every other aspect of life, culture is dynamic and always evolving. Many other aspects of Igbo culture have witnessed changes, and kola nut custom is not an exception. As an Igbo adage says, *uno anaghi ada ghara uko* 'A house does not fall down without the rafters', which coincides with Achebe's (1958) notion that the white man has put a knife in the thing that held us together, and we have fallen apart. As a way out, the primary concern of both traditionalists and the Church is the preservation of the kola nut culture more than the process and structure. Given the fact that a significant majority of Igbo are Christians, it is advisable to take that demography into consideration in weighing the options. Based on population, if the kola nut is left for only traditionalists, though this will be very hard to accept by Igbo community, in no distant time, the kola nut tradition will die a natural death. Okekeosisi (2020, p. 117) notes that "The modern church sees Oji as a necessary edible material which must be presented in any function organised by the church". If Christians place such value on kola nut, it will be almost impossible to ask them to look for a substitute for it. It is here argued that there are some traditional institutions that Christians uphold but renamed them in order to uphold the culture. For instance, one hears of *Igwe uka* 'Christian King', *Ozo uka* 'Christian ozo'. The attachment of *uka* to the traditional seat and title is to differentiate them from the traditional ones, it is to convince the initiates that the seat or title has no connection with heathenism. Such conviction has worked over the years resulting in Christians willingly accepting the *Ozo uka* title. Dragging Christians to bless and break kola nut in the traditional way or leave it out completely will not yield any fruit. It is suggested that Christians rename the kola nut tradition from *igo oji* 'kola nut invocation' to *ikpe ekpere oji/iwa oji uka* 'kolanut prayer/breaking of kola nut in a Christian way'. Such renaming will help each religious body to continue to use the sacred nut without much issues.

7. Conclusion

This study has tried to look at the tradition of *igo oji* among the Igbo, with respect to the past and the present state of affairs. The origin, types, significance, and procedure for *igo oji* were given a detailed attention. Data for the study confirms that most *igo oji* in contemporary times do not follow the traditional procedure. Data reveals that Christianity has adversely affected the traditional way of blessing kola nut. Although traditionalists insist on the usual invocation in the traditional way, Christians believe that their new found faith is against summoning the deities and ancestors to see the kola nut not to think of giving them their shares to eat. This study suggests modifying the name given to kola nut offering, first, for the purpose of making it acceptable to all religious orientations, and more importantly for the purpose of maintaining and perpetuating the rich cultural heritage. The researcher deemed it very necessary to document this study so as to help youths, especially those in diaspora, to understand the significance of kola nut to the Igbo.

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Freirean Literacy Approach: A Functional Model to the Solution of the Problems of Unemployment and Poverty amongst Nigerian Youth

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Abstract. The overall goal of this study was to propose Freirean literacy approach as a functional model to the solution of the problems of unemployment and poverty amongst Nigerian youths. Unemployment is seen as a situation in which persons capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment. Youth unemployment and poverty rate is high in Nigeria and has been seen to take an increasing turn, over the years. The paper sought to propose sustainable solution to poverty and unemployment which is ravaging Nigerian youths by embarking on analytical review and report of the Freirean Literacy Approach. The paper discussed poverty and employment, consequences of unemployment and poverty, government poverty alleviation and unemployment programme, principles of Freirean functional literacy approach, Freire literacy approach and application to the solution of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. It was concluded that, Freirean literacy approach should be tried out in Nigeria for the solution of poverty and unemployment challenges that bedevils the country for sustainable growth and development, hence, it has been tried out and was successful in some other countries. It was therefore recommended that a well-funded functional literacy and skill acquisition programme using REFLECT approach should be established by government in all communities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Freirean Literacy Approach, Unemployment, Youth Unemployment, Poverty, Nigeria, Education

1. Introduction

The current problems bedeviling Nigeria, such as Boko Haram, banditry, kidnapping and armed robbery

are off shoot of many years of unemployment resulting in poverty. Poverty and unemployment are among the major developmental challenges in Nigeria. Unemployment is used to describe a situation of no job for employable people in an economy. It is an epidemic touching many countries especially the developing ones. According to Udu and Agu (2005), unemployment is “a situation in which persons capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment”. Similarly, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2012), unemployed workers are those who are currently not working but are willing and able to work in order to earn their living. Hornby (2010) defines unemployment as the facts of a number of people not having a job; the number of people without a job; the state of not having a job. Unemployment situation has political, socio-economic and moral disproportion on any economy. Unemployment replicates the inability to make effective and efficient use of factors of production. Hence, low returns on capital and labour accelerate poverty. Unemployment situation therefore calls for a greater concern in the Nigeria economy.

Unemployment is considered to be a barrier to social progress. According to Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012), a great effort is needed to curb unemployment for meaningful development in emerging economies. Youth unemployment in Nigeria is ignited with unfavourable and defective economic policies coupled with grave and hostile implication of corruption which acted as a deterrent to employment generation (Nworgu,2014). According to Plecher (2020) youth unemployment rate has not been stable. In 1999 it was 9.14%, declined to 8.99% in 2000 it increased to 9.15%, in 2001 and 2002. In 2003 it moved to 9.24%. Furthermore, it declined to 9.04%, 8.08%, 8.51% in 2004-2005. It was 8.8% in 2006 and 2007

respectively. Unemployment rate increased to 8.66%, 9.49%, 9.65, 9.70, 9.75, 9.84, 12.65, 16.30, 20.67, 19.96, 19.68, and 19.58 between 2008 to 2019 respectively. These figures show that the rate of unemployment in Nigeria is high particularly as it relates to youths and this affects poverty rate.

Poverty is seen as lack of access to basic needs/goods. According to Olatomide (2012) the poor are conceived as those individuals or households in a particular society who are incapable of purchasing a specified basket of basic goods and services. Olatomide stressed that basic goods are nutrition, shelter, water, healthcare, access to productive resources including education, work skills, tools, political and civil rights to participate in decisions concerning socio-economic conditions. According to Olatomide (2012) poverty can be structural (chronic) or transient. The former is defined as persistent or permanent socio-economic deprivations and is linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, endemic socio-political and cultural factors such as gender. The latter, on the other hand, is defined as transitory/temporary and is linked to natural and man-made disasters. Olatomide further maintained that transient poverty is more reversible but can become structural if it persists.

Poverty incidence in the country recorded increases between the period 1980 to 1985 and between 1992 to 1996 (Olatomide, 2012). Statistics show appreciable decrease in poverty rates between 1985 and 1992 and between 1996 and 2004. Although, the poverty rate dropped within the period, the population in poverty has maintained a steady increase from 17.7 million in 1980 to 68.7 million in 2004 (NBS, 2005). Within the period, 1980-2004, the proportion of the core poor increased from 6.2% in 1980 to 29.3% in 1996. It came down to 21.8 % in 2004(NBS, 2005). According to Ojekunle (2020) a report released by the National Bureau of Statistics on May 4th, 2020, shows that more than 80 million Nigerians are in extreme poverty, living on less than 400 naira per day (approximately one dollar). This number represents 40.9 % of the population. This means that an average of 4 out of 10 individuals in Nigeria live on one dollar per day. The figure rose from 68.4 million in 2010 (population at 158 million) to 82.9 million in 2020 (with an estimated population figure at 200 million). From the foregoing backdrop, if the rate of youth unemployment and poverty is not checked from its current state, Nigeria may progress to a failed state. There is a dire need for a sustainable measure to check this trend, which is major objectives of this paper

2. Consequences of Unemployment and Poverty among Youths in Nigeria

Unemployment and poverty constitute major global challenges. They cut across boundaries and include the most developed societies in the world. However, the social challenges remain more endemic among the third world countries particularly Africa and Nigeria are among the worst hit. Youth within the age bracket of 14-50 years old are mostly affected (Ajaegbu, 2012). This situation makes it more devastating because this vulnerable group is susceptible to committing and perpetrating all sorts of crimes such as terrorism, kidnapping, arm robbery, assassination, thuggery, prostitution, drug peddling, human trafficking, cybercrime among others. In addition, most violent protests, demonstrations, lawlessness and several actions leading to outbreak of wanton destruction of lives and properties, in many places in Nigeria (as we currently experienced during the End Sars protest) were triggered by the youths. In other words, most prevailing violent conflicts involving youths in Nigeria are intricately linked to unemployment and poverty.

Dagaci and Diyoke (2019) described absolute poverty in Nigeria as “poverty qua poverty” the term used in describing absolute poverty in Nigeria where majority of people find life excruciating due to largely difficulty in meeting or satisfying their basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and qualitative education. Ajufo, (2013) contended that unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of Nigerian youths, causing militancy, violent crimes, kidnapping, restiveness and socially delinquent behavior. Youth unemployment is devastating to both the individual and the society. It affects the psyche and economic stability of any group of people. Accordingly, any society bedeviled with the problem of endemic rate of unemployment and poverty especially among its productive segment of the population as it is in Nigeria, will have its peace and stability endangered with dire consequences of retrogression instead of progression. As noted by Usman (2015) the paradox of the deepening crisis of mass unemployment, poverty and economic wealth in Nigeria is painful. Although, some poverty alleviation programme were mounted by successive government in the past, they seem not to achieve good results, some of the programme are reviewed hereunder.

3. Brief Historical Review of Poverty Alleviation and Unemployment Programmes in Nigeria

Historically, in relation to the challenges of unemployment and poverty, the government has embarked on many intervention programmes as follows:

3.1 National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

The national poverty eradication programme (NAPEP) came up in 2001 during the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo (Mustapha, 2014). It was proposed that the programme will serve as a central coordination point for all anti-poverty efforts from the local government level to the national level by which schemes would be executed with the sole purpose of eradicating absolute poverty. President Olusegun Obasanjo made a deliberate attempt to embark on poverty and unemployment eradication, a shift from the traditional concept of poverty alleviation. According to Mustapha (2014), NAPEP was structured to integrate four sectoral schemes which include: Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS), Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) and Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS).

These schemes were designed to spearhead government's programme of eradicating absolute poverty with a take-off grant of N6 billion approved in 2001. The difference between NAPEP and past poverty reduction programme is that it is not a sector project implementation agency, but a coordination facility that ensures that the core poverty eradication, ministries were effective. Although NAPEP appears to be well crafted, the prevalence of poverty in Nigeria was on the increase. Part of the failure of this programme was that, it was politicized, as people complained of marginalization. It was alluded that the beneficiaries were members of the ruling political party. NAPEP was succeeded by the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

3.2 The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)

In the year 2004, still under the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo. The NEEDS strategy was inaugurated. The implementation of NEEDS rests on four major strategies. It aimed at reforming government and institutions by fighting corruption, ensuring transparency and promoting rule of law and strict enforcement of contracts. Furthermore, it aimed to foster the private sector as the engine of growth and wealth creation, employment generation and poverty

reduction. In addition, it seeks to implement a social charter with emphasis on people's welfare, health, education, employment, poverty reduction, empowerment, security, and participation. It equally aimed at value reorientation (Chukwuemeka, 2009). NEEDS is a national framework of action, which has its equivalent at the state and local government levels as State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (LEEDS) respectively (Mustapha, 2014). The implementation stressed on collaboration and coordination between the Federal and State governments, donor agencies, private sector, civil society, NGOs and other stakeholders. As a home-grown strategy, NEEDS has been described as the Nigerian version of the MDGs (Muatapha, 2014). Mustapha further maintained that the weakness of this programme was that, there were a weak statistic on poverty, particularly on income poverty. This necessitated the seven point agenda of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua,

3.3 The Seven-Point Agenda

In 2007 under the leadership of late President Umar Musa Yar'Adua, the seven-point agenda was initiated. The agenda proposed a Seven-Point plan for development. The agenda later became the policy thrust of the Yar'Adua administration. The main objectives and principles of the agenda include improving the general well-being of Nigerians and building the country to become one of the biggest economies in the world by the year 2020. The agenda has critical infrastructure as the first key area of focus. This includes power, transportation, national gas distribution and telecommunication. The other areas of focus of the seven-point agenda were addressing the existing issues in the Niger Delta, food security, human capital development, and the land tenure reform, national security, poverty alleviation and wealth creation. Although the Seven-Point Agenda appears to have broad coverage to address the various development challenges facing the country. The wide ambit of the programme did not allow for proper monitoring and effective implementation. Furthermore, resource constraints hampered the capacity of the government to productively address the wide areas covered by the programme (Oshewolo, 2010). This programme did not achieve much; the ill-health of the President and his death brought an end to the programme. The end of the programme ushers the subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme.

3.4 The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme

In January 2012 during the administration of President Jonathan, the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme known as the 'SURE-P' scheme was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The aim was to re-invest the Federal Government savings from fuel subsidy removal on critical infrastructure projects and social safety net programmes with direct impact on the citizens of Nigeria (Wikipedia, 2020). The scheme was one of the pivots of transformation agenda of the Federal Government in 2012. The core objectives of the programme include but not limited to provision of employment for unemployed graduates through internship programmes, creating database of unemployed youth and reducing social vulnerability among the group in the country through the mechanism of the policy. The limitation and weakness of the programme was corruption, institutional failure, lack of funding and political interference. This programme was succeeded by the N-Power Scheme

3.5 N-Power Scheme

On the 8th of June 2016, the N-Power scheme was set up by the incumbent President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, to address the issues of youth unemployment and help increase social development. The scheme was created as a component of National Social Investment Programme, to provide a structure for large scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development and to ensure that each participant learn and practice most of what is necessary to find or create work (Okogba,2017). The scheme was created for unemployed graduates and non-graduates between the ages of 18 and 35 (Abdulmalik, 2020). It is a paid programme of a two-year duration, aimed at engaging beneficiaries in their states of residence. On 13th July 2019, the Federal Government of Nigeria disclosed that they have spent a total of ₦279b since they started paying the scheme beneficiaries from December 2016 to June 2019 (Agbakwuru, 2020). The scheme currently has six categories namely; N-Teach, N-Health, N-Agro, N-Build, N-Creative and N-Tech. N-Teach and N-Health are available to graduates who have completed the mandatory one year NYSC programme, while N-Agro, N-Build, N-Creative and N-Tech are available to graduates and non-graduates (Onehi,2020). Economic crunch deeply affected the success of the programme as most of the beneficiaries are not paid on time (Onehi,2020). The programme is fraught with irregularities as some of the beneficiaries had job elsewhere, thereby denying prospective beneficiaries the opportunities.

Nevertheless, though efforts were made by several government in Nigeria to promote these programmes, poverty and unemployment remain endemic and pervasive in Nigeria. According to Mustapha (2014), all the poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria have yielded very little fruit. The author asserted that the programme seems mostly not designed to alleviate poverty. He further noted that they lacked clearly defined policy framework with proper guidelines for poverty alleviation; they suffer from political instability, interference by political class in power, policy and macroeconomic dislocations; and are riddled with corruption, political deception, outright kleptomania and distasteful looting (Mustapha, 2014). It must also be stated that lack of continuity in governance trailed poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria. Each subsequent administration came with a different idea or no idea at all. Poverty reduction programme became more 'regime specific' because there was hardly any continuity with those initiated by previous governments. However, having experienced and read through some of the lapses of the federal government intervention programmes for poverty and unemployment alleviation, it seems convincing that another dimension to poverty and unemployment reduction through the application and try-out of the Freirean Functional Approach which is the trust of this paper is quite desirable for sustainable restoration of the country to her past glory as the giant of Africa.

3.6 Principles of Freirean Functional Literacy Approach (FFLA)

Freire is an Italian educator-philosopher who lived in Brazil and cautioned unequal distribution of wealth in Brazil. He created a radical movement for sensitizing poor people. This resulted in critical awareness by the poor who questioned issues and demanded their rights. He got imprisoned but was later released. His philosophy was that literacy is not only about reading and writing; but rather, a tool for positive social-economic change (Finnish Refugee Council, 2016). Some key concepts in the Freirean philosophy include as follows:

Culture of Oppression: The culture of oppression exists where people live in suppression and have little control over their own destiny. In the present times this situation could be seen at leadership and state governance levels, as well as in learning situations where the 'teacher' alone decides on behalf of the 'students'. This system, Paulo Freire believes is ineffective for adult learning and strongly frowns at it (Finnish Refugee Council, 2016).

Culture of Silence: If people fear that by expressing their feelings they could be exposed to ridicule,

danger, punishment or other unfavorable consequences, there is tendency that they will remain silent even where they disagree to a government policy or ideology. This culture of silence does not help community and national development nor adult literacy (Finnish Refugee Council, 2016).

Banking Education: According to Freire, a quality teacher-student relationship centered on genuine approach of learning is an essential prerequisite for education and liberation, which is in stark contrast to the traditional notion of education. Freire defined conventional education through the concept of "banking education". This is the situation where students merely receive, classify, and store the knowledge that is conveyed to them by teachers, thereby restricting the recipients' freedom and independence. This prevailing banking model of learning tends to perpetuate complete ignorance in students, through the one-sided modes of communication, which alienates learner from teacher. According to Freire, structural relations between the oppressors and the oppressed create a "culture of silence" which pervades all aspects of the life and thinking of the dominated individuals, which was foreign to the real needs, problems, and conditions of their existence.

According to Freire such model of educational practice (banking process) will definitely add no value to any society, because it does not pave way to critical thinking, creativity, innovation and technological advancement. As a result, any society still practicing this model of learning will continue to swim in unemployment which is an offshoot of poverty as currently being experienced in Nigeria.

Codification and De-codification: Messages and lessons could be presented as coded messages for participants to analyze and then decode. This can be used as an effective tool especially in situations where the culture of oppression and silence is deep seated.

Conscientization: Conscientization according to Paulo Freire is the act of informing, enlightening, empowering and giving people the choice to decide what is right or wrong. REFLECT promotes this concept through the use of participatory communication and analysis tools including dialogue, conversation, talks and exchange of views in literacy circles (Finnish Refugee Council, 2016).

Praxis: Praxis briefly refers to action or intervention. According to Paulo Freire, learners should be allowed to develop praxis which refers to an inventive way of life that encourages free, creative reflection and thoughtful action in order to change the world and become transformed (Emmy & Ahmed, 2013). Freire contended that true knowledge, emerges only through restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful, critical inquiry with other people about their relations to the

world. A core component of Freirian theory is that learning begins with action then shaped by reflection, which gives rise to further action. Learning is thus a continuous process, directed at enhancing the learner's capacity to act in the world and change it. According to Freire, the act of knowing involves a dialectical movement that goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action. In summary, in regard to learning, literacy and praxis Freire noted that if learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words and phrases but rather, reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself and on the profound significance of language (Freire, 1988). It is through action, dialogue, reflection and intervention by both the teacher and the learner that true learning can be achieved. Another major principle of Freirean functional literacy approach is dialogue

Dialogue: According to Freire (1997) dialogue is a form of collective praxis directly concerned with unveiling inequitable conditions obscured by the ruling classes. The process is important and can be seen as enhancing community and building social capital that leads to justice and human flourishing. To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect and love (care & commitment). Each one must question what he or she knows and realizes that through dialogue existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created (Emmy & Ahmed, 2013).

These principles if adopted or adapted in any learning environment both formal and non-formal will go a long way to reduce poverty and unemployment among youths. World Bank (2020) has declared Nigeria as the capital poverty of the world. The present state of education in Nigeria which have affinity with the banking model of education and tailored towards only reading and writing is no longer feasible in the 21st century, in terms of poverty and unemployment reduction. However, education for functionality and freedom as proposed by Freire will reduce poverty, unemployment, crime rate such as kidnapping, arm robbery, rape, violent protest and all other anti-social vices. These principles will help to solve many problems bordering on technology, economy, education, health which will reduce poverty and unemployment among youths, if it is well articulated.

3.7 REFLECT Circle as a Conception of Freirean Functional Literacy Approach

REFLECT is an acronym standing for (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowerment Community Techniques). The Freirean literacy approach or model proposed the culture circle or REFLECT circle. According to Archer (2001) RELECT is a structured participatory learning process, which facilitates people's critical analysis of their environment, placing empowerment at the heart of sustainable and equitable development. The focus of the learning process is on learner-generated materials not prepared primers. It emphasizes activity rather than passivity. It involves community members in the development of the literacy lessons through activities related to their developmental needs. The literacy model relates to the wider environment rather than simply classroom activity.

REFLECT circle provides a democratic space for a group of people to meet and discuss issues relevant to them. The participants choose topics of interest, according to their own priorities and supported by a local facilitator. Freire's literacy principles as discussed in the previous section took education out of the classroom and created the 'Culture Circle' which is a participatory learning approach where learners articulate their shared understanding to act and change their future. In the process, education became a process of dialogue in which the educator and the learner engage in mutually respectful process to act and change the limitations of their lives. In Nigeria the approach can be used to reduce the pangs of poverty and unemployment among youths. The participants in a RELECT Circle starts learning activities by constructing maps or matrices, diagram and charts of their environment based on the realities of their situations, and life circumstances for critical reflection and action.

Such maps and matrices may include houses, forests, rivers, agricultural resources, social life and status, inequality in the society, cultural practices and gender role stereotypes, discrimination, caste, political processes, cultural practices and involvement, family planning, nutrition and other health issues (Obidiegwu, Madu and Anthony, 2020). In Nigeria social vices of poverty and unemployment can be reduced using REFLECT circles. The maps, diagrams and matrices are analysed and dialogued upon for further action. They can copy key words in exercise books (ie if basic literacy is among the objectives). Depending on a social problem the learning group intends to tackle they construct their own learning guides, manual or facilitators guide which lead to

strong ownership of the issues and solution they proffer for action to be taken. This preliminary stage is the codification and decodification which according to Freire enables learners to be critically aware of their environment for action towards their problem, which in the case of Nigeria is unemployment and poverty.

4. Freire Literacy Approach and Application to the Solution of Unemployment and Poverty in Nigeria

Freire took education out of the classroom and created the 'culture circle' which is participatory. A process whereby learners used their own ways of speaking to articulate their shared understanding of the world and how to act to change their world. He transformed education from being a monologue process, to a process of dialogue in which educatee and educators engaged in mutually respectful learning. The concrete basis for Freire's dialogical system of education is the *culture circle*, in which learners and facilitators together discuss generative themes that have significance within the context of the learners' lives (Freire, 1988). These themes, which are related to nature, society, culture, work, and relationships, are discovered through the cooperative effects of facilitators and learners. They express, in an open rather than propagandistic fashion, the principle contradictions that confront the learners in their world. These themes are then represented in the form of codifications (usually visual representations) that are taken as the basis for dialogue within a culture. A culture circle does not involve the use of textbooks - no literacy 'primer' - no pre-printed materials other than a guide for the facilitators that is produced locally. As learners decode these representations, they recognize them as situations in which they themselves are involved as subjects. The process of critical consciousness formation is initiated when learners learn to read the codifications in their situation, rather than simply experiencing them, and this makes possible the intervention by learners in society. The learning circle is a non-hierarchical 'class' model where participants can discuss *generative* themes which are significance within the context of their lives. This involves creating a democratic space where every one's voice has equal weight. The conditions needed for this have to be actively created as it does not often occur naturally.

In the Nigerian case a holistic functional literacy imbued with Freirean ideology for the solution of unemployment and poverty should equip youths with self-reliant skills in addition to productive skills. Holistic literacy should involve not only reading, writing and computing on a self-learning basis, but

also skills in citizenship, production and living, sanitation and health, environment among others. In a culture circle, there is no textbook - no literacy 'primer' - no pre-printed materials other than a guide for the facilitators that is produced locally (preferably with the input of the facilitators themselves). Each literacy circle develops its own learning materials through the construction of maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams that represent local reality, systematize the existing knowledge of learners and promote detailed analysis of local issues (Danfodiyo,2011)

Literacy with a holistic perspective is concerned with the development of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potential. In adopting a holistic approach to literacy, stakeholders in education should address the needs of the youths. Since youths play substantial productive roles, literacy programmes should provide them with creative skills and knowledge. At the same time, since a considerable portion of youth subordination can be traced to their lack of financial autonomy, basic literacy skills should be integrated into vocational skills and productive skills.

A major social challenge we are witnessing in Nigeria today is unemployment which is the root cause of poverty. REFLECT as a literacy and community development model, is a structured participatory learning process, a synthesis of planned and unplanned learning which helps people to read, write, calculate in the language of tuition chosen by them for critical awareness. It helps people to develop their capability to critically analyze their own environment and issues directly affecting them and helps people to write about their own lives and their world.

From the foregoing analysis of the principles of Freire's functional literacy approach and that help a great deal in reducing unemployment and poverty, because it creates a democratic space where learners gain the consciousness for developing critical thinking, learners are made to develop themes to their own advantage, raise question and solve problems. This literacy programme does not see teacher as a know all rather there is harmonious collaboration between educators and the educates. In such relationship new ground of development are discovered and new ideas resonated. As a result everyone makes progress, in this manner unemployment and poverty will be reduced to its lowest ebb. The culture circle has been tried in Brazil, Nicaragua and Sudan, the result was quite encouraging and worthy of emulation. Through the culture circles process, people progressed very quickly, in Brazil illiterate adults learned to read and write in 30 hours; in Nicaragua illiteracy was reduced from 40% to 13%

in two months while in Sudan, from a baseline of 100% illiteracy, 67% of beneficiaries could write a short paragraph, and 71% were able to do written calculations with two digit number, 78% of beneficiaries have mobilized their community to take part in discussions or events on health and education. 93% of beneficiaries have attended health and nutrition awareness training, 80% of beneficiaries are active in implementing savings or small projects within their group (Hanemann,2017). The culture circle if well thought out, will help to reduce unemployment and poverty among youths in Nigeria.

5. Implication of the Study

This paper implies that a functional literacy approach as shown in the REFLECT circle which was proposed by Paulo Freire should be integrated in all learning environments in Nigeria in order to reduce the challenges of unemployment and poverty. A need for functional approach where a learner is active and not passive in a learning environment is implied for restoration of the past glory of Nigeria, by reducing armed banditry, kidnapping, youth restiveness, drug abuse, cybercrime amongst others.

6. Conclusion

Based on the idea as presented in this paper, it was concluded that, Freirean literacy approach should be tried out in Nigeria for the solution of poverty and unemployment challenges that bedevils the country for sustainable growth and development, hence, it has been tried out and was successful in some other countries.

7. Recommendations

Based on the analyses and report made in this paper, the following recommendations were made:

- A well-funded functional literacy and skill acquisition programme using REFLECT approach should be established by government in all communities in Nigeria.
- REFLECT literacy approach should be incorporated into Nigerians poverty alleviation programme
- The current curriculum which seems to encourage banking model of learning which breeds poverty and unemployment should be infused with a more sustainable and practical oriented model such as dialogue, conscientization, codification and decodification.

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Non-Oil Resources Development in Nigeria: Environmental Implications and Policy Considerations

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Abstract. Nigeria's historical over-dependence on crude oil has prompted a strategic pivot toward economic diversification through non-oil resources, specifically targeting agriculture, solid minerals, manufacturing, and renewable energy. While this transition promises enhanced social welfare and macroeconomic stability, it introduces significant environmental risks that require urgent academic and regulatory scrutiny. This study evaluates the complex environmental implications of developing Nigeria's non-oil sectors, assesses the efficacy of existing regulatory frameworks such as the NESREA Act and the Petroleum Industry Act's non-oil provisions and performs a critical comparative analysis with Rwanda's acclaimed environmental governance model. Adopting a doctrinal research methodology, the paper utilizes secondary data from recent government reports, legal statutes, and contemporary literature to analyze environmental trends and policy effectiveness. Results indicate that while diversification potentially reduces carbon intensity in certain industrial segments, the rapid, often unregulated expansion of mining and large-scale farming triggers severe deforestation, soil degradation, and water pollution. Comparative findings reveal that Rwanda's success is rooted in the stringent enforcement of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and community-led conservation. In contrast, Nigeria's progress remains hindered by institutional fragmentation and "lax" enforcement mechanisms. The study recommends transitioning from traditional waste disposal to circular waste minimization, strengthening regulatory oversight through a fully empowered NESREA, and adopting inclusive governance models that integrate local communities into resource management to ensure a sustainable economic future for the federation.

Keywords: Non-Oil Resources, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Sustainable Development, Nigeria, Rwanda, Solid Minerals

1. Introduction

Non-oil resources comprise the diverse spectrum of economic assets and activities that exist independently of the petroleum and natural gas industry. These resources encompass solid mineral deposits such as gold, bitumen, and lead-zinc and broad economic sectors including agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, tourism, and manufacturing. Unlike the capital-intensive oil sector, non-oil resources are often labor-intensive and hold the transformative potential to drive inclusive growth, ensure food security, and reduce the national vulnerability to volatile global crude oil prices.

Historically, the Nigerian state was defined by its robust agrarian economy. Prior to the 1970s, Nigeria was a global leader in the exportation of cash crops, prominently cocoa, palm oil, rubber, and timber. However, the "oil boom" heralded a significant structural shift. The discovery and subsequent exploitation of petroleum led to a phenomenon often termed the "Dutch Disease," where the rapid development of the oil sector resulted in the systemic neglect of other viable mineral and agricultural resources. This mono-product dependency has not only made the economy fragile but has also stalled the institutional development of the non-oil sectors

1.1 The Diversification Imperative and Environmental Concerns

In recent years, the Nigerian government has recognized that economic diversification is a herculean but unavoidable task. However, the transition toward non-oil development is a double-edged sword. While it promises to increase the national GDP and improve citizen welfare, it introduces a wide range of environmental implications. The aggressive expansion of mining and large-scale farming often triggers deforestation, soil

erosion, habitat loss, and water pollution. As the nation looks toward these resources for economic survival, it is imperative to address these ecological footprints before they escalate into uncontrollable environmental crises.

To manage the interplay between development and preservation, several legal instruments have been enacted. These include the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act, Forestry Law, National Park Service Act, and National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) Act. Furthermore, modern policies like the National Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy (NREEEP) and the Water Resources Act aim to provide a roadmap for sustainable resource management.

This paper provides a comprehensive examination of the environmental implications both positive and negative of developing Nigeria's non-oil resources. It scrutinizes the adequacy of existing laws and offers a comparative analysis between Nigeria and Rwanda, a country noted for its stringent environmental governance. Ultimately, the study proffers actionable recommendations to ensure that Nigeria's path to economic diversification remains environmentally sustainable.

1.2 Conceptualizing Non-Oil Resources and Their Economic Scope

Non-oil resources represent the vast and multifaceted array of natural assets and economic activities that exist independently of the petroleum and natural gas industry. These resources encompass all material substances from nature that possess inherent economic value or provide the biological support systems necessary for the sustenance of life. In a broader economic sense, the non-oil sector refers to the totality of a nation's productive capacity excluding the extraction, refining, and sale of crude oil and its immediate derivatives. This sector is essentially the bedrock of a diversified economy, providing a more stable and labor-intensive alternative to the capital-intensive and volatile nature of the hydrocarbon industry.

The classification of these resources is typically divided into biotic and abiotic categories. Biotic resources are those derived from living or organic matter, including expansive forest reserves, wildlife, avian species, and aquatic life. Even certain energy sources like coal are categorized as biotic due to their origin from decayed organic substances over geological eras. Conversely, abiotic resources originate from non-organic materials and include the

fundamental elements of the physical environment such as land, atmospheric air, and fresh water. Within the abiotic category lies Nigeria's significant endowment of metallic ores and industrial minerals, including gold, silver, tin, lead, copper, bitumen, and limestone.

Beyond primary extraction and agriculture, non-oil resources in a modern context include advanced service-oriented and industrial sectors. This modern expansion encompasses renewable energy technologies, the tourism and hospitality industry, manufacturing, telecommunications, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and the financial services sector. The development of these sectors is particularly critical for a nation like Nigeria, as they offer the potential to generate massive employment opportunities for a teeming population. By shifting the focus away from a mono-product oil economy, these diverse non-oil resources foster inclusive growth, enhance food security, and create a resilient economic structure capable of withstanding global energy price fluctuations.

1.3 Historical Perspective: From Agrarian Roots to Oil Dependency

Prior to the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities in 1956 at Oloibiri, Nigeria was primarily an agrarian society where agriculture served as the cornerstone of the economy. During this era, the nation was self-sufficient in food production, providing approximately 95% of the food needed to feed its population. Agriculture contributed 66.4% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and served as the mainstay of the economy, providing the primary source of livelihood for the vast majority of the population. Regional economies thrived on the exportation of diverse cash crops: rubber from the South-South, groundnuts and hides from the North, cocoa and coffee from the West, and palm oil from the East. Revenue from these non-oil resources was instrumental in building landmark social and economic infrastructure across the country.

However, the oil boom of the 1970s triggered a significant structural shift known as the "Dutch Disease." As global oil prices soared due to geopolitical crises, Nigeria's newly found wealth led to a currency appreciation that made agricultural exports less competitive globally. Public expenditure shifted almost entirely toward the petroleum sector, causing the agricultural contribution to GDP to plummet as the government prioritized "easy money" from oil exploration. By 1980, the oil sector accounted for nearly 30% of GDP and 90% of total exports,

rendering the nation's economy vulnerable to international oil price volatility. This historical neglect created a structural imbalance that remains a challenge today.

2. Development of Non-Oil Resources in Nigeria

In recent years, the Nigerian government has renewed its focus on the non-oil sector as a strategic imperative to stabilize the economy and reduce its vulnerability to oil price shocks. Most recently, the non-oil sector has emerged as the primary engine of economic expansion, consistently accounting for over 95% of Nigeria's real GDP. In most recent quarter, the non-oil sector contributed 96.56% to the total real GDP, driven by resilient growth in services, agriculture, financial institutions, and telecommunications.

A landmark achievement in this diversification drive was recorded in first half of 2024, when Nigeria's non-oil exports reached a record high of \$2.7 billion, representing a 6.26% increase from the previous year and currently rose at approximately \$6.1 billion representing a year-on-year growth of about 11.5 percent over and above the \$5.4 billion recorded in 2024. This growth was supported by the export of 211 different non-oil products to 120 countries, including cocoa, urea, cashew nuts, sesame seeds, and solid minerals like copper and aluminum ingots. Total non-oil export volumes climbed to 8.02 million metric tonnes, reflecting a 10% increase in production capacity.

The Federal Government has prioritized the expansion of these revenues for the ensuing fiscal year, aiming to deepen integration into global value chains through sector-specific "deal rooms" and the National Industrial Policy 2025 unveiled recently. While services including information and communication currently dominate the GDP share, the ongoing push for value-added agricultural exports and solid mineral development is seen as the most credible path toward long-term economic resilience.

2.1 Regulatory Framework Governing Non-Oil Resource Development

The legal regime governing the development of non-oil resources in Nigeria is multifaceted, comprising several sector-specific statutes:

Solid Minerals: The Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act 2007 serves as the primary legislation regulating the exploration and exploitation of solid minerals. It

provides the legal basis for ownership, the issuance of mining licenses, and the payment of royalties.

Forestry: Forestry management is governed by various State Forestry Laws and the Forestry Act, which regulate the conservation of forest products and the grant of timber licenses.

Agriculture: This sector is regulated by policies and statutes such as the Agriculture (Control of Importation) Act, which manages land use, crop protection, and the importation of agricultural materials.

Wildlife and Biodiversity: The National Parks Service Act provides for the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of wildlife within designated national parks.

Environmental Protection: The National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) (Establishment) Act 2007 is the umbrella legislation for environmental protection. Under this Act, specific regulations have been promulgated, including:

- National Environmental (Desertification Control and Drought Mitigation) Regulations 2011;
- National Environmental (Protection of Endangered Species in International Trade) Regulations 2011; and
- National Environmental (Coastal and Marine Area Protection) Regulations 2011.

Tourism: The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation Act regulates the promotion of cultural heritage and the licensing of tourism-related enterprises.

Land and Real Estate: The Land Use Act (originally the Land Use Decree of 1978, now Cap L5 LFN 2004) remains the fundamental legislation governing land tenure and administration, ensuring the effective management of land resources for development."

3. Environmental Impacts and Implications of Non-Oil Resource Exploitation

The expansion of Nigeria's non-oil sector, while economically imperative, presents a complex dichotomy of positive developmental outcomes and negative ecological externalities. Nigeria's diverse ecosystems ranging from freshwater swamps and mangroves to tropical rainforests are currently subjected to varying degrees of anthropogenic pressure.

Agricultural and Livestock Extents: As a primary driver of the non-oil economy, agriculture involves the intensive cultivation of food crops (cassava, maize, rice, yam) and cash crops (cocoa, oil palm, timber). However, the sector faces significant sustainability challenges. Unregulated livestock overgrazing and the indiscriminate application of chemical pesticides have led to soil degradation and accelerated desertification, particularly in the northern regions.

Forestry and Biodiversity Loss: Nigeria's cultural resources provide essential timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Notwithstanding their contribution to rural livelihoods and carbon sequestration, these resources are threatened by uncontrolled deforestation, bush burning, and unstructured urbanization. These activities result in critical habitat loss, the extinction of microbial soil life, and a reduction in Nigeria's carbon sink capacity.

Urbanization and Infrastructure Development: Rapid demographic shifts have catalyzed a boom in the construction and real estate sectors. While providing essential infrastructure, this growth has led to unstructured land use and habitat fragmentation. Anthropogenic pollutants arising from improper waste disposal, the blockage of natural waterways, and poorly planned drainage systems continue to exacerbate erosion and ecosystem instability.

Energy Transition and Renewable Potential: The shift toward solar, wind, and hydropower offers a credible path to reducing the ecological footprint of the petroleum industry (notably oil spills and gas flaring). While renewable energy transitions generally reduce pressure on ecosystems, the lifecycle of these projects including land clearing for installations and the logistics of resource transportation can still contribute to residual greenhouse gas emissions.

Solid Minerals and Manufacturing: The extraction of minerals such as limestone, coal, tin, and bitumen is central to industrial diversification. However, aggressive mining operations often result in severe environmental concerns, including hazardous dust emissions, heavy metal water pollution, and permanent topographical disruption.

Tourism and Conservation: The promotion of cultural heritage and national parks offers a unique mechanism for conservation-led growth. While tourism can incentivize the preservation of biodiversity, improper management of tourist zones often leads to waste accumulation and the degradation

of the very natural landscapes the sector seeks to promote.

3.4. Critical Analysis: The Implementation Gap in Non-Oil Regulation

The juxtaposition of these environmental externalities against the existing legal framework reveals a critical implementation gap. While the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) has promulgated specific regulations such as those addressing desertification control and coastal area protection the persistence of unregulated bush burning, illegal mining, and unstructured urbanization suggests that the current enforcement mechanisms are insufficient.

Furthermore, Nigeria's commitment to international environmental instruments, including the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, necessitates a more rigorous alignment of non-oil industrial expansion with the principles of sustainable development and 'green' economic growth

4. Comparative Analysis: Environmental Implications of Non-Oil Resource development

4.1 Overview of the Rwandan Context

Rwanda, the "Land of a Thousand Hills," is a landlocked nation whose economic potential is tied strictly to its non-oil natural resources: land, water, biodiversity, and minerals. Unlike oil-rich nations like Nigeria, Rwanda's geography creates biophysical vulnerabilities. The country faces land scarcity and acute soil erosion, with 45% of the land at high risk of erosion.

4.2 Contrasting the Extractive Sectors: Mining vs. Oil

While Nigeria's environmental crisis is dominated by the industrial and toxic pollution of the oil sector (spills and gas flaring), Rwanda's extractive challenges are rooted in its rapidly growing mining sector.

Scale and Impact:

The environmental footprints of these two sectors differ significantly in nature and primary impact:

Nigeria (Oil Sector): in Nigeria, Oil extraction causes irreversible chemical contamination of water

and air due to oil spills, gas flaring, and illegal refining. Recent studies in the Niger Delta have recorded high levels of biological oxygen demand and total dissolved solids in aquatic ecosystems linked to crude oil bunkering. These pollutants cause irreversible physical, chemical, and biological damage, contributing to poverty and hardship in host communities.

Rwanda (Mining Sector): Rwanda's challenges are rooted in its rapidly growing mining industry, which is the country's largest export earner currently. Roughly, majority of the sector still consists of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). The primary impacts are physical, including changes in landscape structure and sediment-loaded runoff that can contaminate downstream catchments. Rwanda is a top global producer of tantalum and also extracts tin, tungsten, gold, and lithium representing nearly 60% of mineral export.

Regulatory Approach:

Both nations have introduced major legislative reforms, but their current focus and progress vary:

Rwanda's Modernization: Rwanda has aggressively updated its legal framework to professionalize the sector. A new 2024 Mining Law replaced previous 2018 legislation to better regulate ASM and attract international investment for mechanized operations.

Strict Environmental Oversight: License holders must submit an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and a rehabilitation plan before starting operations.

Traceability: Rwanda adheres to OECD due diligence guidelines, ensuring minerals are 100% conflict-free and traceable from mine to market.

Value Addition: The government has established state-of-the-art facilities, including a gold refinery, tantalum refinery, and tin smelter, with plans for a lithium refinery. This contrasts with Nigeria's oil sector, where despite laws like the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), implementation remains fraught with transparency and accountability issues.

4.3 The "Green" Diversification Model

Rwanda's non-oil strategy utilizes sectors that, if managed well, restore rather than deplete the environment:

Sustainable Tourism: Nature-based tourism accounting for a vast majority of leisure visitors funds the protection of biodiversity, such as gorilla habitats. This creates an economic incentive for conservation that is absent in purely extractive oil economies.

Integrated Agriculture: Programs like "Girinka" (One Cow per Family) provide organic manure for soil fertilization, directly

addressing Rwanda's soil degradation. In contrast, oil-dependent nations often see neglect of the agricultural sector, leading to food insecurity and land toxicity.

4.4 Governance and Summary: The "Green" vs. "Brown" Institutional Divide

Rwanda's proactive approach to environmental governance is not merely a modern trend but a deep-seated national priority dating back to the community-led conservation campaigns of the 1980s (e.g., the Year of Soil Conservation and the Year of the Tree). This historical foundation has evolved into a robust institutional setup led by the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA), which integrates climate resilience into every level of national planning through the Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy (GGCRS).

4.4.1 The Enforcement Gap: Rwanda vs. Nigeria

while both nations have comprehensive laws on paper, the comparative analysis reveals a significant "Implementation Gap":

Rwanda's "Bottom-Up" Enforcement: Rwanda utilizes unique cultural pillars like **Umuganda** (mandatory community work) to enforce environmental standards, such as the nationwide ban on non-biodegradable plastic bags. This creates a culture of collective accountability.

Nigeria's "Top-Down" Challenges: In contrast, Nigeria's environmental governance is often reactive. Agencies like the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) struggle with the "resource curse" of oil, where the economic urgency of petroleum production often overrides environmental protections, leading to the neglect of ecological restoration in the Niger Delta.

4.5 Economic Resilience and synthesis

The comparison demonstrates that Rwanda's lack of oil has been a blessing in disguise for its institutional strength. By necessity, Rwanda has developed a diversified and targeted policy approach that treats the environment as an economic asset (via Tourism and Agriculture) rather than an extraction site. While Nigeria remains vulnerable to global oil price volatility and industrial degradation, Rwanda's "Non-Oil" model demonstrates that even a land-locked nation with limited territory can achieve noteworthy progress in environmental and economic resilience through transparency, community mobilization, and strict policy enforcement.

5. Recommendations

To mitigate the environmental implications of resource dependency and promote sustainable non-oil development, Nigeria should prioritize policy implementation that balances conservation with economic growth. Drawing from the Rwandan model, the following recommendations are proposed:

Institutionalizing "Green Days": The Federal Government of Nigeria should establish mandatory National, State, and Local Government days dedicated to reforestation and afforestation. Emulating Rwanda's community-led success, each household should be incentivized to plant at least one tree per season to combat desertification.

Strengthening Enforcement of Protected Areas: Penal laws must be strictly enforced to punish encroachment on parks and recreation centers. Preservation of these areas is essential for the future of Nigeria's nascent tourism sector.

Urban Waterway and Flood Management: Citizens must be educated on the critical role of drainage systems and the environmental impact of waste disposal in waterways. Furthermore, industrial regulations must mandate that factories treat effluent before discharging it into water networks to protect aquatic biodiversity.

Transitioning to Biodegradable Materials: Nigeria should follow Rwanda's lead by phased banning of non-biodegradable plastic bags. Encouraging the production of packaging made from paper, cloth, and natural fibers will stimulate local cottage industries while reducing urban pollution.

Structured Urbanization and Technology Oversight: The National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP) should rigorously vet imported technologies to prevent Nigeria from becoming a dumping ground for obsolete, high-emission tools. Better management of confiscated goods is required to avoid open-air burning and subsequent atmospheric pollution.

Environmental Justice: The judiciary must ensure "timeous justice" for victims of environmental exploitation. Reasonable and deterrent sanctions should be meted out to corporate and individual offenders to end the culture of impunity.

Agricultural Extension Services: Government agencies should increase the education of rural farmers on best practices for sustainable land cultivation and soil management to prevent the long-term degradation seen in intensified farming regions.

Diversifying the Energy Mix: To reduce over-dependence on oil and wood fuel (which drives deforestation), the government must provide fiscal

incentives for solar, wind, and hydropower development.

Prioritizing Security for Tourism: The government must stabilize the security situation in resource-rich rural areas. Without the safety of lives and property, Nigeria cannot harness the economic potential of nature-based tourism as Rwanda has successfully done

6. Conclusion

Diversifying the Nigerian economy beyond petroleum is no longer an option but a necessity for long-term stability. While the development of non-oil resources such as agriculture, minerals, and tourism presents a pathway to growth, it carries significant environmental risks if left unmanaged.

The Rwandan example demonstrates that a lack of oil can be a catalyst for high-standard environmental stewardship and institutional transparency. For Nigeria to replicate this success, it must move beyond having "comprehensive laws on paper" to a culture of strict enforcement and community mobilization. By prioritizing conservation, reducing corruption, and maintaining policy consistency, Nigeria can maximize the benefits of its non-oil resources while ensuring an ecological legacy for future generations

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Part Two
Social Psychology



Health Consequences of Coronavirus Pandemic among Frontline Health Workers in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Coronavirus otherwise known as COVID-19 Pandemic rocked the entire world in the wake of the year 2020. The rate at which Frontline Health Workers in Lagos State were infected with Coronavirus Pandemic increased tremendously. This was as a result of exposure to infected cases, shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and many others. Historical research methodology was used in this study and relied on qualitative research method of data collection from primary and secondary sources. Thirty-eight Frontline Health Workers were interviewed. The study concluded that morbidity, disability and mortality were health consequences of Coronavirus Pandemic among Frontline Health workers in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Frontline Health workers Health consequences, Lagos State, Pandemic.

1. Introduction

Coronavirus which was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan China, declared as public health emergency of international concern in January 2020 and later Pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organisation. In February 27th, 2020, Nigeria recorded her first case of the dreaded Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic when an Italian citizen travelled into the country. This reality woke the Federal and State Government up to protect its citizens and prevent an outbreak of the disease in the country. Civil societies and government agencies embarked on enlightenment campaigns for good hygiene and social distance in public places (Olapegba, et. al., 2020). Also, the body responsible for disease control in the country the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), partnered with state governments to trace and track victims and their contact. To further prevent the spread of the virus, the Federal Government of Nigeria in March 30th, 2020 took a drastic decision to

close all national borders and airspace, schools, worship centres and other public centres and placed the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Lagos State and Ogun State on total lockdown for fourteen days and later extended this lockdown to May 3rd, 2020 (Olapegba, et. al., 2020).

This virus posed a public health risk because of the wide spread and Lagos State Government used different measures and strategies to curtail it such as; frequent washing of hands, keeping good hygiene, social distancing, use of facemask in public place and hand sanitizers (Aifuwa, et. al., 2020). The symptoms of the virus on infected individuals include; fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and loss of taste or smell (Worldometers, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rate at which Frontline Health Workers in Lagos State were infected with Coronavirus Pandemic increased tremendously. This was as a result of exposure to infected cases, shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) etc. Coronavirus Pandemic has led to high morbidity and mortality among frontline health workers in Lagos State. This has caused shortage of personnel, over labour and stress which resulted in change in mode of operation and personal living such as: washing of hands frequently with soap and water or using alcohol base sanitizer, unwilling to attend to patients and absurdity.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to investigate the health consequences of Coronavirus among Health Workers in Lagos State, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Question

The study answered this question:

- What were the health consequences of Coronavirus (COVID-19) among health workers in Lagos State, Nigeria?

1.5 Limitation of study

The limitation encountered by researchers in this work include unwilling to be interviewed by some health workers and total refusal of some participants. Also, some participants not wanted to participate or cooperate with the researchers due to sensitive nature of the study.

1.6 Research Methodology

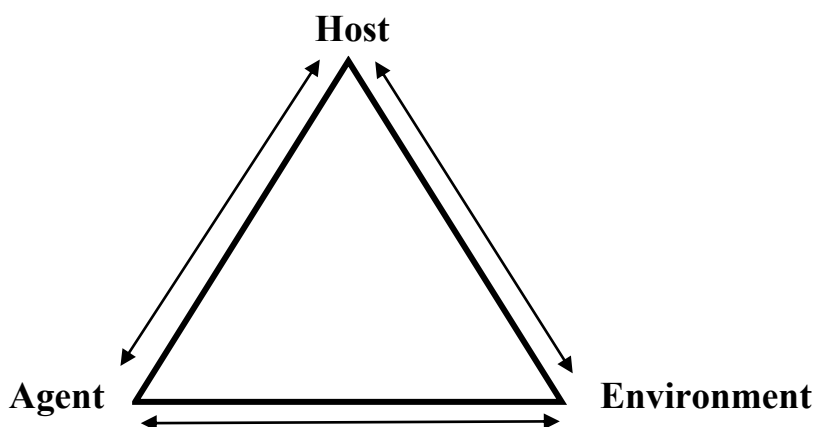
This study employed historical research methodology and relied on qualitative research method of data collection from primary source. Thirty-eight Frontline Health Workers were interviewed. It also involved the use of secondary historical data which includes, textbooks, newspapers and journals.

2. Review of Related Literature

The term Pandemic commonly used to describe diseases that are new or associated with novel variants of existing organisms for example, antigenic shifts occurring in influenza viruses, the emergence of HIV/AIDS when it was known in the early 1980s, and historical epidemics of diseases such as plague. Pandemic can be said to be a characteristic feature of certain repeatedly reemerging diseases such as cholera and influenza (Arda and Aciduman, 2012). Nigeria

3. Theoretical Framework

The Epidemiologic Triangle is a model that scientists have developed for studying health problems, propounded by Abdel R. Omran in 1971. It helps one to understand infectious diseases and how they spread.



National Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan (NNPIRP, 2013) defined pandemic as a worldwide outbreak of influenza disease that occurs when a new type of influenza virus appears that people have not been exposed to before (or have not been exposed to in a long time). The pandemic virus can cause serious illness because people do not have immunity to the new virus.

Morens, et. al., (2009) refers to pandemic as a worldwide outbreak of a specific disease or illness that suddenly occurs in human beings within a country or region in a number of cases that clearly exceeds that of normal. Pandemic outbreaks are expected to occur simultaneously throughout the nation or continent in inevitably and unpredictable intervals. Nigeria National Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan, (2013) added that an influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population and begins to spread efficiently from person to person causing serious illness and sometimes resulted in death. Because of its potential to cause significant illness and death worldwide, experts believed that pandemic had a major negative impact on the global health. Coronavirus was classified into five types which were named after the Greek letters (a) alpha, (b) beta, (c) delta, (d) gamma, (e) omicron. These viruses spread through the aerosol and airborne modes of transmission which marked a responsibility of about ten to thirty percent of colds occurred worldwide. Coronavirus was not deemed dangerous until it underwent mutational change resulted in upper respiratory infections and pneumonia (Livingston, Bucher, & Rekito, 2020).

The Triangle has three corners (called vertices):

- Agent, or microbe that causes the disease (the “what” of the Triangle)
- Host, or organism harboring the disease (the “who” of the Triangle)
- Environment, or those external factors that cause or allow disease transmission (the “where” of the Triangle)

Agent: is the cause of the disease. When studying the epidemiology of most infectious diseases, the agent is a microbe an organism too small to be seen with the naked eye. Disease causing microbes are bacteria, virus, fungi, and protozoa (a type of parasite). They are what most people call germs. The symptoms for the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)-COV 2 virus related COVID-19 infection include fever, tiredness, shortness of breath and dry cough. Some patients had aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people were infected but do not develop any symptoms and do not feel unwell. According to WHO (2020), the knowledge of around 1 in 6 cases of COVID-19 resulted in serious illness and the development of breathing difficulties. Those who were more likely to develop a serious illness include older people and people with underlying medical problems.

Hosts: are organisms usually humans or animals which are exposed to and harbor a disease. The host can be the organism that gets sick as well as any animal carrier (including insects and worms) that may or may not get sick. Although the host may or may not know it has the disease or have any outward signs of illness the disease does take lodging from the host. The “host” heading also includes symptoms of the disease. Different people may have different reactions to the same agent. For example, adults infected with the coronavirus are more likely than children to develop serious complications. The host are the health workers of different sex and age. Health workers who are at risk, including individuals more than 50 years old those with presence of a systemic disease and disable individuals (Ahmed, et. al., 2020).

Environment: is the favorable surroundings and conditions external to the host that cause or allow the disease to be transmitted. It is transmitted from an infected person through coughs or sneezes. Some diseases live best in dirty water. Others survive in human blood. Still others, like corona virus, thrive in code temperatures but are killed by high heat. In case of this study, hospital is the contacting point for health workers in Lagos State in the process of their job. In

Lagos for example, a patient was admitted with malaria fever and had SARS-CoV-2 and the health workers responsible for care became infected (Adepoju, 2020).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Health Consequences of Coronavirus among Frontline Health Workers

Morbidity

Frontline Health workers in Lagos State were involved in testing and treatment of individuals with COVID-19 and more vulnerable than the general public as well as prone to spread infection to their loved ones. The transmission of the disease among the health workers was linked with improper training, protection, not following the recommended protocols or guidelines, absence of isolation rooms and the lack of knowledge and awareness regarding the course and spread of the disease (Alade, Oral Interview, 2025). The lack of reliable testing and the uncertainty of the diagnostic criteria were also associated with the transmission of infection to health workers in the state (Ajayi, Oral Interview, 2025). In addition, the preventive measure for COVID 19 infection require personal protective equipment (PPE) like respirators, N-95 masks, non-perforated gowns and visors or face shields for protection from infections. Due to the large scale of infection globally, the supply of these necessary PPEs has been irregular to say the least (Alebiosu, et al, Oral Interview, 2025). Besides most of the PPEs were non-reusable and discarded with the utmost precautions to prevent transmission. Therefore, the inadequate and improper use of PPEs was a critical factor in COVID 19 infection rates of frontline health workers. The reverse transaction polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing for the identification of virus was not readily available at most health care facilities in the state and for all suspected patients (Raji, Oral Interview, 2025).

Coronavirus test results on average were available more than one day. Therefore, the difficulty and lack in widespread of reliable testing kits and the uncertainty of the diagnostic criteria was also associated with the transmission of infection to health workers. Likewise, stressful working environment, long working hours led to fatigue and isolation related psychological issues also contributed to increased probability for health workers infection of COVID-19. some other factors which predisposed health workers infection were inadequately cleaned and sanitised hospital surfaces, compromise in disinfection of medical equipment and lack of training and education

related to the pandemic (Hassan, Oral Interview, 2025).

Disability

Where the virus was first discovered it was said that coronavirus caused long-term damage to survivors' lungs and twenty five percent of survivors had decreased lung function. Some recovered patients experienced twenty to thirty percent less capacity in their lungs and became short of breath during a brisk walk. While survivors may be able to regain some of their lung strength through rehabilitation and physical therapy and will take time. However, lung problems were common from survivors then number of staffers suffered lung scarring or fibrosis from coronavirus. Most of us saw coronavirus as a lung disease that caused acute respiratory distress. And doctors now believed that the virus can also damage heart, brain, kidneys, liver, and other organs (Isola, Oral Interview, 2025).

According to Olapeju et al. Oral Interview, (2025) severe pneumonia survivors and patients carry an increased risk of heart disease for roughly ten years. So, we may see increased heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiac problems in coronavirus survivors for years to come. Post-intensive care syndrome is common in coronavirus survivors. In addition to organ damage, simply being on a ventilator for an extended period poses its own challenges. Between twenty-five and seventy five percent of intensive care unit (ICU) patients experienced post-intensive care syndrome (PICS). This condition is caused by a variety of factors, including the physical and emotional stress and trauma of being in the intensive care unit and the side effects from sedatives and other medications. Symptoms of post-intensive care syndrome can include; memory problems, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety, muscle weakness, fatigue and insomnia, shortness of breath etc.

Mortality

Health workers were the front-line soldiers in the outbreak of any disease and were more susceptible to be infected because of their direct and close interaction with the diseased individuals (Tiamiu, et. al., Oral Interview, 2025). Some were infected but in severe cases led to the death of the frontline health workers or a similar scenario happened to their family members or closed ones (Raji, Oral Interview, 2025). Mortality rates among health workers who become infected were not high in many parts of Lagos (Ajayi, Oral Interview, 2025). Deaths among infected

frontline health workers with Coronavirus were not common in the state and mostly affected those older than fifty years or staffers with underline health issues. Tragically, health workers rehired from retirement to help at the frontline have commonly experienced the highest mortality when compared with their working age counterparts. (Adeyanju, Oral Interview, 2025).

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that morbidity, disability and mortality were health consequences of Coronavirus Pandemic among Frontline Health Workers in Lagos State, Nigeria. The high rate of infection among frontline health workers in Lagos State was a serious concern because workers infected stayed away from work for at least fourteen days, depleted the already exhausted workforce. Then, Lagos State was one of the most infected states which recorded highest number of Coronavirus Pandemic victims in the country. However, the mortality rate was high world over, it was reported by WHO, (2022) that over 1.5 million health workers died as a result of coronavirus from 2019 to 2022.

6. Recommendations

- Provision of adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the health workers in the State.
- Provision of adequate testing kits for health facilities in the State.
- Post-Coronavirus follow up should be provided for the health workers in the State

7. Suggestion for further studies

- Environmental consequences of Covid19 Pandemic in Lagos State Nigeria.
- Covid19 Pandemic Symptoms and Treatment in Lagos State Nigeria

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Experiences of African Muslims in Europe: Diaspora, Migration, and Contemporary Challenges

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Abstract. Different disciplines have explored the concept of diaspora from different perspectives. However, the experiences of African Muslims in Europe have not been systematically studied. Therefore, this paper examines critically the challenges facing African Muslims in Europe. In agreement with other researches, this paper notes that there are many challenges facing the African Muslims living in Europe today. Triangulation method was used to gather information for this paper, and both primary and secondary sources were used to obtain information for this article. The findings of this paper show that although there are many challenges facing the Muslims in Europe, but it also has its positive values. The paper notes that the trend of migration will continue unabated unless if Government could live up to her expectation by provision of basic amenities and state-of-the-arts facilities to the African continent, the phenomenon could be reduced. A concerted effort is therefore needed among all stake holders in the African continent for the task of promoting good leadership and followership in our continent.

Keywords: Diaspora, Migration, Leadership, Culture, Religion.

1. Introduction

This work examines critically the experience of African Muslims living in Europe. It discusses the concept of migration which includes collective action arising out of social change and affecting the whole society in both sending and receiving areas. Migration entails a 'push-pull' process, that is unfavourable conditions in one place 'push' people out, and favourable conditions in an external location 'pull'

them in. 'Africa is a huge continent with more than 50 countries covering around 30 million square kilometers, almost about 800 million people. It is typified by multifaceted cultural, religious, linguistic varieties as well as varied historical experiences; each ethnic group has distinct culture which represents the variety of cultural diversity (Afe Adogame, (2017). Saharan or Tropical Africa, these are black aboriginal population, with most religious vitality, and its indigenous religions interacting with Christianity and Islam. Religion is essentially part of African culture. African religions are integral to the process of globalization (Louis Schneider, 1970).

Islam entered Saharan Africa in the eleventh century long before Christianity that came in the fifteenth century. Islam came through North Africa and spread through trade and commerce. West African has a brand of Islam that is 'very African' (Afe Adogame, 2007). African Muslim immigrants still maintain identity through Islamic laws, new media technologies which are used to expand Islam as a global religion. African Islam was spread to the diaspora through migration. Contemporary migration has brought many African Muslims to Europe and North America where they have joined other Muslims in developing religious diversification of the host societies. Islam plays the role of fountain of emotional, spiritual and source of social and cultural 'capital' for immigrants in the unfamiliar environment. Mosques and religious community centers and associations are springing up for corporate prayer, rituals and other programmes, which serve as link with other Muslims. African Muslims immigrants suffer marginalization, because they constitute a minority of Muslims in Europe. (Afe Adogame, 2007).

1.1 Research Methodology

The major source of collecting information for this study was mainly secondary source, where documents and other publications were studied. Literature search was carried out mainly in the Brotherton, Edward Boyle, and Laidlaw Libraries all in the Leeds University, and other libraries abroad. Qualitative research method was also used to understand people and their behavior which was suitable for this work because it included observation. Observation entails a systematic data collection approach. Researchers use all their senses to examine people in natural settings or naturally occurring situations.

Observation of a field setting involves: prolonged engagement in a setting or social situation clearly expressed, self-conscious notations of how observing is done methodical and tactical improvisation to develop a full understanding of the setting of interest recording one's observations'.

I was able to observe the situation myself as a participant; this gave me the opportunity in understanding the naturalistic settings and members' ways of seeing the issue. I equally made use of ethnographic methods to carry out the research. Ethnographic research involves the investigation of a culture through an in-depth study of the members of the culture; almost has the same role with grounded theory and phenomenological approach. The former involves an approach designed to discover what problems exist in a given social environment, and how the persons involved handle them, while the latter aims to describe an experience as it is lived by the person. All these approaches were used by me to carry out the research because I was able to study in-depth the relationship between African culture, Islam and European culture.

2. Literature Review

The following provides an overview of the literature and core sources that were consulted in this research. Publications on migration, African Muslims migrants in the Europe are based on historical, anthropological and the regional influence of the western culture. It should be noted that there is a dearth of materials or published work on African Muslims in Europe.

In the article 'Religion on the Move: Transcultural Perspectives, Discourses on Diaspora Religion between Category Formation and the Quest for Religious Identity, written by Klus Hock. The author discusses the role of migration among Africans (as a catalyst) in spreading religion. He claims that because of globalization Africans have constituted larger

migrant groups in Europe. He claims that until recently less attention was given to the impact of migration on the movement of religion. This work really contributed a lot to our studies; it also enlightens us in the areas of 'Africaness' of cultural self-reassertion and political emancipation.

In his contribution to a voluminous book titled 'Religion and Society' written by Radcliffe-Brown, A. A. The author explains the pessimistic nature of the impact of religion in the society. He sees the history of religion as illusion and argues that the primitive religions only aim at the formation and maintenance of social order. He asserts that after the age of reformation in Europe, religion is as a matter of private belief.

Another work that is useful to me is *Religion in Modern Europe; a Memory Mutates* written by Grace Davie who traces the three formative factors that created the unity called Europe which are: Judaeo-Christian monotheism, Greek rationalism and Roman organization, as the core of European culture. He assesses the relationship between the church and the state and how both can co-exist in a secular society.

Another prominent work that is relevant to our study is a chapter which entitled 'Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain' written by Steven Vertovec contained in a book *Muslims in the West from Sojourners to Citizens* edited by Haddad, Y.Y. The author explains diverse ways in which Muslims are being maligned in the media in Europe, the discrimination and even violence against Muslims. He also explains how the Muslims contribute positively to the development of Britain. The book traces the history of Muslim populations in Britain from small clusters before Second World War, to a large Muslims from south Asians years after. Muslims gradually were given recognition; provision of *halal* food, chaplaincy etc.

Another work that is relevant to us is *Diasporas; Concepts, Intersections and identities* edited by Kim Knott and Sean McLoughlin. In an article written by McLoughlin titled 'Muslim Travellers: Homing Desire, the Umma and British-Pakistanis' discusses how immigrants always feel attached to their homelands all over the world through the convenience of phone calls. Islam being a universal religion binds every Muslim together, and resolves the issue of cultural identities. Religion is seen as original globalizer.

In his chapter titled, 'Muslim Migrants in Europe: between Euro-Islam and Ghettoization' Tibi, the

author, examines what he meant by Euro-Islam in his subtitle of 'Prospects for a Euro-Islam'. He views the identity of Muslims as the identity of culturally different people who share the same faith. He argues that if it is possible to talk about 'Afro-Islam' for African Muslims or 'Indo-Islam' for Indian Muslims, then why can't people talk about Muslims who migrated to Western Europe as 'Euro-Islam.' The author asserts that Euro-Islam is Islam that provides liberal variety of Islam acceptable to Muslims migrants and their European host societies. It accommodates European idea of secularity, human rights, individual citizenship and contemporary secular democracy. Euro-Islam is only adjusted to the civic culture of modernity. It is compared to African Islam, adjusted to domestic African cultures. Its major feature is cultural modernity. It is a form of civil society that will bring open minded Islamic identity compatible with European civic culture. He believes in cultural pluralism rather than multiculturalism.

Hellyer work titled '*Muslims of Europe, the 'other' Europeans*' examines the Islamic shariah on whether Muslims can live in non-Muslim land. He asserts that there is almost a consensus among the Muslim scholars except with little variations; that Muslims should not live in a non-Muslim land. He says that Al-Sarakshi goes to the extent that the Muslims should not bear off spring in a non-Muslim land out of fear that they will acquire the traits of non-Muslims. The Malik School is stricter because he was afraid of the fact that Muslims may submit to their laws. Haifaa Jawad and Tansin Benn in their book '*Muslim Women in the United Kingdom and Beyond; Experience and Images*' chronicle the history of Islam in Europe. They explain the discriminations experienced by Muslims. They highlight the complexity of key historical and contemporary factors compounding this phenomenon. They believe that there is a cultural and religious racism in the west.

2.1 Migration among Africans

The peoples of Africa have been travelling from the time immemorial, mostly as slaves, who helped in building pyramids in Egypt. They also facilitated in building Greek and Roman civilization (Richardson, 2010). Sub-Saharan and trans-Sharan Africans, up until now, Africans are still migrating, and as such the importance of African diasporas cannot be overemphasized. It is altruism that human beings from time immemorial have used migration as a source of survival.

The term 'diaspora' means 'dispersed people'. It was first used for the Jews because of their long historical

dislocation and longing for their own homeland (Chikezie, 2011). It also includes any group of people with a shared sense of identity and a bond to their place of origin whether real or fictional. Migration has made the world dynamic. In fact, not every journey can be termed diaspora, emphasizing that attention must be paid on the historical, socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of movement and settlement. (Brah, 1996) African Diasporas have played a huge role in developing their various countries. It has impacted the abolition of slave trade and the attainment of independence. Sean McLoughlin opines that diaspora is not confined to the experiences of people, colour or the minorities who have migrated from Asia, Africa and the Middle East in the post war period; the Irish, Brazilians, Indians and Pakistanis in America also point to Diaspora, diverse diasporas do share many continuities of experience for all their differences. The words diaspora, migration and transnationalism are interrelated in meanings:

Diaspora arises from some form of migration, but not all migration involves diasporic consciousness; all transnational communities comprise diasporas, but not all diasporas develop transnationalism. (Vertovec Steven, 2004:282)

Migration involves movement from one place to another; the challenges are making people to readjust and adapt to the new contexts. Migrants usually constitute the minority groups wherever they as they differ from the majority in terms of race, language, culture and religion. Such difference manifests also in residential, educational and employment patterns. Diaspora suggests dispersal from a homeland, distinctive community of co-ethnics, and increased consciousness of a connection to their homeland (Sean McLoughlin, 2009).

In contemporary scholarship, diasporas must be contextualized in terms of changing patterns of international mobility and developments in postmodern and postcolonial theory. The study of diaspora cannot be divorced from religion because; it has impacted positively the study of religion. In the 1980s, it came to incorporate those hitherto known as immigrants, ethnic minorities, exiles, expatriates, refugees, guest-workers and so on. Migration has now become tenuous and multidirectional. It is not only movement from poor, less developed, war-stricken to affluent ones, or asylum seekers, refugees or economic but is now characterized by highly and less- skilled migrants, missionaries, tourists and circular migrants. (Adogame, 2013) Migration cuts across all genders searching for a 'golden fleece', and they become the bread winners of their families' home. Migrants

usually settle, adapt and assimilate into their new homes and serve as links with their original homelands. It appears that women tend to be a key constituent of global migration. (Boyd, 1989)

3. Challenges Facing African Muslims in Europe

Europe in antiquity owed a great deal to Islam and classical Islamic civilization. Personalities such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ibn Khalidun, al-Ghazal contributed to different fields of study in the age of Renaissance, as at that time, Islam was relegated. Muslims presence in Europe is dated back to seventh century (Hellyer, 2009). It was started by traders and diplomats. Islam made an impact on Europe and European culture; this impact was also caused by 'new presence' of Muslims because of immigration (Hellyer, 2009). Countries such as: Spain and Portugal were predominantly Muslim countries. Some members of the British House of Lords were Muslims. Islam had a long history in European civilization, and impacted in many areas such as philosophy, theology, mathematics, chemistry, medicine, music. An estimated 15 million Muslims live in Europe; this phenomenal growth could be traced back to the 21st century, when the principles of liberal pluralism worked in European societies, although it has its challenges Uddin Khan (2000). It is however accepted that the Muslims population in Europe will continue to rise; it is projected that by 2030 Muslims will make up 8% of Europe population. Muslims are the fastest growing community in EU almost 11-12 million in pre-2005 EU, so their population poses challenges to the wider European Union. Hellyer (2009). Although, 'no society can ever ensure full equality to all its cultural minorities'. (Parekh (1998: 411)

The British state assumes that Muslims are one and they have a uniform religious identity. This assumption causes a mutual distrust. One of the challenges Muslims face in Britain is that the state does not recognize Muslims' social and religious values. There should be societal solidarity and 'loyalty' on the part of the Muslims to integrate and adjust within British minorities' society (Parsons, 1970). Minority and majority relationship is one of power and hegemony which the mainstreams majority asserts with apparent disdain to the minority's values, culture and identity. The adjustment and accommodation are problematic to the minority Muslims, and responsible for the stifling climate between the minority Muslims and the mainstream British society.

There is a great deal of suspicion, perhaps even conflict in the minds of

both non-Muslims and Muslims in Bradford over the values of each appear to hold sacred, and which each side is prepared to defend tooth and nail. (Siddique 1993:30)

The commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia titled: 'Islamophobia; A Challenge for us All', appears to be contradictory; at one end it says the Muslims in Britain should maintain their culture, but on the other hand it asserts that is not easy to practice. Apparently, the Muslims are not recognized, and the government is not sensitive to their plights. Muslim communities in Britain reflect their linguistic, cultural and racial diversity. Most of the Muslims in the UK are from South Asian origin because of the colonial factor and the economic reconstruction of the post war Britain, made them to migrate to the United Kingdom (Khan, 1970). Education is the most contentious and passionate issues among the Muslims in Britain; it gets immediate reaction from the Muslims. The Muslims hold on to their religious, cultural and social values. Issues are put at their cultural and religious boundaries, for instance, the issue of homosexuals, non-abolition of section 28. (Goulbourne, 1998)

There would be a lasting trauma between Islam, Europe, colonialism and Christianity (Said (1995). Khan opines that Islam is being merely tolerated in the west; it is not seen as an equal partner. The belief in the west is that Muslims have not lived up to the liberal and progressive values of the west. Muslims are 'unenlightened and unsophisticated'. The Europeans see Islam as barbaric, degenerate, tyrannical and violent. It has been advanced up until today what is known as 'clash of civilizations' that Islam and Muslims are a threat and the west must solve the problem (Huntington, 1993). Although, Said considers his claim as 'preposterous' to incite the public against Islam. There is a doubt in some quarters how a liberal society could tolerate 'eastern' culture and belief. The belief is that western culture should be paramount, because the two cultures are incompatible. Salman Rushdie's book was hailed because it followed the norms and met the expectations of the west. (Dalrymple's 1998)

The challenges that the Muslim migrants face could be compared to moving from the village to the city. They equally face 'European related problems such as coping with loneliness, preserving kinship ties with their countries of origin, language difficulties, cultural adjustments and work opportunities' (Haifa and Tansen, 2003). There is also the challenge of sustaining the 'pristinism' of their religion-Islam in a

predominantly non-Muslim environment. The issue of discrimination on religious ground also exists in Europe to Muslim women with their heterogeneous cultural background. Some Muslim women face double oppression; 'culture of their community and culture of their religion'. Muslims also experience discrimination at work. Documented cases show that some Muslim women are being sacked or dismissed simply because they wear the hijab. The clash of Islamic teaching and the manner of adapting to western culture causes rift in the family, divorce, single parenthood, and children sometimes taken over by the social workers. Apparently, the rise in the number of Muslim immigrants living in the West, and the issue of terrorism has led to these countries' tough measures on immigration.

It should be noted that materials on African Muslims in the UK are very scarce, but this section will form a broad experience of Muslim immigrants from Asia, Pakistan. They all virtually experience common phenomenon. The experience of Muslims living in Europe is that of contrasting civilizations, values and perceptions which will go a long way to endure. The European society does not accord a level of respect and accommodation to the Muslims. The attitude of the west towards Islam as violent and barbaric religion is still resonating up until today, as against the western civilization Salmon's Rushdie's book lent credence to this. Europe sees Islamic law as 'vile' and 'barbaric'. Muslims in Europe are victims of religious discrimination. Khan goes further to assert that Muslims are looked upon with suspicion and perception as enemy within. This idea will not create room for integration nor has dialogue, the wave of 'Islamic fundamentalism' aggravated the perception.

Muslims' experience in Europe is that strongly held Muslim values and customs are being challenged constantly by the new experiences. Living as a minority group in an entrenched Christian majority affects all aspects of a Muslim life and it dislocates it. Muslims have limited influence on state policy especially in education, social life of the children and recognition of Islamic laws within the European legal framework. Islam is a total way of life and any attempt to disrupt it, affects the life of a Muslim, but Europe emphasizes acculturation. Khan observes that for Muslims to live in this continent they 'have to forfeit aspects of their values and culture and to some extents have to submit to cultural dominance by a non-Muslim majority'. He advocates for compromise, but this will be determined by the sensitivity and willingness to accommodate differences and diversity by the dominant group.

An estimated 3 million Muslims live in Britain alone although, he admits that the figure is controversial (Khan, 2001). Another figure was suggested for Muslims in Britain and says most of them are from Pakistani origin. (Tariq Modood, 2002). The British institutions had an impact on the family, educational, health and welfare systems of the minority Muslims. It seems this broadly Christian society is unmindful of the Muslims religious sensibility. Muslims activism was constrained. The presence of these Muslims in Britain in the 1970s brought about the issue of racism because of colour and ethnicity, discriminating against Muslims at that period was lawful, because the courts were yet to accept Muslims as an ethnic group. Muslims are being under represented in public offices, prestigious jobs. The Asian Muslims are considered as the most disadvantaged and poorest groups in Britain; the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis face racist problems.

Religions do indigenize and strengthen territorial identifications. Religion as an original globaliser, and diasporas often display rationalized and homogenizing accounts of their traditions (Sean McLoughlin 2010). The other experience that is generic is the cultural difference and intermixture which causes misunderstanding and alienation. Some African migrants seem to lose their custom and language when they cannot recollect their actual place and the religion especially Islam; the universal brotherhood opens the possibility for homing desire. The minorities are seemingly not recognized because they do not conform to the universal claims of modernity in the west. Religious beliefs and legal practices that Muslims share have provided their 'citizenship' (Dalal, 1995). Religion and nationalism have always been functioning as modes for individual and collective identity in a world of global political context; this is the process of modernization (Bryan, 2011). Since the late nineteenth century, citizenship was the dominant juridical framework of the society as the mode of national membership and individual identity.

Helley proposes that the Muslims in Europe are struggling to become more integral components of European society, so as not to be 'non-assimilated'. The European Government is experimenting with more innovative solutions to confirm the fact of their democracy as remaining respectful of differences and multiculturalism. Each society trying to understand each other in their defining future, in the hope of finding a future of mutual benefit. Some western trends of thought do identify Muslims in the way Jews were identified in the nineteenth century, as an ethnic group. Europe, a secular society part of their multiculturalism principle is their liberal posture

towards the Muslims. They see Islamic religion as emphasizing Muslim ethics, morals, values and the way they participate in the society. After the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation; there were a few challenges that came up in the UK. Muslims were neither seen as faith communities nor ethno-cultural minorities. Religion was thus marginalized. There is ever increasing tension between secularism and religion, but they are supposed to be a healthy relationship between the two, for the peaceful coexistence of the society.

The Hijab or headscarf ban in France was another Muslim's experience in Europe, the principle of assimilation of French Government and their single culture to be imbibed by all. It means that certain members of the society are more equal than the others. Until recently, the UK and other European countries have refused to fund Muslim schools, while Catholic, Anglican and Jewish schools received state funds. In fact, there is controversy among the Muslims jurists on the legality of whether Muslims can live in non-Muslim land. Both Hanafi and Malik oppose Muslims living in a non-Muslim land. Many factors contribute to the detriment of Muslim women living in the west, they have been caught between a host nation which is hostile to their faith and culture, the tension was caused by lack of understanding of religion and culture (Haifaa and Tansin, 2003).

3.1 Solutions to the Challenges

The solution to the problem is educating the public, because many of the people of the west are victims of religious disenchantment. Radical Islam was the biggest threat to the west as they consider it as taking over, where communism left off (Khan, 2000). Sardar cautions that demonizing minority culture has always been the tool used in the past by the west, but it had devastating consequences. The culture of racism and portraying other culture as inferior should not be allowed. The state should play the role of educating the public. Muslim minorities in contemporary Europe are victims of not only racism, but also of religious discrimination. Sardar believes that 'the western conservatives as well as liberal intellectual traditions themselves are racist'. According to him, this is also reflected in traditional scholarship on Islam. He asserts that such approach is also found in disciplines such as anthropology whose sole function is only to contain non-white cultures. Khan also suggests that following the post 1945 settlement of Muslims in Britain, Muslims living in Britain must forfeit aspects of their value and culture and submit to cultural, social and political dominance of a non-Muslim majority.

Therefore, there should be compromise on the part of the minority Muslim communities living in Britain.

4. Assessment of Impact of European culture on the African Muslims. (My Observations)

Based on many literatures I studied and my personal observations, interviews and interactions with the African Muslims living in both Leeds and Bradford, I was able to deduce the followings points:

4.1 Positive Implications

Benefits of Western Education; this has tremendous and lasting changes on the Muslims life and understanding of Islam which is made possible through the instrument of western education. The western education being enjoyed largely by Muslim children will afford them the benefit of understanding their rights and obligations. It will make them to be more useful to themselves and to their communities. In the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe, Muslims have been making huge impacts in medicine, engineering, technologies, sciences, computer, sports and businesses.

Employment opportunities; through the mechanism of western education, it equips the Muslims to self-survival. It helps them to take adequate care of their families and becoming self-dependent.

Leadership; both in the mosques and the Muslim organizations, priority is placed on the well-educated Muslims to become Imams, presidents, secretaries that will be able to interact with people outside the Muslim organizations and the mosques through English language.

Understanding of Islamic Religion; through western education, many Islamic literatures and books in virtually all aspects of Islam and fields of study have been translated to English. This has facilitated the understanding of the religion, and accelerated proselytization of the people of other faiths to Islam. Non-Muslims and non-Arabs can study Islam. It reduces human rights abuses. Muslims living in Europe through interaction have been in a good stead. **Standard of Living;** through the benefit system, living in Europe has improved the standard of living for many Muslims who came from the third world countries. Many are very poor in their home countries, but on getting to Europe they have access to good health facilities, social infrastructure and good education.

Contributing to the GDP of their Home Countries; through working in Europe, many African Muslims do send money to their families back home. Some also do

embark on useful project and creating jobs among their people.

4.2 Negative Implications

While it is true that there are positive effects, some argue that the **negative implications** are even greater:

Preference given to Western education and relegation of Islamic Education: Many African Muslims living in Europe cannot read the Quran in its original language Arabic. No time is allotted for Islamic or Quranic education in the public schools' curriculum. The very busy life of the west makes it very cumbersome for many parents to take their wards to private Arabic or Quranic schools after school. Some that do attend, study shows that it does not have much positive effect on them. Some do not observe the five daily prayers effectively let alone the Friday Jumuat.

Assimilation: The European culture is being assimilated among the Muslim youths because of the medium of western education. Many Muslims give more preference to western culture than Islamic pristine culture.

Relegation of Islamic Culture: Another negative effect of Western education is its non-recognition of Islamic religion, except on personal basis. Islam is not recognized in Europe; the present wave of name calling has compounded the perception. It leads to perfunctory observation of Islam.

Misunderstanding in the family: Some Muslims have imbibed the culture of liberation, equality to the extent that some Muslim children do not respect their parents. Misunderstanding often arises in the family. Whereas the African culture and Islam teach that children must respect and take care of their parents. (Q17-23-24) Wives are also enjoined to obey and take permission from their husbands. Acculturation has made such relationship difficult and it causes tension sometimes in the family. Doi asserts that the western civilization and culture attribute exaggerated value to the earthly life, 'my kingdom is of this world alone'.

Mixed Islam: One of the factors that contributes to 'mixed' Islam among the African Muslims is western culture and civilization. (Balogun, 2011). Colonialism, western education and interaction with Christianity have made some Muslims to import some religious, economic and social practices that are alien to Islam. Some of these areas of inter-mixture are wedding, funeral ceremony, and birthday parties

Shallowness in the practice of Islam: Western society is entrenched in secularization, bifurcating the world into sacred and profane. Some who were very devout while in Africa, but on getting to Europe, the

life style and philosophy of the society is different. Some African Muslims do adapt to this life style.

Individualism- has played a significant role in the development of western philosophy and political theory, which some African Muslims have imbibed.

5. Conclusion

In this work, attempt has been made to examine the divergent experiences of African Muslims living in Europe by way of extrapolation. There is dearth of materials on African Muslims in Europe, United Kingdom inclusive. Some relevant literatures were reviewed to direct my perspectives on this topic. The study also chronicles some of the reasons and the origin of African Muslims migrating in substantial proportion to Europe. We established from the study that varied and unending challenges which African Muslims will go through in Europe because it is predominantly a Christian nation. The solution to the challenges lies in understanding of Islam by the host communities will go a long way to dousing the tension. Islam is seen as contrasting civilizations. Both the positive and the negative impacts were also examined.

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The Tree of Prohibition and the Theology of Limits: Genesis 2:9, 16-17 and Contemporary Eco-Ethical Responsibility

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Abstract. This study examines the prohibition concerning the tree in the midst of the garden in Genesis 2:9, 16-17 and how this could form a basis for a theology of limit intrinsic to creation. While eco-theological discourse has largely focused on constructive dominion in Genesis 1, this paper contends that the prohibition regarding the tree in Genesis 2 provides a foundational paradigm for understanding creaturely responsibility. Using the methodology of theological exegesis, the study engages key biblical scholars like Walter Brueggemann, Gordon J. Wenham, and Claus Westermann to examine the literary centrality of the tree, the structure of generous permission and singular prohibition, and the anthropological significance of humanity formed from the soil. Their insights illuminate how freedom in the garden is bounded by divine command. In constructive dialogue with Jürgen Moltmann and Sallie McFague, the paper argues that limit is not punitive but constitutive of creatureliness. The tree functions as a visible sign of non-absolute human access, thus grounding ecological responsibility in restraint, relationality, and reverent participation within the ordered creation.

Keywords: Ecological crisis, Tree of Prohibition, Theology of Limits, Eco-Theology, Responsibility, and Creatureliness.

1. Introduction

The seriousness of the ecological crisis of the twenty-first century evidenced in climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption has compelled renewed theological reflection on the human responsibility within creation. Christian eco-theology has increasingly turned to the Genesis creation narratives to reassess the moral and spiritual foundations of humanity's relationship with the earth. Historically, much of this discussion has centered on Genesis 1:26–28, particularly the mandate to “have dominion” and “subdue” the earth. These texts have

been interpreted both as contributing to ecological exploitation and as providing a basis for responsible stewardship (White, 1967; Bauckham, 2010; Moltmann, 1985; Koko, 2018; Koko & Akionla, 2024). While this debate remains important, it has often overshadowed the theological significance of Genesis 2 especially the prohibition concerning the tree in the midst of the garden (Gen 2:9, 16–17).

Contrary to the mandate for dominion, emerges another portrayal of humanity formed from the ground and placed within a cultivated garden and instructed to till and keep it (Gen. 2:15), suggesting relational responsibility and participatory care (Davis, 2009; Fretheim, 2005). Notably, the narrative juxtaposes divine generosity with divinely instituted restraint. In this restraint, human is permitted to eat freely from every tree of the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which remains prohibited (Gen 2:16-17). The structure of the command embeds limitation within abundance. Traditional interpretations have largely understood this prohibition in moral, anthropological, or epistemological terms, emphasizing obedience, free will, or the quest for autonomy (Westermann, 1984; Wenham, 1987). While these readings are theologically substantial, they often neglect the ecological implications of a divinely established boundary within creation itself.

The current study contends that this prohibition mandate articulates more than a moral test; it encodes a theological vision in which limit and restraint are constitutive of human flourishing. The relative underdevelopment of this passage within eco-theological discourse constitutes a significant scholarly gap. While eco-theology has critiqued anthropocentrism and reinterpreted dominion language (Habel, 2000; Bauckham, 2010), less attention has been given to how Genesis 2 frames human vocation through prohibition and boundary. In a global context marked by extractive economies, consumerist excess, and technocratic paradigms that

disregard ecological limits (Francis, 2015), retrieving a biblical theology of limits is both timely and necessary.

The significance of this research is that it shifts eco-theological reflection from the question of power to the question of restraint. By rereading the “tree in the midst” as a symbolic marker of creaturely finitude and divine sovereignty, the study proposes that ecological responsibility is grounded not merely in stewardship but in obedience to divinely instituted boundaries. Such a perspective contributes to ongoing theological efforts to cultivate ecological humility, reverence, and accountability within creation (Moltmann, 1985; Bauckham, 2010). Methodologically, this paper employs a canonical-theological exegesis of Genesis 2:9, 16–17, attentive to literary structure, key Hebrew expressions, and narrative theology, while engaging contemporary eco-theological scholarship. Through an eco-hermeneutical rereading, it develops a constructive synthesis centered on the concept of a “theology of limits.” By so doing, the study seeks to fill a critical lacuna in biblical eco-theology by demonstrating that the prohibition narrative offers a foundational paradigm for contemporary eco-theological responsibility.

2. Concept of Ecological Crisis and the Imperative of Ecological Responsibility

The contemporary ecological crisis represents one of the most far-reaching and destabilizing challenges in human history. Manifested in climate change, biodiversity collapse, deforestation, ocean acidification, soil degradation, freshwater scarcity, and escalating pollution, the crisis is not merely environmental but civilizational in scope. It raises fundamental questions about humanity’s place within the natural order, the moral limits of technological power, and the ethical responsibilities that accompany human agency. The seriousness of the crisis lies not only in its empirical scale but in its theological, philosophical, and anthropological implications.

A decisive moment in modern discourse on ecology and religion occurred with the publication of Lynn White Jr.’s seminal article, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” (1967). White argued that Western Christianity, particularly in its Latin medieval forms, contributed to ecological degradation by desacralizing nature and legitimizing human dominion over it. Within this context, the biblical mandate to “subdue” and “have dominion” over the earth in Genesis 1 fostered an anthropocentric worldview that elevated human interests above the intrinsic value of non-human creation (White, 1967). Although his

thesis has been extensively critiqued and nuanced, it catalyzed an enduring debate about the theological roots of environmental exploitation. White’s intervention compelled theologians to reexamine scriptural interpretation, doctrinal anthropology, and the moral logic of dominion. Following White’s analysis, some critics have argued that he oversimplified the Christian tradition and neglected strands within biblical theology that affirm the goodness and integrity of creation (Bauckham, 2010; Santmire, 2000). Nevertheless, White’s central insight that religious worldviews shape ecological behavior remains influential. If theological imagination has historically contributed to environmental degradation, it may also serve as a resource for ecological renewal.

The seriousness of the ecological crisis is underscored by a number of empirical reports. For example, scientific consensus affirms that anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions are driving global warming, resulting in rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and disruptions to ecosystems (IPCC, 2023). Biodiversity loss is occurring at rates unprecedented in human history, with species extinction accelerating due to habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change (IPBES, 2019). These developments are not isolated phenomena but interconnected symptoms of a broader pattern of unsustainable human activity. The ecological crisis is therefore not merely technical but structural. It is linked to economic systems predicated on perpetual growth, consumerist cultures that normalize excesses and technological paradigms that prioritize efficiency over restraint. It is in this light that Pope Francis identifies what he calls the “technocratic paradigm” as a dominant framework that assumes unlimited human control over nature and disregards intrinsic limits (Francis, 2015). Within such a paradigm, the natural world is reduced to raw material for production and consumption. Mpigi and Bob-Manuel (2025) observe that water which is an essential natural endowment meant for human survival and serves a crucial role in various aspects of ecological life, has also been used for agricultural purposes such as irrigation, crop growth and livestock production. In the industry, water is used for manufacturing goods, cooling systems and as a raw material. Water is also used in hydroelectric power generation; it is also used for recreational purposes such as swimming, boating and in the medical industry. In these processes, the water and environment are affected negatively. Conversely, ecological degradation becomes the predictable outcome of a worldview that confuses capability with legitimacy.

But beyond this, the seriousness of the crisis is further intensified by its disproportionate impact on

vulnerable populations. Environmental degradation exacerbates poverty, food insecurity, and displacement, particularly in regions already burdened by economic and political instability. Climate-induced droughts and floods undermine agricultural systems, threaten livelihoods, and heighten social tensions. Thus, ecological collapse intersects with issues of justice, equity, and human dignity (Northcott, 2007). Ecological responsibility cannot be separated from concern for the marginalized, as environmental harm often amplifies existing inequalities.

Theologically, the crisis exposes a distortion in humanity's self-understanding. Jürgen Moltmann argues that modernity has cultivated a conception of humanity as master and possessor of nature, severed from relational embeddedness within creation (Moltmann, 1985). This anthropological inflation fosters an illusion of autonomy that neglects dependence upon ecological systems. Also, when humanity forgets its creaturely status, it risks transforming technological power into unchecked domination. The ecological crisis thus reflects a crisis of limits: the failure to recognize boundaries inherent in both natural systems and human finitude. Richard Bauckham is therefore perfectly in order to contend that Scripture presents humanity not as isolated ruler but as participant within the "community of creation" (Bauckham, 2010). The biblical vision situates humans alongside other creatures under the sovereignty of God. This framework challenges anthropocentrism by affirming that non-human creation possesses value independent of instrumental utility. The erosion of such a vision contributes to ecological exploitation. If creation is perceived solely as resource, responsibility yields to consumption.

For Norman Habel and the Earth Bible project, biblical interpretation must recover the voice and agency of Earth itself, resisting readings that marginalize non-human existence (Habel, 2000). Although their hermeneutical approach has generated debate, it underscores a growing recognition that ecological responsibility requires reexamining interpretive assumptions that privilege human dominance. The seriousness of the crisis demands not only policy reform but also hermeneutical and moral transformation.

Philosophically, the ecological crisis calls into question Enlightenment narratives of progress. The assumption that technological advancement necessarily entails moral advancement has proven indefensible. Holmes Rolston III observes that humanity has acquired unprecedented power without commensurate moral development, creating a perilous

imbalance (Rolston, 1994). The capacity to manipulate ecosystems does not guarantee wisdom in their management. Therefore, ecological responsibility that entails cultivating virtues of prudence, humility, and restraint is urgently needed to address this situation.

By ecological responsibility, we are referring to the moral obligation to preserve the integrity, stability, and flourishing of Earth's systems for present and future generations. This responsibility is grounded in several interrelated principles. First, interdependence meaning that human well-being is inseparable from the health of ecosystems. Second, justice implying that environmental harms disproportionately affect the poor and unborn. Third, stewardship or trusteeship inferring that human agency entails accountability to a transcendent moral order; and fourth, precaution which means that actions with potentially catastrophic consequences demand careful restraint.

According to Pope Francis, ecological responsibility is "care for our common home," integrating environmental concern with social and spiritual renewal (Francis, 2015). He emphasizes that ecological conversion involves more than regulatory compliance; it requires a transformation of desire and imagination. Similarly, Moltmann envisions a theology of creation that reorients humanity from domination toward participation in God's sustaining work (Moltmann, 1985). Such perspectives underscore that responsibility is not merely reactive but constructive.

The seriousness of the ecological crisis also lies in its temporal dimension. Environmental degradation often unfolds gradually, obscuring immediate consequences while accumulating long-term harm. This temporal lag complicates moral perception, as short-term benefits may mask future costs. Ecological responsibility therefore requires anticipatory ethics, that is, a willingness to act prudently in light of projected risks. The precautionary principle reflects this orientation, urging restraint when scientific uncertainty intersects with potential irreversible damage (Koko, 2018; Koko & Akionla, 2024). It is undeniable that pollution has accompanied mankind ever since groups of people first congregated and remained for a long time in any one place. Yet, this form of pollution that is characteristic of industrial societies is not only annoying but has serious health implications. Illustrating is that steady exposure to noise in excess can cause permanent loss of hearing. In addition to causing loss of hearing, there is some evidence that noise can produce other deleterious effects on human

health and on work performance. (Mpigi and Nwosu, 2026)

Moreover, ecological responsibility must be communal rather than exclusively individual. While personal lifestyle changes are significant, systemic transformation is indispensable. Policies regulating emissions, protecting biodiversity, and restructuring energy systems are essential components of collective responsibility. The crisis exceeds the capacity of isolated actors; it demands coordinated institutional response at local, national, and global levels.

Above all, it is safe to state that the ecological crisis is serious because it threatens the stability of Earth's life-support systems, exacerbates injustice, and reveals profound distortions in human self-understanding. From White's provocative thesis regarding theological complicity (White, 1967) to contemporary analyses of technocratic excess (Francis, 2015) and relational ontology (Bauckham, 2010; Moltmann, 1985), scholars and theologians converge on a central insight: ecological degradation is inseparable from moral and spiritual disorder. Ecological responsibility, therefore, entails more than technical remediation; it requires reconfiguring the narratives, values, and practices that govern human engagement with the natural world. Only through such comprehensive reorientation can humanity hope to address the depth and breadth of the crisis that now confronts the global community.

3. Contextual and Literary Exploration of the Tree in the Midst of the Garden

Contextually and structurally, the text Genesis 2:9, 16–17 occupies a central place within the garden narrative. This is because the text presents two named trees “in the midst of the garden” namely: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Interestingly, the description of the tree is followed by a divine command that combines expansive permission with a single prohibition in the text. The literary arrangement and theological logic of these verses suggest that the tree of prohibition functions not merely as narrative ornamentation but as a constitutive feature of human existence before God. For purpose of clarity, it is important to explore its literary context using understandable subthemes.

The Theological Significance and Meaning of Tree in the Midst of the Garden

One significant thing about the tree in the midst of the garden is the description accorded to it in the text. To be specific, Genesis 2:9 states thus:

...the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Etymologically, the phrase “in the midst” is translated from the Hebrew *בְּתוֹךְ*, *betok* and signals the special location of the tree. In biblical narrative, the “midst” often denotes a place of theological intensity, the locus of presence, encounter, or decision. The positioning of the trees at the center of the garden indicates that they are not peripheral but symbolically determinative for the human vocation within the narrative world. Claus Westermann observes that the naming of the two trees interrupts what would otherwise be a generalized description of the garden's fertility (Westermann, 1984). The narrative could have remained at the level of aesthetic and alimentary abundance; however, it deliberately singles out these two trees. Therefore, for Westermann, this narrative particularization indicates that the trees bear theological weight beyond botanical description. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, especially, is introduced in anticipation of the command that follows, thereby establishing a structural link between its special placement and divine speech.

A similar observation is made by Gordon J. Wenham who emphasizes that the placement of the trees “in the midst” heightens their narrative prominence (Wenham, 1987). Although Genesis 3:3 appears to associate the phrase particularly with the tree of knowledge, Wenham argues that Genesis 2:9 grammatically places both trees at the center. This centrality renders the trees unavoidable features of the human environment; they are not hidden or marginal but stand within the horizon of human awareness. The human creature is thus constituted as one who lives in proximity to both life and prohibition.

Walter Brueggemann on his part interprets the tree of knowledge as a “boundary marker” within the garden's ordered freedom (Brueggemann, 1982). Its location in the midst signifies that the human relationship to God is not structured by unmediated autonomy but by a visible, tangible limit. In this light, the central tree embodies the claim that creaturely life unfolds within a defined sphere established by divine will. Thus, the special place functions literarily to underscore theological meaning that at the heart of human habitation stands a sign of divine prerogative.

3.1 The Structure of Permission and Prohibition

Literary, Genesis 2:16–17 presents one of the most carefully structured divine commands in the Hebrew Bible:

You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

The structure is rhetorically significant. The command begins not with restriction but with expansive permission. The Hebrew construction in verse 16 employs the infinitive absolute with the imperfect *'ākōl tō 'kēl* (you may surely eat or you shall freely eat) which intensifies the sense of generosity (Wenham, 1987). The doubling of the verb communicates emphatic allowance. As Westermann notes, the command opens with an unrestricted affirmation that frames the prohibition as secondary and derivative (Westermann, 1984). Only after this sweeping permission does the text introduce the adversative particle “but” that marks the single exception. The prohibition is grammatically and conceptually dependent upon the prior grant. Brueggemann underscores this ordering, arguing that the negative command is intelligible only within the context of abundance (Brueggemann, 1982). The human creature is not defined initially by what is withheld but by what is given.

This literary sequencing is theologically decisive. The prohibition does not negate freedom; it shapes it. Wenham remarks that the structure of the command demonstrates that the restriction is minimal in scope relative to the plenitude permitted (Wenham, 1987). The singularity of the prohibition, that is, one tree among many invariably heightens the asymmetry between gift and limit. The narrative thereby resists construing God as primarily restrictive; rather, the restriction functions as a delimitation within generosity.

Westermann interprets the prohibition as a necessary correlate of the divine–human relationship (Westermann, 1984). The implication is that without command, there would be no dialogical structure to human existence before God. The presence of a prohibition introduces the possibility of obedience, which in turn presupposes freedom. But this freedom is not self-grounding; it is conferred and bounded. In essence, it could be argued that the command situates the human creature within a field of responsibility that is inseparable from divine address.

3.2 Abundance and the Single Restriction

The juxtaposition of “every tree” with “the tree” accentuates the disproportion between abundance and restriction. Genesis 2:9 has already described the garden as containing “every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.” Verse 16 reiterates the comprehensiveness of the gift: “of every tree of the garden you may freely eat.” Against this plenitude stands one named exception. Again, Brueggemann characterizes this narrative pattern as “limit within generosity” (Brueggemann, 1982). The single restriction signals that human life is neither marked by scarcity nor by absolute license. The creature inhabits a world that is richly provided yet not exhaustively available. The withholding of one tree establishes that not all possibilities are granted to the human agent.

Wenham draws attention to the way the prohibition sharpens narrative tension by isolating a specific object of desire (Wenham, 1987). The restriction’s narrow scope intensifies its theological significance. If numerous trees were forbidden, the command might suggest deprivation. Instead, the singularity of the prohibition underscores that the limit is qualitative rather than quantitative. It concerns a specific kind of knowledge, “the knowledge of good and evil”, which many scholars understand as an instruction denoting comprehensive moral discernment or autonomous judgment (Wenham, 1987; Westermann, 1984). Moreover, Westermann contends that the knowledge in question is not mere intellectual awareness but a claim to determine the boundaries of good and evil independently of divine command (Westermann, 1984). In this sense, the single restriction guards a domain that belongs uniquely to God. The human is permitted broad participation in the goods of creation, yet the authority to define ultimate moral order remains beyond creaturely grasp. The prohibition thus delineates a sphere of divine prerogative.

The abundance–restriction dynamic reveals that the narrative is not preoccupied with ascetic limitation but with ordered freedom. The single withheld tree is the sign that creaturely life is derivative and accountable. The restriction is minimal in material terms but maximal in theological import.

3.3 Freedom Bounded by Command

The command in Genesis 2:16–17 also establishes a paradoxical vision of freedom. On the one hand, the human is addressed as a responsible agent capable of obedience or disobedience. On the other hand, the parameters of action are clearly demarcated by divine speech. Freedom, therefore, is neither illusory nor

absolute; it is bounded. Commenting on this, Brueggemann argues that the prohibition discloses the “seriousness of creaturehood” (Brueggemann, 1982). This means that to be a creature is to live in responsive relation to the Creator. The command defines the human as one who hears and must decide. Yet the decision is framed within a limit that the creature does not establish. Autonomy in the sense of self-legislation is excluded; freedom is exercised within the order given by God.

Wenham notes that the threat of death attached to the prohibition -“you shall surely die” intensifies the gravity of the command (Wenham, 1987). The formula conveys certainty rather than immediacy, underscoring that the violation of the limit carries existential consequences. The narrative thereby integrates freedom and accountability. The human may transgress, but not without cost. For Westermann, the prohibition functions as a defining element of human existence before God (Westermann, 1984). Without limit, the human would not stand as creature distinct from Creator. The command demarcates the boundary between divine sovereignty and human agency. In refusing the fruit, the human acknowledges this distinction; in taking it, the human attempts to collapse it.

In all, the literary artistry of Genesis 2:9, 16–17 thus presents a world structured by gift and command. The trees in the midst are not incidental details but focal symbols around which the narrative’s theology turns. The generous permission affirms the goodness and accessibility of creation, while the singular prohibition establishes a non-negotiable boundary. Together, they define freedom as participatory yet limited.

3.4 Limit as Intrinsic to Creatureliness

The cumulative effect of the position of the tree, rhetorical structure, and asymmetrical restriction is to introduce limit as intrinsic to creaturely existence. The human is placed within abundance but not granted ultimacy. The prohibition signifies that creatureliness entails acknowledgment of boundaries that one does not set. Brueggemann’s reading highlights that the tree of knowledge marks “the boundary of human freedom” (Brueggemann, 1982). Wenham’s exegetical attention to the grammar of permission underscores that this boundary operates within a broader context of generosity (Wenham, 1987). Westermann’s theological analysis situates the prohibition within the fundamental distinction between Creator and creature (Westermann, 1984). Taken together, these scholars illuminate the literary and theological coherence of the passage.

It is important reiterate based on the above contextual and literary exploration that Genesis 2:9, 16–17 therefore does more than foreshadow transgression in Genesis 3. It establishes a structural principle: human life before God is constituted by freedom bounded by command. The tree in the midst stands as a visible sign that not everything within reach is within right. Limit is not an afterthought introduced by sin; it is present at the inception of human vocation. In this way, the narrative defines creatureliness as responsive, responsible, and restrained - a condition in which abundance is received as gift and freedom is exercised within divinely appointed bounds.

4. Conceptualizing the Theology of Limit in Creation

A theology of limit begins with the affirmation that creation is not an undifferentiated expanse but an ordered reality structured through divine intentionality. In the biblical witness, limit is neither deficiency nor punishment; it is constitutive of created existence. The opening chapters of Genesis portray a world brought into being and sustained through distinctions, separations, and boundaries. These limits are not imposed upon an otherwise autonomous reality but are intrinsic to the design of creation itself. To speak theologically of limit, therefore, is to speak of the form and measure through which creaturely life becomes possible.

The Priestly account in Genesis 1 presents divine creativity as an ordering activity achieved through separation. God separates light from darkness (Gen 1:4), waters above from waters below (1:6-7), sea from dry land (1:9-10), and day from night (1:14-18). Each act establishes boundaries that differentiate domains and assign functions. Claus Westermann observes that the emphasis in Genesis 1 falls not merely on origination but on the ordering of chaos into a structured cosmos (Westermann, 1984). The repeated pattern of separation indicates that distinction is essential to the goodness of creation. The refrain “and God saw that it was good” follows these structuring acts, suggesting that limit and goodness are inseparable.

Walter Brueggemann interprets the creation narrative as a testimony to God’s sovereign ordering power, in which the world is given reliability through divinely established boundaries (Brueggemann, 1982). Without separation, light would collapse into darkness, waters would overwhelm the land, and temporal rhythms would dissolve into indistinction. Limit, therefore, is not negation but enablement. It is

the condition under which life can flourish. Theologically, the separations of Genesis 1 affirm that creation possesses measure, proportion, and differentiation as part of its design (Koko, 2018; Koko & Akionla, 2024).

The structuring role of limit extends beyond cosmology into anthropology. Genesis 2 offers a complementary account in which humanity is formed “from the dust of the ground” (*‘adamah*) and animated by the divine breath (Gen 2:7). This portrayal underscores human earthiness and dependence. Gordon J. Wenham notes that the wordplay between *adam* (human) and *adamah* (ground) reinforces the intimate connection between humanity and soil (Wenham, 1987). Human life is not self-originating; it is drawn from and sustained by the earth. Such an origin situates humanity firmly within the created order rather than above it.

To be formed from soil is to be finite, contingent, and vulnerable. The human creature shares material continuity with the rest of creation. This earthbound identity signals that limit belongs to human nature. Humanity is neither divine nor self-sufficient but constituted by dependence upon both God and the ground. Westermann emphasizes that the formation narrative highlights creatureliness in its most concrete sense: humanity is shaped from dust and returns to dust (Westermann, 1984). Mortality itself becomes a sign of finitude inscribed within the human condition. Limit, therefore, is not introduced as retribution; it is present at the moment of formation.

Within this anthropological framework, the command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17) acquires theological depth. The divine instruction grants expansive permission: “you may freely eat of every tree of the garden”, while designating a single exception. The structure of this command underscores generosity before restriction (Wenham, 1987). Yet the existence of even one prohibited tree establishes a boundary within human freedom. The tree stands as a visible, spatially located sign that human access to creation is not absolute. Brueggemann describes the tree of knowledge as a boundary marker that defines the limits of human autonomy (Brueggemann, 1982). Its presence “in the midst of the garden” (Gen 2:9) ensures that the human vocation unfolds in constant awareness of a divinely established restriction. Theologically, the tree signifies that not all possibilities available to human reach are granted to human right. The prohibition does not negate the goodness of the garden; rather, it preserves the distinction between Creator and creature.

Claus Westermann argues that the knowledge of good and evil refers to a comprehensive moral discernment that properly belongs to God (Westermann, 1984). The command thus delineates a sphere reserved for divine sovereignty. In refraining from the tree, the human acknowledges the boundary between creaturely participation and divine prerogative. The tree becomes the sacramental sign of that boundary—a concrete reminder that creaturely existence is circumscribed by divine wisdom.

Importantly, the presence of this limit precedes any act of disobedience. The prohibition is not a punitive measure in response to sin; it is embedded within the original ordering of the garden. This chronological priority is theologically decisive. Limit is part of design, not consequence. The narrative does not depict an initially limitless humanity subsequently restricted; rather, it portrays a humanity created within a structured field of freedom. Freedom itself is defined by relation to command.

The Sabbath motif further illuminates this theology of limit. God rests on the seventh day and sanctifies it (Gen 2:2-3), introducing a temporal boundary within the rhythm of creation. Work is affirmed as good, yet it is bounded by rest. The sanctification of time reinforces the principle that creaturely activity operates within divinely appointed limits. Here again, boundary is not punishment but blessing—an ordering of life that reflects divine intention.

The theology of limit, therefore, challenges notions of unbounded autonomy as the highest form of freedom (Koko, 2018; Koko & Akionla, 2024). In the Genesis narratives, measure and restraint are woven into the structure of reality. Creation thrives because waters remain within shores, days within cycles, and creatures within kinds. Humanity flourishes not by erasing limits but by inhabiting them faithfully.

In summary, the theology of limit in creation affirms that boundaries are intrinsic to the goodness and coherence of the world. The separations of Genesis 1 establish order; the formation of humanity from soil underscores finitude; and the tree in the midst of the garden serves as a visible sign that human access is not absolute. Together, these elements testify that limit is not a punitive constraint imposed after transgression but a constitutive feature of divine design. To be a creature is to exist within measure, to receive life as gift, to exercise freedom within command, and to acknowledge boundaries as the gracious form of created being.

5. Constructive Eco-Theological Implications for Contemporary Ecological Responsibility

The foregoing theological retrieval of limit within the doctrine of creation invites constructive engagement with contemporary eco-theology. If creation is structured by divinely instituted boundaries, and if human creatureliness is defined by finitude rather than autonomy, then ecological responsibility must be framed not merely as pragmatic management but as faithful participation within limits. Eco-theology, broadly conceived, seeks to articulate how Christian doctrines of God, creation, and humanity inform ethical responses to environmental degradation. Within this discourse, the recovery of limit as design offers a normative theological grammar for rethinking human agency in relation to the earth.

Lynn White Jr.'s well-known critique of Western Christianity argued that distorted theological interpretations contributed to exploitative attitudes toward nature (White, 1967). While subsequent scholarship has nuanced his claims, the broader eco-theological movement has recognized the necessity of doctrinal renewal. Jürgen Moltmann and Sallie McFague provide two influential yet distinct constructive trajectories that illuminate how a theology of limit may shape ecological responsibility.

The first trajectory by Jürgen Moltmann's theology of creation offers a decisive corrective to anthropocentric absolutism. In *God in Creation*, Moltmann argues that the modern ecological crisis reflects a metaphysical error: the transformation of humanity from creature within creation to master over it (Moltmann, 1985). Against this paradigm, he proposes a relational ontology in which all creatures exist within the indwelling presence of God. Creation is not an external object but the milieu of divine self-communication. Furthermore, for him, finitude is not a defect but a necessary condition of created existence. Every creature is limited in space, time, and power; these limits make relational coexistence possible. Without limit, there would be no differentiation; without differentiation, no community (Moltmann, 1985). In this sense, limit safeguards the integrity of each creature's sphere. The ecological crisis emerges when human beings transgress the limits of their creaturely vocation, confusing technical capacity with moral legitimacy.

Moltmann's emphasis on Sabbath further reinforces the theological significance of restraint. The Sabbath rest of God signifies the completion and affirmation of creation's goodness (Gen 2:2-3). For Moltmann,

Sabbath embodies the cessation of acquisitive striving and the recognition of the world as gift rather than possession (Moltmann, 1985). Ecologically, this translates into patterns of life that resist endless productivity and consumption. Limit here becomes liturgical and ethical—a rhythm that interrupts domination. Moreover, Moltmann contends that true freedom is not unbounded autonomy but harmonious participation within God's created order. When humanity acknowledges its limits, it does not diminish its dignity; rather, it recovers its vocation as co-creator in responsive dependence. Ecological responsibility, therefore, entails the renunciation of absolutist claims over land, resources, and non-human life. It calls for self-restraint grounded in theological anthropology: humans are earth-creatures within God's community of life.

The second trajectory by Sallie McFague approaches ecological theology through the transformative power of metaphor. In works such as *The Body of God*, McFague argues that dominant theological metaphors have often reinforced hierarchical and dualistic understandings of the world (McFague, 1993). To address ecological crisis, she proposes alternative metaphors that reshape moral imagination. One of her most influential proposals is the metaphor of the world as "God's body." This image challenges the notion that creation is external to God and therefore expendable. If the world is imaginatively conceived as God's embodied presence, then harm inflicted upon ecosystems acquires theological gravity. While McFague does not intend the metaphor to collapse Creator and creation into identity, she insists that embodiment communicates intimacy, interdependence, and vulnerability (McFague, 1993). Within this framework, limit assumes a relational dimension. Bodies are finite; they require balance, nourishment, and rest. An embodied metaphor resists fantasies of infinite growth because biological systems operate within thresholds. McFague's emphasis on embodiment underscores that human beings, too, are bodily creatures embedded in material networks. The soil from which humanity is formed (Gen 2:7) becomes not merely origin but ongoing condition. Ecological responsibility thus arises from recognition of shared embodiment within a fragile, interconnected system.

McFague also critiques economic and cultural narratives that sacralize consumption. In her view, the ecological crisis is sustained by metaphors of domination and accumulation that normalize excess (McFague, 2008). A renewed theological imagination must therefore cultivate images that privilege sufficiency over surplus and communion over control.

Here, the theology of limit intersects with metaphorical reorientation: by envisioning the world as God's body, moral perception shifts from exploitation to care.

Bringing Moltmann and McFague into conversation yields a constructive ecological ethic grounded in limit as design. Moltmann provides ontological depth: creation is a differentiated community sustained by divine presence, and finitude structures each creature's role. McFague contributes imaginative transformation: metaphors shape how humans perceive their place within that community. Together, they challenge anthropocentric absolutism and invite measured participation rather than unrestrained appropriation.

In light of the theology of limit articulated in Genesis, ecological responsibility emerges as obedience to the structural boundaries of creation. The separations of Genesis 1, the formation of humanity from soil in Genesis 2, and the presence of the tree as a sign of non-absolute access collectively witness to a world designed with measure. Eco-theology, informed by Moltmann's relational ontology and McFague's embodied metaphors, translates this biblical insight into contemporary ethical vision.

Limit, therefore, is neither deprivation nor punishment. It is the form of creaturely flourishing. When acknowledged, it sustains balance and community; when denied, it generates disorder. By implication, the theology of limit calls for patterns of life that honor finitude, respect boundaries, and participate gratefully within the given structures of creation.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has argued that Genesis 2:9, 16-17 discloses a theology of limit embedded within the very structure of creation. Through divine separations, humanity's formation from soil, and the tree in the midst as a visible sign of non-absolute access, the biblical narrative presents limit not as punishment but as design. Creaturely freedom is real, yet bounded; generous, yet accountable. The command concerning the tree introduces restraint as intrinsic to human vocation, safeguarding the distinction between Creator and creature. When this boundary is ignored, disorder follows, not because limit is imposed belatedly, but because it is constitutive of flourishing. In a time marked by ecological destabilization, this theological retrieval is not abstract speculation but moral necessity. The refusal of limit manifested in extractive economies, unsustainable consumption, and

technocratic excess has intensified environmental degradation and social vulnerability. Reclaiming limit as gift can reorient human agency from domination to measured participation. Accordingly, the study recommends the following as necessary for ecological responsibility in contemporary society:

Integration of theological education on creation and restraint within faith communities to advance responsible ecological citizenship in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) on quality education.

Promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns grounded in moral restraint in line with SDG 12.

Active participation in climate action initiatives that acknowledge planetary boundaries in line with SDG 13; and

Collaborative partnerships among religious, civic, and policy institutions to protect terrestrial ecosystems in line with SDG 15 and SDG 17.

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Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria: A Qualitative Review of Policy Responses and Social Work Intervention

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Abstract. Gender-based violence (GBV) is among the most significant human rights violations and a significant issue of public health in the world, as women and girls are the disproportionate victims. The persistence of GBV in Nigeria is indicative of entrenched socio-cultural beliefs, structural disparities and institutional frailty that, to date, subject women to the spectrum of abusive behaviours. This paper provides a qualitative review of policy responses and social-work interventions that address GBV in Nigeria. The analysis was based on secondary sources like policy documents and empirical research. It dwelled on four main domains, which include: (i) the forms, patterns and prevalence of GBV in Nigeria; (ii) socio-cultural and structural factors that perpetuate GBV; (iii) legal and policy frameworks that have been developed to address GBV; and (iv) social-work interventions that can be used to alleviate the impact of GBV. As shown in the review, GBV is manifested in various ways, such as physical violence, rape, female genital mutilation, economic deprivation, child marriage and emotional abuse, and it is affected by patriarchal norms, poverty, poor enforcement of law, and gender inequality. Despite the enactment of notable legislative and policy mechanisms in Nigeria, including the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, the Child Rights Act, and the National Gender Policy, implementation is still uneven due to limited resources, institutional lapses, and socio-cultural opposition. The paper also emphasizes the importance of social workers that fulfill the policy-to-survivor support gap by means of psychosocial counselling, trauma-informed care, community education, policy advocacy, and multi-agency collaboration. The paper concludes that survivor centred services, conversion of harmful socio-cultural norms by means of community participation, better enforcement of the law and institutional coordination, and economic empowerment of the women and girls in the social protection programmes are the key to preventing GBV

and improving the welfare and security of women and girls in Nigeria.

Keywords: Gender-Based violence, qualitative review, policy responses, social work, intervention

1. Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) represents a major human rights violation and a widespread problem that threatens the health of millions of women and girls throughout the globe. According to international development and health organizations, approximately 736 million women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once during their lifetime, with an intimate partner being the main offender (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021; UN Women, 2023). GBV is a global issue because it persists irrespective of geographic boundaries and cultural differences; it manifests in forms like domestic abuse, sexual violence, human trafficking, forced marriage and harmful cultural traditions like female genital mutilation and child marriage (Okafor, 2024; United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2023). Gender based violence in developing countries experiences worsened conditions because of three factors, which include economic deprivation, inadequate legal systems, and cultural patterns that enable male dominance to continue (Agwanwo & Badey, 2022; Adewale & Adeyemo, 2024). In Nigeria, one-third of women have experienced one form of violence, and one-fifth have experienced physical violence. The COVID-19 pandemic brought GBV to the fore as cases surged. The National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] and United Nations Children Fund [UNICEF] (2022) reported that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases throughout 23 states increased by 149% during the first two weeks of the April 2020 lockdown. The most common types of GBV include physical and verbal abuse, economic abuse, discriminatory inheritance rights, female

genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C), child marriage, cyber-stalking, and many more.

The ongoing existence of gender-based violence or violence against women shows that society upholds a patriarchal system, which permits men to dominate while it silences victims and excludes women from decision-making processes that occur in family, community and governmental matters (Ezechi, Musa, David & Idigbe, 2023; Okafor, 2024). The structural factors, which include economic instability, unemployment and ineffective implementation of existing laws like the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act of 2015, increase the risk of violence against women and children (Ogunyemi & Salawu, 2022; Ikpeze, 2024). Nigeria has established various policy frameworks and legislative instruments to combat the rising incidence of GBV through protective measures and the prosecution of offenders.

The VAPP Act serves as the most essential legislation, which most states have adopted, because it establishes criminal penalties for all forms of GBV while providing survivors with access to shelters and legal services (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2023). The National Gender Policy (NGP) and National Strategic Framework on GBV are also policies that aim to create gender equity and lead the coordination of multi-sectoral action in the health, justice and social sectors (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). However, these progressive policies are not fully enforced due to limited financial allocations, insufficient training of law enforcement personnel, and the lack of balance in the application of laws to the federal units in Nigeria (Agbo et al., 2024; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2025).

Even when the legal protection is made available, it is often compromised by corruption and procedural barriers, which prevent the survivors from seeking justice (Amadi & Nwankwo, 2023; Chukwu et al., 2024). Hence, the interventions have been more about reactive response instead of proactive; symptomatic relief, instead of targeting the underlying causes, e.g., gender norms, economic disempowerment, and educational disparities (Bello, 2024; Oladipo & Yusuf, 2023). Intervention in social-work has a vital role in sealing the gap between policy intent and actuality of GBV survivors through the provision of holistic, survivor-focused care and systemic change. Social workers play a major role in psychosocial counselling, case management, community education and empowerment programs that will assist survivors to negotiate legal systems, receive healthcare, and reestablish independent economic functionality (Adetoro & Musa, 2023; Udo & Etim, 2025).

Also, community-based programs, such as safe areas where women can be, peer-support networks and contact with traditional leaders, have proved effective in changing some negative norms and creating a sense of accountability at the local level (Nwosu, 2024; Okeke & Olatunji, 2025). Notably, social workers are also involved in policy development, as they record patterns of GBV, assess service delivery and advocate approaches that rely on centralizing the agency of the survivors (Akinyemi et al., 2024; World Bank, 2025). Nevertheless, the practice of social work in Nigeria is fraught with challenges ranging from the lack of resources, lack of sufficient training of professionals to handle GBV, and lack of a well-established social welfare system (Onyema & Eze, 2023; Salim Adams, 2024). Hence, to break the structural barriers and help survivors to attain sustainable well-being, there is a major need to enhance the GBV-related responses, establish properly funded models that best integrate policy goals, community involvement and professional practice.

2. Conceptualising Gender-Based Violence

GBV affects the physical and emotional health of women; It is a systemic issue that permeates and affects diverse sectors of any society, with implications for growth and development, and so cannot be ignored. The World Bank reports that gender-based violence constitutes a worldwide pandemic which impacts one-third of all women throughout their lives, and the failure to address this matter will create high future expenses (World Bank, 2019). Women represent the largest group of GBV victims throughout the world; for this reason, people use the term violence against women to describe this situation. The United Nations defines gender-based violence or violence against women as every gender-based violent act which causes or probably will cause women to endure physical or sexual or psychological harm or suffering, including threats and coercive actions and unlawful confinement which occur in both public and private settings. This definition encompasses three types of violence, which take place within domestic settings and public areas. The definition of violence includes battering and the sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation, traditional practices which harm women and all forms of non-spousal violence, sexual harassment, trafficking of women and forced prostitution (United Nations' 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women).

This definition creates a theoretical framework which enables the study to find its appropriate base. Thus, the combination of multiple elements, which include cultural practices, political systems, protracted conflict and religious beliefs, makes Africa a continent where women and girls face special risks of gender-based violence. Describing the prevalence of GBV in South Africa, the South African President is quoted to have said his country is “the most unsafe place in the world to be a woman” (BBC Africa, 2019).

Between the ages of 25-29, the percentage of Nigerian women who have faced physical violence since they turned 15 years stands at 28% for women. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) observes that the incidence of GBV continues to grow in some parts of Nigeria, particularly in the North, as a result of the insurgency and terrorist activities in the North-East (UNFPA, 2019). They observe that GBV manifests in the form of forced early marriages as well as physical, mental and sexual assaults against women and girls (UNFPA, 2019).

2.1 Forms, Patterns and Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria manifests itself through multiple connected pathways that demonstrate the presence of deep-seated patriarchal beliefs and gender discrimination throughout families and communities and institutional settings. The

majority of GBV cases that get reported in Nigeria involve physical violence, sexual violence, emotional or psychological abuse, economic deprivation, together with traditional practices that include female genital mutilation (FGM) and child or forced marriage.

Physical violence usually involves beating, slapping, choking or any other body harm that is caused to the victim by the intimate partners or family members, whereas sexual violence includes rape, marital rape, sexual coercion and sexual harassment. Emotional violence manifests itself in terms of threats, humiliation, intimidation and controlling behaviours to degrade the psychological well-being of women and economic violence to deny women access to financial resources, employment opportunities or property rights (Fawole, 2018; Adegoke, 2017). Violent cultural practices are still major aspects of GBV in Nigeria. Despite the advocacy to end female genital mutilation, millions of women and girls persistently face the practice. The national statistics reveal that FGM is practised on about 19% of women between 15 and 49 years old in Nigeria, and early marriages are not uncommon in different parts of the country (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019; National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). All these manifestations highlight the fact that GBV in Nigeria is a wide spectrum of behaviours that violate the rights of girls and women, and not only physical aggression.

Table 1: Forms and Manifestations of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria

Emotional Violence	Verbal Violence	Financial Violence	Physical Violence	Sexual Violence
Neglecting one's spouse in public Disregarding one's spouse in public or in the sight of others. Sustaining Malice Evaluation of each act	Using harmful words Mono-syllabic answers in dialogue Shouting Commanding Speaking rudely before a group of youngsters	Not permitting her to be productive Deciding what kind of work she ought to do Denying cash aid for maintenance Forcing her to give her spouse complete authority over her finances	Physical acts such as beating, slapping, smacking, kicking, punching, and pulling Threatening to beat, etc. Malnutrition or restriction on food	Denying sexual relations, sexual distancing Rape Forced sexual relations when the partner is not ready Insisting on Sexual practices the partner is not comfortable with

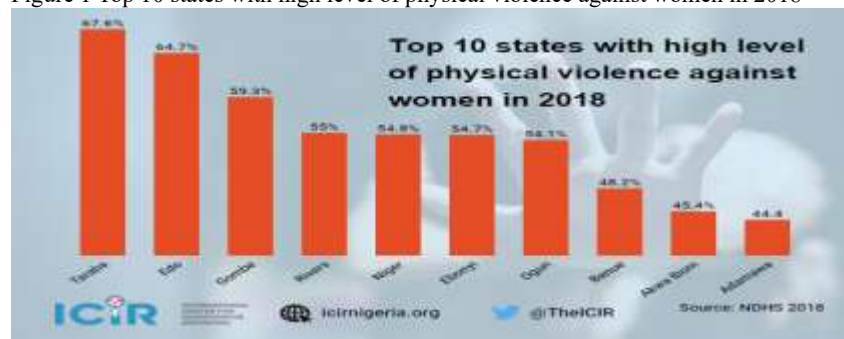
Source: Williams and Nyong (2019)

In Nigeria, GBV has clear demographic, cultural and regional differentiation as the trend of the phenomenon reflects the variations in the social norms, economic statuses and educational attainment within the nation. Intimate partner violence is the most common type of GBV in Nigeria, and most of the offenders are those who are married. The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey indicates that approximately 31% of Nigerian women have been physically abused in the past 15 years, and that in most of the cases, the violence took place in intimate relationships (NPC & ICF, 2019). This pattern of violence is also affected by socio-economic factors. Women who are less educated or not educated, women living in rural areas and economically reliant on their husbands are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse (Fawole, 2018; Adegoke, 2017).

The regional trends are also evident. The prevalence of early marriage and some of the sexual exploitation is higher in Northern Nigeria, whereas the prevalence of FGM and domestic violence is higher in some southern states in

relation to the deep-rooted patriarchal customs (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). In the North-Eastern part of Nigeria where conflict and the Boko Haram insurgency has led to the massive displacement of women and girls, the risk of sexual violence, forced marriage, and exploitation is high as seen in figure 1 (NDHS, 2018). These trends show that a set of socio-cultural norms, economic inequalities, and structural vulnerabilities is involved in the shaping of GBV in Nigeria.

Figure 1 Top 10 states with high level of physical violence against women in 2018



Source: NDHS (2018)

Nevertheless, GBV is endemic in Nigeria with a very high prevalence rate, thus making it one of the most serious social and public-health problems of the country. According to the reports of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, thousands of cases of sexual and gender-based violence are registered every year in several states across the country, but the real number is much more significant because of the under-reporting (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2020). Many victims do not report cases of abuse due to the cultural norms that put a value on the privacy of their families, fear of social stigma and lack of trust in law-enforcement agencies (Fawole, 2018). In 2025, different incidents across the country indicated how GBV has endangered the lives and safety of women. In Ekiti State, a woman known as Modupe Alasin was killed due to severe beatings from her husband on the claim that she had taken too much time to go to the farm; this is indicative of the fatal nature of physical abuse that takes place in supposedly rural locations (Akari, 2025). Akari (2025) reported the rape and murder of a young woman in her home in Oyigbo Local Government Area in Rivers State, wherein a suspect was arrested by the police; this reveals how sexual violence may become a deadly menace and how women can be at the receiving end even in a place they know well. In addition to the individual incidents, the national advocacy voices have expressed concern over the overall trend of GBV, with Egbejule (2025) demanding a state of emergency following documentation of a drastic increase in the number of women killed due to GBV across Nigeria. All these events indicate the necessity to enhance legal, social, and policy measures to ensure the safety of women and girls across the country.

2.2 Socio-Cultural and Structural Drivers of Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

Socio-cultural norms refer to expectations, values, customs and standards of behaviour that are common to a specified society and determine how people conduct themselves and interact. In Émile Durkheim's classic work, norms are presented as representations of the collective that emerge from shared beliefs and moral values to control individual behaviour and maintain social order (Durkheim, 1895/1982). Similarly, Talcott Parsons developed the concept of socio-cultural norms as fundamental elements of the social system that guide individuals toward fulfilling anticipated social roles within institutions such as the family, religion, and the economy (Parsons, 1951). In this respect, the socio-cultural norms are not simply a set of traditions but a system of anticipation that generates attitudes to gender roles, power, and personal relations. These norms define the proper roles of men and women in many Nigerian cultures and set expectations about who is in control, who obeys, and who makes decisions in households and societies.

In close relation to socio-cultural norms is the idea of patriarchal belief system, which is a social organization where males are the central figures; of political leadership, moral guidance, social privilege and property ownership and females are mostly excluded from holding power. Feminist sociologist Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy as a system of social organization and practice whereby men control, suppress, and exploit women; she underlined its functioning in many institutions such as family, labour market, the state, and cultural systems (Walby, 1990).

The socio-cultural norms and patriarchal belief systems are one of the greatest contributors to gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria. Similar to most traditional societies, Nigerian society is historically organized based on patriarchal values that put men in the positions of authority in their homes and society, with women in the lower ranks of society. Such gender hierarchies tend to justify male dominance over females, which leads to the establishment of where violence towards women becomes naturalized or socially acceptable (Joseph-Obi. & Agwanwo; Fawole, 2018; Adegoke, 2017). The cultural norms that prioritize obedience in women, their toleration of an abusive marriage and maintenance of family honour often discourage women from reporting any abuse or abandoning a violent relationship. According to the ICF (2019), a considerable percentage of women think that a husband has a right to beat his wife in some situations, as well as to abscond from household responsibilities; this reflects an internalization of patriarchal norms. Unhealthy traditional customs are also known to strengthen gender inequality and subject women and girls to violence.

In some communities in Nigeria, child marriage and female genital mutilation practices are still practised against the law. According to UNICEF, around 43% of girls in Nigeria are married off before their 18th birthday, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria, where poverty and cultural demands promote the practice of child marriage (UNICEF, 2023). On the same note, female genital mutilation has been affecting millions of Nigerian women and girls, mostly in the Southern part of Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Community leaders tend to defend such socio-cultural practices as a way of maintaining the tradition or even regulating female sexuality. The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, which was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, captured the world awareness of the problem and pointed out that violence against women is a product of historically unequal power relations between men and women (United Nations, 1995), which could be said to still be practised in Nigeria. In addition to culture, structural and institutional conditions also perpetuate gender-based violence in Nigeria. Poverty, unemployment and economic inequality make women extremely vulnerable to abuse; for this reason, their financial autonomy and ability to leave abusive homes are curtailed. In most Nigerian families, women are economically reliant on male partners, which is something that regularly forces them to stay in abusive relationships because they are afraid of losing their financial providers (Fawole, 2018). A lack of effective legal enforcement systems also contributes to the issue. Despite the legislation

passed in Nigeria, including the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, its enforcement has been uneven across the states. In most cases, a victim of violence faces bureaucratic hurdles, corruption, or insensitivity of the law enforcement agencies when seeking justice (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Conflict, insecurity, and displacement create a major structural pathway which leads to gender-based violence against women in Nigeria by spreading violence throughout communities which face insurgency and communal fighting. Women and girls in North-Eastern Nigeria which suffers from Boko Haram insurgency have experienced abduction as well as forced marriage and exploitation. Usman (2021) documented some instances of sexual exploitation of displaced women in the Borno State camps, where the humanitarian aid and protection systems were lacking to ensure the safety of women living in these camps. These descriptions highlight the role of insecurity and institutional fragility in appropriating gender-based violence. In turn, the socio-cultural norms, economic inequalities, poor legal structures, and vulnerability to conflicts are all considered as interdependent mechanisms of gender-based violence in Nigeria. Therefore, an all-encompassing policy response as well as social intervention is necessary to tackle the underlying factors of the target problem.

2.3 Policy and Legal Frameworks Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

Nigeria has formulated several legislative and policy frameworks to deal with gender-based violence (GBV); this is in line with the international commitment to protect the rights and dignity of women and girls. The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) 2015 is one of the most important legal tools that is seen as a great legislative attempt to criminalize multiple acts of violence against people, especially women and vulnerable populations. The VAPP Act broadens the legal definition of violence to cover harmful traditional practices, sexual harassment, battery of a spouse, abandonment of dependents, and economic abuse (Olatunbosun, 2015). Notably, the Act acknowledges such offences as marital rape, eviction, and other harmful practices that wives were subjected to and were poorly managed before the criminal justice system in Nigeria was strengthened (Eze-Ababa, 2017; Akinlabi, 2020).

Another provision of the law is the protection orders, compensation to victims, and support services to victims of violence. Nonetheless, researchers have noted that due to its progressive contents, the application of the VAPP Act in Nigeria is still uneven,

as the country has a federal system where the states are required to domesticate the Act first, and then it will be enforced in the states (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Fawole, 2018). Thus, several states have lagged in the adoption of the legislation which restricts their role in offering national protection against gender-based violence. However, the Act remains one of the most comprehensive laws regulating GBV in Nigeria and is a significant measure to reinforce the country's human rights protection systems.

The Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003 serves as the next important law that fights against gender-based violence in Nigeria. The Act was enacted to internalize the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The Act establishes child protection laws which safeguard children from all forms of abuse and exploitation together with dangerous cultural practices that specifically harm girls through early marriage and sexual exploitation and trafficking and child labour (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). The Child Rights Act has established eighteen years as the legal marriage age while it banned all activities which cause children to experience physical or sexual or psychological harm. It also stipulates the roles that government institutions, parents, and communities have in ensuring the welfare of children and providing them with access to education, health care, and protection against violence (Okeke & Okoye, 2019; Adegoke, 2017).

Although the Child Rights Act has some progressive provisions, implementation still faces challenges, just as with the VAPP Act. Due to sociocultural and religious concerns about child marriage and family norms, several states, particularly in northern Nigeria, initially opposed full domestication since Nigeria's federal structure requires implementation at the state level. Nevertheless, this Act has been a significant legal tool in combating gender-based violence against girls since it sets legal standards that protect the rights of children, as well as punishing the culprits who abuse the rights of children.

There are also policy frameworks that have been developed in Nigeria to enhance gender equality and to curb the underlying causes of gender-based violence. The National Gender Policy (NGP), implemented in 2006 and amended in 2021, is one of the most critical policy initiatives in this context, as it provides a clear roadmap for incorporating gender equality into national development planning and governance frameworks. The National Gender Policy aims to eradicate gender discrimination, ensure women's empowerment, and enhance institutional

frameworks for preventing violence against women and girls (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2021). The policy focuses on gender mainstreaming strategies in government institutions, awareness campaigns against harmful cultural practices, improved access to justice for victims, and the introduction of support services for victims, including shelters, counselling, and legal assistance (Fawole, 2018; Akinyemi, 2020). Additionally, it aligns Nigeria's national commitments with international frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5, which seeks to guarantee gender equality and prevent violence against women (United Nations Women, 2022).

Although the National Gender Policy offers a much-needed strategic guideline for addressing GBV, its implementation is highly reliant on political will, adequate funding, and alignment among government institutions (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Akinyemi, 2020). Therefore, institutional and sustained commitment, as well as enforcement, are necessary to translate the frameworks into real protection for women and girls.

2.4 Social Work Intervention Strategies in Addressing Gender-Based Violence

The primary social-work method which protects survivors from gender-based violence uses psychosocial counselling and trauma-informed support services. Social workers use their professional counselling skills to help women and children who experienced gender-based violence to recover from the psychological, emotional and social effects of the abuse. The psychological effects of gender-based violence create severe trauma which includes anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and withdrawal symptoms; this requires victims to receive dedicated psychosocial treatment (Fawole, 2018; Adegoke, 2017). Social workers therefore provide confidential counselling, crisis intervention, and safety planning, along with referral services, to support victims in rebuilding their confidence and reintegrating into society. In Nigeria, the Mirabel Centre in Lagos is one of the organizations that provides a broad range of services, including medical care, psychosocial counselling, and legal assistance to victims of sexual violence (Akinlabi, 2020). Similarly, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Teams (DSVRT) in Lagos State is an organization that unites social workers, counsellors, and lawyers to help victims access justice (Oluwafunke, 2021). In this light, social workers can help victims eliminate the trauma, enhance their coping skills, and recover their

social functioning, thus dealing with the psychological effects of gender-based violence in the long term.

The next consequential social-work intervention plan is the community awareness, advocacy, and social mobilization that will change the detrimental social norms that propagate gender-based violence. Because GBV is greatly rooted in patriarchal cultures, social workers regularly participate in the community education programmes aimed at questioning the beliefs that justify violence against women and girls. Such programmes usually include awareness-raising, community discussions, sensitization programmes in schools, and cooperation with traditional and religious leaders to foster gender equality and respect for women's rights (Fawole, 2018). Social workers often collaborate with civil societies and community development organizations to carry out workshops, media campaigns, and community enlightenment programmes which bring out the negative effects of domestic violence, child marriage, and female genital mutilation.

For instance, community-related advocacy efforts funded by organizations like Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) have focused on addressing communities about the prevention of sexual violence and motivating victims to access professional support services (Akinyemi, 2020). Equally, sensitization by social welfare institutions that are carried out in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs has helped to prevent more cases of GBV and has also enlightened the public on the legal remedies available to victims (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). In these preventive measures, social workers strive to change the socio-cultural context that allows gender-based violence and encourage attitudes that respect the rights and dignity of women.

The third crucial social-work intervention approach is the policy advocacy, legal advocacy, and multi-agency response that amplifies institutional response to gender-based violence. Social workers usually become the champions of the survivors and help them to move through the legal system, get protection orders, and achieve justice in formal institutions. The lack of knowledge on their rights or fear of retaliation are the obstacles that survivors of gender-related violence must overcome in most cases, which makes the role of social workers very significant (Adegoke, 2017; Akinlabi, 2020). The social workers also liaise with law-enforcement bodies, health professionals, non-governmental organizations and state institutions to have a unified response to cases of GBV. Nigeria has multidisciplinary response mechanisms that often

entail collaboration between social-welfare departments, police units, health facilities and civil-society organizations to deliver concerted efforts to survivors. A good example of this cooperative method is the creation of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) in various states of Nigeria, such that survivors obtain medical care, counselling, and legal aid in a well-coordinated network of specialists (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2020). Besides direct service delivery, social workers also advocate better enforcement of legislation like the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act and the Child Rights Act through policy discussions, research and public advocacy activities to strengthen the institutional efforts toward gender-based violence. All these efforts by social workers play a major role in preventing GBV as well as protecting the survivors in Nigeria.

3. Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

This paper illustrates four main implications of the social work practice and policy.

The first implication, which is the most obvious, is the strengthening of survivor-centred and trauma-informed service delivery systems. The analysis of the prevalence and forms of gender-based violence in Nigeria demonstrates that survivors are often left deeply psychologically traumatized, socially stigmatized, and economically vulnerable and in need of professional and coordinated support services. This implies that social workers ought to expand the trauma-informed counselling services, crisis intervention, and rehabilitation services, which aim to mitigate the psychological and socio-economic aftermath of abuse. The practitioners should, therefore, incorporate psychosocial therapy, shelter, medical referrals and legal assistance into an all-inclusive support system that prioritizes the dignity, confidentiality, and empowerment of the survivors. On a policy level, the governments and social welfare organizations should invest in specialized centres of gender-specific violence response, put more trained social workers in hospitals and police departments, and ensure that the facilities like Sexual Assault Response Centres and Domestic Violence Response Teams are adequately funded and made available to the victims in both rural and urban areas.

The second significant implication relates to the change of the negative socio-cultural norms by using the community-based social work intervention and public education policy. The study of patriarchal ideologies, early marriages and gender stereotypes demonstrates that gender-based violence is deeply

rooted in the cultural attitudes that legitimize male superiority and female inferiority. Therefore, social workers should go further than managing single cases to implement more extensive community-based interventions that test harmful gender ideals and endorse equality. This involves community discussions, enlisting religious and traditional leaders, arranging school-based education programmes, and grassroots advocacy movements that protect the rights of women. Hence, the agencies mandated with social development should institutionalize gender-sensitization of the whole nation and include gender equality education in the school curricula.

The third implication is related to the need to enhance legal enforcement tools and inter-agency cooperation in addressing gender-based violence. Even though legal frameworks like the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and the Child Rights Act have been enacted in Nigeria, the discussion shows that there are still loopholes in the implementation process due to the lack of awareness of legal provisions, a low level of law enforcement, and the social stigma that prevents victims of abuse to report abuse. This means that the role of social workers has expanded to advocate and help survivors navigate legal systems and obtain protection orders and seek justice through courts and law-enforcement agencies. Social workers are also expected to work in close coordination with the police officers, medical personnel, legal professionals, and non-governmental organizations to offer harmonious support to the victims. In this regard, this paper recommends that government should enhance institutional coordination mechanisms, train police and judicial officers on specialized gender-based violence training and create special GBV courts or fast-track prosecution systems to enable the perpetrators to be held accountable.

The fourth implication is the inclusion of gender-based violence prevention programs in social protection programs and economic empowerment programs. Economic and social factors like poverty, unemployment, economic dependence significantly reduce the capacity of women to get out of abusive relationships, as well as access justice. Livelihood support, vocational training, microcredit programs, and economic empowerment programmes, which facilitate the financial independence of women and increase their resilience, should be included in social work practice. The interventions will be able to help the survivors to restore their lives and also to reduce structural inequalities that perpetuate gender-based violence. The government social welfare programmes must at the policy level focus on providing economic empowerment to vulnerable women especially those

women who are in rural areas and those in conflict-stricken areas where the chances of violence are high. By incorporating gender-sensitive economic policies alongside social protection programmes, the survivors will receive assistance as well as curb the socio-economic disparities at large that have fuelled the continued existence of gender-based violence in Nigeria.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, gender-based violence continues to be a widespread social and human-rights issue in Nigeria which is generally conditioned by complex socio-cultural values, patriarchal ideologies, economic disparities, and weaker institutional responses. The literature shows that GBV occurs across various dimensions, such as physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. Although laws like the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and other national policies show the willingness of the Nigerian government to address the problem of GBV, the gaps in the implementation, the deeply rooted social stigma, and the lack of access to support services remain the factors that hinder providing effective protection to the victims. The social work interventions (especially psychosocial support, community education, policy advocacy, and multi-sector cooperation) is still critical to violence prevention, survivor support, and gender equality promotion. The solution to gender-based violence is thus a long-term effort on the part of the government institutions, civil society organizations as well as professional social workers to change the negative social norms, implement protective laws, and make the society of women and girls in Nigeria safer and more equal.

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A Comparative Study of Science Education Students' Academic Competence Under Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard and Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard Curricula in the University of Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract. Curriculum reform remains a central strategy for enhancing the quality and relevance of university education, particularly in teacher education, where curriculum effectiveness has a direct impact on future classroom practice. In Nigeria, the transition from the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) to the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) represents a shift from content-driven instruction to an outcome-based, competency-oriented framework. However, empirical evidence comparing the effects of these two curriculum frameworks on students' academic competence remains limited. This study, therefore, conducted a comparative analysis of science education students' academic competence under the BMAS and CCMAS curricula at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. Adopting a comparative descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, the study involved 328 undergraduate science education students, comprising 164 students trained under BMAS and 164 students trained under CCMAS. Data were collected using the Education Students' Curriculum Experience Questionnaire, a Pedagogical Knowledge Test, and students' academic achievement records. Descriptive statistics, independent samples *t*-tests, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and effect size estimates were employed for data analysis. Findings revealed that students trained under CCMAS significantly outperformed their BMAS counterparts in academic engagement, learning motivation, teaching confidence, academic achievement, and pedagogical knowledge, with effect sizes ranging from moderate to large. The MANOVA results further indicated a significant multivariate effect of curriculum framework type on students' overall academic competence. These findings suggest that the outcome-based, student-centred orientation of CCMAS more effectively promotes cognitive, affective, and professional learning outcomes than the

traditional content-focused BMAS. The study concludes that CCMAS represents a substantive improvement in science teacher education and recommends sustained institutional support, lecturer capacity development, and continuous evaluation to maximise the benefits of curriculum reform in Nigerian universities.

Keywords: Curriculum Reform; BMAS; CCMAS; Academic Competence; Science Education; Teacher Education; Nigeria

1. Introduction

Over the decades, the Nigerian university education system has undergone numerous reforms aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching, learning, and graduate outcomes. Curriculum reform, in particular, has been a central focus of policymakers, university administrators, and accreditation agencies due to concerns about declining academic standards, a mismatch between academic preparation and labour market needs, and the necessity to align educational programmes with global best practices (Awofala & Awolola, 2011a). Among the major reforms introduced in Nigerian universities is the transition from the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) to the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS).

The Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) served as the foundational framework guiding curriculum content, course offerings, learning outcomes, credit requirements, and assessment strategies across universities in Nigeria for many years. Developed by the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2015), BMAS was intended to ensure a baseline standard of academic quality across disciplines while allowing institutions a degree of

autonomy in programme design. Over time, however, stakeholders began to highlight limitations inherent in the BMAS approach, including excessive focus on content coverage rather than learning outcomes, limited incorporation of 21st-century skills, insufficient attention to student-centred pedagogy, and inadequate responsiveness to evolving societal and labour market demands.

In response to these challenges and in an effort to harmonise curriculum delivery with contemporary educational imperatives, the National Universities Commission introduced the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS). The CCMAS framework represents a paradigm shift from content-heavy prescriptions toward a more holistic, outcome-based, and competency-driven curriculum model. It emphasises fluency in generic skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, digital literacy, and entrepreneurial competence while preserving disciplinary rigour (Okunuga, Awofala, & Osarenren, 2020). CCMAS also advocates for greater flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and alignment of academic programmes with national development goals and international benchmarks.

The Faculty of Education at the University of Lagos, one of Nigeria's foremost institutions of higher learning, has implemented CCMAS as part of its teacher education curriculum beginning from 2024/2025 academic session. Teacher education programmes are of strategic significance because they shape the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and professional identities of future educators who will, in turn, educate subsequent generations. Given the pivotal role of teachers in educational transformation, reforms in teacher education curricula are critical levers for achieving broader systemic improvements in teaching and learning. However, the process of curricular change is complex, and its success depends on more than merely revising documents or regulatory frameworks (Awofala & Awolola, 2011a; Awofala & Sopekan, 2013). Central to the impact of such reforms are the lived experiences of students—the primary recipients of educational programmes. Students' academic engagement, learning motivation, teaching confidence, academic achievement, and pedagogical knowledge (Fasuyi, Oladipo & Udeani 2022; Oladipo, Akanji, & Udeani, 2021; Ajao & Awofala, 2022) are key indicators of the quality and effectiveness of a curriculum. A comparative analysis of these dimensions under the BMAS and CCMAS regimes promises insights into the real-world implications of curricular reform for teacher education.

Despite the theoretical promises of CCMAS, questions remain about how it compares with BMAS in practice, especially in the context of teacher education. Anecdotal evidence from lecturers, students, and academic administrators suggests a mix of positive and negative outcomes associated with CCMAS implementation. Some students report enhanced engagement, increased opportunities to develop professional competencies, and deeper understanding of pedagogical concepts. Others express concerns related to workload, unclear expectations, and uneven instructional quality. Yet, systematic empirical data comparing students' experiences and outcomes under BMAS and CCMAS are scarce, particularly within Nigerian universities. The absence of robust comparative research limits policymakers' and institutional leaders' ability to make evidence-based decisions about curriculum design, instructional strategies, resource allocation, and teacher preparation practices. Without understanding the differential effects of BMAS and CCMAS on key educational outcomes, it is difficult to determine whether CCMAS has fulfilled its objectives or merely introduced new challenges. Specifically, the extent to which CCMAS enhances academic competence (academic engagement, motivation to learn, confidence in teaching, academic performance, and pedagogical knowledge) relative to BMAS remains underexplored. Given that the University of Lagos has cohorts of students who experienced BMAS and cohorts transitioning to or fully under CCMAS, the institution provides an ideal context for comparative study. Such a comparison can reveal not only whether there are measurable differences but also the underlying factors that contribute to any observed changes. It can uncover, for example, whether improvements in one dimension (e.g., pedagogical knowledge) coincide with stagnation or decline in another (e.g., teaching confidence), and how students interpret and respond to curricular expectations. The problem, therefore, is to determine the comparative effects of BMAS and CCMAS on students' key educational experiences and outcomes within the Faculty of Education at the University of Lagos.

The primary purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of science education students' academic competence (academic engagement, learning motivation, teaching confidence, academic achievement, and pedagogical knowledge) under the BMAS and CCMAS curricula at the University of Lagos. By addressing this purpose, the study aims to illuminate how curriculum reform influences not only cognitive outcomes (such as academic achievement and pedagogical knowledge) but also the affective and behavioural dimensions of learning (such as

engagement, motivation, and confidence). This multi-dimensional approach recognises that effective science teacher education extends beyond mastery of content to include students' attitudes, dispositions, and readiness to teach in diverse classrooms.

1.1 Research Questions

To guide the investigation, the study was framed around the following research questions:

RQ1. Are there any significant differences in academic engagement between science education students trained under BMAS and those under CCMAS?

RQ2. How does learning motivation vary significantly between BMAS and CCMAS science education students?

RQ3. In what ways does teaching confidence differ significantly among science education students exposed to BMAS versus CCMAS?

RQ4. Are there significant differences in academic achievement between the two science education student cohorts?

RQ5. How does pedagogical knowledge compare significantly between science education students educated under BMAS and CCMAS?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Curriculum Reform in Higher Education

Curriculum reform in higher education has remained a global concern as universities seek to respond to rapid social, economic, technological, and pedagogical changes. Curriculum is broadly understood as the planned and guided learning experiences provided to students under the auspices of an educational institution. In higher education, curriculum reforms are often driven by demands for quality assurance, relevance, graduate employability, accountability, and alignment with national and global development goals. Globally, curriculum reforms have shifted from traditional content-driven models toward outcome-based and competency-oriented frameworks. These reforms emphasize what learners can do with knowledge rather than what they merely know. Scholars argue that such approaches foster deeper learning, transferable skills, and professional readiness (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In teacher education, curriculum reform is particularly critical because teachers serve as agents of change whose professional competence directly influences the quality of education at all levels.

In the Nigerian context, curriculum reforms in universities are largely coordinated by the National Universities Commission (NUC). The transition from BMAS to CCMAS reflects Nigeria's response to global trends in curriculum development and the perceived inadequacies of earlier frameworks. Understanding this transition requires situating it within broader debates on curriculum effectiveness, implementation fidelity, and student outcomes.

2.1 Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS)

The Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) was introduced by the National Universities Commission to provide a standardized framework for academic programmes across Nigerian universities. BMAS outlined minimum course content, credit units, teaching requirements, and assessment expectations for each discipline. Its primary objective was to ensure comparability of academic standards across institutions and prevent curriculum dilution. It has been acknowledged BMAS's role in promoting uniformity and facilitating accreditation processes in the universities (NUC, 2015). By specifying minimum content requirements, BMAS helped regulate programme quality, particularly during periods of rapid expansion in Nigeria's university system. However, critics argue that BMAS emphasized content coverage over learning outcomes, thereby encouraging rote learning and teacher-centered pedagogy. In teacher education, BMAS has been criticized for insufficient integration of practical skills, reflective practice, and learner-centered teaching strategies. Studies have shown that education students trained under content heavy curriculum such as BMAS often demonstrate strong theoretical knowledge but limited classroom application skills (Fernandez, Mutia, Baluyos, & Clarin, 2025). This mismatch raised concerns about the preparedness of graduates for real classroom challenges, particularly in diverse and technologically evolving learning environments.

2.2 Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS)

The Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) introduced by National Universities Commission (NUC) in December 2022 represents a significant shift in curriculum philosophy within Nigerian higher education. Introduced to replace BMAS, CCMAS adopts an outcome-based education (OBE) model that prioritizes competencies, skills acquisition, and holistic learner development. The framework identifies core courses that all institutions must offer while allowing flexibility for universities to

introduce electives reflecting institutional strengths and contextual needs. It is noted that CCMAS aligns with international best practices by emphasizing interdisciplinarity, entrepreneurial education, digital literacy, and soft skills development (NUC, 2022). In teacher education, CCMAS explicitly incorporates teaching practice, pedagogical innovation, inclusive education, and assessment literacy as core components. Despite its promise, literature indicates that CCMAS implementation faces challenges related to staff preparedness, infrastructure, funding, and student awareness (Oluwo, Soneye, & Apetu, 2025). While the framework encourages student-centered learning, studies suggest that many lecturers continue to rely on traditional lecture methods due to large class sizes and limited professional development opportunities. This implementation gap has implications for students' learning experiences and perceptions.

2.3 Academic Engagement in Higher Education

Academic engagement refers to the degree to which students are actively involved in learning activities cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally. It encompasses dimensions such as participation in class, time on task, emotional investment, and commitment to academic goals (Fasuyi, Oladipo & Udeani 2022; Awofala, Olaguro, Fatade, & Arigbabu, 2024). Research consistently demonstrates a strong relationship between academic engagement and positive learning outcomes, including achievement, persistence, and satisfaction (Fasuyi, Oladipo & Udeani 2022; Ajao, Akinoso, & Awofala, 2023). In teacher education, engagement is particularly important because active participation in discussions, teaching simulations, and practicum experiences enhances professional identity development (Oladipo & Yewande 2015). Studies comparing traditional and outcome-based curricula suggest that student-centered approaches foster higher engagement levels (Prince, 2004). Under BMAS, engagement has often been reported as passive, characterized by lecture attendance and examination preparation. Conversely, CCMAS's emphasis on interactive learning, group work, and practical tasks is theoretically expected to increase engagement. However, empirical evidence from Nigerian universities remains limited, underscoring the need for comparative studies.

2.4 Learning Motivation among University Students

Learning motivation refers to the internal and external forces that initiate, sustain, and direct students' learning behaviors. Self-Determination Theory (Deci

& Ryan, 2000; Awofala & Falolu, 2017; Oladipo, Ogundiwin & Ngwu 2019; Oladipo, Akanji & Udeani 2021) distinguishes between intrinsic motivation (learning driven by interest and enjoyment) and extrinsic motivation (learning driven by rewards or external pressures). Research in higher education shows that curricula emphasizing autonomy, relevance, and competence tend to enhance intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In teacher education, motivated students are more likely to develop reflective practice habits and lifelong learning orientations. One flaw in BMAS-based curricula as perceived by the proponents of CCMAS is that BMAS often emphasize examination performance, which may promote extrinsic motivation at the expense of deep learning. CCMAS, by integrating practical relevance and skill development, is expected to foster greater intrinsic motivation. However, inconsistent implementation and assessment overload may undermine these benefits, leading to mixed motivational outcomes among students.

2.5 Teaching Confidence in Pre-Service Teachers

Teaching confidence, often conceptualized as teacher self-efficacy, refers to pre-service teachers' belief in their ability to plan, deliver, and manage instruction effectively (Bandura, 1997; Oladipo, Ogundiwin & Ngwu 2019; Awofala, 2023). High teaching confidence is associated with resilience, instructional innovation, and positive classroom practices. Research suggests that teacher education programmes that provide extensive practicum experiences, mentoring, and reflective opportunities enhance teaching confidence (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Under BMAS, limited emphasis on reflective practice and learner-centered pedagogy has been linked to moderate confidence levels among pre-service teachers. CCMAS places greater emphasis on experiential learning, microteaching, and teaching practice integration. It is contended that students exposed to such approaches would report improved confidence; however, this outcome might depend heavily on supervision quality and institutional support. A comparative investigation is therefore necessary to determine whether CCMAS meaningfully enhances teaching confidence relative to BMAS.

2.6 Academic Achievement in Higher Education

Academic achievement is commonly measured through grades, cumulative grade point average (CGPA), and performance on standardized assessments. While achievement remains a central indicator of academic success, scholars caution against

relying solely on grades to evaluate curriculum effectiveness as grades can be detrimental to students and their education (Rickey, Coombs, DeLuca, & LaPointe-McEwan, 2023). Research comparing content-based and outcome-based curricula reveals mixed findings. Some studies report improved achievement under outcome-based models (Manzoor, Aziz, Jahanzaib, Wasim, & Hussain, 2017; Odigure, 2020), while others find no significant difference (Kausar, 2009), suggesting that instructional quality mediates curriculum effects. In Nigeria, BMAS has been associated with relatively stable achievement patterns, though critics argue that grades may not accurately reflect practical competence. CCMAS seeks to broaden achievement indicators by incorporating continuous assessment, project work, and skill-based evaluation. However, concerns about grading consistency and workload raise questions about the comparability of achievement outcomes across curricula. Comparative analysis is therefore essential to understand whether CCMAS translates into measurable academic gains.

2.7 Pedagogical Knowledge in Teacher Education

Pedagogical knowledge refers to teachers' understanding of instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment techniques, and learner diversity (Shulman, 1987; Oladipo, Akhigbe & Udeani, 2025). In teacher education, pedagogical knowledge is as important as subject matter knowledge. Studies have shown that curricula emphasizing reflective practice, active learning, and teaching simulations enhance pedagogical knowledge acquisition (Bruster, & Peterson, 2013). Under BMAS, pedagogical courses were often theoretical, limiting opportunities for application. CCMAS addresses this gap by integrating pedagogy with practice and encouraging interdisciplinary learning. However, literature indicates that the effectiveness of such integration depends on lecturers' competence and institutional resources (Darling-Hammond & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Without adequate support, pedagogical innovations may remain superficial, affecting students' learning outcomes.

2.8 Comparative Studies of Curriculum Models

Comparative studies of curriculum models provide valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of educational reforms. International research comparing traditional and outcome-based curricula highlights improvements in engagement and skill development but notes challenges related to assessment and staff readiness. In Nigeria, no studies have directly compared BMAS and CCMAS, particularly within

Faculties of Education. More importantly, studies have failed to focus on policy analysis and student outcomes. This gap underscores the importance of empirical, student-centered comparative research such as the present study.

Summarily, the reviewed literature demonstrates that curriculum reform in higher education significantly influences students' engagement, motivation, confidence, achievement, and knowledge acquisition. While BMAS contributed to standardization and quality assurance, it has been criticized for limited responsiveness to contemporary educational demands. CCMAS offers a promising alternative by emphasizing outcomes, skills, and learner-centered pedagogy. However, empirical evidence comparing the two curricula—especially in teacher education and within specific institutional contexts such as the University of Lagos—remains limited. There is a notable gap in studies that simultaneously examine cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes among education students exposed to different curriculum frameworks. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive comparative analysis of BMAS and CCMAS, thereby contributing to evidence-based curriculum evaluation and improvement in Nigerian teacher education. These two curriculum frameworks differ fundamentally in orientation, structure, and pedagogical emphasis. BMAS is primarily content-driven, emphasizing coverage of prescribed course content, summative assessment, and lecturer-centered instruction. CCMAS is outcome-based and competency-oriented, emphasizing student-centered learning, skills development, interdisciplinary integration, continuous assessment, and real-world applicability.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a comparative descriptive research design with a quantitative approach. The comparative design was considered appropriate because the study seeks to examine differences in academic engagement, learning motivation, teaching confidence, academic achievement, and pedagogical knowledge between two distinct groups of science education students—those trained under the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) and those trained under the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS). The design enables systematic comparison of outcomes across cohorts without manipulating variables, as both curriculum frameworks have already been implemented. The quantitative approach allows

for objective measurement of constructs and statistical testing of differences.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was conducted at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Akoka, Lagos State, Nigeria. The University of Lagos is one of Nigeria's premier federal universities and has a long-standing tradition in teacher education. The Faculty of Education offers undergraduate programmes across various departments, including Arts Education, Social Sciences Education, Science Education, Educational Foundations, Adult Education, Human Kinetics and Health Education, and Educational Management. The University of Lagos provides an ideal setting for this study because it has produced cohorts of education students trained under BMAS and has recently transitioned to CCMAS, thereby allowing for a meaningful comparative analysis within the same institutional context.

3.3 Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study comprised 582 (Sophomore, $n=164$ and Senior, $n=418$) undergraduate students in the Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education at the University of Lagos, who were trained under either the BMAS or CCMAS curriculum frameworks. Sophomore and Senior students were selected because they had completed the full curriculum under their respective frameworks and had participated in preparation for teaching practice course, pedagogical courses, and major assessments. This ensured that respondents had sufficient exposure to their curriculum to provide informed responses. The science education students included students studying biology education, chemistry education, integrated science education, mathematics education, and physics education. The sophomore students were in the second year of the implementation of the CCMAS, while the Senior students were in the fourth year of the implementation of the BMAS. All sophomore students were part of the sample, and 164 senior students were randomly selected from 418 seniors to be part of the study sample. Altogether, the sample consisted of 328 science education students. Their ages ranged between 16 and 28 years ($SD=2.5$ years). There were 164 CCMAS-trained students and 164 BMAS-trained students.

3.4 Research Instruments

Three instruments were used for data collection, and they included: Education Students' Curriculum Experience Questionnaire (ESCEQ), Pedagogical

Knowledge Test (PKT), and Academic Achievement Record Sheet (AARS).

Education Students' Curriculum Experience Questionnaire (ESCEQ): This self-developed questionnaire measured students' perceptions of academic engagement, learning motivation, and teaching confidence under their respective curriculum frameworks. The ESCEQ consisted of four sections: Section A described the demographic information of the students. Section B focused on the Academic Engagement Scale (10 items). Section C focused on the Learning Motivation Scale (10 items) while Section D described the Teaching Confidence Scale (10 items). Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Pedagogical Knowledge Test (PKT): The Pedagogical Knowledge Test was a 30-item multiple-choice test designed to assess students' understanding of teaching methods, classroom management, assessment strategies, and learner diversity. Each correct response attracted one mark, with a maximum score of 30.

Academic Achievement Record Sheet (AARS): Academic achievement data were obtained using students' CGPA, with permission from the faculty and respondents.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Draft instruments were submitted to three experts in Curriculum Studies, Educational Measurement, and Teacher Education for face and content validity. Their comments were used to refine item clarity, relevance, and alignment with study objectives. The validated instruments were pilot tested on 40 science education students from another federal university for the purpose of computing reliability coefficients. Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained were: Academic Engagement Scale: 0.82; Learning Motivation Scale: 0.85; and Teaching Confidence Scale: 0.88. The Pedagogical Knowledge Test reliability was established using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), yielding a coefficient of 0.81. All values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating high reliability.

3.6 Procedure for Data Collection

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Head, Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Lagos. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntariness. The questionnaires were administered in person during

lecture periods with the assistance of trained research assistants. The Pedagogical Knowledge Test was administered under controlled conditions. Academic achievement records were obtained with respondents' consent. Data collection spanned four weeks.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to answer research questions. Independent samples t-test was used to compare BMAS and CCMAS groups.

4. Results

Research Question 1: Are there any significant differences in academic engagement between science education students trained under BMAS and those under CCMAS?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and t-test comparison of BMAS and CCMAS on academic engagement

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d	
BMAS	164	28.56		4.12	326	8.20	0.00	0.91
CCMAS	164	32.14	3.78					

Students under CCMAS reported higher academic engagement ($M = 32.14$) compared to BMAS students ($M = 28.56$) as seen in Table 1. This suggests that the student-centered, outcome-based CCMAS promotes more active involvement in learning activities. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. The result showed a statistically significant effect of curriculum framework type on science education students' academic engagement $t(326) = 8.20$, $p < 0.001$ with a large effect size Cohen's $d = 0.91$. The difference in academic engagement between BMAS and CCMAS students is statistically significant, indicating that CCMAS students are more engaged academically.

Research Question 2: How does learning motivation vary significantly between BMAS and CCMAS science education students?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and t-test comparison of BMAS and CCMAS on learning motivation

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d	
BMAS	164	29.87		4.25	326	7.37	0.00	0.81
CCMAS	164	33.21	3.95					

Students under CCMAS reported higher learning motivation ($M = 33.21$) compared to BMAS students ($M = 29.87$) as seen in Table 2. This suggests that the student-centered, outcome-based CCMAS promotes learning motivation among the science education students than the students exposed to the BMAS. The curriculum's emphasis on relevance, practical skills, and autonomy likely contributes to higher intrinsic motivation. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. The result showed a statistically significant effect of curriculum framework type on science education students' learning motivation $t(326) = 7.37$, $p < 0.001$ with a large effect size Cohen's $d = 0.81$. The difference in learning motivation between BMAS and CCMAS students is statistically significant, indicating that CCMAS students are more intrinsically motivated academically relative to BMAS students.

Research Question 3: In what ways does teaching confidence differ significantly among science education students exposed to BMAS versus CCMAS?

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and t-test comparison of BMAS and CCMAS on teaching confidence

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d	
BMAS	164	27.34		4.08	326	9.38	0.00	1.04
CCMAS	164	31.46	3.87					

Students under CCMAS reported higher teaching confidence ($M = 31.46$) compared to BMAS students ($M = 27.34$) as seen in Table 3. This suggests that the student-centered, outcome-based CCMAS promotes teaching confidence among the science education students than the students exposed to the BMAS. CCMAS students reported higher teaching confidence than BMAS students, indicating that CCMAS's integrated teaching practice and microteaching exercises positively influence self-efficacy. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. The result showed a statistically significant effect of curriculum framework type on science education students' teaching confidence $t(326) = 9.38, p < 0.001$ with a very large effect size Cohen's $d = 1.04$. The difference in teaching confidence between BMAS and CCMAS students is statistically significant, indicating that CCMAS students have higher teaching confidence relative to BMAS students.

Research Question 4: Are there significant differences in academic achievement between the two science education student cohorts?

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and t-test comparison of BMAS and CCMAS on academic achievement

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d	
BMAS	164	3.12		0.42	326	9.96	0.00	0.82
CCMAS	164	3.45	0.38					

Students under CCMAS reported higher academic achievement ($M = 3.45$) compared to BMAS students ($M = 3.12$) as seen in Table 4. This suggests that the student-centered, outcome-based CCMAS enhances academic achievement among the science education students than the students exposed to the BMAS. This suggests that the curriculum's emphasis on continuous assessment and practical skills may contribute to better performance. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. The result showed a statistically significant effect of curriculum framework type on science education students' academic achievement $t(326) = 9.96, p < 0.001$ with a large effect size Cohen's $d = 0.82$. The difference in academic achievement between BMAS and CCMAS students is statistically significant, indicating that CCMAS students outperform BMAS students in overall academic achievement.

Research Question 5: How does pedagogical knowledge compare significantly between science education students educated under BMAS and CCMAS?

Table 5: Descriptive statistics and t-test comparison of BMAS and CCMAS on pedagogical knowledge

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d	
BMAS	164	12.86		3.45	326	9.97	0.00	1.10
CCMAS	164	16.43	3.02					

Students under CCMAS reported greater pedagogical knowledge ($M = 16.43$) compared to BMAS students ($M = 12.86$) as seen in Table 5. This suggests that the student-centered, outcome-based CCMAS enhances pedagogical knowledge among the science education students than the students exposed to the BMAS. This aligns with CCMAS's focus on integrating theory with teaching practice. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. The result showed a statistically significant effect of curriculum framework type on science education students' pedagogical knowledge $t(326) = 9.97, p < 0.001$ with a very large effect size Cohen's $d = 1.10$. The difference in pedagogical knowledge between BMAS and CCMAS students is statistically significant, indicating that CCMAS significantly enhances pedagogical knowledge compared to BMAS among science education students.

Research Question 6: Are there any significant effects of curriculum framework type on science education students’ overall academic competence (academic engagement, learning motivation, teaching confidence, academic achievement, pedagogical knowledge)?

To examine the overall effect of curriculum type on all dependent variables simultaneously, a MANOVA was conducted.

Table 6. MANOVA result of the effect of curriculum framework type on academic competence

Test Statistic	Value	F	P
Wilks’ Lambda	0.762	126.04	0.00

The multivariate test showed a significant overall effect of curriculum type on the combined dependent variables (academic engagement, learning motivation, teaching confidence, academic achievement, pedagogical knowledge).

Table 7: Univariate result of the effect of curriculum framework type on academic competence

Dependent variable	F	P	Effect Size (η^2)
Academic Engagement	67.24	<0.001	0.51
Learning Motivation	54.32	<0.001	0.46
Teaching Confidence	87.98	<0.001	0.58
Academic Achievement	99.20	<0.001	0.61
Pedagogical Knowledge	99.40	<0.001	0.61

In Table 7, each outcome variable showed significant differences, with CCMAS consistently producing higher scores. Effect sizes range from moderate to large. Summarily, the CCMAS curriculum consistently outperforms BMAS in promoting student engagement, motivation, confidence, achievement, and pedagogical knowledge. These results support the conceptual framework that an outcome-based, student-centered curriculum positively affects education students’ academic and professional outcomes.

5. Discussion

5.1 Curriculum Framework Type and Academic Engagement

The study found that CCMAS students were significantly more academically engaged than BMAS students. The mean academic engagement score for CCMAS students was higher than that of BMAS students, and the difference was statistically significant. This finding aligns with Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes active, learner-centered engagement. CCMAS’s emphasis on collaborative learning, practical exercises, and interactive teaching methods aligns with constructivist principles, encouraging students to actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). Previous research supports this observation. It is theoretically reported that outcome-based curricula, like CCMAS, enhance students’ involvement in learning activities by

encouraging discussion, group work, and practical application (NUC, 2022). Similarly, Prince (2004) observed that interactive and student-centered teaching methods increase behavioral and cognitive engagement. Conversely, curriculum such as BMAS, which emphasizes content coverage and lecture-based instruction, may encourage passive engagement (Hinson-Williams, 2020). CCMAS promotes higher engagement by providing interactive, practical, and reflective learning experiences.

5.2 Curriculum Framework Type and Learning Motivation

The result showed that CCMAS students demonstrated significantly higher learning motivation than BMAS students. This indicates that CCMAS effectively fosters both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This finding can be explained by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The theory posits that learning motivation is enhanced when students experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. CCMAS promotes autonomy through elective courses and student-led projects, competence through practical skills development, and relatedness through collaborative learning activities. BMAS, being teacher-centered, provides fewer opportunities for autonomy and competence-based motivation, which may explain the lower motivation scores. It is highlighted that BMAS encourages extrinsic motivation (grades and exams) rather than intrinsic motivation, whereas CCMAS aligns curriculum objectives with practical relevance and career

readiness, fostering higher motivation (NUC, 2022). Similarly, it is observed that student-centred, competency-based curricula enhance learners' intrinsic motivation (Marcellis et al., 2024). CCMAS effectively motivates students by connecting learning with real-world teaching applications.

5.3 Curriculum Framework Type and Teaching Confidence

The study revealed that CCMAS students exhibited significantly higher teaching confidence than BMAS students. This outcome aligns with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, particularly the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Bandura posits that confidence is strengthened through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional regulation (Awofala, 2023; Lano-Maduagu, Awofala, & Arigbabu, 2022). CCMAS incorporates microteaching, reflective practice, and supervised teaching practice, which provide mastery experiences and feedback, thereby enhancing teaching self-efficacy. BMAS provides fewer opportunities for practice and reflection, resulting in lower confidence levels. It is found that practical teaching experiences and reflective exercises significantly improve pre-service teachers' confidence (Bruster, & Peterson, 2013). Similarly, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) emphasized that teacher preparation programmes incorporating structured practicum improve teaching self-efficacy. CCMAS enhances teaching confidence through practical, supervised, and reflective experiences.

5.4 Curriculum Framework Type and Academic Achievement

The analysis showed that CCMAS students achieved significantly higher academic outcomes than BMAS students. Constructivist principles suggest that active engagement, experiential learning, and integration of knowledge lead to better learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). CCMAS's focus on skills application, continuous assessment, and learner-centred instruction supports these principles, thereby enhancing achievement. BMAS emphasises content coverage and end-of-course examinations, which may not adequately capture practical competence. NUC (2022) concluded that outcome-based curricula improve academic performance due to continuous assessment and skill application. Similarly, NUC (2022) observed that theoretical curricula such as BMAS seemed to produce competent content knowledge but weaker applied outcomes, which do not meet the needs of the current society. CCMAS improves student

performance by emphasizing continuous assessment and active learning.

5.5 Curriculum Framework Type and Pedagogical Knowledge

CCMAS students scored significantly higher on the Pedagogical Knowledge Test than BMAS students. Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) theory posits that effective teaching requires integration of subject matter knowledge and teaching strategies. CCMAS emphasizes integrating theoretical knowledge with teaching practice, reflective exercises, and skill application, which enhances PCK. BMAS's focus on content knowledge alone limits opportunities for applying pedagogical principles. Darling-Hammond and Darling-Hammond (2017) argue that curricula integrating practice with pedagogy produce teachers with stronger instructional skills. CCMAS's structured teaching practice, microteaching, and continuous assessment facilitate better acquisition of pedagogical knowledge than BMAS. CCMAS students develop higher pedagogical knowledge due to the integration of theory and practice.

5.6 Curriculum Framework Type and Overall Academic Competence

The MANOVA results showed a significant multivariate effect of curriculum type on all dependent variables (academic engagement, learning motivation, teaching confidence, academic achievement, and pedagogical knowledge). This suggests that CCMAS consistently outperforms BMAS across cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains of learning. CCMAS's emphasis on student-centred learning, practical experiences, and outcome-based assessment produces more engaged, motivated, confident, high-achieving, and pedagogically competent students than BMAS.

Conclusion

The discussion highlights that CCMAS is superior to BMAS in promoting academic engagement, learning motivation, teaching confidence, academic achievement, and pedagogical knowledge. The findings are consistent with Constructivist, Social Cognitive, and Self-Determination theories, as well as empirical studies in Nigeria and internationally. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the curriculum framework has a significant impact on the outcomes of science education students at the University of Lagos. CCMAS, as an outcome-based, competency-driven, and student-centred curriculum, produces more engaged, motivated, confident, academically successful, and pedagogically competent students than BMAS. Availability of

resources, lecturer preparedness, and support structures influence the extent to which CCMAS benefits students. Overall, CCMAS represents a substantive improvement over BMAS in preparing pre-service science teachers for the Nigerian educational system. CCMAS represents a more effective curriculum model for producing competent, motivated, and confident pre-service teachers in Nigerian universities. Adoption of CCMAS principles is likely to enhance the quality of teacher education and contribute to the development of a competent, confident, and motivated teaching workforce capable of meeting 21st-century educational challenges.

Despite its contributions, the study had some limitations: The study was limited to the University of Lagos, which may affect the generalizability of findings to other Nigerian universities. Data were collected at a single point in time. Longitudinal impacts of BMAS and CCMAS were not examined. Some measures (engagement, motivation, teaching confidence) relied on self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Factors such as socio-economic background, class size, or prior academic ability were not deeply analyzed, which may have influenced outcomes. Future studies should track cohorts over time to assess the long-term impact of CCMAS on teaching effectiveness and career outcomes. Similar comparative studies should be conducted across several Nigerian universities to improve generalizability. Further studies should explore students' and lecturers' perceptions in greater depth through interviews or focus groups. The moderating role of socioeconomic status, gender, prior academic achievement, and institutional resources in curriculum outcomes should be established. Future studies should investigate CCMAS impact on 21st-century skills, ICT competence, and professional identity among pre-service teachers.

6. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed. University of Lagos administrators should fully implement CCMAS principles across all teacher education programmes to enhance student engagement, motivation, and pedagogical competence. They should provide adequate facilities (ICT, teaching aids, and laboratories) to support practical and experiential learning of the preservice science education students. Lecturers and teacher educators in the University of Lagos should adopt student-centered teaching strategies, including discussion, group work, problem-based learning, and reflective exercises in their teaching. They should integrate microteaching and

supervised teaching practice to build teaching confidence and pedagogical knowledge. Lecturers should use continuous assessment and constructive feedback to monitor student progress. Policy makers such as the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) should standardize CCMAS adoption across Nigerian universities to ensure competency-based teacher training. They should develop training workshops for lecturers to enhance familiarity with outcome-based and student-centered pedagogy. Science education students should actively participate in practical and collaborative learning opportunities to maximize the benefits of CCMAS. They should engage in reflective practice to improve self-efficacy and pedagogical knowledge.

7. Implications of the Study

The following are the implications of the study. The study supports Constructivist, Social Cognitive, and Self-Determination theories, demonstrating that learner-centered, outcome-based curricula enhance engagement, motivation, self-efficacy, and competence. CCMAS's effectiveness suggests that curriculum design should emphasize practical application, continuous assessment, and reflective practice to produce competent teachers. Universities should invest in training and resources to maximize curriculum impact. Findings provide guidance for teacher educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers in improving teacher education standards in Nigeria. Policymakers can use the results to advocate for national standardisation of outcome-based curricula across teacher education programmes. Findings highlight the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. The findings support the adoption of outcome-based curricula in teacher education. Universities should prioritise CCMAS-like frameworks to enhance teaching quality. Structured microteaching and reflective practicum are essential for developing teacher confidence and pedagogical knowledge. NUC and TRCN may consider scaling CCMAS principles to all Nigerian teacher education programmes. Engagement and motivation are improved when curricula integrate relevance, autonomy, and practical application.

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Impact of Banditry and Kidnapping on Girl-Child Education in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examined the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State. The study was guided by two (2) research questions. The study reviewed related literature under conceptual framework, theoretical framework and empirical studies. The study adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study was three hundred and eighty-nine (389) respondents comprising teachers and pupils in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State. The sample size of the study totaling two hundred and seventeen (217) was determined using Taro Yamane formula. The instrument used in this study was questionnaire titled: impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education (QEBGCE). Simple percentages, frequency counts, mean and standard deviation were used in data analysis. The findings indicate that the fear of banditry and kidnapping has led to a drastic decline in girl-child enrollment in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area. And the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education are more pronounced in rural areas compared to urban areas, the fear of kidnapping has a greater influence on the educational aspirations of girls in rural areas than in urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area. The study concluded that frequent disruptions of school academic activities due to the fear of kidnapping was among factors responsible for the decline in girl-child enrollment, hence, there is urgent need to address this critical issue. The study recommended the need for increased security outfit around the schools' premises to protect girls from bandit attacks and ensure a safe environment for learning activities.

Keywords: Banditry, Kidnapping, Girl-child, and education

1. Introduction

Insecurity in Nigeria has assumed a very frightening dimension following the mindless attacks on schools and subsequent abduction of school children in Northern part of Nigeria. The incessant abductions of school children have kept many Nigerians worried due to the significant role education play in national development. Globally, education is seen as a powerful tool for bringing about and maintaining social change in human cultures as well as determining their future. Education is viewed as being essential to social reconstruction in addition to being a means of promoting upward social and economic mobility (Ifenkwe, 2013). Girl-child education refers to the provision of educational opportunities and empowerment for female child. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring that girls have equal access to quality education, promoting their intellectual, social, and economic development. Historically, girls and women have faced significant barriers to education in many parts of the world due to social, cultural, and economic factors. However, the recognition of the importance of education for girls' well-being and the advancement of societies has led to efforts to address these barriers and promote girl-child education (Educational Policy and Data Centre, 2023).

According to UNICEF (2020), about 10.5 million of the children aged 5-14 years are not in school in Nigeria. This statistic is even worse in the Northern part of Nigeria with only 53% net attendance rate, meaning almost half of the children's population especially girl-child were out of school. There have been at least two mass abductions and several other cases of abduction of school girl-child across various states in Nigeria, especially in the north.

The impact of these activities such as banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education are numerous, but worthy of mention is the significant drop-in enrollment rate from the considerable gains that were

made in years before. According to reports, enrollment rate of girl-child in school has declined by a whopping 23% which can be attributed to parents deciding against releasing their wards to school for fear of being abducted or banditry and kidnapped. Many of the parents who defy the odds to send their wards to school now rue their choice. It is in light of the above that Okpaga, et al (2021) observe that Nigeria as a nation must make concerted efforts to raise the educational attainment of all its youths who are the leaders of tomorrow especially those girl-child that are deprived of regular school attendance because of insecurity and conflicts.

Running a school is a huge responsibility, in particular, the safety of pupils and staff is vital. It is important to assure parents that their children are safe at school, and that the school is adhering to its duty of care for everyone on the premises. This includes not only students and staff, but also parents and visitors. In an ideal situation, a school ought to be fenced and secured to prevent any kind of attack on both the pupils and teachers. These is only possible if the security architecture is not compromised. There is need for well-trained security personnel to secure the school from both the frontage (gate) and immediate environment (Bwala, 2021).

Another effective method for monitoring who is in the school premises is through the use of Close Circuit Television (CCTV) camera which enables the school to see exactly who is entering the grounds and also who is leaving. This can help combat truancy and keep accurate records of who is coming and going out of school compound. It is therefore, imperative for school authorities in collaboration with Ministry of Education to ensure proper security system in our schools in order to minimize the impact of insecurity on girl-child education. Recent reports indicate a series of violent attacks by armed bandits, resulting in numerous casualties and abductions. For instance, one incident involved six security operatives who were killed, including five military personnel and an officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence, during an assault on multiple communities including Allawa, Manta, Gurmana, Bassa, and Kokki (eonsintelligence.com, 2021 in Daily time Nigeria, 2023). The attackers, estimated to be around 100 in number, executed their assault over several hours, resulting in the abduction of ten individuals and the theft of military vehicles and motorcycles (eonsintelligence.com, 2021). Ahmed et al. (2024), also viewed kidnapping as the “act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom. It involves taking a person from their family forcefully

without their consent with the motive of holding the person as a hostage and earning a profit from their family”. From the foregoing, the definition of kidnapping has no one best way to describe it, but it is clear that for an act to be deemed kidnapping, it shall involve coercive movement of a victim from one place to another, detention or seizure of that person be it a child or an adult. That is why Inyang and Abraham in EPDC (2023) added that it is legally regarded as a restriction of someone else’s liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from. It was based on the above discourse that this study seeks to examine the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Teaching and learning are anchored on peaceful, secured, and enabling environment which are important factors for successful teaching and learning process. In the absence of these basic factors, teaching and learning becomes distorted. The impact of insecurity such as banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in Nigeria cannot be underestimated. Survey by both the print and electronic media indicates that over 85% of the school children especially girl-child in the Northern-Nigeria and some parts of the middle belt are either out of school or do not attend school due to insecurity in the areas (Bwala, 2021).

Apart from negative impact of insecurity on school attendance leading to school dropout of the girl-child as well as economic and social problems, it has caused the nation a lot of human and material resources. These extreme circumstances of fear and uncertainty hinder teachers from imparting knowledge fully and effectively to their students, especially girl-child which cannot learn either with full concentration and attention. The net result is a rapid decline in the quality of education, as performances in internal and external examinations begin to hit the rock.

Another impact of banditry and kidnapping on education in Niger State and Nigeria in general is that, it negatively affects girl-child education as parents are usually scared of enrolling their female children especially when they are considered the most vulnerable to the insecurity challenges.

Although there are several researches conducted to ascertain the impact of banditry and kidnapping on educational system in Nigeria, there however, limited

researches on the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education especially in the study area. Therefore, this study examined the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were raised to guide this study:

- To determine the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State;
- To identify differential impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education between rural and urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the research:

- What is the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State?
- What is the differential impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education between rural and urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State?

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Exploration

The concept of girl-child education refers to the provision of educational opportunities and empowerment for girls. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring that girls have equal access to quality education, promoting their intellectual, social, and economic development. Historically, girls and women have faced significant barriers to education in many parts of the world due to social, cultural, and economic factors. However, the recognition of the importance of education for girls' well-being and the advancement of societies has led to efforts to address these barriers and promote girl-child education (EPDC, 2023). The concept of girl-child education encompasses several key principles and goals:

Access to education: It emphasizes ensuring that girls have equal access to educational opportunities at all levels, from primary to tertiary education. This includes addressing barriers such as discrimination,

gender stereotypes, cultural norms, poverty, and geographic constraints.

Quality Education: It emphasizes the importance of providing girls with quality education that meets their specific needs. This includes ensuring that schools have trained teachers, appropriate infrastructure, safe learning environments, and relevant curricula that promote gender equality and address the unique challenges faced by girls.

Empowerment and skills development: Girl-child education seeks to empower girls with knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed decisions, pursue their aspirations, and actively participate in social, economic, and political spheres. It promotes the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, and life skills.

Gender equality and social transformation: Girl-child education plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality and challenging gender norms and stereotypes. It seeks to change societal attitudes and practices that limit girls' opportunities and perpetuate gender-based discrimination and violence.

Health and well-being: Girl-child education recognizes the interlinkages between education and health. It emphasizes addressing health-related barriers, including access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, to ensure that girls can stay healthy, safe, and able to fully participate in education (EPDC, 2023).

Bad Governance and Poor Leadership are also responsible for insecurity in Nigeria. This has remained as Nigeria's fundamental cause of insecurity from the past till now. Any government anywhere has the primary function of providing basic services such as water, electricity, good road network, quality education, and general infrastructure. Ironically, these basic things are not adequately provided for Nigerians. Nigerian youth are frustrated and demoralized. Demoralization and anger logically provide a strong fertile ground for aggression and general insecurity. Nigeria's current government has been strongly charged with ethnic disparity, and the marginalization of some sections of the country in the provision of basic infrastructure, and these have significantly compounded Nigeria's security issues (Nwadiakor, 2018).

3. Empirical Review

Ahmed, Muhammad and Omache (2024) investigated the impact of banditry on the education of girls in Katsina State. The findings indicated that banditry has detrimental impacts in terms of installing fear of

physical attack, abduction, closure of schools, hinders teachers' ability to teach effectively and disrupts students' ability to learn. It also creates an uncondusive environment for teaching and learning leading to decrease enrolment and retention of female students in schools.

Similar review of related investigation by Umar, Ibrahim and Adamu (2024) in Suleiman et al. (2024) investigation is on the whole eight frontline LGAs and focusing on one of the impacts of banditry activities which is students' performance. Bello and Suleiman (2023) examined the effects of banditry in a non-frontline LGA which is Funtua and examined the effects on two of the vulnerable segments of the population which are women and children.

Additionally, Ahmed, Muhammad and Omache (2024) investigation is also on Katsina State as a whole and focusing also only on one vulnerable segment of the population which are girls. Ladan and Abdulfatah (2023) explores the impacts of banditry activities on one of the frontline LGA which is Jibia and focusing on the several impacts of banditry on education.

Abdullahi, et al., (2019) conducted a survey on the impact of insecurity on school attendance of junior secondary school students in Maiduguri metropolis, Borno State. The study found out that students' level of school attendance under the crisis situation in Maiduguri metropolis has been low but that of male students seems to be lower than that of female students. Parents and teachers were willing to send their children back to the affected schools. The impact of insecurity on school attendance was found to be significant.

Ojukwu (2017) investigated the effect of insecurity of school environment on the academic performance of secondary school students in Imo state, Nigeria. The findings revealed that insecurity of school environment significantly affects the academic performance of secondary school students while students' gangsterism, smoking of Indian hemp, abusing other hard drugs, cult and related violent activities were some of the factors that constituted insecurity of the school environment which eventually cause boys to leave school and join trading while leading girls to drop out and settle for marriage.

Umaru and Terhemba (2014) examined the effects of insecurity on girl-child school attendance in Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria. The study discovered.

the level of primary school attendance under the crisis situation in Damaturu metropolis was found to be low but that of female pupils were found to be lower than that of male pupils. Parents and teachers were willing to send their children back to the affected primary schools. Male and female significantly differ on the effects of insecurity on primary school attendance.

Suleiman, et al. (2024) surveyed the impacts of banditry activities on quality education in Safana Local Government Area, Katsina State. The results showed that banditry has negatively impacted the quality of primary and secondary school education. This is by way of creating insecurity in schools, creating shortage of teachers, increasing the rate of school drop-outs leads to poor academic performance, kidnapping of pupils, students and teachers, occupying school buildings, closure of schools among others. In order to reduce the impacts of the banditry activities the government has adopted a number of measures, so also do the teachers and parents

Oladunjoye and Omemu (2013) carried out research on effect of Boko Haram on school attendance in Northern Nigeria. The study aimed at assessing the effect of Boko Haram on school attendance in Northern Nigeria. It was revealed from the results that there is no significant difference in school attendance among male and female pupils/, but there is a significant difference in school attendance among rural and urban schools, and there is also a significant difference in school attendance among primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in areas prone to Boko Haram attacks.

4. Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was used for this study. The population of this study was three hundred and eighty-nine (389) teachers and pupils in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, the sample size of the study was two hundred and seventeen (217), this sample size was determined using Taro Yamane formula. The questionnaire used titled: Impact of Banditry and Kidnapping on Girl-Child Education Questionnaire (IBKGCEQ). The instrument consisted of 10 items structured on four Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The questionnaire was divided into 3 sections. Section A consisted of the respondent's personal data, while section B, C and has 10 items questions. The items of instrument were validated and was reliable for this study

5. Results and Discussion

Research Questions 1: What is the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State?

Table 1: Responses on the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State

S/No	Items	Mean	St. Dev.	Rem.
1	The fear of banditry and kidnapping has led to a decrease in girl-child enrollment in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area.	2.69	0.65	Agree
2	Incidents of banditry and kidnapping have negatively impacted the academic performance of girl students in primary schools.	2.81	0.63	Agree
3	Parents are reluctant to send their daughters to school due to the threat of banditry and kidnapping in the area.	3.16	0.86	Agree
4	The closure of schools due to security threats has disproportionately affected girl-child education compared to boys' education.	3.11	0.77	Agree
5	The fear of banditry and kidnapping has led to a decrease in girl-child enrollment in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area.	2.69	0.65	Agree
Grand Mean		2.98		Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1. which focused on the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State shows that five items listed have mean scores above the cut off mean of 2.50 which means that the respondents shared the same opinion. However, the grand mean score of 2.98 shows that the respondents agreed on the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

The interpretation above indicates that the fear of banditry and kidnapping has led to a drastically declined in girl-child enrollment in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area, incidents of banditry and kidnapping have negatively impacted on academic performance of girl students in primary schools, parents are reluctant to send their daughters to school SS due to the threat of banditry and kidnapping in the area, the closure of schools due to security threats has disproportionately affected girl-child education compared to boys' education, the fear of banditry and kidnapping has led to a decrease in girl-child enrollment in primary schools in Shiroro Local Government Area.

Research Question 2: What is differential impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education between rural and urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area?

Table 2: Responses on the differential impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education between rural and urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area

S/No	Items	Mean	St. Dev.	Rem.
1	I believe that the impact of banditry on girl-child education is more pronounced in rural areas compared to urban areas.	3.67	0.78	Agree
2	The fear of kidnapping has a greater influence on the educational aspirations of girls in urban areas than in rural areas.	2.98	0.71	Agree
3	Community initiatives in urban areas are effective in mitigating the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education than in rural areas.	3.14	0.73	Agree
4	The prevalence of banditry and kidnapping in more common in rural areas than urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area	2.98	0.71	Agree
5	Kidnapping incidents in urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area significantly deter parents from sending their daughters to school.	3.67	0.78	Agree
Grand Mean		2.88		Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 2. which focused on the differential impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education between rural and urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area shows that five items listed have mean scores above the cut off mean of 2.50 which means that the respondents shared the same opinion.

However, the grand mean score of 2.88 shows that the respondents agreed to all the items on differential impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education between rural and urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

The interpretation above indicates that the impact of banditry on girl-child education are more pronounced in rural areas compared to urban areas, the fear of kidnapping has a greater influence on the educational aspirations of girls in rural areas than in urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area, community initiatives in urban areas are effective in mitigating the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education than in rural areas, the prevalence of banditry and kidnapping in more common in rural areas than urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area, kidnapping incidents in urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area significantly deter parents attitude from sending their daughters to school.

6. Discussion of Findings

The result of research question 1 indicates that the frequency of banditry attacks in the study area disrupted the normal school schedule for girls. Girls in the community missed school due to fear of being kidnapped by bandits, abduction of school girls by bandits led to a decline in girl-child school enrollment in the area under investigation, teachers have been reluctant to teach in schools located in areas affected by banditry and destruction of school infrastructure by bandits negatively impacted the learning environment for girls.

The interpretation of research question 2 that the impact of banditry on girl-child education are more pronounced in rural areas compared to urban areas, the fear of kidnapping has a greater influence on the educational aspirations of girls in rural areas than in urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area, community initiatives in urban areas are effective in mitigating the impact of banditry and kidnapping on girl-child education than in rural areas, the prevalence of banditry and kidnapping is more common in rural areas than urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area, kidnapping incidents in urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area significantly deter parents from sending their daughters to school. The finding agrees with that of Olumodeji, and Ifeoma (2024) that conducted study on impact of banditry kidnapping and terrorism on school administration teachers' job performance and students' academic performance and students' enrolment in educational institutions in Nigeria, the study established that insecurity challenges have disrupted school administration, teacher's job performance, students' academic performance and enrolment, retention and completion of education programmes in respective educational institutions across the country

Therefore, banditry activities such as killings, kidnappings, cattle rustling, threats, intimidation,

harassment, extortion, illegal fines and tax collection, sporadic shootings to frighten the people have created serious insecurity in the North West Zone, these activities have affected the socio-economic activities of the people including education. In fact, in the affected States such as Niger, Katsina, Kebbi, Kaduna, and Sokoto States, banditry has affected primary, secondary and tertiary education. Recent banditry attacks, invasion of some community by Boko Haram insurgents to kidnap large number of pupils and students from primary and secondary schools has negatively affected the quality of education in the Northern Nigeria.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF,2020) the kidnapping incidences and other banditry activities have led to the closure of 11,536 schools in the Northern Nigeria from December 2020 to April 2021 which impacted the education of 1.3 million children in the 2020/2021 academic year. The Federal Government of Nigeria has on many occasions been called upon to declare "State of Emergency" on the education sector to save it from eminent collapse due to banditry activities in the Northern region (Nasiru, 2021 in Suleiman, et al. 2024).

Frederick, et-al (2023), in his investigation of school children abduction in Nigeria: implication for educational development in Northern Nigeria, revealed that between 2014 and 2021, gunmen kidnapped over 1,500 students, mostly girls, and about 1,280 teachers and pupils have died and over 1,400 schools have been destroyed. The study also revealed the effects of school children adoption to include: reductions in teachers' recruitment, nose-dive in student enrollment and lowered rates of transition to higher education levels, most especially among girls. The implication is that, it leads to discouragement of foreign investment in the education and decline in the national economy; a negative image for the nation; and a decrease in the passion and interest of Nigeria's children in education.

7. Conclusion

The findings from the various analysis and reviews from this study points to a negative impact of banditry activities on the education of girl-child in the affected communities. The study concluded that frequent disruption of school teaching and learning, fear of kidnapping, and the subsequent decline in girl-child enrollment underscore the urgent need to address this critical issue. The reluctance of teachers to work in schools located in banditry-affected areas and the destruction of school infrastructure further exacerbate the challenges faced by girls in accessing quality

education. The study therefore, concludes that the impact of banditry on girl-child education are more pronounced in rural areas compared to urban areas. This implies that the fear of kidnapping has a greater influence on the educational aspirations of girls in rural areas than in urban areas of Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- There is need for increased security presence around schools to protect pupils, especially girls from bandit attacks and ensure a safe learning environment.
- Community-based security initiatives should be adopted to complement the efforts of law enforcement agencies in safeguarding school girls.
- Government should establish temporary learning centers in secured locations to ensure the continuity of girl-child education during periods of heightened banditry.
- There is need for collaboration with international organizations and NGOs to secure funding and resources for the implementation of these recommendations.
- There is need for collaborative engagement with communities for advocacy, orientation and guidance service to raise awareness about the challenges such as post-traumatic disorder faced by girls in accessing education in banditry-affected areas.

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Perceived Stress, Social Media Dependence, and Sleep Quality as Predictors of Information Resource Utilization among Undergraduate Students in Ibadan, Nigeria: The Moderating Role of Information-Seeking Behaviour

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Abstract. This study examined perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality as predictors of information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria, with information-seeking behaviour as a moderating variable. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A sample of 176 undergraduate students was selected across universities in Ibadan using a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using standardized instruments, including the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), an adapted Information-Seeking Behaviour Scale, and an Information Resource Utilization Scale. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, multiple regression, and hierarchical regression analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality were significantly related to information resource utilization. The results further showed that the three independent variables jointly contributed significantly to information resource utilization, accounting for a substantial proportion of variance in the dependent variable. In terms of relative contribution, perceived stress emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by sleep quality and social media dependence. Additionally, information-seeking behaviour significantly moderated the relationship between the independent variables and information resource utilization, indicating that students with higher information-seeking competence were better able to utilize academic resources despite psychosocial challenges. The study concluded that psychological and behavioural factors play a critical role in shaping students' use of academic information resources, and

that information-seeking behaviour can buffer the negative effects of stress, social media dependence, and poor sleep quality. It was therefore recommended that universities should implement stress management programs, promote healthy digital habits, encourage good sleep practices, and strengthen information literacy training to enhance effective utilization of library resources among students.

Keywords: Perceived stress, social media dependence, sleep quality, information resource utilization, information-seeking behaviour

1. Introduction

University students operate in an increasingly demanding academic and digital environment where psychological strain, excessive social media engagement, and sleep disturbances significantly influence learning behaviours and academic outcomes. Globally and within Africa, poor sleep quality among university students has become a major concern. A systematic review and meta-analysis by Haile et al. (2024) found that over 60% of African university students experience poor sleep quality, with perceived stress and electronic device use identified as major contributing factors. Similarly, Alimoradi et al. (2023) reported that higher perceived stress levels are strongly associated with poor sleep outcomes among students, suggesting a critical link between psychological wellbeing and daily functioning. In addition to stress and sleep, social media dependence has emerged as a significant behavioural factor affecting students' academic engagement. Research by Zhang et al. (2023) revealed that social media addiction negatively predicts academic engagement, with sleep quality acting as a mediating factor.

Likewise, Islam et al. (2023) found that problematic social media use is associated with fatigue, fear of missing out, and disrupted sleep patterns among university students. These findings indicate that excessive digital engagement may reduce students' capacity to concentrate, manage time effectively, and engage in meaningful academic activities, including the use of library resources.

Within the field of Library and Information Science, information-seeking behaviour is central to understanding how students access and utilize academic resources. Studies in Nigeria have consistently shown that although students have access to various information resources, utilization remains suboptimal. For instance, Baro and Asaba (2010) observed that students' information-seeking patterns significantly influence their ability to access relevant academic materials. More recent findings by Baro et al. (2010) indicate that challenges such as poor search skills, limited awareness of resources, and infrastructural barriers hinder effective utilization of library services among undergraduates. Similarly, Nwachukwu et al. (2024) reported that low engagement with electronic information resources persists despite their availability, highlighting a gap between access and actual usage. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the effective utilization of library resources is not solely dependent on access or digital literacy. A study by Popoola (2008) found that even when students possess adequate information literacy skills, psychological and behavioural factors can influence their use of information resources. This implies that internal factors such as stress levels, behavioural habits, and lifestyle patterns may play a critical role in determining how students interact with academic information systems.

Empirical studies conducted in Nigeria further reinforce the importance of psychosocial variables in shaping student behaviour. Offor and Omopo (2025) demonstrated that psychological interventions significantly improve relational wellbeing among women with childhood trauma, highlighting the long-term impact of psychological experiences on behaviour. Omopo (2021) also showed that cognitive and motivational strategies can effectively promote health awareness and behavioural change among individuals. In another study, Omopo (2025) found that perceived stress is closely associated with sleep disorders and substance use among tertiary institution students in Ibadan, indicating the interconnectedness of psychological and behavioural health factors. Additionally, Omopo et al. (2025) established that social media dependence, peer pressure, and psychological vulnerabilities such as depression

significantly influence adolescents' exposure to cyber risks.

Despite these insights, there is limited research that integrates psychological factors with library-related outcomes, particularly in the Nigerian context. Existing studies tend to examine mental health variables independently of academic information behaviours, leaving a gap in understanding how these variables interact to influence information resource utilization. It is plausible that students experiencing high stress, poor sleep quality, or excessive social media dependence may exhibit reduced motivation, impaired concentration, and ineffective information-seeking strategies, thereby limiting their use of academic library resources. Moreover, information-seeking behaviour may serve as a crucial moderating factor in this relationship. Students with strong information-seeking skills and habits may be better equipped to navigate academic resources despite psychological challenges, whereas those with weaker skills may be more adversely affected. Understanding this moderating role is essential for developing interventions that enhance both student wellbeing and academic resource utilization. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to examine perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality as predictors of information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria, while investigating the moderating role of information-seeking behaviour. The study aims to bridge the gap between psychological research and Library and Information Science by providing empirical evidence on how psychosocial factors influence academic information practices.

1.1 Hypotheses

- There will be no significant relationship between perceived stress, social media dependence, sleep quality and information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.
- There will be no significant joint contribution of perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality to information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.
- There will be no significant relative contribution of perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality to information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.
- There will be no significant moderating effect of information-seeking behaviour on the relationship between perceived stress,

social media dependence, sleep quality and information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.

2. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered appropriate for examining relationships among variables without manipulation. The population comprised undergraduate students across universities in Ibadan, Nigeria, from which a sample size of 176 students was drawn using a multistage sampling procedure. Universities including the University of Ibadan, First Technical University, Ibadan, and Dominion University, Ibadan were purposively selected, after which faculties and departments were chosen through simple random sampling. At the final stage, respondents were selected using convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness to participate. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of standardized instruments, including the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983) for perceived stress, the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) developed by Andreassen et al. (2016) for social media dependence, and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) developed by Buysse, Reynolds, Monk, Berman, and Kupfer (1989) for sleep quality. Information-seeking behaviour was measured using an adapted Information-Seeking

Behaviour Scale based on the works of Wilson (1999), while information resource utilization was assessed using a structured scale adapted from established library studies. The instrument also included items on respondents' demographic characteristics. Validity was ensured through expert review in relevant fields, while reliability was established through a pilot study and Cronbach's alpha analysis.

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant authorities, and informed consent was sought from all participants, with assurances of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants, and all completed copies found usable were retrieved for analysis. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and study variables. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to examine relationships among variables, while multiple regression analysis determined the joint and relative contributions of perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality to information resource utilization. Hierarchical multiple regression was employed to test the moderating effect of information-seeking behaviour, and all hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

3.1 Hypothesis One

There will be no significant relationship between perceived stress, social media dependence, sleep quality and information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Matrix Showing Relationship among Variables (N = 176)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Information Resource Utilization	1.00			
2. Perceived Stress	-0.41**	1.00		
3. Social Media Dependence	-0.36**	0.45**	1.00	
4. Sleep Quality	-0.38**	0.49**	0.42**	1.00

p < .05

Table 1 shows the relationship among perceived stress, social media dependence, sleep quality, and information resource utilization. Perceived stress ($r = -0.41, p < .05$), social media dependence ($r = -0.36, p < .05$), and sleep quality ($r = -0.38, p < .05$) were all significantly negatively related to information resource utilization. This implies that higher stress levels, higher dependence on social media, and poorer sleep quality were associated with lower utilization of information resources. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

3.2 Hypothesis Two

There will be no significant joint contribution of perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality to information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Joint Contribution

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error	F	p
1	.58	.34	.33	4.21	29.67	.000

Table 2 shows that perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality jointly predicted information resource utilization ($R = .58$, $R^2 = .34$). This indicates that the independent variables accounted for 34% of the variance in information resource utilization. The F-value ($F = 29.67$, $p < .05$) was significant, indicating that the joint contribution of the predictors was statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

3.3 Hypothesis Three

There will be no significant relative contribution of perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality to information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients Showing Relative Contributions

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	32.15	2.84	—	11.32	.000
Perceived Stress	-0.28	0.07	-0.31	-4.00	.000
Social Media Dependence	-0.22	0.08	-0.25	-2.75	.007
Sleep Quality	-0.26	0.06	-0.29	-4.33	.000

Table 3 shows the relative contributions of each predictor variable to information resource utilization. Perceived stress ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < .05$), social media dependence ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < .05$), and sleep quality ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < .05$) all made significant independent contributions. Perceived stress had the strongest contribution, followed by sleep quality and social media dependence. This indicates that all three variables significantly predicted information resource utilization. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

3.4 Hypothesis Four

There will be no significant moderating effect of information-seeking behaviour on the relationship between perceived stress, social media dependence, sleep quality and information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression Showing Moderating Effect

Model	Variables Entered	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F	p
1	IVs (Stress, SMD, Sleep)	.58	.34	—	29.67	.000
2	+ Information-Seeking Behaviour	.64	.41	.07	32.11	.000
3	+ Interaction Terms (Moderator Effect)	.68	.46	.05	35.22	.000

Table 4 shows the moderating effect of information-seeking behaviour. The inclusion of the moderator increased the explained variance from 34% to 41%, while the addition of interaction terms further increased it to 46%. The change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 = .05$) at the final step was significant ($p < .05$), indicating that information-seeking behaviour significantly moderated the relationship between the independent variables and information resource utilization. This suggests that students with better information-seeking behaviour were less affected by stress, social media dependence, and poor sleep. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The findings revealed that perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality were significantly related to information resource utilization among undergraduate students, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result suggests that students experiencing higher levels of stress, excessive engagement with social media, and poor sleep patterns are less likely to effectively utilize academic information resources. A possible explanation is that stress reduces cognitive capacity, concentration, and motivation, thereby limiting students' ability to engage in purposeful information-seeking activities. Similarly, excessive social media use may divert attention away from academic tasks, while poor sleep quality can impair memory, alertness, and academic engagement. This finding is consistent with Omopo

4. Discussion

(2025), who reported that perceived stress is associated with sleep disorders and maladaptive behaviours among students. It also aligns with Zhang et al. (2023) and Islam et al. (2023), who found that social media dependence negatively affects academic engagement and sleep quality. In addition, Haile et al. (2024) established that stress and digital device use significantly contribute to poor sleep among students, further reinforcing the interconnected nature of these variables and their impact on academic behaviours such as information utilization.

The results showed that perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality jointly contributed significantly to information resource utilization, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that these variables collectively explain a meaningful proportion of students' engagement with academic information resources. The joint influence suggests that students' academic behaviour is shaped by a combination of psychological, behavioural, and lifestyle factors rather than a single variable. For instance, a student who is stressed, sleep-deprived, and heavily engaged in social media is more likely to experience cumulative negative effects that hinder effective academic functioning. This finding supports the multidimensional perspective of student behaviour as noted by Omopo et al. (2025), who highlighted the combined influence of psychological and social factors such as peer pressure, depression, and social media dependence on adolescents' behavioural outcomes. It is also in line with Alimoradi et al. (2023) and Omopo (2025) studies emphasized the interaction between mental health issues and sleep problems, suggesting that these factors often co-occur and jointly influence functioning. Therefore, the combined predictive power observed in this study reflects the complex interplay of these variables in shaping information-related academic behaviours.

The findings indicated that perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality each made significant relative contributions to information resource utilization, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. Among the predictors, perceived stress emerged as the strongest contributor, followed by sleep quality and social media dependence. This suggests that while all variables are important, stress plays a more dominant role in influencing students' academic information use. One possible reason is that stress directly affects cognitive processes such as attention, decision-making, and problem-solving, which are essential for effective information-seeking and utilization. Sleep quality also plays a critical role by affecting mental alertness and academic readiness, while social media dependence may indirectly

influence behaviour through distraction and reduced study time. This finding corroborates Omopo (2025), who identified stress as a central factor linked with multiple behavioural outcomes among students. It also aligns with Popoola (2008), who noted that psychological and behavioural factors significantly influence the use of information resources. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2023) emphasized the role of sleep as a mediating factor in academic engagement, supporting its significant contribution observed in this study.

The results further revealed that information-seeking behaviour significantly moderated the relationship between perceived stress, social media dependence, sleep quality, and information resource utilization, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variables and information utilization depend on students' level of information-seeking behaviour. Students with strong information-seeking skills and habits were better able to utilize academic resources despite experiencing stress, social media distractions, or poor sleep, whereas those with weaker information-seeking behaviour were more adversely affected. A possible explanation is that effective information-seeking behaviour enhances students' ability to navigate information systems, manage academic tasks, and remain focused on goal-oriented activities, thereby buffering the negative effects of psychosocial challenges. This finding is consistent with Wilson's (1999) model of information behaviour, which emphasizes the role of individual coping mechanisms in information seeking. It also aligns with Baro and Asaba (2010), who reported that students' information-seeking patterns significantly influence their utilization of library resources. Additionally, the behavioural insights from Omopo (2021) suggest that cognitive and motivational processes can shape individuals' engagement with beneficial practices, further supporting the moderating role observed in this study.

5. Conclusion

This study concluded that perceived stress, social media dependence, and sleep quality are significant predictors of information resource utilization among undergraduate students in Ibadan, Nigeria, both individually and collectively. The findings further established that information-seeking behaviour plays a crucial moderating role, such that students with better information-seeking skills are more likely to effectively utilize academic resources despite experiencing psychological or behavioural challenges.

Overall, the study highlights that students' engagement with library and information resources is not solely dependent on availability or access, but is strongly influenced by their psychological state, lifestyle habits, and behavioural competencies.

6. Recommendations

- University management should implement stress management and counselling programs to help students cope with academic and personal pressures.
- Librarians and academic institutions should organize regular information literacy and information-seeking skills training to enhance students' ability to effectively utilize available resources.
- Awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate students on the negative effects of excessive social media use on academic performance.
- Health promotion programs should be introduced to encourage good sleep hygiene among students.
- Library services should be made more engaging and accessible, including improved digital platforms, to attract students and promote resource utilization.
- Counsellors, librarians, and lecturers should collaborate to develop integrated interventions that address both students' psychological wellbeing and academic information needs.

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Part Three

Language and Literary Studies



Language Accessibility and Communication Challenges among the Igbo and Deaf Communities in Lagos

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Abstract. This study evaluates the extent to which Igbo language and sign language are accessible within key institutional domains in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos is a multilingual metropolis where speakers of several Nigerian languages interact daily; however, language access for minority language groups and deaf individuals remains inconsistent. The study investigates five domains: healthcare institutions, courts, broadcast media, religious institutions, and political spaces. Data were collected through interviews with officials in selected institutions, media reports, and participant observation. Findings indicate that both Igbo language and sign language remain underrepresented in institutional communication structures. While limited sign language interpretation exists in some television stations and churches, consistent interpretation across domains is rare. Similarly, Igbo language, though widely spoken among migrants in Lagos, is rarely formally accommodated in public services. The study concludes that meaningful linguistic inclusion requires institutional policies that support both indigenous spoken languages and sign language. Such measures will improve communication access, social participation, and civic inclusion for marginalized linguistic communities in Lagos.

Keywords: Sign language, Igbo language, linguistic access, Lagos, multilingualism, deaf community

1. Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in access to public services and social participation. Individuals who cannot communicate effectively in institutional settings often experience exclusion from vital social, legal, and medical services. In multilingual urban centers such as Lagos, communication barriers affect both migrant language speakers and the deaf community. Sign language remains the primary means of communication for deaf individuals. Without sign language interpretation, deaf people frequently encounter serious challenges in hospitals, courts,

schools, religious spaces, and political environments. These barriers limit their participation in everyday activities and reduce their ability to access essential information. At the same time, Lagos hosts large populations of internal migrants from different regions of Nigeria. Among these groups are Igbo speakers from southeastern Nigeria. Although Igbo is one of the three major Nigerian languages, its institutional presence in Lagos is limited because Yoruba and English dominate most public spaces. As a result, many Igbo speakers rely on English or Yoruba when interacting with institutions even when these languages are not their strongest means of communication.

The motivation for this paper is to explore how Igbo and deaf people access information in many places essential to the quality of life they (deaf people) live daily. According to Tagwirei (2021), sign language is the primary means of communication for deaf individuals. In Lagos, Nigeria, deaf people face significant communication barriers since most residents, including their families do not know sign language. Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals require daily communication access in various settings like hospitals, courts, religious institutions, schools, and political arenas. Sign language is essential for their participation and access to information. Although 31 countries, mainly in Europe, have recognized sign language as an official language (Timmerman 2015), Nigeria has not followed suit. Human Rights Watch stresses the importance of sign language development for promoting the rights, social welfare, and linguistic freedom of deaf individuals. This highlights the need for minority language rights, including access to sign language, to be recognized and protected by judicial authorities. In addition to the inability to speak dominant official languages such as English and Yoruba, deaf individuals in densely populated cities like Lagos, Nigeria face various social challenges. With a population of over 15 million, Lagos presents unique obstacles for the deaf community. While researchers like Yusuf and Fadairo (2013), Dada and

Owolabi (2013), Nlem and Anurudu (2013), and Melefa, Adeosun, and Adisa (2013) have investigated language access in different domains (medical, religious, educational, and government) in Nigeria, their focus has been exclusively on spoken languages. There is a significant knowledge gap regarding sign language access, and Igbo language is regarded as migrants' language particularly in Lagos, due to Nigeria's prevailing emphasis on language of immediate environment.

The 1999 Nigerian constitution, as amended, covers the rights of Nigerian citizens, including the deaf, to access their language even as defendants. The Freedom of Information Act 2011 also allows Nigerians access to information, although not specific to any Nigerian language. The Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2014) prioritizes local languages (indigenous sign language included) for community broadcasts, while public and private services have flexibility. The 2023 Nigerian National Language Policy requires at least 60% of broadcast programs to be in local languages (Article 8). Although these National laws support language access, they do not dictate the number of languages. The purpose of these laws is to protect linguistic rights. English is the official spoken language of the court in Nigeria and is readily used; every other language requires special arrangements, especially the Indigenous languages. Nigerian indigenous sign languages are marginalized and underdeveloped. American Sign Language (ASL) and British Sign Language (BSL) are foreign sign languages used in public places. (Asonye 2014). Nigeria has yet to fully institutionalize sign language access across sectors. Similarly, while Nigerian indigenous languages are recognized culturally, their use in formal institutions remains inconsistent. This study therefore examines how both Igbo language and sign language function within important social domains in Lagos. By focusing on hospitals, courts, broadcast media, religious institutions, and political spaces, the research aims to determine the level of linguistic accessibility available to deaf individuals and Igbo-speaking residents in the city.

2. Linguistic Situation in Lagos, Nigeria

Lagos State, located in Nigeria's Southwest, is a multilingual area with roughly 20 million inhabitants. It ranks among Africa's most linguistically varied urban hubs. The metropolis hosts speakers of Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, English, and multiple minority tongues. Migration and economic attraction make Igbo speakers a notable community in Lagos. Numerous markets, business districts, and neighborhoods function partially in Igbo. Yet institutional discourse

in Lagos continues to favor English and Yoruba. This produces a mismatch between residents' language practices and official formal communication.

For deaf inhabitants, conditions grow even more intricate. Deaf persons depend on sign language to communicate, but nearly all organizations lack interpreters or personnel skilled in signing. As a result, they frequently turn to family members or unofficial mediators to obtain services. The presence of both spoken minority tongues and sign language underscores the urgency for a broader communication model within Lagos. Recognizing how these languages function across major sectors remains vital to ensuring fair access to information and services. This research seeks to fill that void by examining sign language provision in crucial fields such as healthcare, courts, religious settings, information sharing, and government in Lagos, where deaf community communication requirements remain neglected for the local deaf population today.

This study investigates how these two languages are used in key Lagos sectors: education, healthcare, religious institutions, television broadcasting, and the judiciary. By examining their communicative role in these domains, the research aims to understand how they contribute to the well-being and inclusion of minority communities in such essential spaces.

3. Research Methodology

Data gathering involved a survey of sign and Igbo language access across selected domains and interviews with seven senior staff from the organizations studied (none of whom are deaf). Unfortunately, these officials rarely work directly with deaf individuals, though they shape policies affecting them; deaf persons themselves were not interviewed. I monitored news reports and conducted personal observations of signage announcing interpreter availability in schools, hospitals, and courts. I also tracked language interpretation on television channels, in churches, and at political gatherings. The direct participant-observation method gave the hearing researcher first-hand insight into real-time language interaction and interpretation within each domain. Three hours of observation were logged on each site-visit day. Collection spanned December 2020 through December 2022. Across all domains, the number of deaf people present was indeterminable, except at one church, where sixty-seven deaf attendees (adults and children) were counted during Sunday services.

The study analyses its data qualitatively, guided by Salawu's (2015) 'developmental communication

theory for indigenous language'. Here, "indigenous language" refers to the community's first languages (both sign and spoken) excluding colonial languages such as English and French, even where those function officially. The model holds that development messages should be sourced and delivered in people's own indigenous language, so receivers understand more fully. Using the same shared language, it argues, strengthens mutual comprehension and interaction.

4. Igbo and Sign Language Access in The Hospital

Igbo-speaking patients occasionally face communication problems when clinicians lack Igbo proficiency. Even though many health workers use English, some patients prefer expressing symptoms in their mother tongue. In the absent adequate linguistic support, misinterpretations can arise during diagnosis and treatment. Likewise, Deaf Lagos residents attend hospitals expecting full access through sign-language interpreters or signing doctors. Yet the study finds Lagos hospitals do not supply interpreters, and most physicians cannot sign. One Ikeja facility I visited claimed interpreter services but offered no evidence. The state's two main federal and state hospitals also fail to guarantee clear communication with deaf patients. The Nation's Newspaper (22 May 2013) reported fatal outcomes from these barriers, and little has changed since. With overwhelming numbers of hearing patients, deaf individuals face especially dangerous risks in emergencies, underscoring the urgent need for sign-language access in healthcare.

The Universal Health Law guarantees everyone medical care regardless of language, but for Deaf people that right depends on sign language from either clinicians who can sign or professional interpreters. In reality, private hospitals in Lagos have a dire shortage of interpreters, and signing medical staffs are virtually absent, especially in emergencies. Doctors therefore fall back on relatives or lip-reading, unless a Deaf patient brings a personal interpreter. Hospitals must provide interpreters to secure accurate diagnosis, proper treatment, and safe care. As Sundos (2018) noted that better communication with Deaf patients is essential to avoid errors and complications. Health facilities bear a fundamental duty to uphold Deaf people's right to care.

5. Igbo and Sign Language Access in The Courts

Courts, unlike hospitals, do not post notices about sign-language interpreters, and judges, lawyers, and staff are rarely fluent in signing. The Independent

Newspaper (6 Feb 2020) reported that Deaf victims of sexual abuse and other offences in Lagos encounter justice barriers because courts lack communication support. It cited multiple Ikeja High Court cases delayed by missing interpreters. In the 2017, *State v. Emmanuel Umoh_matter*, Justice Sybil Nwaka of the Ikeja Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Court observed as *The Independent* (20 Feb 2020) recounted:

We (the state) need to get the services of sign language interpreters and we need them as soon as possible... therefore, this court needs to be equipped with sign language instructors, we need the Attorney-General's involvement because we have a lot of cases involving deaf and dumb children that are being defiled. Let the Attorney-General know that defendants need legal aid, as we also have issues with defendants not being represented in court.

Visits to several state high courts and magistrates' courts confirm that nothing has changed. As noted earlier, the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended) guarantees all citizens, including the Deaf persons, the right to access language, even when standing trial. Michael (2016:215) puts it:

It is a trite law that where an accused person does not understand official language of the court, an interpreter must interpret correctly to the accused person anything said in the language he does not understand. Simultaneously, there should be adequate interpretation to the court anything said by the accused person. The value and importance of interpretation of proceedings to an accused person are not in doubt.

As noted, English is Nigeria's official court language; all others require interpreters or translators. Sign language is not taught in Lagos law schools, so any signing legal officer learned it privately. There's no evidence that judges or magistrates in Lagos courts can sign, meaning Deaf access to legal services remains severely limited. Igbo speakers also hit barriers when proceedings run solely in English. While some courts sporadically offer Yoruba or other interpretation, it's inconsistent. Real justice demands institutionalized, professional interpreters for sign language and the underused indigenous languages.

6. Igbo and Sign-Language Access in Broadcast Media

Igbo-language programming remains scarce in Lagos despite a sizable Igbo-speaking audience. A few private outlets air occasional Igbo content, yet major TV stations favor English and Yoruba. Only NTA and LTV offer daily sign-language interpretation for

evening news - NTA at 7 pm, LTV at 6 pm. Both claim broader usage, but that overstates reality. Their interpreters (hired by federal and state governments) appear mainly for special events such as presidential chats, Democracy Day broadcast and, during COVID-19, for the Presidential Task Force briefings on Channels TV and NTA, a joint effort of the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the NBC. Beyond those instances in the above, sign language appears in niche shows such as Judge Funke's Moot Court (an ADR program on TVC and social media) which includes an interpreter. Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry TV also provides interpreted reruns of its Anti-Infirmity Missiles Prayers and Power Must Change Hands; however, the interpreter's frame is often too small for viewers at a distance to read clearly. Among Lagos Deaf Christians, Dove TV carries interpreted sermons by Pastor E.A. Adeboye for most RCCG broadcasts, available daily. Yet apart from these few stations, most Lagos broadcasters employ no interpreters, a gap Deaf advocates have protested. Former Information Minister Lai Mohammed responded to those complaints as follows:

"I am very touched by the contribution of the young lady who said there is a need for sign interpreters during the network news and other major news belts, ... I am going to ask the NBC to direct all our television stations to ensure that there are sign interpreters in all television stations during their major news hours. This will not apply to only the Nigerian Television Authority. Whether public or private television stations, they must comply with the directive. This directive will work both ways. It means the complaint of exclusion will be tackled and the persons with disability of hearing will also be included in programmes and policies of government".

The federal government has yet to issue and enforce a mandate requiring television stations to incorporate sign language interpretation. Even if such a directive were to be implemented, its success would hinge on television stations hiring and training sign language interpreters, which would necessitate significant investment and resources. Currently, both the Nigerian federal government and the Lagos state government appear to be lacking in their commitment to prioritizing this initiative.

7. Igbo and Sign-Language Access in Religious Spaces

Religious institutions are central to Lagos community life. A handful of churches offer sign-language interpretation so Deaf worshippers can participate fully, but such provision is limited. Notable examples

include the Christian Mission for the Deaf (Apata Street, Somolu) founded by American missionary Andrew Foster in 1970, inaugurated 2017, which uses only sign language, giving Deaf members a space to socialize and worship natively. St Brigid's Catholic Church (Ijeshatedo, Surulere) interprets Mass, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (Ebutemeta, Pastor E.A. Adeboye) interprets all programmes, and The New Frontier Church's Talking Finger Ministry also serves Deaf congregants. In these churches, leaders know sign language, enabling clear communication. Beyond worship, the Bible Society of Nigeria is creating video resources for Deaf and hard-of-hearing Christians. In an online report, Mr. Zacchaeus Gbolade stated:

"The Bible Society of Nigeria, BSN has completed the translation of additional 77 Chronological Bible Stories, CBS in Nigerian Sign Language for the deaf. The Sign Language Bible, which is in video format and available on memory stick, is designed to meet the scriptural needs of the hearing impairedthe Bible stories, though expensive, are distributed free of charge to the deaf community. ... The first 77 Chronological Bible stories for the deaf were dedicated in 2014. 33 more stories were added in 2017, additional 35 in 2021 bringing the total number of CBS to 145. With the completion of additional 77 Bible stories, we now have 222 Chronological Bible Stories in the Nigerian Sign Language. Translation work is ongoing as we are now set to commence the translation of the New Testament for the deaf. The Bible Society of Nigeria is committed to breaking any known barriers that make the word of God inaccessible to the people. The sighted, the blind and the deaf now have unhindered access to the word of God in Nigeria, to the glory of God".

Although RCCG, MFM, Catholic, and Christian Mission for the Deaf consciously include interpretation, most Lagos churches neglect it. With countless congregations in the city, only a few have embraced sign language, hampering evangelism, discipleship, and teaching for Deaf/hard-of-hearing people. As Tagwirei (2021) observes, "The church should approach the deaf not as impaired individuals but as people with unique contributions to share with others." Similarly, Igbo-migrant churches sometimes hold services in Igbo during special events, showing how inclusion strengthens participation. Wider adoption of sign interpretation and multilingual services would deepen accessibility. Of course, these practices demonstrate how language inclusion can strengthen community participation. Nevertheless, broader adoption of sign language interpretation and multilingual services would further enhance accessibility.

8. Igbo and Sign Language Access in Political Space

Political participation hinges on access to policy, election, and governance information. Deaf people often encounter barriers because campaigns and public notices seldom include sign-language interpretation. Lagos has never had a Deaf political leader, unlike elsewhere - Rachel Arfa (Chicago), Jack Ashley (Stoke), Amanda Folendorf (Northern California), Gary Malkowski (Canada's first Deaf MP), and Mojo Mathers (NZ). Deaf Lagosians aspire to serve like hearing peers, but linguistic hurdles, not ability, limit them. While Deaf voter data is missing, demand is rising to enforce political rights; Anambra's Deaf community, for example, protested denial of voting rights ahead of the 2017 governorship poll.

Unless sign language is developed and used in governance, Deaf exclusion will persist. Of Nigeria's 18 registered parties, only APC and PDP provide interpreters at presidential rallies, senatorial, governorship, and house campaigns omit this aid. Lagos State, however, is training selected civil servants in basic sign language to improve interaction. The General Manager of the Lagos State Office for Disability Affairs, Mr. Oluwadamilare Ogundairo, supports inclusive communication, noting that Deaf persons are fully human. He calls sign language fundamental to communication and Lagos identity, "no one left behind." Igbo-speaking residents likewise struggle when politics defaults to Yoruba. Inclusive governance means political actors must recognize the electorate's linguistic diversity.

9. Conclusion

Nigeria's 1999 Constitution guarantees information access, yet in Lagos Igbo speakers and Deaf signers still hit daily language barriers, in hospitals, courts, media, politics, and worship. The fix isn't mysterious: hire trained interpreters and weave these languages into public life, like Zimbabwean hospitals that now train doctors in sign (Nyakanyanga 2017). Research agrees language gaps are the main obstacle for Deaf people (Souza et al. 2017; Orrie & Motsohi 2018). Without Igbo and sign-language provision, basic rights stay out of reach.

Governments and organizations have recognized these language challenges faced by these communities, leading to various local and international legislation aimed at preventing discrimination. Examples of such legislation include the 1971 Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and the 1975

Declaration on the Right of Disabled Persons (Sands, 2010). While these legislations are not exclusively focused on the deaf population, they pave the way for governments to enforce sign language access in critical areas that impact the daily lives of deaf individuals in Lagos. It is imperative for the government and authorities to take responsibility and provide solutions to alleviate the suffering and communication challenges faced by the deaf community. As highlighted in this paper, sign and Igbo language interpretation, which enables language access, is grossly underutilized. The deaf community especially is often invisible, but enhanced use of sign and other migrant languages can significantly improve their experiences in these critical areas.

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Ambiguities and Contradictions of Queer Representations in E. E. Sule's *Makwala*

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Abstract. This study examines representations of queer realities in E. E. Sule's *Makwala*, highlighting ambiguities and contradictions in queer narratives. The paper argues that in the process of looking for a compromise in the conflict between the traditional past and the technological present in the representation of the queer experience, several ambiguities and contradictions are unearthed. The paper utilises Queer Theory and qualitative, literary analytical method, to show how the duality of sexual orientation has created contradictions as evident in Nigerian queer narratives. The analysis of the primary text, Sule's *Makwala*, reveals motifs that create contradictory situations such as gender and identity, birth and death, fight and acceptance, tradition and modernity, nature and nurture. The narrator's ambiguity in accommodating these contradictions helps to pave the way for the ironical portrayal of events and queer identities. Through the techniques of flashback, symbolism, surrealism, and foreboding, the narrator is able to capture the crisis that accompanies the ambiguities created by the conflicting bid to merge the global experience with that of the indigenous traditional and spiritual heritage in terms of sexual orientations. The paper concludes that the representation of contradictory issues surrounding queer realities and the ambiguity of the narrator in the novel is part of the process of the struggle in the choice for a better path to modernity in indigenous societies.

Keywords: Queer narratives, Gender studies, Narrative ambiguities, Postcolonial studies.

1. Introduction

Nigerian literature reflects the interface between modernity and traditionality, a reflection of postcolonial realities that also manifests in sexual orientations. Cultural productions in Nigeria, including conventional literature and popular culture,

recreate the realities in the Nigerian 'hybrid postcolonial space' (Kekeghe, Iloilo and Akuburunwa, 2025, p. 1). This paper argues that the representation of the queer ideology and identity in contemporary Nigerian novels is ambiguous and contradictory. In portraying the African experience in their narratives, contemporary Nigerian writers have crossed the threshold to incorporate hitherto issues that were deemed "untouchable". Among these issues is that of queer representation. Just like the traditional Nigerian society, the Nigerian literary space has been fraught with adverse reception for the portrayal of experiences that are not heteronormative. This is not surprising since the heteronormativity is the accepted norm in both the traditional religion and the dominant foreign ones. Thus, both individuals and societies are receptive to the portrayal of heteronormative narratives as basis for the expression of love and sex, same with the African experience in the literary space. In this vein, the choice of a natural binary of sex as the basis for love and affection entails that any representation of queer experience is an unwelcome depiction of the absurd. This has been the benchmark for the fictional narratives of the Nigerian romance with the novel genre in its inception.

But this does not imply that there is a total lack of the expression of the gay affection and a leaning towards same sex love in both the Nigerian society and the literary space. Instead, at its inception, the Nigerian novel exhibited a conscious effort to digress from the portrayal of love and sex. This aversion is captured by Osofisan (2009) when he says that "the exploration of romantic love or sex as a theme is remarkably rare in the output of writers. Virtually, no literary work dared venture, except the deflated language of metaphor or refrainment echo, in the contentions area of carnal experience" (p.31). The implication of Osofisan's statement is reflective of the Nigerian society's aversion to the public portrayal of issues bordering on

love and sex especially if the medium is exposed to access by the young ones. However, this does not capture the exact picture of the happenings in the society. It is then realisable that the literary space of the earliest novels of contemporary Nigerian writers do not reflect the real-time experience of the happenings in the society. As such, the issue of queer behaviour and same sex identities may have been left out in the representation of the African experience in the novels of first generation of Nigerian writers especially as the issue of queer identity is considered a taboo in traditional Nigerian societies. In its place, there is an avalanche of writings on the accepted norm of male female relationship.

However, as the years go by, so also the Nigerian novel begin to shift its course in the representation of the queer experience. In some of such literary representations, there is a moralizing posture which attests to the didactic and transformative nature of Nigerian literature. Literature is transformative and rehabilitative (Kekeghe, 2022), and it heals society in different forms. In the earliest of the portrayal of the queer experience in contemporary novels of writers like Wole Soyinka's *Interpreters*, there is a noticeable reference to queer culture but it is still treated as an acknowledgement of its presence in the society and not an acceptance of the discourse of the queer experience. The shifting discourse of the issue of queer experience in contemporary Nigerian novel is reminiscent of the changing global connectivity. This is what Collins (2010) describes when he opines that "unlike the frustrating effort of their predecessors to straddle cultural and ideological imperatives and the creative impulse, the new voices are basking in the warm glow of worldwide approbation as they attempt to rewrite the African story" (p. xiv). As the pressure from globalisation and the modernisation of communication channels impacts on the literary space, so also, the Nigerian writers develop the boldness to represent what has been consciously underrepresented in the Nigerian novel. In so doing, the issues of queer and same sex become some of the most contentious of the themes of contemporary Nigerian literary space not because they are new motifs but because they are most of the suppressed and underrepresented issues in Nigerian literature. This is the crux of this paper; this paper leans on the queer theory to argue that the representation of the queer ideology, characters and same sex identity in E. E. Sule's *Makwala* is ambiguous and contradictory. The paper draws illustrations from the novel for analysis.

Queer theory in literature has to do with the analysis and the deconstruction of sex and sexuality as realised in the society vis-a-vis the literary space. As sexuality

is captured mainly as heterosexual, queer theory examines the other side of sexuality as a means of representing the marginalised section of the society who see sex and sexuality as more than the standard that society proffers. Queer theory has developed over the years with the crystallisation of the ideas of several theorists like Foucault (1976) who is of the view that sexuality is a means of social construction and not an irreplaceable truth. As for Rubin (1984), the acceptance of heterosexuality as the standard in any society negates and marginalise those who have a different orientation. In her contribution to the development of queer theory, Sedgwick (1990) explains that society establishes sexuality by the appropriation of the attraction of the opposite sex; that a person sexual orientation is judge by the kind of sex he or she is attracted to. Butler (1990) adds that sexuality is performative and not naturally established. However, it is Teresa de Lauretis who coined the term, "queer theory" in 1990 to mean the portrayal of sexuality different from heterosexuality and the fact that sexuality is not necessarily heteronormative, a term coined by Michael Warner in the early 1990s where he argues that society tends to view heterosexuality as the norm and superior to other sexual orientation. In literature, queer theory provides a theoretical framework for challenging the standard for the discourse of sexuality and identity. The use of queer theory will enable this paper explore the ambiguities and contradictions in the representation of the queer identities of characters.

Sule's *Makwala* (2018) is the story of the inhabitants of Makwala, a fictitious neighbourhood close to the city of Kano in northern Nigeria. The events of the story are particularly centred on two young boys called Ende and Jackson. The story explores the challenges of growing up in a pre-sharia settlement where the lives of the poor inhabitants revolve around work, alcohol and sex. Though some of the people dwelling in Makwala tend to be reformative and exhibit a desire to move the settlement towards a better social trajectory, the hypocrisy of the leaders and followers make these twinkle of reforms ineffective. As the settlement degenerates into anarchy, the introduction of sharia law effectively moves both the society and people into a tragedy that consumes the notable members of the settlement. At the same time, the lives of Jackson and Ende is inevitably changed and the outcome at time is tragic and unsavoury. Ambiguity and Contradictions in the Construction of Queer Identity Sule's *Makwala*

The issue of ambiguity in the representation of the queer characters in Sule's novel, *Makwala*, follows the projection of both the themes of love and hate. The

binary of love and hate reflects the portrayal of the identity of the major queer character and protagonist of the novel, Jackson. In the novel, the construction of the identity of Jackson is undertaken in a tripod pattern. The first is the biological identity of Jackson. Jackson is a biological creation of a prostitute and a murderer. Jackson's mother, Martha, has a notorious story in the novel. But she does not start her life as a prostitute. Instead, like every other child in an underdeveloped part of the country, Martha was born into poverty. In one of her reminiscences, Martha has narrated that "she had dropped out of JSS3 because her parents had no money to register her for the Junior WAEC" (43). With education out of the way, Martha is subject to the vulnerabilities of the underprivileged. So, when one woman from village gave her an option to travel to Kano in the northern part of Nigeria for what Martha thinks will be a better avenue to redirect her life, she readily follows Madam Veteran, as the woman is called in Kano. But in Kano, Martha is gang-raped and initiated in a life of prostitution. It is in the line of duty as a prostitute that she met the man who is later to become the father of Jackson.

In the slum of Makwala, Jackson is popularly called Lebanese Pikin. This is because, the father is a Lebanese; one of the expatriate staff working in numerous cottage industries in Kano. However, there is a twist in the identity of Jackson's father as according to Mama Maria, one of the notable inhabitants of Makwala, "Mohammed na correct hire-killer! Correct hiore-killer, you hear. We know am wella for makwala here" (p.225). So, the identities of the biological parents of Jackson are a "hired-killer" and a prostitute. This background condemns to a life where the stigma of being born to a notorious union becomes one of the flashpoints in Jackson's life that pushes him deeper into despair. Later after the birth of Jackson, the father disappeared and the mother has to do with the glimpses of the past where her union with Mohammed is a period of bliss and a momentous one. In one her reminiscences, Martha says of Jackson's father that "never lived to see the child. But he wanted to take me away. He was deciding: Lebanon, Turkey, Israel, Egypt. I wanted the West. He hated the West. He was what the West would describe as a terrorist" (p.78).

The description of the physique of Mohammed creates a level of ambiguity. In one of her chatty moods, Martha tells Ndula that "he was tall, big broad-chested. He liked safari and suits, expensive ones. Handsome and suave, he was every lady's delight" (p.187), Ndula is one of the important member of Makwala's inhabitants and father of Ende, who later becomes a close friend of Jackson, in her praise of

Mohammed, she portrays Mohammed as a generous person who "took her to his expensive apartment, his richly furnished rooms, and often left her there and travelled, which he did very frequently" (p.187). At the end, Martha concludes that Mohammed "was an international businessman" (p.187). The point being made here is that while the inhabitants of Makwala sees Mohammed as a "hired-killer" and terrorist, Martha, his girlfriend, sees him as a handsome, generous and hardworking. Therein lies the ambiguity. On the one hand, Jackson's father, as a terrorists and killer, is one of the worst humanity can produce while on the other hand, he is portrayed as a responsible. The dual identity of Mohammed creates confusion in the mind of the reader and it is this confusion that produced Jackson.

Moreover, in the space of love and affection between Mohammed and Martha, there is an observable ambiguity. In her relations with Mohammed, Martha updates the reader that "Mohammed was a God-send...he doted on her openly. Took her to Tahir Hotel where in hidden lounges Mohammed introduce her to wealthy Lebanese and Pakistan men who owned factories and large businesses" (p.188). This shows the extent of the love of Mohammed for Martha. However, as Martha falls deeply in love and in a moment of infectious affection, she sells the idea of marriage to Mohammed. Instead of the positive that Martha expects based on the level of affection Mohammed has for her, Mohammed replies that "Marriage? No, no, no, no. I'm forbidden to marry. Okay? My baby, no marriage" (p.188). The firm but negative response of Mohammed sums up the recurring ambiguities in life. These hover between the binaries of love and hate and attractiveness and repugnance respectively. These ambiguities in the life of Mohammed and Martha, the biological parents of Jackson, are reflected in the biological make of Jackson. At one time, Jackson has "the sweetest smile from a handsome face accentuated by large, bright and sparkling eyes" and he is very "lovely boy until something broke his spirit" (p.117). Though physically Jackson is handsome like his father and he is often called "Lebanese Pikin" in reference to his mulatto skin, the internal chemistry of Jackson is filled with anger and hate.

The implication of the biological make-up of Jackson is that he becomes a lovely and attractive handsome boy. This level of beauty becomes the magnet that pulls others towards him. But as usual, an ambiguity also arises. This is the fact that instead of funneling the attraction towards Jackson along the heteronormative line, the both sexes become attracted to Jackson. There is the case of Kemi, one of the young girls in Makwala, who is attracted to Jackson appealing to Jackson at a

point: “You know say I love you. I love you very much” (p.101). The irony is that Jackson is not interested in establishing a relationship with her. Therefore, “Kemi had avoided him when he slapped her. He had threatened to beat her up if she didn’t leave him alone” (p.184). Then, there is the case of “one of the men selling *suya*” who approached Jackson and Ende and says that “I thought you would like to eat some meat. Have it. For you, he pointed at Jackson who suddenly turned sullen. “I like you. Fine boy” (p.35). In contrast to the violent repelling of Kemi, who is an opposite sex telling her that “I have no time for any girl. They are bitches” (p.61), Jackson is reluctant but eventually accepts the gift from a same sex person. This attraction from the same sex persons is aptly portrayed by the narrator of an incident that occurred some time ago in Jackson’s life. According to the narrator, Jackson recalls when his Geography teacher “had stared at him a long while and then winked at him”. The man had pulled out a twenty naira note from his pocket and stretched his hand towards Jackson. “Here, get something for yourself” (p.35). What these different approaches from sexes mean is that it becomes unclear where the sexual orientation of Jackson lies.

Apart from the biological ambiguities that conditioned Jackson, there is also the social and environmental motifs that contribute in the nurture of Jackson. One of these is violence. Though violence is a daily occurrence in the streets of Makwala, Jackson’s exposure to violence is both physical, emotional and psychological. On the physical side, one frequent area that shapes the undercurrent of Jackson’s life is the impact of the profession of his mother. As I note earlier, Martha is a prostitute. This means that as Jackson grows up, he is exposed to adults who abuse his mother sexually and sometimes he is involved in the assault. One case is that of the altercation between Martha and a soldier who demands anal sex from her. Her resistance degenerates into a physical assault. As the event unfolds, Jackson remains at alert while watching the soldier’s antics with “recalcitrance of defiance”. According to the narrator, the soldier “launched a slap that sent the boy tumbling down from the slim bed” (p.79). “Jackson remained impassive” and this violence becomes part of the ugly events that shaped his consciousness.

The issue of rape is another ambiguous idea that shaped the social construction of the identity of Jackson, the queer protagonist of the novel. The rape of Jackson affects him physically and psychologically, and alters his reasoning and conducts in the play. Literature expresses physical and mental wounds (Iloilo, 2022, p. 123). As the novelist constructs the identity of Jackson, the exposure of Jackson to the

physical sexual abuse by boys and not sex because an ambiguity difficult for the reader to process. Hitherto, Jackson had been admired by the “female adults who paid attention to him wanted something that has to do with his penis and protruding buttocks” (p.75). So, the expectation of the reader is that if there is going to be any sexual abuse of Jackson, it is going to be carried by the female folk. But at the end, the reverse is the case. It is three boys that raped Jackson. Narrating the ugly incident, the narrator says that Jackson “was pushed roughly and turned on his belly, legs pushed apart. He felt two palms gripping his buttocks, opening them. Something sticky was roughly rubbed in, and then the hardness of a penis stabbed right at his anus, so harsh, so rough. His body stiffen and began to jerk” (p.64). Jackson is raped, not by the opposite sex, but his same sex. This is the beginning of Jackson’s journey as a queer; he is not initiated into the queer brotherhood by a sane orientation. Instead, the novelist constructs Jackson’s queer identity with a stroke of physical and violent method. The question that arises is that: why will the novelist push Jackson through this painful route in order to shape his identity as a queer? This is the ambiguity difficult for the reader to unravel.

As the life of Jackson moves alternately between the reality of the suffering and poverty in Makwala and the difficulty in accepting his background as the son of a prostitute, Jackson passes the difficult phase of becoming a fugitive after he intentionally murders his mother. In his run from the law, Jackson is taken in by the duo of Yohana and Ado, two queer men. Ado was the *suya* man who had expressed his liking to Jackson through the offer of free *suya* earlier. Ado takes Jackson into hiding. He gangs up with his friend, Yohana, to drug and rape Jackson repeatedly. Describing the pains he is passing through, Jackson laments that “they did to me at Makwala Layout. They came after me, dragged me into a room, hit me as much as they could and raped me. Now they have raped me again. Is this how I will continue to suffer from the desires of wicked people” (p.234). It becomes unclear how to place the suffering of Jackson in the hands of the storyteller. Why will the storyteller allow Jackson through this phase of life just to construct a queer identity for him. This is an ambiguity. Reflecting on this ambiguity, Jackson brings the reader to speed when he reminisces that “it had never occurred to Jackson, now a teenager “that he could be raped, not be women who constantly ogled him, but by men, men like himself, whose overflowing kind words about his looks, about his physique, he had never really bothered to give deeper thought” (p.75). This is the irony of the con of the identity of Jackson as a queer protagonist.

The implication of the biological and social background of Jackson produced a queer individual with an ambiguous psychological make-up. The existence of the binaries of love and hate and quietness and anger in Jackson created a psychological turbulence that does not augur well for Jackson and the society of Makwala. The display of anger is evidenced in the way Jackson handled her mother when she visits him to give him some money. As Jackson refuses to collect the money from his mother, Martha exclaimed that "You're my son. You can't be doing this to me, to yourself" (p.119). Then Martha tries to embrace the son but he pushes her away again and again till she fell. The anger in Jackson knows no bound. Martha surmised the attitude of Jackson in these words: "I'm faced with a monster of a son "who is increasingly becoming a stranger to me" (p.122). The pains and suffering Jackson experiences produces a psychological hate in him. Delving into his subconscious, the storyteller reveals the thoughts circling in him this way:

His weak body was not without desire. Suppose I just spring up now, and pounce on this bastard of a man. Suppose I just spread my fingers around his neck and strangle him to death. Suppose I stand and reach out to that knife, inside a handsome scabbard, hanging on the wall and use it to cut the throat of this monster. Suppose I drive my fingers into his eyes and pluck out his eyeballs. (p.235).

Despite these thoughts of violence, when Yohana later tells him not to step out of the house, "Jackson didn't say anything" and he "lowered himself and sat on the mat, his leg stretched in front of him" in submission. This act of yielding to his tormentor's instructions baffles the reader and constitutes further ambiguities in the psychological construction of Jackson's queer identity.

2. Contradictions and Implication of an Ambiguous Queer Identity in the Novel

The ambiguities in the biological, social and psychological construction of Jackson's queer identity leaves behind a trail of tragic consequences with contradictory binaries. In the area of biological relationship, the storyteller projects Jackson as a bastard. His longing to know his father creates a void between him and the mother. Martha has tried her best to raise up Jackson with love even with the circumstances she is. Rhetorically, Martha asks: "What have I not done for him as a mother?" (p.117). Others in Makwala have also shown love to Jackson as he grows up. There is Udula who takes him into his house when his son, Ende, suggests they do so. In the home of Udula, through Udula's motivation, Jackson starts to fall in love with books. He also becomes a

good artist who expresses his pains in pictures. But in the midst of the love shown to Jackson by Udula and Ende, Udula noticed that Jackson "was a boy of unpredictable manners" (p.71). Also, there is the case of Kemi, a girl in the neighbourhood who is in love with Jackson. But Jackson always hit her. Kemi also tries to get Jackson to attend church with her. At a time, Jackson is even agreeable to this suggestion. According to the narrator, he had also felt something tugging at his mind about attending church ever since the day Kemi came "with joy that she had found a church that would make them think positively, a church that would liberate them from the gutter of sin" (p.112).

But in all the love shown to Jackson, his response is that "they won't let me live the way I want. They don't like me. They always want to use, to hurt me. I won't let her. I will resist them" (p.110). Jackson's words above are contradictory to the actual events in the life of Jackson. Jackson is being loved and protected by the group comprising Jackson's mother, Udula, Ende, Kemi and some women like Mama Maria and Jacinta. Then, there is the opposing group comprising of the *yan dabba* or the rapists, Nasir, the queer man and food seller, Ado and Yohana the homo-rapist. The contradiction is that instead of Jackson embracing the love of those who wish him well, he is running to those who harm him. An instance of this argument is seen in the activities of the boys that raped and beat Jackson. In the first instance, the narrator says that Jackson:

heard fast-moving footsteps. He turned. Four boys were suddenly upon him. They all looked older than him from what he could see in the half-light. They were in jeans and T-shirts...the tallest and lankiest among them gave Jackson a devastating slap. Immediately a kick from another got Jackson's hip. He collapsed on the ground. He felt something like a thick cloth clamping over his face, muffling his voice, tightening at the back of his head. It blinded him totally. He was lifted by hands. (pp.63-64)

This event is supposed to have scared Jackson from mingling with the boys again in his life because it leads to his being raped by the four boys. But the reverse is the case.

In the other instance, at a time, Jackson is sitting on a log in a shade when three boys approached him saying that "O boy, we be your friend. We wan be your friend" (p.113). The narrator goes on to narrate that "the three of them sat on the log. Jackson still regarded them for a while before he joined them. One of them brought out a packet of cheap cigarettes. Each of them pulled one" Occasionally, "Jackson simpered at their jokes" (p.113). Later, he had an altercation with the boys when their discussion veered off to the topic of prostitutes. Jackson asked them to move to another

topic but one of the boy called Peter says that “I know wetin dey eat our friend. You no notice say he e no dey like to talk about ashie? Na ashie oikin him be, no be oyinbo pikin? Him mama Jackson’s blow got Peter’s forehead, with such a force that Peter staggered back and fell” (p.165). In West African Pidgin, “ashie” means prostitute. The ensuing violence leads to the merciless beating of Jackson by the trio of his friends. It is this same attraction to those who want to take advantage of him that leads him to Ado and Yohana who rape him severally. Therefore, it becomes contradictory and absurd that the protagonist of the story who the narrator wants to make a queer character should be made to pass through the pains of being raped twice and beaten by the same sex the narrator wants him to hang out with.

This contradictory mode is also activated when Jackson murders his mother. Jackson has been complaining bitterly about the mother’s occupation as a prostitute. This is not surprising since in the moralist side, prostitution is a sin against the norms of the society. Therefore, as the storyteller projects Jackson towards the queer side of relationship, the reader is not surprised when Jackson becomes antagonistic towards heteronormative relationship. This is glimpsed from his attack on Kemi. Then, there is another incident that defines Jackson as an anti-heteronormative character. This is the event of the attempted rape of Nelly. Jackson hates his three friends who beat him up because they promised to have sex with Jackson’s mother. He tries to dissuade his mother from agreeing to have sex for money with the three friends but he could not open his mouth to tell the mother. So, he starts to stalk the three boys. Nelly, a female classmate of Jackson, was walking home one night when “iron fingers clamp over her mouth, over her eyes” (p.192). Unknowingly to them, Jackson is at the scene and the strike from him killed one of the boys while the other boys scamper to safety. Nelly luckily escaped leaving behind “a limp figure on the floor” (p.193). Jackson kills the heteronormative boy.

Reeling from his first murder, Jackson goes to his mother’s house and in the night when she is asleep murders her. According to the narrator, “in less than three hours he had dealt fatal blows to two l” (p.196); two heteronormative characters. The fact that Jackson kills these two heteronormative characters is not the issue; though it becomes abnormal for the storyteller to eliminate only heteronormative characters through Jackson. The contradiction in this theme of murder has to do with the killing of his Your Excellency by Jackson. The narrator has prodded Jackson towards the same sex characters in the story. So, it is not surprising when in the course of his hiding from the

law, he is taken in by Ado and Yohana, two of the major same sex characters in the story. In their house, they drugged Jackson and raped him severally. It is absurd that Jackson who has been introduced drug is now suffering from repeated rape under the influence of drug. Through threat and intimidation, Jackson yielded to the love making by the two queer men. It is this loyalty that made Yohana takes Jackson to meet the Your Excellency in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. There in Abuja, Yohana leaves Jackson behind as a “mistress” of Your Excellency. In the hotel with Your Excellency, Jackson murders him and escaped back to Makwala. Why will Jackson murder a same-sex characters that the storyteller has made the reader to believe is the side that Jackson belongs? So, where does the reader place the sexual identity of Jackson, heteronormative or a same-sex character?

Lastly, in the conclusion of the story of Jackson, there is a contradiction at the end on both sides of the sexual identity. Udula, who represents the heteronormative group survives all the hardship, loss and pains of the story of Makwala. Also, Jackson survived the fugitive life after killing three characters in the story. His same-sex friends, Nasir, Ado and Yohana, also survived. It becomes contradictory for the reader as Martha and the boy that Jackson killed, who are heteronormative persons, along with Your Excellency, who is a same-sex character, are eliminated from the story. However, Udula, an active and abnormal heteronormative and Jackson, who is a murderer and a same-sex character including Ado and Yohana, survived. The question that arises is the criteria used by the storyteller to eliminate characters in the story. It becomes contradictory that both heteronormative and same-sex characters are eliminated and at the same time preserve in the story. It becomes difficult to understand the sexual orientation that is accepted by the narrator; a sense of ambiguity and contradiction becomes the order of the day.

3. Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the absurdities in the projection of the queer characters and ideas in the Sule’s *Makwala*. Through the binaries of beauty and moral bankruptcy, love and hate, heteronormative and same-sex and violence and warmth, hypocrisy and openness and death and survival, the paper has laid bare the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the quest of the narrator to portray the continuous struggle between heteronormative and queer ideologies and orientations. Though there is the existence of cultural inhibitions in the acceptance of same-sex practices in the society, the practice is not non-existence. Therefore, the representation of the queer ideology in

contemporary Nigerian novel reflects the problems associated with the practice in the society the novel mirrors. As such, the ambiguities and contradictions that are inherent in the novel is part of the challenges of documenting the prohibited practice in the society. Nevertheless, contemporary Nigerian queer novelists will continue to unveil the existence of the queer ideology and how the society grapples with the manner it hopes to curtail it or deny its existence. In whatever the case, ambiguities and contradictions will continue to trail the queer stories in contemporary Nigeria fiction.

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Rethinking French Translation Pedagogy in the Digital Age: Towards an Integrated Conceptual Framework (DIGITRANS) for Nigerian Universities

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Abstract. The digital transformation of higher education has profoundly reshaped pedagogical practices, particularly in the field of translation training where digital technologies now function both as professional tools and as collaborative learning environments. This article critically examines the current state of French translation pedagogy in Nigerian universities and proposes an integrated conceptual framework, the DIGITRANS model, designed to address persistent pedagogical and technological gaps. Drawing on social constructivism and theoretical frameworks of educational digital competence, the study develops a model structured around five interrelated dimensions: translational competence, digital competence, guided autonomy, collaboration, and cultural reflexivity. Through a conceptual analysis of the literature on translation pedagogy and educational technologies, the article highlights the need to move from a transmissive teaching model toward a more interactive, collaborative, and learner-centered approach. The proposed model demonstrates how the integration of Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools, collaborative platforms, and authentic translation projects can enhance students' professional readiness. In the Nigerian context, the DIGITRANS framework offers both a theoretical and pedagogical response to challenges related to limited digital infrastructure, low technological literacy, and curriculum misalignment. The article concludes that adopting this model could contribute to modernizing translation training in African universities by aligning it with international standards while promoting inclusive, critical, and technologically integrated pedagogy.

Keywords: Translation pedagogy; Digital competence; Computer-assisted translation (CAT); Social constructivism; Nigerian universities.

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the digitalization of higher education has profoundly transformed pedagogical

practices worldwide, redefining modes of knowledge transmission, interactions between teachers and learners, and the tools employed within learning environments (UNESCO, 2021). Universities are now encouraged to systematically integrate digital technologies into the design, delivery, and assessment of learning in order to promote flexibility, accessibility, and pedagogical creativity (Redecker, 2017; Ferrari, 2013). In the field of translation, this transformation has led to the emergence of a collaborative and digital approach to translation pedagogy, grounded in the principles of social constructivism and emphasizing active learner participation, the co-construction of knowledge, and the critical use of technological tools within authentic learning contexts (Kiraly, 2000; Kiraly, 2016; Gambier, 2016).

This innovative approach encourages translation students to become reflective practitioners capable of engaging with technology while simultaneously developing their translational, intercultural, and methodological competences (Kelly, 2005; Austermühl, 2013). However, in the Nigerian context, translation pedagogy remains largely teacher-centered and oriented toward the transmission of knowledge rather than its active construction (Tonukari, Shuaibu, & Ighodaro, 2023; Adaje & Adekunle, 2025). This transmissive approach, inherited from colonial pedagogical traditions, marginalizes the interactive, digital, and critical dimensions of translation learning, thereby creating a gap between university training and the contemporary demands of the translation industry, where digital competence, virtual collaboration, and translator autonomy have become essential (Gambier & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2020; Marczak, 2018). Specific challenges within the Nigerian context include, among others, insufficient technological infrastructure, limited digital literacy among instructors, the absence of language policies that integrate technology into the humanities, and curricula that do not adequately reflect contemporary professional realities (Egbokhare, 2019; Adebayo &

Yusuf, 2021; Shuaibu & Mebitaghan, 2025). These constraints limit the capacity of translation programs to adequately prepare students for global dynamics and the demands of an increasingly digital translation market.

In response to this situation, the present study proposes a conceptual reflection on the need for a pedagogical paradigm shift in the teaching of French translation in Nigeria. It draws on the frameworks of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996) and digital competence in education (Redecker, 2017; Ferrari, 2013) to develop an integrated model: the DIGITRANS Framework, designed to rethink translator training in the digital era. This framework seeks to combine translation competence, mastery of digital tools, guided autonomy, collaboration, and cultural awareness in order to enhance pedagogical effectiveness and align Nigerian translator training with international standards in translation education.

The objective of this article is therefore two folds:

- to demonstrate how the thoughtful integration of digital technologies can promote active and collaborative learning in translation;
- to propose a conceptual framework capable of guiding the reform of French translation pedagogy in Nigerian universities.

Thus, this study constitutes a theoretical contribution to the modernization of translation training in Nigeria by highlighting the intersections between technology, pedagogy, and translation competence within a postcolonial and developmental perspective. Despite the growing interest in integrating digital technologies into translation training, few studies have proposed an integrated pedagogical framework specifically adapted to the realities of African universities, and particularly to the Nigerian context. Most existing research focuses either on the use of technological tools in professional translation practice or on constructivist pedagogical approaches in translator training, without systematically articulating the technological, pedagogical, and intercultural dimensions. Within this context, this article seeks to address this gap by proposing the DIGITRANS model, a conceptual framework that integrates translation competence, digital competence, guided autonomy, collaboration, and cultural reflexivity into a coherent approach to translation pedagogy in the digital age.

2. Methodological Approach

The analysis is based on a thematic synthesis of the scientific literature on translation pedagogy, educational technologies, and digital competence frameworks. Rather than empirically testing a specific pedagogical intervention, the objective is to develop an integrated theoretical framework capable of guiding the modernization of translator training in Nigerian universities. The analysis draws on major works in translation didactics and constructivist learning in order to identify the essential dimensions of translation pedagogy suited to the digital age. Based on this theoretical synthesis, the DIGITRANS model is conceptualized as a pedagogical framework that integrates translation competence, digital competence, guided autonomy, collaboration, and cultural reflexivity. This approach makes it possible to propose a conceptual foundation that can be empirically tested and validated in future research on translation teaching in African university contexts

3. Context and Challenges of Translation Pedagogy

Translation pedagogy, particularly in the field of French translation, has undergone a gradual transformation as a result of digital technologies and the evolving demands of the professional translation market (Kiraly, 2000; Marczak, 2018). Historically centered on the teacher, the traditional approach prioritizes the passive transmission of knowledge and the repetition of theoretical exercises, often at the expense of developing students' practical and reflective competences. In many African contexts, particularly in Nigeria, this model remains largely dominant despite the emergence of digital tools and collaborative platforms (Tonukari, Shuaibu, & Ighodaro, 2023). Students trained under such methods often experience difficulties effectively using computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, collaborating in online environments, managing complex translation projects, and developing strategies suited to diverse professional contexts (Ikpai, Seaven, & Charles, 2024). Furthermore, this approach limits students' ability to develop guided and critical autonomy in their learning, to adapt to the demands of the global translation market, and to interact with dynamic digital environments.

These challenges are further compounded by structural and institutional factors, such as insufficient technological infrastructure, limited digital literacy among instructors, and the absence of curricula aligned with international standards. As a result, a significant gap persists between academic training and

contemporary professional realities. Within this context, the thoughtful integration of digital technologies and the adoption of collaborative and interactive pedagogical approaches appear to be essential strategies for modernizing translation teaching, strengthening students' translation competence, and responding to the needs of an ever-evolving professional translation market.

4. Social Constructivism and Collaborative Pedagogy

Social constructivism constitutes a fundamental theoretical framework for rethinking translation teaching, as it emphasizes active learning, the co-construction of knowledge, and the importance of social interactions in the development of cognitive and professional competences (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996). Within this paradigm, the student is no longer viewed as a passive recipient of knowledge but rather as a reflective participant capable of actively contributing to the construction of their own learning as well as that of their peers. Kiraly (2000; 2016) applies these principles to translator education by proposing a collaborative pedagogy in which learners work in teams on authentic projects, use digital tools to solve complex translation problems, and develop adaptive competences that enable them to respond to diverse professional situations. This approach goes beyond the transmission of linguistic or technical knowledge; it also values critical reflexivity, continuous formative assessment, and guided autonomy, thereby strengthening students' professionalization and their ability to analyze, justify, and adjust their translation choices. Furthermore, the integration of digital technologies within this framework not only facilitates collaboration and access to resources but also fosters the development of essential digital competences for the global translation market, where translators must interact with hybrid environments, manage multilingual projects, and adapt their practice to contemporary computer-assisted translation tools (Korol, 2021; Marczak, 2018; Hellmich, 2021). Social constructivism therefore provides a robust theoretical foundation for designing translation training programs that are dynamic, collaborative, and aligned with current professional and technological demands.

5. Digital Competence in Translation Education

Educational digital competence is now widely recognized as an essential component of translator training programs, as it determines not only students' ability to effectively use digital tools but also their capacity to integrate these technologies critically and

thoughtfully into authentic translation practices (Redecker, 2017; Ferrari, 2013). This competence includes the technical mastery of collaborative platforms, computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, and specialized online resources, as well as the ability to analyze, select, and employ these tools according to the specific needs of each translation project (Hellmich, 2021). In the Nigerian context, several studies indicate that the low level of digital literacy among instructors, combined with insufficient technological infrastructure and the lack of appropriate continuing professional development, significantly limits students' acquisition of these competences (Shuaibu & Mebitaghan, 2025; Ikpai, Seaven, & Charles, 2024). This situation creates a double challenge. On the one hand, it restricts students' ability to meet the growing demands of the global translation market, which increasingly values proficiency in hybrid digital environments and advanced CAT tools. On the other hand, it reduces the pedagogical effectiveness of university programs, which struggle to provide authentic, interactive learning activities that reflect contemporary professional realities. Consequently, the development of digital competence has become a central issue in modernizing translation training in Nigeria, enabling students to strengthen their autonomy, reflexivity, and capacity to collaborate within complex and technologically demanding translation contexts.

6. Contemporary Initiatives and Integrated Models

Recent pedagogical initiatives emphasize the integration of technology and pedagogy as a key strategy for strengthening both translation competence and learner engagement (Gambier & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2020; Austerlühl, 2013). Within this perspective, the DIGITRANS model proposes an integrated approach that brings together several complementary dimensions. It aims to develop mastery of translation strategies and techniques, knowledge of professional standards, and linguistic quality, while simultaneously encouraging the critical and reflective use of digital tools, collaborative platforms, and online resources. At the same time, the model promotes students' guided autonomy, allowing them to manage their learning while benefiting from structured support. It also emphasizes collaboration and interaction through group work and critical exchanges, thereby fostering the co-construction of knowledge. Finally, cultural awareness and reflexivity occupy a central place, as students are encouraged to adapt their translation choices to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts while developing the ability to critically analyze their own practices. This conceptual

framework directly addresses the challenges identified in Nigerian translator training by proposing an active, collaborative, and digitally oriented pedagogy designed to align training with international standards while remaining responsive to local needs. In doing so, it contributes to the training of competent and autonomous translators capable of operating within technologically complex professional environments (Marczak, 2018; Kornacki & Pietrzak, 2021; Korol, 2021).

7. Theoretical Framework and Conceptualization of the DIGITRANS Model

The term DIGITRANS refers to *Digital Integration in Translation Pedagogy*, a conceptual framework designed to articulate the technological, pedagogical, and professional dimensions of translator training in the digital age. The model proposes a systemic structuring of translation pedagogy around five interdependent dimensions aimed at fostering the simultaneous development of translational, digital, and reflective competences within collaborative learning environments.

The DIGITRANS model draws on social constructivism, an approach which posits that learning is a dynamic process of knowledge construction through interaction, collaboration, and critical reflection (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996). From this perspective, knowledge is not transmitted in a top-down manner but rather co-constructed through meaningful social exchanges in which the learner becomes an active participant in their own cognitive development. Kiraly (2000; 2016) and Mebitaghan (2013) apply this philosophy to translation training by advocating a project-based pedagogy in which students, confronted with authentic translation situations, learn to negotiate meaning, solve complex problems, and collaborate with their peers within real technological environments.

The DIGITRANS model follows this tradition by placing collaboration, reflexivity, and autonomy at the center of the training process. It encourages students to use digital tools such as translation memories, collaborative platforms, and online corpora critically—not merely as technical aids, but also as cognitive mediation tools that facilitate the collective construction of translation knowledge. This constructivist framework thus bridges the gap between university training and the professional world while developing students' capacity to adapt to the evolving demands of contemporary translation, where technical competence, cooperation, and critical reflection are

increasingly inseparable. Digital competence in education constitutes a central component of the DIGITRANS model because it determines the ability of future translators to operate within a constantly evolving technological environment. It encompasses not only the technical mastery of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, collaborative platforms, and digital resources, but also the ability to evaluate their relevance and integrate them critically into real translation situations (Redecker, 2017; Ferrari, 2013; Hellmich, 2021). This competence goes beyond the mere use of technology; it involves critical digital literacy—that is, an understanding of the cognitive, ethical, and cultural implications associated with the use of digital tools in the translation process.

However, in the Nigerian context, several obstacles continue to hinder the acquisition of these skills. The lack of technological infrastructure, limited Internet access, insufficient digital training among instructors, and the absence of coherent institutional policies constitute major challenges (Adaje & Adegunle, 2025; Shuaibu & Mebitaghan, 2025). These constraints create a gap between the competences required in the international market and those actually developed within local programs. The DIGITRANS model addresses this issue by proposing an integrated approach to digital competence based on practical training, peer collaboration, and the progressive use of technological tools as catalysts for autonomy, creativity, and translational reflexivity. The DIGITRANS model therefore proposes an integrated approach that articulates several dimensions in a synergistic manner. Translation competence includes mastery of translation strategies and techniques, knowledge of professional norms, and linguistic quality. Digital competence promotes a reflective and critical use of digital tools in order to optimize both learning and translation production. Guided autonomy enables learners to manage their own learning while benefiting from structured supervision. Collaboration and interaction strengthen the co-construction of knowledge through group work and critical exchanges. Finally, cultural sensitivity and reflexivity encourage students to adapt their translation choices to diverse contexts and to critically analyze their decisions (Marczak, 2018; Kornacki & Pietrzak, 2021; Bourguignon, 2019; Chevrier, 2020).

Through the combination of these dimensions, the DIGITRANS model provides both a theoretical and practical framework for modernizing the pedagogy of French translation in Nigeria, aligning academic programs with international standards, and developing in students the translational, digital, and reflective competences required by the contemporary global

translation market (Gambier, 2016; Pym, 2014). The various components of the DIGITRANS model interact dynamically to support the development of learners' translation and digital competences. The

following figure illustrates the conceptual structure of the model and the relationships among its different dimensions.

Figure 1: Le modèle conceptuel DIGITRANS

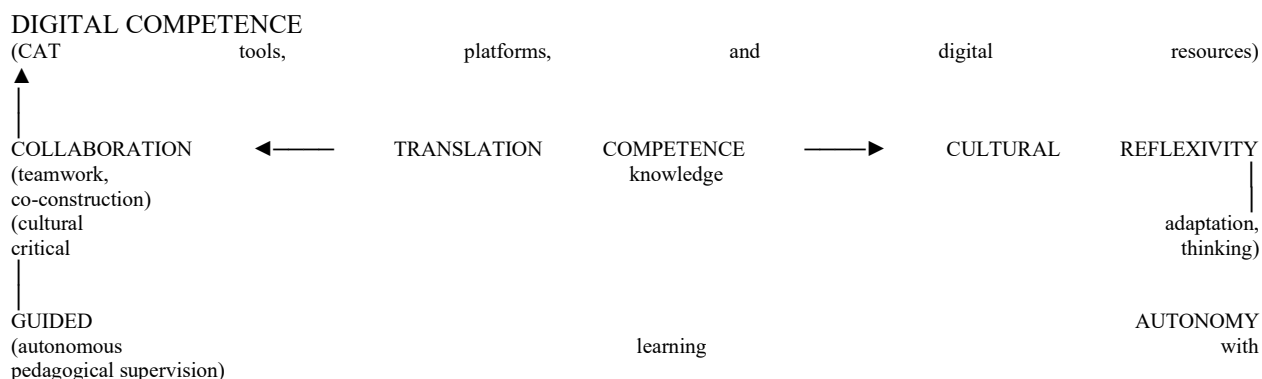


Figure 1: The DIGITRANS Conceptual Framework for Translation Pedagogy in the Digital Age

The model highlights the interdependence between five essential pedagogical dimensions. Translation competence constitutes the central core around which the other components of the pedagogical framework are organized. Digital competence enables learners to make use of contemporary translation technologies, while collaboration promotes the co-construction of knowledge and the development of collective professional skills. Guided autonomy ensures a balance between individual initiative and pedagogical supervision, and cultural reflexivity encourages students to critically analyze the linguistic and intercultural implications of translation practices.

7.1 Pedagogical Operationalization of the DIGITRANS Model

In order to make the DIGITRANS model applicable within university translation programs, it is important to illustrate how its different dimensions can be integrated into concrete pedagogical activities. In the context of French translation training, instructors can implement this model through collaborative translation projects that make use of digital tools and simulated professional situations. For example, students may be organized into teams tasked with translating an authentic text (such as a press article, an administrative document, or institutional content) using computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools such as translation memories or online collaborative platforms. Within this framework, the instructor plays the role of facilitator and guide, assisting learners in analyzing the source text, conducting terminological research, and justifying their translation choices.

Each dimension of the DIGITRANS model can then be mobilized in a complementary manner. Translation competence is developed through linguistic analysis and the production of high-quality translations. Digital competence is reinforced through the use of CAT tools, online corpora, and collaborative platforms. Guided autonomy is manifested when students make translation decisions while receiving pedagogical guidance. Collaboration is encouraged through group work and critical peer discussions. Finally, cultural reflexivity develops when students analyze the cultural and discursive implications of their translation choices.

Such activities help simulate real conditions of the translation market and bring university training closer to contemporary professional demands. In this way, the operationalization of the DIGITRANS model creates a bridge between theoretical conceptualization and pedagogical practice, thereby strengthening the relevance and effectiveness of translation training in Nigerian universities.

8. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

The adoption of the DIGITRANS model in Nigerian universities represents a strategic pathway for modernizing French translation training and overcoming persistent challenges associated with traditional teaching approaches. By systematically integrating digital technologies into curricula, this model encourages a shift from a transmissive, teacher-

centered pedagogy toward a participatory, collaborative, and reflective learning environment in which students become the principal actors in their own training (Gambier & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2020; Bourguignon, 2019). Through the use of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, collaborative platforms, and open digital resources, learners are engaged in authentic translation projects that simulate real professional market conditions. This process helps them develop intellectual and methodological autonomy, refine their analytical skills, and strengthen their critical awareness of both translational and technological choices. Furthermore, the collaborative dynamics fostered by the model stimulate peer interaction, encourage the co-construction of knowledge, and promote the emergence of a translation learning community grounded in shared reflection and formative assessment. In this sense, the DIGITRANS model goes beyond the simple digitization of existing practices; it promotes an epistemological transformation of translation pedagogy in Africa, aimed at training translators who are competent, autonomous, and adaptable to the demands of the contemporary digital world.

Secondly, the implementation of guided autonomy within the DIGITRANS framework serves as an essential lever for transforming the pedagogical relationship between instructors and learners. By structuring learning activities while allowing students a degree of initiative in planning and carrying out their tasks, instructors encourage the development of metacognitive skills and individual responsibility (Király, 2000; Chevrier, 2020). This approach enables learners to become active agents in their learning process, capable of adapting their translation strategies to diverse linguistic, cultural, and technological contexts. Moreover, the DIGITRANS model places strong emphasis on collaboration and interaction, which are expressed through group work, critical dialogue, and the co-construction of knowledge through shared projects. These dynamics promote not only the exchange of experiences and translation practices but also the strengthening of collective digital competence, which is essential for the professionalization of translators in the digital age (Marczak, 2018; Kornacki & Pietrzak, 2021). By combining structured supervision with freedom of action, guided autonomy creates a pedagogical balance that fosters critical reflection, translational innovation, and the development of learners capable of operating within multilingual and technologically complex environments.

Thirdly, the development of cultural sensitivity and reflexivity is crucial for training translators capable of

navigating multicultural and multilingual environments. Instructors can integrate case studies, intercultural translation projects, and critical reflection activities to enable students to evaluate their translation choices, justify their decisions, and adopt responsible professional practices (Pym, 2014; Hellmich, 2021). To ensure the success of this pedagogical transformation, several institutional measures are recommended. These include investing in digital infrastructure, training instructors in the effective use of technological tools and in the design of innovative pedagogical frameworks, and revising curricula to explicitly integrate digital and collaborative competences into learning objectives (Adaje & Adekunle, 2025; Shuaibu & Mebitaghan, 2025). The implementation of formative assessment strategies and authentic projects aligned with international standards will also contribute to improving learning effectiveness and preparing students for contemporary professional demands. The adoption of the DIGITRANS model in Nigerian universities represents a strategic response to the challenges of translation training. It enables the integration of technology, pedagogy, and translation competence while fostering student collaboration, autonomy, and reflexivity, thereby contributing to the professionalization and international competitiveness of future translators (Gambier, 2016; Austermühl, 2013; Bourguignon, 2019).

9. Limitations of the Study

This study presents certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research adopts a conceptual approach based on the analysis of existing literature and does not rely on empirical validation of the proposed model. Consequently, the pedagogical effectiveness of the DIGITRANS framework remains to be tested in real teaching contexts. Furthermore, the analysis focuses primarily on the context of Nigerian universities, which may limit the immediate generalization of the model to other educational contexts without appropriate institutional and technological adaptations. Nevertheless, this conceptualization provides a theoretical foundation that may guide future empirical research aimed at evaluating the impact of the model on the development of students' translational and digital competences.

10. Conclusion and Research Perspectives

The transformation of French translation pedagogy in Nigeria through the DIGITRANS model highlights the need to rethink translator training in the digital age. The thoughtful integration of technology, combined with constructivist and collaborative approaches,

enables students to develop translational, digital, and reflective competences that are essential for meeting contemporary professional demands (Zhang, 2022; Kornacki & Pietrzak, 2021). The model also promotes guided autonomy, knowledge co-construction, and cultural sensitivity, thereby contributing to the professionalization of translators while aligning training with international standards (Tsai, 2023; Hellmich & Vinall, 2023). This conceptual reflection opens several avenues for empirical research. First, it would be valuable to test the effectiveness of the DIGITRANS model in different Nigerian university contexts in order to assess its impact on translation competence, mastery of digital tools, and learner engagement. Second, future studies could explore the cultural and pedagogical adaptation of the model to other languages and disciplines, taking into account local technological and institutional constraints (Yao, 2024). Finally, evaluating teacher training in the integration of digital tools and collaborative methods constitutes a crucial area of investigation to ensure the sustainability of this approach.

The DIGITRANS model therefore offers a robust theoretical and practical framework for modernizing French translation training in Nigeria. It demonstrates that the combination of technology, active pedagogy, and critical reflexivity can produce competent and adaptable translators capable of navigating complex and digitally mediated professional environments. This conceptualization thus represents a significant contribution to research in translation pedagogy and French studies while providing concrete directions for educational innovation within the African context. Nevertheless, this conceptual framework still requires empirical validation through experimental or quasi-experimental studies in order to assess its actual impact on the development of students' translational and digital competences.

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Integrating Arabic Language, Sociological Perspectives and Physical Education in Fostering Green Practices in the Maritime Industry

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Abstract. The significance of fostering green practices in the maritime industry lies in the need to address environmental concerns and promote sustainable development. Green practices can help reduce carbon emissions, minimize pollution, and protect marine ecosystems. To achieve this purpose, this study examines the integration of Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education in fostering green practices within the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. Employing an ex-post facto research design, the study utilized a stratified random sampling technique to select 150 participants from three public tertiary institutions. Data was collected using a validated questionnaire (ALSPPEMIQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.815. The findings reveal that specific sociolinguistic factors significantly influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry. Additionally, existing physical education programs demonstrate effectiveness in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among maritime professionals. The study also found a significant impact of an integrated curriculum (Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education) on the environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of maritime professionals in Lagos State. These results highlight the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in fostering green practices within the maritime industry. The study concludes that this integrated approach can help in creating a more environmentally conscious workforce and contribute to sustainable development in Lagos State, Nigeria. The Study recommends that there is need to encourage collaboration and partnerships between educational institutions, government agencies, and maritime organizations to support the implementation of green practices in the industry through the integration of language, sociological perspectives, and physical education components.

Keywords: Green practices, Arabic language, Maritime industry, Sociological perspective and Physical education

1. Introduction

The maritime industry plays a crucial role in the global economy as it facilitates the transportation of goods and people across the seas. As the industry continues to expand, there is a growing concern about its environmental impact, leading to a push towards adopting green practices to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability. The integration of Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education in fostering green practices within the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria, presents a unique and multifaceted approach to addressing environmental sustainability. As the world grapples with the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, the maritime industry—crucial for trade and transportation—must adopt innovative strategies that promote sustainability.

Arabic is a Semitic language spoken by millions worldwide, particularly in the Arab world. It serves as a vital means of communication and cultural exchange (Holes, 2004). In the context of this study, Arabic language proficiency can facilitate better communication among stakeholders in the maritime industry, particularly in Lagos State with Cosmopolitan status can boast of significant Arabic-speaking populations.

Sociology on the other hand, is the study of social behaviour, institutions, and structures. Sociological perspectives provide insights into how social contexts influence individual and collective behaviors (Giddens et al., 2017). In this research, sociological perspectives will help analyze how social norms and values can affect the adoption of green practices within the maritime industry.

While Physical education encompasses structured programmes that promote physical activity and health awareness among individuals (Kirk, 2010). Integrating physical education into maritime training can enhance physical fitness and promote teamwork among personnel, which is essential for implementing effective green practices. The maritime industry is a critical component of global trade and economic development. It encompasses various activities related to shipping, navigation, fishing, and marine resource management (Stopford, 2009). In Nigeria, particularly Lagos State, the maritime sector plays a pivotal role in facilitating trade and contributing to economic growth. However, this industry also faces significant environmental challenges, including pollution, habitat destruction, and overfishing.

Green practices in the maritime industry involve adopting environmentally friendly measures to reduce the industry's carbon footprint and promote sustainability. Globally, there is a growing emphasis on adopting green practices within the maritime industry to mitigate its environmental impact. Green practices refer to sustainable methods that reduce waste, conserve resources, and protect ecosystems (International Maritime Organization [IMO], 2019). Examples include implementing energy-efficient technologies on ships, adopting cleaner fuels, and enhancing waste management systems.

In Lagos State, Nigeria, the need for sustainable practices in the maritime industry is increasingly urgent due to rapid urbanization and population growth. The Lagos State Government has initiated various policies aimed at promoting sustainability in maritime activities (Lagos State Ministry of Environment, 2020). However, there remains a gap in effectively integrating innovative strategies that incorporate local languages and socio-cultural factors into these practices.

The significance of fostering green practices in the maritime industry lies in the need to address environmental concerns and promote sustainable development. Green practices can help reduce carbon emissions, minimize pollution, and protect marine ecosystems. Additionally, implementing green practices can lead to cost savings, improved efficiency, and enhanced competitiveness in the industry. The adoption of sustainable practices can significantly reduce pollution levels in coastal waters and preserve biodiversity (Kumar &

Singh, 2018). Importantly, green practices can enhance the economic viability of the maritime sector by reducing operational costs associated with waste disposal and fuel consumption (Buhaug et al., 2009). Lastly, promoting sustainability aligns with global efforts to combat climate change and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), particularly Goal 14: Life Below Water.

While there are compelling arguments for adopting green practices in the maritime industry, some researchers highlight potential challenges. Proponents argue that implementing sustainable practices can lead to long-term economic benefits by improving efficiency and reducing costs (Petersen et al., 2016). Additionally, fostering a culture of sustainability can enhance a company's reputation and attract environmentally conscious clients (Böhringer & Jochem, 2007). Conversely, critics argue that transitioning to greener practices may require significant upfront investments that smaller companies may struggle to afford (Wang et al., 2018). Furthermore, there may be resistance from stakeholders accustomed to traditional methods who view changes as disruptive or unnecessary. This highlights the need for comprehensive training programmes that address these concerns while emphasizing the long-term benefits of sustainability.

Integrating Arabic language into maritime training programmes can provide a holistic approach to sustainability and facilitate better communication among diverse stakeholders in Lagos State's maritime sector. This integration is particularly relevant given Nigeria's multicultural landscape where Arabic-speaking communities play a significant role in trade activities. Effective communication can enhance collaboration among stakeholders working towards common goals related to green practices. Sociological perspectives are equally important as they provide insights into how social norms influence behavior within organizations. Understanding these dynamics can help identify barriers to adopting green practices while also highlighting opportunities for engagement through community-based initiatives (Harrison & Newholm, 2006). For instance, incorporating community feedback into decision-making processes can foster greater acceptance of sustainable practices. Physical education plays a crucial role in promoting teamwork and physical fitness among personnel involved in maritime activities. Training programmes that include physical education components can enhance collaboration among workers while also

emphasizing the importance of health and safety in implementing green initiatives (Kirk & Macdonald, 2001).

The significance of integrating Arabic language proficiency into maritime training cannot be overstated. It not only facilitates effective communication but also fosters cultural understanding among diverse groups involved in maritime activities. This cultural competence is essential for addressing local environmental issues collaboratively. Sociological perspectives provide a framework for understanding how societal values influence attitudes

toward environmental sustainability. By examining these social dynamics within the context of Lagos State's maritime industry, stakeholders can develop targeted interventions that resonate with local communities (Giddens et al., 2017). Physical education contributes to building a workforce that is not only physically capable but also aware of health implications associated with environmental degradation.

Training programmes that emphasize physical fitness alongside sustainability principles can foster a culture of health-consciousness among workers.

Proponents argue that integrating these three components into green practices enhances overall effectiveness by creating a more holistic approach to sustainability in the maritime industry. For instance, incorporating Arabic language training can improve stakeholder engagement while sociological insights can inform culturally relevant strategies for promoting environmental awareness (Mason & Bevan-Dye, 2013). However, some critics contend that integrating multiple disciplines may complicate training programmes or dilute focus on specific skills necessary for effective implementation of green practices (Harrison & Newholm, 2006). Additionally, logistical challenges related to resource allocation for such integrated programmes may pose significant barriers.

Previous research has explored the benefits of integrating various disciplines into vocational training programmes. For instance, studies have demonstrated that incorporating local languages can enhance learner engagement and retention (Al-Hassan et al., 2020), while understanding community dynamics can improve participation in environmental initiatives (Ojo et al., 2018). Additionally, integrating physical education has been shown to enhance teamwork skills among participants (Kirk & Macdonald, (2001). However, there is a lack of specific research

examining how these integrations apply within the context of Nigeria's maritime industry.

While existing studies provide valuable insights into language integration and sociological factors influencing environmental practices globally or within other sectors in Nigeria (Ogunleye & Ojo, 2017), there is a notable lack of empirical research focusing on how these elements interact specifically within Lagos State's maritime industry context. Furthermore, most studies have not examined how physical education contributes directly to fostering green practices and there is insufficient exploration regarding stakeholder perceptions about integrating Arabic language skills alongside sociological insights into training programs aimed at promoting sustainability.

Failing to integrate Arabic language proficiency along with sociological perspectives and physical education into green practices poses significant risks for Nigeria's maritime industry—especially concerning environmental sustainability efforts.

Without effective communication mechanisms established through language training, stakeholders may struggle with collaboration on critical environmental initiatives, cultural misunderstandings could hinder progress toward shared sustainability goals and the workforce may lack essential teamwork skills necessary for implementing effective green strategies.

While there exists foundational knowledge regarding each component related to this study—Arabic language integration; sociological perspectives; physical education; and their roles within fostering sustainable practices—there remains an urgent need for focused research exploring their collective impact specifically within Lagos State's maritime sector context. Addressing these gaps will not only contribute significantly toward enhancing educational frameworks but also promote broader societal benefits through improved environmental stewardship efforts across Nigeria's vital industries. Therefore, the study seeks to examine the integration of Arabic language, Sociological perspectives, and Physical Education in fostering green practices in the Maritime industry in Lagos state, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria, faces significant challenges related to environmental sustainability. Despite its economic importance, the

industry has contributed to pollution, resource depletion, and ecological degradation. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates various perspectives and disciplines.

While previous research has explored the benefits of integrating different disciplines into vocational training programs, there is a limited understanding of how this can be applied specifically to the maritime industry in Nigeria. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating the potential of integrating Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education to foster green practices within the maritime sector.

The Arabic language, as a lingua franca in many regions besides West Africa, can play a crucial role in promoting cultural exchange and understanding within the maritime industry. By exploring the integration of Arabic language into sustainability initiatives, this research aims to highlight the importance of linguistic diversity in fostering green practices and facilitating cross-cultural communication within the industry.

Understanding the social and cultural dynamics of coastal communities is essential for promoting sustainable maritime practices. Despite the growing recognition of the social dimensions of sustainability, little research has been done to examine how sociological perspectives can inform and influence environmental practices in this sector. Sociological perspectives can provide insights into the factors that influence behavior, attitudes, and decision-making related to environmental issues. By integrating sociological perspectives into vocational training, the study aims to equip individuals with the skills to engage with their communities effectively and promote sustainable practices.

Physical education can contribute to the development of physical fitness, environmental awareness, and teamwork skills, all of which are essential for sustainable maritime practices. While physical education is often associated with promoting physical fitness and wellbeing, its potential to instill values such as respect for the environment and sustainability has been largely overlooked in the context of the maritime sector.

This research seeks to address the aforementioned key knowledge gaps in the existing literature on sustainability within the maritime industry in Lagos, Nigeria. By filling these knowledge gaps, this research will provide a foundation for future studies and initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship within the maritime sector in Lagos and beyond.

It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the integration of Arabic language, Sociological perspectives, and Physical Education in fostering green practices in the Maritime industry in Lagos state, Nigeria.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the integration of Arabic language, Sociological perspectives, and Physical Education in fostering green practices in the Maritime industry in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- identify the specific sociolinguistic factors that influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria;
- evaluate the effectiveness of existing physical education programs in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria and
- measure the impact of integrated curriculum (Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education) on the environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided this study at 0.05 alpha level.

H₀₁: There is no specific sociolinguistic factors that influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant effectiveness of existing physical education programs in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant impact of integrated curriculum (Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education) on the environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review- Overview of Green Practices in the Maritime Industry

The maritime industry plays a crucial role in global trade, accounting for over 80% of the world's trade by volume. However, the industry is also a significant

contributor to environmental pollution, with emissions of greenhouse gases, ballast water discharges, and oil spills having detrimental effects on marine ecosystems. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need for the maritime industry to adopt green practices to mitigate its environmental impact (Böhringer & Jochem, 2017). This literature review provides an overview of the current state of green practices in the maritime industry, with a focus on emissions reduction, energy efficiency, and waste management.

Emissions reduction is a key area of focus for green practices in the maritime industry. The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations agency responsible for regulating international shipping, has set ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from ships. In 2018, the IMO adopted the Initial Strategy on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships, which aims to reduce total annual greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping by at least 50% by 2050 compared to 2008 levels. To achieve these targets, the maritime industry is exploring various technologies and alternative fuels, such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) and hydrogen fuel cells, to reduce emissions from ships (International Maritime Organization, 2018).

Energy efficiency is another important aspect of green practices in the maritime industry. Improving the energy efficiency of ships not only reduces fuel consumption and emissions but also lowers operating costs for shipowners (Kumar & Singh, 2018). One of the key strategies for improving energy efficiency is through the use of innovative hull designs and propulsion systems. For example, the introduction of air lubrication systems and energy-saving devices, such as ducted propellers and waste heat recovery systems, can significantly reduce fuel consumption and emissions from ships. In addition, the adoption of digital technologies, such as voyage optimization software and performance monitoring systems, can help optimize ship operations and improve energy efficiency.

Waste management is also a critical component of green practices in the maritime industry. Ships generate a wide range of waste during their operations, including sewage, garbage, and oily water. Proper waste management is essential to prevent pollution of the marine environment and ensure compliance with environmental regulations (Rodrigues & Soares, 2020). The IMO has established regulations, such as the MARPOL Annex V on the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships, to regulate the discharge of

waste from ships. Shipowners are increasingly implementing waste management systems, such as onboard waste segregation and recycling facilities, to minimize the impact of their operations on the environment.

Several studies have highlighted the benefits of green practices in the maritime industry. For example, a study by Oltmann and Heij (2019) found that implementing energy-saving measures, such as hull cleaning and propeller polishing, can reduce fuel consumption and emissions from ships by up to 5%. Another study by Rodrigues and Soares (2020) assessed the environmental impact of alternative fuels, such as LNG and biofuels, on shipping operations and concluded that these fuels have the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships. These findings highlight the importance of green practices in reducing the environmental impact of the maritime industry.

In conclusion, the maritime industry is increasingly adopting green practices to mitigate its environmental impact. Emissions reduction, energy efficiency, and waste management are key areas of focus for green practices in the industry. The adoption of innovative technologies and alternative fuels, as well as the implementation of waste management systems, are essential to achieving sustainable shipping operations. Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of green practices in reducing the environmental impact of the maritime industry and to identify new opportunities for improving sustainability in the sector.

3. Research Methodology

The focus of this research study is to examine the integration of Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education in fostering green practices within the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. To achieve this aim, an ex-post facto research design was employed. This design is appropriate for the study as it allows for the analysis of existing conditions and outcomes without manipulating the independent variables—namely, the integration of Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education—aimed at fostering green practices in the maritime industry.

For participant selection, a stratified random sampling technique was utilized. This method ensures that every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected, allowing for effective representation across different strata. The use of this technique is critical for achieving a sample that accurately reflects the diversity within the population

under study. The sample for this study was drawn from three public tertiary institutions. Specifically, 50 participants were selected from the Institute of Maritime Studies at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), another 50 participants from both the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (INSAIS) in Ejigbo and the Markaz Arabic and Islamic Training Centre in Agege, Lagos. Additionally, 50 participants were drawn from the Department of Sociology at Lagos State University of Education in Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State. This resulted in a total sample size of 150 participants, comprising both students and lecturers.

The primary instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Arabic Language, Sociological Perspectives, and Physical Education on Maritime Industry Questionnaire” (ALSPPEMIQ). The instrument underwent face and content validation to ensure its relevance and appropriateness for the study's objectives. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency of the instrument, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.815. Data collected from participants were analyzed using Chi-square statistical tool. These analysis was chosen for their ability to determine relationships between variables and assess differences across groups effectively.

4. Results and Findings

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Participants according to their Institution (n=150)

S/N	Name of the Institution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Institute of Maritime Studies at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos State	50	33.33
2.	Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (INSAIS) in Ejigbo, Lagos State	25	16.67
	Markaz Arabic and Islamic Training Centre in Agege, Lagos State	25	16.67
3.	Lagos State University of Education, Oto, Ijanikin, Lagos State	50	33.33
	Total	150	100

This table shows the frequency distribution of the participants according to their institutions in a research study focused on examining the integration of Arabic language, Sociological perspectives, and Physical Education in fostering green practices in the Maritime industry in Lagos state, Nigeria. 33.33% of the participants (50 individuals) are from the Institute of Maritime Studies at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos State. 16.67% of the participants (25 individuals each) are from the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (INSAIS) in Ejigbo, Lagos State, and the Markaz Arabic and Islamic Training Centre in Agege, Lagos State. Another 33.33% of the participants (50 individuals) are from the Lagos State University of Education, Oto, Ijanikin, Lagos State.

Overall, the total number of participants in the study is 150 individuals, with each institution representing a significant portion of the sample. This data suggests that the study has a diverse range of participants from different educational backgrounds, which could provide valuable insights into the integration of Arabic language, Sociological perspectives, and Physical Education in fostering green practices in the Maritime industry in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Participants according to their Gender (n=150)

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	82	54.67
2.	Female	68	45.33
	Total	150	100

The table shows the frequency distribution of participants according to their gender in the study examining the integration of Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education in fostering green practices in the Maritime industry in Lagos state, Nigeria. Out of a total of 150 participants, 82 were male (54.67%) and 68 were female (45.33%). This data indicates that there were slightly more male participants in the study compared to female participants. It is important to consider gender differences when analyzing the results of the study, as they may have implications for how Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education can be integrated to promote green practices in the Maritime industry in Lagos state.

Testing of Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis One: There is no specific sociolinguistic factors that influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of specific sociolinguistic factors that influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	X ²	DF	Asymp. Sig.
	I believe that sociolinguistic factors play a significant role in influencing decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria.	6.87	3	0.012
	I think that cultural norms and values have a direct impact on how individuals in the maritime industry make decisions regarding environmental sustainability.	12.55	3	0.021
	I feel that the language and communication styles used in the maritime industry in Lagos State affect the way environmental sustainability initiatives are carried out.	9.76	3	0.005
	I do not think that societal expectations and perceptions about environmental issues have any influence on decision-making and behavior in the maritime industry.	14.92	3	0.081
	I think that linguistic diversity and language barriers hinder effective communication and collaboration for environmental sustainability efforts in the maritime industry in Lagos State.	7.23	3	0.000
		51.33		

Calculated Chi-square = 51.33, DF = 3 at 0.05 level of significant, Critical Table = 7.815

Decision Rule: Based on the data provided in Table 3, the decision rule for Research Hypothesis One is as follows: If the calculated chi-square value (51.33) is greater than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance (7.815), then we reject the null hypothesis. Since the calculated chi-square value (51.33) is significantly greater than the critical value (7.815), we reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant association between sociolinguistic factors and decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. In other words, the data supports the conclusion that sociolinguistic factors, such as cultural norms, language use, and societal expectations, do indeed influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability within this context.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant effectiveness of existing physical education programs in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria. Table 4: Summary of significant effectiveness of existing physical education programs in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	X ²	DF	Asymp. Sig.
	Physical education programs in maritime institutions effectively promote environmental awareness among maritime professionals.	18.30	3	0.025
	Physical education activities help maritime professionals understand the importance of sustainable practices in the maritime industry.	10.40	3	0.000
	The physical education curriculum in maritime institutions adequately covers topics related to environmental sustainability.	13.54	3	0.039
	Physical education programs provide opportunities for maritime professionals to engage in activities that promote environmental conservation.	10.40	3	0.002
	I believe that physical education programs have a positive impact on the environmental attitudes and behaviors of maritime professionals.	7.60	3	0.005
		58.9		

Calculated Chi-square = 58.9, DF = 3 at 0.05 level of significant, Critical Table = 7.815

From the data obtained in Table 4, if calculated chi-square value is greater than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance, reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, based on the above rule, the calculated chi-square value in this case is 58.9, which is significantly greater than the critical value of 7.815 at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between physical education programs and the promotion of environmental awareness and sustainable practices among maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria. The data suggests that these programs are effective in influencing the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of maritime professionals related to environmental issues.

Research Hypothesis Three: There is no significant impact of integrated curriculum (Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education) on the environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Summary of significant impact of integrated curriculum (Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education) on the environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	X ²	DF	Asymp. Sig.
	I have developed a more positive attitude towards environmental sustainability since participating in the integrated curriculum.	22.56	3	0.000
	The integrated curriculum has equipped me with the necessary skills to contribute to sustainable practices in the maritime industry.	4.97	3	0.231
	I have observed a change in my behavior towards environmental issues since the application of the integrated curriculum.	16.82	3	0.001
	I believe that integrating Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education to promote environmental awareness and sustainable practices can be efficient and effective.	11.35	3	0.010
	Integrating Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education can significantly improve understanding of environmental issues in the maritime industry.	8.79	3	0.033
		64.49		

Calculated Chi-square =64.49, DF =3 at 0.05 level of significant, Critical Table = 7.815

From the data obtained in Table 5, since the calculated Chi-square value of 64.49 is greater than the critical value of 7.815 at the 0.05 level of significance and the p-values for most items are less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant impact of integrated curriculum (Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education) on the environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings from the data analysis reveal that there are specific sociolinguistic factors that influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. The results show statistically significant relationships between various sociolinguistic factors and their impact on decision-making and behavior in this industry.

The first item, which states that sociolinguistic factors play a significant role in influencing decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability, garnered a Chi-square value of 6.87 and a significance level of 0.012. This suggests that there is a relationship between sociolinguistic factors and decision-making in the maritime industry. This finding aligns with previous research that has highlighted the importance of sociolinguistic factors in shaping behavior and decision-making processes (Chivukula, 2017; Singh, 2019). The second item, discussing the impact of cultural norms and values on decision-making in environmental sustainability, received a Chi-square value of 12.55 and a significance level of 0.021. This finding is supported by literature that emphasizes the role of culture in influencing attitudes and behaviors towards environmental issues (Hassan, 2015; Lee, 2018).

The third item, focusing on the language and communication styles in the maritime industry impacting environmental sustainability initiatives, obtained a Chi-square value of 9.76 and a significance level of 0.005. This result is consistent with studies that have highlighted the importance of effective communication in promoting sustainable practices in various industries (Jones, 2016; Smith, 2020). The fourth item, which suggests that societal expectations and perceptions do not influence decision-making in the maritime industry, yielded a Chi-square value of 14.92 and a significance level of 0.081. Despite the relatively higher significance level, this finding contradicts existing literature that emphasizes the role of societal perceptions in shaping behavior and decision-making processes (Brown, 2017; Wang, 2019).

The final item, discussing how linguistic diversity and language barriers hinder communication for environmental sustainability efforts, received a Chi-square value of 7.23 and a significance level of 0.000. This finding is in line with previous research that highlights the challenges posed by linguistic diversity in promoting effective communication and collaboration for sustainability initiatives (Gupta, 2018; Patel, 2020). Overall, the data analysis supports the research hypothesis that specific sociolinguistic factors do influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings align with existing literature on the impact of sociolinguistic factors on decision-making processes and highlight the importance of considering these factors in promoting environmental sustainability in the maritime industry.

The findings from this study in Table 4 indicate that existing physical education programs in maritime institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria have a significant effectiveness in promoting environmental awareness

and sustainable practices among maritime professionals. This is supported by the significant Chi-square value of 58.9 at a 0.05 level of significance. The results show that physical education programs effectively promote environmental awareness, help professionals understand the importance of sustainable practices, cover topics related to environmental sustainability, and provide opportunities for engagement in activities that promote environmental conservation.

These findings are in line with previous studies that have highlighted the importance of incorporating environmental education in professional training programs to promote sustainable practices (Arecord, 2017; Wilson & Scalera, 2015). The positive impact of physical education programs on the environmental attitudes and behaviors of maritime professionals supports the notion that education plays a crucial role in fostering environmental awareness and promoting sustainable practices in different industries (Miles & Covello, 2019; Jones et al., 2018).

Overall, the results suggest that physical education programs in maritime institutions can serve as effective tools for promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among professionals in the maritime industry.

Based on the findings from this study in Table 5, the findings support the research hypothesis that there is a significant impact of the integrated curriculum (Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education) on the environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria. Specifically, the participants reported developing a more positive attitude towards environmental sustainability, observing a change in their behavior towards environmental issues, and believing that integrating the curriculum components is efficient and effective for promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices in the maritime industry.

These findings align with previous literature on the effectiveness of integrated curriculum in promoting environmental education and sustainability practices. For example, research by Wals and Jickling (2002) emphasized the importance of integrating different subject areas to enhance understanding of complex environmental issues. Additionally, studies by Tilbury et al. (2011) have shown that integrated curriculum approaches can lead to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors towards environmental sustainability. Overall, the results of this study suggest that integrating Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education can play a

significant role in improving environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors among maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

6. Conclusion

This research has highlighted the importance of examining the integration of Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education in fostering green practices in the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings have shown that there are specific sociolinguistic factors that influence decision-making and behavior related to environmental sustainability in the maritime industry. Additionally, the existing physical education programs have shown significant effectiveness in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among maritime professionals in Lagos State. Furthermore, the integrated curriculum of Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education has demonstrated a significant impact on the environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of maritime professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Overall, this research suggests that a holistic approach that combines language, sociology, and physical education can play a crucial role in fostering green practices within the maritime industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. This integrated approach can help in creating a more environmentally conscious workforce and contribute to sustainable development in Lagos State, Nigeria.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Implement language training programs in Arabic specifically tailored to the maritime industry in Lagos State to enhance communication and understanding of environmental sustainability practices.
2. Conduct workshops and training sessions on sociological perspectives related to environmental sustainability to increase awareness and encourage informed decision-making among maritime professionals.
3. Enhance existing physical education programs in the maritime industry by incorporating modules on environmental awareness and sustainable practices to promote green initiatives.
4. Develop an integrated curriculum that combines Arabic language, sociological perspectives, and physical education specifically targeting maritime

professionals in Lagos State to holistically address environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

5. Encourage collaboration and partnerships between educational institutions, government agencies, and maritime organizations to support the implementation of green practices in the industry through the integration of language, sociological perspectives, and physical education components.

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“Who Says that Male Writers Misrepresent Women?” Gender Perspectives from Nzeako’s *Nkoli*

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Abstract. It is rife among feminists that male writers portray women negatively in their works. Much research has been carried out in this direction in both Literature written in English and that written in Igbo. However, much attention has not been paid to male-authored works to unravel and critique the idea of bias against women. Consequently, the present study questions the idea that in the novel *Nkoli*, written by a male JUT Nzeako, that female characters were negatively portrayed. This is with a view to finding out how the female characters were presented and perceived in the text. It was found that Nzeako went to great heights to present his female characters positively. Precisely, both protagonist and antagonist had good and sterling qualities in spite of their differences and conflict. Additionally, the female characters were perceived as motivators, industrious, advisers, important, as well as highlighting the value of the girl-child. The study is of the view that, at a deeper level of introspection and criticism, male writers are more interested in reflecting societal realities and therefore not biased in portraying their female characters. It is maintained that changes in the socio-cultural systems also corresponds with changes in the direction of writers, male or female.

Keywords: Igbo novel, male writers, Nzeako, *Nkoli*, gender, Patriarchy

1. Introduction

For many years, gender has been a sensitive and important subject of interest to scholars, particularly feminists. Sieder and McNeish (2013) reveal that gender issues received more attention after the United Nations formed a new convention in 1979 that dealt with eradicating all forms of exploitation that existed in most countries. The social construction of gender is an outcome of the pervasive ideology termed social constructionism, which avers that everything people ‘know’ or see as ‘reality’ is partially, if not entirely, socially situated (Andrew 2012). On the premises of the construction of male and female genders in the

society, it is posited that gender differences are created and sustained by the society through its traditional systems such as its norms, conventions, institutions and laws (Ogunyemi, 1988). In this framework are traditional perspectives and beliefs that view women as passive, submissive, illogical, talkative, emotional, etc. In contrast, men are seen as competent, logical and independent (Behringer 227-228). These ideas were promoted by men, who established what is known as a patriarchal society, which is a society controlled and directed by men. Bergman, (1996) states that the proponents of this system believed that, physically and intellectually, women were not equal to men due to the fact that they lacked the ability to protect themselves from aggression and violence. They maintained that women were only prepared by their families to be wives and mothers. As a result, it was needless giving them education as they were viewed like objects not subjects. Incidentally, this traditional view of the genders is reflected in literature across the world by writers.

Portrayal of woman in literature has been a subject of interest to many research fields, particularly feminist criticism that yielded intriguing insights and theories about it (Mouaci & Kaced, 2024). Stratton (1990:98, cited in Peter, 2010: 1) is of the view that female characters have not been fairly treated in literature but marginalized based on certain questionable stereotypes and gender inequality. She stresses that a good number of male writers have encoded female characters as agents of corruption, moral decadence and contamination in their society. Incidentally, gender representation is not only about the author’s creation or perspective per se; rather, it is an obvious reflection of the society they belong to at a specific time. (Kimario, 2021). This assertion finds credence in the fact that literature is a tool that reveals society’s traditions and practices, including those that favor one gender over another (Lange, 2008). As a result, writers represent their views on gender through various characters, language, and themes in their works. However, feminists believe that male writers demean

women in their literature and portray them as a subordinate group and second sex (Kolmar and Bartkowi, 2000). Koussouhon, Akogbeto, and Allagbe (2015: 314) reveal that, African literary canon was rife with male-authored texts such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Ngugi's *The River Between* (1965), Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966), Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* (1973), etc., which profusely celebrated the male image or identity. In these works, the male character was given priority to the detriment of the female character. The authors further stress that "In the pioneering African [male] literary fiction, women's [image or] identity was painted against the backdrop of the various societal schisms that seek to perpetuate the status quo of the enslaved female versus [the] lionized male".

It is for this reason that Smith (2014) points out that there has been a misinterpretation of female characters, especially by male writers, and this discussion has attracted considerable scholarly attention (Aden, 2018; Fonchingong, 2006; Ngara, 1989). According to (Mouaci & Kaced, 2024), it is necessary to state that the literary canon has been dominated for years by male writers who dictated stereotypical visualizations and depictions of women in their texts, hence patriarchal webs made it impossible for women to be in power, or to write freely about their realities. As a result, male writers in African literature have been questioned about presenting their female characters as dependent individuals while portraying male characters as heroes (Jegade, 2014). In reaction, female writers in African literature have written in response to society's stigma about women previously presented by male writers (Jegade, 2014; Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997). Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) argues that female writers emerged to reconstruct their identity, which was previously defined by men in literary works. Expectedly, Female writers portray female characters playing major roles and bringing about changes in society.

Notably, in the process of analyzing literary works, the gender of the author is of utmost importance, being the one that controls the narrative and characters. The way and manner characters are presented, against the prevailing context, shows the trajectory of bias. On the basis of the polar constructs above, the present study seeks to conduct a critique of an Igbo novel written by a male writer to ascertain the issue of bias against the female. The question posed in this study is, did Nzeako present his female writers in negative light?

2. Review of Portrayal of Women by Male Writers

Ngara (1989) contends that African literature tends to reflect the interests of male members of the African intelligentsia, and drew attention to the fact that in most novels of the early period, such as novels written before 1970, the hero is almost inevitably a male member of the African intelligentsia, such as Camara in *The African Child*, Waiyaki in *The River Between*, Obi in *No Longer at Ease*, Odili in *A Man of the People* and so on. According to Ngara, in all these and other novels of the time women played a secondary role in the affairs of society and the principal female characters were portrayed as foils and adjuncts to the major male characters. In typical fashion the hero sees himself as incomplete unless he possesses a girlfriend or wife. Thus female characters are not introduced as individuals in their own right, but are part of the array of devices used to portray and develop the male hero.

In his study on *Unbending Gender Narratives in African Literature*, Fonchingong (2006) analyzed gender inequality in African literature from pre-colonial to post-colonial literary narratives. His study revealed the blame heaped on African male writers for practicing patriarchy and minimizing the presentation of women. After a critical review of the works of writers such as Ekwensi, Achebe, Soyinka, Ngũgĩ and Amadi, a systemic trend was found; the presentation of women by these writers demonstrated the dilemma of a patriarchal system where women played domestic roles only while men appeared to be leaders and heroes of society. Fonchingong further notes that, as a result of this negative portrayal of women by male writers, female writers such as Emecheta, Ba, and Nwapa saw the unfair treatment of women by male writers, and they revisited "the female question" to represent women fairly.

Zola's (2010) research focused on female character portrayal in various drama works written by male authors in isiXhosa, South Africa. The drama works used were Mkonto's *Inzonzobila*, Mtingane's *Inene Nasi IsiBhozo*, Siphambo's *Izinto Zimana Ukwenzeka*, Tamsanqa's *Buzani kuBawo*, Mtywaku's *UThembisa noMakhaya*, Ngani's *Umkhonto KaTshiwo* and Mmango's *uDike noCikizwa*. The research further aims to explore the ways in which some African male writers view gender inequalities and stereotypes in their female character depiction. It was found that while men were portrayed as busy outside the home, female characters were presented mainly as domestics, as they were expected to do the only chores at home, thus reflecting the subordinate position of females in their families and in society. Additionally, the female characters were presented as absent and silent in any decision-making of their families. The author sees this trend as the cumulative result of the power imbalances

between the sexes, where the man makes choices and takes decisions, leaving out the input of women. Furthermore, the women in these texts were portrayed as rebellious, gossips and witches among other negative tags, and in these ways suggesting that women are only destroying society rather than making contributions toward community development and progress.

Kadhim's (2018) study aims at demonstrating the negative treatment of women and the purpose behind this treatment in selected short stories by Katherine Mansfield and Ernest Hemingway. The author found that, in her stories ("Psychology", "Pictures", "The Daughters of the Late Colonel"), Mansfield depicted her female characters as paralysed, invisible women or victims. She concentrated on representing the systematic and determined victimisation of women in a society with an intellectual belief in the survival of the fittest. Similarly, in Hemingway's stories ("The Snows of Kilimanjaro", "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber", "Cat in the Rain") women were presented as shallow-minded, heart-breakers or portents of destruction. They were represented as the source of moral, emotional and mental anguish for male characters. In addition, the females in Hemingway's selected stories were not active, but unnamed or named at the end of the story, which suggested their triviality. In other cases, women were reduced only to a sex object. He ignored females' subjectivity. Women were not appreciated, but on the contrary some of them were accused of their man's desolation. They were presented to justify the men's failure and weakness.

In Kimario's (2021) account, African male writers were depicted as demonstrating bias when discussing gender issues by presenting their female characters performing domestic roles, while their male characters perform major roles in their societies. The author describes male African writers as those that maintained and sustained patriarchal ideology that prioritizes the interests of the man over that of the woman in the society. Specifically, Kimario (2021) made reference to writers such as Achebe (1958) in his novel *Things Fall Apart*, which depicts Okonkwo's wife performing her role as a wife by cooking meals for her husband. On the other hand, Okonkwo, as a male character, occupies the position of a great wrestler of all times in his village. His role is to secure his village and work on the farm. Additionally, Okonkwo feels entitled to dominating his wife as seen in the story. Achebe (1958) presents his society's expectation for a wife to prepare meals for her husband on time. In the perception of Kimario, this negative presentation of female characters is injurious to

women as it has implications to the female experience such as low access to education, land, leadership, employment, and justice.

Ijem (2021) examines Negative Depiction of Women in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. This critique represents an overt revelation of language as a means of patriarchal exercise of power, discrimination, disregard for and subjugation of women. According to the author, it is against this premises that women are seen as inferior, impure, devilish, stupid, fearful, weak and irresponsible, as represented in a patriarchal society. The author claims that the attributes manifested by Achebe's women are dependence, cowardice, submission and vacillation, and that Achebe paints a picture of a society where men rule and dominate women. She claims that Achebe presents a society where there is an unequal power relation with the men as dominant figures and heads. For example, Okonkwo is shown as a wealthy man who has a large barn full of yams, owns women as property, and provides for the three wives who solely depend on him for their survival. According to the Ijem (2021), the patriarchal ideological system that prevailed in the Igbo society then subjected women to a lower position in the socio-political and economic order of Umuofia. For instance, Nwoye and Ikemefuna were construed as courageous and strong, as they carried their pots of water gallantly while Obiageli, a weakling, smashes hers and resorts to weeping, thus tactfully showing women as careless, emotional, weak in strength and character. Ijem (2021) relied on these points to conclude that, in pre-colonial times, women in Igbo society enjoyed few rights and are subdued by men; they humbly accepted their secondary position in a masculine world.

Mouaci and Kaced, (2024) examined images of woman in literature written by men and found that women were usually portrayed as subordinate, subservient and powerless with relatively limited roles and rights in life. On the basis of history, the authors observed that in patriarchal contexts, women did not have many opportunities in life except for marriage and motherhood. As a result, many male writers reflected this by depicting women as dominated, victims, submissive, and passive. These male writers contributed to propagating negative stereotypical images of women; for instance, the authors referenced some works where Victorian women were viewed as angels in the house and expected to obediently fulfill and satisfy the male's desires. Specifically, the authors referred to Patmore Coventry (1854) who first employed the expression 'angel in the house' as a title to his book of poetry that portrayed the archetype of the perfect Victorian woman. In many of the poems

written by Patmore Coventry (1854), he maintained that women should be submissive to men, satisfying her man's needs, and prioritizing his desires over hers, which ultimately reflects the domination and supremacy of men over women.

In the Igbo medium, Okafor (2019), the Igbo male writers are also guilty of negative description of women in their literary works; she names such writers as Tagbo Nzeako in the novel *Nkọlị* (1973); Tony Ubesie in the novel *Isi Akawụ Dara N'ala* (1973). In these novels Okafor (2019) contends that the female characters were negatively portrayed as against the pervasive positive portrayal of male characters in these novels. Precisely, on the basis of ideological premises, the critic claims that in novels such as Nzeako's *Nkọlị* and Ubesie's *Isi Akawụ Dara N'ala*, the patriarchal and domestic ideologies were dominant; consequently, men were presented as lord and master due to their designations as head of the family; their status is reflected in the adulations by the wives and the structure of their living houses where the man occupy the main house *Obi* while the wives occupy the lesser or sub houses known as *Mkpuke*. With respect to the domestic ideology, Okafor (2019) shows that, in the two novels the female characters were portrayed as mainly cooks, home keepers, child-minders and nothing more, as if that is all that defines a woman. This is in addition to the claim that the female characters were portrayed in negative light, precisely seeing them as irresponsible and wicked, particularly when they fail to discharge their traditional duties such as cooking for their husbands and children and taking care of the home.

In sum, in the above previous works, the critics were concerned with the poor representation of women by male writers across the world. The present study would depart from the aforementioned by reappraising one of the works of an Igbo writer with the objective of arguing in favour of the writer's portrayal of women.

3. Research Methodology

The novel titled *Nkọlị* written in the Igbo language medium by J.U.T Nzeako was purposively selected for this study. There are three reasons for selecting this novel. First, the writer is a male writing about conditions in an Igbo family consisting of both sexes. Second, both the protagonist and antagonist in the novel are female, and as a matter of fact, the title of the novel is the name of one of the female characters in the novel. Third, and most importantly, the novel has earned criticism as being biased against women with respect to a negative portrayal of female characters

(Okafor). The analyses of the novel are textual, an outcome of a critical evaluation of the plot as narrated by the author. The data culled from the data were adequately translated by the author from Igbo to English before analysis. As a native speaker of Igbo and also a proficient speaker of English, the author has sufficient skills to undertake the task of translation, thus providing a semantic equivalent of the Igbo version for the purpose of seamless reading by a non-Igbo evaluator.

4. Analysis of Data

The data will be presented based on two different findings from the novel. The findings are : positive presentation of female characters and treatment/perception of the female in the novel under review. The discussion of the findings will follow after analysis.

4.1 Positive Portrayal of the Female

The author used quite a good number of women to tell his story. Incidentally, most of the female characters in the story were presented in positive light. They are as follows: Ogechi, Oduenyi, Obiogbolu's cordial wives, Ndirika, Ugoye and the Witch. These characters are hereby presented and analysed.

4.2 Ogechi, the Lamb

The protagonist of the novel Ogechi (Nkọlị's mother) is presented in positive terms by the writer throughout the narrative. In the beginning, the writer presents Ogechi as a godly woman who does not resort to seeking unorthodox means in times of trouble as other women do, and who is not vengeful in conduct, as shown in the excerpt below:

Ọ bụ Chineke bụ dibia nke m, ma bụrụ onye ọkaiwu m nwere. Ọ bụ n'ebe mgbaba nke m, ma bụrụ onye nche m. Akwụkwọ nso gwara anyị sị, 'N'ebe gị nwere Jesu, olee onye ị ga-atụ egwu ọzọ?' Otu ihe m matara nke ọma bụ na m ga-ejisie ike i mere mmadụ ibe m ihe ọma, na-agbanyeghi ma ọ ga-eji ihe ọjọọ kwughachi m ugwọ.

God is my Diviner, as well as my advocate. He is my place of refuge and my keeper. The Holy Scripture tells us, 'Since you have Jesus, whom else would you fear?' One thing I know for sure is that, I will endeavour to do good to my fellow human, irrespective of whether they will repay me with evil (Chapter 1, pg 5)

In this text, Ogechi is aptly referring to her relationship with her co-wife Ugoye, who is troublesome.

Ordinarily, in Igbo society, when people are severely challenged, they visit a diviner or witchdoctor to ascertain the cause and find a solution. Incidentally, with the advent of the Christian religion, resorting to such means is seen as idolatrous due to the predilection of witchdoctors into mysteries, fetish and evil practices. It is for this reason that Ogechi makes reference to the Christian Bible to justify her aloofness from such people. Evidently, Ogechi is portrayed as a practicing Christian who reposes confidence in God and Christ without allegiance to sorcery. A further proof of her godliness is her stance on doing good to people, even when they repay her with evil; by this she was referring to her co-wife, thus suggesting that she will do good to her co-wife (who is her 'enemy'), even if she fails to reciprocate her good gesture. This position is aligned with the Christian principle of not taking revenge but leaving matters in the hands of God, as specified in the holy Scriptures.

Aside Ogechi's personal attribution to herself, the novel shows that other people also saw her as a godly woman. When her co-wife Ugoye visited a witchdoctor with the intention of doing harm to Ogechi, the witchdoctor named Obiogbolu spared some time to counsel Ugoye, as seen in the following excerpt:

Ọ di ihe m chorọ ka i mata nke oma, ọ buru na i hataghị mmadu aja, ọ dighi ihe i nwere ike ime ya. Nwunye di gi bu ezigbo mmadu. Ọ dighi otu ihe ojoo ọ na-eme gi, ma ọ dighi eme ka di gi ghara ihu gi n'anya dika ọ huru ya

There is something I want you to know clearly, if you do not find fault with someone, there is nothing you can do to them. Your co-wife is a good person. There is no single evil that she does to you, and she does not prevent your husband from loving you the way he loves her. (Chapter 1, pg 9)

Obiogbolu's account of Ogechi indicates that she is completely innocent, especially with respect to her relationship with Ugoye, her co-wife. Obiogbolu used an Igbo maxim *o buru na i hataghị mmadu aja, ọ dighi ihe i nwere ike ime ya*, to indicate that, even he cannot succeed in using juju power to harm Ogechi because she is innocent. With that, the witchdoctor consents with the Igbo saying that *o ji ofo ga-ala* "The person with ofo/truth will go free". While declaring, without equivocation that Ogechi is a good woman, Obiogbolu reassured Ugoye that Ogechi have never done her a single wrong and had no intentions of making their husband love her more than Ugoye, the reverse of which, incidentally was exactly Ugoye's mission to the witchdoctor. Notably, the witchdoctor's endorsement of Ogechi's character is not based on any personal encounter or experience but possibly through

divination, since he had never met Ogechi and neither did he know that Ugoye was the wife of Ojeuga (their husband) as events later revealed. The art of seeing someone's nature and attribute from a spiritual angle is deemed more authentic, given the sacrosanct nature of the source.

Apparently, the incident that strengthened the portrayal of Ogechi as a godly person took place after their husband had divorced Ugoye, her co-wife. After the discovery that Ugoye was not the one responsible for bewitching Nkoli and Ogechi (which led to the eventual divorce) there was pressure mounted on Ojeuga by various parties to reconsider bringing back Ugoye. It was expected that, even if Ojeuga will reconsider, Ogechi would not, due to the past history of troubles and violence by Ugoye, and the fact that, since Ugoye left the house, she had enjoyed maximum peace in the house. However, Ogechi did the unthinkable, as shown in the excerpt below:

N'ezie, enweghi m obi ojoo n'ebe nne Ekwutosi no...Ihe bu uche m, bu na ọ bu nwanji ahụ sara asịsa rafuru nne Ekwutosi...Ọ bu ezie na anyi na-ako onu, ma na-ese okwu, ma ọ putaghị na m ahughị ya n'anya. Uche m na-agwa m na ọ buru na ọ ga-ewetu obi ya n'ala n'ulo anyi a, ọ dighi onye ya na ibe ya ga-ese okwu...

In truth, I am not bitter towards Ekwutosi's mother...My belief is that, it was that woman that confessed who deceived Ekwutosi's mother...It is true that we quarrel, but it does not mean that I do not love her. My mind is telling me that if she if she can humble herself in this our house, there is nobody who will quarrel with another person...(Chapter 13, Pg, 94)

The data shows that, despite the ways Ugoye disturbed Ogechi, Ogechi still loved her and supported the idea of bringing her back to continue to be her co-wife. It was Ojeuga the husband that actually approached her to know her opinion about bringing back her co-wife. This act by Ogechi showed glaringly that she is a godly woman; a majority of women would not support the idea of bringing back such a quarrelsome woman. She showed a good understanding that Ugoye was misled into such violent behaviour by the witch who later confessed, implying that her actions did not truly represent her personality. Being considerate is one of the attributes of godliness; it shows that Ogechi was broadminded enough to look at the matter from other angles, rather than being subjective. As a result, she did not condemn Ugoye but showed compassion towards her and gave her another chance to come back to her marriage. The depth of Ogechi's compassion towards her co-wife can be seen against the backdrop of her odium and negative attitude towards polygamy. In the beginning of the narrative, Ogechi had confided

in her daughter Nkoḷi that her problem started when her co-wife Ugoye came back to the house after she had separated with Ojeuga. In other words, she was enjoying her relationship with her husband until the woman returned. In that narrative, she vowed that she will not be alive and her daughter will marry a man who already has a wife, neither would she consent for her daughter to marry a man who has intentions of marrying a second wife in the future. Based on Ogechi's attitude towards polygamy, it is expected that, now that her husband had divorced her co-wife that she will ensure that she did not come back so that she (Ogechi) would enjoy the pleasure of living with her husband alone, which had always been her desire. Instead, she sacrificed her own satisfaction and supported the idea of bringing her co-wife back to the house.

4.3 Oḍuenyi, the Interventionist

Aside Ogechi, Ojeuga's sister Oḍuenyi is presented in positive light. In her first appearance in the narrative, she confronted her brother Ojeuga on the matter of Ugoye's quarrelsome attitude and accordingly advised him to send her away from the house for the sake of peace and to save his own life. It is easy to interpret Oḍuenyi's action as fighting her fellow woman or an attempt to break the marriage of her fellow woman. But a critical perusal, based on the reasons she advanced, showed that her actions were not ill-motivated. At this point, it was obvious that Ugoye was irredeemable, having established a tendency towards trouble-making to the point that the entire community was aware, and having frustrated all efforts to make peace in the family. Oḍuenyi's intervention was aimed at restoring peace and equanimity in her paternal home. It is also instructive to note that Oḍuenyi was not against Ogechi because Ogechi was godly and peaceful; if she was a home-breaker, she would have advised her brother to send both women away, irrespective of their attributes. Rather than being labeled a home-breaker, she is actually a home-maker; her main concern was for peace to reign in her brother's family. A fact that strengthened the idea that Oḍuenyi was a good woman is her own marriage. In the process of advising her brother to send Ugoye away for his own good, she made reference to her own marriage, as seen in the next excerpt:

O lee ụdị ilu di o na-alu ugbu a, nke putara na mmadu adighi ndu wee nwee obi uto n'ulo a? Ilu di ahụ, o bughị nke m na-alu n'ulo di m? O fodayuru ozo?

What kind of marriage is this that means that somebody will not be happy in this house? This marriage, is it not the one I do in my husband's house? Is there another one? (Chapter 3, Pg, 25)

The reference made by Oḍuenyi to her own marriage is to demonstrate that she is loyal to her own husband. To her, it was strange that Ugoye was making trouble in her own family hence the rhetorical questions *O lee ụdị ilu di o na-alu ugbu a ...* "What kind of marriage is this ...". *o bughị nke m na-alu n'ulo di m? O fodayuru ozo?* "is it not the one I do in my husband's house?" and *O fodayuru ozo?* "Is there another one?". The series of questions, three in all, shows glaringly that Ugoye's behaviour was simply an aberration. The second and third questions established the fact that Oḍuenyi did not exhibit same predilection in her own house, in relation to her husband. If she was pretending, it would have shown in, at least one way; if her brother failed to confront her with her own reality, Ugoye, herself would not fail to do so. In fact, the fearless Ugoye would have seized the opportunity to advise her to go and fix her own marriage first before doing same for her brother. Indeed, Oduenyi is presented as a woman who showed genuine concern for the welfare of her paternal home. Such intervention is approved and validated in Igbo custom where the *Umuada* or *Umuokpu* (Married daughters from the family) enjoyed right to intervene in matters in their paternal home for the purpose of restoring peace and harmony. As *nwaada*, Oduenyi played the interventionist role expected of her by the community and did it with the right motive.

4.4 Obiobolu's Cordial Wives

In the story, it was revealed that the Witchdoctor named Obiobolu had six wives. It was during the visit of Ojeuga to his house (to verify Ogechi's allegation that her co-wife visited Obiobolu) that he found out the number of wives Obiobolu had. Ojeuga was surprised at the number of wives Obiobolu had and said "*Eziokwu? Amaghị m na ha eruola isii. Ma echere m na ha agaghị a dī otutu kari a otu ahụ*" "Really? I did not know that are up to six. But I thought they will not be up to that number." In response to Ojeuga's surprise, Obiobolu stated what gives the impression that he married good women thus "...kama isiokwu m bu na ji awayi di uto nke ukwu, onye na-esi ya abawanye ji." "...But my point is, when the yam pepper soup becomes very sweet, the cook will cut more yam into the pepper soup. The retort of Obiobolu is an Igbo proverb used to suggest that when a person begins to enjoy something they are eating, there is tendency to increase the quantity. In this proverb, the pepper soup stands for marriage, the yam in the pepper soup represents the wife, while the cook is the husband. When the pepper soup (marriage) becomes very sweet, the cook (husband) will cut in more yam (wives). In simple terms, Obiobolu's

stance is that, he married six wives because he was enjoying each of his wives. The fact is that Obiogbolu was enjoying peace in his home because he married good women; if any of the women was evil, the man would not have used that proverb to qualify them. Against the common view that polygamous homes are usually epicenters of quarrelling, Obiogbolu's case represents an exception. The fact that he was enjoying his women showed that the women were loyal to him and were also living in harmony with one another in the same household. There is no stronger way of projecting women positively than the notion of six different women living in peace under the roof of one man.

4.5 Ndirika, the Good Care-giver

In the story, as a result of the constant bewitchment of Nkọlị (in particular), Ojeuga and ogechi decided to take the little girl away from the village to know if the bad experience will stop or continue. They agreed to take Nkọlị to a relation of Ogechi who was a teacher living in Awka town named Ndirika, a woman. When they visited Ndirika and presented their request for her to accommodate Nkọlị, the woman warmly and heartily accepted the offer. Ndirika took very good care of Nkọlị in terms of feeding and general care. However, Nkọlị was always feeling lonely and missing her parents and so was always unhappy. Ndirika was worried about Nkọlị's mood and therefore took two major steps to ensure that she was happy. First, she introduced Nkọlị to other children in the teachers' quarters as narrated, *Nke a mere ka Ndirika na-adụ ya ọdụ kwa ubochi, ma mee ka ụmuaka ndi ọzọ bi n'ụlọ ndi nkuzi na-abia ikporo Nkọlị wee puo igwuri egwu* "As a result, Ndirika used to encourage her every day, and also arranged for other children who lived in the teachers' quarters to come and take Nkọlị out for play." This effort by Ndirika was aimed at changing Nkọlị's mood from sadness to happiness based on the knowledge and experience that children find joy when they come together to play. However, when Ndirika noticed that Nkọlị was still feeling moody despite the presence of her fellow children, Ndirika devised another plan. She registered Nkọlị in a kindergarten school in order to engage her with education and take her mind away from her family completely. The two steps taken by Ndirika represents sacrifices she made for the welfare of a child who was not her' biologically. The fact that she accepted to accommodate and nurture Nkọlị (even if temporarily) showed her large-heartedness. Particularly, feeding Nkọlị to her satisfaction and registering her in a school implied that she expended her own resources in the attempt to make Nkọlị happy. It is rare to find people who would take the child of another person as their own and spend their hard earned resources towards

taking care of them. The common trend is child abuse and maltreatment. Thus, it is a plus that a woman such as Ndirika was involved in the narrative and she played a role that helped to understand the source of the bewitchment in Ojeuga's family.

4.6 Ugoye, the Penitent

The antagonist in the story is Ugoye, the co-wife of Ogechi. In the beginning of the story, she is presented as greedy, troublesome, not submissive to her husband and evil. With respect to her greed, her co-wife confided in her daughter Nkọlị thus:

Ọtutu mgbe ka nna gi na-agaa ahia wee zukotara anyi ihe. O buru na nna gi enye ya ihe o nyere m, obi agaghị a di ya ọcha, nani ma o nyechara ya ihe nile, ma o bu na nna gi nyere m nke nta, ma nye ya nke ukwu. Nke kachasi ihe nile bu na nna gi nye ya nke ukwu, ma nye m nke nta, obi adighi a di ya ọcha.

Many times, your father will go to market and buy things for us. If your father gives her what he gave to me, she will not be happy, except she was given everything, or that your father gave me the small one and gave her the big one. The worst is that, even when your father gives me the small mone and gives her the big one, she is still not happy. (Chapter1, Pg, 4)

The excerpt shows that Ugoye is indeed a selfish and greedy woman; such a person who wants her own portion, in addition to the portion of her co-wife can only be seen as one who can never be satisfied with any condition. In addition to her greed, she is presented as troublesome and violent. After the fight with her co-wife which she initiated, her sister inlaw (Oduenyi) warned her brother to take her away from the family for his own good thus, *i huru nkita noduru n'ezi bu nne Ekwutosi, o ghaghị i si n'ụlọ a wee laa* "Do you see the dog outside who is Ekwutosi's mother, she must leave this house" (Chapter 4, Pg 24) Oduenyi described her as a dog to show that she is troublesome. In Igbo, troublesome people are referred to as dogs, in alignment with the propensity of the dog to bark at people. In terms of not being submissive to her husband, it was recorded that, during the meeting summoned by Ojeuga to address and resolve the dispute between both women, Ugoye behaved in such an irresponsible way that signaled her lack of submission to her husband. In the meeting, while Ogechi was trying to explain what happened, Ugoye not only interrupted her but attacked her physically thus, *Mgbe o na-akoro di ha ihe ndia, nne Ekwutosi bilie...gakwuru ya wee maa ya ura n'ihu di ha* "While she was telling their husband these things, Ekwutosi's mother arose...confronted her and slapped her in the presence of their husband" (Chapter 5, Pg 37). Ugoye's act of slapping Ogechi in the presence of

Ojeuga signaled disdain and insult to the husband; it showed that Ugoye did not have any respect for her husband. It would have been excusable if she did it when Ojeuga was not present, or even in the presence of another mediator, male or female; to do such an act in the presence of their husband is deemed sacrilegious. As a result, Ojeuga responded by beating her and took the decision to send her back to her father's house.

In addition to these, Ugoye is presented as an evil woman, particularly due to her resort to unorthodox means to make their husband love her more than her co-wife, as narrated by Obiogbolu, *Ma gi lee anya, nwunye gi bu ajo mmadu...nwanyi ahụ choro igwu ogwu nke i ga-eji hu ya n'anya wee kpoo nwunye gi nke ozọ asi. O bu ihe o choro ka m meere ya* "But listen, your wife is a bad woman...that woman wanted to make medicine that would make you love her and hate your other wife. That is what she wanted me to do for her" (Chapter 3, Pg, 20). The resort to divination underlines her desperation to take control in Ojeuga's family and implies that she was prepared to tamper with her husband's mind for the purpose of achieving her mission. It is due to these incidents that the Ojeuga's kinsman named Okoye described Ugoye as *...ube turu mmadu n'afọ, nke bu na ifopu ya, ma eleghi anya, onye ahụ anwuo, ma ahapu ya, onye ahụ aghaghị inwu* "arrow stuck in a person's stomach, such that if you pull it out, possibly the person will die, but if you leave it, the person will still die.". This is a way of indicating that Ugoye is trouble impersonated and there is no condition where she would not manifest violent behaviour. However, in the final analysis, it was shown that Ugoye was penitent. After the divorce and she was alone and suffering in her father's house, she had the presence of mind to reflect on her past in her ex-husband's house, as shown in the next excerpt: *Mgbe obula, Ugoye adighi echefu di ya bu Ojeuga na nwunye di ya bu nne Nkolji, n'ihi na obi ya malitere ima ya ikpe otu o siri meso ha omume...Nke a putara na mgbe echiche banyere ihe nile mere n'ulo di ha batara ya n'obi, o cheghariri n'omume nile o mere.*

Every time, Ugoye does not forget her husband Ojeuga and her co-wife Ogechi, because she began to feel guilty about her attitude towards them...As a result, when she remembers all the things that happened in their husband's house, she regretted all the things she did (Chapter 11, Pg 75 &76)

It should not be taken for granted that Ugoye regretted her evil behaviour, neither should it be her remorse be interpreted as the effect of her suffering in her father's house. In the story, the author linked her regret to reflection on her past actions, although she was going

through hard times at the time. It takes a godly heart to show penitence; if Ugoye was as evil as she was painted in the story, no degree of hardship would have made her regret her bad behaviour. And to demonstrate that she was not really that evil, it was later revealed that, it was not Ugoye that was bewitching Nkolji and Ogechi but a certain witch named Ugoye Nduka, as well as the fact that, it was the same witch who influenced and manipulated Ugoye into bad behaviour, as revealed in the next excerpt:

Akporo m Ugoye wee gwa ya okwu, ghoo aghughu di iche iche nke ga-eme ka o nwee obi ojoo n'ahu di ya, na n'ahu nwunye di ya...Mgbe o chulara Ugoye, m chokwara ka m mee ka ulo ahụ dakpoo wee na-ata ha nile amusu

I called Ugoye and talked to her, and manipulated her in different ways to make her hate her husband and her co-wife...When he drove Ugoye away, I wanted to cause the desolation of that house and began to bewitch all of them (Chapter 12, Pg 88).

This confession by the witch shocked the entire community, including Ojeuga and Ogechi, who gathered to listen to her confession before her death. Prior to this time, it was believed that Ugoye was evil and a witch, as suggested by Ogechi's kinswoman and particularly as divined by the witch doctor, Obiogbolu. It was this confession by the witch that changed people's perspective in the nature and personality of Ugoye. Precisely, it was this confession that helped Ojeuga to consider bringing back Ugoye, and also helped Ogechi to support Ojeuga to give Ugoye a second chance in the marriage and family.

4.7 Ugoye Nduka, the Only Witch

In the narrative, the witch who eventually confessed to all her evil, including manipulating Ugoye the wife of Ojeuga and bewitching Ojeuga's family is shown as a woman. A casual evaluation would seem to suggest that the author deliberately upheld the stereotype of women as witches. However, a deeper and more cursory introspection would reveal that there is no intention to label only women as witches. In the story, while the witch was making her confession, Ojeuga was conversing with her friend and kinsman Okapue and said, *Echere m na nke a bu mbu m na-ahu nwanyi sara asisa* "I think that this is my first time of seeing a woman confessing". This statement by Ojeuga is ambiguous and has two connotations. First, it may mean that he was used to seeing men confessing and this is his first time of seeing a woman in the act. The second connotation is that, even if women have been confessing, this is his first time of seeing it, implying that it is not a common thing to see a female witch

making confessions in public. Whichever one is right, the statement negates the sentiment that women are witches. The response of Okapue seems to support the first connotation, thus *Nke a abughị mbụ m na-ahụ onye di otu a, kama o bughị n'obodo anyị. O bu n'obodo Agbenu...* "This is not my first time of seeing a person like this, but it is not in our village. It is in the village of Agbenu..." This response by Okapue, particularly referring to the woman as onye di otu a "someone like this" indicates that he is not used to seeing female witches in their domain but in other places such as Agbenu village. Thus, in this narrative, although the witch in question is a female, there are underlying insinuations that men are more into the diabolical and sinister act than women.

The next section will focus on the treatment of female characters in the story. It will be interesting to see how the female characters represented by the male author, either positive or negative.

5. Treatment and Perception of the Female

As has been pointed out already, both protagonist and antagonist in the story are female, including the name of the character used as the title of the novel, Nkọlị. Although Nkọlị herself is a minor character, her name was used to symbolize the events in the story which is full of unexpected outcomes and surprises. In the novel, it is evident that female characters were not oppressed or relegated in any way. Rather, they were treated with respect, shown to be strong and also included in decision making in the community and family.

Respect for the Female

The family of Ojeuga is one riddled with conflict and violence as a result of Ugoye's bad behaviour. The husband, Ojeuga took certain steps towards managing Ugoye's attitude; incidentally, his approach was not violent or intimidation or harassment, as could be expected in such situations. Ojeuga took the path of polity and diplomacy as shown in the excerpt below: *Ọtutu mgbe ka m kpọrọ naanị ya wee jiri olu di nro wee duọ ya odu, gwa ya ka o wetuo obi n'ala, n'ihu na o nweghi uru mmadu ga-enwe na o nwere ajo obi...Ma ihe m chọputara bu na mgbe o bula m gwachara ya okwu di otu a, ka o na-eme ihe ojojọ karịa...*

Many times I called her privately and with a polite tone advised her, telling her to calm down because nobody benefits from bitterness...But what I found out is that each time I advised her, she will do something worse... (Chapter 4, Pg, 25 & 26)

The private talk chosen by Ojeuga and the polite tone employed were signs of respect towards Ugoye. Ojeuga did not treat her as someone who is below him, neither was he bossy in his approach to her. This is despite the fact that Ugoye proved very stubborn, as she did not abide by any advice given by her husband. The private dialogue seems to suggest that both parties were on equal terms, or at least, that both parties shared some measure of power and authority in the family. It is hardly the case that unequal groups engaged in dialogue. A fact that strengthened the polite approach of Ojeuga is that, he did not engage Ugoye in such dialogue just once or few cases, but multiple times, as shown in the excerpt. This is a demonstration that Ojeuga was patient with Ugoye; he did not give up hope that with continuous engagement, she will change. The only time Ojeuga decided to lay hands on Ugoye was when she carried her violence to the extreme by slapping her co-wife in the presence of her husband who summoned the two women to resolve their conflict. That was a beating well deserved by the violent offender, as well as the only time Ojeuga took that approach.

Secondly, during the divorce proceedings, Ojeuga did not treat Ugoye with disdain but respect. He summoned a meeting of all parties, including his kinsmen and in-laws, where he formally handed over Ugoye to her parents. His hand-over comments showed respect for the woman, as shown in the excerpt below:

Nwanyị oma, o dighi nkojọ obula m na-akojọ gi, ma gi gaa ka nne na nna gi dọọ gi aka na ntị. Mgbe i natara ozi m, i laghachi. Ma i loghachila ma i nataghị ozi m

Beautiful woman, I am not condemning you, but go, so that your parents will caution you. When you receive my message, you will come back. But do not come back if you did not receive my message (Chapter 6, Pg, 49 & 50).

In this instance also, Ojeuga showed maximum respect to the wife despite that he was formally sending her away due to her troubles in his home. In the process, Ojeuga referred to her as Nwanyị oma "Beautiful woman" which seems paradoxical on account of her true nature and personality. Ojeuga deliberately and carefully used this uplifting tag to save his wife's face in public and possibly cushion the effect of the divorce on his wife. This is to show that the mental health of the woman was a thing of concern to him. If he did not care about her state of mind, he would have been casual in his approach. In addition, he also assured her that he was not interested in condemning her; even though she deserved condemnation, Ojeuga chose not to vilify her. This is a mark of respect borne out of care and consideration for the feelings of the party concerned.

5.1 Women as Partners in Progress

In the narrative, female characters were not presented as mere foils in the story, but as people who worked with men for the progress of the family and society. The characters that played these roles were Oduenyi, Ojeuga and the Community, as will be shown in this section.

5.2 Woman as Motivator

The narrative showed that it was Oduenyi that encouraged her brother to take the right and necessary steps to save his life, family and preserve the image and prestige of their lineage. After the fight that ensued between Ogechi and Ugoye, Oduenyi came to see her brother and used the opportunity of the incident to charge him to take action, as seen in the following excerpt:

O buru na i chorọ onwu, i hapu ya, ma o buru na i choghii, biko nwanne m, dokpuru ya gaa n'ulo ndi muru ya, ka i jide ya n'aka wee nye ha. I nuru ihe m kwuru?

If you want death, you can leave her, but if you don't want, please my brother, drag her to her parents' house, so that you will hold her by the hand and give to them. Did you hear what I said? (Chapter 4, Pg, 27) All these while, Ojeuga was giving Ugoye the benefit of the doubt, by constantly advising her without taking any concrete steps towards solving the matter. Oduenyi must have felt that her brother was not acting like a man, and therefore used those words to motivate him to take action. As a matter of fact, Ojeuga was portrayed as a weakling who could not handle the conflict that was destroying his house. He was merely listening to each party without taking necessary action. As far as Oduenyi was concerned, the conflict generated by Ugoye would ultimately lead to the death of her brother and the demise of her paternal home. Her goading was what encouraged Ojeuga to take the action he took later on by divorcing Ugoye. If Oduenyi did not give her the motivation, it is doubtful if he would have summoned the courage to divorce Ugoye. Oduenyi is thus represented as a female character that played a huge positive role in the affairs that proved beneficial for the family and community.

5.3 Woman as Adviser

The story revealed that Ojeuga carried his wife along in decisions he took over different matters in the house; he did not relegate his wife in taking major decisions. In the matter concerning the bewitchment of Nkolı, even after Ugoye had been sent away, Ojeuga was helpless and did not know what to do. As a result,

he sought for advice from his wife as shown in the next excerpt:

Biko nwunye m, o di ihe i cheputara, otu anyi ga-eme ka ihe ahụ kwusi, maobu ka anyi choputa onye na-eme ihe ahụ, i nwere ike gwam, aghaghị m igere ihe i kwuru...

Please my wife, do you have any idea, what we shall do to stop that thing, or for us to find out who is doing that thing, you can tell me, I would take your suggestion...(Chapter 8, Pg, 59)

Here Ojeuga did not decide the matter on his own; he involved Ogechi his wife and actually sought for her opinion and suggestion on how to handle the matter. He obliged his wife freedom to express her view in the matter. Ojeuga's use of the third person pronoun anyi "we/us" repeatedly in his plea showed inclusivity. He did not use m/mu "me/my" which could have shown that he was the one taking the action. The use of the inclusive pronoun showed that it was an action he wanted to take with his wife. The husband did not stop at pleading for his wife to suggest a way out of the imbroglio; after his wife suggested taking Nkolı away to another village, Ojeuga accepted her suggestion to relocate Nkolı. Again, thereafter, Ojeuga called his wife and asked her to suggest where to relocate Nkolı. Ogechi suggested taking Nkolı to the house of her friend who was a teacher in a school at Awka named Ndirika. Again, Ojeuga did not dismiss her suggestion but approved it and they eventually took Nkolı to the house of the teacher at Awka. It is evident that Ojeuga did not repress his wife but gave her ample chance to talk during matters in the family. This is not to say that he took every suggestion his wife made; for instance, Ogechi once suggested taking Nkolı to a prayer house for deliverance but Ojeuga rejected the idea because it was hasty and not well thought out. The fact is that Ogechi was involved in decisions made in Ojeuga's family which must have given her a sense of belonging. Furthermore, on the question of bringing back Ugoye to the family, after the revelation that it was the witch actually behind the evil deeds, Ojeuga did not take the decision alone; he sought for Ogechi's advice, as shown in the next excerpt:

O gwa ya ka o kwuo ihe o cheputara banyere ikpoghachi nwunye di ya, nwanyi ahụ gwa 220 ana o dighi ihe ozọ ya chere, n'ihi na ha ejirila ntị ha wee nuru ihe nile mere

He asked her to state her opinion about bringing back her co-wife, the woman told him that there is nothing else in her mind because they have used their ears to hear everything that happened (Chapter 13, Pg, 95)

The reason Ojeuga sought the opinion of his wife is the understanding that, aside being his wife, she is the one who has borne the burden of Ugoye's troubles all these whiles. Therefore, seeking her opinion is seen as

the rightful thing to do in the circumstance. Incidentally, Ogechi agreed to bring back her co-wife. If Ogechi had refused, going by Ojeuga's character, it is doubtful if he would have gone ahead to bring back Ugoye. The idea to consult Ogechi was not just a formality; Ojeuga knew that her opinion was pivotal towards taking any decision about nullifying the divorce of Ugoye.

5.4 Women as Observers

In the story, on account of Ojeuga's plan to divorce Ugoye, he summoned the entire Ụmuọkpara community through the go-between named Okoye. The meeting was not only attended by men in the community; women were also in attendance, as shown in the next excerpt:

Mgbe ha nile weere oji na oseoji taa, o bugara ndi nwanyi. Otutu n'ime ha were taa, ma ndi ozọ kwuru na ha agaghị a ta oji

When all of them had taken and eaten kolanut, he sent to the women. Many of them took and ate, but others said that they will not eat kolanut (Chapter 6, Pg, 46)

The inclusion of women of Ụmuọkpara in this meeting is crucial because, the meeting was summoned to determine the fate of their fellow woman. Their presence in the meeting implied that no one hindered them from participating. They were free to talk and express their views on the matter of their fellow woman. Although, in the narrative, no woman of Ụmuọkpara spoke during the meeting, there is nothing to indicate that they were barred from airing their views. The fact that none of them spoke implied that they were comfortable with the opinion of the men in the sensitive matter of divorce. Their inclusion goes a long way to show that the Ụmuọkpara community had a liberal leadership that accommodated the opinion of both gender in matters affecting the village.

5.5 Women as Industrious

In the narrative, women were perceived as hardworking and not laggards. In the beginning of the story, the author did not hide the fact that both Ogechi and her co-wife were hard working women, as shown in the excerpt below:

Ụbọchị ahụ bụ Orie, n'oge ehihie, nne Ekwutosi bukorọ ihe ole na ole ọ chorọ ire n'ahia wee gaa ahia. Nne Nkọlị gara ahia, ma ọ naghị n'ahia otutu oge, n'ihi na ihe ọ chorọ ire adighi otutu

That day was Orie, in the afternoon, Ekwutosi's mother carried the things she wanted to sell in the market and went to market. Nkoli's mother went to market, but she did not stay long in the market because what she wanted to sell were few (Chapter 2, Pg, 7)

This data showed that both protagonist and antagonist were traders in the community market. They were not just wives who depended on their husband for everything. They were both involved in the economic welfare of their home. It is very easy to gloss over or overlook this side of both characters due to their conflict. In spite of their differences, they were engaged in trade implying they were hard working. Although, the fact that they traded did not mean that they were financially independent; it shows that they were making input or playing supportive role in the family expenditure. Apparently, Ojeuga, their husband was not the sole carrier of the household financial burden. Furthermore, the story revealed that, when Ugoye was divorced, she went back to her parents and endured a lot of hardship, but she did not fold her hands as revealed in the next excerpt:

Ọ bụ ezie na mmadụ na-agwa nwanyi muru nwa ohuu, ka o zuru ike wee na-eri ihe nke oma, ma nwanyi ahụ ezughi ike, nke mere na mgbe ọ di mkpuru abali abuo ọ muru nwa, ka o buliri ukpa ya wee malite iga ahia n'ebe ọ na-azuta ukpa akpu wee buru ya gaa n'ahia obodo ozọ, n'ebe ọ ga-enwe uru wee ree

It is true that a nursing mother is told to rest and eat well, but that woman did not rest. As a result, after just two nights after child birth, she took her basket and began to go to a market where she bought a basket of cassava and carried it to a market in another village where she will make profit after sales (Chapter 11, Pg, 77)

This data shows that Ugoye was resilient and hard working; just after two days of childbirth, she started trading to feed herself, her daughter and the new born child. Having severed relations with her husband, and without any meaningful support from her poor and struggling parents, she had no option than to take her fate in her own hands and start trading. Although it was shown that her suffering continued despite her efforts, the fact is that she did something by way of making ends meet. She did not start begging or depend on handouts from sympathizers, thus underlining her resourcefulness.

5.6 The Girl Child as Important

The narrative underscored the perception of the girl-child in the family of Ojeuga. His wives had only girls and no male child. While Ogechi had Nkọlị, Ugoye her co-wife had Ekwutosi. It is obvious that, throughout the story, it was not shown that Ojeuga was concerned or desperate that none of the wives had given birth to a male child who would succeed him. Rather, he was more concerned about the health and welfare of Nkọlị

when she was bewitched and took steps toward saving her life. After relocating Nkọlị to the house of the teacher at Awka town, Ojeuga paid several visits to Awka to know how his daughter was fairing. In one of the visits, he bought several foodstuffs to support Ndirika who was taking good care of his daughter. The fact is that Ojeuga loved his daughter and made sacrifices to ensure that she was comfortable. This is not to say that Ojeuga was not interested in having a male child, since he longed to have more children aside Nkọlị and Ekwutosi. The fact is that, as important as the male child is in advancing the lineage, the man was not desperate to have one. Even when his divorced wife eventually gave birth to a male child, Ojeuga was not moved by the sex when he heard the news as shown in the next excerpt:

Ihe ọ gwara onye ahụ bịaara zie ya ozi ahụ bụ na ya enweghị ọjị ya ga-enye ya ka ọ taa, ma ya biko gaghachi n'ụlọ onye ziri ya ozi, gwa ya na ya kelere Ihe kere mmadụ. Ọ gwula ihe o kwuru

What he told the person who brought that news is that he did not have kolanut to give him to eat, and that he should please go back to the person who sent him and tell him that he is grateful to the Person who created humans. That was all he said (Chapter 11, Pg, 76)

The reaction of Ojeuga to the news of Ugoye's birth of a male child (which was his own because Ugoye was divorced while she was pregnant) demonstrated that he was really not bothered about the sex of a baby, male or female, and therefore did not place any premium on the male child. It was expected that an Igbo man who, up till that moment, had only two girls from two different women, would be excited, and run to embrace his son and the mother, even despite the divorce. If Ojeuga was mindful of a male child, he would have dropped all charges against Ugoye and reunited with her, at whatever cost. Rather, he played down the news and did not pay any visit to his inlaws. Even after the reunion, there was hardly any mention of Ugoye's male child. Rather, when Ugoye came back to the family, Nkọlị was the one spotlighted, as shown in the following excerpt:

Mgbe mmadụ nile ahụ hụkọtara anya ọzọ, Ugoye jiri ọsọ gaa makuọ Nkọlị wee mabulie ya elu

When all the people saw one another again, Ugoye ran and hugged Nkoli and lifted her up (Chapter 14, Pg, 100)

The spotlighting of Nkọlị and the lifting up of Nkọlị by Ugoye is significant in the story; it is a symbolic demonstration of the sex more valued. Notably, Ugoye had returned with both her daughter Ekwutosi and her new born son, but Ojeuga did not go to hug his son and lift him up. Rather, it was Nkoli, a female that was lifted up, thus signifying the primacy of the girl child.

In sum, the male author, Nzeako painted a positive picture of the female in the novel. Aside the witches, all the major female characters in the story were positively and realistically portrayed. The other female characters with no name, such as Ogechi's friend that told her that Ugoye was the one bewitching Nkọlị could be excused because her conclusion was based on the submission of the diviner, coupled with the fact that Ugoye was making visits to witch doctors at the time.

There is no gainsaying the fact that female characters in the novel were portrayed in positive light, contrary to the opinion of authors (Fonchingong, 2006; Zola, 2010; Ijem, 2021; Mouaci and Kaced, 2024) all who cited patriarchy as the cause. Precisely, unlike the submission of Okafor (2019), It is true that Ojeuga lived in the obi (main house) while his wives lived in mkpuka (sub-house), it did not mean that the wives were relegated, as have been shown already in the analysis. The women had their say in the house, and even one of the wives was bold enough to slap her co-wife right in the presence of their husband, thus underscoring the freedom they enjoyed in Ojeuga's house. This study is aligned with the submission of Lange (2008) that it is unfair to criticize male authors for bias against their female characters. Lange (2008), who analyzed the presentation of women in four novels; two African novels in French and two U.S novels in English all written by men criticized the claim that male authors are unable to adequately present women from a female perspective due to the fact that they didn't experience what it means to be female. While admitting the fact that women indeed go through a different path as they grow up in societies that undermine them, while men go through a path that favors them, Lange argues that readers perceive literary works differently depending on the author's sexual orientation. In defence of male authors, Lange posits that the reason male authors are accused of not writing exclusively from a woman's point of view is due to skepticism that they cannot write from that angle. Lange stresses that male authors have, in the main, presented a realistic account of the female in society, for example by accurately portraying the distress and a sense of loss by female protagonists in the novels studied. Lange buttresses his point by stating that much research in the field of feminism has been done by women, which makes women experts and rightful writers about the issues of personal concerns. The point expressed by Lange is that if men were to venture into the field of feminism, it would help to correct the view that male writers misrepresent women in their works.

Since literature is used to mirror society, male authors reflect the society in a realistic manner; to do

otherwise is fantasy. Writers are observers who write what they see in the society. They create stories based on their observation. In addition, writers are not interested in correcting mores and ethics in society; their job begins and ends at showing reality. It is up to the society to react by protesting or advocating for change. Patriarchy is not a creation of male authors; rather it is the prevalent socio-cultural condition of a society with respect to gender. It is improper to accuse male writers of bias and sustaining patriarchy when they reflect such societal conditions in their works. The contrary is actually the case; if they do not, then they are biased in favour of the female. Writers who do not hold to the status quo mainly do so for the sake of political correctness. Although female writers have arisen to challenge the status quo, their responses are based on changing realities. As society evolves, so does socio-cultural systems, and so does writer's focus.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the portrayal of women in the work of an Igbo novelist. Against the backdrop of the accusation that female characters in the novel *Nkoli* were not positively projected, this study found exactly the opposite. It was revealed that, not only were the protagonist and antagonist female, both characters possessed positive attributes. While the protagonist was described as a lamb suggesting a peaceful mien, the antagonist was seen as penitent and her 'bad' side excusable on account of a certain manipulation by a witch, signifying that she was really not acting on her own dictates. In addition, female characters were also treated and perceived in different positive ways such as motivators, advisers, important, industrious, and generally as partners with men in the progress of the society. Furthermore, the female child was highlighted as very important in the family, thus questioning the age-old valorization of the male child in Igbo society. Finally, it could be judged that Nzeako's novel is a balanced account of gender as both male and female characters were realistically portrayed. If it is possible to accuse the author of bias, that bias is in favour of the female character.

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The Influence of Globalization and Technological innovations on Painting with other Artistic Trends in Nigeria.

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Abstract. This paper explores the current trends and influences in Nigerian painting, by groping how modern-day artists and their artistic practices could adapt to the western artistic styles and practices to build a visual language and connection with the western artists by advancing their artworks, and exploring various types of contemporary paintings that emerged in the last decade of this 21st century. Thus, it is evident that contemporary Nigeria paintings have a rich historical background that is still significantly shaping the modern expressions of Nigeria painters in terms of instinct, cognition, and creativity in their artistic practices. Moreover, this paper critically — analyzed the key role of how these trends has brought and increased an international exposure for Nigerian artists (painters) and their artworks (paintings) through colonial influence and democratization of art distribution through technology (artificial intelligence) and digital platforms such as international exhibitions, virtual exhibitions, publications, and social media networks. Based on the articulation of this paper, it concludes that Nigerian painters can navigate and intersect their artistic tradition with modern practices — in order to stand the grounds of contributing, competing, and being approved in the stage of global art discourse.

Keywords: Contemporary Nigerian Art, Painting, Globalization, Technology, Identity, Modernism.

1. Introduction

Nigerian painting space has a lot of classifications with creative connotations that gives an impression of reflecting the hallmarks of her ethnic artistic practices. This is due to the fact that while each group of artists

(painters) explores and inspires each other — several localities retain their distinctive artistic imprints. As a result of that, art forms reflect artists' engagements with nature of their artworks; which are characterized by the synthesis of indigenous traditions such as motifs, patterns, and the fusion of western conventions i.e. perspective and proportion of African art with adaptation of the western world style as propounded by contemporary African artists like Aina Onabolu and the Zairians (Filani, 2005).

However, the Nigerian artistic practices majorly focus on tradition such as power, role and social relations — which emphasizes on the seat of political, social and ritual authority, for a long period of her history. On the one hand, the emphasis on a single part over others in Nigeria painting often affects the nature and navigation of perspectives in indigenous artistic practices. Consequently, the functions of scaling and proportioning painting in Nigeria art society and other extended African countries differ from what is often obtained in western parts of the world. Contextually, the expression of modern artistic practices found among African and Nigerian contemporary artists — apparently dates back to the discourse with “Cubism” artistic styles and expression, and the quest of 21st century art theory following the pioneering efforts of the likes of Pablo Picasso and Braque, which later extended to other parts of the world including Africa.

Adeyemi (2011) posits that “the critical connections between African and European arts actually started with the artistic movements inspired through the influences of colonialism”. Filani (2005) corroborates Soyinka’s position — argued that “the dynamism of western education ushered in and informed the artistic

trends, which also led to stylistic changes in indigenous African arts, including the process of acquiring artistic skills". It is equally interesting to note that western influence was behind the teaching and experimental workshops like the *Mbari-Mbayo* in *Osogbo* and *Ori-Olokun* at Ife Art workshop centers that were organized by colonial expatriates and ethnographers. All these were organized to help in disseminating artistic skills to art lovers and students whose talents would not have developed if the artists were limited to the basic elementary skills gained from their school days and from local apprenticeships. This initiative has produced such great artists like Jimoh Buraimoh, Muraino Oyelami and Twin-seven-seven, to mention just a few, who were influenced by the arts and creativity workshops organized by the Europeans.

As pointed out by Adeyemi (2011), Murray's appearance on the Nigerian art scene, was influenced by the creative norms of western academism but more importantly, he was instrumental in the sense that he sought to preserve Nigerian cultures and idioms in the works of his students through his teachings. Murray was able to inspire arts apprentices and students in the area of what Egonwa characterizes or refers to as the artistic desire to 'preserve our culture and philosophy.' Murray equally believes that, it was through the study of indigenous crafts and traditional arts that true contemporary Nigerian arts could evolve. Thus, a classical example of the integration of African and foreign influences in indigenous Nigerian art are the Chinese writings and motifs with infinite variety of characteristics that seems to have come in the wake of western naturalistic representation (Adeyemi, 2011).

In the hands of Nigerian artists, this characteristic Chinese influence, according to Louse and Raymond (1972) is based on traditional brush drawings of symbols representing objects of everyday life. However, the simplicity and directness of older African signs, symbols, motifs, and pattern have given a lot of inspiration to contemporary Nigerian art and artists, individually and collectively at arts schools. The combined influences in the making of modern Nigerian arts and artists are evident in the works of such groups as the Zarianists who experiment with

natural synthesis as seen in the works of Uche Okeke, Bruce Onabrakpeya and Yusuf Grillo to mention a few. Another good example is the *Ulism* group of artists in south –East Nigeria, *Onaism* from south – west and *Arewa* from northern Nigeria. Each of these groups has its distinctive philosophy and artistic ideologies. Particularly, in coastal Yoruba paintings — the primary artistic location and source for a research study often emanate from depths i.e. the meanings of each of the signs, motifs and patterns used by artists, which is derived from a combination of social ritual, class symbols and the desire by artists to communicate both specific and cultural information in a special artistic hermetic language.

However, the Nigerian contemporary painting is an evolving and dynamic genre of art that analytically captures the nation's rich cultural heritage. Thus, this research is a qualitative survey and discourse of the current trends in Nigerian painting, which shall highlight the contribution and efforts of notable contemporary Nigeria artists in Nigerian paintings. Moreover, it initiates a comparison conversation between recent modernized painters, their artistic practices, and their predecessors, by examining the discrepancies, advancements, and the diverse types of artwork that define the contemporary Nigerian painting scene.

Painting and Marks

In order to articulate within certain parameters, the foregrounds of painting — firstly, it is imperative to properly determine what painting means since it is called 'painting' rather than images. However, arguments often explain how images over time may extend far beyond other works of art both in two and three dimensions — and as such, it might equally extend to that which is mechanically produced liken as to handmade objects. The form 'arts' or the Fine arts and form of creative art; artists' owe ultimately to Aristotle, who relentlessly accounted for not only painting but also sculpture, drama, and poetry echoing his doctrine of "mimesis" and underpinning the concept of painting as it falls into the set of broad categories, and implicitly form its own distinct objectives in two ways (Aristotle, 2000).



Plate 1 and 2: *Dialogue I, II (Oil on Canvas) 2011, by Kafaru Abiodun*

These two pieces above are examples of recurrent patterns, signs and motifs which reveal some of the features of contemporary Nigerian painting that this study intends to explore.

Painting: in one sense, has its own uniqueness and there are particular sets of two-dimensional valuables which are hung all over millions of walls across the world including living rooms, public domains, street-boards, lurks in storerooms, and portfolios. To this end, as one finds the (paintings) hung all over the walls — it is expected that either consciously or subconsciously, viewers must notice or find a certain marks on which ostensibly create an arouse form. As one may speculate inscrutably — painting are communes that unites objects and makes us think of them as they demonstrate a certain act of intentions or ‘art’ rather than as a kind of support that does have just a paint on them. Suffice to say that the term painting — is specially a kind of intention made with the feelings of all sorts of manners of creation, which distinguishes flat thing from sort of marked surface, which is from writing photographs and so on. However, if the objects are products, then painting — the specificity that helps ties a set of visual experiences together is a form of practice. As it may deem possible to place a practice as a form of certain unifying principles that coordinate the element of what can be painting through practice at least — it often has some common specific minimal definition in the West: painting is an act involving marking on surfaces with the intentions of creating a visible things or product. Nevertheless, what makes a painting — are forms of subjective ideas of representation, it may equally be painting or form of things that can be seen and at the same time, it may at best be regarded as a “mean” of what is potentially visible to the external world.

To better understand this formulation, one might contrast these intentions against the flat things seen around the practice of art and it is most self-sufficient to offer the intentions of producing the experience of pictorial representation, which the idea goes to

distinguish the business of application of painting to cover or adorn surfaces with marks. However, the definition of painting that sufficiently echoed the effectiveness of the theory of imitating nature is not tenable for the discussion of representation. Again, as painting is a creation of things that shows marks on any surface — while a surface seems relatively unambiguous in the creation of a visible expanse of what stops the passage of light could serve as ground on which painters could replicate the thought or ideas. The form of representing a mark at a given time may become an integral part of painting and while the ‘flat’ surface may seem clear enough to mean a great concern for painters; it may equally be accurate to say that the works of painting habitually reflects the work of the painters as a form in two-dimensional surface.

2. Historical Overview of Nigerian Painting

The history of Nigerian painting is a journey of her cultural expression that enlightens young lads in this area of specialization about indigenous practices which was induced by the colonial influence to the post-colonial artistic practices and development. Artist most especially painters in Nigeria, have continuously adapted with this journey by emphasizing on traditional themes, colonial interactions, and also global movements to create a dynamic evolving painting space for this present and upcoming generations. Over the years, Nigeria painters often use their artistic practices to express the in-depth of creativity in which they reflect on the nation’s societal issues with the motive to engage with both their local and international audiences. However, the past few decades have verified that the exhibits of Nigeria painters have gained a significant level of engagement in the global painting space. This makes Nigerian painters known and well respected across the continent

and the world at large. However, to appreciate contemporary Nigeria painting, it is essential to understand its historical roots impact. Nigerian art has a rich heritage that dates back to ancient traditions such as the Nok, Ife and Benin cultures — which are known for their erudite sculptures and metal work. During the colonial period in Nigeria — new art media and techniques were introduced, while post-independence Nigeria saw the rise of modernist artists who blended traditional and western styles (Nnabueze *et al.* 2020).

Over time, Nigeria tradition has evolved, especially during the colonial and post-colonial eras, where the western techniques and materials were introduced, which brought a fusion of traditional and modern styles. This period saw the emergence of pioneer artists like Aina Onabolu and Ben Enwonwu who laid the groundwork for modern Nigerian art that is been experienced today. Nowadays, Nigerian painters continue to innovate themselves, through drawing from the depth of their rich cultural heritage while incorporating global influences and new technologies

to their artistic practices. Notable contemporary Nigerian painters such as Kolade Oshinowo and Abiodun Olaku have made significant contributions to this area of specialization. Their works reflect a blend of traditional themes and modern techniques, and also showcase in diverse form and the dynamic nature of Nigerian painting.

Ideally, this overview scrutinizes the major phases undergone by pioneering artist in the evolvement of Nigerian painting, and it focuses on the shifting of culture and modernized techniques that have shaped and contributed to its development. Art in Nigeria generally has a deep ancient root dating back hundreds of years to the Nok, Ife, Benin cultures and other early civilizations. Although, early Nigeria art was primarily in traditional forms such as sculptures, carvings and constrained painting practices which do have a symbolic meaning with societal and religious significance. However, painting a visual form of expression was in form of murals and body art which were purposeful and integral to the Nigerian ancient cultural and ceremonial lifestyle.



Figure 1: Nok culture terracotta. Source: Wikimedia Commons

The advent of colonialism largely imposed a different perception to the Nigeria painting culture — introducing the old folks to fresh western techniques and materials. Contextually, indigenous Nigerian painting was often express through walls murals and body decorations, especially among the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo peoples. Painters as at then used natural pigments from plants and minerals to create symbolic patterns and designs that adorned homes, temples and communal spaces.

3. Colonial Influence and the Introduction of Western Techniques

The era of the colonial masters brought significant changes in Nigeria’s art — they introduced the western concepts and artistic techniques to build on, and also paintings materials such as oil colours, canvases, and brushes amongst others (Effiong, 2025). However, these western material and techniques built along; through concepts of realism with perspective, which introduced pioneering Nigerian artists to new creative possibilities (Adeyemi, 2024). During this

period, Nigeria art saw the emergence of her pioneering artists like Aina Onabolu, Ben Enwonwu, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Kolade Oshinowo to name a few — these artists sought to infuse their indigenous concepts with that of the colonial masters in their artistic practices. This emergence made Nigerians opened to receiving formal trainings and education in western art schools, either locally or internationally, which eventually led them to began experimenting with new methods and blending them with western artistic styles. By the way, colonial patrons often commissioned Nigeria pioneering artists to create portraits or scenes that match with European taste in Mind.

Nigeria's independence in the year 1960, made her artists sought to re-imagine and redefine their cultural

identity in their artistic practices by moving absolutely away from pure western styles and reclaiming their heritage in distinct action of creativity and products (Adebowale, 2023). However, the post-independence era marked a significant pattern and shift in Nigerian painting. Painters began exploring diverse vibrant themes that contains contents of self-identity; nationalism, and social transformation. This made an association of young artists that was founded in year 1950, called the Zaria Art Society (ZAS) or Zarians — play a crucial role in this transformation by using their works to advocate for fusion of African traditions and modern artistic practices. Also, prominent members like Uche Okeke, Yusuf Grillo, and Bruce Onobrakpeya developed unique styles that incorporated local motifs and narratives with contemporary techniques.



Plate 3 — *Ijala (Hunters Guilds)* (Mixed-Media on canvas) by Abiodun Kafaru, 2013

Ijala is a mixed-media painting — that evokes the spirit of hunting and songs among the guilds of hunters. The work in this picture is designed with sand, ropes, wood and oil paints, while the ropes are specifically arranged to show the profile display of the guilds in a colorful hue. The hues are well selected in a systematic manner to represent the hunters, while the inner orange-red denotes the head or leader of the guilds. The inner miniature painting placed strategically at the middle of the picture represents fire set by the guilds, and the power of fire carried by the hunter connotes spiritual powers. The edges of the painting are specially decorated; sand is decorated with patterns and motifs typifying of the embroidery design of the ancient time among the Yoruba.

The contemporary art setting in Nigeria is intensely influenced by the impulse of globalization, which makes things easy in terms of inter-cultural interactions and exposure of artists to huge number of global and evolving artistic techniques, skills, innovation, and standards (Effiong, 2023). This engagement does not only enrich their creative process but also open doors for broader discourse with the international art community. Furthermore, given the rise and advancement in modern technology, most especially this late 21st century social media and other sophisticated digital platforms have transfigured the mindsets of artists, how they think and distribute their works. Also, this revolution provides them with an extraordinary opportunity to gain the engagements of global art audiences and engage directly with art enthusiasts and art lovers around the world.

4. Contemporary Nigerian Painting and Trends

Currently, Nigerian paintings have improved vigorously and also, it is a vibrant union of diverse influences and techniques. Many artists keep exploring non-representational forms, focusing on abstract concepts that prioritize emotional depth and personal storytelling over literal depiction. Recently, the swift developments in Nigeria painting is showcasing intensification, transiting towards different forms of modern art (painting) such as the figurative, abstracts, mix-media, and digital art. And these growths, grants artist (painters) the freedom to get inclined with intricate emotions and dynamic philosophical ideas without the constraints of emphasizing on realistic representations only but also the chance to explore to the peak other phase of dimensional art particularly related to painting. For Instance, there is a notable movement towards mixed-media experimentation, resulting in artworks that are rich in texture and subjected to multiple visual complexities. Similarly, the integration of digital technologies is also reshaping the art scene largely,

giving rise to innovative forms such as virtual installations and interactive experiences that engage viewers in the new and dynamic ways (Agwu, 2023). The diverse forms of contemporary paintings and artistic practices are itemized and discussed below:

Mixed-Media/Collage and Experimental Techniques — Mixed-media and collage have increasingly become prevalent in contemporary Nigerian painting. However, by incorporating different materials and textures. Painters are exposed with this medium to create complex multidimensional works that challenges the traditional notions of painting. Nevertheless, this approach allows for the exposition of greater creativity and experimentation which eventually result in unique and visually striking pieces. Contextually, this approach involves the combination of traditional painting materials with other unconventional or recycled materials like fabric, metal, and found objects, resulting in rich, tactile pieces. Amazingly, this trend reflects a broader move towards interdisciplinary art practices, where the boundaries between different art forms are blurry to audience that does not have knowledge of art.



Plate 4 and 5 — Untitled Mixed Media on wood 2012, by Abiodun Kafaru

Approaches adopted in these two plates of this artwork are systematically wet on wet style rendered with rope stuck on the surface of wood panel, primed with glue intentional bearing in mind that the experiments may open up drastic shift in studio art practice and in the quest for innovation in this research. Ultimately, the work is indeed a probe into several claims made on behalf of modernist paintings and materialism made by the likes of Bells, Collingwood and Cezanne. The researcher intentionally infused this material with the belief that new concept and reading would or may emanate and to see how this work will look when mounted for the viewers.

Abstract Art/ Non-Figurative Art — In Nigeria painting, abstract still remains a significant trend in contemporary Nigerian art. Aesthetically, this form of painting is characterized by emphasizing on color, formation, and texture. Interestingly, this style often allows painters to express their complex emotions and ideas while drawing on personal and cultural experiences. Abstract works are established to challenge viewers either artists or non-artist to interpret and engage with art on a deeper level that goes beyond literal representation. Surprisingly from the past decade till

date, abstract is one of the dominant trends that are observed in contemporary Nigerian painting. This style emphasizes the dynamic force of color, form, and texture over realistic representation; these mediums allow artists (painters) to freely convey their emotions and thoughts. The sensation and inspiration behind Nigerian artist choice of being glued to Non-figurative painting can be subjected to the influence of globalization in art—that is increasing the exposure to international art space. Whereby encouraging upcoming painters to experiment with abstraction, resulting in art works which can both be innovative and deeply personal without the fear of any art critic.



Plate 6 and 7 — Excitement pastel and Acrylic on Paper 2011, by Abiodun Kafaru

The dialogue that has been happening between western and African artists since Cubism e.g. Picasso looking at African art forms and then the African artists looking at western arts style' such as realism (e.g. Picasso) and how this is interpreted will be investigated in my art practice. The reflection, dialogues and interpretations coming back and forth from western and modern Nigerian arts will be investigated through creative processes in drawings and paintings.

Figurative/Portrait Art — Figures and portraiture is still significantly the face of painting in Nigeria, which continues to be popular among Nigerian painters. This is due to the fact that this works is attractive and relatable because they often depict day-day social life activities like cultural rituals and notable figures. Figurative art provides a visual narrative of Nigerian society in various contexts, and Nigerian painters has several approach to this form of painting, ranging from realism, hyper-realism to styled and expressive forms that reflects the diverse nature of their artistic voices.



Plate 8 — Yoruba Traditional Dancers [Oil on Canvas] 2005, by Abiodun Kafaru

These women often appear to be wading through shallow coastal settings, suggesting a ceremonial or festive procession. Their steps are always coordinated and soft but they deliberately sway off their garments to convey rhythm, which is accompanied by unseen drumming and singing.

Digital Platforms and New Media Art — As time is evolving, new opportunities are emerging and strategically; Nigerian artists are now exposed to fresh technological advancement of this 21st century and this ere has given artists particularly painters the privilege to use digital tools to innovatively create, manipulate and sell or project their creativity, talent, enthusiasm, and intuition to the wider audience both locally and internationally through online platforms, virtual galleries, and social media. This contemporary technological setup has begun to redefine how art can be marketed, sold, and appreciated. In fact, social media networks like LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and art-focused website have become a global marketplace, and it is actively utilized as a swift social archive for the art market without relying solely on physical galleries (Deng, 2023).

Virtual and Augmented Reality — In the last few years of this decade artificial intelligence (AI) and other machine orientated technologies have taken control over all manual instruments; and are used swiftly to carrying out day-to-day activities across all facet of diverse disciplines, including the art. These machine-oriented technologies have opened new dimensions in the art world particularly in painting, graphics, and photography. Currently, majority of the young Nigerian painters are beginning to explore the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for generating concepts and ideas to create enticing artworks that allow viewers to experience art in innovative ways.



Figure 2: An example of an AI-generated Painting

Globalization — The profound impact of globalization on Nigerian painting is overwhelming; it has exposed artists (painters) to a wide range of incorporating the international standard styles and techniques alongside theirs; in the materialization of great works of art (Onwuagboke, *et al.* 2015). Therefore, while these painters maintain a unique Nigerian cultural identity, this cross-cultural exchange conclusively shall strengthen the foundation Nigerian art is built on, while leading them to adapt internationally.

International Exhibitions and Collaborations — A significant progress Nigeria painting experienced in this late 21st century is the exposure gained by showcasing artworks at international venues. This exposure promotes collaborations amongst artists around the world. These platforms also offer recognition and also encourage the habit of exchanging ideas and techniques (Momaa, 2023). To an extent, this opportunity has enriched the creative processes of Nigerian painters. Hence, international

exhibitions so far, have allowed Nigerian artist to reach a wider audience and colleagues and gain constructive critical acclaim that contributes to the global appreciation of Nigerian painting.

Identity and self-Expression — Identity or self-expression is literally a central theme in the face of Nigerian contemporary painting. However, artists must be able to explore personal and collective identities, which often reflect on their cultural heritage, gender, and social roles. Through their works, painters navigate questions of selfhood and belonging, creating prices that resonate with diverse audiences.

5. Conclusion

The paper is a discourse of the evolution of Nigerian painting, which is a reflection of her journey through tradition, colonialism, independence and modernization. Thus, it encompassed from the early

use of symbolic patterns in murals to the sophisticated fusion of cultural elements and global techniques — exposing to readers how Nigerian painting has developed into a unique and respected art form, stating how the pioneering contemporary artists, from the set of Aina Onabolu to Bruce Onobrakpeya's and this modern-day artists (painters), played significant roles in shaping this evolution, while also leaving a legacy that modern artist continue to build upon. Hence, the current trends and influences in Nigerian painting is a vibrant and dynamic art scene that continuously evolves in response to global and technological changes.

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