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Editorial

This issue of NIU *Journal of Humanities* touches on Development Administration, Educational Management, Religious Studies as well as Language and Literary Studies.

The first part of the Journal focuses on Development Administration. One of the papers in this section examines the problem of flooding in several communities in Niger State which is becoming more worrisome and provides efforts and strategies at reducing the impact have become more costly with unsatisfactory outcomes. Findings in the study reveal that various mitigation strategies have been used over the years but without much impact due to poor awareness and community engagement and responses during flood disasters. These consistent findings underscore the need for comprehensive community awareness, engagement and quick responses during flood disasters. It is further suggested that the communities should be productively engaged in the administration of the various flood mitigation strategies for quick and adequate responses during flood disasters.

The second part is on Language and Literary Studies. One the papers in this Section reveals that there are potential problems encountered by students in their bid to get or guess the correct French equivalent of Yoruba idiomatic expressions because of their background in the French language, their non-familiarity with the idiomatic expressions, poor knowledge of the French idiomatic expressions, the degree of the idiomacity. This paper therefore, recommends that there should be a course on French idioms that will expose learners the more to French culture, and conventional phrases that will improve their vocabularies.

One of the papers, in the third section on Educational Management, argues that the School Feeding Programme (SFP) has had a positive impact on pupil enrolment, attendance and academic performance, as perceived and affirmed by the pupils themselves, teachers, and parents. The study therefore, recommends government should ensure that there is an increase in the number and quality of teachers to accommodate the potential increase in enrolment. Additionally, there should be sufficient physical facilities, such as classrooms and other learning spaces, to avoid overcrowding and provide a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning.

Papers in the last section deals with issues in Religious Studies. One the papers in this Section investigates how Islamic principles, legal frameworks, and scholarly connections influenced foreign relations, alliances, and conflict resolution between Sokoto and other Hausa land such as Zauzau, Kano, Rano, Katsina, Daura and other Hausa States. And the Results indicate that Islam acted not only as a spiritual foundation but also as a diplomatic tool that validated authority, governed warfare through the jihad concept, and enabled peaceful resolutions. This paper therefore, suggests that modern African nations reconsider the ethical aspects of Islamic diplomatic

traditions such as justice, accountability, and peaceful conflict resolution to enhance contemporary methods of resolving disputes, fostering regional cooperation, and engaging in interfaith dialogue.

On the whole, 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

Development Administration



Assessment of the Structure, Conduct and Performance of Timber Markets in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract. The timber industry in Southwest Nigeria plays a vital role in socio-economic development, yet constrained by inadequate access to reliable and timely market information. This study assessed the structure, conduct and performance of timber marketing business in Southwest, Nigeria with a view to improve the performance of timber market in the region. Primary data were obtained from timber marketers across the six states of Southwest Nigeria, using structured questionnaires. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and the result was presented using tables and charts. Findings revealed that there was more male gender (62.8%) than female gender (37.2%) in timber marketing business in the region. The result of the ages of the respondents showed that 27.7% of the respondents were between the ages of 41-50, 26% were 51-60 years, 19.2% were 21-30, 16.1% were between 31-40 while 7.3% and 3.4% respectively of the respondents ages ranged between 60-70 years and above 70 years. There are diverse in size, specialisation, and market reach, with most operating through traditional marketing channels. Most timber marketers belonged to group of association and the association are paying vital roles in assisting their members. The Southwest Timber market is monopolistic in nature. It is recommended that effective Timber Marketing Information System be developed to enhance performance of timber marketing in Southwest, Nigeria in order to giving an easy access to vital timber marketing information.

Keywords: Assessment, Structure, Conduct, Performance, Timber market, Southwest, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Market structures are the specific social organizational relationship that exists between buyers and sellers in a

market. Many market participants are involved i.e. buyers and sellers, the good and service (i.e. the product) that are bought and sold are homogenous; that is to say, it is identical. However, the major characteristics that economists really focused on in describing the market structures are the nature of competition and the mode of pricing in that market. The market structure has influence greatly on the behaviour of individual traders in the market (Ajewole and Fasoro, 2013). Market structure refers to the social and economic organisation that exists between buyers and sellers in a given market. It describes how competitive the market is, based on factors such as the number of firms, the bargaining power of buyers and sellers, the level of competition and collusion, the degree of product differentiation, and how easy it is to enter or exit the market (Wikipedia, 2023). Market structure understanding is a good basis for market operation analysis, price setting and firm's behaviour. There are primarily four market structures or market models: Perfect Competition, Monopolistic Competition, Oligopoly, and Monopoly.

Market conduct is behavioural, that is, what the firms do with their prices, production levels, products, promotions, and other key operating variables (Greer, 1992). It focuses on how firms set prices either independently or collectively. MC is the typical strategies and behaviours adopted by firms as they respond to the conditions and dynamics of the markets in which they operate, whether as buyers or sellers. MC refers to the strategic behaviour firms adopt in determining prices, either individually or in coordination with others, as well as in setting advertising and research expenditure. It encompasses actions such as market sharing arrangements, pricing strategies, and efforts aimed at limiting competitors or

enhancing product quality (Acharya and Agarwal, 1999; Archrol, 1991).

Timber market performance can be described as how well the marketing system performs, what society and the market participants expect of it. While market structure and conduct describe how firms operate and interact within a market, market performance reflects the outcomes of these interactions and how effectively the market functions. According to Greece (1992), performance represents the achievements and responses generated within the market as a result of firms' behaviour. Carlton and Perloff (1994) further defined market performance as the market's ability to deliver consumer benefits efficiently. In this context, timber market performance refers to the effectiveness of the timber marketing system in meeting the expectations of both the society and market participants.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Study area

The South West is one of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, serving as both a geographical and administrative division. This region includes six states: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo (All News, 2021; My Guide Nigeria, 2023). The South-

West zone of Nigeria extends along the Atlantic coastline, starting from the border with the Republic of Benin in the west and reaching the South-South region in the east, with the North Central region lying to its north. The southernmost part features Central African mangrove ecosystems, while the interior consists primarily of the Nigerian lowland forest zones in the south and east, as well as the Guinea forest, savanna mosaic found in the more arid northwest. The region experiences two major seasons like the rest of Nigeria: the rainy season, which spans from March to November, and the dry season, which occurs from November to February. During the dry season, Harmattan winds, cold and dusty gusts from the Sahara, typically sweep through the southern areas (My Guide Nigeria, 2023). The South-West is predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group, with the region forming the core of Yorubaland, the cultural and ancestral homeland of the Yoruba people. This group represents the majority ethnic population in the zone. In terms of economic activity, urban centers like Lagos and Ibadan are major contributors to Nigeria's economy, while the rural areas remain less developed. The South-West hosts over 50 million residents, accounting for more than 22% of the national population. Lagos stands out as the most populous city in the region, in Nigeria and across the entire African continent.



Figure 1: Map of the Study Area

2.2 Sampling Procedure and Sampling Technique

Proportionate to size sampling procedure was used to select 379 respondents from 1895 timber marketer's population using a 20% sampling intensity.

Table 1: Sampling procedures for Respondents in Southwest, Nigeria

States	Numbers of registered Timber marketers	20% sample
Oyo	300	60
Ogun	535	107
Osun	330	66
Lagos	200	40
Ekiti	280	56
Ondo	250	50
Total Sample	1895	379

Field Survey, 2025

2.3 Sources of Data and Instruments for Data Collection

Primary and Secondary data were used. The primary data was collected with the aid of a structured questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from relevant journals, literature, websites and reports, to complement the primary data.

2.4 Data Analysis

A total number of three hundred and seventy-nine (379) questionnaires were administered while 355 was retrieved and analysed. To investigate the structure, conduct and performance of Timber market in Nigeria, Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, Mean and Standard deviation) were used and the result was presented using tables and charts.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Timber Marketers in South-West, Nigeria

Understanding the socio-economic characteristics of timber marketers is fundamental to analysing their roles, decision-making patterns, and performance within the timber value chain. These characteristics offer insight into the demographic and economic profiles that influence marketing strategies and business sustainability.

Table 2: Socio-economic and operational Characteristics of the Timber Marketers in South-West, Nigeria

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent %
Gender	Male	223	62.8
	Female	132	37.2
	Total	355	100.0
Age	Less than 20	1	3.0
	21-30	68	19.2
	31-40	57	16.1
	41-50	98	27.7
	51-60	92	26.0
	61-70	26	7.3
	Above 70	12	3.4
	No response	1	3.0
	Total	355	100.0
Estimate Income level	N100,000-200,000	87	24.5
	N201,000-300,000	56	15.8
	N301,000-400,000	41	11.5
	N401,000-500,000	66	18.6
	Above N500,000	91	25.6
	No response	14	3.9
Total	355	100.0	
Have other Sources of Income?	Yes	144	40.6
	No	211	59.4
	Total	355	100.0
Other sources of livelihood	Artisanship	18	5.1
	Building Contracting	37	10.4
	Furniture making	7	2.0

		Trading other products	62	17.5
		Farming	10	2.8
		No response	221	62.2
		Total	355	100.0
Languages Spoken by the Respondents	Yoruba	Yes	355	100.0
		No	0	0
		Total	355	100.0
	English	Yes	173	48.7
		No	180	50.7
		No response	2	0.6
		Total	355	100.0
	Hausa	Yes	9	2.5
		No	344	96.9
		No response	2	0.6
	Total	355	100.0	
Igbo	Yes	7	2.0	
	No	346	97.4	
	No response	2	0.6	
	Total	355	100.0	
Pidgin	Yes	93	26.2	
	No	260	73.2	
	No response	2	0.6	
	Total	355	100.0	
Academic Qualifications of Respondents		No formal Education	9	2.5
		Adult literacy Class	10	2.8
		Quar'anic education	11	3.1
		Pry Sch Cert	45	12.7
		Sec Sch Cert	181	51.0
		OND/HND/NCE	73	20.6
		Univ. Degree	26	7.3
		Total	355	100.0
Types of Information Technology/System	Mobile phone	Yes	347	97.7
		No	8	2.3
		Total	355	100.0
	Laptop	Yes	26	7.3
		No	329	92.7
		Total	355	100.0
	Internets	Yes	61	17.2
		No	294	82.8
		Total	355	100.0
	Library	Yes	3	8.0
No		352	99.2	
	Total	355	100.0	
Proficiency of the Respondents at using information technology		Novice	20	5.6
		Intermediate	266	75.0
		Highly proficient	69	19.4
		Total	355	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 showed the socio-economic characteristics of the Timber marketers in Southwest, Nigeria. The table revealed that 62.8% of the respondents were male while 37.2% were female. This showed that there were more of male gender than female gender in the plank markets in south-West, Nigeria. The observed gender

distribution indicated a notable presence of women in a sector traditionally dominated by men. While men continue to constitute the majority, the substantial involvement of women reflects evolving dynamics in the industry. This corroborates Falana *et al.*, (2023) which says there were more of male gender than

female in planks marketing business, pointing women to be usually involved in domestic works. Historically, timber marketing in Nigeria has been predominantly male oriented, attributed to the physically demanding nature of the work. According to the findings of Olawumi and Okunlola, (2015); Alawode *et al.* (2023), majority of people in sawmilling/planks related business were male. The result of the ages of the respondents showed that 27.7% of the respondents were between the ages of 41-50, 26% were 51-60 years, 19.2% were 21-30, 16.1% were between 31-40 while 7.3% and 3.4% respectively of the respondents ages ranged between 60-70 years and above 70 years. This result showed that the respondents were within the active age-group and were agile and resilient to stress, and source for income for livelihood sustenance. This pattern suggested that timber marketing is predominantly practiced by mature adults, many of whom are likely to have accumulated relevant experience and capital over time. This aligns with the findings which consistently show that middle-aged and older individuals dominate the timber trade in Nigeria and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. According to Alawode *et al.* (2023), most timber marketers fell within the 41–60 years' age range, indicating that experience and established networks play a critical role in sustaining participation in the sector. Also, Salawu (2001) and Okunlola *et al.* (2023) noted that individuals between the ages of 31 and 50 represent the most active and productive workforce in agriculture and forestry-related activities. Okumadewa *et al.* (2000) observed that individuals aged 40 to 50 are generally productive due to their physical capacity and work experience.

For the estimate income level of the respondents, it is revealed that majority (25.6%) of the respondents had an estimate monthly income level of above N500,000, 24.5% had estimate income level of N100,000 - 200,000, followed by 18.6% having an estimate of N401,000 -500,000 while the least was 11.5% with estimate monthly income of between 301,000-400,000. From this analysis, it is deduced that Timber marketing business is a lucrative job and it is a very good source of income for livelihood in the South-West, Nigeria capable of yielding high monthly income especially for those with established networks and experience in trade. The economic potential of timber marketing has been documented in prior research by Falana *et al.* (2023) and Idoko (2024) that marketers reported timber trading as a primary source of income capable of supporting household expenditures, education and capital investment. This aligns with the conclusions of Adedokun *et al.*, (2017); Ohwo and Ogoha, (2017) and Aremu *et al.* (2015) who

all emphasised that sawnwood production across major sawmills remains a highly lucrative venture as it is a business with high rates of financial returns on investment, particularly when marketers are involved in both wholesale and retail distribution (Areo *et al.* 2024). Many (59.4%) of the respondents had no other sources of livelihood, while 40.6% had other sources of income other than timber marketing business. Since many of the respondents did not have other sources of income, this can be attributed to the profitability of the business. Since many of the respondents did not have other sources of livelihood aside from timber marketing business, the few ones that has were still into timber (forestry) related business. The engagement of timber marketers in ancillary economic activities such as furniture production and building contracting constitutes a form of horizontal and vertical integration within the timber industry. Furniture making is a logical and economically viable extension of timber marketing. Mbereyaho *et al.* (2019) emphasizes timber's structural utility, environmental sustainability, and adaptability, positioning it as a core material in both residential and commercial construction projects.

The educational background of timber marketers in Southwest Nigeria presents a diverse but largely basic qualification structure. The majority of respondents (51%) possessed secondary school certificates, indicating that most participants had completed basic formal education. Additionally, 20.6% had post-secondary qualifications such as Ordinary National Diploma (OND), Higher National Diploma (HND), or Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). A smaller segment (12.7%) had only primary education, while others had Qur'anic education (3.1%), adult literacy education (2.8%), and no formal education at all (2.5%). These findings suggested that timber marketing in Southwest Nigeria is accessible to individuals across various educational levels, but especially to those with at least basic education. The dominance of secondary-level education aligns with earlier research by Alawode *et al.* (2023), which reported that secondary school graduates form the bulk of timber traders in the Bodija timber market, Ibadan. This level of education is often sufficient for handling fundamental aspects of timber business operations, such as basic bookkeeping, customer relations, and understanding market dynamics. Although, formal education is not a prerequisite for venturing into timber marketing business, but it can provide an added advantage to those who possess it. So, the respondent's level of education is sufficient to influence their decision making in planks marketing business.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of the Structure and Conduct of timber marketers in South-west, Nigeria.

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage %
Year of establishment of business	1-5 years	14	3.9
	6-10 years	64	18.0
	11-15 years	60	16.9
	16-20 years	54	15.2
	Above 20 years	162	45.7
	No response	1	0.3
	Total	355	100.0
Operational business Capital	Less than N300,000	20	5.6
	N301,000-N500,000	38	10.7
	N501,000-1,000,000	82	23.1
	N1,000,001-N5,000,000	130	36.6
	Above N5,000,000	85	24.0
	Total	355	100.0
Scale of Business	Retail	35	9.9
	Wholesale	69	19.4
	Both	251	70.7
	Total	355	100.0
Type of Business Ownership	Corporate	35	9.9
	Sole ownership	288	81.1
	Cooperative Society	32	9.0
Employment Capacity	Total	355	100.0
	1 – 5	319	89.9
	6 – 10	31	8.7
	11-15	2	0.6
	Above 20	3	0.8
Monthly Profit Margin	Total	355	100.0
	Less than N100,000	87	24.5
	N101,000–N200,000	52	14.6
	N201,000–N300,000	63	17.7
	N301,000–N400,000	43	12.1
	N401,000–N500,000	43	12.1
	Above N500,000	56	15.8
	No response	11	2.5
	Total	355	100.0
Reason for Species demand in Market	Aesthetic Yes	81	17.2
	No	293	82.5
	No response	1	0.3
	Total	355	100.0
	Colour Yes	114	32.1
	No	241	67.9
	Total	355	100.0
	Strenght Yes	281	79.2
	No	74	20.8
	Total	355	100.0
Criteria for grading Sawn wood	Proportion of sapwood and heartwood (Colour) Yes	125	35.2
	No	230	64.8
	Total	355	100.0
	Presence of natural and milling defect Yes	161	45.4
	No	194	54.6
Total	355	100.0	
Have means of predicting Price change?	Yes	308	86.8
	No	47	13.2

	Total	355	100.0
If Yes, what are the means?	High transportation cost		
	Yes	209	58.9
	No	139	39.2
	No response	7	2.0
	Total	355	100.0
	When price of Petrol is Inflated	Yes	
	No	155	43.7
	No response	193	54.4
	Total	7	2.0
		355	100.0
	When price of other substitute is increased		
	Yes	44	12.4
	No	304	85.6
	No response	7	2.0
	Total	355	100.0
	When Electricity bill is increased	Yes	
	No	78	22.0
	No response	270	77.6
	Total	7	2.0
		355	100.0
Do you seek assistance from other marketers?	Yes	290	81.7
	No	65	18.3
	Total	355	100.0
Kind of Assistance rendered, if Yes	When demand is high.	242	68.2
	Low power supply	27	7.6
	Insufficient labour	48	13.5
	No response	38	10.7
	Total	355	100.0
If No, Why?	Sufficient man power	46	13.0
	No mass production	12	3.4
	Low demand for product	15	4.2
	High demand for man power	5	1.4
	No response	277	78.0
	Total	355	100.0
How often do you pay when assistance is requested?	Daily	129	36.3
	Weekly	57	16.1
	Monthly	58	16.3
	When need arise	22	6.2
	No response	89	25.9
	Total	355	100.0
Labour per person Payment	Less than N2500	95	26.8
	N2500-N3000	83	23.4
	N3001 – N5000	27	7.6
	Above N5000	65	18.3
	No response	85	24.0
	Total	355	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Tables 3 and 4 showed the descriptive analysis of the Structure, Conduct, and performance of timber marketers in South-west, Nigeria. The result in Table 3 showed that many of the respondents were established for not less than six to twenty years and above. A larger percentage (45.7%) of the responded had been in timber marketing business for above twenty (20) years, followed by six to ten years of establishment with 18% of the respondents, while

16.9.1% had been established for over 11-15 years, and 15.2% has been established for 16-20 years. This distribution suggested that majority of timber markets in the region are long-standing establishments, reflecting a mature and well-rooted sector within the local economy. Marketing experience is a vital attribute that prospective marketers must take into consideration before venturing into any business such as Timber marketing. It provides valuable insights into

the intricacies of trade as well as the activities involved (Busari *et al.* 2012; and Aremu *et al.* 2015). The longevity of these markets supported the findings of Olorunnisola (2023), who emphasized that Nigeria's wood industry has historically been a major contributor to economic development, with strong foundations laid during the colonial and immediate post-independence eras. The timber marketers long stay in business is a good prediction that the timber market recorded a greater success in timber marketing. This is in line with the data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, that, only 25% of new businesses stick around for 15 years above, and these statistics has been true for 30 years and can teach current and aspiring entrepreneurs one very important lesson and play a crucial role in long-term success (US Chamber of Commerce, 2023).

According to Okeleke (2020) and Sambe *et al.* (2022), timber marketing business is a capital intensive and a profitable business. In this study, 36.6% of the respondents was doing business with N1,000,001-N5,000,000, 24% was operating their business with above 5,000,000, 23.1% was trading with N501,000-N1,000,000 while 10.7% were doing business with N301,000-N500,000. This result showed that the respondents' day to day running cost is not lesser than between N300,000 and N500,000 which is quite fair, with a profit margin of between N101,000 – N 200,000 monthly. The analysis of operational capital among timber marketers in the study area revealed key insights into the financial dynamics and ownership structures that characterised this informal sector. The data indicated that 36.6% of respondents are actively engaged in doing business, suggesting a moderate level of participation in consistent operational activities. This aligns with the findings of Ariyo and Jerome (2005), who noted that limited capital access and informal institutional support often constrain broader business participation in Nigeria's SME sector. Furthermore, a notable 24% of the marketers operate with an operational capital exceeding ₦500,000. This subset likely represents the more established or better-resourced entrepreneurs within the timber trade, who may have stronger linkages to supply chains, greater market access, or diversified client bases. This finding supports Owolabi and Makinde's (2012) argument that, access to capital significantly influences firm performance and the ability to scale operations.

Ownership structure in the sector is predominantly skewed towards sole proprietorship, with 81.1% of timber businesses being solely owned. This is consistent with Ekong (2010), who found that sole ownership remains a dominant feature of informal

rural enterprises due to ease of operation and minimal bureaucratic overhead. However, the dominance of this ownership type may limit formalisation and access to credit, as Lawal and Alabi (2007) argued that institutional financing is more readily accessible to formally registered and jointly owned businesses. Planks marketing business is a capital consuming business which called for the Government in supporting the marketers as they needed support to device a way of getting soft loans either from the State or Federal Government so as to ensure smooth running of their business with high profits, the higher the operational capital, the higher the profit will be.

The scale of Timber marketing business in South-West, Nigeria is both wholesales and retails with majority (81.1%) of the marketers to be sole ownership, with 89.9% of the marketers having an employment capacity of 1-5 people. This suggests that the timber marketing sector in the region is predominantly composed of micro and small enterprises, which tends to align with the findings of Alawode *et al.* (2024), who observed that timber markets, such as Bodija Sawn wood market in Ibadan, Oyo State are primarily operated by small scale enterprises. These businesses often rely on family labour and a limited number of hired workers, reflecting the informal nature of the sector. Further supporting this observation, Babatunde *et al.* (2020) noted that in the timber markets of Ife East Local Government, Osun State, the majority of businesses are small-scale operations with minimal staffing levels. The predominance of small-scale operations in the timber marketing sector has implications for employment generation and economic development. While these enterprises provide essential employment opportunities, their limited scale may restrict their capacity to contribute significantly to broader economic growth.

In the timber markets of South-west, Nigeria, grading of sawn wood is a critical process that influences market value, usability, and consumer preference. The grading criteria were primarily based on two factors: Proportion of sapwood and heartwood (Colour) and Presence of natural and milling defects. A larger proportion (45.4%) of the respondent's grade sawnwood based on the presence of natural and milling defects. Defects such as knots, splits, shakes, and warping can significantly reduce the mechanical strength and aesthetic appeal of timber, thereby affecting its timber value (NHL, 2019, p.29). Kargbo *et al.* (2022) emphasised that such defects, often resulting from improper processing and handling, lead to a decrease in timber quality and consumer acceptance. Also, Rotowa *et al.* (2017) noted that in

Nigeria, grading standards are heavily influenced by visible defects, with defect-free timbers commanding higher prices. Approximately 35.2% of the timber marketers' grade sawn wood by assessing the proportion of sapwood to heartwood. Heartwood being the older, central part of the tree, is typically more durable and resistant to decay, making it preferable for structural applications. In contrast, Sapwood is the younger, outer layer that is more susceptible to insect attacks and decay. The colour differentiation between these two: heartwood darker and sapwood lighter and they serve as a visual cue for grading. This practice aligns with findings by Arisandi, (2021), who noted that heartwood's higher content contributes to its durability and desirability in construction. Understanding these grading criteria is essential for stakeholders in the timber industry to ensure quality control, meet market demands, and enhance the economic value of timber products.

There were means of price prediction change in the study area. The ability to anticipate price changes is a vital skill for timber marketers, especially in dynamic markets where input costs and external economic variables fluctuate frequently. In this study, a significant proportion (86.8%) of timber marketers in South-west, Nigeria indicated that they had means of predicting price changes in the timber market. Transportation (58.9%) remains one of the most critical cost components influencing timber prices. As pointed out by Ajani and Ofoegbu (2011, p.132), fluctuations in transportation costs, especially over poor road networks typical in many parts of Nigeria, directly impact the final market price of timber products. Rising transport costs due to distance, fuel scarcity, and vehicle maintenance issues often result in immediate timber price adjustments. Fuel price increases (43.7%) were cited as a strong predictor of timber price changes. The Nigerian economy's dependency on petroleum products makes timber marketing highly sensitive to petrol price volatility (Ariyo and Jerome, 2005, p. 17). Higher petrol prices escalate transportation, milling, and distribution costs, thereby exerting upward pressure on timber prices. Also, 22% of the respondents pointed electricity to be a determinant factor in timber price changes as electricity is critical for sawmilling operations. According to Oyediran and Olayemi (2014, p. 78), irregular power supply and rising electricity tariffs increase production costs, which are subsequently transferred to the market price of sawn wood and other timber products. Substitutes (12.4%), such as steel, cement, and aluminum also affect timber market

dynamics. When prices of substitutes rise, demand for timber (a relatively cheaper alternative) increases, creating an upward pressure on timber prices. This substitution effect has been well documented in the Nigerian construction sector (Rotowa *et al.* 2017, p. 74). The high predictive ability among timber marketers reflects their accumulated market experience and adaptability to Nigeria's economic fluctuations. Their ability to link macroeconomic variables such as fuel prices, transport costs, and substitute goods' prices to timber market trends is crucial for maintaining competitiveness and profitability in a volatile economic environment.

The dynamic nature of timber marketing in South-west, Nigeria often necessitates collaboration among marketers, particularly during periods of high demand or operational constraints. In this study, 81.7% of respondents sought assistance from other timber marketers, while 18.3% did not. Among those who sought assistance, several key reasons for assistance were highlighted: High Demand for Products (68.2%), Low Power Supply (7.6%), and Insufficient Labor (13.5%). Labor shortages, whether seasonal or unexpected, often push marketers to seek external assistance to maintain workflow continuity. The request for assistance is usually on a daily basis with payment of less than N2,500. According to Oladejo and Oladipo, (2011), manpower availability is a critical determinant of productivity in the Nigerian informal sector, including timber processing and marketing. Labor shortages, whether seasonal or unexpected, often push marketers to seek external assistance to maintain workflow continuity. According to Oladejo and Oladipo, (2011), manpower availability is a critical determinant of productivity in the Nigerian informal sector, including timber processing and marketing. Conversely, 18.3% of respondents reported not seeking external assistance, citing several reasons such as Sufficient manpower (Some timber marketers possess enough internal labor capacity to handle operational demands without requiring external help: this internal resource sufficiency is a hallmark of resilient small businesses (Ariyo and Jerome, 2005), Low production volume (Marketers engaged in relatively low-volume or specialized production activities often manage independently, reducing the need for collaborative support.), and low product demand (When market demand is weak, there is little operational pressure necessitating additional assistance, consistent with business cycle theories where resource mobilization matches demand levels (Storey, 1994)

Table 4: Marketing Performance and Institutional Conduct of Timber Marketers in South-west, Nigeria

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage %	
Annual Rent Pay	Less than N30,000	170	47.8	
	N30,000-50,000	76	21.4	
	N51,000- N70,000	21	5.9	
	N71,000-N80,000	13	3.7	
	Above N80,000	68	19.2	
	No response	7	2.0	
	Total	355	100.0	
Additional Payment	Yes	284	80.0	
	No	68	19.2	
	No response	3	0.8	
	Total	355	100.0	
If Yes, what purpose?	Fueling Yes	37	10.4	
	No	308	86.8	
	No response	10	2.8	
		Total	355	100
	Maintenance of machine Yes			
	No	73	20.6	
	No response	279	78.6	
		Total	3	0.8
		355	100.0	
	Electricity Yes	143	40.5	
	No	209	58.9	
	No response	3	0.6	
		Total	355	100.0
	Security bills Yes	223	62.8	
	No	129	36.3	
No response	3	0.9		
	Total	355	100.0	
Years in Business of Timber Marketing	Less than 5 Years	37	10.4	
	6 - 10 Years	53	15.0	
	11 - 15 Years	49	13.8	
	16 - 20 Years	54	15.2	
	Above 20 Years	145	40.8	
	No response	17	4.8	
	Total	355	100.0	
Supply of Timber	Regular	172	48.4	
	Irregular	180	50.7	
	No response	3	0.9	
	Total	355	100.0	
Causes of Irregular Supply	Lack of fund. Yes	83	23.4	
	No	132	37.2	
	No response	140	39.4	
		Total	355	100.0
	Inaccessibility to forest.			
	Yes	67	18.9	
	No	145	40.8	
	No response	143	40.3	
		Total	355	100.0
	Problems of transportation Yes			
	No	65	18.3	
	No response	154	43.4	
	Total	136	38.3	
	355	100 .0		
Government policies.				
Yes	62	17.5		
No	158	44.5		
No response	135	38.0		
	Total	355	100.0	
Satisfied with returns?	Yes	194	54.6	
	No	161	45.4	
	Total	355	100.0	

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If No, Why?	High cost of raw materials	Yes		
		No	41	11.6
		No response	178	50.1
		Total	136	38.3
			355	100.0
	High cost of machine			
		Yes	11	3.1
		No	206	58.0
		No response	138	38.9
		Total	355	100.0
	Insufficient fund			
		Yes	76	21.4
		No	141	39.7
		No response	138	38.9
		Total	355	100.0
	Lack of Credit facilities			
		Yes	64	18.0
		No	155	43.7
		No response	136	38.3
		Total	355	100.0
Are you part of any Association?		Yes	337	94.9
		No	18	5.1
		Total	355	100.0
Are there dues attached to being a member?		Yes	321	90.4
		No	27	7.6
		No response	7	2.0
		Total	355	100.0
Any challenge with the dues payment?		Yes	80	22.5
		No	275	77.5
		Total	355	100.0
Roles of Association	Guide the determination of price			
		Yes	130	36.6
		No	223	62.8
		No response	2	0.6
		Total	355	100.0
	Determine who can sell sawnwood in the market			
		Yes	79	22.3
		No	276	77.7
		Total	355	100.0
	Assist members financially			
		Yes		
		No	133	37.5
		Total	222	62.5
			355	100.0
	Assist in getting supplies	Yes		
		No	81	22.8
		No response	272	76.6
		Total	2	0.6
			355	100.0
Any constitution association activities?	guiding	Yes	320	90.1
		No	22	6.2
		No response	13	3.7
		Total	355	100.0
How often do you meet?	Weekly		68	19.2
	Fortnightly		157	44.2

Monthly	69	19.4
Bi-monthly	25	7.0
As the need arise	29	8.2
No response	7	2.0
Total	355	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 shows the Marketing Performance and Institutional Conduct of Timber Marketers in South-west, Nigeria. Cost of business premises and overhead expenses are crucial determinants of the profitability and sustainability of small-scale enterprises, especially in informal sectors like timber marketing. In this study, the annual rent paid by timber marketers varied significantly: 47.8% paid less than ₦30,000, 21.4% paid between ₦30,001 and ₦50,000, and 19.2% paid up to ₦80,000. This variation in rental cost likely reflected differences in market locations, accessibility, and market prominence. Timber markets located in urban or high-traffic zones tend to attract higher rent due to commercial advantages, as supported by Akinrinmade and Akinbola (2015), who found that shop rent is a major cost burden for small traders in densely populated commercial centers of Nigeria. Moreover, informal sector businesses often rent spaces without formal lease agreements, leading to inconsistent pricing and vulnerability to arbitrary rent hikes. According to Olatunji and Adepoju, (2014), the absence of tenancy regulation in informal markets often leads to exploitation by landlords or market associations, which negatively affects the capital retention of small-scale traders.

Beyond rental costs, timber marketers also reported other recurrent overheads, with: 62.8% incurring security expenses, 40.5% paying for electricity, 20.6% on maintenance of machines and 10.4% on fueling. Security costs are common in Nigerian open markets, especially where public policing is weak. Traders often contribute to local vigilante groups or hire private guards to protect goods and infrastructure. Rotowa *et al.* (2017) noted that, informal traders in Lagos and Ibadan markets frequently organise self-help security to mitigate theft and market fire risks due to inadequate public safety systems. Similarly, electricity costs also constitute a notable extra bill. Given that many timber processors use electrical tools or depend on cold storage, any interruption in power supply affects operations, leading to the additional cost of alternative sources such as generators, incurring payment on fuels to power the generators. This aligns with Oyediran and Olayemi's (2014) findings that poor power supply significantly increases operational costs in the sawmilling and timber industry in Nigeria.

Regularities in the supply of timber in the study areas were investigated. Timber supply consistency is a crucial element in ensuring business stability and meeting customer demand within the timber marketing sector. Supply consistency is critical for the sustainability of timber marketing, influencing both operational planning and market reliability. In this study, timber marketers in South-west, Nigeria reported varying perceptions regarding timber supply regularity: 48.4% of respondents reported regular supply, 50.7% reported irregular supply, and 0.9% was silent about their perception. This near-even split indicated that timber supply is perceived as unstable by the majority, which poses significant risks to business continuity. Such irregularity in supply can disrupt business operations, increase transaction costs, and reduce profit margins. This corroborated with the findings of Onyekwelu *et al.* (2010), who observed that the informal timber market in Nigeria often suffers from unpredictable supply chains, primarily due to inconsistent access to forest resources and market logistics. Respondents who identified irregularity in timber supply attributed it to various systemic and environmental factors such as Lack of funds (23.4%), transportation problems (18.3%), Inaccessibility to forest areas (18.3%), and Government policies (17.5%). Lack of capital limits the ability of marketers to purchase and stock timber in advance. This confirms Ariyo and Jerome's (2005), findings who emphasised that limited access to formal financing inhibits the capacity of small-scale enterprises to maintain steady inventories. In the context of timber marketing, insufficient capital restricted the ability of traders to procure raw logs or process timber in advance, making their supply highly dependent on spot transactions. Transportation challenges, reported by 18.3% of respondents, are equally critical. Poor road networks especially in forest hinterlands exacerbate delays and raise the cost of timber logistics. According to Ehiaghe and Oduguwa (2016), many timber suppliers in southern Nigeria face delays and timber damage due to bad access roads, particularly during the rainy season. These challenges reduce the efficiency of the supply chain and discourage regular delivery of timbers. Inaccessibility to forests is another critical factor. Poor rural infrastructure, seasonal rainfall patterns, and insecurity in forest areas hamper transportation and timber extraction (Ogunwusi and Onwualu, 2013).

Government regulations, including logging moratoria, forest access restrictions, and environmental conservation policies, also play a significant role. While these policies aim at ensuring sustainable forest management, they can unintentionally constrain supply if not harmonized with local economic realities (Nduwamungu and Akinyemi, 2017). For instance, permit delays or sudden enforcement of logging bans can lead to supply shortfalls, particularly affecting informal traders who lack lobbying power.

Associations and cooperative societies play a pivotal role in organising informal market participants in Nigeria, especially within sectors like timber marketing. In this study, an overwhelming 94.9% of respondents were registered members of timber marketing associations, and 90.4% of these members regularly paid dues. Notably, 77.5% of the members indicated that the financial contributions made to these associations were not considered burdensome, reflecting a positive cost-benefit perception of membership, indicating that the marketers got values for the dues they paid to the association. Associations function as regulatory and support institutions within the timber market. Marketers ought to belong to an association for them to carry out their businesses without any disturbance as the role of association cannot be under estimated for members. According to the data analysed, key roles played by associations include: Guiding price determination (36.6%), Controlling market access (i.e., deciding who can sell) (22.3%), Providing financial assistance to members (37.5%), and Supporting members in sourcing timber supplies (22.8%). These findings are consistent with the work of Ekong (2010), who emphasized the role of informal institutions in facilitating market efficiency and conflict resolution in rural enterprises. Associations often serve as intermediaries between government regulation and market participants, helping to enforce norms, share information, and provide welfare support. Ogunleye and Adepoju (2011) further argued that associations in the Nigerian forestry sector act as informal governance bodies, setting rules that improve transparency in pricing, encourage ethical trading practices, and assist in collective bargaining, especially in markets where formal enforcement mechanisms are weak. Moreover, the supportive roles, such as offering financial aid and helping members access supply chains, align with findings from Adewumi and Omotesho (2002), who documented the importance of cooperative societies in enabling access to credit, resources, and technical assistance among agricultural marketers.

Investigation was made on knowing if the timber marketers in the study area had constitutions guiding

their association, the marketers (90.1%) affirmed that there were constitutions and that they also had days of meeting. This agreed to the rules guiding association by Justice connects (2024) that any incorporated associations must have a governing document called a 'constitution' or 'rules' that sets out the roadmap for how the association will operate. The organisational structure and governance systems within timber marketers' associations in Southwest Nigeria reveal a strong presence of institutionalised conduct that significantly influences market performance. The presence of a constitution indicates the transition from informal to semi-formal market governance, a feature that aligns with the Structure-Conduct-Performance (SCP) paradigm in industrial organization theory. The SCP framework, as described by Bain (1959) and later adapted for informal markets by Shepherd (1990), posits that structured governance such as constitutions and internal regulations, leads to more predictable conduct and ultimately enhances performance outcomes in terms of stability, efficiency, and equity in terms of conduct. The frequency of meetings also serves as an important indicator of association vibrancy and engagement.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study investigated the Structure, Conduct, and Performance of Timber Markets in South-west Nigeria. Major timber markets in the State capital of each of Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Lagos and Ogun states were identified and assessment was done on their structure, Conduct and performance with a view to provide a sustainable plank marketing system in Southwest, Nigeria. Analysis of the structure and conduct of timber marketing revealed strong association-based governance, regular meeting schedules, and indications of well-established trade practices. The Southwest timber market is monopolistic in nature. Performance was influenced by both internal organisation and external challenges.

It is recommended that Timber Marketing Information System is developed and accessible for Timber users, this development will enhance an effective performance of Timber marketing business in the Southwest, Nigeria

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Youth-Led Initiative in Re-Building Education in Crises Zone: Challenges and Innovation (A Case Study of Borno State, Nigeria)

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Abstract. The study examined Youth-led initiative in re-building education in crises zone: challenges and innovation. Three objectives guided the study. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprises youth leaders, volunteers, NGO staff, educators, and beneficiaries involved in youth-led education initiatives in Borno State. The population of the study is 350 youths. A sample size of 200 respondents was drawn from the target population using a purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. The instrument for Data Collection was questionnaire. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). Data was collected using Kobo Collect, a digital data-gathering tool developed for field-based research in humanitarian and development settings. The questionnaire was designed and uploaded to the KoboToolbox server, which allowed respondents' information to be collected efficiently using smartphones or tablets. The instrument was validated by experts in Adult and Non-Formal Education and Educational Research from the University of Maiduguri. Reliability coefficient of .849 was obtained for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient method. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. Findings from the study shows that; Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) plays an important role in rebuilding education and promoting youth participation in crisis-affected areas of Borno State. The organization enhances educational opportunities for vulnerable and displaced youths through literacy, skills training, and mentorship programs. Innovative approaches such as digital learning, community-based education, and psychosocial interventions are key strategies used by CATAI to sustain learning. Based on the findings of

the study, the following recommendations were made; The Borno State Government and the Federal Ministry of Education should provide financial, logistic, and policy support to youth-led organizations like CATAI. CATAI should invest in continuous capacity development for its staff and volunteers in areas such as digital pedagogy, psychosocial care, monitoring and evaluation, and humanitarian education management to improve program delivery. Development partners, donor agencies, and private organizations should collaborate with CATAI to establish long-term funding mechanisms that ensure sustainability of youth-led education programs beyond short-term humanitarian cycles.

Keywords: Youth-led, Initiative, Re-building, Education, Crises Zone, Challenges, Innovation

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and a critical driver of peace, stability, and sustainable development. However, in many crisis-affected regions, education systems are often among the first casualties of conflict and displacement. The destruction of schools, loss of teachers, and disruption of learning environments leave millions of children and youth without access to quality education. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2023), over 224 million children and adolescents globally are currently affected by conflict and humanitarian crises, with a significant proportion residing in sub-Saharan Africa. In these fragile contexts, education not only provides cognitive development but also serves as a protective mechanism, offering psychosocial support and a sense of normalcy to affected populations (UNICEF, 2022). The urgent need to restore and reimagine education in crisis zones has therefore become a global priority.

In recent years, youth-led initiatives have emerged as powerful agents in rebuilding education systems within crisis-affected communities. Young people, particularly those directly impacted by conflict and displacement, are increasingly taking leadership roles in designing, implementing, and advocating for educational recovery programs (Save the Children, 2021). Youth engagement brings creativity, contextual understanding, and community trust, which are essential in addressing educational disruptions where conventional state or international interventions are often limited. Studies have shown that youth-led organizations often succeed in reaching marginalized groups and innovating local solutions, including mobile learning, peer tutoring, and community-based education models (Global Partnership for Education [GPE], 2022). These initiatives highlight the transformative potential of youth leadership in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all, even in fragile and emergency settings like the one of Borno state.

Crisis zones, such as those in Northeast Nigeria, Syria, Yemen, and parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, illustrate how protracted conflict can devastate educational infrastructure and opportunities. In Nigeria, the decade-long Boko Haram insurgency has destroyed thousands of schools and displaced millions of learners, particularly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Despite such devastation, youth organizations and local volunteers have initiated informal learning centers, digital literacy programs, and psychosocial support groups to sustain education among displaced and conflict-affected children. For instance, community-based youth movements have collaborated with humanitarian partners to develop flexible learning schedules and low-cost digital tools that allow children to continue learning despite insecurity (Plan International, 2021). These local innovations underscore the resilience and agency of youth in rebuilding education systems from the grassroots level.

Nevertheless, youth-led education initiatives in crisis zones face numerous challenges that constrain their reach and sustainability. Limited funding, lack of technical training, insecurity, and weak institutional support are persistent barriers (Norwegian Refugee Council [NRC], 2021). Additionally, young leaders often struggle with legitimacy and access to formal decision-making spaces, which hinders their capacity to scale up successful models. Gender-based discrimination and socio-cultural barriers further limit the participation of young women in leadership roles

within education recovery efforts (UN Women, 2022). Despite these challenges, the resilience and innovation demonstrated by youth-led movements continue to attract international attention as effective, community-driven models for education recovery. Understanding the dynamics of these challenges and the innovative strategies developed to overcome them is crucial for policy and programmatic support.

The Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) plays a critical role in promoting access to education and rebuilding efforts among youths in crisis-affected areas of Borno State by creating safe learning spaces and advocating for inclusive education policies. Through its community-driven programs, CATAI empowers displaced youths to participate in literacy, peacebuilding, and civic engagement, aligning with findings that youth-led interventions are pivotal in restoring education in conflict zones (UNICEF, 2022; Save the Children, 2021; GPE, 2022; NRC, 2021). CATAI's initiatives in Maiduguri have significantly enhanced educational opportunities for vulnerable youths by facilitating vocational training, leadership development, and community learning hubs for internally displaced persons. This reflects broader evidence that locally rooted, youth-led organizations improve educational access and resilience in fragile settings where formal systems remain weak (Plan International, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2022; UNESCO, 2023; CATAI, 2024). The organization has also adopted innovative approaches such as mobile learning platforms, psychosocial support, and digital literacy programs to sustain education amid ongoing insecurity. These innovations correspond with global best practices showing that technology-driven, community-based education models enhance learning continuity and inclusion in humanitarian contexts (UNESCO, 2023; UNICEF, 2022; GPE, 2022; Plan International, 2021).

Some demographic groups are more vulnerable to having their education disrupted by emergencies than others (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2020). Based on this analysis, the five groups that were affected in most of the reviewed countries were children from low socioeconomic status households, girls, children with disability, refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons, and children living in rural or remote areas.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In many crisis-affected regions, particularly in Northeast Nigeria and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the prolonged effects of conflict, insurgency,

and displacement have severely disrupted educational systems, leaving millions of children and youth without access to quality learning opportunities. Despite efforts by governments and humanitarian agencies, the destruction of school infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, and persistent insecurity continue to hinder the restoration of formal and non-formal education. In response, youth-led initiatives have emerged as vital grassroots efforts to rebuild education through community-based learning, digital innovation, and advocacy. However, these initiatives face critical challenges such as inadequate funding, limited institutional recognition, lack of technical support, and threats to the safety of young volunteers. The exact problem this study seeks to address is the limited understanding of how youth-led initiatives function in rebuilding education in crisis zones, the specific challenges they encounter, and the innovative strategies they employ to sustain learning amid instability. Without empirical insight into these dynamics, policy frameworks and educational recovery programs risk overlooking the transformative potential of youth leadership in post-conflict education reconstruction.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to examine:

- the role of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in promoting access to education rebuilding efforts among youths in crisis-affected areas of Borno State.
- the contributions of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in enhancing educational opportunities for vulnerable youths in Maiduguri and its environs.
- the innovative approaches adopted by the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in sustaining education through humanitarian interventions and digital learning platforms in conflict-affected communities of Borno State.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were answered:

- What is the role of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in promoting access to education rebuilding efforts among youths in crisis-affected areas of Borno State.

- What are the contributions of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in enhancing educational opportunities for vulnerable youths in Maiduguri and its environs.
- What are the approaches adopted by the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in sustaining education through humanitarian interventions in conflict-affected communities of Borno State.

2. Literature Review

Ibrahim and Goni (2023) conducted a study in Borno State, Nigeria, to examine the role of youth-led organizations in rebuilding education systems and promoting community resilience in crisis-affected areas. The study focused on the operations of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) and other youth-based organizations working in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and host communities across Maiduguri Metropolitan Council and Jere Local Government Area. A total of 250 respondents participated in the study, comprising youth volunteers, program facilitators, NGO coordinators, and beneficiaries of CATAI's education recovery projects. The researchers employed a mixed-method approach, using both quantitative and qualitative instruments, including structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and emerging themes related to challenges and innovations in youth-led education. The findings revealed that youth-led initiatives significantly contributed to rebuilding education by reopening temporary learning centers, providing literacy and vocational training, and promoting peace education among displaced populations. The study also found that youth organizations faced challenges such as limited funding, insecurity, and lack of institutional support, but overcame many obstacles through community partnerships, digital learning programs, and peer mentoring. Ibrahim and Goni concluded that youth-led interventions like those of CATAI play a critical role in educational recovery and should be integrated into formal education-in-emergencies frameworks at both state and national levels.

Theoretical work on participatory and community-based education further highlights that youth leadership aligns with principles of resilience and

rights-based education, promoting inclusion, gender sensitivity, and locally appropriate pedagogies (Brookfield, 2020; UNICEF, 2022). Together, these sources position youth-led approaches not merely as stop-gap measures but as potentially transformative elements of longer-term education recovery and system strengthening in crisis settings.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. This design is suitable because it allows the researcher to gather data on the activities, challenges, and innovations of youth-led organizations such as the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) and other youth-focused NGOs operating in Borno State. The study was conducted in Borno State, Nigeria, one of the states most affected by insurgency and humanitarian crises in the North-East region. Borno State is selected because it hosts a large number of youth-led and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actively engaged in education recovery and community rebuilding efforts. Maiduguri, the state capital, serves as the operational hub for many initiatives such as CATAI, Grassroot Learning and Empowerment Initiative (GLE-I), and Care Best Initiative (CBI). The study area is significant because it provides an ideal context to examine the contributions and challenges of youth-led organizations in re-establishing education in conflict-affected communities. The population of this study comprises youth leaders, volunteers, NGO staff, educators, and beneficiaries involved in youth-led education initiatives in Borno State. Specifically, the population includes staff and volunteers from CATAI, GLE-I, Care Best Initiative, and other active organizations participating in educational rebuilding efforts. The estimated population is approximately 350 individuals. A sample size of 200 respondents was

drawn from the target population using a purposive and stratified random sampling technique. The purposive sampling was used to select key organizations directly engaged in education recovery, while stratified random sampling was ensure that respondents are drawn from different categories including youth leaders, volunteers, facilitators, and beneficiaries. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). Data was collected using Kobo Collect, a digital data-gathering tool developed for field-based research in humanitarian and development settings. The questionnaire was designed and uploaded to the KoboToolbox server, which allowed respondents' information to be collected efficiently using smartphones or tablets. Enumerators were trained on how to administer the Kobo Collect form and ensure data accuracy and confidentiality. The use of Kobo Collect helped in minimize paper use, ensure real-time data entry, reduce errors, and enhance data security. The researcher and trained field assistants were visited the selected organizations and communities to administer the questionnaire both online and offline, depending on network availability. The instrument was subjected to content and face validation by three experts in Adult and Non-Formal Education and Educational Research from the University of Maiduguri. A pilot test was conducted in Jere Local Government Area of Borno State using 20 respondents who share similar characteristics with the main study population but are not part of it. The data collected from the pilot study was analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient, and a reliability value of 0.70 and above was considered accepted. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations was used to answer the research questions.

4. Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	107	57.8
	Female	78	42.2
Age	18–25 years	45	24.3
	26–35 years	81	43.8
	36–45 years	44	23.8
	46 years and above	15	8.1
	SSCE	28	15.1
Educational Qualification	NCE/Diploma	53	28.6
	Degree	79	42.7
	Postgraduate	25	13.6
Duration with CATAI	Less than 1 year	30	16.2
	1–3 years	99	53.5
	Over 3 years	56	30.3

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The demographic data indicate that both genders were well represented, with a slight male dominance (57.8%). The majority of respondents (43.8%) were aged between 26–35 years, suggesting active youth participation. Most respondents (42.7%) had at least a degree qualification, reflecting a knowledgeable and skilled workforce. Furthermore, over half of the respondents (53.5%) had been involved with CATAI for 1–3 years, showing substantial experience in youth-led education rebuilding.

Research Question One: *What is the role of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in promoting access to education rebuilding efforts among youths in crisis-affected areas of Borno State?*

Table 2: Statistical Analysis on the role of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in promoting access to education rebuilding efforts among youths in crisis-affected areas of Borno State

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	CATAI has re-established community learning centers in crisis-affected areas.	185	3.84	0.76	Agree
2	CATAI mobilized displaced children and youth back to school.	185	3.91	0.69	Agree
3	CATAI collaborates with agencies to rebuild schools and facilities.	185	3.76	0.81	Agree
4	CATAI provides training to enhance youth participation in education recovery.	185	3.79	0.78	Agree
5	CATAI's projects improved access to education for displaced youths.	185	3.88	0.73	Agree
6	Youth engagement through CATAI promotes peace and social cohesion.	185	3.95	0.71	Agree

Mean = 3.86

Table 2 presents the statistical analysis of respondents' views on the role of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in promoting access to education rebuilding efforts among youths in crisis-affected areas of Borno State. The data indicate that respondents generally agreed that CATAI plays a vital role in re-establishing education systems disrupted by insurgency and conflict. The mean scores of the items ranged between 3.76 and 3.95, with an overall cluster mean of 3.86, showing a strong consensus among respondents that CATAI's interventions have significantly improved access to learning opportunities for youths in displaced and conflict-affected communities.

Specifically, respondents agreed that CATAI has re-established community learning centers in crisis-prone areas and effectively mobilized displaced children and youth back to school. The organization's collaborative efforts with other NGOs and government agencies to rebuild educational infrastructure were also recognized as vital for restoring normalcy in affected areas. Furthermore, CATAI's initiatives to train and empower young people to participate in educational recovery programs were viewed as instrumental in enhancing community resilience and fostering peace education. The relatively low standard deviation values (ranging between 0.69 and 0.81) suggest consistency in the responses, indicating that most participants shared similar positive perceptions of CATAI's educational recovery role.

Research Question Two: *What are the contributions of CATAI in enhancing educational opportunities for vulnerable youths in Maiduguri and its environs?*

Table 3: Statistical Analysis on the contributions of CATAI in enhancing educational opportunities for vulnerable youths in Maiduguri and its environs

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	CATAI provides literacy and vocational training for vulnerable youths.	185	3.92	0.68	Agree
2	CATAI supports skill development programs for self-employment.	185	3.87	0.74	Agree
3	CATAI improves access to non-formal education for out-of-school youths.	185	3.78	0.80	Agree
4	CATAI provides educational materials and mentorship.	185	3.83	0.77	Agree
5	CATAI partners with community groups to expand learning opportunities.	185	3.75	0.83	Agree
6	CATAI's advocacy increases community awareness on youth education.	185	3.89	0.70	Agree

Mean = 3.84

Table 3 presents the statistical analysis of respondents' opinions on the contributions of the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in enhancing educational opportunities for vulnerable youths in Maiduguri and its environs. The results reveal that respondents generally agreed that CATAI has made substantial contributions to improving access to education for marginalized and displaced youth. The mean scores of the six items ranged between 3.75 and 3.92, with an overall cluster mean of 3.84, indicating a strong level of agreement across all measured indicators. This suggests that CATAI's programs have had a significant and positive influence on promoting literacy, vocational training, and self-reliance among youths affected by conflict in Borno State.

Respondents agreed most strongly that CATAI provides literacy and vocational training for vulnerable youths (Mean = 3.92) and supports skill development programs for self-employment (Mean = 3.87). These findings demonstrate that CATAI's educational interventions go beyond classroom instruction by equipping participants with livelihood skills

necessary for survival and economic independence. Similarly, items on mentorship (Mean = 3.83) and partnerships with community groups (Mean = 3.75) highlight the organization’s collaborative and holistic approach to educational empowerment. The low standard deviation values (ranging from 0.68 to 0.83) indicate consistency in respondents’ views, suggesting that most participants shared similar positive perceptions of CATAI’s contributions.

Research Question Three: *What approaches are adopted by CATAI in sustaining education through humanitarian interventions in conflict-affected communities of Borno State?*

Table 4: Statistical Analysis on approaches adopted by CATAI in sustaining education through humanitarian interventions in conflict-affected communities of Borno State

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	CATAI uses digital learning tools to reach remote learners.	185	3.80	0.79	Agree
2	CATAI integrates psychosocial support into education programs.	185	3.95	0.71	Agree
3	CATAI promotes community-based learning models during crises.	185	3.86	0.75	Agree
4	CATAI collaborates with donors to sustain innovative education projects.	185	3.77	0.82	Agree
5	Trained volunteers deliver emergency education in IDP camps.	185	3.90	0.72	Agree
6	CATAI monitors and evaluates education projects to ensure sustainability.	185	3.88	0.73	Agree

Mean = 3.86

Table 4 presents the statistical analysis of respondents’ views on the approaches adopted by the Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) in sustaining education through humanitarian interventions in conflict-affected communities of Borno State. The results indicate a strong level of agreement among respondents that CATAI employs innovative and sustainable strategies to ensure the continuity of learning in crisis environments. The mean scores of the items ranged from 3.77 to 3.95, with a cluster mean of 3.86, suggesting that the organization’s methods are widely perceived as effective and responsive to the educational needs of displaced and vulnerable learners. This finding demonstrates that CATAI’s intervention strategies are not only innovative but also community-centered, aligning with contemporary education-in-emergencies frameworks.

Respondents most strongly agreed that CATAI integrates psychosocial support into education programs (Mean = 3.95) and that trained volunteers deliver emergency education in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps (Mean = 3.90). These responses reflect CATAI’s emphasis on holistic learning that addresses both the educational and emotional needs of learners traumatized by conflict. Likewise, the organization’s adoption of digital learning tools (Mean = 3.80) and community-based learning models (Mean = 3.86) demonstrates its adaptability in using flexible approaches suited to volatile environments where formal schooling systems may be disrupted. The low standard deviation values (ranging from 0.71 to 0.82) indicate a high level of consistency in respondents’ views, confirming broad agreement on the effectiveness of these approaches.

5. Summary of Findings

CATAI plays an important role in rebuilding education and promoting youth participation in crisis-affected areas of Borno State.

The organization enhances educational opportunities for vulnerable and displaced youths through literacy, skills training, and mentorship programs.

Innovative approaches such as digital learning, community-based education, and psychosocial interventions are key strategies used by CATAI to sustain learning.

6. Discussion

The finding that CATAI is instrumental in restoring education and mobilizing youth echoes broader evidence showing that local youth-led organizations accelerate educational recovery after disruptions by establishing learning spaces and mobilizing learners (Plan International, 2021). Like CATAI, community-based youth groups in other conflict-affected settings have been shown to rapidly re-open informal learning centers and foster school re-entry through outreach and peer mobilisation (Save the Children, 2021). Global reviews also highlight that youth involvement enhances contextual legitimacy and trust, enabling programs to reach marginalized children that formal interventions sometimes miss (GPE, 2022). Similarly, UNICEF emphasizes that youth-led actions often deliver psychosocial and protective services alongside learning, which helps stabilize communities and supports return to school (UNICEF, 2022). Contrastingly, some evaluations indicate that while youth groups are highly effective at rapid-response activities, they may struggle with scale and long-term institutionalization without stronger partnerships and resources (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Research in Nigeria and other fragile contexts shows that NGO-led

youth initiatives succeed when integrated with formal recovery plans, yet often face sustainability challenges if donor support and government linkages are weak (NRC, 2021). Studies of local actors in North-East Nigeria further suggest that youth groups' contributions to rebuilding education are maximized when complemented by technical support, monitoring, and capacity building (Ibrahim & Goni, 2023). Thus, CATAI's documented role aligns with the literature but also underscores the common need for durable institutional backing to maintain long-term education recovery.

Finding that CATAI improves opportunities via literacy, vocational skill-building, and mentorship is consistent with empirical studies showing that non-formal education and skills training increase employability and household resilience among displaced populations (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2021). Evidence from program evaluations in Nigeria indicates that when literacy instruction is paired with livelihood skills, participants report higher income diversification and improved food security outcomes that mirror CATAI's reported impacts (Bala & Yusuf, 2022). International reviews also underscore that mentorship and life-skills components strengthen retention and psychosocial recovery, thereby improving educational outcomes for out-of-school youth (UNESCO, 2019). Likewise, Okoro and Ugwu (2020) found that integrated adult learning and vocational approaches translate into practical adoption of sustainable agricultural and livelihood practices among vulnerable groups.

However, comparative studies caution that the effectiveness of such interventions depends heavily on resources, facilitator quality, and linkage to markets or further education: programmes lacking these supports often show limited long-term impact (Adebayo & Abubakar, 2021). Evaluations across fragile contexts reveal that while short-term gains in skills and literacy are common, sustainability and the transition from training to livelihood requires follow-up extension services and credit/market access (Opara & Nwachukwu, 2020). Contextual research in North-East Nigeria also indicates that socio-cultural barriers and insecurity can inhibit women and certain vulnerable groups from fully benefiting unless programmes are designed to be gender-sensitive and conflict-aware (Ibrahim & Goni, 2023). Therefore, CATAI's contributions align with successful models, but the literature highlights the necessity of complementary supports to consolidate those gains.

The prominence of digital tools, community-based models, and psychosocial support in CATAI's

approach mirrors global best practices for education in emergencies, where blended modalities maintain continuity when formal schooling is disrupted (UNESCO, 2023). Studies of radio, mobile and tablet-based instruction in conflict zones show these modalities can reach learners in insecure or remote locations and preserve learning momentum (GPE, 2022; UNICEF, 2022). Moreover, programmatic literature demonstrates that combining psychosocial care with learning activities improves engagement and cognitive recovery among traumatized learners, reinforcing CATAI's integrated strategy (Save the Children, 2021). Research in sub-Saharan fragile settings further finds that community-based education (including learning circles and safe-space classes) increases accessibility and local ownership, contributing to better retention amidst instability (Ndirangu & Otieno, 2021).

Nevertheless, comparative evidence warns that technology-driven solutions require reliable infrastructure, digital literacy, and ongoing maintenance; in under-resourced conflict settings these prerequisites are often fragile, limiting scalability (FAO/sector reports; Human Rights Watch, 2022). Evaluations of digital pilots in Nigeria and elsewhere show promising short-term learning gains but emphasize that without investment in teacher training, device replacement, and contextualised content the benefits can be uneven (Obeng & Mensah, 2023; Rahman, 2022). Studies also stress that psychosocial and community models must be culturally adapted and monitored to avoid retraumatization and to ensure inclusion of marginalized groups, including girls and internally displaced youth (UN Women, 2022; Ibrahim & Goni, 2023). Thus, CATAI's innovative mix aligns with evidence-based strategies but must be supported by robust infrastructure, capacity building, and inclusive design to achieve sustainable impact.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that youth-led initiatives play an indispensable role in rebuilding education and restoring hope in conflict-affected communities. The Center for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) stands out as a model of effective youth leadership in humanitarian education, particularly in Borno State. Its efforts in re-establishing learning spaces, mobilizing displaced children, and empowering young people to participate in educational recovery have significantly contributed to rebuilding the education system in the region.

CATAI's integration of literacy, skills training, and mentorship programs has strengthened resilience among vulnerable and displaced youths, enabling them to gain self-reliance and improve their livelihoods. The organization's innovative strategies—such as the use of digital learning platforms, community-based learning hubs, and psychosocial support—have proven to be practical and sustainable methods for maintaining education continuity amid crisis. Therefore, youth-led organizations like CATAI are critical partners in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on inclusive and equitable quality education in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- The Borno State Government and the Federal Ministry of Education should provide financial, logistical, and policy support to youth-led organizations like CATAI.
- CATAI should invest in continuous capacity development for its staff and volunteers in areas such as digital pedagogy, psychosocial care, monitoring and evaluation, and humanitarian education management to improve program delivery.
- Development partners, donors, and private organizations should collaborate with CATAI to establish long-term funding mechanisms that ensure sustainability of youth-led education programs beyond short-term humanitarian cycles.

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Politics, Violence, and Historical Change in Ekiti: A Study of Aramoko-Ekiti from the First Republic to the Fourth

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Abstract. From time immemorial, violence has manifested in various ways and has had a severe impact on human existence. Several aspects of human life, such as economy, infrastructure, and migration, are accompanied by violence, and political activities are not exempt. The peaceful conduct of elections is an indispensable component of democratic governance. However, the Nigerian electoral process has been marred by recurring incidents of political violence. Ekiti State, in particular, and Aramoko-Ekiti by extension, has witnessed significant episodes of political violence during the 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 general elections. This article, which is of significant importance, employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys, interviews, and secondary sources, to gather data and investigate the causes and consequences of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti. The article provides an analysis of the deep-rootedness of political violence, its causes, such as Ethnic and religious tensions, use of inflammatory language, fierce competition for resources and power among political actors. As a unit and focus of analysis, the Aramoko area in Ekiti is examined in the context of the political violence that erupted following the 2007 general elections and continued up to the 2023 general election. The article presents practical recommendations, including strengthening traditional institutions, robust voter education, and scaling up community security to prevent the repetitive pattern of political violence, particularly during electioneering periods.

Keywords: Violence, Resolution, Politicians, Political Violence, Ekiti

1. Introduction

The Nigerian political landscape has long been marred by violence, a pattern that dates back to the pre-independence era and the early years after independence in 1960. Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, political activities have been characterized by intense power struggles and violent

clashes. Available statistics show that between 1999 and February 2003, over 10,000 lives were lost due to violent conflicts, while the Nigerian Red Cross helped resettle over 250,000 individuals and 32,000 families in 2001 alone because of political violence in that election year (Olukorede, 2002).

The fight for political power in Nigeria is often driven by economic interests, as those in power control the distribution of scarce resources (Dudley, 1973). This has fostered a culture where politics is viewed as a way to amass wealth, and those seeking power are often willing to pay a high price, sometimes resorting to violence. As Adeyemo (2000) observed, using violence in the power struggle has negative effects on the well-being of individuals and society as a whole.

In Nigeria, like other climes, the incidence of political violence has caused a series of divisions within families and communities and led to antagonisms among and within social groups. The country has witnessed numerous cases of political violence, including assassinations, bomb blasts, intimidation, murders, and destruction of property. The first notable act of political violence after independence was the Western Region political crisis, which accompanied the post-election period of the 1963 federal election, the event that eventually resulted in the first Nigerian military coup of January 1966, an ugly event which resulted in the assassination of key political leaders (Diamond, 1995). Since then, political violence has continued to plague the country. In the years following 2003, political violence has persisted, with various incidents of electoral violence, thuggery, and intimidation.

The 2019 general elections were no exception, marked by reports of violence, ballot snatching, and arson in some parts of the country. Among such communities affected by political violence is Aramoko-Ekiti, a historic town in the present-day Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State. This paper situates Aramoko within the wider political evolution of Ekiti and Southwestern Nigeria, using its experiences to

illuminate how violence and change have shaped both local society and the Nigerian federation.

2. Politics, Violence, and Historical Change in Nigeria, 1999–2019

Nigeria's return to democracy in May 1999 was greeted with optimism and relief. After decades of military rule marked by coups, decrees, and repression, the Fourth Republic promised a new era of constitutional governance and civic participation. Yet the years between 1999 and 2019 reveal that politics, violence, and historical change remained tightly intertwined. Elections widened political participation, but violence repeatedly disrupted democratic practice. Social grievances found expression in militant movements and insurgencies, while historical change unfolded through both democratic resilience and deepening insecurity.

From the outset, politics was shaped by the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Between 1999 and 2015, the PDP controlled the presidency and most state governments, presenting itself as the party of stability. Yet its rule was marred by electoral malpractice, corruption scandals, and persistent violence. The 2003 elections, for example, were marked by widespread irregularities and were widely condemned as among the most violent and flawed in Nigeria's history. Ballot-box snatching, intimidation of voters, and killings underscored the extent to which elections were treated as contests to be won at all costs. Electoral violence was a symptom of a deeper political culture where access to office was linked to access to wealth. For many elites, politics was not primarily about public service but about controlling state resources. The stakes were high, and competition often spilled into thuggery and bloodshed. Historical change in this period was therefore contradictory: democratic forms existed, but the substance of free choice was repeatedly undermined by violence and manipulation.

The 2011 elections brought both progress and tragedy. On the one hand, the election was hailed as the most credible poll since 1999, thanks to reforms implemented by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the leadership of Attahiru Jega. On the other hand, the announcement of Goodluck Jonathan's victory triggered post-election violence in Northern states, leaving over eight hundred (800) people dead and displacing thousands of people. This episode revealed both the potential of Nigeria's democracy to improve and the dangers of unresolved sectional tensions. By 2015, Nigeria reached a critical turning point. The election that year produced the first-ever defeat of an incumbent president, as Muhammadu

Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) triumphed over Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP. The peaceful transfer of power was hailed as a democratic milestone, signalling that Nigeria's politics could allow genuine competition and change. Yet even this landmark was shaped by violence. Boko Haram's attacks had intensified under Jonathan's presidency, and insecurity was a key factor that swung voters toward Buhari, a former general perceived as capable of restoring order.

By 2015, the Buhari administration inherited a country burdened with insecurity, corruption, and economic challenges. While the military succeeded in reclaiming much of the territory seized by Boko Haram, sporadic attacks continued, and new security threats emerged. Banditry in the Northwest and farmer–herder clashes in the Middle Belt escalated. Electoral violence also persisted. At the time of the 2019 general elections, though resulting in Buhari's re-election, they were marred by ballot-box snatching, voter suppression, and deaths in several states. Violence remained a recurring feature of political competition, even after two decades of civilian rule. Between 1999 and 2019, therefore, Nigeria's experience demonstrates the entanglement of politics, violence, and historical change. Politics provided opportunities for participation but also became a source of division and conflict. Violence erupted in multiple forms, namely, electoral, communal, insurgent, and criminal, reflecting both state weakness and elite manipulation.

3. The Historical Roots of Political Violence in Ekiti Land

Ekiti State was created from Ondo State on October 1, 1996, with Ado-Ekiti as its capital. Ekiti State is fully located within the Tropics. It is positioned between Longitudes 40° 51' and 50° 45'1" East of the Greenwich meridian and between latitudes 70° 15'1" and 80° 51" North of the Equator. The state borders Kwara and Kogi States to the north, Osun State to the west, and Ondo State to the east and south. Ekiti State comprises 16 Local Government Councils. According to the 2006 Census, the population was 2,384,212, with 1,215,487 males and 1,183,470 females (NPC gazette 2006).

However, far from being a recent issue, the violent nature of electoral competition in Ekiti has deep roots in the region's colonial and postcolonial history, influenced by party rivalries, institutional weaknesses, and the manipulation of local identities for political purposes. This history shows ongoing use of violence as a political tool, which later reemerged in the Fourth Republic.

During the colonial period, the Ekiti people were integrated into the Western Region under the administration of the British colonial state. As with other Yoruba-speaking areas, Ekiti became deeply involved in the nationalist struggles that culminated in Nigeria's independence in 1960. The emergence of modern political parties in the 1940s and 1950s created avenues for Ekiti elites to participate in the broader Yoruba political project. The Action Group (AG), led by Obafemi Awolowo, found a strong base in Ekiti due to its emphasis on free education, infrastructural development, and Yoruba unity (Coleman, 1958). For a state long known as "the fountain of knowledge" due to its literacy and educational achievements, the AG's policies resonated powerfully with Ekiti's intellectual and political consciousness.

Yet even in this formative period, competition between parties often generated violence. The AG's dominance was contested by the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), which sought to attract Yoruba voters outside the AG stronghold. In Ekiti towns, these rivalries sometimes translated into violent confrontations at rallies, ballot-snatching during elections, and clashes between rival youth groups (Sklar, 1963). These early patterns laid the foundation for the intertwining of politics and violence in the region.

The most notorious episode of violence in Western Nigerian politics was the crisis of the early 1960s, popularly known as "*Operation Wetiee*". This crisis was triggered by a bitter split within the AG, which fractured into rival factions aligned with Awolowo and Samuel Akintola, respectively. The resulting political tension engulfed much of the Western Region, including Ekiti towns such as Ado-Ekiti, Ikere, Ijero, Ikole, and Aramoko. Violence became widespread: ballot boxes were seized and destroyed, houses of opponents were burned, and political assassinations took place. The phrase *Wetiee*, which literally means "drench it" in petrol and set it on fire, captured the intensity of this violence, as properties were destroyed to punish political opponents (Suberu, 2007).

For Ekiti communities, *Wetiee* was more than a passing episode; it was a formative trauma that entrenched violence as a normalized feature of political contestation. Families displaced by arson, communities polarized by partisanship, and youths mobilized as instruments of violence all contributed to a collective memory that would resurface decades later. The failure of state institutions to mediate the crisis effectively, coupled with the collapse of trust in the electoral process, reinforced the perception that

politics was a zero-sum game where survival required force.

The collapse of the First Republic in 1966, partly precipitated by the violence in the Western Region, ushered in a long era of military rule. For Ekiti people, this period brought both respite and repression. On the one hand, the suspension of competitive politics temporarily reduced the violent clashes between rival parties. On the other hand, military authoritarianism suppressed political participation and weakened civil institutions, leaving unresolved the structural drivers of violence.

When the Second Republic was inaugurated in 1979, Ekiti once again became deeply involved in competitive politics. The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), widely seen as the successor to the AG, regained dominance in the region. However, the same patterns of contestation and manipulation re-emerged. Elections were marred with irregularities, thuggery, and intimidation. In 1983, the general elections in the Western Region were widely condemned as fraudulent, leading to widespread violence, destruction of property, and loss of lives (Joseph, 1987). Ekiti towns, like other Yoruba communities, were drawn into this cycle, which culminated in another military coup led by General Muhammadu Buhari, in December 1983. Once again, the collapse of the republic revealed the fragility of Nigeria's democratic institutions and the resilience of violence as a tool of political struggle.

The annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election remains one of the most defining moments in Nigeria's democratic history. The election, widely regarded as free and fair, was won by Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale (M.K.O.) Abiola, a Yoruba businessman and philanthropist with deep support across the country. For Ekiti and other Yoruba communities, Abiola's victory represented both a regional triumph and a national hope for democratic renewal. The annulment by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida was therefore experienced as a profound betrayal. Protests erupted across the Southwest, including in Ekiti towns, where civil society organizations, students, and professional groups mobilized for the validation of the election. Violence accompanied these protests as security forces clamped down on demonstrators, leading to deaths, injuries, and widespread repression (Osaghae, 1998). For many in Ekiti, the annulment reinforced cynicism about state institutions and deepened the belief that political rights could only be secured through struggle, sometimes violent struggle. The eventual death of Alhaji Moshood Abiola in detention in 1998

intensified these sentiments but also galvanized the democratic movement. By the time the Fourth Republic was inaugurated in 1999, it would have been thought that democratic governance would abate the spate of political violence in Ekiti State and Nigeria at large, but as would be seen, this persisted in repeated experiences of political intrigues and violent outbursts.

4. Political Contests and Violence in Ekiti State, 1999-2019

The re-democratization of Nigeria in 1999 ushered Ekiti State, created only three years earlier in 1996, into the national political arena as one of the newest sub-national units. With a relatively homogenous Yoruba-speaking population, high literacy levels, and a reputation for political consciousness, Ekiti quickly emerged as one of the most hotly contested political landscapes in the Southwest. Electoral competition, however, was rarely peaceful. From 1999 to 2019, nearly every electoral cycle in Ekiti was marred by irregularities, violence, and disputes that frequently escalated into protracted legal battles. These episodes underscored both the intensity of party competition and the fragility of Nigeria's democratic institutions at the subnational level. The 1999 elections had placed the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the Yoruba-dominated successor to the pro-democracy movement, in power across the Southwest, including Ekiti. Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo, son of the Second Republic governor of old Ondo State, became Ekiti's first elected governor. His administration, however, soon faced criticism for aloofness, lack of grassroots connection, and limited infrastructural achievements (Adebanwi, 2008).

In the 2003 elections, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), then dominant at the national level under President Olusegun Obasanjo, launched a coordinated strategy to capture the Southwest. Ayodele Fayose, a relatively unknown but charismatic businessman, emerged as the PDP's candidate in Ekiti. Campaigning with the populist slogan of being "the man of the people," Fayose mobilized artisans, market women, and unemployed youths with promises of empowerment and visibility (Adelakun, 2014). The election was fiercely contested. Reports of ballot-box snatching, intimidation of voters, and violent clashes between party supporters were widespread (Usukuma, 2014). PDP thugs allegedly disrupted voting in opposition strongholds, while AD accused security agencies of complicity. Despite these irregularities, Fayose was declared the winner. His victory marked the collapse of AD control in Ekiti and was emblematic of the broader "PDP sweep" of the Southwest in 2003, except Lagos. The violent and

controversial nature of the election, however, left deep scars, planting seeds of mistrust that would haunt subsequent cycles.

Yet, if the 2003 elections revealed the vulnerability of Ekiti's emerging democracy, the 2007 elections exposed its deep-rooted fragility. The governorship race was between Segun Oni of the PDP and Kayode Fayemi of the Action Congress (AC), the rebranded opposition party. Oni, a technocrat, was widely seen as the candidate of the PDP establishment, while Fayemi, a civil society activist and scholar, campaigned as a reformist alternative (Omotola, 2010). The elections were heavily condemned as fraudulent. Ballot boxes were hijacked in several local governments, votes were inflated, and security forces were accused of siding with the PDP (Human Rights Watch, 2007). In Ekiti towns such as Ido-Osi, Oye, and Aramoko, violent clashes erupted between rival supporters. Properties were destroyed, thugs wielded dangerous weapons, and voters were intimidated at polling stations. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Oni the winner of the highly contested election, but Fayemi rejected the results, filing petitions at the electoral tribunal. The post-election violence reflected a dangerous nexus: political actors mobilized unemployed youths, supplied them with weapons, and used them to enforce electoral dominance. During this period, a popular slogan, "Rig and Roast," became prominent among supporters of Kayode Fayemi of the ACN. For many in Ekiti, especially in rural towns like Aramoko, elections were no longer seen as civic exercises but as battles where survival and loyalty were tested through violence. The period was so intense with the slogan "Rig and Roast," which more or less became an addictive chant among the youth, especially the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) faction. In fact, Aramoko not only became an epicentre of violence during this time but also was driven by intense political rivalry between two siblings vying for both the National Assembly and State House of Assembly seats, each under opposing parties, each trying every means to control the community's political soul. These events, in turn, led to serious political turmoil that continues to influence the town's political landscape to this day.

The legal contest between Fayemi and Oni dragged on for over three years, turning Ekiti into one of the most litigated states in Nigeria's democratic history. The Court of Appeal eventually nullified Oni's election and ordered reruns in selected local governments in 2009. These rerun elections became some of the most violent in the state's history. In the Ido-Osi local government area, thugs invaded polling stations, seized ballot boxes, and assaulted voters. Journalists and election

observers were attacked, and several people were reported killed in violent confrontations (Ayobolu, 2015). Aramoko and its environs also witnessed outbreaks of violence, as party loyalists clashed in attempts to secure an advantage in rerun areas. The militarization of the process, marked by heavy deployment of soldiers and police, did little to stem the violence; in some instances, security operatives were accused of colluding with politicians.

After a prolonged legal battle, Fayemi was finally declared the rightful winner in October 2010, more than three years after the original 2007 election. By then, the protracted conflict had polarized communities, entrenched political bitterness, and claimed numerous lives. The episode reinforced the perception that in Ekiti, elections were not simply about democratic choice but about existential struggles that could justify violence.

The 2014 governorship election represented another dramatic turn in Ekiti's volatile political trajectory. Fayemi, having governed since 2010, sought re-election under the All Progressives Congress (APC). His administration was credited with infrastructural improvements and policy reforms, but was criticized for elitism and failure to connect with grassroots concerns (Omilusi, 2016). Fayose, the ousted former governor, returned as the PDP candidate with his trademark populist style, promising to "bring government back to the people." The campaigns were intense. Fayose deployed street-level mobilization, engaging directly with market women, commercial motorcycle riders, popularly known as *Okada*, and artisans, contrasting this with Fayemi's intellectual style. Yet the election environment was heavily militarized. Thousands of soldiers, police, and Department of State Services (DSS) operatives were deployed, creating what critics described as a siege atmosphere (Ayobolu, 2015). APC leaders alleged harassment and detention of their members, while reports of ballot snatching and voter intimidation surfaced in some areas. Despite these controversies, Fayose won convincingly, defeating Fayemi in all the sixteen local government areas that made up Ekiti state by a wide margin. And heavy defeat that is popularly referred to as sixteen zero (16-0) among politicians. His victory was celebrated by supporters as a triumph of grassroots politics over elitism but condemned by opponents as the product of intimidation and manipulation. The heavy use of security forces became a recurring feature of Ekiti elections, raising questions about the line between democratic protection and authoritarian coercion.

The 2018 election further entrenched the pattern of contentious and violent politics in Ekiti. With Fayose constitutionally barred from seeking re-election, the PDP fielded his deputy, Kolapo Olusola-Eleka, while the APC re-presented Fayemi, seeking a comeback. The stakes were high, not only for Ekiti but also for national politics, as the election was seen as a test run for the 2019 general elections. The campaign period was marred by violent clashes between party supporters. Rallies were disrupted, party offices attacked, and sporadic shootings reported in towns such as Ikere, Ado, and Aramoko. On the eve of the election, Fayose dramatically claimed he was teargassed and brutalized by police, an incident that further polarized the political climate. On election day, reports of vote-buying, intimidation, and ballot-box snatching surfaced. The heavy presence of security operatives once again created a militarized environment. While some observers argued that this prevented large-scale violence, others noted that it suppressed opposition mobilization and tilted the field in favour of the ruling APC at the federal level. Fayemi emerged victorious, returning as governor. However, the election left lingering bitterness, with PDP supporters alleging that state power and coercion had determined the outcome.

5. The Aramoko-Ekiti Experience

Politically, Aramoko has been highly competitive, reflecting the broader currents of Ekiti State politics. In 1999, the AD secured strong support in the town, benefiting from its pro-democracy credentials and Yoruba nationalist appeal. By 2003, however, the PDP made significant inroads, leveraging national resources and the populist charisma of Fayose to win support among market women and youths. This shift was not without tension. Campaigns frequently escalated into violent clashes, with Aramoko's major junctions and motor parks becoming battlegrounds for rival supporters. During the 2007 and 2009 rerun elections, Aramoko again became a flashpoint. Rival parties established strongholds in different quarters of the town, and confrontations often occurred as thugs attempted to secure polling units. Reports indicated that ballot boxes were seized in parts of Aramoko during the rerun, while opposing groups exchanged gunfire in nearby villages (Ayobolu, 2015). For many residents, the experience of voting became inseparable from the fear of violence. As mentioned earlier, one major reason for the ugly incidents in the Nodal community was presumed to be because, the duo of Hon. Kehinde Odeunmi a renowned politician with state and national influence within the PDP bloc both in Ekiti state and Nigeria at large and his First cousin, Hon. Gbenga Odeunmi, a deeply loaded grassroots

politician, two siblings from the two opposing parties contested to the national assembly and state house of assembly respectively, the scenario extremely put the town on the climax of the political map of Ekiti as the one time peaceful community with absolute calmness lost it completely, with people of the town now sleeping with only one eyes closed due to the fear of eventualities.

The 2014 and 2018 elections reinforced these dynamics. Fayose's populist style resonated with traders and artisans in Aramoko, who felt alienated by Fayemi's more elite approach. Campaign rallies in the town drew massive crowds but also witnessed violent disruptions. In 2018, clashes between PDP and APC supporters around Aramoko's motor park left several injured. The heavy presence of security forces, while aimed at preventing escalation, often created further tension, as residents perceived the militarization of the town as both intimidating and partisan. Thus, Aramoko's political alignments were not static but shifted across electoral cycles. These shifts were shaped by a combination of economic grievances, populist appeals, and elite patronage. Yet the constant factor was violence, sometimes latent, sometimes overt, that accompanied every major election.

At the heart of Aramoko's political violence is the mobilization of youths. The town, like much of Ekiti, has a vibrant youth population, historically organized through age-grade associations (*egbe*) and community development unions. These institutions once served constructive purposes: mobilizing labor for communal projects, enforcing norms, and fostering social solidarity. In the democratic era, however, many of these structures were co-opted into partisan politics. Politicians provided money, alcohol, motorcycles, and weapons to youths, transforming them into instruments of intimidation. During elections, these youths were deployed to disrupt polling units, chase away opposition supporters, or protect ballot boxes for their patrons. After elections, many were abandoned, deepening cycles of poverty and resentment. The contradiction was stark: while democracy promised empowerment, in practice it reduced youths to expendable tools in the violent struggles of elites.

At the same time, Aramoko's educated youth played different roles. As one of Ekiti's historically literate communities, Aramoko produced teachers, civil servants, and professionals who were vocal in political debates. Many returned home during the elections to cast votes and influence opinion. These educated voices often resisted political thuggery, calling for transparency and good governance. Yet their influence was limited by the material power of politicians who

controlled resources and could mobilize unemployed youths more effectively. This duality, between civic-minded educated youth and disenfranchised, mobilized youth, captures the contradictions of democracy in Aramoko. It highlights how structural inequalities create divergent experiences of political participation within the same community.

Aramoko's traditional institutions, especially the palace of the Alara of Aramoko, have historically played central roles in community governance. The oba (king) and chiefs functioned as custodians of culture, mediators of disputes, and symbols of unity. In the past, these institutions commanded authority that could deter violence. However, the democratization process complicated their role. Politicians increasingly courted traditional rulers for endorsements, often dividing royal councils along partisan lines. In some cases, the Obas and the chiefs were accused of openly supporting candidates, undermining their neutrality. One of the case studies to support this claim was a dramatic situation that occurred in the aftermath of Fayemi's defeat in 2014, when members of ACN, in large numbers, protested at the palace with branches of leaf in their hands, an act considered an abomination in the community. Their outburst was said to be on the premise that the palace was used to coordinate the directions in which the election went in the community, by maligning the Kayode Fayemi-led administration, which led to widespread hatred for the ACN faction. This politicisation eroded their capacity to mediate impartially during violent disputes. In Aramoko, palace grounds that once symbolised communal unity occasionally became sites of protest or contestation during election seasons.

6. Causes and Patterns of Political Violence in Ekiti State

Ekiti State, recognized by the 1999 constitution, has a population of approximately 2.4 million people as of 2006, with a land area of 6,353 square kilometres (Ajibade 2015). The state is divided into 16 local government areas and has a relatively homogenous population of Ekiti-speaking Yoruba people. With a voter registration count of 733,766 (INEC 2007), the state has experienced its fair share of political violence. Political violence is a recurring issue in Nigeria, particularly in developing countries, where it has become an essential characteristic of the political process. Election rigging is a significant contributor to this violence, often fuelled by primordial sentiments like ethnicity and religion rather than ideological differences. Those seeking power may employ

violence, assassination, intimidation, and corrupt practices to achieve their goals.

In Ekiti State, notable incidents of political violence include the disputed governorship election in 2007 between Segun Oni and Kayode Fayemi, which led to violence, re-run elections, and a prolonged legal battle, and in addition to the legal battle was the equal representation of both parties at the state house of assembly which was also considered as a battle ground all through the time frame. In February 2009, the Election Tribunal, sitting at Ado-Ekiti, agreed with Fayemi and ordered Segun Oni to vacate the office of Governor, while Olatunji Odeyemi (the then speaker of the House of Assembly) became the Acting Governor. Also, the Court ordered the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) to conduct a re-run election within 90 days. And, April 25 2009, was declared by INEC as the Election re-run day for the areas affected by the Court's ruling.

While the people of Ekiti State prepared for the re-run election on the scheduled day, Ekiti State became a battleground, such that violence was everywhere. In the long run, the declared election result was 109,000 votes cast for Oni and 106,000 for Fayemi. Fayemi and the ACN rejected the results. Fayemi commenced the next turn of legal protest against the election results, which the Tribunal declared Oni won. Fayemi and the ACN headed to the Court of Appeal, sitting in Ilorin, and, finally, the Court declared Kayode Fayemi the winner on October 15, 2010, with the majority lawful votes- 105,631 as against 95,176. In the course of the battle over winners in Ekiti State, which led to several cases of re-run elections, a lot of people were maimed and killed, while properties were destroyed, especially in Ido-Osi and Oye Local Government Area, but ripples also manifested in Aramoko-Ekiti among political "loyalists". Before the election results were declared in favour of Fayemi, a lot of political violence was perpetrated. The tensions remained high in subsequent elections, with allegations of violence and intimidation up to the 2019 elections.

7. Tackling Political Violence in Aramoko-Ekiti

The persistence of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti, as in wider Ekiti State, is not inevitable. It is the product of historical legacies, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and institutional weaknesses. Addressing it requires both a historical understanding of how violence became normalized and deliberate policy interventions to rechannel political participation toward peaceful ends. A major pathway is to restore the neutrality and authority of traditional

institutions. In Aramoko, the Alara of Aramoko and chiefs retain symbolic power that can unite the community. To reclaim this role, traditional rulers must deliberately distance themselves from partisan endorsements. Policy frameworks could support this by legally prohibiting monarchs from overt political involvement while empowering them as mediators during elections.

Another critical intervention is civic education. The recurring violence in Aramoko reflects not only elite manipulation but also limited understanding among some citizens of their rights and responsibilities. Civil society organizations, religious institutions, and schools can play vital roles in fostering a culture of peaceful participation. Educational campaigns should emphasize that elections are not wars but opportunities to express collective will. They should also provide practical guidance on resisting vote-buying, rejecting thuggery, and reporting electoral malpractice. In Aramoko's markets and schools, such campaigns could be conducted through dramas, town hall meetings, and radio programs in Yoruba, making them accessible to all.

Alongside civic education, stronger voter protection is necessary. INEC, in collaboration with security agencies, must ensure that polling stations in Aramoko are safe without being militarized. Transparent protocols for security deployment, monitored by observers and civil society, would reduce perceptions of partisanship and intimidation.

Any serious attempt to tackle political violence in Aramoko must confront youth unemployment. As long as large numbers of young people remain jobless, they will remain vulnerable to recruitment by politicians. Policy responses should therefore combine immediate opportunities with long-term structural reforms. At the local level, initiatives such as vocational training centers, microcredit schemes, and cooperative societies could provide youths with economic alternatives. State-level policies could prioritize agro-industrial development in Ekiti West LGA, capitalizing on the town's agricultural heritage. By linking cocoa, cassava, and pepper farming to processing industries, more sustainable jobs could be created for Aramoko's youth.

Reforming security practices is also crucial. The heavy-handed militarization of Aramoko during elections, as seen in 2014 and 2018, undermines trust and sometimes fuels violence. Security agencies must be trained in impartial crowd control, human rights standards, and community engagement. Accountability mechanisms should be strengthened.

Citizens in Aramoko should have access to complaint channels when security operatives engage in harassment or collusion. Civil society observers could monitor deployments and publish independent reports on security conduct. Over time, this would help rebuild trust between the community and the state.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, political violence in Ekiti State is both a nexus of electoral competition and an expression of broader struggles over legitimacy, authority, and access to power. Elections provide the flashpoints, but the underlying issues, such as weak institutions, elite rivalries, and winner-takes-all politics, ensure that violence spills beyond the ballot box. Historically, this cycle has shaped the state's reputation, showing that in Ekiti, politics and violence are intertwined not only during elections but throughout the life of democratic governance. By and large, the study of Aramoko-Ekiti underscores the fact that political violence is not merely an abstract national issue but a lived reality across political entities and units in Nigeria.

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Strategies for Effective Wardrobe Management amid Socio-Economic Challenges among Women in the Ondo West Local Government Area

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Abstract. This study investigates strategies for effective wardrobe management amid socio-economic challenges among women in the Ondo West Local Government Area. Relevant Literature was reviewed. The study employed Survey Research Design, the study area was Ondo West Local Government Area, while the total number of women in the study area formed the population for the study. Five wards out of the twelve wards in Ondo West local Government Area were randomly selected using purposive sampling technique. One Hundred respondents were randomly selected from the five wards and a well structure questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Mean, Standard Deviation and T- test were employed to analyze the Data collected. The findings reveal that women predominantly engage in practices such as seasonal wardrobe rotation, clothing decluttering, and strategic clothing preservation. Socio-economic challenges significantly impact wardrobe management, with women prioritizing household needs, relying on second-hand clothing, and adapting to economic pressures. Cultural factors, particularly traditional beliefs and the need for specific attire for cultural events, play a crucial role in wardrobe organization. Notably, the study found that effective wardrobe management contributes to women's self-esteem, particularly through the ability to have suitable clothing for various occasions and managing wardrobes despite financial limitations. The research recommends Rotational preservation of cloth should be done regular by women to better manage their wardrobe in current economic Incorporate culturally relevant wardrobe management practices, emphasizing the preservation of culturally significant attire for special occasions.

Keywords: Wardrobe Management, Women, Socio-Economic Challenges, Cultural Factors, Self-Esteem.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Wardrobe is a collection of clothing items owned by an individual or group of people. It includes all types of garments and accessories worn on a regular basis such as tops, bottoms, outwears shoes and jewelry.

Wardrobe management techniques involve organizing and maintaining your clothing collection to maximize its functionality, longevity, and efficiency. The socio-economic challenges affecting women's wardrobe choices can be multifaceted and vary across different contexts and cultures. Some of these challenges are income disparities, gender expectation, resources, unpaid domestic labor, body image pressure, access to fashion education.

Also, societal norms often place greater emphasis on women's appearance, leading to pressure to conform to certain beauty standards and fashion trends. This can create a financial burden as women may feel compelled to spend more on clothing, cosmetics, and accessories to meet these expectations. Limited job opportunities can result in financial constraints that affect women's ability to afford a variety of clothing options for different occasions, such as work attire or formal wear. Every woman loves to look good and attractive. Women are embodiment of beauty, they use various accessories to complement their dressing e.g wig, wrist watch, shoes, bag, scarves, belt, hats, cap berets, cosmetics, jewelries, just to make them gorgeous and acceptable in the society. Due to this current economy, women manage their wardrobe by mixing and matching items to create multiple outfits.

Furthermore, access to fashion education and resources, such as sewing classes or online tutorials, can empower women to create their own clothing and

express their personal style affordably. However, not all women have equal access to these opportunities, which can perpetuate disparities in wardrobe choices.

In some cultures and religious communities, there are specific dress codes or modesty requirements that women are expected to adhere to. These constraints can limit women's choices in terms of styles, colors, and fabrics, as well as impose additional financial burdens to maintain a modest wardrobe. The management of wardrobe in the present socio-economic challenges among women is a significant issue that affect various aspects of their lives. Descriptive survey research design was used to carry out the study in Ondo West local government Area of Ondo state. Random sampling technique was adopted to select samples for the study from five wards within the Local Government Area.

The instrument used for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire and the data collected were analyzed using Mean, standard Deviation and T-test. The study concludes that rotational, and preservation of cloth should be done regular by women to better manage their wardrobe in current economic. Incorporate culturally relevant wardrobe management practices, emphasizing the preservation of culturally significant attire for special occasions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The basic needs of human survival are food, shelter and clothing, Women are expected to stock their wardrobe with quality dresses and accessories, but due to current economic state of the country some people are selling what they have in their wardrobe in order to feed themselves, the current hardship really affect women and limit their ability to purchase new clothing or maintain an updated wardrobe. Which had led to reuse of old clothes, which could affect their self-confidence and overall appearance. It has therefore become imperative to put in place strategies for managing a good wardrobe in the face of these present socio-economic challenges among women in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Purpose of the Study are:

- To document the wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State.
- To investigate how socio-economic challenges influence wardrobe management in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State.

- To examine the impact of wardrobe management on women's self -esteem in this present economy.
- To identify the cultural factors influencing wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government.
- To suggest strategies to enhance wardrobe management among women in Ondo West Local Government.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What are the wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo west local government area of Ondo state?
- How do socio economic challenges influence wardrobe management in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State?
- What is the impact of wardrobe management on women's self- esteem in this present economy?
- What are the cultural factors influencing wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo state?
- What strategies can be suggested to enhance wardrobe management among women in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo state?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The finding of this study will educate women and equip them with practical tools and strategies to build and maintain an organised and good wardrobe despite financial limitations.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to Strategies for Effective Wardrobe Management Amid Socio-Economic Challenges among Women in the Ondo West Local Government Area.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Wardrobe

A wardrobe is a collection of clothing, accessories, and other items that a person owns or has access to. It is a personal and subjective concept that can vary greatly from person to person, depending on factors such as culture, lifestyle, and personal taste.

Wardrobe" goes beyond just physical clothes, it's about the emotional connection we have with our clothes, how we use them to express ourselves, and the stories they tell about our identity. A wardrobe can be a canvas for creative expression, with colors, patterns, and styles serving as a form of artistic communication. A wardrobe is also an integral part of our daily routine, influencing how we start our day and approach our daily tasks. A well-curated wardrobe can simplify our morning routine by providing a quick and easy way to get dressed, while a chaotic wardrobe can lead to decision fatigue and stress. A wardrobe is also shaped by our cultural and social context, with clothing choices influenced by factors such as family background, social class, occupation, and geographical location. A wardrobe that reflects our cultural heritage or sub-cultural identity can be a powerful tool for self-expression and connection. Also, a wardrobe can serve as a symbol of status, with certain clothing items or brands conveying social status, wealth, or prestige.

Beyond aesthetics, your wardrobe significantly impacts your psychological well-being. The clothes you wear can affect your mood, attitude, and self-confidence. Wearing outfits that make you feel good can uplift your spirits and empower you to tackle the challenges of the day with confidence and poise.

2.2 Wardrobe Management Practices

Wardrobe management practices involve strategies for organizing, maintaining, and maximizing the efficiency of your clothing collection. Here are some keys:

Inventory and Assessment: Start by taking stock of your wardrobe. Assess each item of clothing based on factors like fit, condition, and frequency of wear. Identify pieces that you love and wear often, as well as those that no longer serve you.

Decluttering: Remove items that no longer fit, are damaged beyond repair, or haven't been worn in a long time. Consider donating, selling, or re-purposing these items to clear space and streamline your wardrobe.

Categorization: Organize your remaining clothing into categories such as tops, bottoms, dresses, outerwear, and accessories. Within each category, further organize items by color, season, or occasion to make it easier to locate specific items when getting dressed.

Storage Solution: Invest in storage solutions that maximize space and keep your wardrobe organized. This may include using garment racks, closet organizers, drawer dividers, or storage bins to store and protect your clothing.

Seasonal Rotation: Rotate your wardrobe seasonally to ensure that you have easy access to appropriate clothing for the current weather conditions. Store off-season items in labeled bins or garment bags to keep them out of the way while making room for seasonal pieces.

Capsule Wardrobes: Consider creating a capsule wardrobe consisting of a curated selection of versatile, mix-and-match pieces that can be worn interchangeably. This approach encourages intentional purchasing and helps prevent wardrobe clutter.

Maintenance: Regularly clean and maintain your clothing to ensure longevity. Follow care instructions on garment labels, mend any minor repairs promptly, and store items properly to prevent damage.

Shopping Mindfully: Adopt a mindful approach to shopping by considering the quality, fit, and versatility of potential purchases. Aim to invest in timeless, high-quality pieces that align with your personal style and complement your existing wardrobe.

By implementing these wardrobe management techniques, you can create a well-organized, functional wardrobe that reflects your personal style, minimizes clutter, and dressing up seamless and enjoyable

2.3 Strategies to Enhance Wardrobe Management

Purge and declutter: Regularly remove items that no longer fit, are out of style, or are in poor condition. This can help reduce decision fatigue and free up mental energy. (Marie Kondo, 2014)

Categorize and group: Organize clothes into categories (e.g., tops, bottoms, dresses) and group similar items together. This can help simplify the decision-making process and reduce stress (Julia Shaw, 2019)

Create a capsule wardrobe: Implement a capsule wardrobe approach, where you have a limited number of essential items that can be mixed and matched to create multiple outfits. This can help reduce decision fatigue and promote creativity. (Jennifer L Scott, 2019)

Plan outfits in advance: Take some time to plan out your outfits for the week or month. This can help you make the most of your wardrobe and avoid last-minute decisions. (Anne-Marie Bouchard, 2020)

Use a color-coded system: Implement a color-coded system to categorize your clothes, such as using color-coded tags or labels. This can help you quickly identify what you have and what you need. (Dr. Taylor Hibbert, 2019)

Store out-of-season clothes: Store out-of-season clothes in labeled bins or containers to keep them organized and out of the way. This can help reduce clutter and make it easier to find what you need when the season change (Emily Schromm, 2020)

Invest in quality over quantity: Focus on investing in high-quality, timeless pieces rather than buying cheap, trendy items that may quickly go out of style. This can help reduce waste and promote sustainability. (The Value of Quality Over Quantity by Gigi Burris, 2019)

Use technology to your advantage: Utilize apps like Stylish or Closet to track your wardrobe, generate outfit ideas, and receive personalized styling recommendations. (The Rise of Fashion Technology by Rachel Johnson, 2020)

Practice mindful consumption: Be mindful of your shopping habits and avoid impulse purchases. Take time to think about whether you really need an item before buying it. (Dr. Elizabeth Cox, 2019)

Seek inspiration from others: Follow fashion influencers or bloggers who align with your personal style and aesthetic. Use their inspiration to create new outfit ideas and stay up-to-date on the latest trends. (Fashion Influencers" by Lauren Conrad, 2020)

By incorporating these strategies into your wardrobe management routine, you can improve your overall sense of style, reduce stress, and enhance your overall well-being.

3. Research Design

This study employed survey research design.

3.1 Area of the Study

This study was carried out in selected areas in Ondo West Local Government. Ondo West Local Government is one of the Eighteen (18) local Governments in Ondo State. The population of Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State is 359,247 (Ondo West Local Government Secretariat,2014). There are 12 wards altogether in Ondo West Local Government, they are Yaba, Odosida, Newtown, Laje, Odojomu, Ilunla, Bagbe/ Igunsin, Okerewo, Igbado, Surulere, Okelisa, and Lekere (National Population Commission ,2009).

3.2 Population of the study

The population for this study consisted of women in Ondo West Local Government Area, Ondo State. The total number of women in Ondo West Local

Government Area of Ondo State is 226.148 (National population commission, 2006).

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

For this research, random sampling technique was adopted five (5) wards were randomly selected in Ondo West Local Government Area using purposive sampling technique. Twenty (20) respondents were selected from each ward; making a total number of One Hundred (100) respondents that constitute the sample for the study.

3.4 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire.

3.5 Validity of the Instrument

The research questionnaire was validated by lecturers from the Department of Home Economics, Adeyemi Federal University of Ondo, and their observations, suggestions and comments were used to correct the instrument to ensure face and content validity.

3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

Split half method was used to determine the internal consistency and level of precision of the instrument. Twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were administered once which were divided into two groups which are odd and even number on the item of the questionnaire. The two data gotten from the Odd and even number were scored and correlated. The reliability index was estimated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC); a reliable coefficient (r) 0.755 was considered positive.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data collated were analyzed using Mean, Standard deviation and T-test. The Mean of the responses were interpreted based on the statistical real limit. Any item with the Mean response of 2.50 and above is taken as agree while any Mean below the cut off point is taken as disagreed

The data was analyzed using frequency count, Mean Test and T-test. The mean test was used in testing the drafted research question.

Decision rule: accept the Mean value once the Mean score (C) is greater than 2.5 that is (4+3+2+1); where Strongly agree is rank 4, disagree 2 and strongly disagrees 1.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents Based on Age Range

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-24 years	44	44.0
25-34 years	14	14.0
35-44 years	12	12.0
45-54 years	22	22.0
55+years	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 1 shows the age distribution of respondents: 44% were aged 18–24, 14% aged 25–34, 12% aged 35–44, 22% aged 45–54, and 8% were 55 years and above.

Table 2: Demographic Information of the Respondents Based on Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed (Full time)	33	33.0
Employed (Part Time)	12	12.0
Self-Employed	33	33.0
Unemployed	14	14.0
Students	4	4.0
Other	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on their occupation: 33% were employed full-time, 12% employed part-time, 33% self-employed, 14% unemployed, 4% students, and 4% categorised as others

Table 3: Demographic Information of the Respondents Based on Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below ₦40,000	25	25.0
₦60,000 - ₦80,000	12	12.0
₦81,000 - ₦100,000	24	24.0
₦101,000 - ₦120,000	15	15.0
₦1201,000 - ₦140,000	17	17.0
Above ₦140,000	7	7.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents based on their monthly income: 25% earned below ₦40,000, 12% earned between ₦60,000 and ₦80,000, 24% earned between ₦81,000 and ₦100,000, 15% earned between ₦101,000 and ₦120,000, 17% earned between ₦121,000 and ₦140,000, and 7% earned above ₦140,000.

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 4: What are the wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government?

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	Decision Rule
1	I regularly organize my wardrobe to ensure easy access to clothes.	1.64	0.64	Rejected
2	I maintain a seasonal wardrobe rotation to manage my clothing effectively.	1.86	0.82	Accepted
3	I frequently declutter my wardrobe by donating or discarding clothes I no longer wear.	1.88	0.87	Accepted
4	I set a budget for clothing purchases to avoid overspending.	1.81	0.91	Rejected
5	I prefer buying versatile clothing items that can be used for multiple occasions.	1.74	0.80	Rejected
6	I store my clothes in a manner that preserves their quality (e.g., hanging, folding).	1.97	0.94	Accepted

Decision Rule/Weighted mean = 1.82

Table 4 presents an overview of the wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government. Several practices were assessed to understand how women organize and manage their wardrobes. The data indicates that certain practices are commonly accepted, while others are not. Women in the community appear to engage in seasonal wardrobe rotation to manage their clothing effectively ($\bar{X} = 1.86$, Std. Dev. = 0.82), and they also frequently declutter their wardrobes by donating or discarding clothes they no longer use ($\bar{X} = 1.88$, Std. Dev. = 0.87). Additionally, they store their clothes in a manner that helps preserve their quality, such as hanging or folding ($\bar{X} = 1.97$, Std. Dev. = 0.94). However, other practices are less frequently adopted. For instance, regularly organizing wardrobes for easy access to clothes ($\bar{X} = 1.64$, Std. Dev. = 0.64), setting a budget for clothing purchases to avoid overspending ($\bar{X} = 1.81$, Std. Dev. = 0.91), and buying versatile clothing items for multiple occasions ($\bar{X} = 1.74$, Std. Dev. = 0.80) were rejected based on the decision rule. With a weighted mean of 1.82, it can be concluded that the predominant wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government include seasonal rotation, decluttering, and quality preservation of clothes, while practices related to budgeting, organizing for easy access, and purchasing versatile items are less commonly observed.

Table 5: How do socio-economic challenges influence wardrobe management among women in Ondo West Local Government?

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	Decision Rule
7	Financial constraints limit my ability to purchase new clothing items.	1.97	0.97	Rejected
8	I often prioritize other household needs over buying new clothes.	2.13	1.05	Accepted
9	The current economic situation has made me more conscious of my wardrobe management.	2.03	0.90	Rejected
10	I rely on second-hand clothing due to financial limitations.	2.17	1.06	Accepted
11	I try to make my clothes last longer due to the high cost of new items.	1.95	1.02	Rejected
12	My wardrobe management practices have been affected by inflation and rising costs.	2.06	0.97	Accepted

Decision Rule/Weighted mean = 2.05

The socio-economic challenges faced by women in Ondo West Local Government significantly influence their wardrobe management practices, as shown in the above table. Financial constraints appear to limit their ability to purchase new clothing items ($\bar{X} = 1.97$, Std. Dev. = 0.97), although this particular assertion was rejected based on the decision rule. Similarly, while women tend to make their clothes last longer due to the high cost of new items ($\bar{X} = 1.95$, Std. Dev. = 1.02), this was also rejected. Conversely, other socio-economic factors were deemed influential. Women often prioritize other household needs over buying new clothes ($\bar{X} = 2.13$, Std. Dev. = 1.05), and many rely on second-hand clothing as a result of financial limitations ($\bar{X} = 2.17$, Std. Dev. = 1.06). Moreover, the rising costs of items and inflation have significantly impacted their wardrobe management practices ($\bar{X} = 2.06$, Std. Dev. = 0.97), leading to a heightened consciousness about their wardrobe choices ($\bar{X} = 2.03$, Std. Dev. = 0.90), though this was rejected in the decision rule. Overall, with a weighted mean of 2.05, it is evident that socio-economic challenges, particularly financial constraints and inflation, play a critical role in shaping wardrobe management among women in this region.

Table 6: What is the impact of effective wardrobe management on women's self-esteem amid socio- economic challenges?

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	Decision Rule
13	Maintaining an organized wardrobe boosts my confidence.	2.03	0.92	Rejected
14	Knowing I have suitable clothes for various occasions positively affects my self-esteem.	2.23	0.98	Accepted
15	Effective wardrobe management reduces stress when deciding what to wear.	1.82	0.94	Rejected
16	I feel more empowered when I can manage my wardrobe effectively despite financial challenges.	2.27	0.99	Accepted
17	Wearing clothes that fit well and look good improves my self-image.	1.97	1.07	Rejected
18	Good wardrobe management helps me feel more prepared and confident in social settings.	2.10	0.93	Accepted

Decision Rule/Weighted mean = 2.07

The table above highlights the impact of effective wardrobe management on women's self-esteem in the current economic climate. While some items were rejected based on the decision rule, significant insights were observed. Maintaining an organized wardrobe, though potentially beneficial, was not strongly linked to boosting confidence ($\bar{X} = 2.03$, Std. Dev. = 0.92). Similarly, the notion that wearing well-fitting clothes improves self-image ($\bar{X} = 1.97$, Std. Dev. = 1.07) and that effective wardrobe management reduces stress when choosing outfits ($\bar{X} = 1.82$, Std. Dev. = 0.94) were also rejected. On the other hand, certain practices were found to positively influence self-esteem. Knowing one has suitable clothing for various occasions positively impacts self-esteem ($\bar{X} = 2.23$, Std. Dev. = 0.98), and the ability to manage one's wardrobe effectively despite financial challenges fosters a sense of empowerment ($\bar{X} = 2.27$, Std. Dev. = 0.99). Additionally, good wardrobe management contributes to feelings of preparedness and confidence in social settings ($\bar{X} = 2.10$, Std. Dev. = 0.93). With a weighted mean of 2.07, the findings suggest that effective

wardrobe management can play a significant role in enhancing women’s self-esteem, particularly in areas related to empowerment, preparedness, and managing appearances in various social and economic contexts.

Table 7: What cultural factors influence wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government?

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	Decision Rule
19	Traditional beliefs influence my choice of clothing and wardrobe organization.	2.33	0.94	Accepted
20	I maintain separate attire for cultural or religious events, which affects how I manage my wardrobe.	2.28	1.09	Accepted
21	The local fashion trends in my community affect the way I select and organize my clothes.	1.56	0.66	Rejected
22	I prioritize clothing styles that reflect cultural values when managing my wardrobe.	1.68	0.76	Rejected
23	Cultural expectations influence how often I update or replace items in my wardrobe.	1.78	0.91	Rejected
24	I keep specific cultural or traditional attire even if I do not wear them frequently. Eg. sanyan, etu, alaari.	1.81	0.91	Rejected

Decision Rule/Weighted mean = 1.91

The cultural factors influencing wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government reveal both traditional and community-related influences, though not all cultural factors showed a significant impact. Two key factors were accepted based on the decision rule. Traditional beliefs strongly influence women’s choice of clothing and wardrobe organization ($\bar{X} = 2.33$, Std. Dev. = 0.94), and the need to maintain separate attire for cultural or religious events also plays a major role in wardrobe management ($\bar{X} = 2.28$, Std. Dev. = 1.09). However, other cultural factors were found to have less of an impact. Local fashion trends in the community ($\bar{X} = 1.56$, Std. Dev. = 0.66), the prioritization of clothing styles reflecting cultural values ($\bar{X} = 1.68$, Std. Dev. = 0.76), cultural expectations regarding how often items should be updated or replaced ($\bar{X} = 1.78$, Std. Dev. = 0.91), and the retention of specific cultural or traditional attire ($\bar{X} = 1.81$, Std. Dev. = 0.91) were all rejected in the decision rule. With a weighted mean of 1.91, the data suggests that while traditional beliefs and the necessity to maintain attire for cultural or religious purposes significantly influence wardrobe management practices, other cultural expectations or trends are less impactful in shaping how women in this community organize and manage their wardrobes.

Table 8: What strategies can be suggested to enhance wardrobe management among women in Ondo West Local Government?

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	Decision Rule
25	Workshops on wardrobe management would be beneficial for women in the community.	1.67	0.82	Rejected
26	Budgeting for wardrobe updates should be included in personal finance training.	1.75	0.90	Rejected
27	Local thrift markets can help improve wardrobe options affordably.	1.91	1.00	Accepted
28	Community sharing programs (e.g., clothing swaps) can help manage wardrobes.	1.98	0.99	Accepted
29	Guidance on clothing care can help extend the life of garments.	1.77	0.87	Rejected
30	Introducing wardrobe planning tools would assist in better wardrobe organization.	2.09	1.11	Accepted

Decision Rule/Weighted mean = 1.86

The suggested strategies to enhance wardrobe management among women in Ondo West Local Government reveal a mix of potential solutions, with some being more acceptable than others based on the decision rule. Several strategies were rejected, including workshops on wardrobe management ($\bar{X} = 1.67$, Std. Dev. = 0.82), incorporating budgeting for wardrobe updates into personal finance training ($\bar{X} = 1.75$, Std. Dev. = 0.90), providing guidance on clothing care to extend garment life ($\bar{X} = 1.77$, Std. Dev. = 0.87), and promoting clothing care education ($\bar{X} = 1.91$, Std. Dev. = 1.00). However, there are a few strategies that were accepted as valuable for improving wardrobe management. Local thrift markets, which provide affordable clothing options, were found to be beneficial ($\bar{X} = 1.91$, Std. Dev. = 1.00). Similarly, community sharing programs, such as clothing swaps, can aid in managing wardrobes effectively ($\bar{X} = 1.98$, Std. Dev. = 0.99). Furthermore, introducing wardrobe planning tools to assist in better organization was also

accepted as a useful strategy ($\bar{X} = 2.09$, Std. Dev. = 1.11). With a weighted mean of 1.86, the findings suggest that practical, community-oriented approaches—such as thrift markets, clothing swaps, and the introduction of planning tools—are seen as more feasible solutions to enhance wardrobe management, while more formal interventions like workshops or budgeting strategies were less favored.

5. Discussion of the Findings

Wardrobe management practices are an important aspect of personal organization and can significantly influence how individuals manage their clothing and resources. In many cultures, including those in Ondo West Local Government, the way women organize, store, and manage their wardrobes is shaped by various factors, including socio-economic status, cultural values, and practical constraints. Recent studies have indicated that seasonal rotation of

clothing is a common practice for effectively managing wardrobes, as it allows individuals to keep their clothing fresh, organized, and accessible (Miller et al., 2020).

The socio-economic challenges faced by women in Ondo West Local Government significantly influence their wardrobe management practices, as demonstrated by the data. While financial constraints were not found to significantly limit the ability to purchase new clothing items, women's wardrobe decisions are still strongly shaped by broader economic factors. Despite the rejection of the claim that the high cost of new items encourages women to make clothes last longer, it remains evident that financial limitations continue to influence wardrobe management in other ways. For example, many women in the region prioritize household needs over clothing purchases, reflecting a common strategy in resource-constrained environments where the immediate demands of family care take precedence (Muthoni et al., 2020).

Similarly, the impact of rising costs and inflation cannot be overlooked. With the increasing cost of living, many women in Ondo West have become more conscious of their wardrobe choices, even though this heightened awareness was not strongly supported by the data. Inflation often leads to shifts in consumer behavior, where spending on clothing becomes more calculated, and purchasing decisions are made with greater consideration of durability, utility, and necessity (Anderson & Clark, 2022). Overall, despite some rejected assertions, the findings underscore the crucial role that financial constraints, inflation, and household priorities play in shaping wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government. These challenges force women to adopt practical strategies, such as relying on second-hand clothing, to cope with economic pressures, while also maintaining a heightened awareness of their spending choices. This reflects broader socio-economic patterns where low-income women balance their clothing needs with other financial obligations, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of women in the face of economic adversity.

The cultural factors influencing wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government reveal a blend of traditional and community-related influences, with some factors playing a more significant role than others. Traditional beliefs, for example, strongly influence women's choices of clothing and how they organize their wardrobes. Clothing in many African communities is not just a functional necessity but also a means of

expressing cultural identity and values. In this context, wardrobe management is deeply tied to cultural pride and tradition, where garments are viewed as symbols of heritage (Ijeoma & Uche, 2021). Studies have highlighted that in many African societies, including Nigeria, maintaining culturally significant clothing is considered a vital part of preserving cultural identity and respecting societal expectations (Ajayi & Akinlabi, 2022). The necessity of maintaining separate attire for cultural or religious events also plays a crucial role in wardrobe management. Women in Ondo West, for example, retain specific garments for occasions like religious ceremonies, weddings, and festivals, as these events often require distinct attire to mark social and cultural milestones. This practice of setting aside special clothes for particular occasions is prevalent in many African communities and is closely tied to religious and cultural observances (Ogunjimi & Fapohunda, 2020). Such attire is not only functional but also symbolic, serving to reinforce social and cultural bonds within the community.

Overall, the findings suggest that traditional and religious values significantly shape how women in Ondo West manage their wardrobes. While local fashion trends and the frequency of updating wardrobes are secondary, the need to maintain culturally appropriate attire for specific events and to preserve traditional clothing practices remains central to wardrobe management. These cultural practices ensure that clothing is not just a personal necessity but a reflection of the community's values and traditions, highlighting the strong link between clothing, identity, and cultural preservation (Fletcher, 2020).

Summary

This study investigated the management of wardrobe in the present socio-economic challenge among women in Ondo west local government area of Ondo State. Specifically, the study intends to: document the wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, investigate how socio economic challenge influence wardrobe management in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, examine the impact of wardrobe management on women's self -esteem in this present economy, identified the cultural factors influencing wardrobe management practices among women in Ondo West Local Government and Suggest strategies to enhance wardrobe management among women in Ondo West Local Government. Five (5) research question and two (2) research hypotheses were raised in line with the objectives of the study. The study employed survey research design and five (5) research questions guided the study. The instrument use for data was self-developed questionnaire. The

following are summary of findings from the study: The study highlights how socio-economic factors, cultural values, and personal preferences influence wardrobe management among women in Ondo West, with seasonal rotation and decluttering commonly adopted. Community-driven strategies like thrift markets and clothing swaps are preferred for their practicality and cost-effectiveness in overcoming financial constraints.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on Strategies for Effective Wardrobe Management Amid Socio-Economic Challenges Among Women in the Ondo West Local Government Area revealed that socio-economic factors, cultural values, and personal preferences shape how women manage their wardrobes. While practices such as seasonal rotation, decluttering, and quality preservation of clothing are commonly adopted, other strategies like budgeting for clothing and organizing for easy access are less frequently practiced. Financial constraints, including the prioritization of household needs and reliance on second-hand clothing, play a significant role in influencing wardrobe management choices. Additionally, while socio-economic status does not significantly impact the factors affecting wardrobe practices, cultural traditions, such as maintaining attire for specific cultural or religious events, remain central. Strategies like thrift markets and clothing swaps, are favored for their practicality and cost-effectiveness in the face of economic limitations. Overall, these findings highlight the resilience of women in Ondo West in navigating the complexities of wardrobe management within the context of limited financial resources.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Rotational, and preservation of cloth should be done regular by women to better manage their wardrobe in current economic
- Introducing low-cost wardrobe planning tools, such as apps or planners, to help women organize and manage their clothing efficiently.
- Self- esteem should become part of women daily life
- Incorporate culturally relevant wardrobe management practices, emphasizing the preservation of culturally significant attire for special occasions.

- Measure like thrift market, clothing swaps amid feasible solution to enhance wardrobe management amid current socio-economic challenges among women in Ondo Local Government Area.

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The Urhobo-Ndakwa Relations: Analysing the Core Delta Claims in an era of State Creation Agitation

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Abstract. The research examines the relationship between the Urhobo and Ndakwa ethnic nationalities in Delta State. Throughout history, the Urhobo have asserted that the Ndakwa ethnic minority is part of what they define as the core Delta. Consequently, they argue that Ndakwa should be incorporated into the authentic Delta State, thereby excluding the other Western Igbo groups (Enuani and Ika) known as Anioma, with whom they share socio-cultural connections. This study seeks to examine the origins of the Ndakwa and Urhobo peoples and their connections that may have led to such assertions. The research relies on a combination of primary and secondary sources to achieve its objectives. The approach utilises a descriptive historical reconstruction methodology for data analysis. The research posits that there is a lack of evidence indicating a connection between the Urhobo and Ndakwa; instead, the association leans towards the Western Igbo groups, all of whom trace their origins to the Igbo east of the Niger, primarily due to linguistic factors and other elements of cultural heritage. The research further reveals that the enduring relationship between the adjacent Urhobo and Ndakwa communities, alongside colonial influences, likely contributed to the emergence of such a claim. Of greater significance, the presence of crude oil deposits in Ndakwa land raises the possibility that, should the core Delta aspiration materialise, the Urhobo would seek to assert control over this wealth, particularly in light of the mono-cultural economic framework currently in operation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Urhobo, Ndakwa, Origin, Core Delta, State Creation.

1. Introduction

The establishment of states has emerged as a significant aspect of Nigeria's political evolution. The inception occurred in 1967 when General Gowon's

military junta instituted a twelve-state framework in Nigeria. Movements advocating the establishment of new states are predicated on the notion that such actions not only resolve issues of minority representation by transforming minorities into majorities but also facilitate a more direct connection between governance and the populace. Consequently, various ethnic nationalities often engage in fervent pursuits aimed at establishing a state, seeking to gain control over finite resources and access to power. Nevertheless, these processes have not consistently unfolded in a tranquil manner within Nigeria, a nation marked by its pluralistic nature. Plural societies demonstrate significant societal fractionalisation, characterised by ethnic and class divisions (Jibo, Simbine and Galadima, 2001, 1). The Ndakwa and Urhobo communities of Nigeria's Delta State exemplify the complexities inherent in this political narrative. The Delta State of Nigeria also exemplifies a pluralistic society, encompassing a significant array of ethnic groups, each with distinct socio-political institutions (Ikime, 2006, 287) within the South-South geopolitical zone of the nation.

In the aftermath of independence, the Delta-Edo communities, guided by the Action Group (AG), sought to establish a distinct region for themselves, driven by concerns of potential marginalisation (Willink's Commission of Enquiry, 2003, 274). Consequently, the Midwestern region came into existence. Nonetheless, the establishment of the area appeared to foster a significant divide between the Edo-speaking populations and the Delta minorities, who had historically gravitated towards one another within the same geographical context and had united in their pursuit of statehood. In 1991, Delta State was created from Bendel State under the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. The state, in its essence, comprises various groups such as the Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ijo, Isoko, and Igbo (including Ndakwa, Anioma, and Ika), among others (Otite, 2000, 46). Consequently,

individuals developed a heightened awareness of their political surroundings, with each faction striving to optimise the opportunities available within it. It is important to recognise that the State was established to tackle the matter of minority concerns. Nonetheless, the formation ultimately led to the diversification of the state, leading certain groups to perceive themselves as the majority and, consequently, entitled to a privileged position within the political framework, in contrast to others.

To that extent, certain factions, spearheaded by the Urhobo, asserted their identity as the 'Core' Deltans, simultaneously designating the Delta Igbo as 'non' Deltans. Consequently, they advocated a separation from the latter, who reside in the state's upland regions. In their fervent discussions, they assert that the Ndokwa, a segment of the Delta Igbo, should be included in what they define as the Core Delta. The assertion is that Delta State should encompass the communities that were part of the former Delta Province, as established by colonial governance, including the Ijo (Ijaw), Itsekiri, Urhobo, Isoko, and Ndokwa groups. As noted by Ikime (2006, 281), there exists a greater sense of familiarity among themselves than with individuals from the former Benin Province; for them, the makeup of Delta State represents a union of disparate elements. The remaining groups indicated that the upland people, or Anioma people, were to be excluded. It is noteworthy that the Urhobo people, as articulated by Ikime (1977, p. 84), contended that the Ukwuani and Aboh groups, historically and collectively identified as the Ndokwa people, ought to be included within the boundaries of Delta State.

Upon the establishment of the state, a multitude of suspicions, assertions, and counter-assertions emerged from various factions regarding the allocation of resources, timing, and locations. The Urhobo group, asserting its position as the majority and leader among the core Deltans, has expressed a desire for Delta State to be governed by the Delta people. This encompasses the various groups that constituted the Delta Province during the colonial period, namely the Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, and Isoko. Given that the Urhobo and Ndokwa peoples communicate through separate, mutually incomprehensible languages, what rationale underlies the Urhobo group's assertion that the Ndokwa people should be included in what it designates as the core Delta State? This study embarks on the premise of exploring the potential connection to the Urhobo and critically examining its assertion regarding the Ndokwa land as an integral component of the Urhobo's envisioned Delta State.

2. Research Methodology

The research was grounded in existing secondary sources pertaining to the topic at hand. The collection encompasses published books, scholarly journals, and pertinent reports. To conduct a thorough examination, both descriptive and analytical methods of historical reconstruction are employed. These methodologies are suitable for the investigation, as alterations in oral narrative patterns may have arisen from various influences, including pride, fear of the unknown, and other factors. Oral traditions are highly relevant to this study, as they help bridge critical gaps in the reconstruction of the early history of African peoples, despite their inherent limitations. Their significance increased when addressing the complexities of group origins and migration. The research examines the early history of the Urhobo and Ndokwa communities, focusing on their origins and migratory patterns to assess the nature of their early interactions and to evaluate the validity of the Urhobo assertion that the "Core Delta" encompasses the Ndokwa populace.

3. Review of Related Literature

In his 2015 analysis, Egenti articulates the connection between language and ethnic identity, emphasising that linguistic usage reveals and affirms a community's identity. This is due to its capacity not only to structure thought but also to forge social connections. Furthermore, it functions as a reflection of social identity and affiliations, akin to modes of attire, culinary practices, and other cultural expressions. For her, language is a significant indicator of ethnic identity. This trait is fundamental to the essence of ethnic identity. Individuals belonging to a particular ethnic group regularly use a language that markedly sets them apart from other ethnic groups. Based on the aforementioned, it can be inferred that there exists no connection between the Ukwuani and Urhobo peoples, as the languages spoken by these two groups are mutually unintelligible.

Lenshie and Yenda (2015) argue that a significant challenge that persists in colonised territories, stemming from a notable characteristic of British colonisation, is the question of citizen versus settler identity. This occurs because colonial authorities tend to amalgamate diverse cultures and backgrounds in pursuit of their own economic gains, disregarding the socio-political ramifications of such actions. Consequently, individuals find themselves engulfed in a state of identity perplexity within a specific clan. While the aforementioned is indeed a reality, there was a notable absence of proposals addressing the pressing issue of identity among African individuals, a matter

that has persistently hindered interpersonal relations, specifically in Nigeria, since the departure of colonial powers from the political landscape.

Onu and Oche (2019) assert that in Nigeria, there exists an unresolved dichotomy between indigenes, those who assert their status as native owners of the land, and settlers, individuals perceived as immigrants who have coexisted with the native owners for an extended duration. They pose a question about the rationale for labelling an individual or a collective as a foreigner solely on the basis of relocation from one locale to another, particularly when they establish residence among others who have also migrated from different origins to the same destination, albeit arriving prior to the former group. Nevertheless, the authors neglected to identify the underlying factors contributing to inter-ethnic conflicts and the potential strategies for their management.

Oko and Ogbodo (2022, 20) assert that Africans tend to define their identities through cultural connections rather than geographical boundaries, a phenomenon observable among the communities of European descent in South Africa. In his view, Africa embodies a richly varied tapestry of social values, transmitted across generations and often observed among neighbouring tribes living in close proximity. One of these societal values is the acknowledgement and esteem for individuals as persons, thereby engaging with them as integral members of the community in which they exist. Nevertheless, a period characterised by a propensity for tribalism and a lack of tolerance for differing perspectives will inevitably arise. Although the aforementioned stance is indeed true, it does not adequately examine the underlying factors that may contribute to tribalism and intolerance within communities.

While there is a plethora of research concerning inter-ethnic relations, the studies examined do not provide a comprehensive analysis of Ndokwa-Urhobo relations. This research endeavours to investigate the historical ties between the Ndokwa and Urhobo, with a particular focus on elucidating the reasons behind the Urhobo group's assertion of Ndokwa as an integral part of the core Delta, to the exclusion of other Anioma groups.

3.1 The Land and Peoples

The Ndokwa and Urhobo are adjacent ethnic groups in Nigeria's western Niger Delta region. Within the present geopolitical landscape, the Ndokwa and

Urhobo represent the North and Central Senatorial districts of Delta State, respectively. The term 'Ndokwa' refers both to the territory and its inhabitants, originating from the appellations of two colonial district councils within the Aboh Division: The Ndoshumili and Ukwuani District Councils. The term 'Ukwuani' refers to the language used by the community. This occurs despite the fact that one of the contemporary local councils governing the populace is named after the language (Ukwuani), while the inhabitants of this region have gradually distanced themselves from their original designation, Ndokwa, and have instead embraced the term Ukwuani.

Ndokwa is derived from the initial three letters of Ndoshumili combined with the second, third, and fifth letters of Ukwuani. The region is organised into three distinct Local Government Areas: Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West, and Ukwuani, with administrative centres located at Aboh, Utagba-Ogbe (Kwale), and Obiaruku, respectively. The region is situated within the longitudinal coordinates of 60° 60' to 60° 420' East and the latitudinal coordinates of 60° 310' to 50° 250' North, specifically in the Niger Delta (Okolugbo, 1984).

Oluka-Nwaeze (2009) asserts that the pre-colonial Ndokwa land functioned as a dual communal society; whereas Aboh operated as a military and commercial kingdom, the remaining upland communities, with the exception of the Emu clan, were posited to lack centralised political authority. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Ukwuani local council maintain proximity to and engage more frequently with the Urhobo communities of Abraka and Orogun. Consequently, this may lead to a heightened level of attention directed towards them in comparison to the Ndokwa East and Ndokwa West councils. Consequently, Ndokwa and Ukwuani will be utilised interchangeably throughout the study.

The Ijaw people, one of the oldest and largest ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria, despite being richly endowed with natural resources—particularly crude oil—the region has faced environmental degradation, socio-economic marginalization, and political unrest. Understanding the Ijaw people requires an exploration of their complex relationship with their environment, their history of resistance and resilience, and their significant role in the broader narrative of Nigeria's oil economy and ethnic politics. This chapter is devoted to geographic milieu and genesis of crude oil exploration and theft in the region.

3.2 Geographical Settings and Demographics of the Ijaws in the Niger-Delta

Figure. 1: Map of the Western Niger Delta showing Study Area.



Source: Okpevra. ?.

A Peep into **Figure 1:** Map of Delta State showing the contiguity of the Ndokwa and the Urhobo people.

Source: Okpevra, U.B. (2022). "A Peep into Isoko Relations with her Neighbours under British Colonial Rule in the Niger Delta of Nigeria". *Abraka Humanities Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1

The Ndokwa represents one of the three subdivisions that constitute the Igbo community west of the River Niger, alongside the Enuani and Ika groups. The three subgroups are now collectively recognised as Anioma (Good Land), situated within Nigeria's Delta State. In the Western Igbo region, the Ukwuani reside in the low-lying, marshy terrain at latitude 50° 50' 70" North and longitude 60° 6' 50" East. The assembly consists of fifteen distinct clans: Abbi, Akoku, Amai, Ebedei, Emu, Eziokpor, Ezionum, Obiaruku, Ogume, Onicha-Ukwuani, Umuebu, Umukwata, Umutu, Utagba-Ogbe, and Utagba-Uno. The term Ukwuani emerges as a conceptual framework rooted in its geographical context. This term refers to inhabitants of low-lying areas, reflecting the Igbo tradition of naming settlements according to their geographical characteristics (Opone, 2017, 133). Ogbogbo (2014, 108) observes that Ukwuani is not merely one of the notable residents of Delta State, but rather a significant entity within the broader South-South region, which is constitutionally encompassed by the states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers.

The term 'Urhobo' refers both to the community and its indigenous language. The Urhobo community communicates in Urhobo. They represent a unique collective within the diverse array of ethnic communities found in the Niger Delta region. Their primary presence is noted in the Local Government Areas of Ethiope East, Ethiope West, Okpe, Sapele, Udu, Uvwie, Ughelli North, Ughelli South, and Warri South. The Urhobo people are recognised as the largest ethnic group in Delta State and rank among the top ten major ethnic groups in Nigeria (Otiye, 2003,

21). Their location is situated in the western region of the Niger Delta, south of latitude 60 North, encompassing a contiguous territory of approximately 5,000 square kilometres. This area is defined by longitude 50, 400 to 60, 250 East and latitude 50, 150 to 60 North, within the southern portion of the state (Aweto, 2005, p. 684). The northern boundary is defined by the Bini (Benin), while the Ijo (Ijaw) delineate the southern edge. To the west, one finds the Itsekiri and Ijo, with the Isoko positioned to the southeast and the Ukwuani to the northeast (Adjara and Omokri, 1997, 1; Eghagha, 2017). Socio-culturally, the Urhobo is made up of twenty-two (22) clans which include Oghara, Idjerhe, Okere-Urhobo, Ephron (Uvwie), Okpe, Agbon, Avwra (Abraka), Agbara-Ame, Agbarho, Orogun, Udu, Agbarha-Otor, Ughievwen, Ughelli, Ephron-Otor (Effurun-Otor), Ogor, Olomu, Evwreni, Eghwu, Uwheru, Okparabe, and Arhavwarien (Ekeh, 2005. 3).

3.3 Origins and Migrations

In a diverse society such as Delta State, characterised by various centrifugal forces and where access to scarce resources, political positions, and job opportunities is predominantly influenced by one's group affiliation, the examination of ancestral traditions has emerged as a persistent topic within the political discourse. This is because it pertains to the fundamental essence of a community's collective identity (Mordi and Opone, 2009, 47). The pursuit of access has engendered instability across nearly all domains of the state (Ifidon, 2012, 334).

Much of what is recorded about the origins and migrations of the Ndokwa people is sometimes believable and, in other cases, speculative. Consistent with many peoples of the region, their traditions of origins and migrations are not written; instead, they rely on information passed down over generations (Ifinedo and Opono, 2024). In an attempt to document their origins, a considerable number of scholars, throughout the years and continuing to the present, have persistently, yet mistakenly, maintained the perspective that the Ukwuani people, or indeed the majority of their communities, trace their origins to the Benin kingdom. Okolugbo (2004) delineated “three waves of migration,” indicating that Benin served as the genesis of the various communities that presently comprise Ukwuani land prior to the British incursion into the region. He asserts that the initial and subsequent waves of the aforementioned migration, which transpired in the 15th and 17th centuries respectively, can be traced back to the Benin Kingdom; whereas the third wave represents a confluence of Benin and Igbo migrants. Ojieh (2003) further supports that assertion, yet approaches the third wave from a distinct perspective, positing that individuals are indigenous to their place of residence. It is likely that they would have overlooked, in their haste, the fundamental truth that every community—be it a family, clan, village, town, or state, regardless of its size—must have originated from a specific point in history. The community may fragment, relocate, and integrate new influences, or be overtaken by external forces and incorporated by incoming populations, thereby resulting in the emergence of a novel tradition of origin for the group (Dike and Ajayi, 1988, 395).

The aforementioned expression assumes that all individuals possess their own unique traditions of origin. In other terms, they neither descended from the heavens nor emerged from the ground. Nevertheless, certain misunderstandings persist regarding the origins of specific groups, influenced by bias and various other factors. In a diverse society such as Nigeria, where limited employment opportunities, political significance, and the overall welfare of the populace are heavily influenced by one's identity and background, inquiries into a person's origins have become increasingly prevalent. Moreover, there is a tendency among “smaller” groups to align with and trace their origins and migrations to groups perceived as more prestigious, in order to maintain their relevance within society. When such occurrences transpire frequently, the indigenous populations tend to become disconnected from their historical narratives, particularly in the absence of contemporary methods for chronicling events in Africa.

An account recorded by Mordi and Opono (2009) details how a group sought refuge from Benin to escape the enslavement imposed by Oba Esigie, who had emerged victorious over them. The Chima group reportedly punished a woman, unaware that she was the Queen Mother, for trespassing and collecting firewood from their land. The Oba, filled with indignation, subsequently mustered an army that vanquished the group, compelling them to seek refuge beyond Esigie's borders. In the midst of their exodus, they established settlements. In addition to the settlements located in the Enuani region, it is reported that the group in flight established Onitsha, situated on the eastern bank of the Niger, along with Obetim (Afor), Ossissa, Ashaka, and Aboh within Ndokwaland. Nonetheless, Nwadiolor (2012, 90) notes that these names carry Igbo connotations and suggests that if they are indeed of Igbo origin, it would be reasonable to infer that within the Ndoshumili (Ndokwa) community, there existed a blend of individuals from both Igbo and Benin backgrounds, and in this scenario, the Benin linguistic influences did not prevail. Consequently, it seems that the Benin migrants encountered other communities that had established themselves in the region prior to their arrival. Consequently, one can assert that the Ndoshumili people likely possess a greater historical depth than the Benin migrants in the region. Isichei (1976) posits that the ancient origins of their settlement along the Niger are encapsulated in the designation assigned to them by other Igbo groups, ‘Ndoshumili,’ which translates to ‘people of the Niger.’

Furthermore, Opono (2017, 144) has questioned Ukwuani's claim of origin from Benin and argued that such a claim does not reflect historical reality. He interrogates the oral traditions of the various communities that make up Ukwuani and observes that: The dominant narrative that the Ukwuani people are Benin immigrants is not supported by evidence. The people speak Igbo language (the most eloquent cultural badge), bear Igbo names and share similar religio-cultural traits with the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, which are obvious indications that they are Igbo settlers. However, claims of origin from Benin by some Ukwuani communities may not be unconnected with their early contact with the Benin kingdom. The Igbo migrants appeared to have gone deep into Benin territory earlier to a place called Ado na Idu. Such movements might have continued for some time before being forced to recoil by Esigie's hostilities in the 16th century. On their way they founded many settlements in the Western Igbo area including the Ukwuani land.

It is thus clear that the Ukwuani people do not share a connection with the Urhobo. This is particularly noteworthy given that the languages of both groups, which serve as essential socio-cultural elements for their people, bear no relation to Urhobo. Atanda (1980, 2) emphasises this point, asserting that language is a fundamental factor in defining an ethnic group's identity. It functions as the primary means of communication, and in its absence, the collective existence and distinct identity of that ethnic group become unattainable. Despite the debates regarding the origins of the Ukwuani people, forensic research has established that they are indeed part of the Igbo ethnic group (Izuegbu, 2003, 14). This conclusion is further supported by linguistic evidence demonstrating their ties to the Igbo communities east of the Niger River (Afigbo, 1980, 75).

Throughout the years, various narratives regarding the origins of the Urhobo people have been proposed. Nevertheless, they are accompanied by a range of controversies. This is especially true given the scarcity of documentary evidence and the absence of archaeological and palynological data, which have compelled scholars to turn to oral traditions that may be shaped by various influences (Otite, 1971). Nonetheless, the majority of interpretations adopted by scholars, such as Ekeh (2005, p. 10), Otite (2003, pp. 26-27), and Ikime (1969, pp. 6-7), appear to trace the origins of numerous Urhobo clans back to Benin. This belief may be related to the linguistic classification of the Urhobo language within the Edo-Igbo language group (Ekeh, 2005a, 9; Thomas, 2010), as well as to parallels in political and socio-cultural practices, including the monarchical kingship system.

Conversely, some assert that the inhabitants are indigenous to their respective locales. For example, Ometan (2002) and Idjakpo (2010) argue that the Urhobo people did not migrate from elsewhere, but are native to their land and have resided there since ancient times. There is a belief that humanity either descended from the heavens or emerged from the soil, akin to the mythological narratives concerning the Yoruba genesis at Ile-Ife, regarded as the epicentre of dispersion to various locales (Ogeroju, 2021, 195-196). Though these assertions have been thoroughly discredited by historians over an extended period. Irrespective of prevailing beliefs, it is evident that the Urhobo and Ndokwa communities lack any intrinsic connection regarding their origins and migratory patterns.

3.4 The Contention

The inquiry that persists in stimulating contemplation is: why does the Urhobo, asserting its status as the

majority in Delta State, argue that the Ukwuani constitutes a segment of what it designates as the Core or authentic Delta State? Initially, one might consider the geographical positioning of the two groups prior to the arrival of Europeans and the subsequent blending of populations. The Urhobo territory is delineated to the north by Benin, to the south by the Ijo, to the west by the Itsekiri, to the south-east by Isoko, and to the north-east by the Ndokwa people, specifically situated between the Abraka and Aragba-Orogun as well as the Obiaruku and Abbi clans respectively. The closeness inherently establishes both groups as neighbours. Otite (2003, 21) notes that both groups possess similar geographical characteristics and natural resources, particularly the Ndokwa people in the present-day Ukwuani Local Government Area of the State. The primary characteristic that sets apart the two regions is the tropical rainforest belt, marked by a rich tapestry of dense vegetation. This includes an evergreen forest composed of towering trees, with a thick undergrowth of climbing plants that intertwine closely along streams and creek channels (Ojeh and Ojoh, 2012, 313). This forest belt, however, is characterised by the predominance of the oil palm tree within its natural vegetation. This emerged as a significant factor in shaping relationships among individuals as they participated in a shared endeavour of palm oil production (Ikime, 2004, 89).

Moreover, within the regulated trade in palm oil, the Itsekiri, who interacted directly with European traders along the coast, depended heavily on the Urhobo community for acquiring oil palm. The explanation for this phenomenon lies in the geographical separation between the Utagba-Ogbe (Kwale) and Aboh communities, both of which engaged in oil palm cultivation, and the Itsekiri (Ikime, 1969, 66). The Urhobo relied on the adjacent Ukwuani communities, which possess comparable natural vegetation, to provide supplementary palm oil and kernels to the Itsekiri. As a result, this interaction may have deepened the association between the two groups.

Moreover, in 1960, Abraka, an Urhobo community, and Obiaruku, a Ukwuani community, which are in close proximity to each other, were of significant importance to the British authorities during the colonial administration, to such an extent that they were perceived as a unified entity owing to their intertwined cultural interactions. As a result, this closeness has cultivated a strong bond between the two adjacent communities from multiple perspectives to the present time (Okolugbo, 2004, 2).

In the third instance, during the colonial era, when individuals in authority were partitioning Nigerian

territories in the 1930s, the Jekri-Sobo Province was established, with its administrative centre in Warri. The province comprised the Itsekiri, Urhobo, Ukwuani, Isoko, Ijo, and Aboh (Ikime, 1977, p. 84). The consequence of such a confederation would have been that the constituent groups of the province engaged with one another, either through a shared comprehension or under compulsion to unite in their opposition to the British authorities. It can be argued that this phenomenon represents a colonial remnant, in which disparate groups were indiscriminately combined, leading to a protracted engagement that has shaped the Urhobo group's perception of the Ukwuani people as potential constituents of what they define as the authentic Deltas.

Ultimately, and of paramount significance, is what may be referred to as the politics of oil. This appears to be the most likely interpretation of the argument, with the ongoing debate centring on who holds authority over various matters. From the inception of the state, Ikime (2006, p. 281) articulates that the factions within the colonial Delta Province, which the Urhobo assert to be the predominant group, exhibit a greater affinity towards the entities in the federation compared to those associated with the Benin Province, encompassing the Ika and Aniocha/Oshimili (Asaba) Peoples. Nevertheless, an examination beyond the fig reveals that this sense of comfort is likely contingent on the potential benefits of including Ukwuani land within the proposed federation.

Among the Igbo-speaking Deltans, the Ukwuani community, which encompasses the three Local Government Areas of Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West, and Ukwuani, is notably rich in the valuable resource known as black gold. It is evident that the discovery of significant oil reserves in 1958 marked a pivotal transition in the economy of Nigeria, particularly in Delta State, from agriculture and traditional vocations to a focus on crude oil. This occurs notwithstanding the significant contributions of palm oil to Nigeria's economy prior to this revelation (Aboyeji, 2021, 25). At present, the Ukwuani Local Government Area ranks as the fourth-largest oil-producing region in Delta State, following Itsekiri, Ijo, and Isoko. It is noteworthy for having the largest gas deposit in Africa, surpassed only by Russia's. The possession of these resources within a state will ensure a consistent flow of revenue, thereby fostering economic development. It is undeniable that the Urhobo group seeks to deny the Anioma people access to this natural wealth, thereby positioning themselves to dominate the resources as the purported majority through the anticipated establishment of the core Delta State. This observation stems from historical analysis, indicating

that the two groups are more interconnected through economic factors than through other considerations.

4. Conclusion

The research has critically examined the enduring debate and advocacy of the Urhobo regarding the inclusion of the Ukwuani in a coalition, to the degree that it (Ukwuani) ought to be recognised as a component of what the Urhobo refer to as the Core Delta. Evidence clearly demonstrates that the Ukwuani people are of Igbo origin and thus lack significant socio-cultural connection to the Urhobo. It was revealed that, despite interactions occurring between the two groups before the colonial era due to geographical necessities and inherent characteristics, they remain politically and socio-culturally distinct. The Urhobo community operates under a centralised political structure known as Ovie-ship, which provided a stable foundation for British authorities to exert effective control over the region. Conversely, the Ukwuani community operates under a decentralised political framework characterised by a gerontocratic structure known as the Okpala-Uku system, wherein the eldest male of each clan assumes oversight functions alongside various age-grade groups. Moreover, the two groups communicate in mutually unintelligible languages, serving as a fundamental indicator of their cultural divergence; their lifestyles are significantly distinct from one another.

The study revealed that the fragmentation of the region by colonial authorities compelled the two groups, among others, to operate under a unified political framework. It has also been revealed that both groups, among others, possess natural resources—specifically crude oil—which the Urhobo, as the recognised majority in the state, may seek to dominate. One must consider that, should the Urhobo people pursue this self-serving endeavour, the issue of pluralism, which the creation of states was intended to address, would only intensify. The artificial political constructs established by colonial authorities were fundamentally designed for the exploitation of African populations. Nostalgic and irredentist tendencies often manifest when groups in question lack cultural compatibility, particularly when they are denied the socio-political benefits afforded by their society.

It is important to acknowledge that should the agitation materialise, the issue of pluralism, along with the accompanying fears of minority groups that have troubled the state, will persist. This is evident, as noted, in the lack of any affinity between the two groups. Nevertheless, the essence of this matter concerning disunity may not lie solely between core

and non-core Deltans; rather, the contention revolves around self-serving politicians who exploit the populace's lack of awareness and education, inciting discord among them to further their own agendas and secure electoral support. It is of paramount importance that successive governments, particularly at the state level, fulfil their responsibilities to initiate and ensure equitable developmental progress across the various groups within the state. Ultimately, there is a pressing need for fairness, equity, and justice among the state's populace. The perpetual evolution of history has facilitated the convergence of diverse groups, regardless of any inherent comparative advantages. One must consider that what appears to be an advantage may not endure indefinitely, while what seems to be a disadvantage could potentially be transformed into an advantage, as exemplified by the situation in Great Britain. Yesterday, the focus was on agriculture, specifically palm oil; today, it shifts to oil; and tomorrow, it could very well be an entirely different matter beyond those that claim majority's grasp. Thus, all ethnic nationalities of Delta State should promote unity in diversity to provide an enabling environment for the State's development based on equity, fairness, and justice.

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Administration of Flood Disasters Mitigation Strategies in Riverine Communities in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract. The problem of flooding in several communities in Niger State is becoming more worrisome and efforts and strategies at reducing the impact have become more costly with unsatisfactory outcomes. This study therefore, seeks the assessment of the administration of flood disaster mitigation strategies in riverine communities in Niger State. The specific objectives of the study were to identify the flood mitigation measures adopted in the study area, find out if the administration of flood mitigation methods have been effective in the study area; and know the challenges and prospects of effective administration of flood mitigation measures in three selected riverine communities of Mokwa, Rijau and Shiroro from the three Senatorial Zones of the State, with a total population of 983623 and a sample size of 400. The sample size was determined using 1967 Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. Findings from the study revealed that various mitigation strategies have been used over the years but without much impact due to poor awareness and community engagement and responses during flood disasters. The study concludes that the rate and impact of flood disasters in the selected riverine communities could be reduced if effectively administered through productive community awareness, engagement and quick responses during flood disasters. The recommendations are that, the communities should be productively engaged in the administration of the various flood mitigation strategies for quick and adequate responses during flood disasters.

Keywords: Flood, Disaster, Mitigation Strategies, Disaster Administration and Productive engagement

1. Introduction

Flood disasters pose significant threat to lives and

property globally causing extensive damage to infrastructure, disrupting livelihoods, and endangering human lives. Climate change, unsound environmental behaviour, inadequate drainage infrastructure and uncoordinated urbanization, and deforestation are among the factors that triggers or exacerbate the occurrences of flooding. Consequently, frantic efforts have been made by government at federal, state and local levels to develop comprehensive strategies and approaches that focus on both mitigating the causes of flooding and implementing effective response measures when flood disasters occur. Mitigation measures by Niger State aimed at addressing the underlying causes of flooding have been developed and implemented over the years with minimal success. These initiatives involve the construction and maintenance of drainage systems, river channelization, public sensitization and floodplain management.

Nigeria had a historically threatening flood especially, 2002, 2012, and 2022 which affected extensive areas in 30 States, particularly in the country's southern regions, killing 400 people and uprooting 1.3 million more (Wu, Lu, Zhou, Chen, Xu, 2016; World Economy Forum 2023).

In 2012, Cameroun, a neighbor to Nigeria with 1,975 km long land border with Nigeria that connects to the Atlantic Ocean in the south and a triangular point with Chad in the north, opened its reservoir dam known as Lardo, which is situated in the northern province of Cameroun along the course of the Benue River (Agada & Nirupama, 2015). The construction of this dam in 1982 was intended to provide electricity to the northern part of the country and enable the irrigation of agricultural lands (Modo, 2023). It is expected that Nigeria would build another dam in the downstream to

accommodate excess water each time the water from Lardo Dam is released to reduce flooding and maximize other benefits of the dam. However, this has not been done. Since the dam was built, its releases of water occurred in the years 2002 and 2012, each time causing severe flooding in Nigeria (Agada & Nirupama, 2012).

Cumulatively, estimated billion-dollar investments were destroyed (World Economy Forum 2023). The flood destroyed billion-dollar investments made in agriculture and caused a rise in food prices and severe food shortages in Nigeria (Eme, Onyishi, Uche & Uche, 2023).

Nigeria saw the highest number of flood-related casualties as of October 6th, 2022, with 2 million people forced to flee their homes, 612 people lost their lives, 200,000 dwellings were damaged, and 7483 individuals contracted cholera or other waterborne illnesses (World Bank, 2024).

Niger State has not been left out of the issue of devastating floods due to its location in the North-Central part of Nigeria with several water bodies. The State's geographical location, characterized by low-level of water absorption clay soil and significant riverine terrain, makes it susceptible to flooding during heavy rainfall. The presence of River Kaduna, River Niger and the Baro river as well as the operation of Hydro-electricity dams in Kainji, Jebba, Shiroro and Zungeru have become a source great concern to the inhabitants of the riverine communities. Riverine communities like Baro, Agaie, Bida, etc, have remained highly vulnerable due to their location and proximity to the Niger-River valley and River Kaduna. Between 1999-2000, houses, schools, livestock, farmland and over 200,000 persons were displaced (Niger State Emergency Management Agency, 2000). Between 4th and 8th September 2024, the Global Data Institute Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), in collaboration with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Niger State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA), and the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), identified 71 locations in Niger State that were impacted by floods or received internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the flooding.

In response to this recurring threat, various mitigation and response measures have been implemented to reduce the impact of flood disasters on the State and its inhabitants. Niger State Government, in collaboration with World Bank, Hydropower Producing Area Development Commission (HYPPADEC), Ecological Funds Office and other

relevant agencies have embarked on projects to expand and rehabilitate existing drainage systems and construct new canals.

One notable reference highlighting the mitigation and proactive measures to flood disasters in Niger State is the "New Niger Development Agenda, (2024)" published by the Niger State Government under the monitoring and supervision of the "New Niger Development Project". This document outlines a comprehensive strategy for all developmental issues, disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response, and recovery, emphasizing the importance of coordination between government agencies, communities, and other stakeholders.

In a bid to cope and be proactive towards flood disasters in Niger State, some mitigation and preparedness strategies were designed and implemented both at State and local community levels. Among the strategies include the relocation of those residing on the river banks and flood plains, construction of drainages, clearing of drains before the commencement of the rainy season, enforcement of waste management and disposal laws, and establishment of Rapid Response Teams among others. However, continued efforts on public awareness campaigns, and sustainable practices are essential to ensure the long-term resilience of Niger State in the face of recurring flood disasters, hence, the need for more studies on the approaches to mitigating flood disaster risks in riverine areas cannot be overstressed.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The increasing rate of government expenditure and efforts towards the administration and mitigation of flood disasters without corresponding impact on the residents of affected communities is increasingly worrisome. Annually, substantial budgetary allocation, sensitization and enlightenment on good environmental practices, as well as relocation from flood plains are made. In a not too recent report on flooding in Niger State by the International Organization on Migration (2024), Agaie local government area had the highest number of affected 4,436 or 27% individual from the affected population in the State. Mokwa followed with 2,133 or 13%. Bida recorded 2,000 individuals or 12%, while Katcha had 1,332 individuals or 8%. Kontagora had 1,030 individuals affected, accounting for 6%, and Borgu followed with 700 individuals or 4%. Munya also had 690 individuals or 4%, while Lavun had 568 or 3%. Rafi recorded 544 individuals, Gbako 525, Lapai 490, all making up 3% each. Mashegu had 450 or 3%,

Shiroro 437 or 3%, and Edati 360 or 2%. Suleja had 332 individuals or 2%; Gurara 300 or 2%; Agwara 192 or 1%; and Rijau had the lowest with 40 individuals, accounting for less than 1% (International Organization on Migration 2024; www.iomnigeriadtm@iom.int, Global Data Institute Displacement Tracking Matrix, 2024).

Similarly, specifically, on the 27th May 2025, Mokwa community in Mokwa Local Government Area of Niger State experienced a devastating flood leading to the loss of over 151 lives and millions of properties (Capacity Media Trust, 2025). In Mokwa, Rijau, Shiroro and several Local Government Areas of the State, devastating floods have become an annual phenomenon (Friend of the Environment (FOTE, 2024).

Despite several mitigating strategies from various scholars, flood disaster management has continued to be a big challenge and its negative impact on economic development, environmental sustainability and improving standard of living has continued to impede affected communities' progress and development. The analyses of these previous studies indicated a neglect of collaborative and productive community engagement in the administration of the formulation and implementation of flood disaster mitigation strategies. It is on this background that this study seeks the analysis of flood disaster mitigation approaches in riverine communities of Mokwa, Rijau and Shiroro in Niger State so as to identify the flood mitigation measures adopted in the study area, find out the effectiveness or otherwise flood disaster mitigation administration methods and know the challenges and prospects of effective flood disaster mitigation administration in the study area.

To realize these objectives, the pertinent questions put forward by the study are: What are the flood mitigation measures adopted in the study area? Which of the flood mitigation methods have been effective in the study area? What are the challenges and prospects of effective administration of flood disaster mitigation in the study area?

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Concept of Flood

Luino, (2016) defined flooding as the rising and overflowing of a body of water, especially onto normally dry land. It has different types/classes based on the water level, size, duration, wave strength, magnitude of destruction, cause(s), and area affected

(Serinaldi, Loecker, Kilsby, & Bast, 2018).

2.2 Concept of Flood Disaster

Several definitions with regards to disaster exist. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) defines a disaster as “a sudden ecological phenomenon of sufficient magnitude to require external assistance”. It is also defined as any event, typically occurring suddenly, that causes damage, ecological disruption, loss of human life, deterioration of health and health services, and which exceeds the capacity of the affected community on a scale sufficient to require outside assistance.

Flood Disaster and Risk Administration. Flood disaster and risk administration ranges from information gathering, and disaster and risk analysis to continuous societal disaster impact and risk assessment and adoption of policies (Sayers *et al.* 2013). This broad range of flood management is rather less considered during the formulation of preparedness and mitigation strategies, which has mostly constituted structural measures for flood mitigation. Negligence to enforce established frameworks and policies that enhance flood risk management contributes to the vast number of Niger State population living in flood-exposed and prone areas with the urban poor being the most vulnerable groups (Adelekan, 2016). Flood control is changing the natural state of flooding via engineering measures, to reduce flood disaster. It was first applied to control floods when humans realized that floods were inevitable but manageable (Kundzewicz *et al.*, 2019; Zevenbergen *et al.*, 2020; Abdi-Dehkordi *et al.*, 2021).

2.2.1 Causes of Flood Disasters

The causes of flood disasters in Niger State can be attributed to a combination of natural and human factors. These factors exacerbate the vulnerability of some of the communities to flood disasters. Some of the major causes of flood disasters include heavy rainfall, climate change, poor drainage systems, rapid urbanization and increased construction of buildings and roads, bad environmental practices by residents, deforestation and soil erosion and low soil absorptive capacity (Okafor *et al.*, 2020; Agwu *et al.*, 2019; UNEP, 2018; Oyegbile, *et al.*, 2018, Ukpere *et al.*, 2018).

3. Impact of Flood Disasters in Nigeria

3.1 Poverty Perpetuation

Flood disasters have continued to be a part of the major

factors hindering Africa's growing population of city dwellers from escaping poverty, and stands in the way of the Sustainable Development Goals of achieving 'significant improvement' in the lives of urban slum dwellers' (Action Aid, 2022).

3.2 Degradation of Communities' Socio-Economic Lives

Bariwani, *et al.*, (2012) revealed that the floods of 2012 in Nigeria had a major impact on socioeconomic life for days, weeks and even months in some areas. Roads and buildings were submerged thereby halting movements and victims were trapped due to blockage of road and damaged bridges (Nzeh, *et al.* 2012 cited in Ifeanyi-Obi, *et al.* 2017).

3.3 Increases Transportation Costs and Travel Time

Describing the impacts of flooding in Nigeria, Odunuga, *et al.*, (2018) revealed that 81% of respondents surveyed reported increase in transportation costs and breakdown of vehicles making travel difficult. Adelekan & Asiyanbi (2016) reported that more than half of all respondents surveyed had experienced property and damage worth more than NGN 52,000 (USD 330), which is more than one month's income for three-quarters of the respondents.

3.4 Environmental and Infrastructural Degradation and Destruction

Flood disasters destroy available infrastructure like roads, electricity, communication facilities, culverts and bridges, health centers, pipe borne water etc, thereby, causing shortages and degradation to the few that are left. The consequence of these is over pressure on the available infrastructure aftermath flooding, more expenditure for replacement and refurbishment (Abubakar, *et al.*, 2020).

3.5 Increases Health, Sanitation and Environmental Hazards

Flood disasters have a very negative effect on the health and environment of residents because flood waters normally mix with sewage and contaminate drinking water most especially, well water and streams which serve as major sources of drinking water to rural communities (Nnaji *et al.*, 2020).

3.6 Possibilities in Effective Flood Disaster Administration

The prospects of effective flood disaster management in Niger State are promising, with potentials for significant improvements in mitigating the impacts of flooding and enhancing the resilience of the state. Several factors contribute to these prospects and they include but not limited to enhanced awareness and education, improved early warning systems, strengthened infrastructure, collaborative approach and climate change adaptation (Ologunorisa *et al.*, 2021; Nnaji *et al.*, 2020, Ibimilua & Okereke, 2019)

Post-flood disaster mitigation strategies are crucial for effective recovery and long-term resilience-building in the aftermath of flood disasters. These strategies aim to address the immediate needs of affected communities, restore essential services, mitigate future flood risks, and promote sustainable development. The following are key post-flood management strategies:

Disaster Preparedness: as defined by Siriwardhana *et al.* (2021) as disaster preparedness is "a set of activities, measures, and capacities developed by governments, private sectors, communities, and individuals before a disaster, to support vulnerable populations to mitigate the impact of hazards and to enable their effective response and recovery including developing early warning systems, evacuation plans, formulating emergency preparedness plans, conducting education/training programs, and prepositioning resources". It involves daily practices giving an overview of the level of influence of hazard perception of citizens on responsive actions in the face of disasters (Hatori *et al.*, 2023)

On a similar note, Appleby-Arnold *et al.* (2021) conclude that daily disaster preparedness behavior by individuals can be strengthened by community-individual collaboration through the establishment of the recommendations amongst which include:

- Family should set up emergency plans, simple reminders, easy communication medium, and convergence points in situations of disasters,
- Individuals should lookout for publicly displayed information on how to prepare for disasters and form a habit of reading and memorizing this information,
- Enquire for and attend community workshops on disaster preparedness programs,
- Create bonds with individuals of other cultural backgrounds to foster better communication during an evacuation,

- Inform other participants and trainers of personal skills during workshops that could be useful to the community during disaster response.

4. Empirical Review on Related Studies

Funmilayo, Roohollah, Taofeeq, and Zina (2025), assessed surface water flood mitigation strategies: a global comparative review. They asserted that discourse on climate change has brought to the fore the pressing need for improved flood management strategies and that recent trends indicate a surge in flooding incidents in residential areas, capable of potentially disrupting socio-economic activities and result in loss of lives. The study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to comprehensively assess and compare various flood mitigation strategies employed in residential zoning practices globally. Findings from the study highlight several key areas, including the impact of strategies on flood susceptibility, the effectiveness of rainwater harvesting systems and green infrastructure in flood management, and the importance of sustainable urban development and ecological preservation. Proposed strategies, such as neighbourhood and site planning, regional planning, storm water management, green roofs, permeable pavements, and regulatory measures, offer valuable pathways for safeguarding water resources in urban planning efforts.

Ayuba, Muritala, Gilles, Nasir, and Luc Vechot (2024) conducted a survey on pre-disaster preparedness/prevention and mitigation strategies for floods using Lagos, Nigeria as a case study. They argued that climate change-induced phenomena are increasingly becoming frequent and intense causing global challenges and that urbanization and population growth continue to aggravate flood events, making building resilient cities a vital way to combat them. The study reviewed flood preparedness and mitigation strategies employed in developed countries to reveal flood risk management practices that promote resilience in these countries to allow adoption in struggling and developing countries such as Nigeria. The review from previous and current studies followed three methods consisting of inclusion and exclusion criteria, abstract screening, and full-text review. The findings from past studies present multifaceted measures taken to prepare for and mitigate floods and how they have enabled people and cities to live with floods, however, developing countries still face a major risk of a severe impact from flood inundation.

Mostafizur, *et-al* (2024) surveyed flood preparedness in rural flood-prone area: a holistic assessment

approach in Bangladesh Despite the many fatalities and injuries, the study evaluated flood preparedness in the flood-prone rural region of Dowarabazar Upazila, Sunamganj District, Bangladesh. Cross-sectional survey was conducted in Dowarabazar, an Upazila of Sunamganj District, susceptible to flooding in northeastern Bangladesh. Residents of this Upazila who were at least 18 years old were included in the sample. An in-person field study was performed. Dowarabazar Upazila is situated between 24°58'ⁱ and 25°11'ⁱ North latitude and 91°240 and 91°43'ⁱ East longitude and encompasses an area of 263.35 square kilometers (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2011). It is bordered to the north by the Indian state of Meghalaya. Along with its 228,460 inhabitants, Dowarabazar Upazila was home to 42,693 households (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2011). Compared to the national average of 51.8%, its literacy rate (for those aged 7 and over) was 30.38% (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2011). The field survey had 596 respondents. As required, the study implemented Spearman's rank correlation and multiple linear regressions. Most respondents warned that floods might affect their homes. Many participants reported receiving flood-related information from locals. Most participants reported not being notified of flood forecasts and warnings in their area. The majority indicated that they sought refuge in flood shelters. A significant portion of the participants in the study were unaware of flood preparedness. Loss minimization and adaptability are deficiencies. Concerning flood preparedness, gender, age, occupation, monthly income, multiple sources of income, and house type are all significant determinants. Recommendation from the study was that authorities should thus take these factors into account while enhancing flood preparedness. In addition to implementing measures such as improving livelihood patterns and conducting educational campaigns, it is imperative to construct holistic flood preparedness.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1 Emergency Management Theory

Emergency Management Theory is a theory of disaster and risk management propounded by an American expert in Emergency Administration David McEntire, in 2004. This theory was formulated in a bid to provide a pragmatic, proactive and reactive all-in-one paradigm for management of disruptive and hazardous phenomena after the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Centre on 11 September, 2001 in United States of America. This theory holds that disastrous emergencies are inevitable in the society and have the tendency of causing unrecoverable

effects unless responsible, immediate and urgent measures are taken in the dimension of preventing, responding, recovering and mitigating issues of these emergencies. It states that unless these measures and the strategies of executing them are put in place, the society is doomed to be marred by unrecoverable emergency situations that will threaten its existence.

5.2 Thrust of Emergency Management Theory

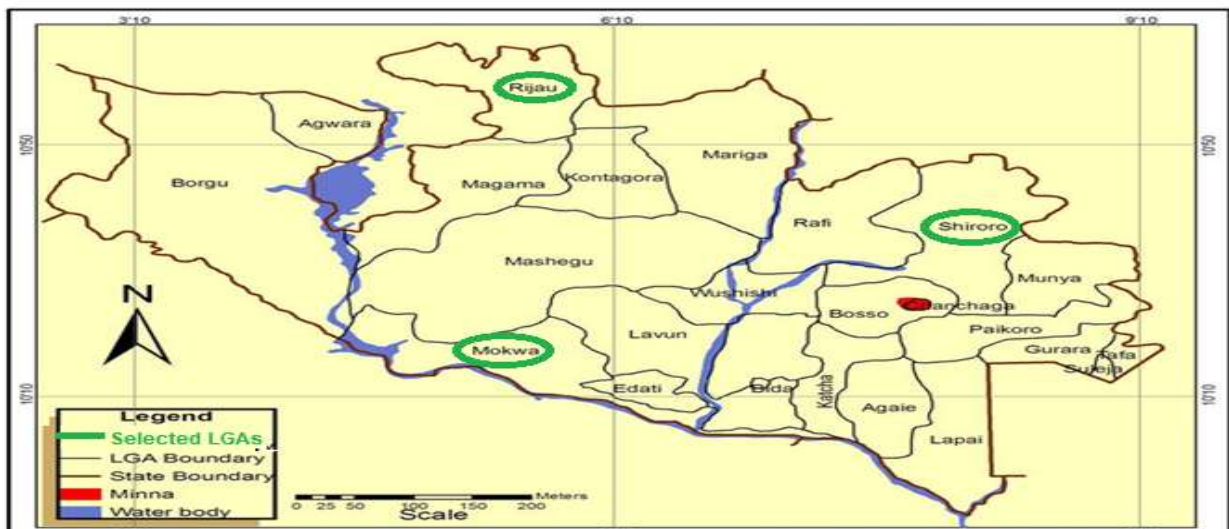
The trust of EMT is Preparedness, pro-activeness, re-activeness and post-emergency actions. The theory holds that if the human species and society do not want to be likened to the extinct animal species, then they should evolve proactive, reactive and post-emergency occurrence measures and plans that will combat disastrous emergencies and their effects head-on. The measures to be adopted should be in line with the nature of the disaster and must conform to the following fundamental principles: Preparedness, Response, Recovery and Mitigation, (McEntire,

2004). This is to say that measures to be taken to curtail emergencies and their effects from ravaging and ruining the society should be measures taken pre-disaster occurrence in readiness for any eventuality of disastrous nature; measures taken to eliminate, suppress and/or reduce the effects of an already occurred disaster; measures taken to help the victims of disaster as at the time of disaster occurrence in terms disaster rescue; and measures taken to normalize the disaster affected area as well as disaster affected victims.

6. Research Methodology

The design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey design which involves the use of questionnaire for the collection of data. Under the survey research design, the primary data for this study was collected from 983263 population from Mokwa, Rijau and Shiroro Communities in Niger State

Map of Niger State, Nigeria showing selected Local Government Areas



Source: www.nigerstate.gov.ng

The population of the study comprises Mokwa 297,911, Shiroro 335,404, and Rijau 338,481 (3.5% World Bank annual projection from 2006 census).

To determine the sample Size, Taro Yamane (1967) formula was adopted as shown below:

$$\frac{n}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{983623}{1+983623(0.005)^2} = \frac{983623}{983624 (0.0025)} = \frac{983623}{2459} = 400 =$$

The sample size is therefore: 400

The sample size for each department is obtained using the formula below

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of each Department}}{\text{Total Number of Population}} \times \text{Total Sample Size}$$

Table 2: below shows the specific Sample distribution.

S/n	Name of Community	Population	Sample Size/dept
1	Rijau	350,308	$\frac{350308 \times 400}{983623} = 142$
2	Mokwa	297,911	$\frac{297911 \times 400}{983623} = 121$
3	Shiroro	335,404	$\frac{335.404 \times 400}{986323} = 136$
Total		986323	400

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Data were sourced from primary and secondary sources, analyzed, presented and hypotheses were tested using simple percentages, computer aided package known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS):

7. Discussion and Summary of Major Findings

A total of 400 respondents were surveyed and 392(98%) respondents returned their questionnaires. 8(2%) didn't return their questionnaire duly completed. Among these respondents, 279(71.2%) were males and 113(28.8%) were females, 169(43%) are single, 127(32%) married, 49(13%) divorced, 19(5%) widowed and 28(7%) separated.

The age analysis of respondents showed that 290(73%) are between 18 - 47 years while 102 (27%) years are from 48 years and above.

On the question with regards to awareness on the flood mitigation measures adopted in selected communities in Niger State, 71(18%) strongly agreed, 34(9%) agreed, 4(1%) were neutral, 175 (45%) disagreed, while 108 (28%) strongly disagreed.

Also, on the respondents' level of awareness of the nature of flood mitigation measures adopted in their communities, 129(33%) favoured very high, 19(5%) favoured 6(2%) were neutral, 179 (46%) indicated low while 59 (15%) indicated a very low.

On the question with regards to the existences of differences in flood mitigation measures adopted in the selected communities, 90(23%) strongly agreed, 101(26%) agreed, 7(2%) were neutral, 123(31%) disagreed, while 71(18%) strongly disagreed.

On how whether local knowledge actually influences the respondents' participation in flood disaster mitigation in their community, 83(21%) strongly agreed, 93(24%) agreed, 50(11%) were neutral, 45(31%) disagreed while 121(31%).

On how effective are the flood mitigation methods in

their communities, 77(20%) strongly agreed, 109(28%) agreed, 12(3%) were neutral, 89(23%) disagreed, while 105(27%) strongly disagreed.

With regards to whether community members get ready to respond to perceived flood events, 79 (20%), strongly agree, 75(19%) agree, 72(18%) were neutral, 91(23%) disagreed, while 75(19%) strongly disagreed.

On the challenges and prospects of effective flood mitigation measures in their communities, 141(20%) strongly agreed, 175(45%) agreed, 6(2%) were neutral, 39(10%) disagreed, while 31(8%) strongly disagreed.

With regards to any need for strengthening existing government policies/frameworks that promote and enhance sustainable flood disaster mitigation, 123(31%) strongly agreed, 179 (46%), agreed, 5(1%) were neutral, 53(14%) disagreed, while 32(8%) strongly disagreed.

8. Conclusion

The efforts towards flood disaster mitigation administration could be more effective via a combination of measures though with significant and productive community engagement. By engaging the community productively, riverine communities in Niger State can get involved in the formulation and implementation of Flood disaster mitigation approaches by taking ownership of such programmes. This will bring about effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability and eventually minimize the impacts of flood disasters, protect lives and property, and promote the well-being of the riverine communities.

9. Recommendations

Based on the discussion of mitigation and response measures to flood disasters in Rivers State, the following recommendations are suggested:

Infrastructural improvement and strengthening:

there is need for infrastructure upgrade and strengthening as the current available infrastructure are obsolete, weak, deficient and inadequate. The various bridges, drainages, water channels and dams need to be strengthened and upgraded so as to be able to withstand the pressure arising from excess flow of water.

Pro-activeness: There is need for enhancing early warning signals for predictability, early evacuation and response. This could be through weather monitoring stations, and communication systems to alert residents and authorities about impending floods. Public awareness campaigns and sensitizations are also necessary to ensure the effectiveness of early warning signals.

Financial incentives and Insurance supports: the riverine communities that are vulnerable flooding could be organized into cooperative or action group so as to get a micro financial support to mitigate the impact of flood disaster on them. They can also be given the groups a small-scale insurance cover to compensate them in case of flood disaster and losses. Collaboration with financial and insurance institutions in this regard will help to develop affordable and accessible finance and insurance alternatives directed to the specific needs of riverine communities. The establishment of an emergency trust fund or programs to support affected individuals and communities during and after flood events will also go a long way in ameliorating flood disaster impact.

Enhanced productive community Engagement: effective and productive community engagement is pivotal for successful administration of flood disaster mitigation. This will promote and encourage community participation in decision-making processes, raise consciousness and awareness about flood risks, and provide training on emergency response procedures. It will also engender a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members and empower them to act proactively in order to reduce their exposure to flood disasters.

Deployment of innovation and technology: There is need for research efforts to understand the changing patterns and impacts of floods so as to develop applications that can assist residents of rural communities to identify impending flooding so as to foster innovation in flood management technologies and practices. This could be through advanced forecasting models and alternative decision models among others.

Environmental governance, administration and coordination:

there is need for the enhancement of the coordination of the formulation, implementation, execution and enforcement of best environmental laws and practices. If properly administered, the enforcement of the various environmental laws and regulations will encourage compliance and eventually reduce environmental behaviours that increase flood disaster risks.

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The Implication of Government Bias on the Resolution of Communal Conflict in Nigeria

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Abstract. The incidence of communal conflicts in Nigeria has been on the rise since the 1990s. These conflicts cut across all sections of the country, from the North to South. Interestingly, these conflicts are mostly anchored on disputes over land and the dichotomy between indigene and settlers. As one with the monopoly of force, the state, through the government is expected to be an effective arbiter but this has not been the case in terms of government intervention in communal conflict in the country. The reason for this is the perceived bias by the parties on government intervention. The implication of such perceived bias is that it is difficult to resolve such conflicts. This study argued that there are standard procedures that the government is expected to follow if its intervention will sail through. The study maintained that these procedures would help in building trust in government by the parties for a smooth resolution of communal conflict.

Keywords: Conflict, conflict resolution, communal conflict, land, communal bias.

1. Introduction

Conflict, generally, is a reality of social relations. Conflict at any level arises from divergences of interests, desires, goals, and value aspirations in the competition for scarce resources and in a bid to meet imposing demands on social life in a defined socio-physical environment (Otite, 2001). Conflict among nation-states has considerably reduced while the spate of intra-state conflicts has been on a steady increase due to the intense struggle for power among groups and control of the scarce resources, thereby putting tribal and ethnic groups against one other (Joshua, 2014). In Africa, conflict at sub-national level between communities or local militias is a wide spread phenomenon (Torbjornson, 2016). The continent

experienced 386 communal conflicts between 1989 and 2014 with an estimate of 131,563 lives being lost within the period (Torbjornson, 2016; Elfversson, 2013). The countries affected in this include Nigeria, Democratic of Congo, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda with Nigeria and Democratic of Congo being the most affected (Torbjornson, 2016; Elfversson, 2013).

This is hardly surprising given Nigeria's socio-cultural diversity and complexities, as defined by multiplicity of ethnic nationalities and language groups. These conflicts range from inter-ethnic conflicts to religious and communal conflicts. While inter-ethnic and religious conflicts have attracted much attention, with enormous literature and discussions, the increasing incidence of communal conflicts has not spurred much scholarly research into studying various communal conflicts in various communities in Africa. The rise in the number of communal conflicts has continued to give serious concern to all who cherish peace and are interested in nation-building in Nigeria. From the Ife-Modakeke conflict, Aguleri-Umuleri conflict, Jos conflict, Tiv-Jukun conflict, Warri conflict, Okene conflict, Ezillo/Ezza-Ezillo conflict, among others, there have been many cases of communal conflicts in Nigeria. These conflicts cut across the six geo-political zones in the country. For example, the Ife-Modakeke communities are in Osun State in the South-West zone; the Warri crises took place in Delta State in the South-South zone; the Tiv-Jukun communities are settled in Benue and Taraba States in the North-Central; and the high incidence of banditry has been high in states such as Zamfara in the North Eastern zone, Sokoto state in the North-West zone; and the duo of Aguleri-Umuleri communities which are in Anambra State and Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo communities in Ebonyi state which are in the South-East region. Nigeria has been engulfed in various

shades of crises at all fronts. However, what has distinguished communal crises from other forms of security threats to the state is that while others are actually a threat from individuals or groups who rise in contention against the State, communal crises are usually between communities who are members of the state and only rise in contention against each other.

Interestingly, most of the communal conflicts have bordered on the contestations over land and have thus become almost intractable and recurring, despite government's intervention. Land has always been an integral part of human existence. It is central to almost all forms of communal conflicts in Africa. For all intents and purposes, most of the communal conflicts in Africa have been woven around the quest to repossess a land that one party consider its own and has been encroached on by the other party. In fact, land has been a common denominator in most recurring communal conflicts. From Ife-Modakeke conflict, Aguleri-Umuleri conflict, Jos conflict, Tiv-Jukun conflict, Warri conflict, Okene conflict, and even the Ezillo/Ezza-Ezillo conflict, one thing that is common to them all is the dispute over land and the quest to repossess supposed over-taken land. This is not surprising given the attachment of the African to land. The attachment of the African to land is borne out of the idea of land as espoused in African ontology and cosmology. The African notion of land has been argued to be different from the idea of land as espoused in Western epistemology.

One would, therefore, have thought that the involvement of government in the process of conflict resolution will help end such conflicts but this is often not the case. The reason for the failure of government to fully resolve the communal conflict is due to the perceived bias of government and its agents. This study there examines how government bias makes the resolution of communal conflict in Nigeria almost impossible.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Land

For the sake of this study, we define land as a property or specific piece of the earth with clearly-defined boundaries and owned by a person or group of people. It is important to mention that ownership of land is defined by the law of first possession. The law of first possession is a rule in property law in which ownership rights is granted to the party that gains control before other claimants. This rule is a standard rule of establishing property rights. Thus, the owner of

a piece of land is deemed to be the one who possessed or gained control over the land first before others.

2.2 Conflict Resolution

For the sake of this study, we adopt the definition in Heitler (1990). Conflict resolution is defined by Heitler (1990) as "*the attainment of a solution that satisfies the requirement of all the seemingly conflicting forces and thereby, produces a feeling for all participants*".

2.3 Communal Conflict

For the sake of this study, we shall use the operational definition of communal conflict as the violent conflict between non-state actors or groups that are organized based on communal identities.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is defined by Heitler (1990) as "*the attainment of a solution that satisfies the requirement of all the seemingly conflicting forces and thereby, produces a feeling for all participants*". Wallenstein (2008) defines conflict resolution as "*a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent acts against each other*". It is primarily aimed at intervention to change or facilitate the course of a conflict. According to Albert (2001) conflict resolution serves three purposes namely: minimization of chances of destructive conflicts, stabilization of cessation of destructive conflicts so as to prevent escalation, and prevention of outbreak of a full-blown conflict done by uprooting the basic reasons for the conflict. Conflict resolution is "*Where the disputing parties reach an agreement that resolves their fundamental incompatibilities, accepts one another's continued existence as parties, and ceases all violent action against one another*" (Wallenstein, 2002; 8).

3.2 Communal Conflict

Communal conflict is made up of two words, communal and conflict. Suffice to say that conflict as a phenomenon can be described as either positive or negative depending on its outcome. When the result of a conflict situation is positive, it is defined as a functional or constructive conflict while a conflict situation that ends up producing negative outcomes are regarded as dysfunctional conflicts. For example, and as Hoelscher and Robert (2002) posited, conflict is the

underlying force that is responsible for stimulating innovation.

Communal relates particularly to group or involves things that are commonly used, shared, or experienced by a group within a society. Just as such things shared can be resources, they can also be conflicts and when it is conflict, it is known as communal conflict. Several scholars have tried to define the idea of communal conflict. Azuonwu (2002) defines it as a conflict that occurs between two or more communities. Oboh and Hyande (2006) sees communal conflict as a situation where two or more communities engage themselves in disagreement or acts of violence over various issues leading to loss of lives and destruction of properties. Dzurgba (2006) argued that communal conflict in Nigeria mostly end in communal violence and that these conflicts occur between two or more communities over territorial land, farmland and territorial water for fishing. Horowitz, (2000) also holds that communal conflict often results in communal violence - a situation where violence is perpetuated across ethnic lines, and victims are chosen based upon ethnic group membership.

Land

Amodu (2021) argued that the idea of land in African ontology abhors viewing it as a commodity or an individual possession. The author argued that the African views land as a gift of nature to human existence. In the light of this, land goes beyond the concrete as it also has a spiritual dimension to it and there is no distinction between these dual notions of land in Africa. Amodu noted that the contradiction which exists, in Western metaphysics, between the physical and the spiritual, is non-existent in African notion of land as these dual notions are considered intertwined. Land is both the space for housing the living as well as the abode for the dead. It serves as a link between the living and the ancestors. Land enjoys an anthropomorphic treatment and as such it is meant to be revered asides it being a source of food production. Hence, while man is a major player in matters concerning land, land does not belong to man alone as it is also the abode for other beings including rivers and air. It is in the light of this that Amodu attempts to define land as ‘...a holistic community of mutually reinforcement of natural life or vital forces, consisting or housing the human communities (families, villages, nations, and humanity), spirits, gods, deities, stones, sand, mountains, rivers, plants, fish, insects, birds and animals.’ This also explains how and why land becomes a medium of identity for the African. The connection between man and his land is exemplified in certain practices such as the burying of the umbilical cord of a new-born in the earth after it

has been severed from the new-born; pouring of libation to the land before drinking or during propitiation; the burying of the foreskin and blood of newly circumcised boy in the earth, among others. These actions are a signifier of how the connection between man and the land is created. Above all, when he dies, he is buried in the same earth which represent him going back to his source. The land carries a part of him and he carries a part of it and as such land is used to distinguish him from another. This captures the special connection that is created between the African and the land in which he lives on.

The ancestors of the land who had gone ahead occupy a vital force in the land and are connected to the living. It also explains why land cannot be an individual possession because these ancestors are the guiding spirit of the community. They are the vital force for the community and as such land is a communal property. The implication of this African notion of land is that there is a special attachment by each to his land of birth. Any attempt to dispossess the individual of his ancestral land is synonymous to cutting his ties with his ancestors and tearing off a part of him given that the land carried his soul and body with it. He sees himself as being the custodian and protector of his ancestral land and one with a duty to pass the land to his children in inheritance just as his own forebears passed the same land to him. This mandate is considered both physical and spiritual. It is physical in the sense of passing the concrete land to the generation to come while the spiritual aspect is represented in creating the needed connection between the coming generation and the generations that have gone past. Each generation is thus saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that the chain and cycle of life of connection is not broken in their own time.

As laudable as the ideas espoused by Amodu seem, one noticeable lacuna is the confusion of assuming that all African tribal groups would have the same ontology about land. This mistake is often the case with many assumptions with what is considered African while neglecting the uniqueness of tribal group. Similarly, the author failed to explain the fluidity in the idea of individual and communal ownership of land in African ontology. The individual is only given the land in lease by the community and within the period in which this lease subsists, he lays claim to the ownership of the land but this does not detract from the fact that the community is considered the actual owner of the land and so can withdraw the individual ownership bestowed on the individual should a sacrilege be committed.

Lentz (2013) explored the issues around land and property rights and the sense of belonging that follows from same. The book which focused on the author's exposure in Ghana and Burkina Faso is centred around the changing significance of land within the region as well as the role that the first-comer narrative plays in land ownership claims and the struggles and conflict that arise from same. The book noted that the advent of colonialism and the realities of post-colonialism has changed the notion about property rights from what used to obtain in the pre-colonial period. The new trend is that the state exerts authority in the ownership of land and as such is bequeathed with the power of allocating the resource within the state. This new trend creates a disconnection between the individual and his immediate community. Colonialism connected land ownership, belonging, and political office in a new dimension different from what obtained in pre-colonial times. Post-colonialism came with the burden population density and the scramble for the little available land space. The post-colonial period saw the introduction of new actors, who are not defined by ethnicity, in the scramble for lands.

The first-comer narrative which the book also centres on explores the first-comer argument. Putting up the first-comer narrative automatically confers the right of first possession on a person or group of person and so excludes others from enjoying that right. The author noted that the first-comer narrative is attractive for four reasons: it shows how the pioneer settlers got to the place in question; it shows how the pioneer settlers established their rule and order in the place where they settled; it allows for some flexibility in the framing of the nature and scope of property rights; and it establishes the encounter between the pioneer person or settlers and the spirits of the land. The fourth ground explains how the sense of belonging is created as man establishes a connection between himself and nature, thereby rendering a sense of power and absoluteness to the property claims of the pioneer settlers. By power and absoluteness, the author meant that the first-comer assumes the place of authority to determine what happens within the occupied space and this is regardless of whether late-comers consider the verdict of this authority fair or just or not. However, it is also a known fact that when a late-comer has stayed so long in a land space, there is a high tendency for him to begin to see himself as having as much claim to being a first-timer as the actual first-timer. He feels he has paid his dues by working towards the advancement of the land. The matter is even made worse where the late-comer occupies a space that has been left uninhabited but claimed by the first-timer and as such, he (the late-comer) exerted much energy into

developing the uninhabited space and making it habitable enough.

Although Lentz opined that the conflict over land is as a result of conflicting first-comer narrative, it is not the case in most situations. Rather, you have narratives where the late-comer acknowledges the fact that the first-comer got to the place before them and even allocated the space they (late-comer) now occupy to them but premise their right to claim over the land on the ground that they got the land in exchange for service delivered, have stayed long in the land, and have invested their resources into the land enough to give them a right of claim over it.

4. Communal Conflict and Government Roles

Nwagwu (2016) discussed the role of the state in ensuring the management and resolution of a conflict. He argued that the style and pattern of a government's responses actually determine how volatile any conflict will become. Put differently, maintaining peace and order is the primary responsibility of the government and is essential to ensuring the safety of lives and property. As a result, the institutional mechanisms of the government play a crucial role in conflict avoidance, conflict prevention, and tension reduction. The possibility exists that a conflict will progress into a full-scale, explosive conflict scenario if the institutions of government remain largely indifferent or partial towards one of the conflicting sides. Albert (2004), on the Ife-Modakeke communal conflict, had argued that the communal conflict will continue to result in more deaths and property damage unless the government's response pattern is changed proactively. Albert mentioned that the communities themselves are less to blame for the continued persistence of the Ife-Modakeke communal conflict than are the weak responses of governments, both past and present.

In his 2012 report titled "*Rethinking Nigeria's Indigenous-Settler Conflict*", Aaron Sayne acknowledged that most of Nigeria's communal clashes are a face-off between the acknowledged original inhabitants, or indigenes and settlers. With time, these conflicts may become more deadly and widespread. He noted that the Nigerian structure makes it such that it is up to the state and local governments to decide who is an indigene. Given that indigenous people have preferential access to land, schools, development funding, and public employment, misuse of the label can exacerbate deep socioeconomic disparities. Even though addressing inequality may not always be sufficient to put an end to violence, these inequalities contribute to it. In

addition, other identity-based divides in Nigeria reinforce the indigene-settler distinction, making it explosive. In many instances, indigenes and settlers are also separated by cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic differences but this is not intractable. Sayne arrived at this conclusion by making two assumptions. The first assumption is that government must share resources more equally among all Nigerians to reduce violence. The second assumption behind his conclusion is that government must hold more perpetrators accountable to reduce indigene-settler violence. He opines that to reduce indigene-settler violence, the government must hold more perpetrators accountable. Without justice, communities that have been severely impacted by indigene-settler violence will rarely experience lasting peace.

Elfverson (2019) in her treatise titled *“How Government Bias can fuel Communal Conflicts in Africa”* explains the way the bias or perceived bias of a government can be an ingredient for communal conflict. It also explains why government may not be successful in resolving some conflicts because one or both parties in the conflict already see her as taking sides with one of the conflicting parties. She posited that recent studies have shed new light on how political maneuvering and poor governance raise the likelihood of communal violence. To garner support for their campaigns, politicians, for instance, may take advantage of and incite hostility along ethnic or other identity lines. In another instance, it can be that certain groups gain preferential access to state resources and economic opportunities, thereby fueling hatred between groups. In other circumstances, failing to provide certain regions with services, such as security, increases the likelihood that the local communities will arm themselves to fight for control of scarce resources. In general, her research suggests that in situations of communal conflict, governments rarely can act as a neutral arbiter. Political leaders frequently find themselves at the center of any conflict. This could happen directly as a result of active bias or incitement, or it could happen indirectly as a result of bad policies and services not being provided equally to citizens.

Johan Brosche (2015) undertook a study where he tried to establish a relationship between government bias and communal conflict. In his article, *Causes of Communal Conflict: Government Bias, Elites, and Conditions for Cooperation*. This study provides a causal explanation for how violent communal conflicts are brought on by government bias. The fact that interactions between central and local elites, as well as between local elites, will be disrupted by a biased regime is the first step in the causal story. The

government is the most important central elite in communal conflicts, and the leaders of various communities, as well as the native administrations that they frequently belong to, are the most important local elites. Since the government is the most important central elite, its actions have a significant impact on the actions of other actors. Local elites who are marginalized are more likely to be reluctant to work with the government when the regime exhibits bias. The likelihood of collaboration between central and local elites is reduced as a result. The relationships that exist among the elites of the area can also be affected by government bias. That the public authority is fundamental for relations among nearby elites could appear to be a bit outlandish. However, the regime has the ability to both replace elites it dislikes and undermine arenas that are essential for fostering constructive relations among local elites. Conflictual behavior, including violence, is less risky for a state-favored local elite. As a result, governments can foster distrust not only between themselves and local elites but also within those elites themselves by favoring particular communities. In conclusion, this study argues that interaction between local elites and central elites will be disrupted by government bias. Government predisposition, and the unconstructive first-class communication it involves, will adversely influence the three components fundamental for forestalling shared struggle. Violent racial and ethnic strife is brought about by all three mechanisms. We can avoid a greater number of violent communal conflicts in regions where the government takes a more neutral stance than in regions where the regime is partial.

5. Government Bias and Communal Conflict in Nigeria: The Way Forward

As we have established in this study, the actions of government determine how well government's position will sit well with the people and be acceptable. The place of government intervention in either dousing already raised tension or inflaming it more will depend on the conditions that Brosche (2015) outlined. It is expected that a government will ensure it balances the differences, wills, and capabilities of the disputing communities by making sure it gets the perspective and desires of the parties to the conflict. (Burton 1997). A second principle is to conduct a situation analysis so as to know the root causes of the conflict. The third principle is to explore the role of local actors so as to get a better framework of the issues leading to the conflict. The fourth principle is that government should establish an inter-community peace advocacy committee. That will be people centred. A fifth principle is that government

must not show any sense or iota of partiality in the conflict resolution process. The sixth is to aim at assimilating the conflicting interest of the conflicting parties. Government has a duty to identify the meeting points between the communities and seek to deplore this towards unifying them. According to Brosché (2015), *'This avoids unnecessary reactions; and strengthens the credibility of the resolution mechanisms.* this would engender commitment from all parties involved. Amy I also add that where promises are made by government towards restituting victims, it has to be done in good time lest the victim builds an accumulation of frustration as a result of the misery that the conflict has imposed on him.

In the same vein, the principles set by Lamidi (2019) for government intervention in communal conflict are quite instructive. Balancing the differences, wills, and capacities of the opposing people, organizations, or communities is initially the main focus of peacemaking. In order to accomplish this primary objective, it is necessary to have the most comprehensive understanding of the viewpoints of the parties involved in the conflict, particularly a solid grasp of the objectives of the warring parties (Burton 1997). Since government acts must be planned appropriately, this deserves to be considered the fundamental principle. With regard to balancing the differences, these insights might be useful in determining which panel or committee should be established and under what terms.

The second principle is to investigate and clarify the underlying causes of conflicts within a community by conducting a situational analysis. This would reveal the dynamic influences of cultural affinities and historical precedents that have led to the intensification of communal conflicts. Furthermore, because of the thorough comprehension of the incidental elements and cultural nuances resulting from the situational analysis's execution, the resolution mechanisms would thus become identifiable.

The third principle focuses on investigating the potential role of local actors, who may, in certain circumstances, think about the applicability of a customary method that is most frequently helpful in conducting a situational analysis, in order to further strengthen the government's capacity on peacemaking processes. The local players are in a unique position to offer thorough intelligence for comprehending the paths of communal conflicts. Furthermore, the design of the process for identifying the reasons of communal conflict benefits more from the involvement of local players. They can clearly contribute significantly to

local peacemaking efforts and accomplish this far more quickly than state-led efforts.

The fourth principle requires the government to assist in the formation of an intercommunity peace advocacy group during any communal peacemaking effort. This would allow the parties to the conflict to engage. The committee would give the government greater access to the individuals and circumstances surrounding the conflicts. Additionally, the committee would offer a framework for peacemaking that would incentivize individuals, organizations, and communities to reciprocate by honoring their commitments to maintain peace.

As a coordinating mediator, the government's interest should be impartial, according to the fifth principle. Strict adherence to the courses of action that the parties agree to and believe to be lawful is required. Although it may take some time for the parties involved to adjust to a mediation mission's methodology, it could ultimately prove to be quite beneficial.

To include or assimilate the separatist interests of the opposing groups, a sixth and logical premise of peacemaking is to develop an overarching purpose with a particular emphasis on overcoming fixation with ethnic attachment. This should be accomplished carefully by balancing all competing interests in terms of a shared objective. It has been proposed that this is possible because there is always a point of convergence for every variety (Kalyvas 2003; Wilkinson 2006:1779; Boone 2014). The potential for quest unification and purpose visualization despite the "indispensable" goals of the involved parties might then be examined at the meeting location. The basic premise is that the likelihood of slowing down the speed of a conflict increases with the importance of the goal to the disputants' quest. Others must be able to clearly distinguish the viewpoints in order to further solidify the integrative approach. "This avoids unnecessary reactions; and strengthens the credibility of the resolution mechanisms," claims Brosché (2014). All parties may show their commitment as a result, and excessive promises may be avoided through moderation.

For a peace process to be effective, each of these principles must be adhered to strictly. A partial adherence to the principles will almost yield the same result as a non-adherence. Hence, adhering to just five out of the six principles will not yield the desired results. This said, a cursory look at the principles shows that the government adhered to all but two of the principles. Without doubt, the government tried to balance the differences of the parties; investigated and

clarified the underlying causes of conflicts by conducting a situational analysis; investigated the potential role of actors and parties in the conflict; and assisted in the formation of an intercommunity peace advocacy group.

The underlying point here is that government has to earn the trust of the conflicting parties if it would be able to effectively end such communal conflict. The place of trust in conflict resolution has been espoused by scholars as an important factor in conflict is to be resolved (See Nooteboom, 1996; Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998). Sullivan, Peterson, Kameda and Shimada (1981) also argued that the presence of trust between the conflicting parties would mean they will both work towards sorting their difference. It is a building block for working out a solution between.

6. Conclusion

The delicateness of land in African cosmology is trite. It is at the heart of most communal conflicts in Nigeria. It is therefore understandable that these communal conflicts are often heated and fatal. The failure of government to be able to resolve these communal conflicts has, as explained earlier, been as a result of the absence of trust in the intervention of government. If government will be able to intervene effectively in the communal conflict, the place of trust building is most important. By its actions and the adequate equitable distribution of resources among all communities, it will be a lot easier to bring the conflicts to an end.

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Part Two

Language and Literary Studies



Conceptualising *Odova* (Alias) Within the Context of African Oral Performance

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Abstract. Africa's communal nature is deeply rooted in its cultural heritage, with social activities like festivals and ceremonies incorporating performative elements for education and cultural transmission. However, Westernization threatens these valuable oral traditions, leading to their marginalization. Preserving these traditions is crucial for maintaining African identity and cohesion. The study explores the concept of *Odova* (alias) within the Okpe nationality of Nigeria, a call-and-response performance demonstrating authority, marking identity, and transmitting cultural knowledge. The research combines interviews and ethnographic research within Okpe communities to understand how these traditions are sustained across generations. The study highlights the profound connection between orality and cultural significance, illustrating how *Odova* encapsulate individual identity, achievements, and social standing. These aliases are dynamic elements within Okpe traditional performances, serving as vehicles for transmitting history, values, and societal norms. Through the study of *Odova*, we gain insights into the complex interplay between language, performance, and cultural identity in Okpe society, underscoring the enduring power of oral traditions in preserving and celebrating cultural heritage.

Keywords: Call-and-response, Cultural preservation, *Odova*, Okpe traditions, Oral performances

1. Introduction

Africa's communal nature is deeply intertwined with its rich cultural heritage, evident in various social activities like festivals, burials, and birth ceremonies. These events often incorporate performative elements that serve purposes beyond mere

entertainment, such as education and the transmission of cultural values. However, the influence of westernization poses a threat to these valuable oral traditions, leading to their marginalization in some traditional performances. The continent risks losing a vital part of its identity if these traditions are not preserved and promoted (Adjeketa 2016). Abimbola et al (2024) rightly assert that societal progress is hindered by the displacement or obsolescence of its culture. In the African context, oral tradition is a vital component of culture, encompassing practices, belief systems, and ideas. It is crucial to protect these traditions from being overshadowed by Westernization. Beyond mere entertainment and moral instruction, oral performances hold significant socio-cultural value within African communities, contributing to their identity and cohesion.

African ritual and traditional performances are increasingly influenced by Western cultures and religions. This fusion has contributed to a decline in participation in oral performances within modern African societies. A specific example of this decline is seen in call-and-response performances, which are fundamental to traditions like the *Odova* performance of the Okpe nationality. The blending of cultures poses a challenge to the preservation of these vital aspects of African heritage. The decline of traditional African oral performances is largely attributed to the introduction of Western religion and cultural systems, significantly disseminated through popular media. This influence leads to the modification, recreation, and often mistranslation of various forms of oral performances to align with modern trends, as noted by Oladejo (2014: 73). This adaptation, while aiming for modernity, risks diluting the original cultural significance and authenticity of these performances. Many African oral performance traditions and cultures

are facing extinction, as noted by Blessing (2016). This decline involves the gradual erosion of cultural beliefs, processes, procedures, practices, and languages that are integral to these traditions. The loss represents a significant threat to the cultural heritage and identity of numerous communities across the continent.

This study explores the crucial role of communities in preserving oral traditions, particularly focusing on how oral performance functions as a vehicle for maintaining and transmitting African culture. It investigates the concept of Odova (alias) within the framework of African oral performance, using the Okpe nationality as a specific case study to understand how these traditions are sustained and passed down through generations. The central question addressed is whether oral performance will continue to be the primary means of preserving the culture of the people.

This study details the research methodology employed, which combines interviews and ethnographic research. The study involves visiting communities within the Okpe kingdom and using telephone call to interview male respondents over the age of 50. Data was also gathered through direct observation by attending marriage and burial ceremonies in five randomly selected communities-Orerokpe, Ugorhen, Elume, Ugwuton and Ikeresan-The communities were chosen using a simple random sampling technique.

2. African Oral Performances

Oral performances are deeply ingrained in African culture, with their origins stretching back to the earliest days of the continent's history. These performances are integral to various social gatherings in traditional African societies, encompassing diverse elements such as songs, narratives, chants, proverbs, and riddles. From significant life events like marriage ceremonies and burial rites to communal celebrations like festivals (Adjeketa 2024), oral performances play a vital role in expressing cultural identity and values.

Akintunde and Toyin (2021) emphasize the intrinsic link between the creation and the oral transmission or performance of oral tradition material. The mention that essentially, an oral literary work's continued existence hinges on its oral realization through performance by a poet, singer, or storyteller. Without this active performance, the oral piece risks fading away. Their assertion stresses the crucial role of live enactment in preserving and propagating oral performance (literature). Hence, the act of performance is not merely a delivery mechanism but an integral part of the work's life cycle.

Burton (1990) defines oral performances as expressions rooted in oral traditions or lore. These traditions serve as vital channels for receiving, preserving, and transmitting knowledge and culture across generations through spoken means. Common mediums for this transmission include speech, songs, chants, and poetry. Oral performances are often regarded as "walking libraries" due to their capacity to store and transmit vast amounts of knowledge. This perspective, supported by scholars like John and Magnus (1979) and Chisita and Abdullahi (2010), highlights the significant role of oral traditions in preserving cultural heritage and historical information. The term emphasizes that these performances are not merely entertainment but also dynamic repositories of knowledge, actively performed and shared within communities.

Oral performance is a cornerstone of African socio-cultural life, manifesting in diverse forms such as poetry, song, oral narratives, proverbs, riddles, and jokes. This verbal art permeates cultural, spiritual, social, and occupational aspects of life. Africans highly regard and revere oral traditions, using both formal and informal occasions as opportunities for oral creativity. These performances serve purposes of entertainment, information dissemination, and cultural transmission. Oral performance is intrinsically linked to African life and is inherently public, making the audience a crucial component of the performance dynamic (Clement 2020). Clements further asserts that oral performance functions as a vital communication medium. It serves to transmit a community's history, widely held knowledge, and legal principles through spoken word. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in preserving and perpetuating cultural heritage. In essence, oral performance is a dynamic and multifaceted tool for cultural transmission and preservation (Clement 2020).

Oral performances represent the most prevalent form of human communication and have persisted into the modern era. These performances, deeply embedded in oral traditions, are transmitted verbally across generations. Often presented informally through storytelling, they are sometimes dramatized during festivals and other social events, showcasing the culture and traditions of the community hosting them (Abimbola et al 2024). In numerous African communities, oral performances are integral to various cultural events, including dirges, naming ceremonies, poetry recitals, and folktales. A key characteristic of these performances is the blurring of lines between the performer and the audience. The community views the performance as a communal

activity, with everyone actively participating to ensure its success. This shared responsibility and engagement highlight the collective nature of artistic expression in these contexts.

In many academic settings, participatory theatre is always emphasised. However, Akintunde, and Toyin (2021) stated that participatory theatre leverages the power of oral literature to connect with audiences on a deeper level. And that by grounding performances in familiar community contexts, it ensures accessibility and acceptance. They stated that a key strategy involves adapting well-known oral narratives to introduce and explain modern concepts, bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and contemporary societal issues. This approach makes complex ideas more relatable and understandable for the audience.

3. Research Methodology

This study focuses on seven call-and-response performances (*Edeva*) and their philosophical implications for community development within the *Okpe* nation. *Ogiribo*, *Omota*, *Uhuendi*, *Imoto ro keke vwan*, *Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva*, *Itebele erha* and *Odamoro* These particular *Edeva* (plural) were chosen due to their consistent use across various individuals and communities within the *Okpe* nation. The research observed their frequent occurrence in the seven marriages and burials, with similar responses elicited each time, thus highlighting their significance and justifying their selection for this study. The study uses subjective interpretation to read the seven call-and-RESPONS performance (*Edeva*), selected for the study.

Data Presentation: The Call-And-Respons Performance of Selected *Edova*

EDOVA	FIRST CALL (OTOTA)	FIRST RESPONS (BEARER)	SECOND CALL (OTOTA)	SECOND RESPONS (BEARER)	GENERAL RESPONS (AUDIENCE)
Ogiribo	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Ogiribo (heavy wind or wind stom)	Ogiribo	ukposo, Orhomu ghweye (heavy rain is better than a wind stom)	Urhomemlo (that is true)
Omota	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Omota (the baby squirrel)	Omota	We kpeyi, ono swijoro (if you don't kill it, people will hear his noise in the forest)	Omaroho havwo (that is how it is)
Uhuendi	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Uhuendi (bunch of palm fruit)	Uhuendi	Avwa haye kpakole e (one cannot hold it on his armpit)	Kakaka (never)
Imoto ro keke phan	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Imoto ro keke phan (over loaded vehicle)	Imoto ro keke phan	evwe le oroguae wrotore (the drivers sit is always reserved).	Ni marhe wuna sabu tekete wa nya (how will you get to your destination)
Odamoro	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Odamoro (Try)	Odamoro	awaye wuna sabu ruba (you can't do more than try)	Wu sabu wre gwe ye e (surely, no one can do more than try)
Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva (A Minute To 12)	Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva	Emlu ono sabu ji vwia (anything can still happen)	Oreh phian (definitely)
Itebele erha	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Itebele erha (after six shots or bottles of hot gin)	Itebele erha	Emase vwia ne dere (all women are equal)	Laughs

4. The Concept of Odova within the Okpe Nation

Odova is a fundamental element of Okpe culture, deeply rooted in the practice of Iten, which may also translate to alias telling. This tradition manifests as a call-and-response performance, passed down through generations. Odova performances are not merely entertainment; they often contain significant contextual meanings that reflect the values, history, and social dynamics of the Okpe people.

Within the Okpe nationality, every adult male child possesses the right to acquire an Odova (singular) or Edeva (plural). An Odova is typically inherited or acquired from an elder during a traditional social gathering. However, Odova can also be generic, meaning individuals can create their own based on personal experiences or observations. This highlights the dynamic nature of Odova, blending traditional inheritance with individual creation. In matters of inheritance, particularly concerning the Odova, the eldest son typically assumes the rights and responsibilities associated with it upon the father's absence or death. The Odova represents a significant

inheritance, often passed down through generations, from the father and his predecessors. This system underscores the importance of the eldest son in continuing the family lineage and maintaining ancestral heritage.

The acquisition of Odova, or form of knowledge, often occurs during traditional social gatherings. Younger individuals learn through repeated exposure to the Odova's presentation, noting its use of metaphor, tonal variation, and philosophical or socio-cultural relevance. Showing respect, the younger person may then approach the elder, seeking permission to adopt the Odova as their own. This highlights the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer and respect for elders in the process of acquiring cultural knowledge. In Okpe culture, the term Odova refers to significant call-and-response alias used during oral performances, particularly by men at traditional social gatherings such as marriages and burials. When multiple men share the same Odova at an event, the is bestowed upon the eldest man present. This practice highlights the importance of age and seniority within the community and underscores the role of Odova as a marker of identity and status for men in Okpe traditional settings.

Odova, a call-and-response oral performance tradition, specifically alias telling, functions as both a demonstration of authority and a marker of identity. The performance itself is rich with elements such as gestures, movement, recitation, and voice modulation, all of which contribute to its cultural significance and impact. These performative aspects are integral to the Odova tradition. Therefore, in traditional performances, Odova transcends simple spoken words; it is deeply intertwined with performative elements. These elements are crucial in elevating Odova from a mere identifier to a significant ritualistic or ceremonial act, highlighting the importance of context and execution in its cultural function. Odova serve multiple crucial functions within a community. Beyond their spiritual and ritual significance, they act as vital tools for preserving family and community history, maintaining lineage records, and paying tribute to important individuals. Furthermore, Odova can be used to confer authority and impart knowledge to audiences, highlighting their multifaceted role in cultural transmission and social structure.

Further, within the Okpe cultural context, Odova holds substantial cultural weight and significance. It functions as a key identifier, particularly during social events, where individuals are often addressed by their Odova instead of their

personal names. This practice underscores the importance of Odova in social interactions and cultural identity within the Okpe community. In certain performance traditions, using an individual's real name during introductions can indicate a lack of familiarity with the cultural norms. This is because within the Okpe culture, a distinction is made between general names and Edeva, which are names that carry deep philosophical meaning. While some given names may also possess philosophical significance, the specific context and understanding of Edeva within the Okpe tradition are crucial. Therefore, using a real name might inadvertently signal an outsider's perspective or a lack of understanding of the nuanced naming conventions within the culture.

His Royal Majesty, Orhu 1, the king of Okpe Kingdom, emphasizes the profound significance of names as cornerstones of cultural identity when writing the forward of Idolor's book, *Ede Opkpe*. He posits that names have served as vital sources of cultural identity and practice from the very inception of human civilization. This perspective underscores the enduring role of names in shaping and preserving cultural heritage (Idolor 2019). On the other hand, Edeva is a significant and deeply rooted tradition within the Okpe community. More than just a means of identification, it functions as a system for documentation, enabling the retrieval of information about individuals and the community. Furthermore, Edeva plays a role in projecting future expectations, drawing upon past experiences, both individual and collective, to inform potential outcomes and guide decision-making. This practice highlights the Okpe people's sophisticated approach to record-keeping and future planning through cultural traditions. While names are typically given to children at birth by family and friends, Edeva are inherited, acquired, or generated by adult males. The preservation of these Edeva with deep philosophical meaning is crucial for sustaining, promoting, and transmitting the desired identity of the Okpe nation to future generations, thereby enhancing its visibility in the global cultural landscape.

5. Odova: Call-And –Response Performance as African Oral Performance

Built in oral traditions, Oral performances within the Odova oral traditions of the Okpe society are deeply rooted in personal experiences and life events. These performances serve as testimonies, reflecting the circumstances of an Okpe individual. For audiences unfamiliar with the community, such as eyewitnesses or strangers, these performances offer a direct account of the events being portrayed. However, for audiences

who are members of the Okpe community, the performance functions as an "indirect statement," resonating with shared cultural knowledge and understanding, as noted by Wilson (2015). The meaning is layered, depending on the audience's familiarity with the context.

Call-and-response is a dynamic performance characterized by the interaction between key participants. The Otota, acting as the orator, initiates the exchange with a "call." The Odova bearer then RESPONDS to the Otota's call. Crucially, the audience plays a vital role by affirming the significance of the exchange, completing the communicative loop. This three-part interaction—call, response, and affirmation—defines the structure and participatory nature of the call-and-response performance.

In a traditional performance setting, the Otota (Orator) plays a crucial role, particularly in reciting the Edeva (likely referring to specific verses or pronouncements). Remarkably, the Otota often learns these Edeva on the very day of the performance. Following an initial recitation, the Otota continues to deliver the Edeva from memory throughout the event. The process involves the Otota making a call, to which a designated bearer responds with the philosophical meaning of the Edeva. The audience then affirms this meaning, creating a dynamic and participatory experience. This highlights the importance of oral tradition and memory in the performance. The call and response is a vibrant exchange between a storyteller (the orator) and the audience. As Joseph D. Sobol (1992) notes, these performances are often enriched by paralinguistic elements. These elements include facial expressions, vocal inflections, and body movements, which heighten the impact and engagement during the storytelling process. The interaction creates a dynamic and immersive experience for both the performer and the audience.

In traditional performances, such as marriages or burials, distinct roles are assigned to the audience, the Orator, and the Odova bearer. A key figure in these events is the Otota, who serves as an initiator. The Otota's responsibility involves presenting the men in attendance, specifically the elders, in a sequential order based on age, starting from the oldest. Importantly, these elders are not introduced by their personal names but rather by their Edeva, highlighting the significance of lineage and heritage in these cultural contexts. This practice underscores the respect for seniority and the importance of ancestral connections within the community. The core of the Odova tradition is the call-and-response interaction. An Otota initiates the process by addressing an

individual, referred to as the bearer, and inquiring about their Odova. The bearer then vocalizes their Odova, employing a specific tonal inflection. The Otota echoes the bearer's call, after which the bearer provides a philosophical interpretation of their Odova for the audience appreciation. This entire process emphasizes both individual expression and communal understanding through shared philosophical insights.

The role of the audience in the context being discussed is characterized by both mimetic and verbal participation. This means audience members engage by mirroring actions, such as nodding in agreement, and by verbally affirming the philosophical importance of the Odova. Notably, these responses are spontaneous and occur without any prior rehearsal, suggesting an inherent understanding or connection to the subject matter. The oral performances thrive on communal engagement, deeply enriched by the use of proverbs. These proverbs encapsulate the community's norms, belief systems, and practices, often exploring themes of morality. The audience's appreciation stems from recognizing and connecting with these embedded cultural and philosophical undertones within the performance. The success of the performances hinges on this shared understanding and resonance.

In Okpe traditional performances, such as those featuring the Odova, active participation extends beyond delivering a verbal piece such as speech, poem, or dramatic monologue. The audience is not merely passive; they engage through consistent call and response, creating a dynamic and interactive performance medium. This shared participation, involving both verbal contributions and responsive repetition, is crucial to the overall experience. This Okpe oral performance is deeply rooted in a shared cultural belief between the performer and the audience (Manieson et al 2012). Echoing Mbiti's (1966) perspective, these performances, particularly the call-and-response style known as Odova, serve as a reflection of Okpe life. They mirror the Okpe people's activities, thought processes, lifestyle, values, joys, and sorrows. Fundamentally, the Odovan functions as a way for the community to express their relationship with and reaction to their surrounding environment.

The Odova performance is deeply significant to the Okpe people of Nigeria, extending beyond its physical manifestation. It serves as a powerful symbol representing ancestral spirits, the collective identity of the Okpe community, and their historical continuity. The performance is a living link to the past and a vital component of Okpe cultural heritage. Odova are revered objects believed to hold the power and

wisdom of ancestors. They act as a tangible connection to past generations, enabling communication and ensuring ongoing guidance and protection from those who came before. This reverence highlights the importance of ancestral connection in the culture where Odova are significant. Odova are central to the cultural fabric of the Okpe people, featuring prominently in significant events such as rites of passage, chieftaincy installations, religious observances, and conflict resolution processes. Their presence is particularly notable during major festivals and communal gatherings, where they act as a symbol of shared identity and a means of reinforcing core Okpe values.

The preservation and veneration of Odova are critical to the cultural integrity and social cohesion of the Okpe people. Disrespecting or neglecting Odova performances, whether due to Westernization or religious affiliation, is viewed as a unwise. Such actions are believed to potentially bring misfortune to both the individual, especially inherited odova and the wider community. This, highlight the deep cultural significance of Odova and the Odova performance within Okpe society. The traditions surrounding Odova performance are preserved through meticulous knowledge transfer and ritualistic practices. This ensures that the customs are passed down across generations, maintaining the continuity of this significant element of Okpe heritage. This safeguarding of these practices and performances are important in preserving cultural identity.

6. Philosophical and Cultural Significance to the Audience

Ogiribo... ukposo, Orhomu ghweye.... Urhomemlo

The Odova, Ogiribo is used to describe a destructive force, specifically a violent windstorm. This aligns with the broader definition of a windstorm as a natural disaster that exceeds a community's capacity to cope and jeopardizes its safety and normal operations. Raffaele et al. (2013) support this understanding by defining windstorms as events that overwhelm local resources. Raffaele et al. highlight the philosophical interpretation of Ogiribo where wind disasters serve as a critical evaluation of a community's emergency response effectiveness. Ogiribo emphasize the inherent challenges in planning for these events due to their unpredictable nature. The bearer of Ogiribo advocate for the development of a comprehensive and adaptable emergency strategy capable of responding effectively to unforeseen circumstances. Failure to adequately plan for wind disasters can have significant detrimental impacts on a community's economic

stability, social structures, physical infrastructure, and the psychological well-being of its residents.

The analogy of rain and wind is used to illustrate the impact of community crisis. While one can navigate through rainfall, a strong wind, representing a severe crisis, instils fear and causes significant damage, such as uprooting trees and destroying homes. The core message emphasizes the importance of preventing community crises, as the consequences, including loss of life and property, can be irreversible. This, underscores the necessity of proactive measures to maintain peace and stability within the community, highlighting the potential for devastating and irreparable outcomes if conflicts are allowed to escalate. Also, communities within the Okpe nation, and indeed across Nigeria, face annual devastation from violent windstorms. These storms disproportionately affect inland towns and cities, resulting in loss of life and significant property damage. A specific example is the 2023 windstorm that struck Deghele community in the Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State. This event destroyed crops and residential buildings, leaving many residents homeless and without access to food. The impact of these windstorms highlights a recurring and widespread environmental challenge.

Wind disasters cause significant physical damage, injuries, fatalities, and economic losses (Kamil, et al 2021, Raffaele et al 2023). The "Ogiribo call and respons" emphasizes the importance of annual preparedness for windstorms. This includes taking immediate safety precautions during windstorms, such as avoiding forested areas and reinforcing residential buildings to prevent roof damage. The call serves as a reminder to be proactive in mitigating the potential impact of these destructive events. Emphatically, Ogiribo respons, emphasizes the importance of learning from recent and significant wind disasters in our vicinity. This call to action suggests a need for preparedness and mitigation strategies based on past experiences to minimize the impact of future events. The focus is on applying lessons learned to improve resilience and safety within the community.

Omoṭa... We kpeyi, ono swijoro... omaroho havwo

The squirrel, known locally as "Ota," is a common animal throughout the Okpe nation. It is familiar to people of all ages in the community. Squirrels typically inhabit plantations, agricultural lands, and gardens with trees. They are predominantly found high in the canopy of trees, and only occasionally come down to ground level (Cassola, F. 2017). The Ota, a type of squirrel, has a diet mainly consisting of fruits

and palm fruit seeds, which it can access by cracking open tough nuts (Kingdon et al 2013).. These squirrels are primarily hunted by children, but their small size and intelligence make them difficult to catch. The Omota, or baby squirrel, is particularly elusive and rarely captured by human hunters due to its diminutive size. However, squirrel is preyed on by eagles and other large birds of prey (Thorington et al 2012). This illustrates a basic ecological interaction where one organism (the squirrel) serves as a food source for another (the eagle or bird of prey). This relationship is a fundamental aspect of food webs and ecosystems.

Omota, exhibits remarkable spatial memory, enabling it to navigate and remember locations effectively. This cognitive ability allows Omota to solve intricate problems related to foraging for food. Furthermore, Omota's behavior suggests a capacity for adaptation, indicating it can adjust to and thrive in novel environments. These traits highlight Omota's cognitive flexibility and survival skills.

The Odova, Omota call- and- response serves as a potent reminder to the audience about the critical importance of preserving the lives of young children. This traditional form of communication emphasizes the community's shared responsibility in safeguarding the well-being of its youngest members. The call likely presents a situation or a question related to child welfare, and the response reinforces the commitment to protect and nurture them. The *RESPONS*, *We kpeyi, ono swijoro*, underscores the immense potential of young individuals, highlighting that today's youth will become the leaders and caregivers of tomorrow. It also emphasizes that their capabilities are vast and should not be underestimated. Crucially, *We kpeyi, ono swijoro* stresses the paramount importance of ensuring the safety and well-being of children, suggesting that safeguarding them is a fundamental responsibility.

Uhuendi... Avwa haye kpakole e ... kakaka

In traditional Okpe society, the Uhuendi (bunch of palm fruit) is a widely cultivated farm crop. Local farmers and residents highly value it for its versatility in producing essential commodities like palm oil, palm kernel, and palm kernel oil. The Uhuendi is harvested from palm trees that typically range in height from 15 to 30 meters. The Uhuendi is a substantial object, potentially weighing 10kg or more. Its outer husk presents a risk of injury to anyone handling it carelessly, due to its piercing nature. This risk of self-inflicted harm is central to the philosophical concept of the Odova, Uhuendi. Palm fruit harvesting involves a specific process where the

farmer cuts the fruit and then manually carries it, using both hands, to a carrying pan or wheelbarrow. This method highlights the weight and size of the palm fruit bunch, contrasting it with the ease a footballer might have carrying multiple footballs. The key point is that each palm fruit bunch requires individual handling due to its size and weight.

The call and response sequence, "Uhuendi" and "Avwa haye kpakole e," serves as a crucial reminder within the performance. It highlights the importance of treating productive individuals with respect and care, cautioning against exploitation. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for patience and understanding in interpersonal relationships. The exchange also conveys a pragmatic approach to life's challenges, suggesting that they should be managed incrementally rather than attempting to solve everything at once. This resonates with the idea of tackling problems step-by-step for more effective resolution.

Imoto ro keke phan" ... "Evwe le oroguaye wrotore... ni marhe wuna sabu tekete wa nya

Overloading vehicles leads to several detrimental effects. One major consequence is a significant increase in fuel consumption, impacting operational costs. Furthermore, tires experience accelerated wear, requiring more frequent replacements. Handling also suffers, as steering becomes harder to control, posing safety risks. Transporters confirm that braking distances are extended in overloaded vehicles, increasing the likelihood of accidents. Ultimately, these disadvantages and safety hazards can cause substantial damage to the vehicle itself, reducing its lifespan and increasing maintenance expenses. An often over loaded vehicle visits the mechanic workshops often.

In many Okpe communities, market days occur every four or five days, depending on the specific community. These market days are significant events, particularly for women who are heavily involved in agriculture. They transport their farm produce to the market, often utilizing vehicles that are specifically arranged to carry both the goods and the women from the farming areas to the marketplace. The core idea presented is that even when a vehicle is heavily overloaded, the driver always manages to find space for themselves. This highlights a common scenario where, despite the excess load, the driver's presence and control are prioritized. The saying "no matter how keke (overload) the Imoto (vehicle) is, there is a reserved space for the driver" encapsulates this concept, emphasizing the driver's essential role regardless of the circumstances.

The call and response, "Imoto ro keke phan" and "Evwe le oroguaye wrotore," serves as a crucial reminder to the audience about the importance of respecting and valuing the roles of family heads, community leaders, and national leaders. It underscores the idea that these figures play a vital part in the well-being and progress of society, and their contributions should not be underestimated. The response also signifies that effective community development hinges on strong leadership. A designated leader, empowered to utilize their skills, is essential for navigating challenges and driving progress within the community. The leader's ability to govern, even amidst difficulties, is crucial for the community's advancement and overall well-being.

Odamoro... awaye wuna sabu ruba... wu sabu wre gwe ye e

When the person who bears the Odova *Odamoro... awaye wuna sabu ruba... wu sabu wre gwe ye e* (Try), is called, the response will be: "you cannot do more than try." This explores the philosophical concept of human limitation through the lens of the Odova. The proverbial response, "you cannot do more than try" highlights the ultimate futility of human endeavors in the face of mortality. Regardless of one's achievements – be it academic success like earning a PhD, political power such as becoming a president, military triumphs, material wealth like owning a private jet, or even the legacy of having many children – death remains an inevitable end. The saying serves as a poignant reminder that after death, all that can be said is that the person "tried," emphasizing the inherent limitations of human existence. The tonal variation used when reciting the saying further underscores its solemn and reflective nature.

Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva... emlu ono sabu ji wvia... oreh phian

The Odova performer, known for the phrase *Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva... emlu ono sabu ji wvia... oreh phian* "A Minute to 12," embodies a powerful message of hope and perseverance. His characteristic response, "anything can still happen," underscores the belief that positive change remains possible even in the direst circumstances. This sentiment mirrors the popular saying, "it is not over until it is over," highlighting the importance of never giving up and recognizing the potential for last-minute breakthroughs. The performer's message serves as a reminder to maintain optimism and continue striving

for success, regardless of how late in the game of life it may seem.

Itebele erha... emase wvia ne dere... Laughs

On the Odova, *Itebele erha... emase wvia ne dere... Laughs* "After Six Bottles" the bearer responded with "All Women Are Equal". This humorously illustrates how excessive alcohol consumption can impair judgment and alter perceptions, leading to questionable decisions. While the number of bottles mentioned in this is subjective and depends on individual tolerance. Members of the audience are reminded that in traditional gathering where alcohol is a regular feature, moderate drinking is advised to avoid indulging in questionable demoralised characters.

The Odova performance, primarily used for communication, is increasingly influenced by Western languages, particularly English. This influence has led to a humorous trend where individuals translate Odova phrases into English, creating comical expressions. Examples include translating "Odamoro" to "Try," "Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva" to "A Minute To 12," and "Itebele erha" to "after six shots or bottles of hot gin." This playful adaptation involves both the use of English in the call and the response, highlighting the blending of cultures and languages. Also, these Edeva performances, primarily engaged in by men in their early 50s, appear simple and even comical on the surface. However, a deeper analysis reveals that they possess significant social meaning within the Okpe community. Because the study focuses on understanding the underlying social significance of these seemingly ordinary oral performances, it also undertook their analysis.

7. Summary and Conclusion

This study explores the vital role of oral traditions in preserving African culture, particularly focusing on oral performance as a means of maintaining and transmitting cultural values. It highlights the communal nature of African societies and how social activities, such as festivals and ceremonies, incorporate performative elements that serve educational and cultural purposes. The influence of Westernization poses a threat to these traditions, leading to their marginalization. The chapter emphasizes the importance of preserving these traditions to maintain African identity and cohesion. The study focuses on the concept of Odova (alias) within the Okpe nationality of Nigeria as a case study. Odova is a call-and-response performance deeply rooted in Okpe culture, serving as a

demonstration of authority, a marker of identity, and a means of transmitting cultural knowledge. The research methodology combines interviews and ethnographic research within Okpe communities to understand how these traditions are sustained and passed down through generations. The study details how oral performances are integral to various social gatherings in traditional African societies, encompassing diverse elements such as songs, narratives, chants, proverbs, and riddles. These performances are not merely entertainment but also dynamic repositories of knowledge, actively performed and shared within communities. The call-and-response dynamic is a key characteristic of these performances, with the audience playing a crucial role in affirming the significance of the exchange. The chapter also explores the philosophical and cultural significance of specific Odova, illustrating how they reflect the values, history, and social dynamics of the Okpe people.

African Oral Performance, particularly within the Okpe tradition, highlights the profound connection between orality and cultural significance. This is vividly illustrated through the use of Odova, which are personal aliases that encapsulate an individual's identity, achievements, and social standing. These aliases are not merely labels; they are dynamic elements within Okpe traditional performances, serving as vehicles for transmitting history, values, and societal norms. The oral performance of Odova involves intricate linguistic artistry, employing techniques such as repetition, metaphor, and tonal variation to enhance their impact and memorability. The selection and performance of Odova are deeply contextual, reflecting the specific occasion, the performer's skill, and the audience's expectations. Through the study of Odova, we gain insights into the complex interplay between language, performance, and cultural identity in Okpe society, underscoring the enduring power of oral traditions in preserving and celebrating cultural heritage. The use of Odova in performances serves not only to honour individuals but also to reinforce communal bonds and transmit cultural knowledge across generations.

8. Recommendations

Odova oral performance need to be incorporated into local academic curriculums. Integrating Odova performance into the school curriculum across Africa would be a significant strategy to combat cultural marginalization. This argument suggests that by formally recognizing and teaching Odova performance within educational institutions, the cultural significance and value of this art form can be

elevated. Also, this inclusion would help ensure that younger generations are exposed to, understand, and appreciate Odova performance, thereby preserving and promoting it. Ultimately, this initiative will counteract the erosion of cultural identity and foster a stronger sense of cultural pride and belonging among African students.

Further, assimilating Odova oral performances into academic curricula is crucial for sustainability, building upon prior research in oral traditions. Damola Adesina (2021) highlights the significance of Yoruba folktales in early childhood education, advocating for the preservation of orature's value. Similarly, Michael (2021) emphasizes the pedagogical power of folklore and oral tradition, urging their inclusion in school curricula. This paper extends this argument by proposing the Odova oral performance of the Okpe people of Nigeria as a valuable educational tool. It aims to explore the traditional narrative's inherent meaning, its contextual and emerging meanings during performance, and to safeguard this performance from extinction due to Western and media influences.

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Symbolic Interactionism and Feminist Readings of Women in Igbo Folktales

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Abstract. Gender discourse has assumed a prominent position in contemporary African scholarship, with many scholars attributing women's challenges to entrenched patriarchal ideologies within African societies. In Igboland, these perspectives often highlight male dominance as the root cause of female marginalization. However, this study re-examines women's representations in Igbo folktales to uncover other underlying factors contributing to women's experiences beyond patriarchy. Anchored on feminist literary theory, Principle of Female Mortification and symbolic interactionism, the paper investigates how women's portrayals in selected Igbo folktales reflect individual agency, internalized gender dynamics, and social attitudes that sometimes perpetuate female subjugation. The study adopts a qualitative research design, employing purposive sampling to select and analyze relevant folktales from written anthologies. Through critical textual and thematic analysis, the findings reveal that while patriarchal structures influence women's conditions, certain negative experiences are also self-engendered through women's complicity, rivalry, and moral failings as depicted in the tales. These narratives illustrate that Igbo oral tradition serves both as a mirror and a moral compass, using storytelling to instruct, critique, and reform social behavior. The study concludes that meaningful gender transformation in Igbo society requires a dual approach: confronting structural patriarchy while encouraging individual introspection, self-assessment, and moral mortification among women. It recommends renewed attention to folktales as educational tools for promoting self-awareness, mutual respect, and societal harmony.

Keywords: Women, Igbo Folktales, Patriarchy, Feminist Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, Self-Mortification.

1. Introduction

Human relationships within society are complex and often characterized by conflicts, negotiations, and survival struggles. In African societies, particularly among the Igbo, gender interactions have attracted significant scholarly attention, with many studies emphasizing that women's challenges are largely rooted in patriarchy and traditional gender ideology (Awe, 2019; Oyěwùmí, 1997; Nnaemeka, 2004). Such scholarship suggests that African women are often at the receiving end of cultural, social, and economic structures that privilege men. Common examples include women being blamed for childlessness, subjected to domestic violence, or denied inheritance rights. However, the degree and nature of such subjugation vary across contexts and historical periods.

Gender relations in Africa can be categorized into three dimensions: inter-gender (between men and women), intra-gender (within women's relationships), and individual or self-induced (emanating from personal actions or moral failings). While many feminist scholars have rightly challenged patriarchal domination, the continuing social instability, moral decadence, and family disintegration in contemporary society suggest that gender equality alone does not guarantee social harmony. In contrast, the precolonial Igbo society, though hierarchical, was guided by a value system that emphasized *omenala* 'moral conduct', community ethics, and complementary gender roles (Nwala, 2010; Afigbo, 1981).

As Nwala (2010) notes, every society holds basic beliefs about the universe and human behavior that shape conduct and social stability. In traditional Igbo philosophy, moral responsibility and self-discipline were essential to personal and communal well-being. Thus, both men and women were expected to act within the bounds of cultural and spiritual norms. In

contemporary times, however, despite numerous advocacy efforts toward gender equality, the situation appears paradoxical, there is greater awareness of gender rights but also increasing moral confusion and social fragmentation.

This study therefore argues that while patriarchy is a significant contributor to women's marginalization, it is not the only factor. Women, as moral and social agents, also contribute, consciously or unconsciously to their experiences through interpersonal rivalry, jealousy, and self-centeredness. This view does not trivialize structural inequality but expands the conversation to include individual moral agency and accountability. Thus, the study examines selected Igbo folktales to uncover how these narratives represent women not merely as victims but as active participants in shaping their destinies.

The choice of folktales as data is deliberate. Folktales serve as a vital component of Igbo oral literature, encapsulating the people's philosophy, values, and moral expectations. They mirror society's ideals and contradictions while transmitting knowledge to younger generations (Uba-Mgbemena, 1985; Okoh, 2010). If the ancient Igbo society, guided by such narratives, enjoyed greater moral coherence, then revisiting folktales can offer insights into how self-examination and moral restraint, what this paper terms "self-mortification" may restore social balance.

This study adopts a Womanist theoretical perspective, which moves beyond Western feminism to emphasize the African woman's agency, community-centered values, and moral integrity (Hudson-Weems, 1993; Nnaemeka, 2004). The research is qualitative and expository, drawing data from purposively selected Igbo folktales gathered from oral and written sources. Through textual and thematic analysis, the paper explores how women's portrayals reveal a moral dimension to gender discourse in Igbo culture, one that calls for introspection, self-assessment, and moral renewal as complementary to structural change.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Folktales as Cultural and Moral Frameworks

Folktales are foundational components of the Igbo people traditional literary heritage. As Abrams (1981) notes, across cultures, traditional genres are handed down orally from generation to generation, including *ifo* 'Igbo folktales' which may appear either in poetic or prose form. In the Igbo context, folktales historically served as the primary modes of socialisation, instruction, and learning, particularly before Westernisation.

Folklorists and cultural educators emphasize that folktales are more than entertainment, they act as moral road-maps guiding individuals in communal life. For instance, Uba-Mgbemena (1985) defines *ifo* as an inclusive term covering fables, myths, hero-tales and epics, repositories of knowledge about folk customs, beliefs, morality, and the idea of the universe. Toni-Duruaku (2004) warns that when people discard their folklore, they risk losing identity and shared values.

More recently, scholarship has reiterated the enduring relevance of folktales in moral and social education. For example, film and media adaptations emphasise how folktales are being re-imagined to address contemporary issues Döbereiner (2024) reports on a short-film series where traditional tales are reinterpreted to highlight gender-based violence and female agency (dandc.eu). Likewise, Mdhluli (2025) examines how African folklore shapes moral behaviour, social values, and collective identity, showing that despite modernisation, folktales remain vital vehicles for communal cohesion and cultural transmission (Noyam Journals).

These sources support the view that Igbo folktales function as cultural mirrors, reflecting social norms, moral expectations, and patterns of behaviour, and as moral compasses, offering cautionary or exemplary narratives. This dual role is central for your study's focus on how women are represented and how moral agency is depicted.

2.2 Gender Representations and Patriarchal Narratives

Extensive literature on gender and culture in Africa emphasizes patriarchy as the predominant framework for understanding women's marginalisation. Scholars like Montgomery (1995) argue that African women are socialized into powerless roles through cultural and linguistic mechanisms, while men maintain dominance using verbal strategies and symbolic power. Such work highlights the role of culture, including folktales, in perpetuating gender inequality.

However, more recent scholarship has begun to nuance this analysis by emphasizing women's agency, internalized gender dynamics, and intra-gender relations. For example, ElFalih & El Idrissi (2024) analyse Moroccan folktales and find that although female characters remain tied to negative stereotypes (jealousy, deceit), the storytelling also reveals contradictions and opportunities for women's self-assertion as narrators and agents (ijlls.org). In the Cameroonian context, a recent study of Nso

folktales (2025) finds that while women are often portrayed in subordinate roles, some tales highlight female intelligence and resourcefulness, challenging the view of women as merely passive victims (EA Journals+1).

The scholarship also points to intra-female dynamics, for instance, Okide (2018) analyses how women may contribute to other women's marginalization through rivalry and hostility. This is especially pertinent for your study, which explores individual moral agency as much as structural patriarchy.

In her edited collection *Feminism in African Literature: Essays on Criticism*, Helen Chukwuma (1994) assembles a range of critical essays that examine African literature through feminist perspectives. The volume focuses on how African women writers and female characters in literature reflect, resist, and engage with issues of gender inequality, patriarchal domination, and the quest for agency and identity. It challenges the dominance of Western feminist frameworks by rooting feminist literary analysis within African sociocultural and historical contexts. Through this, the collection encourages a nuanced understanding of African women's experiences under colonial and postcolonial systems, emphasizing the intersection of gender, culture, and power. Significantly, the work represents one of the earliest scholarly efforts to foreground feminist criticism in African literary discourse and to promote African women's authorship and voices within literary studies (Chukwuma, 1994).

Together, these literatures suggest three important dimensions:

- Structural patriarchy and external gendered power relations,
- Cultural vehicles (folktales, proverbs, myths) that transmit gender norms,
- Internal and relational factors, women's agency, complicity, moral choices.

While the reviewed studies richly document how folktales reinforce gender norms and patriarchy, fewer works focus specifically on women's moral agency within folktales, how female characters are not only shaped by patriarchal culture but also shape their own destinies and participate in their moral positioning. This study fills this gap by examining how Igbo folktales represent women beyond victimhood, as moral agents capable of self-reflection, self-correction, and communal transformation. By integrating the folktale literature (on socialisation, moral education, cultural transmission) with gender scholarship that emphasises agency and intra-gender

relations, this work offers a new vantage. It explores how women's representations in Igbo folktales speak to both structural and moral dimensions of gender relations.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Womanist Theory

This study is anchored on Womanist Theory, as articulated by Alice Walker (1983) and further developed by Clenora Hudson-Weems (1993) and Chikwenye Ogunyemi (1996), among others. Womanism emerged as a corrective and complementary response to the inadequacies of Western feminism, which often fails to capture the spiritual, communal, and moral dimensions of African and Black women lived realities. While Western feminism largely defines women's liberation as resistance to male dominance, Womanism expands the discourse by emphasizing *complementarity*, *community*, *spirituality*, and *self-reclamation*. It is rooted in the conviction that the liberation of women cannot be isolated from the healing and restoration of the entire community.

Unlike Western feminism, which tends to interpret gender relations through oppositional binaries of oppression and resistance, Womanism recognizes that African women's struggles are not merely against men but against social, cultural, and moral dislocations that destabilize both genders and threaten communal harmony. The womanist worldview thus privileges *balance* over rivalry, *self-definition* over imitation, and *spiritual self-recovery* over victimhood (Walker, 1983; Hudson-Weems, 1993; Ogunyemi, 1996; Phillips, 2006).

3.1.1 Relevance of Womanist Theory to This Study

Womanist Theory provides the most appropriate interpretive framework for this research because it transcends the narrow focus on patriarchy as the sole determinant of women's conditions. Instead, it probes the internal, moral, and communal dimensions of women's experiences and responsibilities. This theoretical lens aligns with the study's purpose, which seeks to uncover how Igbo folktales portray women not only as victims of subjugation but also as moral agents capable of shaping their destinies through their actions, choices, and ethical orientation.

As Hudson-Weems (1993) contends, African women's liberation must begin with *self-definition*, not mere reaction to patriarchal norms. This assertion resonates with the moral and didactic functions of Igbo folktales,

which serve as instruments for ethical education and communal discipline. Womanism views culture not as a static tool of oppression but as a dynamic resource for moral and social transformation. This position supports the study's finding that folktales act as *moral compasses*, didactic texts that guide ethical behavior, encourage reflection, and inspire reformation.

Similarly, Ogunyemi (1985) emphasizes that Womanism "celebrates Black life, encompassing both men and women in an inclusive struggle for wholeness." This inclusivity reflects the Igbo worldview, in which gender relations are understood within the broader framework of social balance and collective wellbeing. Within this cultural logic, women in folktales are portrayed as multidimensional beings, nurturing and virtuous on one hand, yet capable of jealousy, rivalry, and moral failing on the other. Womanism provides the interpretive space to analyze these portrayals critically, recognizing that women are not passive victims of patriarchy but active participants in shaping moral and social outcomes.

Womanism thus becomes a platform for exploring themes of female complicity, self-examination, and moral regeneration, which are central to the findings of this study. Its emphasis on *self-healing*, *ethical introspection*, and *communal balance* echoes the research's recommendation for *self-assessment and mortification* as pathways toward social harmony. Moreover, Womanism integrates the moral and functional aspects of folktales, understanding them as cultural tools for moral education, behavioral correction, and social empowerment especially for young women in processes of socialization.

Through a Womanist lens, this study interrogates how women in Igbo folktales are represented as moral exemplars or deviants, how such depictions promote self-awareness, cooperation, and social order, and how storytelling functions as a cultural arena for examining women's attitudes and responsibilities not merely men's authority or dominance.

3.2 The Concept of Female Mortification

To extend Womanist ethics, this study introduces the concept of Female Mortification as a moral principle rooted in African spirituality and self-discipline. Derived from the Latin *mortificationem* 'to put to death', mortification in this context does not imply self-destruction but *moral refinement and restraint*. It entails a conscious process of examining one's passions, desires, and attitudes that may foster conflict, envy, or disharmony, and deliberately curbing

them for the sake of inner peace and communal growth.

In Igbo cultural philosophy, this principle mirrors the ethic of *ime ihe n'oke*, meaning *self-restraint* or *moderation*, a virtue considered essential for maintaining social balance and moral integrity. Female Mortification, therefore, calls upon women to engage in self-examination and moral responsibility, not as submission to patriarchal expectations but as a voluntary act of spiritual and ethical renewal aimed at achieving harmony and collective upliftment.

Applied to this study, Female Mortification serves as a womanist strategy of renewal. It encourages women to redirect emotional and social energies away from rivalry and hostility toward self-discipline, introspection, and positive influence. By doing so, it bridges the gap between structural critique and personal responsibility, asserting that genuine gender transformation in African societies must encompass both social reform and individual moral regeneration.

3.2.1 Relevance to the Study

Applying Womanist Theory and Female Mortification to the analysis of Igbo folktales allows for a detailed reading of women's portrayals that moves beyond a purely patriarchal interpretation. This approach enables the researcher to identify how female characters demonstrate moral agency within traditional narratives.

Furthermore, using this framework helps to interpret negative portrayals of women, such as those involving jealousy, betrayal, or rivalry, not merely as evidence of patriarchal bias. Instead, these are read as moral lessons that promote self-discipline and reinforce communal ethics.

Ultimately, this theoretical synthesis allows the study to advocate for internal reawakening. This is a dual approach where women are encouraged to confront structural social inequities while simultaneously cultivating the inner virtues necessary for self-actualization and harmonious coexistence. By synthesizing Womanist Theory with the indigenous moral concept of Female Mortification, this study offers an Afrocentric framework that underscores moral agency, relational balance, and collective healing, values deeply embedded in Igbo cosmology and oral tradition.

3.3 Conclusion

In summary, Womanist Theory provides an Afrocentric and culturally authentic framework for

interpreting women's representations within the moral and social logic of Igbo society. It affirms female agency, self-definition, and ethical responsibility as integral to African womanhood. By situating this discourse within African epistemology rather than Eurocentric feminist paradigms, the study ensures both cultural relevance and scholarly originality. Womanism encapsulates the cultural, moral, and gender dimensions of this research, aligning with the study's overall themes of self-examination, moral regeneration, and communal harmony. Rejecting the adversarial stance of Western feminism, it promotes reconciliation, introspection, and collective upliftment. This perspective enables a richer reading of Igbo folktales as moral texts that portray women not only as victims of patriarchy but as agents of transformation through ethical renewal and social responsibility, values consistent with the didactic and communal functions of African storytelling.

4. Refined Methodology: Interpretive Textual Analysis and Womanist Principles

This study employs a qualitative research design rooted in interpretive textual analysis to systematically explore the moral meanings and cultural values embedded in selected Igbo folktales. The analysis is theoretically anchored in Womanist Theory, focusing specifically on its principles of harmony, balance, communal responsibility, and moral integrity. Data for this study are derived from written sources, comprising ten (10) Igbo folktales that have been purposively selected from published anthologies and scholarly works on Igbo folklore. The Womanist principles guide the interpretation and critical analysis of the selected tales.

4.1 Data Presentation

The data for this study consist of ten Igbo folktales drawn from written sources, particularly Emenanjo (1977), Iroaganachi (1973), Nnabuihe (2005), and Ogbalu (1973). The tales foreground diverse portrayals of women, exposing social attitudes, moral expectations, and the consequences of women's choices and behaviors within traditional Igbo cosmology.

Data 1: *Ede Nwa na-Enweghi Nne* 'Ede the Motherless Child' (Emenanjo, 1977) This folktale tells of Ede, a motherless girl who suffers severe maltreatment from her stepmother after her mother's death. Forced to do all household chores and deprived of food and inheritance, Ede remains obedient despite her suffering. Seeking solace, she visits her dead mother's spirit, who warns her to avoid a forbidden pot of water. When Ede refuses to disobey

this instruction, the stepmother sends her own children to fetch water and they are killed by the spirit, followed by the stepmother herself. The ordeal of a motherless girl maltreated by her stepmother underscores envy, cruelty, and divine justice, illustrating the belief that wickedness self-destructs. The tale underscores the moral victory of virtue, patience, and obedience over cruelty and greed.

Data 2: *Nwa Udele no na Nne Ori* 'The vulture chick in Ori Mother market' (Emenanjo, 1977) A disobedient woman repeatedly returns home late from the market despite her husband's warnings. On one occasion, she lingers at the *Nne Ori* Market until a vulture spirit devours her and her children who come searching for her. Her husband later rescues the children by killing the vulture, though the wife remains dead. The tale portrays a woman whose disobedience and stubbornness lead to her death, highlighting the moral premium placed on discipline and obedience. The story warns against stubbornness and disregard for wise counsel.

Data 3: *Nwaada Loolo* 'Daughter of Loolo' (Nnabuihe, 2005) Nwaada Loolo, the daughter of a titled man, endures cruelty from her stepmother after her father's death. Despite her innocence, she is subjected to impossible tasks meant to lead to her death. Benevolent spirits assist her but warn her never to reveal their help. When she finally confesses under pressure, she dies instantly. Her miraculous resurrection during burial and her stepmother's death serve as a moral reversal, affirming justice for the virtuous and punishment for the wicked. In this tale, female rivalry and oppression are dramatized through a wicked stepmother's maltreatment of her stepdaughter, culminating in supernatural retribution and moral vindication for the victim.

Data 4: *Nwa Agboghọ na-Agba Nho Di* 'A Young lady Over-selective of husbands' (Iroaganachi, 1973). This tale features a beautiful maiden who rejects all suitors out of pride. Eventually, she marries a spirit disguised as a man and is taken to the spirit world to be sacrificed. She narrowly escapes death through the intervention of a hawk. The story condemns pride and excessive selectiveness, promoting humility and discernment in relationships.

Data 5: *DiOchi na-Aku Ngwo* 'A Palm Wine-Tapper Tapping Ngwo Drink' (Iroaganachi, 1973). A grandmother kills her son's pet bird despite her granddaughter's plea to spare it. Upon returning home, the son executes his innocent daughter, believing his mother's false accusation. Later, a palm-wine tapper discovers the truth, and the man kills his mother in remorse. The tale condemns false accusation and injustice, showing how hasty judgment leads to familial destruction. The tale warns against deceit,

rash judgment, and the abuse of trust within family structures.

Data 6: *Nwaanyi na-Ero* ‘A Woman And Mushroom’ (Iroaganachi, 1973).

A woman ignores warnings and harvests a forbidden mushroom believed to be bewitched. Despite songs of warning from the mushroom and her neighbours, she eats it and dies when it bursts her stomach. The tale further present women whose pride, greed, or disobedience invite tragic consequences, reinforcing the moral code of moderation and humility. The tale symbolizes the fatal consequences of greed and disobedience.

Data 7: *Nwaanyi zuru Ihe Di ya na Imo* ‘The Woman that stole her Husband’s item in Imo’ (Iroaganachi,1973).

A man warns his seven wives not to touch a piece of meat before he travels. His favourite wife, Obidiya, secretly eats it. When the theft is discovered, each wife is tested by a river spirit. The innocent ones float, but Obidiya drowns, exposing her guilt. The narrative upholds truthfulness and accountability as moral ideals.

Data 8: *Eke na Nwaanyi* ‘Python and Woman’ (Iroaganachi, 1973)

A woman finds python eggs and eats them against all warnings that they belong to a sacred serpent. When the python discovers the loss, it cuts her open to retrieve its eggs. The tale dramatizes greed and disregard for taboos as a woman eats python eggs and suffers fatal retribution, reinforcing the sacredness of moral restraint. The story reinforces respect for taboos and the spiritual balance between humans and nature in Igbo cosmology.

Data 9: *Ihe Mere Umụ Nwaanyi ejighi Agba Afu-Onu* (Ogbalu, 1973).

In ancient times, women had beautiful beards. A woman named Nkemdiche loses this gift for all women after stealing a king’s ring and hiding it in her beards. As punishment, the beards of all women are shaved and never grow again. The tale teaches against greed and dishonesty. It symbolizes how individual misconduct can bring collective repercussions and disgrace upon womanhood.

Data 10: *Nwaanyi na-Akpọ Di ya Onyenuu* ‘the Woman that calls her Husband ‘That Person’ (Ogbalu,1973).

Tale 10 presents a wife’s arrogance and disrespect toward her husband as social taboos, with redemption achieved only through repentance. A woman refuses to address her husband by his name, calling him “that person” instead, an act considered taboo. To teach her respect, the husband invokes a river spirit to seize her until she pronounces his name. When she finally does, she is released. The story upholds marital respect and the sacredness of language in naming relationships.

Collectively, these folktales reveal that while patriarchal structures shape women’s realities, many conflicts arise from women’s internal flaws, envy, pride, greed, and disobedience. Through supernatural justice and moral allegory, Igbo folktales advocate *female mortification*, a self-corrective process of introspection, humility, and moral discipline, consistent with Womanist ideals of self-realization, harmony, and communal balance

5. Findings

The analysis of the ten selected Igbo folktales reveals several key patterns regarding women’s roles, experiences, and moral lessons within traditional Igbo society.

Firstly, many tales such as *Ede Nwa na-Enweghi Nne* and *Nwaada Loolo* portray women as victims of oppression, often from stepmothers or other female figures. These narratives expose how patriarchal structures and internalized female rivalry contribute to women’s suffering and reinforce systems of subjugation within domestic and communal spaces.

Secondly, folktales like *Nwa Agboghọ na-Agba Nho Di* and *Nwaanyi na-Ero* emphasize the consequences of disobedience, pride, or greed. Women who act against societal expectations often face misfortune or death, underscoring the cultural demand for humility, self-discipline, and moral restraint as markers of acceptable womanhood.

Thirdly, stories such as *Eke na Nwaanyi* and *Nwa Udele na Nne Ori* highlight the supernatural enforcement of justice. In these tales, spiritual or otherworldly forces intervene to punish wrongdoing or vindicate the innocent, illustrating how morality, spirituality, and social order are deeply intertwined in Igbo cosmology.

Furthermore, narratives like *Ihe Mere Umụ Nwaanyi Ejighi Agba Afu-Onu* and *Nwaanyi na-Akpọ Di ya Onyenuu* codify gender norms and expectations. They function as cultural instruments of moral education, defining acceptable female behavior and prescribing consequences for those who transgress social and ethical boundaries.

Overall, the findings indicate that Igbo folktales serve as moral and social instruments, guiding women on appropriate behavior, cautioning against transgressions, and promoting ethical agency. They underscore the intertwined relationship between female agency, communal harmony, and cultural values, providing a basis for applying Womanist Theory in understanding female experiences and

strategies for empowerment in Igbo society. The tales promote self-reflection and ethical agency among women. Through their experiences, the folktales advocate moral self-regulation and inner discipline, suggesting that women attain both personal fulfillment and communal harmony when they embody humility, introspection, and virtue, qualities aligned with the philosophy of ‘Female Mortification’.

6. Data Analysis

The analysis of the selected Igbo folktales reveals that many of the challenges, adversities, and moral conflicts faced by female characters are not entirely the result of external oppression or patriarchal dominance but are, in many instances, consequences of their own choices, actions, and attitudes. While it is undeniable that women suffer injustices from men and, at times, from other women, these narratives illuminate a deeper truth, that individual women also play an active role in shaping their own experiences and the moral fabric of their communities. Moreover, the study aligns this moral philosophy with biblical injunctions such as *Ephesians 5:21–22*, which calls for mutual submission and cooperative coexistence within marital and social relationships. Such spiritual and ethical grounding emphasizes that true strength in womanhood is not expressed through rivalry or rebellion but through wisdom, moderation, and moral integrity.

The ten selected Igbo folktales reveal a complex but consistent moral framework surrounding women’s behavior, agency, and social responsibility. These folktales present women not merely as victims of patriarchal dominance but also as moral agents whose choices significantly shape their destinies and influence communal harmony. Through the lens of Womanist Theory and the principle of Female Mortification, the narratives underscore that self-discipline, moral reflection, and humility are central to women’s empowerment and the preservation of societal balance.

In tales such as *Ede Nwa na-Enweghi Nne* and *Nwaada Loolo*, the cruelty of stepmothers exposes the destructive power of jealousy and internalized female rivalry, revealing that oppression sometimes emerges from within women’s social circles. Similarly, in *Nwa Udele na Nne Ori* and *Nwaanyi na-Ero*, disobedience and pride lead to personal or familial tragedy, reinforcing the Igbo moral ethos that self-restraint and ethical conduct safeguard both individual and communal welfare. Supernatural justice in stories like *Eke na Nwaanyi* functions as a moral equalizer, ensuring that wrongdoing—especially when driven by

greed, envy, or deceit—invites divine retribution and moral correction.

Tales such as *Ihe Mere Umu Nwaanyi Ejighi Agba Afu-Onu* and *Nwaanyi na-Akpo Di Ya Onyenwu* highlight how personal misconduct can extend to collective suffering, demonstrating that women’s moral lapses may perpetuate broader gendered vulnerabilities within their communities. Yet, these same narratives also reveal possibilities for transformation: humility, self-control, and moral introspection emerge as redemptive virtues. Within this moral framework, *Female Mortification*, understood as the conscious discipline of one’s desires and impulses, functions as both a corrective and empowering process through which women reclaim agency while aligning with communal ethics.

Collectively, the tales advocate a form of womanhood rooted in moral self-examination, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility. They assert that empowerment in the Igbo worldview is not achieved through defiance alone but through an active engagement with one’s inner self and moral obligations. Thus, Igbo folktales position women as both moral exemplars and custodians of societal harmony, reflecting a deeply indigenous vision of balance between individual agency and collective well-being.

7. Discussion

The findings from the analyzed folktales challenge the often-generalized notion that African oral narratives merely reinforce patriarchal oppression. Instead, Igbo folktales portray a nuanced moral universe where women possess significant moral agency and social influence. These narratives, when interpreted through the lens of Womanist Theory, articulate a distinctly indigenous form of feminism that balances individual autonomy with communal ethics. Unlike Western feminist paradigms that often emphasize confrontation with patriarchy, the Womanist framework adopted here underscores harmony, complementarity, and moral responsibility as pathways to empowerment.

Central to this interpretive approach is the concept of Female Mortification, which represents the inward discipline through which women achieve moral and spiritual balance. The tales suggest that while patriarchal structures exist within Igbo culture, women’s challenges are not always externally imposed; they often arise from internal human weaknesses such as pride, envy, and greed. By acknowledging and regulating these impulses, women become agents of transformation rather than passive

victims. This moral philosophy resonates with the Igbo proverb *onye kwe, chi ya ekwe* “when one agrees, their personal deity agrees” which affirms the power of individual will and self-mastery in shaping destiny.

Furthermore, these folktales reveal the cultural mechanisms through which society enforces moral accountability. Supernatural justice, community judgment, and personal suffering serve as moral correctives, ensuring that transgressions, whether by men or women, do not go unchecked. This underscores the Igbo worldview of moral equilibrium, where the stability of the cosmos depends on ethical conduct and social harmony. By positioning women as both subjects and enforcers of moral order, the tales dismantle the binary of female victimhood versus male dominance, suggesting instead a relational ethic of balance and interdependence.

Through this lens, *Beyond Patriarchy* becomes not merely a call for resistance but for re-evaluation an invitation to see Igbo women as participants in their own moral and existential journeys. The Womanist perspective thus situates these narratives within a broader discourse of African self-definition, highlighting that empowerment in Igbo oral tradition is achieved not by rebellion but by inner fortitude, self-awareness, and communal alignment. Ultimately, Igbo folktales affirm that the path to gender equity lies in cultivating moral integrity and spiritual consciousness values that sustain both individual dignity and collective resilience.

8. Conclusion

The analysis of the selected Igbo folktales reveals that many of the adversities, moral conflicts, and unfortunate circumstances faced by female characters are not merely the products of external oppression or patriarchal dominance but are often the direct or indirect consequences of their own actions, attitudes, and decisions. While the existence of gender-based injustices and male-induced suffering is undeniable, these narratives uncover a subtler, introspective dimension of accountability, showing that women, too, play crucial roles in shaping their personal destinies and the moral order of their society.

Contrary to Virginia Woolf’s (1991, cited in Bonuedie, 2015:16) assertion that “men have treated women and continue to treat them as inferiors,” the folktales suggest that women frequently contribute to their own predicaments through pride, disobedience, greed, jealousy, or failure to exercise restraint. These traits, when left unchecked, often lead to personal downfall or communal disharmony. Yet, the tales also present

opportunities for self-redemption, teaching that moral growth, humility, and self-discipline are pathways to restoring harmony and balance within the society.

Ultimately, this study concludes that genuine female empowerment must be holistic, encompassing both the external struggle against societal marginalization and the internal cultivation of virtue and self-discipline. When women acknowledge their agency, embrace moral responsibility, and engage with others through self-regulated and constructive conduct, they not only uplift themselves but also advance the collective well-being of society. True progress, therefore, lies in the balance between external liberation and inner transformation, where women become architects of peace, justice, and sustainable coexistence in the moral universe of the Igbo people.

9. Recommendations

This study therefore advocates for female mortification, a deliberate process of self-examination, moral reflection, and character refinement through which women identify and correct attitudes and behaviors that may engender conflict, suffering, or social discord. By cultivating humility, empathy, patience, and restraint, women can transform not only their own lives but also contribute to peace, stability, and moral renewal within their families and communities.

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Interactional Sociolinguistics: A Comparative Analysis of Contextual Miscommunication in British / American and Nigerian Institutional Discourse

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Abstract. This paper examines the vital role context plays in Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) especially as it relates to cross-cultural miscommunications exemplified in British/American and Nigerian data. This study, therefore, critically investigates the intricate dynamics of how context shapes interactional communication, highlighting how cross-cultural differences, linguistic norms and societal expectations and contextualization cues often lead to semantic misrepresentation, misunderstandings and miscommunications. Drawing on empirical data from complex and linguistically diverse cultural background, the study demonstrates how Gumperz IS and contextualization theories can lighten-up the complex interplay between language, culture and context in cross-cultural sociolinguistic interactions. The study drew from purposively selected structured interviews involving electricians, bricklayers, teacher/pupils exchange and Head of Department/staff conversations, which were subjected to discourse analysis. The data reflect work environment across different regions, including USA, UK and Nigeria. The findings reveal that language is consequential in sociocultural context in which communication takes place, and also brings to the fore that effective cross-cultural communication requires not only linguistic competence but also a deep understanding of the cultural nuances and contextual factors that shape interactional dynamics. This paper also contributes to the unburdening of age-long perception that pragmatic context alone rather than cross-cultural differences often lead to miscommunication and distortion of intended meaning in interactional communication in an increasingly globalized world.

Keywords: Interactional Sociolinguistics, Cross-Cultural Miscommunication, Contextualization Cues, Context, Cultural Differences.

1. Introduction

Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) is a sub-discipline of linguistics founded by linguistic anthropologist, John J. Gumperz. Its focus is on discourse analysis. According to Gumperz (2001), IS focuses on how meaning is shaped through social interaction. It is a discipline that is highly interested in cross-cultural miscommunication, politeness, and framing. Politeness is the practical application of good manner while engaging in communication. It is used to make participants in an interaction to feel relaxed and comfortable with one another. Brown and Levinson (1987) identify two types of politeness: negative and positive politeness. Negative politeness is making request with respect to a person's right to act freely. While negative politeness uses indirect speech acts, positive politeness seeks to establish positive relationship between participants in an interaction, which involves the use of direct speech acts (Brown and Levinson 1987). Grice (2001) Maxims can also be considered as an aspect of positive politeness. Politeness is culturally defined such that what may be considered polite in one culture can be considered as rude in another cultural context.

Frame semantics is a theory of linguistic meaning propounded by Charles J. Fillmore. The theory states that for one to understand the meaning of a single word, one must have the essential knowledge that relates to that word. For instance, one would not understand the word "buy" without knowing anything about the situation of commercial transfer, which also involves among other things, a seller, a buyer, goods, money, the relation between money and the goods, the relation between the buyer and the goods and the money, the relation between the seller and the goods and the money and so on. There are three types of frames: Relative, intrinsic and absolute frame of references. Intrinsic frame of reference is a binary spatial relation in which the location of an object is

defined in relation to a part of another object. Absolute frame of reference is also a binary system in which the location of an object is defined in relation to arbitrary fixed bearings. Relative frame of reference in which the location of an object is expressed in relation to both the view point of the perceived and position of an object.

IS in relation to this looks into the application of background knowledge the conversationalists' frame to make meaning out of their interaction. According to Gumperz (2001), conversationalists always rely on knowledge that goes beyond grammar and lexicon to make themselves heard. It therefore tries to figure out what participants have in mind to convey as they engage in everyday interaction. It analyses how people from different cultures may share grammatical knowledge of a language but differently contextualize what is said that different messages are produced. Bailey (2025) reiterates that IS marries the disparity between empirical communicative forms and meanings created from the forms. The communicative forms include linguistic and paralinguistic features. In terms of research methods, it analyses audio or video recordings of conversations or other interactions. Analysis focuses not only on linguistic forms such as words and sentences, but also subtle cues such as prosody and register that signal contextual presupposition. These contextualization cues are culturally specific and usually unconscious. When participants in a conversation come from different cultural backgrounds, they may not recognize these subtle cues in one another's speech, leading to misunderstanding. IS focuses on language in its social context, the language used in interaction by closely observing a speech event in a particular community.

Nevertheless, it is clear that speech event analysis has played an important role in calling attention both to the importance of context in talk and to discourse as principal site for languages and culture studies. As a result, research on language and culture has increasingly come to concentrate on discourse as the basic research site. Ethnographic approaches to conversation share similarities with IS approaches in that they show how culture dictates people's use of language as they engage in communication. This approach tends to dictate people's use of language as they engage in verbal communication. It is the scientific description of peoples and cultures with particular reference to their customs and characteristics. It also studies the differences and relationships between them. Hymes (2010) studies on ethnography show that to situation and uses, linguistic patterns and functions are speaking activity in its own right. He developed a scheme for analyzing context

that has the speech event in which language occurs as its prime unit of analysis: The speech event is to the analysis of verbal interaction what the sentence is to grammar...it represents an extension in the size of the basic analytical unit from the single utterance to stretches of utterances, as well as a shift in focus from ... text to ... interaction (Hymes 2010:17).

Garfinkel (1967) gives some ethnological experiments to reveal that indeed sociocultural background knowledge does influence everyday interactions and decision-makings. He sees interaction as constituted by goal-oriented moves. He is concerned with the interpretative processes through which "interactional outcomes" are achieved. He believes that since talk alone cannot give accurate or detailed intention of the interlocutors; they rely on what he calls "Practical reasoning" and socio-cultural background knowledge to conceive the information that is left unmentioned through talk. This follows what Gumperz (2001) calls an in-built or internalized social order. Events in this case consist of conversation at a party or ordering a meal etc. Hymes' (2010) grids become known as the 'speaking grid', which provides a necessary reminder of the contextual dimensions that determine our use of language. His ethnographic framework led not only to broader notions of the 'communicative competence' language user's display but also to the recognition of the close relationship between speech events and their social or cultural contexts. Again, the theory of variation has made a good contribution to the analysis of discourse based on the analysis of descriptive narratives. This theory was developed by Labov in 1972, and has been very influential in language teaching. Labov and Waletzky (1972) argue that the 'overall structure' of a fully formed narrative of personal experience is: Abstract (summary of story, with its point); Orientation (in respect of place, time and situation); Complication (temporal sequence of events, culminating in crisis); Evaluation (narrator's attitude towards narrative); Resolution (protagonist's approach to crisis); Coda (point about narrative as a whole) (Labov and Waletzky 1972, p. 363).

The Hymes' grid theory has been effectively applied in analyzing narrative of personal experience. This sees people's utterances as situationally cued or conditioned and automatic particularly in the "unselfconscious vernacular mode" which is often the focus of attentions. Schmitt (2010) points out that Labov (1972) did not use the term "genre" but all his analyses as patterned personal experiences deal with genre in language teaching. The theory of variation just like IS looks into how the personal experiences bring about variations in utterances and making meaning of utterances embedded in text linguistics.

The current study also falls within the domain of text linguistics, which is a branch of linguistics that deals with texts as communication systems. It is either the written or spoken form. Text is the actual (extracted) meaning potential of discourse analysis. Text linguistics not only takes into account the form of a text, but also its setting, i.e. the way in which it is situated in an interactional, communicative context. Both the author of a written or spoken text as well as its addressees are taken into consideration in their respective (social and for institutional) roles in specific communicative context. In broader sense, it is the applicant of discourse analysis at the more expanded level of text, rather than 'just a sentence or word level.

Text is extremely important because people not only communicate by means of fragment of sentences or words in large, but by means of texts. It is also the basis of every other discipline like Law, Politics, Religion, Medicine, Science etc.... A text is best regarded as a semantic unit, a unit not of form but meaning (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 1-2). There is text and there is other text that accompanies it: text it is 'well', namely the con-text. It goes beyond what is written: it includes other non-verbal signs- on-the-total environment in which it unfolds.

Discourse analysis requires three major features of context or situation, namely the field of discourse – experiential meaning, which involves social actions and the role participants give to the understanding of a text; the tenor of discourse – interpersonal meaning, which refers to the roles and relationships among participants that they give to the understanding of a text; the mode of discourse -logical meaning: The meaning that the language, written or spoken, give to the understanding of a text; texture – the “sequential implicativeness”. Any text that lacks texture would simply be a bunch of isolated sentences that have no relationship to each other. Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:3) state that a text must meet seven standards of “textuality”: cohesion- the way words are connected in sequence, the “sticking together” of ideas. Eg, “slow cars held up”; coherence- the outcome of cognitive relations such as mutual or common knowledge between participants in discourse, the feeling, that text make sense in relation to its context. Eg. “slow men at work”; intentionality- the text producer’s discourse purpose or goals; acceptability- the text receiver’s attitude of whether the text contains useful relevant details or information such as it’s worth accepting; informativity- whether the degree or amount of information transmitted is suitable for the receiver in the circumstances; situationality-the factors which make a text relevant to the situation in which it occurs

and intertextuality- the way in which a text relies on previous knowledge of one or more encountered texts.

2. Concepts and Tenets of Interactional Sociolinguistics (Is)

IS covers the wide range of communicative environments. It seeks to reconcile theoretical divisions which came as a result of diversity of today's communicative environments. IS claims that for a better understanding of the diverse nature of communication, the way which localized interaction works should be a starting point of studying diversity of interactions. Approaches to diverse nature of interaction differ according to Gumperz (2001) based on relevant data and in the methods of analysis employed.

IS tends to combine these approaches in trying discursive practices. It is on discourse practice communicative practice relies. Interlocutors achieve their communicative goals and aspirations through their communicative practices. In practical sense, when people engage in talks or conversation, they do not rely on words to interpret meaning out of the interaction. They rather rely on interpreting the communicative practices displayed by the speakers or interactants. The main objective of IS is to study how two or more people who engage in a natural interaction exchange speech. It shows how participants in interactions achieve their communicative goals and aspiration in real-life situations by taking into account the cultural shared knowledge and the context within which the interaction takes place. The commonly shared background knowledge usually takes the form of presuppositions which mostly vary according to the nature of the interaction and communicative practices. IS analyses focus on what is termed "conversational inference" by Gumperz (1992) to analyze the communicative practices of interactants. He defines conversational inference as the interpretative procedure by means of which interactants access speaker’s intention at any point in an exchange and produce their responses.

The point of concern is not to analyze the grammatical rule of language but to think of how language devices evoke the contextual presupposition that affect interpretation. Here, concerns are also placed on how presuppositions work in a particular talk exchange. The way which turns are sequentially positioned is really important in making conversational inference. According to Gumperz (2001:219), "many other analytical prior factors are also involved". That still points to the fact that individuals who participate in conversation go beyond the level of literal

interpretation of what is said to interpret and fill what is not said. For instance, Erhovwo had just been talking with Aghogho, and Ese asked Aghogho what they had been doing, he (Aghogho) might answer "I asked Erhovwo if he had some money with him". From this, Ese might infer from the conversation that Aghogho might be planning to borrow money from Erhovwo. Thus, Ese did not make literal interpretation of the statement because in the utterance, there was no word that denoted "borrowing".

Moreover, there are several other possible interpretations to the above utterance but Ese relied on background knowledge acquired through past communicative experience to infer what was intended. What may bring about differences to the interpretation of the utterance is when the background knowledge of the interlocutors differs, and also changes in context. This may cause variations in the interpretation of the utterance. IS analysts show how diversity of background knowledge affects interpretation. It accounts for diversity in the interpretation of conversation. Code-switching, pronunciation, intonation and stress, rhythm, tempo and other supra segmental signs are verbal signs which when combined with grammatical and lexical signs serve to construct "the contextual ground for situated interpretation". This is what Gumperz (1992) calls "contextualization cues". In other words, contextualization cues like prosody, gesture and lexical choice, explores how speakers use them to signal meaning and vividly negotiate understanding in interaction. When this is combined with grammatical and lexical signs, it will construct contextual ground for situated interpretation which affects how message is understood. Lucy (1993: 222) refers to it (contextualization cues) as "meta pragmatic signs". She defines it as "the means by which speakers present information to listeners and how language is being used at any one point in the ongoing exchange". This can be what Toomaneejinda and Saengboon (2022) mean when they posit that IS offers valuable insights into the dynamics of communication, particularly in interactional contexts. Context reveals how differing expectations and interpretations can either facilitate effective interactions or lead to breakdowns in communication

3. Data on Interactional Sociolinguistics

The main purpose of interactional sociolinguistic analysis is to show how diversity and social background affects interpretation. Some of the best known IS analyses were conducted in urban work place settings, where lay participants who are under great pressure to perform, must deal with experts

whose interpretive premises are quite different from theirs, and according to Gumperz (2001); will operate with different "background assumptions." The following extracts from Gumperz's recorded interviews in the mid-1970 in the British Midlands will buttress our discussion on interactional sociolinguistics (IS).

Data 1. ELECTRICIAN

- A. Interviewer: Have you visited the skills center?
- B. Applicant: Yes, I did.
- C. Interviewer: So you have had a look at the workshops?
- D. Applicant: Yes
- E. Interviewer: You know what the training allowance is? Do you?
- F. Applicant: Yeah
- G. Interviewer: Do you know how much you have got to live on for the period of time?

Data 2. BRICKLAYER

- A. Interviewer: Have you visited the skills center?
- B. Applicant: Yep. I've been there. Yeah
- C. Interviewer: so you've had a chance to look around? And did you look in at the bricks shop?
- D. Applicant: Ah yeah. We had a look around the bricks shop and uhm, it look o.k. I mean it's.....
- E. Interviewer: All right.
- F. Applicant: Pretty good yeah.

From the above excerpts, you will discover that the interviewer asks roughly the same questions in each case. However, the two applicants differ in the way they answer and the treatment they receive. In the interview involving the bricklayer, the applicant elaborates his answers, enabling the interviewer to judge how he has interpreted the question. The two applicants/participants actively collaborated in constructing the exchange and we have the impression that they understand each other. In turn (D), for example, when the applicant hesitates as if he were searching for the right word ("I mean it's ..."), the interviewer helps him with "all right" and the exchange ends on a note of agreement. While in the interview involving the electrician, the applicant provides only minimal replies, volunteering no information on his own. We have the impression he is being rather passive, leaving the interviewer to do all the work. When the interviewer in turn (G) rephrases her question about the training allowance, it seems that she is not sure that the applicant understands what she wants of him.

For the electrician, though he has been living in Britain for a number of years, he is a South Asian by background, and the bricklayer is a native of the local

region. We could argue therefore that ideology-based prejudice is at work. There is no question that ideology is an important factor, but experience with this and other similar workplace situations suggest that the treatment the two applicants receive is also due to the fact that, based on their communicative and cultural backgrounds, interviewers and applicants draw different inferences from what they see and hear. IS analyses of such inferential processes can provide evidence to show how such differences come about and how they affect the work place climate.

Further text of the electrician's interview reveals more on the interactional relationship. This time a third person, the course instructor, joins in the questioning. In the first extract, the questioning was designed to test the applicant's knowledge of the course:

- A. Interviewer: And you've put here, that you want to apply for that course because there are more jobs in ... this trade?
 B. Applicant: Yeah (how?).
 C. Interviewer: So perhaps you could explain to Mr. C. apart from that reason, why else you want to apply for electrical work.
 D. Applicant: I think I like ... this profession.
 E. Instructor: And why do you think you'll like it?
 F. Applicant: Why?
 G. Instructor: Could you explain to me why?
 H. Applicant: Why do I like it? I think it is more job prospect.

By using stress to foreground the word "trade" the interviewer is drawing the applicant's attention to the term the applicant used in the written questionnaire he filled out before the interview, relying on him to infer what she intended to convey by this strategy. That is she is indirectly asking the applicant to elaborate, but just like he did in the previous example, the applicant is treating her remarks literally and casually too, as if he has been asked a simple "yes or no" question. When the interviewer tries to elicit more information, by accenting key expressions to call attention to what needs explanation, the applicant simply paraphrases his earlier written response. At this point the course instructor takes over. Like his colleague, he also relies on indirect accenting strategies. Unable to infer what is intended and increasingly uncertain about what he is supposed to say, the applicant once again rephrases what he has just said. He does not seem to notice that the interviewers, by strategically positioning their accents, are attempting to direct his attention to significant point in the argument which they seem to think require more comments.

Research with British-resident South Asians in general, and other similar exchanges in the same set of

interviews indicate that such problems are not unique. By virtue of their communicative background, as native speakers of languages that employ other linguistic means to highlight information in discourse, South Asians often fail to recognize that accenting is used in English to convey key information, and thus do not recognize the significance of the interviewers contextualization areas. Furthermore, we know from ethnographic data the South Asian candidates have been socialized to expect interview practices that differ significantly from those the interviewers employ. They have learned to treat interview as hierarchical encounters, where candidates are expected to show reluctance to dwell on personal likes or preferences, and to what Gumperz (1992: 224) termed "avoid giving the appearance of being too forward or assertive". The consequences of the miscommunication that results becomes clear in the following segment when the instructor turns to the topic of the applicant's previous experience with electrical work:

- I. Instructor: What sorts of work have you done before in this particular field?
 j. Applicant: What do you mean please?
 K. Instructor: Well, electrical installation and maintenance. Some of it involves jobs done in your home. In your own home have you done work in your own home?
 L. Applicant: Yes sir.
 M. Instructor: Yeah, and what sorts of jobs have you done?
 N. Applicant: Well I-, I wired up my own house.
 O. Instructor: You have wired your own house?
 P. Applicant: Yeah.
 Q. Instructor: Yeah?
 R. Applicant: It is passed, by the authority, electricity board.
 S. Instructor: Yeah.
 T. Applicant: First time.
 H. Instructor: So having wired your own house, could you tell me what the "consumer box" is?
 V. Applicant: Yeah, where the fuses is.
 W. Instructor: Where the fuses are, all right. Have you done anything other than wiring your own house?

In data 1, it seems that the applicant is finally about to provide the much-needed information wanted by the interviewer. However, he evidently did not expect the instructor's question. Coming as it does after the applicant's statement, a native speaker would interpret it as a request for elaboration. But the applicant treats it as a "yes or no" question. And when the instructor

then questions his answer, the applicant changes topic. He does not understand that he is being asked to explain what the work he claims to have done involves. In data II, the instructor makes one more effort to test the applicant's knowledge. But the instructor gives only a local description of the term. From the other interview with the bricklayer, and this one involving the electrician, we know that when the interviewers change topic and ask about a specific technical term, they expect the applicant to use such questions as a point of departure from showing what they know about the work involved. We conclude therefore that the instructor is unimpressed with the information he has received and sees the applicant as a doubtful candidate. Although the applicant apparently has had quite a bit of experience doing electrical work, he has difficulty providing sufficient narrative detail to convince the interviewers that he has had relevant previous experience and is really interested in the course. In the end he does not gain admission. To identify some strengths and weaknesses of the theory of the interactional sociolinguistics, we will consider the Pupil Teacher exchange below from sociolinguistic goals.

Data 3

- A. Teacher: James, what does this word say?
 B. James: I don't know (with final rising intonation).
 C. Teacher: Well, if you don't want to try someone else will. Feddy?
 D. Feddy: Is that a "p" or "b"?
 E. Teacher: (Encouragingly) It's a "p"
 F. Feddy: Pen. 6. (Schiffrin, 11).

This teacher-pupil exchange is used to demonstrate how contextualization cues can affect the interpretation of a message. The teacher's response indicates that the teacher is interpreting James' "I don't know" not only according to literal meaning but also as suggesting that James does not want to try to answer the question. Schiffrin identifies James as an African-American. Gumperz (2001) points out that in African-American community, rising intonation conveys the desire for encouragement. Thus, the teacher according to view did not apply the contextualization presuppositions needed to accurately interpret James' message from his use of rising intonation.

In the pupil-teacher exchange there may be a miscommunication between the pupil's remark and the teacher's reply. The meaning of James's utterance, except if viewed as an avoidance, does not seem to be shared by both the teacher and him. In the data given however, interactional sociolinguistic approach falls short of giving the meaning of James' remark. The approach does provide a principle method by which

with further study of the reactions that James' "I don't know" receives in his usual cultural setting, conclusion could be drawn about the likelihood of what James meant. Empirical method could be employed to this. This will call for following James around in his community, for several days, pay attention to the intonation of such utterances as "I don't know", and conclude whether the utterance when made with rising intonation, elicit a response of encouragement. If such a response predominates in eliciting encouragement, we can assert that in his conversation with the teacher, James was in all likelihood seeking encouragement. However, this investigation does not show what James was thinking at the time, and this will again make the meaning of the utterance remain indeterminable unless another method of analysis that can tell us what he was thinking at the time. This will again lead us to ethnography of communication. It gives a methodology by which to discover what accounts as "communicative events".

Interactional sociolinguistics especially when complimented by elements from other approaches to discourse begins to provide a principal method by which the meaning of an utterance can be analyzed and interpreted. Under interactional sociolinguistics we begin to ask.

- i. What does James mean when he utters "I don't know"?
- ii. Why does the teacher respond the way she does in (c).
- iii. Why does the teacher encourage Feddy so nicely, but responded to James with dislike.

The rising intonation of James utterance can be interpreted as indicating a need for encouragement. The teacher on the other hand interpreted James rising intonation as not trying to attempt the question.

Unrecorded Interactional Conversation in Nigeria

The setting of the conversation is the Office of a Head of Department in Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. The conversation is highlighted below:

Characters: Prof. (Head of Department), Mr. Onome (Junior Non – academic Staff)

(Mr. Onome knocks on the door and enters the HoD's office).

Mr. Onome: Good morning, Sir.

HoD: Ah, good morning, Mr. Onome. How are you doing?

Mr. Onome: (sighs) Sir, I'm not feeling too well.

HoD: Oh no, what's wrong with you? Fever or malaria?

Mr. Onome: (hesitates) Hmmmm, it's not that type of sickness, Sir. My mother is ill.

HoD: I see. I'm sorry to hear that. How is she doing? Has she seen a doctor?

Mr. Onome: Yes, Sir. But she'd like me to keep her company.

HoD: (smiling) Ah, I understand. You're asking for a bit of time off, I presume?

Mr. Onome: (nervously) Yes, Sir. Just a few days...

HoD: (chuckles) Mr. Onome, I can relate, but I can only grant you a day off. You have responsibilities here, and I'm sure your mother would want you to take care of yourself too.

Mr. Onome: (disappointed) Huuh, hmmm... Okay Sir. Thank you, Sir.

HoD: Don't worry, I'm sure your mother will be fine. Take care, and let's catch up later.

Mr. Onome: Thank you, Sir. (exits the office, looking unsatisfied).

The conversation highlights a classic and vivid example of cross-cultural miscommunication between the HoD, who operates within a Western-style academic culture, and Mr. Onome, who comes from a traditional Nigerian background. In many Nigerian cultures, family obligations are paramount, and caring for an ill family member is a moral imperative. When Mr. Onome says his mother is ill and needs company, he is implicitly requesting an extended leave to fulfill his filial duties. However, the HoD, operating within a Western-style academic framework, interprets this as a request for a brief absence.

The HoD's offer of a day off is seen as insufficient by Onome, who is torn between his cultural obligations and his professional responsibilities. The conversation reveals a clash between two cultural scripts: the individualistic, task-oriented approach of the academic institution and the collectivist, family-oriented values of Mr. Onome's cultural background. The HoD refuses to be swayed by Onome's antics and cultural/ethical affinity which presupposes him to show a higher level of understanding of the situation, rather he clung to his work ethics and values. Again, Mr. Onome's indirect request shows his cultural background of mutual respect for a boss, whom he assumed will interpret his request for a long absence owing to his mother's ill health. The HoD had expected him to be more direct with his request next time, perhaps. This miscommunication highlights the need for cultural sensitivity and awareness in academic institutions, particularly in multicultural settings like Nigerian universities. Effective communication requires understanding and respecting diverse cultural norms and values.

4. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion critically looks at key concepts/theories relevant to interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) and gave data as examples to support the issues raised in the concepts/theories. Sociolinguistics, study language in relation to society. As seen above, the intercultural encounters or clash, constitute an extreme case where participants represent historically and linguistically quite distinct traditions. All the participants had lived and worked in western industrial settings for much of their adult lives, but they imported into that different linguistic and cultural background experiences which continue to resonate in these encounters. While such examples are useful in illustrating how inferential processes are grounded in both linguistic and other background knowledge, they also show that the social outcomes and interactional consequences of communicative misalignment are greater than any single analysis can show.

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Satire as Postcolonial Critique: National Disillusionment and Rhetoric in Chuma Nwokolo's *How to Spell Naija Volume 2*

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Abstract. This paper interrogates satire as a tool of postcolonial critique in Chuma Nwokolo's *How to Spell Naija Volume 2*. By situating satire within African literary traditions from oral to contemporary forms, the study examines how Nwokolo employs humour, irony, and parody to expose societal dysfunctions in Nigeria. Drawing on postcolonial and rhetorical theories, the paper foregrounds satire as both a literary and socio-political weapon for addressing issues of religious hypocrisy, materialism, corruption, and national disillusionment. Through close readings of selected short stories such as "Godforaday", "Re-vision", "Tansi & Banker", and "We Have Been Paid to Kill You", the study highlights Nwokolo's strategies in depicting the contradictions of modern Nigerian society. These narratives ridicule the excesses of politicians, clergy, and everyday citizens, revealing how institutional and individual corruption intersects with social inequality. The analysis underscores satire as a corrective and purgative force, reflecting the tradition of African writers who deploy literature as a social conscience. Ultimately, Nwokolo's satirical art exemplifies how postcolonial writers interrogate failed leadership, cultural disillusionment, and moral decay, while reinforcing the enduring role of literature in shaping public discourse and national self-examination.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Satire, Rhetoric, Disillusionment, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Virtually all literary works in the three genres have a common feature, which is the ability to adapt to the three primary and oldest theories, namely, Mimetic, Pragmatic and Expressive theories. In classical times, a scholar like Plato saw art as a dangerous craft filled with deception, psychologically destabilising and immoral. He saw it as a threat to the common good.

However, contrary to Plato's opinion, his famous student, Aristotle, disagrees with Plato on the grounds that art was essentially mimesis. He maintains that art was neither dangerous nor psychologically draining but rather a reflection of human society and was beneficial and natural. Art portrays true reality and serves as a purge, which he calls "Catharsis". These views bring us to the idea of pragmatics by Horace and its impact on the audience. To Horace, art serves as a tool for instruction and a lesson to the audience through the mimicking of human life. In the 18th and 19th centuries, there was a shift from the focus on the audience in the creation of literary works, attention was drawn to the artist and his internal feelings, state of mind, became the major subject of his art and not the audience or reader. It became artist-oriented. This created a sudden interest in the description of the artist's craft and his expressive perspectives to interpret the artist's text. From the discourse above, there is an underpinning of the mimetic, pragmatic and expressive theories to the interpretation of literary works of art as a mimetic of reality. Still, the pragmatic effect is important as well as the psychological state of the artist during the production of texts. Nwokolo's collection of short stories embodies these three important aspects of literary criticism.

Literary texts reflect a slice of life as an imitation of reality, their utility value and the expression of the writers through tools. This also applies to literature in Africa, as most African works adhere to the dictum "Art for life's sake" and not Oscar Wilde's idea of "Art for Art's sake", which is based on the philosophical idea that sees the inherent value of art, which is devoid of any utilitarian value. In the reflection of reality in a fictional manner, these writers in their works reflect the positives and negatives in society and see themselves as the eyes of society and make expository commentaries about human strengths and foibles. This brings us to the discourse about satire and its

importance to society. Abraham and Greenbalt (1999) see satire as “the literary art diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it an attitude of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation... satire derides, that is, it uses laughter as a weapon”(p. 275). Akingbe (2014) defines satire as “the act of using humour or exaggeration to critique society” (p. 183). In the words of Adeoti, Satire is a socially sanctioned medium of expressing the communal purgative will (2000, p. 162). The satirist is often portrayed as a champion of shared social values and moral standards. This perception has led some scholars to distinguish between true satire and what they consider mere lampoon or mockery. In this framework, a lampoon is seen as a caricature that depends more on creative exaggeration than on careful critique. In contrast, satire is thought to avoid crude insults, instead achieving its impact with subtlety and precision- what the 18th century English satirist John Dryden describes as the “fitness of a stroke that separates the head from the body and leaves it standing in its place” (pp. 22-23). Ngugi (1972) notes that the satire conceives the whole society as an existing sphere for criticism and that “the satirist sets himself certain standards and criticises society when and where it departs from these norms.” (p. 55). Hence, the satirist is like an overseer and evaluator of the compass of society. Reiterating the usefulness of satire in the Nigerian society, Okwechime (2024) informs that “whenever there is bad governance, the appropriate tool for a literary explication is satire” (p. 5).

Satire in Nigeria has been in existence in its oral form in the forms of mockery and ridicule using songs, mimes in performances. Satires were used to call to mind the excesses of individuals and groups in various societies. For instance, the Yoruba tribe is rich in satirical songs such as the arunbe song, Okorobo song, etiyen song and gelede songs. (Oladunke, 2024). Through performances, gesticulations, refrains, onomatopoeia, repetition, call and response, the Umuada satirical songs of the Igbo tribes are expressed. These songs thematised laziness, failure in civic responsibility, sexual immorality, pretence and hypocrisy used to ridicule and expose folly. (Emelonye & Udogu, 2021). The Udje songs of the Urhobos are another art which is rich in satirical elements.

With the emergence of literacy into Africa, through the missionary and the colonial masters, Nigerians began to adopt the language, style and orthography of the British in their literature. This was primarily due to the establishment of secondary schools and the University. The college in Ibadan was then a satellite campus of the University of London. Pre an independent

Nigerian society, it began to adopt satire in its interrogation of the colonial hegemony, as well as the consequences that ensued in the prejudicial clash between the culture of the West and the Nigerian state. (Oghajafor, 2024). The pioneer poets were Dennis Osadebay and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Osadebay's collection of poems titled *Africa Sings* (1952) dwells on themes relating to the status of black Africans in colonies in Africa and the injustices in these societies. Osadebay's most famous poem, “Young Africa's Plea”, glorifies African values and beliefs, while rejecting, criticising and satirising European notions like racial prejudice. The first-generation writers like Achebe, Soyinka, Clark, Okara, and Okigbo dwelled on the portrayal of the pre-colonial era by glorifying the African continent in its pure state and the colonial era, where poets interrogated the negative effects of colonialism and moved towards decolonisation. Like the pioneer poets, their earlier works before independence dwelt on the Afrocentric temper in refuting the prejudicial European claims about the African continent. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* presents an Afrocentric perspective of the pre-colonial Igbo life and exposes the negativity in the coming of the British. Soyinka's “Telephone Conversation” satirises the inherent racism faced by blacks in Europe and does this through a dramatic monologue using tools of mockery and sarcasm. These Nigerian writers used satire as a significant tool to call out the excesses of the colonialists. After independence, these first-generation writers continued to use their literary works to discuss the negative effects of colonialism on the newly independent states in Africa. Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) discusses the excesses of the British and sees colonialism as a knife that severs the unity in pure, undiluted African societies. The Folk Opera coincided with the first-generation writers and was usually looked upon as a sort of popular entertainment which treated any topics from social satires, biblical stories and political events to historical tragedies. Hubert Ogunde's is the foremost among a vast number of travelling theatre companies. His theatre shows the influence of Western dramatic modes combined with the “Alarinjo theatre”. The Egungun and Gelede, masquerades and the music traditions of the different kingdoms in Yoruba land exercised a great deal of influence. Ogunde's theatre reflected the modes of the people of Western Nigeria between 1946 and 1966. Kola Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo, Baba Sada, and Moses Olaiya Adejumo were popular owners of travelling theatre companies. The first-generation writers acknowledged that writing about colonialism and its negatives would wear out since most African nations had attained independence, especially Nigeria. They saw the need to shift their focus to the newly independent nation and make new strides in the

nation's development. Soyinka advises that "the African writer needs an urgent release from the fascination of the past if he has to fulfil his function as the record of mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time" (Soyinka, 1966, 138-9). Achebe (1967) shares the same idea as Soyinka, as he reveals that the African writer's burden was to "express our thoughts and feelings, even against ourselves, without the anxiety that what we say will be taken as evidence against our race. The problem of post-independence Africa lies with us and not Europe" (p. 13). Hence, Soyinka and Achebe portray the newly independent Nigeria as imperfect. They are ready to show the lopsidedness in its growth and development, as continuous discussions about colonialism and its harmful effects on the continent have become stale and outdated. Their suggestions call for the self-evaluation of Africa by itself and not from external forces. The novels and plays produced in the 1960s and 70s focused on the changing Nigerian society, fraught with political corruption, dictatorial leadership, oppression, and deteriorating economic status. Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) satirises the extent of corruption in the newly established civil service commission and the challenges of being a modern Nigerian. His novel, *A Man of the People* (1966) satirises the in-depth rate of corruption that bedevilled Nigeria's First Republic through Chief Nanga and its collapse as a result of a coup. Cyprian Ekwensi is another novelist whose works exposed aspects of the Nigerian society that were not admirable. His *People of the City* (1954) satirises the harsh realities of Lagos life filled with dangerous ambition, materialism, capitalism and corruption of the urban life on individuals. *Jagua Nana* (1961) also satirises the rate of prostitution in a newly independent state, which equivocally exposes the materialism of the city residents. Soyinka's plays and novels also depict ills in society. Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1965) calls to mind the exploration of sheer disillusionment and deep frustration of young intellectuals struggling with the new socio-political realities of a newly independent African nation. *Kongi's Harvest* (1967) is a play that critiques the ambitions and character of a vicious victim, Kongi and incessant levels of corruption and abuse of power. *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1960) satirises religious hypocrisy and opportunism present in post-independent Nigeria. T.M. Aluko is another notable novelist whose *Chief, the Honourable Minister* (1970) satirises the calamity of political corruption resulting from a schoolmaster's appointment as minister of works in a newly independent African society.

The second generation of writers witnessed the aftermath of the civil war, successive coups leading to

political instability, anarchy, and a decline in the country's economic status. Contrary to the first-generation poets who were seen as being too concerned with explicating the African continent to the Western World, the second-generation writers were concerned with explaining Africa to Africans and exposing its pitfalls. They also introduced ideological and sociological issues that occupy central positions in their works, such as successive Nigerian governments' irresponsibility, Nigerian feminism, Marxism, Nigerian civil war, and the military dictatorship. Through the adoption of the Marxist ideology of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the second-generation writers, moved for the creation of an egalitarian society which is devoid of oppression, dictatorships, poverty, and exploitation of the masses, who are always at the receiving end of these brutal military regimes. They also see themselves as vessels whose duties are to shatter the gigantic floors of subjugation, self-centredness built to entrap the weak in society. The most powerful strategy of the Alter-Native Tradition is the projection of the Carnavalesque spectacle, where the very common activities or performances by ordinary people, often disregarded as non-subject in poetry, acquire poetic values mainly because they dramatise more vividly the much theorised paradigm shift. (Egya, 2019). These were achieved through the use of ridicule for the oppressors and gestures that were mockery in nature. Second generation radical playwrights such as Kole Omotosho, Femi Osofisan and Niyi Osundare have used their plays to satirise the excesses of the political classes in the Nigerian society. Osundare's *The State Visit* (2002), Osofisan's *Midnight Hotel* (2003) and Omotoso's *The Curse* (1976), *The Scales* (1976), Olu Obafemi's *Night of the Myth and Beast* (1986), Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Hands that Crush Stones* (2010), Tess Onwueme's *Tell it to Women* (1992), Felicia Onyewadume's *Echoes of Hard Times* (1996) are satirical in nature. In the poetry genre, poets such as Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Odia Ofeimun, Ibiwari Ikoriko, Funso Aiyejina, Nmimmo Basse, Idris Amali have used their poems to create awareness about social injustice, marginalisation of the lower classes in society and disparities in the society. Osundare's *Village Voices* (1984), *Songs of the Market Place* (1983), Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures* (1990), Amali's *Generals Without War* (2001), *Back Again at the Foothills of Greed* (2014) satirise the civilian and military regimes in Nigeria and through the use of warnings, impending revolutions challenge them and are resilient in tone.

The third-generation poets majorly employ the use of satire in the portrayal of societal ills, and also adopt the Marxist style of the second-generation poets. They

ridicule the oppressors through the form of pun, sarcasm. In style, they are abusive, assertive, combative, confrontational, defiant, forceful, fearless and penetrative. Some notable third generation satirists include Afam Akeh, Olu Oguibe, Charles Bodunde, Esiaba Irobi, Remi Raji, Usman Shehu, Stephen Kekeghe, Kola Eke, etc. Notable third generation dramatists have produced plays that satirise the Nigerian political class. Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* (2006), Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* (2003), Alex Omoni's *The Ugly Ones* (2011), Peter Omoko's *The Mudskippers* (2021), Austine Anigala's *Drops of Rotten Deals* (2019), Wumi Raji's *Another Life* (2013), Sam Ukala's *The Placenta of Death* (1998), Kekeghe's *Broken Edges* (2003) satirise different spheres of Nigerian society to bring about a desired change. Prose fiction is not left out in the classification as third generation prose writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Jumoke Verissimo, Akwaeke Emezi, Helon Habila, etc. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* exposes the dangers of a dictatorial regime and the effects on the oppressed and helpless citizens in Nigeria. Verissimo's *A Small Silence* highlights the traumatic experiences of an activist and his return into a dilapidating and disillusioned society in need of rapid change.

From the survey of literary works in this study, there is a notable absence of the short story prose genre in the study of satire. Most literary and critical works are focused on the drama and poetry genres. This may be as a result of the technicalities involved in the production of plays and poems. Dramatic techniques and poetic devices foreground the ideas of the satire. That is not to say that prose texts are not satiric in nature. Hence, the study analyses how satire is employed in Chuma Nwokolo's collection of short stories, *How to Spell Naija Volume 2* to reflect and challenge national issues. *How to Spell Naija* informs the expectation of the reader or critic, as it presents layers of society and satirises these foibles. Four short stories have been selected to discuss the evidence of satiric elements in the Nigerian contemporary stories. Also, the study also explores Nwokolo's unique style in achieving his satiric endeavour.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the postcolonial and rhetorical theory. The choice of this theory stems from the necessity to portray the Nigerian society's metamorphosis from an independent nation, which was amalgamated in 1914 to form Nigeria, to a country which has celebrated a century in its merger. Also, in exploring Nwokolo's collection of short stories, it is pertinent to pay rapt attention to the modes of

expression and the craft the writer deploys. Most texts written in Nigeria, after independence, as earlier stated, focused on the socio-political, economic issues ranging from dictatorial leadership, civil war, deteriorating economy, poor leadership, endemic poverty and oppression. However, Nwokolo has gone beyond the stereotype and has focused on the day-to-day life experiences of Nigerians, which he documents in short stories. There is a shift from the status quo to the foibles of everyday people. The rhetoric theory accounts for the satirical elements in the texts, which are pragmatic in nature. Fidalgo (2008) points out that the Greek word "retorike" involves a relationship between the speaker 'retor' and rhetoric (public discourse, eloquence), and encompasses oratory art and its discipline. Rhetoric theory involves the study of the strategies, methods literary artists use to communicate, inform, and entertain their audiences. It involves deliberate choices in style expressions to achieve certain goals. Navarro (2011) informs that rhetoric originated around 465BC in ancient Greece. Since the late 1950s, there has been a strong revival of interest in literature as a mode of communication from author to reader, and this has led to the development of a rhetorical criticism which without departing from a primary focus on the literary work itself, undertakes to identify and analyse the elements within a poem or a prose narrative which are there primarily to effect certain responses in a reader (Abrams p. 312). Kenneth Burke's approach moves beyond traditional Aristotelian rhetoric, focusing instead on identification, symbolic action, and motives behind language use. Burke believes that "rhetorical analysis throws light on literary texts and human relations generally". He defines rhetoric as the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols. He further states that literature, characters and readers identify with motives, values, and situations, creating rhetorical effects. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995, p. 11) explain that "the idea of postcolonial literary theory emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of postcolonial writing" For Ashcroft et al., Postcolonialism presents and explores the conditions of colonised states and engages concerned notions about them. It involves studying to understand and analyse works from the former colonies of Europe. Postcolonialism involves the psychological, physical, and cultural effects of the contact between the colonisers and the colonised. It also highlights the recurrent and novel cultural issues faced in the newly formed independent colonised state. (Balogun 2014, Irobi 2008)

3. Satirical Discourse and the Nigerian Societal Condition in Nwokolo's *How to Spell Naija 2*

3.1 Religious Hypocrisy, Blasphemy and Materialism in Contemporary Nigerian Society

In the short story "Godforaday", Nwokolo bestows on Godfrey the status of a god who can hear the thoughts of every living creature, ranging from humans to animals. By doing so, Nwokolo satirises the hidden deceptions in humans. In the short story, Godfrey, through his psychic abilities, discovers Dolapo's extramarital affairs with Tosin's wife as he thinks about the fact that Dolapo might find out. At the same time, Tosin hides his infidelity from his wife, as he impregnates his wife's sister. Nwokolo, in the short story, reveals the ridiculous prayer petitions of most Nigerians, as these petitions include needs and wants that could easily be provided by a stable government and companies. These needs are being brought before the Almighty God and not the government, whose duties are to provide a decent living for the citizens of Nigeria. Nwokolo also reveals the fanaticism of Nigerians in relation to religious life. He reveals: "The voices and those of several hundred souls rose from that prayer ground in the middle of that working day with such vehemence that he staggered and held on to a convenient electric pole until he mastered himself" (p. 38). The excerpt reveals the failures of the Nigerian government. It foregrounds the gross neglect of the Nigerian citizens in that the amenities which are basic in most first and second world countries with significant economies. Godfrey reveals the thoughts and petitions of more congregants in the story to reveal the social realities of most Nigerians who see religion as a way out of their societal predicament and not for the salvation of their souls. This validates Karl Marx's assertion that "religion is the opium of the masses". Nwokolo expresses these through informal, raw, humorous, distinctive intonations and repetition to mirror the desperation, materialism, and misplaced spirituality that characterise the prayers of some Nigerian Christians. These are seen in the extract below:

*Jizuzmybossisgood!
Promotehimtoheaven!
gimmehisjoblord!*

*allthe cattle
andthecars
andthehouses
onathousandhillsareyourslord!
gimmegimmegimmethemnow!
Oya
LetusreasontogetheroGod*

*whathaveIdonetoyou?
30yearsasachurchworker! thirtyhoursaweek!
&I'mstillapauper!
ifIpentthattimeatworkIknowwhatIwillbetoday!
saveyournamefromdisgraceoGod!*

*gimmemoneynowgimmemoneynow
nownownowgimmemoneynow*

*Jesus!makemerich!
I'llgiveeverythingtocharity!
TrymeandseeoGod! (pp. 40-41)*

Through the use of exaggerated petitions and conversational tone, the extract presents a critical commentary on how religious devotion is often driven by self-interest rather than genuine faith. Nwokolo's choice of language is unrefined, colloquial, and spontaneous, resembling the unfiltered thoughts or inner voices of worshippers, which Godfrey hears at all times. The congregants mimic the casual and impatient tone of people who approach prayer as a transactional dialogue with God rather than a solemn act of faith. Nwokolo is deliberate in his non-usage of punctuation and run-together words to reflect emotional urgency and thoughtlessness, thereby emphasising the raw desperation that fuels such prayers. The author employs irony and humour. The humour lies in the contrast between the sacred and the mundane. While the language is directed towards God, the content is shockingly human and self-serving. The expression,

'jesus!makemerich!i'llgiveeverythingtocharity!' is ironic and humorous. The irony here is sharp as the speaker's promise of generosity comes only after personal enrichment, revealing conditional faith. The exaggerated tone provokes laughter but also invites reflection on the hypocrisy and material obsession that have crept into modern worship.

The story also reveals the religious hypocrisy and sheer desperation of some pastors to make their ministries forward through devious and dubious means. This is seen in the General Overseer's sudden recruitment and coaching of Godfrey, a chicken decapitator to be his assistant immediately he discovers his special abilities. He sees Godfrey as a key to enlarging his church ministry. He dismisses every procedure and stage involved in becoming a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, such as the attendance of a liturgical and ministerial school, baptism, and prolonged study of the Holy Bible. Nwokolo reveals:

Godfrey's new job was double the salary and ten times the prestige of a chicken decapitator. After service, he worked with the G.O in air-conditioned offices a dozen

times more luxurious than those of the parsimonious chicken bosses. By 9pm, his own ecclesiastical robe was ready... he was the Head of Department and sole member of the prayer ministry. Godfrey's description of the sudden change in his fortune creates a certain aura of ridiculousness and disbelief (p. 45)

Another story, "Re-visit" portrays religious hypocrisy and blasphemy in the Christian clergy. The Nigerian society in the late twentieth through the twenty-first century has lost count of the number of churches, revival programmes and in some cases, unfortunate exploitation of gullible congregations. The story satirises the unchecked exploitation of Christians for miracles, prophesies and financial blessings through contributions of seeds, tithes and massive offerings. In the story, the Founding Overseer of a modern church stricken with terminal cancer and having a few days to live, confesses to his long years of unconceivable deception of the gullible congregants. He confesses: 'Remember the Night of Revelation, ' he whispered, 'when the spirit lifted me... 'it was all a lie. ' ... There was no scroll. No revelation. It was me. Every time I said "thus saith the Lord... it was a bloody lie!' I tried to die with this secret... you can't imagine...but I had this, O God, this vivid dream! (p. 109)

This revelation affects Gloria's psychological state in the form of grave shock, disbelief. She laments thus: She remembered the hotel room of the revelation... there had been no place for doubt. He had swept her up, it was the biggest thing she had ever seen, it was her life... it was all a lie? She remembered the satellite ministries. At the cost of millions of Naira, the services of the Assembly's men and women of God went out daily via radio and television for millions of homes across the world. Millions of Naira in donations poured in daily, to preach the words of the revelation.... It was all a lie? (p. 111)

In the extract above, Gloria, just like other members of the church, becomes a victim of her husband's religious deception and feels scorned for being the wife of a deceptive clergyman. She reveals: "For the rest of her natural life, and for the rest of her recorded history, people would be analysing all her recorded 'performances', deriding her hubris, condemning her hypocrisy (p. 113)

Gloria on discovering her husband's hypocrisy leads to emotional trauma, which can further result in rage, as can be seen in the story, where she suffocates him to death in anger. It further leads to an identity crisis as the revelation could lead to the shattering of oneself. It could also lead to the loss of faith, religious

disillusionment, social fallout, and public scrutiny. All these are revealed in Gloria's episode of shock and disbelief.

Another issue Nwokolo reveals in the story is the marginalisation of workers in contemporary Nigerian society. The protagonist in the story "Godfor day" reveals the level of ill-treatment and marginalisation of workers. He exposes the tedious nature of a job as a decapitator as he reveals that he decapitates over three thousand and fifty chickens and how the workers are deprived of breaks until Isa, a staff member, in a dizzy state, cuts off three fingers, which unfortunately makes its way to the house of a Scandinavian diplomat. The issue, though a serious one, Nwokolo uses humour to make the incident seem funny and ridiculous. However, this incident brings about an insignificant change in the welfare of the decapitators, as a meager tea break is approved. This marginalisation not only affects the menial workers but also the administrative staff of the company. This is seen in the retrenchment of the accountant who has now become a security guard at a church. This reveals the disposable nature of the corporate workers. This is caused by the accountant's refusal to work on Sundays as a result of his insistence on attending his church's service. Nwokolo satirises the inconsiderate and neglectful nature and attitudes of some churches toward their dedicated and devoted members. This is seen in the shabby treatment meted out on the accountant who is being offered a job as a security operative despite his huge financial contributions to the church through offerings, tithes and is being mocked at by the Church management. The accountant reveals: "So I told the pastor and he gave me a job here! 'But you are an accountant! You went to University!' 'you see?' he cried piteously, 'But he said my tithes were more than my official salary, and he didn't want an accountant who steals. You see my wahala! I am good for bringing tithes, not managing them. (p. 39).

3.2 Personal and Institutional Corruption in Nigeria

In the post-independent era, corruption in the Nigerian corporate world has risen to a worrisome level. The short story, "Tansi & Banker" depicts the irresponsible and reckless behaviour of an account of a client, Tansi. The story exposes and satires the corruption which takes place in banks. The narrator reveals:

He had taken a loan... it was back in the rash days of youth when his only asset was the friendship with an irresponsible branch manager with whom he had shared the money. Over many plates of Tansi-bought pepper soup, the manager had explained how he had classified the loan as irrecoverable and would "scus' it

off the loans register entirely in a few years. Fake luxurious life “as a fixer to the high and mighty” (p. 85).

The story’s central concern is corruption in institutions and individuals. The bank’s former manager embodies how officials exploit their positions to engage in fraud. Classifying a loan as irrecoverable is symbolic of how corruption becomes normalised within institutions. Tansi himself represents a morally bankrupt citizen who thrives on manipulation and deceit. He willingly participates in the fraudulent loan, and later, instead of facing justice, conspires in another fraud, his own fake death. The story reveals how corruption reproduces itself: the irresponsible bank manager enables Tansi’s fraud; Tansi’s deceit inspires Adole’s own complicity. Everyone becomes morally compromised, highlighting a vicious cycle of dishonesty. It also reveals the rate of get-rich-quick syndrome, where youths devise means to get rich. Tansi’s notoriety for bad loans leads him to take a drastic decision in order to evade the repayment of the loan. The emergence of a new account officer and Branch manager turns his dubious ways around. Thus:

Eventually, in the small house, Adole drafted an obituary poster with Tansi’s face on it. Sometimes before dawn, they taped it solemnly to the front door. Perhaps, within the fortnight, the bailiffs would visit and the bank would get the message to finally write off Tansi’s debt. (p. 86).

The story is a satirical and humorous portrayal of corruption, irresponsibility, and the culture of deceit that pervades some aspects of Nigerian society. Through the character of Tansi, Nwokolo exposes how individuals and institutions are entangled in moral decay, where corruption, greed, and image-consciousness often, they override integrity and accountability. Satire is used here as a literary tool to criticise social vices through exaggeration and humour. The story mocks the absurdity of corruption and desperate attempts by people to escape the consequences of their actions. The story further ridicules how Tansi and the bank manager connived to defraud a financial institution. Their behaviour reflects the widespread corruption in Nigeria’s financial sector, where officials misuse their authority for personal gain. The manager’s assurance that he would “classify the loan as irrecoverable and scrub it off the loans register” is a biting satire of institutional rot and lack of accountability.

Furthermore, the story satires the Nigerian bureaucracy and record-keeping system expose their inefficient nature. Despite the corruption and fraud, the bad loan resurfaces a decade later when a “zealous

Redundant Accounts Officer” discovers Tansi’s record. This sudden resurgence mocks how Nigerian institutions often fail to act until a scandal arises or a new officer seeks attention. Nwokolo also reveals the growing nature of social media and public image. This is seen in Tansi’s disgrace as he is “trending for the wrong reasons”, lampooning the obsession with social media validation. Nigerians’ fixation with reputation and online popularity is ridiculed in the story—people care more about what trends than the moral implications of the event. Also, the story reveals the innate nature of desperation and deception. The fake obituary and death certificate demonstrate the extreme deceit people employ to escape consequences. The humour lies in the absurd logic that death could erase debt—a darkly comic reflection on how Nigerians sometimes resort to ridiculous measures to avoid accountability. Nwokolo’s adopts several humorous elements such as irony, hyperbole, dialogue and comic relief. Humour softens the serious tone of corruption and social critique while amplifying its absurdity. The greatest irony is that Tansi, who once flaunted wealth and power, ends up disgraced and hiding in a family bungalow. His downfall is both tragic and comically inevitable. Another ironic twist is his “suicide kind of death”, a fake death that is supposed to restore peace. The storyteller uses expressions like “eye-watering fortune”, “His phone was pinging and reeling and for the first time he was trending” (p.85), heightening the humour through exaggeration, making the scandal both ridiculous and entertaining. Nwokolo has a way of using dialogue and comic relief to downplay the seriousness of the subject matter in his story. Through Adole’s casual tone with reference to Tansi’s fake death this: I am saying the shame killed you... I’m now printing a fake death certificate- strictly for the bailiffs.” (p. 87) This ridiculous confidence in a fraudulent plan exposes the Nigerian knack for improvising deceit with humour and bravado.

Another story, “We Have Been Paid to Kill You” presents a late-night phone conversation between a corrupt public officer, Dr. Pelumi, and a self-proclaimed assassin hired to kill him. Through their exchanges, the author humourously yet powerfully satirises the rottenness of the Nigerian civil service, where greed and mismanagement have led to untold suffering among ordinary citizens, particularly pensioners. Dr. Pelumi embodies systemic corruption driven by greed. His wealth—“twelve billion naira in eighteen accounts” (p. 195) symbolise how public servants exploit their offices at the expense of the masses. The assassin’s knowledge of the sixty-nine thousand pensioners who have not received their pensions ties Pelumi’s private corruption to public suffering. The humour turns dark when we realise that

pensioners actually die in queues in Nigeria. The narrative functions as both a comedy of dialogue and a serious moral allegory, showing that corruption not only destroys the nation's economy but also erodes humanity and conscience. Humour and sarcasm are the story's most striking elements. They create a light, ironic tone that exposes heavy themes like corruption and the death of conscience without turning the narrative into a moral lecture. Nwokolo employs irony and dark humour in the story. There is deep situational irony in the fact that a supposed assassin calls his victim to discuss the logistics of his murder politely. Instead of a tense or fearful exchange, both men engage in witty, sarcastic banter. The banter below explores this exchange:

I can report to the police tomorrow that somebody tried to assassinate me. That they fired into my room. And wounded me. Then I will give it to the newspapers. I can even wear bandage on my head for some weeks. That means you tried, right? So your track record is still good.
Fifty bullets...? Why not kuku make it hundred? What kind of soldier uses fifty bullets to kill a single man, and misses? That's a lie that. (p. 190).

The humour here lies in the absurdity- and assassin and his target arguing about logic, exaggeration and courtesy, as though death is a business transaction. This absurd comedy highlights the normalisation of evil and corruption in Nigerian society. Sarcasm in the story is used as social criticism, as it drives much of the dialogue. Dr. Pelumi's sarcastic remarks: "Are you trying to assassinate me with a heart attack?" (p. 187), "You can call your customer ... You can tell him, or her- or them- that you found out that... that I'm your in-law! And if you kill me your share of my burial expenses will be even more than your balance" (pp. 189-190) reveals his arrogance and moral blindness. He treats a life-and-death situation as a joke, symbolising how Nigerian elites trivialise serious national issues, such as unpaid pensions and suffering retirees. The assassin too uses sarcasm to shame Pelumi's hypocrisy: "You have a reputation as well. A very bad reputation. I am a soldier, not a thief like you" (p.191). From the extract above, the assassin's sarcasm functions as moral irony-a criminal shaming a corrupt official, showing that even those who kill for money may have a stronger conscience than public servants who steal from the poor.

The entire story is built entirely on dialogue, which serves several purposes such as characterisation, conflict, humour and moral exposure. The lack of a narrator makes the reader an eavesdropper in a moral confrontation. Through the use of dialogue, character

personalities are revealed. We see Dr. Pelumi as arrogant, defensive, manipulative, and morally numb. His offers to "retire" the assassin financially show that bribery is his natural response to any threat. Surprisingly, the assassin emerges as strangely principled, guided by conscience rather than greed. His expression: "Everybody has to work according to his conscience, and my conscience is just looking at me up and down now" (p. 192). This makes him a moral mirror reflecting the corruption of the elite. The story's tension lies entirely in their verbal exchanges. The humour and irony of a phone conversation replacing physical violence underscore how words can expose moral decay more effectively than weapons. The story possesses realistic and fast-paced speech full of interruptions, exclamations and rhetorical questions which mirror real Nigerian speech patterns. It keeps the dialogue alive and believable:

*Who paid you to kill me?
That's another mugu question.* (p. 187)

*'Wait, wait, wait! Did I call a guidance counselor by mistake?
Better focus on your life and death!* (p.188)

*'be dreaming there.'
'fifty bullets...? why not kuku make it hundred?'* (p. 190)

My phone credit is almost finished and you're still going round in circles. The solution is chewing chewing-stick and staring at you, but you are just a hypocrite. You are waiting for me to say it for you. Well, good night Dr, Holiness. I'm hanging up and this sim card is going back to the gutter where it came from. Keep yakking till your bullet comes... (p. 191)

The lively exchange captures the streetwise humour and linguistic spontaneity of Nigerian English makes the satire entertaining and authentic. Through the author's use of informal language, pidgin-inflected expressions, and local idioms to reflect Nigerian social realities, the story is accessible to ordinary readers. These conversations reveal everyday Nigerian idiom and give the dialogue cultural authenticity.

4. Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that Nwokolo's *How to Spell Naija volume 2* is more than a collection of humorous tales; it is a serious artistic project that interrogates Nigeria's socio-political and cultural contradictions. By adopting satire as a postcolonial lens, Nwokolo exposes the erosion of moral values, the corruption of public institutions, and the contradictions of religious and political authority. His

stories reveal how ordinary Nigerians internalise and sometimes perpetuate these dysfunctions, thereby reflecting a cycle of complicity. The analysis also illustrates that Nwokolo departs from earlier generations of writers by shifting focus from colonial critique to postcolonial disillusionment, drawing attention to the lived realities of Nigerians in the twenty-first century. Satire, therefore, emerges not merely as entertainment but as a rhetorical strategy that provokes reflection and challenges complacency. It dramatises the gap between national ideals and lived realities, encouraging both laughter and discomfort. In doing so, Nwokolo sustains the tradition of African literature as socially engaged art, one that insists on confronting injustice, exposing hypocrisy, and envisioning possibilities for reform. His work reinforces the view that satire remains an indispensable tool in postcolonial critique and a vital means of rethinking Nigeria's collective destiny.

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Gender Attitudes and Domestic Violence against Men in Literature

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Abstract. Domestic violence remains a burning issue within the family and indeed in society. It has become common in society to see women, rather than men, being beaten, abused, and murdered by their intimate partners. Consequently, several scholarly works dwell more on domestic violence against women while ignoring or paying inadequate attention to the male experience. As a result, the present study examines domestic violence against men perpetrated by women through the lens of literature in Igbo. Ofomata's novel, *Ihe Ojoo gbaaAfo...* (1999), was purposively selected. Dollard et al.'s (1939) Frustration-Aggression Theory was employed as an analytical guide. The result shows that men suffer domestic violence, as epitomized in the protagonist Ikenna, who suffered constant abuse from his wife, Nkemdilim. Ikenna was subjected to verbal abuse, public scorn and humiliation, as well as physical attack, all by his wife. As a result, he suffered isolation from his family and friends, started avoiding his home, and resorted to drunkenness as a coping mechanism. In the end, Ikenna suffered low self-esteem and depression as a result of his wife's aggressive tendencies. The paper argues that women, like men, are perpetrators of domestic violence. However, men hardly cry out or report the abuse on them due to social stigma. Domestic violence against men should be condemned or eliminated, just as violence against women, because of its negative consequences on the abused and collateral effects on society.

Keywords: Igbo Literature, Igbo Novel, Igbo Culture, Gender Attitude, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Gender-Inclusive Violence (GIV), Male Victim, Female Perpetrator, Theories of Domestic Violence

1. Introduction

Literature, which reflects the life of every society, exposes one of the realities of life, which is intimate partner relationships (IPR) in the Igbo family. In most families in societies, families are burdened with one

marital problem or another, hence the occurrence of violence, whether physical, emotional, or psychological. Consequently, violence becomes a topical issue in society owing to its devastating effects on human life. It has become an unfortunate part of many people's daily lives. Violence, which occurs in the family, can be influenced by exposure to violent parents and violent images in the media, including television shows, movies, music videos, and electronic games, as well as pornography (White et al., 2009) and violent literary texts. As parents and children interact and relate in the family, there are bound to be frictions, actions, and reactions that may sometimes lead to domestic violence. Any member of the family could stand the risk of being violated physically, sexually, emotionally, and financially. At times, men, women, and children experience violence within or outside the family. Violence against women and girls kills and maims vast numbers of women and girls. It fills their lives with pain and terror, from which some never recover (UNIFEM, 2002). Feminists' voices rise in defense of the women and girls as victims of violence in intimate relationships.

Feminists assume men to be perpetrators of most domestic violence and consider domestic violence as a gender-based act. The feminists argue that gender role expectations, socialization, and power inequalities are central to understanding aggression and violence in both women and men. The feminists maintain that in societies where there is no formal hierarchy that privileges one group over another and in which women and men exercise relatively equal power, male violence against women, and rape are low (Andersen, 2003; White, et al., 2009; Shaw & Lee, 2009). In contrast, some scholars argue that there is gender symmetry in the use of aggression in relationships (Kimmel & Aronson, 2008; White et al., 2009). Men and women express the same aggressive attitude when confronting family issues, though they may handle their aggression differently. Men may be more likely than women to be aggressive or injure their partners, and the pattern of violence reflects gender differences

in size, strength, and the tendency to engage in violence, not male status, power, and dominance (Felson, 2009). Physical violence occurs in a variety of family relationships, where the husband assaults the wife. Though a wife may equally assault her husband, according to Miller (1994), it occurs less frequently.

While the issue of violence against women is pervasive, not much attention has been paid to violence against men in the context of the family. Probably because men rarely or hardly cry out or report violence against them for fear of societal stigma, shame, and disgrace (Hines, Lysova, & Douglas, 2025). Gender attitudes and beliefs that men are the sole perpetrators of domestic violence will lead to less empathy and support for abused men. Most men suffer terrible domestic violence at the hands of women. The men patiently endure the violence against them without crying out or reporting for help to avoid social criticism and stigma. Consequently, there is an urgent need to address the issue of domestic violence against men. This is because male violence has driven most men out of their families. It has also forced men into alcoholism, keeping late nights, depression, isolation, madness, suicide, and, in some other cases, untimely death. Men's unfortunate death can result in so many widows and fatherless children in society. It could also trigger economic instability, severe hardships for families, and a decline in the productive workforce, ultimately impacting economic growth in society. The purpose of this study is to critically evaluate the often-neglected subject of violence against men in the family through the lens of a literary work in Igbo, and in doing so fill the gap in literature.

2. Conceptualising Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is any aggressive behavior or maltreatment that occurs between intimate partners, in the privacy of a home or family. According to Shogbamu (2025:1), Domestic violence is violence that intimate partners and other family members perpetrate, and that is manifested through physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, economic abuse, and acts of omission (also, UNICEF, 2000). It includes all hostile acts committed by one family member against another, irrespective of age, sex, social status, race, or emotional state. It includes such aggressive behaviors by which the victims are physically or emotionally harmed (Arinze-Umobi, 2008). Domestic violence, also termed domestic abuse or intimate partner violence, can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional, economical, or psychological actions or threats of

actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. It can also be in the form of slapping, hitting, choking, burning, cutting, or cursing, verbal abuse, and holding someone against their will (Griffith & Chadee, 2006; Adebayo, 2014). Verbal and emotional abuses include insults, name-calling, accusations of character and conduct, preventing one from taking up a job, forcing one to leave a job, preventing men from meeting any person in the normal course of events, threats to commit suicide, and any other verbal or emotional abuse (Adebayo, 2014; Shogbamu, 2025). Domestic violence can also take many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects, battery), or threats thereof; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive/covert abuse, and economic deprivation. Domestic violence is therefore a mix of physical and coercive behaviours designed to manipulate and dominate another competent adult or adolescent, to achieve compliance and dependence. Domestic violence includes wife beating, wife battering, man beating, husband battering, domestic abuse, spousal abuse, and family violence, with some legal jurisdictions having specific definitions. Intimate partner violence is gender based and is a serious public health problem that cuts across nations, cultures, religion, and class (Adebayo, 2014).

3. Gender Attitudes towards Domestic Violence

Gender, as a term, was popularized in the 1970s by feminists (Cislaghi & Lori, 2019) who view gender as the social and cultural construction of masculine and feminine identities, roles, norms, and relationships, rather than an immutable personality trait grounded in biological sex (Kagesten et al., 2016). Feminist sociologists advanced this idea further, arguing that gender is best conceptualized as a social system that apportions resources, roles, power, and entitlements according to whether a person or practice is perceived as male or female, masculine or feminine. Most existing gender systems are deeply hierarchical, privileging that which is male or masculine over that which is female or feminine (Cislaghi & Lori, 2019). Attitude is a state of mind or feeling concerning some matter (Harrell, 2005, p. 2). Attitudes are categorized as a mental state, conscious or unconscious; value, belief, or feeling; and a predisposition to behaviour. However, attitude can be a settled disposition and attitude reflecting the assumed opinion. Consequently, gender attitude is an individual's perceptions, beliefs, or endorsement of gender norms. Gender norms are

accepted social rules that govern roles, traits, behaviors, status, and power associated with masculinity and femininity in a given culture (Kagesten et al., 2016, p. 3). Norms are but one element of the gender system, along with gender roles, gender socialization, and gender-power relations. In this account, gender norms are the social rules and expectations that keep the gender system intact (Cislaghi & Lori, 2019).

Feminists' attitudes towards domestic violence are that men abuse women due to their social male behavioral expectations. Men's power, aggression, and dominance result from societal rules and expectations tied to masculinity, while women's passivity, humility, and subjectivity result from societal expectations tied to femininity. Consequently, culturally based socialization practices and traditions influence gender attitudes toward domestic violence (Hadi, 2025), which encourage men to be aggressors and women to be victims. Most societies approve domestic violence against women as a typical way men discipline and control their wives. They blame the victims and treat the aggressor leniently (White et al, 2009; Adabayo, 2014). Incidentally, gender attitudes, myths, and misconceptions prevent many people from understanding that both men and women experience violence in the family. Men and women can be perpetrators and/or victims of domestic violence. Most men who are abused remain in the abusive relationship out of fear of societal ridicule. The traditional notion that men are inherently the aggressors while women are the victims has made it nearly impossible for men to report abuse (Tshoane et al., 2024; Shogbanu, 2025). These stereotype makes them mute and undermine their experiences, and also lead to belittling and ignoring men's abuse by their wives.

4. Domestic Violence against Men

Domestic violence against men is a term describing violence that is committed against men by their intimate partners (IP). Domestic violence against men deals with violence experienced by men or boys in an intimate relationship, such as marriage, cohabitation, dating, or within a family. Male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) have become a serious issue even in the United States (Srivastava, 2013, p. 1193). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) (2024), one in seven men age 18+ in the U.S. has been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner (IP) in his lifetime. One in 10 men has experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner. In 2013, 13% of documented contacts identified themselves as male victims. Although they make up a

smaller percentage of callers to the hotline, there are likely many more men who do not report or seek help for their abuse, for a variety of reasons: men are socialized not to express their feelings or see themselves as victims; pervading beliefs or stereotypes about men being abusers, women being victims; the abuse of men is often treated as less serious, or a "joke"; and many believe there are no resources or support available for male victims (National Domestic Violence Hotline).

Several researchers and commentators have suggested that assaults upon men by their wives constitute a social problem comparable in nature and magnitude to that of wife-beating (Kimmel & Aronson, 2008). The results of almost 200 studies using data from surveys of family problems and conflicts show that "... women are as physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships.... The aggregate sample size in the reviewed studies exceeds 58,000" (Straus & Ramirez, 2009: 141). The victimization of men by their partners is a serious social problem, and it is largely ignored by society. A part of America's social norm reveals that men are the stronger and more dominant gender who do not allow women to dominate. Consequently, male victims do not freely admit being victims of intimate partner violence at the hands of females (Barber, 2008).

This popular ideology of male domination has led to difficulty believing that females were capable of being perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV) and whether females were acting in self-defense from their attackers (Hines, Brown, and Dunning, 2007). In a review of research on women's use of violence with male intimate partners, Swan et al. (2008) reveal that studies consistently find that there are as many women self-report perpetrating physical aggression as do men; some studies find a higher prevalence of physical aggression committed by women and use such acts more frequently. For example, the National Family Violence Survey (NFVS) shows that a nationally representative study of 6,002 men and women found that in the year before the survey, 12.4% of wives self-reported that they used violence against their husbands compared to 11.6% of husbands who self-reported using violence against their wives. Furthermore, 4.8% of wives reported using severe violence against their husbands, whereas 3.4% of husbands reported using severe violence. Studies with college samples also find that men and women commit similar rates of physical aggression or that a higher prevalence of women commits physical aggression.

Male victims often feel ashamed that this act of violence happens to them and struggle to decide what

to do next Adebayo, 2014. This was seen as a problem because males feel that they cannot address this matter because no one will listen to them and that any type of treatment will not help them solve their problems. Male victims are silent about the domestic violence incidents and do not contact authorities because they think that it is a personal matter and they can take care of it. Battered men think that they will not be taken seriously if they go to the authorities to report because of the stigma that domestic violence only happens to women and not men (Adebayo, 2014; Shogbam, 2025). Notwithstanding feminists' hue and cries about domestic violence against women across the globe, domestic violence against men is a reality. It occurs virtually in every society in varying degrees. The problem in conducting studies that seek to describe violence in terms of gender is the amount of silence, fear, and shame that results from abuse within families and relationships. The tragedy is that men who find themselves in this situation hide and do not talk openly about their experience, as talking about it will bruise their ego and expose them to ridicule in a patriarchal society (Adebayo, 2014). Consequently, domestic violence against men remains largely unreported (Hamel, 2007; Christian et al., 2011; Adebayo, 2014; Mohammad and Najmeh, 2017; Sanjay, 2019; Hines, Lysova, and Douglas, 2025).

5. Theoretical Framework

The study draws eclectic theoretical orientations and techniques to explain the promoting factors, patterns, and consequences of women's violence against men in the family as portrayed in Ofofata's *Ihe Ojoo gbaa Afo* (1999). Theories of John Dollard et al. (1939), Frustration-Aggression Theory, also known as the Frustration-Aggression hypothesis, was originally proposed by a group of psychologists, John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Hobart Mowrer, and Robert Sears in their book, *Frustration and Aggression* (1939). The theory states that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. Frustration in this sense is not understood as an emotional experience but as an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response. Consequently, frustration was defined as an event instead of an effective state. It is any obstacle that prevents one from achieving a goal (Breuer and Elson, 2017, p. 1; Kruglanski et al., 2023, p. 2).

Dollard and his associates explain the link between frustration and aggression by showing that people react aggressively due to frustration. For instance, when an individual is prevented from achieving a goal,

he/she is frustrated, and the frustration in turn leads to aggression. Kruglanski et al. (2023: 2) argue that aggressive reaction is a primordial way of demonstrating power and dominance, which are valued attributes that bestow significance on the actor. Frustration-Aggression theory suggests that frustration can increase the likelihood of aggression, and if aggressive impulses are strong and unchecked, they may lead to violent behavior. According to Ogunyemi and Aborisade (2023: 74-75), Frustration-Aggression presupposes that a human tendency to exhibit violence is a result of disappointment with the social situation they encounter. It argues that anger may cause someone to exhibit violent action, which in certain circumstances includes domestic violence. For instance, when someone's aim or ambition is blocked, thwarted, obstructed, or frustrated, anger can occur, which may lead to violent conduct as a way to deal with the frustration to achieve the expected goal (also see Elena et al., 2003).

In a marriage, if a partner is incapable of maintaining their desired quality of life due to a lack of finances, they may attack, strike, and abuse the other partner physically or verbally. It is the opinion that the unfavorable attack is a way of dealing with discontent and frustration, and the purging or relieving of emotional tensions. Domestic violence may occur for a variety of reasons, including power and control dynamics, patriarchal terrorism, psychological disorder, alcohol abuse, financial strain, marital challenges, unemployment, low economic status, stress, isolation, machismo, drug abuse/addiction, personality characteristics, mental health conditions, exposure to cycle of violence, dependency, jealousy, and possessiveness (Walker, 1979; Gelles, 1993; Jouriles & McDonald, 2002; Ogunyemi & Aborisade, 2023). In the context of domestic violence against men, frustration may come from a variety of things, including marital challenges, money concerns, or outside stresses like employment or health problems. The abuse might take the form of a recurring pattern, with resentment often giving way to violent action (Ogunyemi & Aborisade, 2023: 75).

Although the strong version of the theory of Frustration and Aggression was modified by two members of the original team, Miller (1941) and Sears (1941), who argue that frustration does not always lead to aggressive or violent behavior, but that aggression is the inevitable response to frustration. However, frustration stimulates several different inclinations, besides an inclination to aggress, such as an inclination to escape or to find a way around the obstacle to the goal. In other words, people learn through experiences to respond to frustration with aggressive or

nonaggressive responses/ behavior. Buss (1966:161) also argues that aggression can occur without frustration and that frustration is a weak determinant of aggression. He views attack as the primary cause of aggression (Kruglanski et al., 2023, p. 2). Consequently, the frustration-aggression Theory may have highlighted the reasons for domestic violence, but there are other theories as to why domestic violence exists.

6. Analysis Of Domestic Violence Against Men in *The Ojoo Gbaa Afo...*

Ofomata shows the evidence of domestic violence against men in his novel, *The Ojoo Gbaa Afo*. He reveals that some women can be generally aggressive, violent, especially to their husbands, due to their lack of love for their husbands, excessive possessiveness, jealousy, and their husbands' inability to perform their ordained responsibility as the family head. He reveals that a woman's character is important in a marriage. This, in essence, affirms the traditional Igbo parlance that "*Mma nwaanyi bu agwa ya*" (A woman's beauty is in her character). Marrying a girl because of her beauty does not guarantee a peaceful marriage. In Igbo society, once a man reaches the age of reasoning, his parents would caution him about whom to marry.

In the novel, it was shown that Ikenna, the protagonist, secured a good job in Enugu after graduation from the university, but before he departed for the city, his parents advised him about city life. Precisely, his mother, who is aware of some women's devious behaviour, especially those in the city, warns him to be wary of such women:

Nwa m, ekelere m Chukwu na i nwetala oru. Ugbu a itoruola ihe e ji nwoke eme. O buru na I laghachi Enugwu, achoro m ka iburu ihe ndi a m ga-agwa gi n'obi mgbe o bu. Nwa m, anyi bu umunwanyị joro njo nke ukwu. Nwoke o bu nwanyị gburu anaghi agba obara. N'ihia ya, kpachara anya gi nke oma n'obodo mepere emepe a i na-aga maka na nwoke nwanyị egbughi na-anọ ogologo ndu. Chukwu dube gi. (13)

(My child, I thank God that you have gotten a job. Now, you are of age. If you go back to Enugu, I want you to remember this thing I will tell you all the time. My child, we women are terrible. Any man whom a woman killed does not bleed. In this regard, be very careful of the city you are going to, because a man whom a woman does not kill will live long. May God guide you.)

His father also warns him against such city women:
Nwa m, lezie anya ebe ahụ i na-aga. Marakwa na nwoke o bu nwanyị na-afuru opi ji okpa awula be ndi mmuo. Otu mkpuru okwu ezuolara nwata maara

ihe. Ga nke oma. Okwa Igbo kwuru okwu si na Ihe okenye no ala were hu nwatakiri kwuru oto o gaghị ahụ ya. (13)

(My child, be watchful of the place you are going. Know that any man whose wife blows a flute goes to the spirit world using the feet. One word is enough for the wise. Safe journey. Igbo said that what an elder seated down to see, a child cannot see it standing up.)

The counseling from both parents, particularly the mother, proves the possibility that women are evil. The mother's use of the inclusive third person pronoun "*anyi bu umunwanyị joro njo nke ukwu*" (13) (We women are too evil) is borne out of knowledge and experience, from her own and other women. The father's use of the proverb "*nwoke o bu nwanyị na-afuru opi ji okpa awula be ndi mmuo*" (13) (any man whose wife blows a flute for him goes to the spirit world using the feet) implies that any man who is directed or controlled by a woman will not die a good death. In traditional Igbo society, the flute is a musical instrument used to inflame the emotions of dancers or masquerades to enable them perform optimally. It is mainly used in panegyrics for ululation. In the context of marriage, the stance of Ikenna's father is that any man who dances to the tune of his wife or who aligns with the whims and caprices of the wife will not end well.

Unfortunately, Ikenna ignored his parents' advice. He has a well-paid job and lives a very comfortable life in Enugu. He befriends several women and spends most of his salary on them. He rarely visits his parents or spends on them. He is fond of beautiful women and lures them into befriending him by promising them marriage and lavishing money on them. He falls in love with a woman named Nkemdilim based only on her beauty. Although his friends and family had warned him against marrying Nkemdilim due to her bad character, Ikenna vowed that he would marry her or no other woman. Despite the counseling from Ikenna's parents and his friends, Ikenna goes ahead and marries Nkemdirim. Ofomata reveals that immediately Nkemdirim becomes Ikenna's wife, she changes her character towards him and starts maltreating him. Nkemdirim starts to abuse Ikenna verbally as seen in the excerpt below:

Kemgbe Ikenna lubatara Nkemdirim n'ulo ka ndi be Ikenna ha jiri mara n'ezie na o bu n'aji ka nwatakiri na-enwu ewu. O bughi naani na Nkemdirim na-emesu ndi be di ya mgbe o bu, kama nke kacha nke bu na o ji isi di ya bu Ikenna ekwuchi ite. (76)

(Since Ikenna married Nkemdilim into their house, Ikenna's people truly knew that it is by the hairs that children lead a goat. It is not only that Nkemdirim maltreats her husband's people all the time, but the

worst is that he uses the head of her husband, Ikenna, to cover a pot.)

In the excerpt above, the author uses an idiom to capture the frosty relationship between Ikenna and his wife. The idiom “*o ji isi di ya bu Ikenna ekwuchi ite*” (76) (She uses her husband’s head to cover a pot) indicates that Nkemdilim was in total control of Ikenna. It is whatever she wants that she does. The idiom is a powerful way of indicating that Ikenna had become a plaything in the hands of his wife.

One of the ways, Nkemdilim exemplified her violent attitude is in verbal abuse. She verbally abuses and insults Ikenna in every conversation, as seen in the excerpt below.

Ihere malitere mewe ya mgbe ndi agbataobi ha ji nwayo na-agbaputa ka ha bja nuru kwa olu Nkemdirim. Ikenna baara nwunye ya mba ka o mechie onu ya n’ihe ndi ahụ o na-ekwu n’ihi na o maghi ma ara o yiwala ya... O si Ikenna, Anuohia, onye ka I na-abara mba? I chere na m bu nwa nkita be gi. I puola zuzuchaa, were bata ka I bawara nwankita be gi. Ihere anaghi eme gi na o bu mgbe o bu la, umuokorobia ibe gi ana-arafu gi” (99).

(Ikenna was ashamed of himself when his neighbours were running out of their houses to witness Nkemdirim’s insults on him. Ikenna scolded his wife to shut her mouth from all the abuses she was raining on him, because he didn’t know if she was getting mad... She told Ikenna, A wild Animal. Who are you scolding? Do you think that I am your house puppy? You have gone out to mess up and were back to scold your house puppy. You are not ashamed of yourself, that all the time your fellow young men will be deceiving you.)

Ikenna’s neighbours are aware of Nkemdirim’s bad behaviour towards Ikenna, as they were the witnesses to her evil character. In this event, the neighbours heard her raised voice, as was the custom, and came out to hear her verbally abusing Ikenna. She called Ikenna *Anuohia* “A wild animal,” warned him about cautioning her, accused him of fooling around town, and tells him that he is shameless. The act of referring to Ikenna as an animal and fooling about, suggests that she did not have any modicum of respect for her husband. It also indicates that she was in complete control of him. Verbal abuse is an act of violence; although it is not a physical attack on the body, it is an attack on the mind. The abuse on Ikenna is a way of humiliating him in public and that act is capable of adversely affecting his self-esteem and self-worth. Even when Nkemdirim is pregnant, she didn’t desist from her abusive behaviour towards Ikenna. She aggressively abuses and attacks Ikenna whenever he warns her about her behaviour towards his family. But

Nkemdilim did not stop at verbally abusing only Ikenna; she also directed her tongue against Ikenna’s friends and family, which ultimately resulted in Ikenna losing his nuclear networks, as seen in the next excerpt:

Mana ihe kacha ewute Ikenna n’ebe nwunye ya no bu na o chusachaala ndi enyi ya niile. O nweghizikwa onye na-achota ya n’ihi na Nkemdirim anaghi ele ha ezigbo anya ma ha bja. Ndi enyi Ikenna Nkemdirim bu uzọ were mesuo bu Arinze na Builo (77).

(But what saddens Ikenna about his wife’s attitude is that she has driven all his friends away. None of them comes to visit him because Nkemdilim does not welcome them when they come. The first of Ikenna’s friends that Nkemdilim provoked were Arinze and Builo.)

Nkemdirim attacks and abuses Arinze and Builo whenever they visit Ikenna in their house and warns them never to set foot there again. They disassociate themselves with Ikenna and do not care about what happens to him. She maltreats and drives away Ikenna’s brother, Ejindu, who stays with them to complete his education in Enugwu (137). As if it is not enough, she drives away Ikenna’s cousin, who visited Ikenna’s house in Enugwu, for his job interview after his university education (96). To crown it all, she verbally abuses and drives away Ikenna’s mother, who stays in her son’s house because of her sickness. She does not care about her health; she starves her of food and insults her daily to the extent that the woman cries when narrating how she treats her to her son, until she decides to leave their house (205). Acting in such a way to disconnect a person from his network of friends and family is an act of violence; the victim is left alone and, in that position, loses the social relationships that are so vital and beneficial for life and survival.

One other means Nkemdirim deployed to exert control on Ikenna is through physical abuse; she physically fights Ikenna, as the following excerpt shows:

Nkemdirim gara n’oche ebe o no were na-eche uwa ya, dodo ya n’akwa were na-asị ya na o ga-agwa ya ebe o hapuru ya gawa...Ikenna achoghi itupuru ya onu... Nkemdirim kwara ya aka were si ya zaa ya ihe o juru ya. Aka ahụ o kwara ya foduru nwantakiri ka o meruo ya ahụ. Ikenna were nwayo si n’ala ebe o dara bilie n’ihi na mberede nyiri dike. O kwuru oto kpedo ihu n’ala, anyammiri ju ya anya... O gara ebe ahụ o (Ikenna) kwu dodokwa ya aka n’akwa wee na-asị ya na o bu taata ka ha abuo ga-atu onu dakpuo n’ime ya. ...Ikenna malitere tibe Nkemdirim ihe. O na-eti ya, O naghi ele anya n’azu. (102 -103).

(Nkemdirim went to where he sat lamenting his fate, held him on his cloth, and started asking him to tell her where she had left her and went...Ikenna did not want

to talk to her...Nkemdirim pushed him and asked him to respond. The push nearly hurt him. Ikenna gently rose from the floor where he had fallen because an emergency is a challenge for great people. He stood up, head bowed and eyes filled with tears...She went to the place he stood, held his cloth again, and continued to ask him that, it is today that two of them will burrow the earth and fall inside it...Ikenna started to beat Nkemdilim. He beat her without looking back.)

The excerpt reveals that Nkemdirim is really a quarrelsome and violent woman. Even though Ikenna was quietly on his own, thinking about his married life. He tried to avoid her trouble, but she went to him and grabbed his shirt, insisting on a response to her inquiry concerning his whereabouts. Against Ikenna's silence, she violently pushed him down, and he fell and almost hurt himself. After he stood up from the fall, she again grabbed his shirt and this time issued a threat. The threat is seen in the idiom "*taata ka ha abuo ga-atu onu dakpuo n'ime ya*" (103) (it is today that both of them will burrow the earth and fall inside it). This is Nkemdilim's way of saying that they will fight to the death. This is an indication that she was predisposed to violence and was ready to go to any extent to make trouble with Ikenna. Ikenna's reaction to beating her was borne out of frustration and helplessness. Notably, Ikenna was not the perpetrator of the violence; rather, he only reacted to the violence instigated by his wife. Ezeigbo (2012) reveals that negotiation and dialogue are sometimes more efficient in achieving success in human relations than aggression and confrontation. In the same manner, women, especially Igbo women, ought to be wise, sensitive, and proactive in their quest for justice and self-actualization. A woman should ensure peace and harmony in her family and not antagonism and aggression, which bring about separation and destruction of family life, by being committed to the survival and wholeness of the male and female.

After some time, Nkemdirim eventually give birth to a male child, and things become worse for Ikenna. The male child becomes a basis for Nkemdirim to exercise more domineering and aggressive behaviour towards Ikenna, as seen in the excerpt below:

O bughị naanị nwa ka Nkemdirim mụrụ, ọ mụkwuru okwunauka... O sịrị na ọ mụtala onye ga-agbara ya oḡu n'aka di ya... ihe ọ masizirị Ikenna ya mewe na ọ gbasaghị ya n'ihị na ya enweela ọḡokwu na be ya. Na ya abịala abịa, ịla azụ adighị ya. Nwa ahụ Nkemdirim mụtaara Ikenna koliri ya obi elu nke ukwu. O jizi maka ya were na-agbazi Ikenna ose n'anya... Naanị ihe ọ maara bụ ụbọchị ọ bụla ọ gwara Ikenna ihe ọ ga-azutara ya, Ikenna were hapụ ịzuta ya, ọ kpọtụwa. (156).

(It is not only a child that Nkemdirim birthed; she also birthed trouble...She said that she had given birth to someone who would defend her against her husband...Whatever Ikenna wants to do, he should do it because she now has a voice in her house. That she has already come, and there is no going back. That child Nkemdirim gave birth to Ikenna, gave her so much pride. It is on account of that, she started smearing Ikenna's eyes with pepper...The only thing she knows is that, any day she tells Ikenna what to buy for her and Ikenna fails to buy it, abuse will start.)

According to the author, the child has become a source of trouble in the house "*O bughị naanị nwa ka Nkemdirim mụrụ, ọ mụkwuru okwunauka*" (156) (It is not only a child that Nkemdirim birthed, but she also birthed trouble). The male child becomes a source of pride to her because, in the traditional Igbo society, a married woman is never comfortable in her husband's house until she gives birth to a male child. Otherwise, she may lose her position as a wife or may be reduced to nothing in the family. As a result of this male child, she is emboldened to become more unruly with the confidence that she cannot be driven away from the family. According to the author, "*O jizi maka ya were na-agbazi Ikenna ose n'anya*" (156) (She used it as a reason to smear pepper in Ikenna's eyes). The idiom, "smearing pepper in the eyes," is an Igbo way of saying that someone is in a terrible state of suffering. In this case, it is Nkemdilim who is smearing pepper in Ikenna's eyes, meaning that she is really punishing him and making life unbearable for him. Another way the author used to show that Nkemdirim is using the child to make trouble with Ikenna is in terms of her needs as a nursing mother. The author states that, any time Ikenna does not oblige her by providing what she needs, there will be trouble. The use of the word *kpotuwa* "noise will start" is a figurative way of saying that, trouble will erupt in the house.

Thereafter, Nkemdirim stops breastfeeding her child and prefers to give him baby milk. She threatens Ikenna that if he fails to buy the expensive baby food, she will abandon the baby for him (157). Ikenna borrows money from colleagues whenever his salary runs out to buy food. At times, he buys on credit to pay back when he receives his salary. Ikenna thinks of sending her away from his house, but reluctantly decides to leave her because of the shame society will place on him, the suffering his child will go through without a mother, because he does not want to raise their child alone, coupled with his job. He decides to endure her, hoping she will change her cantankerous attitude in the future (106-107). This is to show that many men prefer to suffer in an abusive marriage

rather than expose the suffering they go through with their wives because of social criticisms and stigma.

As a result of the constant altercation and violence instigated by Nkemdilim, Ikenna became very uncomfortable coming home, as the home had turned into a theatre of violence, as shown in the excerpt, “*Kamgbe ọ luchara Nkemdịrịm, be ya anaghizi atọ ya uto. Ọ na-alọta be ya, obi ana-amapu ya*” (101) (Since he married Nkemdilim, his house was no longer delightful for him. While coming back home, he will be full of anxiety). As a result of this discomfort, Ikenna devises a means to come back home very late at night and eats outside. He gets drunk when coming back home to be able to sleep immediately his body touches his bed (105-106). He drinks not to think of his predicament. Consequently, Ikenna becomes lean to the extent that those who know him before he married Nkemdịrịm do not recognize him again. He is so skinny that his clothes hang on his body. Ikenna is ashamed of his predicament. He avoids his family, friends, and colleagues from finding out about his maltreatment by his wife. This is an indication that Ikenna had lapsed into depression because of the constant violence perpetrated by his wife.

In the end, it was the comity of *Umuokpu* (Daughters of the kindred) that came to Ikenna’s rescue. Ikenna’s aunt, Afuluenu, who is one of the heads of *Umuokpu*, plans with the other *Umuokpu* to discipline Nkemdịrịm. They warn Ikenna not to intervene in their matter with his wife, Nkemdịrịm, unless he wants to bury his father alone. Since he cannot control his wife and hides it from them from knowing about his marital problems, he should leave them to do their duty. Since he wants to die in his marriage, his sisters do not want him to die. The *Umuokpu* summon Nkemdịrịm, question her in the presence of some of their *Umunna* (Kindred) who paid a condolence visit to Ikenna, and she insults them. The *Umuokpu* confronted and beat her mercilessly; no one saved her, because they warned the *Umunna* to stay clear from the case. She cries and begs *Umuokpu* for forgiveness. They forgive her but warn her seriously against her abusive character towards her husband, Ikenna. They raise a fine and ask her to bring it the next day, unflinching. In the morning of that day, no one knows Nkemdịrịm’s whereabouts, not even her husband, Ikenna. Nkemdịrịm packs her belongings very early in the morning, when people are still sleeping, and runs away from the house. *Umuokpu* liberated Ikenna from the oppressive strings of his marriage.

Ofomata shows the importance of *Umunna* (Kindred) and *Umuokpu* (Daughters of the clan/kindred) in Igbo society. They are involved in resolving family

disputes, especially domestic violence against men and/or women. In Igbo society, women are not expected to be aggressive. However, *Umuokpu* put some sanctions in place to admonish women and/or men against the act of domestic violence, which destroys family peace and harmony, and constitutes suffering for the children. *Umuokpu* are seen as the peace makers in Igbo society. They are respected, including their decisions in Igbo society. Their decisions concerning family disputes are made to maintain peace in the family.

7. Conclusion

Ofomata’s novel, *The Ojoo gbaa Afo...* (1999), whose full title is (*The Ojoo gbaa Afo, ọ diri onye metara ya*) (If evil lingers for a long time, it will torment the perpetrator), challenges traditional gender attitudes in Igbo society by presenting scenarios where men become victims of domestic violence at the hands of their wives. While the Igbo cultural belief presents men as aggressors and women as passive victims, the novel subverts the longstanding stereotypes about men, reflecting women as aggressors and perpetrators of domestic violence against men. The Igbo novel highlights how men, too, can suffer emotional, psychological, and even physical harm from their wives. By foregrounding these experiences, Ofomata not only critiques societal silence around male attack but also encourages a broader understanding of domestic violence as a gender-inclusive issue. The societal attitude that men are tough, aggressive, and oppressive, and solely perpetrators of domestic violence, and women are weak, reserved, non-aggressive, and solely victims of domestic violence, may make men feel that society will not take them seriously and show empathy and support if they report their wives’ violence toward them. They patiently keep mute and endure the violence against them without reporting for help to avoid social criticism, stigma, and shame it might cause them. Society often trivialises men’s experiences of domestic violence against them and overlooks the need to support them in coping with the trauma and ensure their psychological and emotional stability. Ikenna avoided sharing his family’s predicament with his family, colleagues, and friends due to societal stigma. He was reluctant to divorce his wife because he feared societal judgment about the durability of his marriage and decided to continue enduring his wife’s cantankerous behaviour towards him and continue to suffer damage to his sense of self. There is an urgent need to address the issue of domestic violence against men. This is because male violence has driven most men out of their families. It has also forced men into alcoholism, keeping late nights, depression, isolation, suicide, and,

in some other cases, untimely death, as shown in the Igbo novel. Ikenna lamented when his suffering of abuse from his wife was unbearable that God had abandoned him to die in his marriage. This kind of male abuse by his wife destabilizes peace and unity in the family. Women should embrace respect, negotiation, and dialogue as more efficient means to achieve success in relating with their husbands than aggression and confrontation. In the same manner, women ought to embody compassion, sensitivity, and proactive as they strive for justice and self-actualization. Aggression and abusive behaviour, whether in the form of verbal, emotional, physical, or psychological, in a relationship, cause deep harm and weaken the institution of marriage and family life. Women who act aggressively toward their husbands should recognise that abuse and disrespect toward their husbands are not signs of strength, but unhealthy destruction of family life and create untold hardship for both parties in the relationship, especially the children, who are the most vulnerable. Ikenna's wife, Nkemdirị, eventually ran away from the house following Umuokpu's confrontation; she suffers the consequences of her actions against her husband. Domestic violence against men should be unequivocally condemned or eliminated, just as violence against women, due to its detrimental effects on their emotional stability and economic well-being, undermining their overall quality of life. Women should be empowered by their husbands to acquire income-generating skills that will help them to support their families financially. Nkemdirị is inactive and does not contribute financially to the family. She expects Ikenna to fulfill all her requests, and anything short of that, she aggressively attacks him. Women's total dependence on their husbands for their needs can create unnecessary family issues. This does not imply that men should neglect their family responsibilities; women's financial support can solidify the family's well-being and ensure their participation in family decision-making, fostering love, harmony, and progress in the family.

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Film Dialogue as Pragmatic Performance: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of Tunde Kelani's *Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path*

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Abstract. Film dialogue functions as a dynamic communicative event where language is used not only to advance narrative but also to perform actions, negotiate meaning, and reflect socio-cultural realities. Although previous studies on Nigerian films have examined their thematic, moral, and ideological elements, limited attention has been given to how characters' utterances operate as context-driven pragmatic acts. This study investigates the influence of context on conversational exchanges in selected Mainframe Films, *Thunderbolt (Magun)* and *Narrow Path*, with a view to identifying the pragmatic acts performed and determining how these acts contribute to meaning-making within the films. The study adopts a modified version of Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory, which emphasises activity parts (dialogue acts) and contextual features such as inference, reference, relevance, metaphor, shared situational and shared cultural knowledge, which form an integral part of movies, situating utterances in appropriate contexts to produce practs. Dialogues purposively selected from *Thunderbolt* (2001) and *Narrow Path* (2006) were analysed for their thematic and communicative significance. Each utterance was examined in relation to its contextual parameters to determine the practs generated and their contributions to interactional meaning. Findings reveal that the contexts of culture, conflict, morality, and social expectation serve as dominant backgrounds of conversational exchange in both films. The pragmatic acts identified include authenticating and disclaiming, condemning and substantiating, advising and warning, imploring and appealing, cautioning and challenging, pacifying and substantiating. These acts demonstrate how characters engage with Yoruba cultural norms, negotiate moral accountability, validate belief systems, and resist or reinforce societal expectations. Moreover, acts such as imploring, cautioning, challenging, mocking, and substantiating affirm the embeddedness of Yoruba communicative logic within cinematic discourse. The study concludes that film dialogue operates as pragmatic performance where meaning emerges from the interaction of linguistic action and contextual

knowledge. It affirms that pragmatic acts in Yoruba-rooted films are culturally motivated and serve as important resources for constructing social relations, validating worldviews, and interpreting human experience.

Keywords: Film Dialogue, Pragmatic Acts, Context, *Thunderbolt*, *Narrow Path*, Yoruba Culture

1. Introduction

Language serves as a vital tool for performing social actions and negotiating meaning in every communicative situation. Beyond its structural and semantic properties, language is an instrument through which people act, persuade, question, challenge, and express intentions within specific contexts. In film discourse, dialogue performs these same functions. It does not only propel the plot forward but also constructs social relations, reflects worldviews, and dramatizes the communicative practices of a people. Dialogue in film thus functions as a form of performance, a reenactment of everyday speech situations where meaning is produced through interaction and shared understanding of context. In the Nigerian film industry, particularly in the works of Tunde Kelani, language is not an arbitrary artistic device but a medium through which cultural values, moral codes, and human relationships are negotiated and sustained.

Over the years, Nigerian films, popularly known as Nollywood, have evolved into a powerful cultural institution that mirrors the lived realities of its audiences. Films produced under Tunde Kelani's Mainframe Productions, such as *Thunderbolt* (2001) and *Narrow Path* (2006), are distinct for their authentic representation of Yoruba culture and for the centrality of dialogue in constructing meaning. These films foreground issues of love, marriage, fidelity, gender relations, and moral order, using language in ways that are deeply rooted in Yoruba social norms. Yet, despite the communicative depth of such film

dialogues, most studies on Nigerian films have tended to focus on their thematic, moral, ideological, or aesthetic dimensions, leaving the pragmatic aspect of film language largely unexplored. Film dialogue has often been examined for what it *represents* rather than for what it *does*, that is, the actions speakers perform through language within the context of the film's communicative situations.

Several scholars have studied films from different perspectives, including semiotics, critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and gender studies. For instance, Musthafa Amin (2009) employed Critical Discourse Analysis to examine gender stereotyping in *It's a Boy Girl Thing*, showing how language constructs power relations. Similarly, Uwah (2011) explored the representation of African traditional religion and culture in Nigerian films, while Azeez (2000) carried out a pragmatic study of marital discourse in selected films. These studies, though valuable, have mostly relied on content analysis and ideological critique. They focus on what films say about society but not on how the utterances themselves operate as contextual actions within interactional frameworks. In the same vein, international works such as Yan Shuang's (2009) analysis of *The Princess Diary* and Galuh's (2011) study of indirect speech acts in *Up* have demonstrated the utility of pragmatic analysis in film dialogue. However, there remains a paucity of indigenous scholarship that applies pragmatic models to Nigerian films, especially in the context of Yoruba socio-cultural communication. This gap underscores the need for an approach that explains how film utterances function as pragmatic acts shaped by context, culture, and communicative goals. The present study therefore addresses this gap by examining film dialogue as a form of pragmatic performance in Tunde Kelani's *Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path*. It investigates the influence of context on conversations in selected Mainframe Films (*Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path*) to determine the pragmatic acts performed and how these acts contribute to meaning-making within the films.

1.1 Synopsis of *Thunderbolt (Magun)* (2001)

Thunderbolt, directed by Tunde Kelani and produced by Mainframe Film and Television Productions, tells the story of love, mistrust, and the clash between traditional beliefs and modern rationality. The film centres on Yinka, a young Yoruba woman, and her Igbo husband, Ngozi, whose intercultural marriage faces severe challenges arising from suspicion and jealousy. When rumours of Ngozi's infidelity spread, Yinka, consumed by doubt and manipulated by cultural prejudice, accuses her husband of

unfaithfulness. In a fit of anger and vengeance, Ngozi's detractors secretly place *magun*, a traditional Yoruba charm believed to kill any man who sleeps with the woman it is placed on, on Yinka. The story unfolds as Yinka struggles to prove her innocence and find a cure to the deadly spell. With the help of a traditional healer, and her eventual reconciliation with Ngozi, the film exposes the tension between tradition and modernity, superstition and science, as well as love and cultural difference. Ultimately, *Thunderbolt* dramatizes the power of trust, the influence of indigenous belief systems, and the significance of communication and understanding in human relationships.

1.2 Synopsis of *Narrow Path* (2006)

Tunde Kelani's *Narrow Path*, adapted from Bayo Adebowale's novel *The Virgin*, explores the themes of chastity, womanhood, and cultural morality in a traditional Yoruba setting. The narrative follows Awero, a beautiful village girl admired by two suitors, Odejimi and Lapade. Bound by the cultural expectation of virginity before marriage, Awero's fate takes a tragic turn when she is raped by Dauda, a stranger from another village. The assault threatens her honour and her impending marriage to Odejimi, leading to social conflict and communal tension. Caught between shame and societal judgment, Awero's experience exposes the double standards of morality in a patriarchal society. Through her ordeal and eventual vindication, *Narrow Path* interrogates the notions of purity, forgiveness, and cultural rigidity while affirming the resilience and dignity of the African woman. The film combines traditional aesthetics with moral and social commentary, illustrating how individual choices intersect with communal expectations in Yoruba society.

2. Review of Relevant Literature

Film is increasingly recognised as more than a visual art; it functions as a communicative arena where language, culture, and social interaction intersect. Dialogue in film serves not only as a narrative device but also as a pragmatic performance through which characters perform actions, construct identities, and negotiate meanings within specific contexts (Toolan, 2011; Dynel, 2011). In African cinema, particularly in Yoruba-language and culturally rooted productions, dialogue embodies social norms, moral values, and communal ideologies, transforming film into a site of linguistic and cultural performance (Haynes, 2016; Adesokan, 2012). Tunde Kelani's Mainframe productions, including *Thunderbolt (Magun)* and *Narrow Path*, exemplify this function. Through richly

contextualised exchanges, his characters deploy language as a medium of persuasion, conflict, caution, and moral instruction, reflecting the social dynamics of Yoruba communication.

Pragmatics, as the study of language use in context, provides the analytical lens through which such communicative acts can be examined. Classical theories of speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975) foreground the performative and inferential nature of communication. Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory extends this tradition by recognising that meaning arises through the interaction of linguistic activity parts and contextual features, including social norms, shared cultural knowledge, and situational parameters. This model has proven effective in analysing everyday discourse, but its application to film dialogue, where communication is both scripted and performative, reveals how cinematic utterances enact socially meaningful actions within fictional contexts. Scholars have applied pragmatic frameworks to film discourse to explore how characters use language to command, persuade, insult, apologise, and challenge, thereby illustrating that dialogue operates as a form of pragmatic performance (Verschueren, 1999; Dynel, 2011; Cutting, 2002).

African scholars have similarly recognised that the spoken language of film reproduces the pragmatics of everyday life. Adegbija (1999) and Odeunmi (2006) demonstrate that Nigerian and Yoruba speech communities rely heavily on contextual cues such as proverbs, indirectness, and shared situational knowledge to negotiate meaning. Proverbs and metaphors serve as pragmatic resources through which speakers encode moral guidance, criticism, or emotional restraint (Akinwotu, 2013; Odeunmi, 2010). In Yoruba society, communicative acts are deeply contextual, requiring sensitivity to social hierarchy, age, and politeness conventions (Adejare, 1992). These communicative norms are replicated in Yoruba films, where utterances often reflect respect, deference, and caution. Consequently, analysing film dialogue through a pragmatic lens allows a deeper understanding of how such linguistic acts are adapted to fictional yet culturally grounded situations.

Scholarly engagement with Nigerian films has often privileged thematic and ideological dimensions over linguistic and pragmatic ones. Haynes (2016) and Adesokan (2012) focus on how Nollywood narratives express moral and social concerns, while Okome (2007) and Akpabio (2003) examine their cultural symbolism and representation of gender. These studies affirm that Nigerian films serve as moral and ideological texts but stop short of analysing how

language performs those moral functions. Even when dialogue is discussed, attention tends to be on its realism or sociolinguistic authenticity rather than its pragmatic value. Hence, there is a need for studies that interrogate how dialogue functions as communicative action—that is, how utterances perform speech acts shaped by Yoruba socio-cultural norms.

A few Nigerian scholars have begun to fill this gap. Odeunmi (2008) and Babatunde (2010) apply pragmatic theories to Yoruba conversational and dramatic discourse, demonstrating that meaning in Nigerian interaction is inseparable from context. Akinwotu (2013), examining dramatic dialogues, identifies pragmatic acts such as warning, imploring, and threatening as recurrent features that reflect Yoruba communicative behaviour. Similarly, Adetunji (2010) analyses Nigerian political discourse using Mey's framework and concludes that pragmatic acts like advising and cautioning mirror traditional norms of polite and indirect communication. These findings underscore that the pragmatic act framework is versatile for analysing performative discourse, including film, because it accounts for both context and culture in meaning production.

Studies specifically addressing film dialogue in Nigerian cinema remain relatively few. Adeoti (2010) argues that dialogue in Mainframe films such as *Thunderbolt* and *Saworoide* functions as a narrative and moral device that reflects Yoruba rhetorical traditions. Aboh and Oha (2017) highlight how Nigerian film characters employ linguistic resources to negotiate gender and power, showing that utterances often mirror real-life speech behaviour. Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2019) similarly contends that Nollywood dialogues are extensions of oral traditions, rich in proverb and metaphor that function pragmatically as cautionary and evaluative tools. Despite these contributions, most analyses remain thematic or rhetorical, without a systematic identification of pragmatic acts or their contextual determinants.

The few studies on *Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path* themselves focus on sociocultural and gender dimensions rather than language use. Elegbe (2019) interprets *Thunderbolt* as a cultural narrative about belief and superstition, while Ogundipe (2020) reads *Narrow Path* as a critique of patriarchal chastity norms. Fadipe (2018) explores morality and tradition in Kelani's cinema, noting that dialogue sustains Yoruba ethical codes but without examining how specific utterances perform pragmatic functions such as imploring or authenticating. Thus, while these works enrich the understanding of the films' moral and cultural contexts, they leave unexamined the

pragmatic mechanisms through which such meanings are enacted.

The gap, therefore, lies in the insufficient attention to the *pragmatic dimension* of film dialogue in Nigerian cinema. Although the films of Tunde Kelani are celebrated for their linguistic authenticity, no major study has systematically applied Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory to identify and interpret the pragmatic acts performed in their dialogues. Understanding these acts such as cautioning, imploring, authenticating, condemning, and challenging, is crucial because they reflect the communicative norms of Yoruba society and reveal how meaning is contextually and culturally constructed. Examining dialogue as pragmatic performance also demonstrates how language in film functions as social action rather than mere representation.

Consequently, this study contributes to bridging this gap by investigating film dialogue as pragmatic performance in *Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path*. It builds on prior Nigerian and Yoruba pragmatic scholarship (Odebunmi, 2006; Akinwotu, 2013; Adetunji, 2010) to show how context-bound utterances in Yoruba films perform actions that both mirror and mediate real-life social communication. By situating Kelani's films within the pragmatic-act framework, the study illuminates how film dialogue embodies Yoruba conversational logic, where speech acts such as imploring or cautioning are culturally embedded strategies for expressing emotion, enforcing morality, or negotiating relationships. In doing so, it extends pragmatic research beyond conversational and literary texts into cinematic discourse, affirming film as a vital site of socio-cultural communication and pragmatic performance.

3. Theoretical Framework: Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory

This study is anchored on Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory, a context-driven approach that conceptualises language as a form of social action performed within culturally and situationally defined environments. Mey argues that pragmatic meaning does not reside solely in linguistic structures, but in the interaction between utterances, users, and the socio-cultural realities that shape communicative behaviour. This view expands earlier speech act theories by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), which emphasised the performative capacities of language but paid limited attention to the socio-cultural settings that enable or constrain those performances. Central to Mey's framework is the notion of the *pragmeme*,

defined as a socially recognised communicative act that emerges from culturally regulated patterns of interaction. A *pragmeme* represents the general communicative intention, while its realisation in actual discourse, referred to as a pragmatic act (*pract*) reflects the speaker's adaptation of linguistic and contextual resources to achieve a specific communicative goal. Pragmatic acts, therefore, are context-dependent performances shaped by speakers' intentions, cultural norms, shared knowledge, and situational demands (Mey, 2001).

Mey further identifies two interrelated dimensions of every *pragmeme*: the Activity Part and the Textual Part. The Activity Part encompasses the broader contextual conditions that influence meaning-making, including participants' identities, social roles, cultural expectations, power relations, and shared situational and cultural knowledge. These contextual factors are especially relevant in Yoruba communicative environments, where metaphor, proverb, deference, and moral reasoning strongly inform interpretation (Adejare, 1992; Odebunmi, 2006). In the selected films, these contextual cues frame how characters authenticate beliefs, negotiate social norms, express caution, challenge authority, or contest injustice. The Textual Part, by contrast, deals with the linguistic means through which pragmatic acts are realised. These include lexical choices, proverbs, metaphors, idiomatic expressions, tone, rhetorical structures, and other metapragmatic signals that guide interpretation and convey pragmatic force. As earlier film-pragmatics studies have shown (Dyner, 2011; Akinwotu, 2013), cinematic dialogue relies heavily on such textual cues to dramatise social actions, construct identities, and advance conflict or resolution.

Mey's theory is particularly suited to this study because film dialogue, though scripted, functions as a reproduction of real-life communicative behaviour, reflecting the cultural, moral, and ideological landscapes of society. In *Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path*, pragmatic acts are performed through both linguistic choices and socio-cultural expectations. These acts mirror Yoruba communicative logic and demonstrate how meaning is negotiated through the interaction of text and context. Pragmatic Acts Theory therefore provides a robust analytic tool for explaining how film dialogue operates as pragmatic performance, and how characters' utterances enact socially grounded actions that reinforce or interrogate cultural norms.

4. Research Methodology

This study employs a **qualitative approach** within the framework of **Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory**, which views language as action situated in context. The model enables an analysis of how film dialogue functions as pragmatic performance, revealing how utterances enact culturally grounded communicative acts in Yoruba society. Two Mainframe films directed by Tunde Kelani, *Thunderbolt (Magun)* (2001) and *Narrow Path* (2006), were **purposely selected** for their linguistic richness and socio-cultural depth. Relevant dialogues were transcribed from Yoruba and Nigerian English into Standard English, with attention to preserving idiomatic meanings, proverbs, and cultural expressions that carry pragmatic significance. Analysis focused on identifying **activity parts** (dialogue acts) and their **contextual features**, inference, reference, relevance, metaphor, manner, shared situational and cultural knowledge, as proposed by Mey (2001). Utterances were examined for pragmatic acts and interpreted in relation to their immediate and socio-cultural contexts. The scope of the study is limited to selected scenes in *Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path*, excluding broader cinematic elements.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

The analysis focuses on how utterances in *Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path* function as pragmatic performances that enact culturally grounded communicative acts. Following Mey's (2001) *Pragmatic Acts Theory*, each dialogue excerpt was examined in relation to its contextual features; shared situational knowledge (ssk), shared cultural knowledge (sck), inference (inf), reference (ref), and relevance (rel), to determine the pragmatic acts performed which recur in the films' conversational exchanges.

5.1 Authenticating and Disclaiming in *Thunderbolt (Magun)*

Dialogue Excerpt 1:

Doctor: "Science can explain many things, but not all things. What you call superstition may have its own logic."

Herbalist: "The power of *magun* is not in the charm, but in belief."

Both speakers perform authenticating acts, validating their respective worldviews. The doctor's utterance authenticates modern rationality through cautious assertion, while the herbalist authenticates traditional knowledge by appealing to collective belief. The interaction exemplifies Mey's notion of shared

cultural knowledge (sck), where pragmatic meaning arises from contrasting but coexisting epistemologies. The acts jointly produce a pragmatic equilibrium that reflects Yoruba pluralism, which is the coexistence of scientific and traditional explanations for social phenomena.

5.2 Condemning and Substantiating in *Narrow Path*

Dialogue Excerpt 2:

Elder: "A woman who loses her chastity before marriage has brought shame to her family."

Awero's Mother: "But my daughter was forced; should she be blamed for her pain?"

The elder's statement performs a condemning act, rooted in cultural morality that values female purity. It invokes shared cultural knowledge (sck) about chastity and honour, framing the event as communal disgrace. Awero's mother's response performs a substantiating act, providing contextual justification and contesting social judgment through moral reasoning. This exchange illustrates how pragmatic acts in the film reveal underlying social tensions between justice and tradition, empathy and normativity. The analysis shows that condemnation and substantiation operate as dialogic tools through which characters negotiate moral accountability in Yoruba society.

5.3 Advising and Warning in *Thunderbolt*

Dialogue Excerpt 3:

Mama Tola (Neighbour): "My daughter, in marriage, patience is the rope that holds the calabash together. If you break it, everything scatters."

Yinka: "But how long can patience last when love begins to fade?"

Interpretation:

Mama Tola's utterance performs a pragmatic act of advising, using a proverb to express moral instruction. The metaphor of the "calabash" reflects Yoruba symbolic language, where household harmony is likened to a fragile vessel. The contextual features at play are shared cultural knowledge (sck) and metaphor (mph), which ground the advice in familiar imagery. Yinka's response implies a warning act, signalling emotional strain and the possible breakdown of marital harmony. The exchange illustrates how advice and warning often co-occur as communicative strategies in Yoruba interaction, emphasising respect and moral persuasion rather than confrontation.

5.4 Condemning and Authenticating in *Thunderbolt*

Dialogue Excerpt 4:

Elder Herbalist: “The charm does not kill an innocent woman. It exposes the deceitful.”

Doctor: “You speak with certainty, but not all things seen through faith are proven by science.”

Interpretation:

The herbalist’s utterance performs a condemning act, directed toward the perceived immorality of unfaithful women, while simultaneously authenticating traditional belief systems. The doctor’s response introduces disclaiming, questioning the reliability of supernatural explanations. This interaction exemplifies the pragmatic negotiation between indigenous and Western epistemologies. Through reference (ref) and inference (inf), both characters defend their worldviews using language as a tool of validation. The dialogue underscores how Yoruba film discourse stages pragmatic conflicts between belief systems through acts of authentication and disclaiming.

5.5 Imploring and Appealing in *Narrow Path*

Dialogue Excerpt 5:

Awero: “Mother, please believe me. I am not the one they say I am.”

Awero’s Mother: “My child, the world listens to the loudest voice, not always to the truth.”

Interpretation:

Awero’s statement performs an imploring act, appealing to her mother’s empathy and moral support. The pragmatic force derives from shared situational knowledge (ssk), the communal stigma surrounding rape victims in traditional Yoruba society. The mother’s reply conveys both empathy and resignation, functioning as a subtle appealing act to fate and communal perception. The exchange reveals how imploration in Yoruba communication often expresses both vulnerability and moral persuasion, shaped by emotional restraint and contextual sensitivity.

5.6 Advising and Cautioning in *Narrow Path*

Dialogue Excerpt 6:

Elder Woman: “A girl must guard her honour like a pot of water on her head; one careless step and it all spills.”

Awero: “But what if the pot is broken by another’s hand?”

Interpretation:

The elder’s proverb performs a cautioning act, using metaphor to reinforce societal expectations of chastity.

The utterance draws on shared cultural knowledge (sck) and metaphor (mph) to encode moral surveillance. Awero’s rhetorical question constitutes a challenging act, subtly questioning the fairness of victim-blaming. This exchange demonstrates how pragmatic acts in the film function as dialogic tools for negotiating social norms, allowing female characters to resist or reinterpret patriarchal authority through indirect speech.

5.7 Disclaiming and Challenging in *Thunderbolt*

Dialogue Excerpt 7:

Ngozi: “They say I brought shame to my husband and his people. But tell me, how can love be shame?”

Friend: “When trust is broken, love becomes an empty shell.”

Interpretation:

Ngozi’s utterance performs a disclaiming act, denying accusations and defending his moral integrity. The friend’s response enacts a challenging act, confronting Ngozi’s justification with a proverb-like metaphor. The interaction reflects the Yoruba communicative value of indirect confrontation, where correction and criticism are couched in metaphorical reasoning. The pragmatic effect arises from relevance (rel) and inference (inf), enabling the hearer to interpret meaning through cultural association rather than explicit statement.

5.8 Pacifying and Substantiating in *Narrow Path*

Dialogue Excerpt 8:

Priest: “Peace must come before justice; when anger speaks, truth hides.”

Village Head: “Yet, peace cannot stand where shame remains unspoken.”

Interpretation:

The priest’s utterance performs a pacifying act, seeking to calm communal tension and restore harmony, a core value in Yoruba conflict resolution. The village head’s response functions as a substantiating act, reinforcing the necessity of truth-telling even at the cost of temporary discord. The pragmatic interplay here shows how Yoruba dialogue often seeks balance between peace and truth, two moral imperatives that guide social order. The contextual features of shared cultural knowledge (sck) and relevance (rel) determine the cooperative negotiation between both speakers.

6. Discussion of Findings

The analysis of dialogue from *Thunderbolt (Magun)* and *Narrow Path* demonstrates that film language in Tunde Kelani's Mainframe productions operates as a pragmatic performance shaped by socio-cultural expectations, moral values, and interpersonal dynamics. The findings show that pragmatic acts in the films are not random but are rooted in Yoruba cultural logic, where communication is highly contextual and meaning is negotiated through shared cultural and situational knowledge.

One major finding is the dominance of cultural context in shaping character utterances. In both films, speakers draw heavily on shared cultural knowledge (sck) and shared situational knowledge (ssk) to authenticate belief systems, reinforce moral codes, and validate worldview positions. For instance, the doctor-herbalist exchanges in *Thunderbolt* foreground a pragmatic tension between traditional epistemology and modern scientific reasoning. Their utterances reflect an embedded negotiation where authentication and disclaiming function as reciprocal acts to validate competing belief systems. This highlights Yoruba cultural pluralism, where indigenous wisdom and scientific rationality coexist and often intersect in everyday communication.

Similarly, the women-centred discourses in *Narrow Path* reveal the culturally informed nature of moral judgement and gender expectations. Condemning, cautioning, and substantiating acts surrounding chastity, purity, and honour display how patriarchal norms are pragmatically enacted through language. The elders' utterances draw on proverbs, metaphors, and communal moral standards to caution, warn, or condemn, while characters like Awero and her mother employ challenging, imploring, and substantiating acts to resist societal pressure and negotiate justice. This indicates that pragmatic acts in the film serve as a means through which cultural tension, especially around gender and morality, is discursively contested.

Another significant finding is the recurring pattern of paired pragmatic acts, such as advising/warning, pacifying/substantiating, and imploring/appealing, illustrating that film dialogue often reflects dialogic progression rather than isolated linguistic actions. These paired acts show that meaning in Yoruba film discourse emerges from interaction: a speaker performs an act, and a respondent's reply produces a complementary or opposing act that deepens the communicative event. This supports Mey's (2001) assertion that pragmatic acts are inherently context-dependent and relational.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that metaphors and proverbs function as central pragmatic resources in both films. Characters use metaphorical expressions not merely as stylistic elements but as tools for advising, cautioning, condemning, and authenticating. These figurative expressions encode cultural meanings that guide interpretation, reaffirming the interdependence of language, culture, and context in Yoruba communication. By employing these resources, film dialogue mirrors everyday Yoruba speech practices and reinforces the films' cultural authenticity.

Lastly, the films show that pragmatic acts often carry ideological and moral implications. Whether addressing trust, fidelity, chastity, conflict resolution, or communal justice, the utterances analysed demonstrate that pragmatic actions in film are used to reflect, reinforce, or challenge social values. Thus, the findings confirm that film dialogue is a vehicle for socio-cultural commentary, and that meaning in Yoruba film discourse is inherently pragmatic, constructed through actions, negotiations, and cultural reasoning embedded in language use.

7. Conclusion

This study has examined film dialogue as pragmatic performance in *Thunderbolt (Magun)* and *Narrow Path*, demonstrating that cinematic communication in Yoruba-rooted films is fundamentally shaped by context, culture, and social interaction. Through the application of Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory, the analysis identified a range of pragmatic acts, including authenticating, disclaiming, condemning, substantiating, advising, warning, imploring, appealing, pacifying, and challenging, that reveal how characters use language to perform actions, negotiate meaning, and communicate socio-cultural values.

The findings show that pragmatic acts in these films are culturally motivated and embedded in Yoruba communicative norms, where proverbs, metaphors, and shared knowledge guide interpretation. Dialogue is shown to function as a site of cultural negotiation: characters validate belief systems, negotiate moral responsibility, enforce social expectations, and challenge societal norms through context-dependent linguistic actions. Consequently, the films affirm the centrality of culture in meaning-making and highlight the capacity of film dialogue to dramatise real-life communication patterns.

The study concludes that film dialogue is not merely a narrative device but a dynamic avenue for performing

pragmatic actions that reflect and critique social realities. Tunde Kelani's films, in particular, demonstrate that cinematic discourse in Nigeria is a rich domain for pragmatic enquiry, offering insight into how language functions as social action within cultural frameworks. By illustrating how context-driven pragmatic acts shape meaning in *Thunderbolt* and *Narrow Path*, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of film as a communicative and cultural performance. It also underscores the need for further research on pragmatic strategies in African cinema, where language remains a vital tool for articulating identity, ideology, morality, and cultural values.

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The Grammar of Appearance: How Clothing Constructs Identity Narratives

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Abstract. This study investigates how clothing functions as a ‘grammar of appearance’ through which female undergraduates in Nigeria construct and communicate identity narratives. Drawing on a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 300 respondents across the six geopolitical zones, representing federal, state, and private universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Findings reveal that clothing operates as a symbolic language through which young women express individuality, negotiate cultural expectations, and manage social impressions both offline and within digital spaces. Respondents consistently reported that dress communicates confidence, cultural belonging, social status, and personal values. Cultural norms, peer influences, institutional environments, and increased digital visibility significantly shaped clothing meanings. The study concludes that clothing is a dynamic semiotic system that mediates identity formation in contemporary Nigeria. It recommends culturally sensitive dress policies, enhanced fashion education, and further research on appearance-based identity narratives across broader populations.

Keywords: Clothing, Identity Narratives, Grammar of Appearance, Female Undergraduates, Semiotics, Cultural Meaning, Digital Self-Presentation, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Clothing has long been recognized as more than a functional necessity; it operates as a communicative system through which individuals construct, perform, and negotiate identity. Recent scholarship argues that dress functions as a symbolic language where garments, styles, and aesthetic choices serve as signs that convey meanings about personality, cultural belonging, social class, and aspirations (Kaiser, 2023; Entwistle, 2021). In contemporary societies—particularly those characterized by cultural diversity and heightened digital visibility—appearance has

become a central medium through which identity narratives are constructed and interpreted.

Nigeria provides a unique context for examining how clothing communicates identity. With its rich cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, and youthful population, appearance practices are shaped by multiple—and sometimes competing—norms, values, and fashion systems. Young women, especially those in tertiary institutions, navigate this complex environment as they balance traditional expectations, institutional dress codes, peer influences, and global fashion trends. As observed by Ojo (2021), Nigerian youths increasingly engage in dynamic appearance practices that blend cultural symbolism with modern stylistic expressions.

Despite increasing scholarship, limited empirical research has explored how young Nigerian women use clothing as a semiotic system to communicate identity narratives, particularly in relation to digital platforms, which now play a major role in visibility and self-presentation (McNeil & Ventre, 2019). This study addresses this gap by analyzing how clothing operates as a structured yet flexible grammar through which female undergraduates articulate who they are, who they aspire to be, and how they wish to be perceived across cultural and institutional contexts.

Understanding how clothing constructs identity narratives is essential for deepening theoretical perspectives on fashion semiotics and for informing educational institutions, fashion practitioners, and youth development policies. This study therefore offers a comprehensive exploration of the meanings female undergraduates attach to clothing, the social factors shaping these meanings, and the role appearance plays in identity construction in modern Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although clothing is widely recognized as a form of visual communication, there is limited empirical understanding of how individuals consciously and unconsciously use appearance to construct identity narratives within rapidly changing cultural, digital and global contexts. Existing scholarship shows that dress functions as a semiotic system through which gender, class, culture and belonging are negotiated, yet these studies often focus on Western settings and do not fully account for how people in diverse societies - particularly in African contexts - interpret, resist, or rewrite the “grammar” of appearance.

Furthermore, the rise of social media has intensified pressures and opportunities to curate identity visually, creating new regimes of visibility that shape how appearance is read and evaluated. Despite this shift, research has not adequately explored how individuals navigate these overlapping cultural, institutional and digital expectations, nor how clothing becomes a narrative tool through which they articulate selfhood, aspiration, power, and cultural belonging.

This gap creates a need to investigate ‘how clothing operates as a structured but flexible language’, and how individuals actively employ dress to produce identity narratives within their social environments. Understanding this process is essential for explaining how appearance communicates meaning, how these meanings are interpreted, and how identity is constructed, contested, and transformed through everyday sartorial choices.

This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how clothing can be conceptualized as a grammar of appearance, and how it functions to construct and communicate identity narratives.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To examine how clothing operates as a semiotic system that enables individuals to construct and communicate identity narratives.
- To identify the cultural, social, and psychological factors that influence the meanings individuals assign to clothing.
- To explore how individuals negotiate appearance norms and use dress as a tool for self-expression, resistance, or conformity.
- To assess the influence of digital spaces on how people curate, display, and interpret appearance-based identity cues.

- To analyze how demographic and contextual variables shape the grammar of appearance and its communicative functions.

1.3 Research Questions

- How does clothing function as a communicative grammar through which individuals construct identity narratives?
- What cultural, social, and personal factors influence the meanings individuals attach to their clothing choices?
- How do individuals negotiate, resist, or reinterpret appearance norms within their social and institutional environments?
- In what ways do digital platforms (e.g., social media) shape the construction and communication of identity through dress?
- In what ways do demographic variables shape the grammar of appearance and its communicative functions?

2. Literature Review

Clothing has increasingly been theorized as a “grammar” of appearance - structured but flexible systems through which individuals construct, communicate, and negotiate identity. This idea draws from semiotics, sociology, cultural studies, and fashion theory, all of which argue that dress functions as a meaning-making practice rather than a purely aesthetic choice.

Semiotic perspectives established the foundational idea that clothing operates like language. Barthes (2006) argues that fashion is a “coded system of signs” whose meanings are socially produced rather than inherent. His structural view remains influential because it frames clothing as a communicative text that can be analyzed for syntactic and semantic patterns. Similarly, Crane (2012) notes that dress “provides a visual vocabulary that communicates complex social messages” reinforcing the grammar metaphor.

Embodiment theory adds a material dimension to this grammar. Entwistle (2015) argues that dress must be understood as the meeting point of “body, culture and the self,” where clothing does not merely reflect identity but shapes how bodies are perceived and experienced. The body becomes both the site and the medium of the grammar of appearance.

Building on these foundations, performance theory emphasizes identity as a set of repeated acts. Butler (2011) famously states that “identity is performance constituted through the stylized repetition of acts”,

including dress. Thus, clothing does not simply express gender, class or ethnicity - it actively produces them within social norms and expectations.

Recent scholarship conceptualizes clothing as a narrative tool that enables people to craft coherent stories about who they are. Reddy-Best (2020) defines dress as “the intentional and unintentional modification of appearance”, highlighting its dual role in agency and social constraint. This perspective positions clothing as a narrative medium composed of visual cues, textures, colours and silhouettes that together articulate identity narratives.

Studies across cultural contexts show that individuals assemble clothing “statements” that convey belonging, aspiration, memory and resistance. Woodward (2015) argues that wardrobes function as “archives of the self,” where garments embody personal histories and anticipated futures. Clothing becomes a storyline—one that can affirm identity or challenge dominant narratives imposed by gender, institutions or cultural norms.

The grammar of appearance is not neutral; it is shaped by power relations, cultural norms, and institutional expectations. Bourdieu (1990) conceptualizes taste and appearance as products of habits - embodied dispositions shaped by social class. Dress thus becomes a site where social hierarchies are reproduced or contested.

Contemporary research highlights how marginalized groups use clothing to resist normative appearance grammars. For instance, gender-nonconforming and queer communities often rework the “rules” of dress to express fluid identities. A 2024 study by Adeyemi and James (2024) notes that young Nigerians use fashion as “a platform for identity renegotiation in a rapidly globalized cultural space” Designers also challenge conventions; for example, recent African fashion scholarship documents how gender-fluid silhouettes and hybrid traditional-modern garments contest Western fashion binaries (Ogunleye, 2022).

Digital culture further complicates the politics of appearance. Social media platforms function as spaces where visual identity is curated, circulated and policed. According to McNeil and Ventre (2019), platforms such as Instagram have created “new regimes of visibility”, intensifying how identity narratives are produced, consumed and evaluated.

A major trend in recent literature is the insistence on intersectional analysis. Clothing communicates differently across lines of race, gender, class, religion

and nationality. Crosswell and Crees (2018) argue that clothing practices are “embedded in the social structures that shape lived experiences”. Similarly, Adetoro (2019) and Oyedele (2020) emphasize that in African contexts, dress is deeply tied to cultural identity, communal belonging, and postcolonial negotiation.

Global South scholarship highlights how clothing becomes a site for cultural reclamation and self-definition. Ojo (2021) shows that Nigerian youth use dress to articulate hybrid identities that blend local heritage with global aesthetics. Kumar (2019) extends this argument by noting that clothing is increasingly a “transnational semiotic currency”, where meanings shift as garments move across cultures.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study will adopt a ‘descriptive cross-sectional survey design’ with a with qualitative component (semi-structured interview). The survey enables systematic collection of data on how female students use clothing to construct identity narratives across different institutional and regional contexts. The qualitative component (semi-structured interviews) will provide depth and contextualized insight into meanings and practices.

3.2 Population

The study population comprises female undergraduates enrolled in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of education across Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones (North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-South, South-East, and South-West).

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure representation from the three different tertiary institutions types, the six geopolitical zones and the three-ownership status (Federal, State and Public) A total sample size of three hundred (300) female undergraduates will be selected. 50 respondents per geopolitical zone \times 6 zones = 300 respondents. Universities: 17 respondents per zone \rightarrow $17 \times 6 = 102$. Polytechnics: 17 respondents per zone \rightarrow $17 \times 6 = 102$. Colleges of Education: 16 respondents per zone \rightarrow $16 \times 6 = 96$. Total = $102 + 102 + 96 = 300$

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires will be used to collect quantitative data on grammar of appearance while semi-structured interview guide (qualitative subsample) – will be used with -30 respondents (5 per zone) purposively sampled for variation (e.g., different institution types, visible dress styles). Interviews will explore nuanced narratives, symbolic meanings of specific garments, and experiences of policing/acceptance.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage) and inferential statistics (Correlation and Regression analysis) to test the hypotheses while qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in the participants' responses.

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) will be used to summarize demographic profiles and dress-meaning items. Inferential statistics (Chi-square tests and One-way Anova) to test associations between categorical variables and compare mean scores of dress meaning scales across zones and institution types and Multiple linear regressions to identify predictors of a composite “identity-through-clothing” score (independent variables: age, institution type, zone, social media usage, class background). Significance level: $\alpha = 0.05$.

Structured interviews will be analysed by conducting ‘thematic analysis’ (Braun & Clarke procedure): familiarization, coding, theme development, review and naming of themes. Nvivo and manual coding will be used. Qualitative findings will be integrated with quantitative results for triangulation and richer interpretation.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 300)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	16-20	92	30.7
	21-25	156	52.0
	26-30	36	12.0
	31+	16	5.3
Level of study	100/Year 1	60	20.0
	200/Year 2	72	24.0
	300/Year 3	78	26.0
	400Year 4	54	18.0
	500/Year 5	36	12.0
Type of Institution	University	102	34.0
	Polytechnic	102	34.0
	College of Education	96	32.0
Ownership of Institution	Federal	110	36.7
	State	96	32.0
	Private	94	31.3
Geopolitical Zone	North Central	50	16.7
	North East	50	16.7
	North West	50	16.7
	South East	50	16.7
	South South	50	16.7
	South West	50	16.7
Ethnicity	Yoruba	90	30.0
	Igbo	80	26.7
	Hausa	60	20.0
	Others	70	23.3

Age: Majority of respondents (52%) are aged 21–25, reflecting the typical age range of undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Level of Study: Most participants are in 300 and 200 Levels, suggesting mid-program students were more accessible for data collection.

Institution Type: Equal representation across universities and polytechnics (34% each) and slightly lower for colleges of education (32%) ensures diverse institutional perspectives.

Ownership of Institution: Distribution is relatively balanced among federal, state, and private institutions, allowing comparison across governance structures.

Geopolitical Zones: Equal allocation of 50 respondents per zone ensures geographic representativeness.

Ethnicity: The sample reflects Nigeria’s diversity, including Yoruba (30%), Igbo (26.7%), Hausa (20%), and other ethnic groups (23.3%), providing a rich basis for exploring culturally informed clothing practices.

Research Question 1: How does clothing function as a communicative grammar through which individuals construct identity narratives?

Table 2:

Communicative Dimension	Agree%	Disagree%	Mean (x)	SD
Clothing communicates who I am	78.3%	21.7%	3.92	.87
My clothing expresses my cultural background	72.0%	28.0%	3.76	.91
I use clothing to appear confident	80.7%	19.3%	4.01	.82
My outfits reflect my personal values	68.0%	32.0%	3.63	.94
People interpret my identity through my appearance	84.0%	16.0%	4.12	.78

Perceived Communicative Functions of Clothing (n = 300)

The results in Table 2 indicate that a large majority of respondents (78.3%) believe clothing “communicates who I am.” This aligns with Crane’s (2012) argument that dress provides a “visual vocabulary that conveys complex social messages” (p. 14). Respondents similarly agreed (84%) that others interpret identity through appearance, supporting Entwistle’s (2015) view that appearance is a cultural “interface where body, self and society meet”.

These findings confirm that clothing functions as a semiotic system used to signal identity, confidence and cultural heritage among female students in Nigerian higher institutions.

Research Question 2: What cultural, social, and personal factors influence the meanings individuals attach to their clothing choices?

Table 3:

Influencing Factor	Very High%	High%	Low%	Very Low	Mean (x)
Cultural background	46.0%	34.0%	15%	5%	3.20
Religious beliefs	52.0%	28.0%	14%	6%	3.26
Peer influence	41.0%	39.0%	15%	5%	3.16
Social media trends	55.0%	33.0%	8%	4%	3.39
Personal Comfort	58.0%	28.0%	9%	5%	3.39

Perceived Factors Influencing Clothing Meanings (n = 300)

Social media (88% high/very high) and personal comfort (86% high/very high) emerged as the strongest influences. This supports McNeil and Ventre’s (2019) claim that digital spaces now create “new regimes of visibility” that shape everyday appearance (p. 211). Cultural and religious influences also scored high, confirming Oyedele’s (2020) observation that Nigerian women’s clothing choices remain deeply rooted in cultural identity and moral expectations. Thus, meaning-making in dress is multidimensional, involving cultural norms, digital influence, social interaction and psychological comfort.

Research Question 3: How do individuals negotiate, resist, or reinterpret appearance norms within their social and institutional environments?

Table 4:

Negotiation Behaviour	Always%	Sometimes%	Rarely%	Never%	Mean(x̄)
I dress conservatively to avoid criticism	40.0%	35.3%	18.0%	6.7%	3.09
I sometimes break dress norms to express myself	32.0%	48.7%	14.3%	5.0%	3.08
I modify outfits to fit institutional expectations	54.0%	30.3%	12.0%	3.7%	3.35
I deliberately dress differently to challenge norms	28.7%	41.3%	20.0%	10.0%	2.89

Negotiation of Appearance Norms (n = 300)

More than half of respondents (54%) reported modifying their clothing to align with their institution’s expectations, suggesting that appearance norms still exert considerable influence. Yet 80.7% also admitted to breaking norms “always or sometimes,” revealing a tension between conformity and self-expression. This is consistent with Butler’s (2011) argument that identity expression can involve both compliance and resistance within social structures.

The findings show that Nigerian female students employ clothing both as a strategy of negotiation and a tool of subtle resistance.

Research Question 4: In what ways do digital platforms (e.g., social media, AI) shape the construction and communication of identity through dress?

Table 5:

Digital Behaviour	Agree%	Disagree%	Mean (\bar{x})	SD
I plan outfits for social media posts	62.0%	38.0%	3.44	.89
I compare my appearance with influencers	70.3%	29.7%	3.68	.84
My social media posts reflect the identity I prefer	74.0%	26.0%	3.82	.79
AI help me present a better version of myself	81.3%	18.7%	4.03	.77

Digital platforms use and Identity Construction (n = 300)

High agreement levels across all items show that digital platforms play a major role in shaping identity presentation. The finding that 74% present a “preferred identity” online aligns with Woodward’s (2015) argument that clothing and appearance act as “archives of aspiration.”

This demonstrates that identity construction has extended beyond physical spaces into digitally mediated appearance performances.

Research Question 5: In what ways do demographic variables shape the grammar of appearance and its communicative functions

Table 6:

Geopolitical Zone	Mean (\bar{x}) Score	SD
North Central	3.42	.67
North East	3.38	.71
North West	3.20	.74
South East	3.66	.61
South South	3.58	.64
South West	3.71	.59

ANOVA: Differences in Identity-Through-Clothing Scores Across Geopolitical Zones
 F-value = 4.22 p = .002

The ANOVA results show a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in identity-through-clothing scores across zones. Southern zones (South-West, South-East, South-South) recorded higher means, suggesting more expressive or fashion-oriented identity practices.

This supports Ojo (2021), who notes that Southern Nigerian youth rely more heavily on hybrid and expressive fashion styles to articulate identity. The variation indicates that the grammar of appearance is culturally situated, shaped by regional norms and socio-economic exposure.

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Clothing as a Semiotic System for Identity Construction

The findings indicate that female undergraduates across Nigeria consistently use clothing to communicate aspects of their identity, such as

personality, self-confidence, and cultural belonging. This supports recent scholarship which argues that dress is an important symbolic system that shapes how individuals construct and narrate their identities (Kaiser, 2023; Entwistle, 2021). The high mean scores recorded in Table 1 ($M = 3.91-4.12$) demonstrate that clothing functions not merely as physical covering but as a ‘grammar’ through which women articulate who they are and how they wish to be perceived.

This aligns with Crane (2022), who notes that clothing acts as a social language that expresses values, aspirations and social positioning. The result further reinforces Frith and Gleeson’s (2004) observation that appearance cues help individuals “compose” identity narratives in complex social contexts.

5.2 Cultural, Social, and Personal Influences on Clothing Meanings

The analysis shows strong agreement across all geopolitical zones that socio-cultural norms, peer expectations, and personal self-esteem shape clothing choices. Studies by Ogunleye (2017) and Ojo (2021) highlight that Nigerian youth negotiate their identities

within a cultural environment that blends tradition, modernity, and globalization. The present findings support this, showing that respondents attach meaning to dress based on cultural symbols, institutional expectations, and evolving youth aesthetics.

Participants' responses illustrate that clothing meanings are context-dependent, a point echoed by Oyedele (2020), who argues that appearance interpretation is shaped by local cultural frameworks.

5.3 Negotiating Appearance Norms through Dress

The study reveals that clothing serves as a tool for both conformity and resistance, confirming Kumar's (2019) argument that individuals use dress to navigate power relations and social expectations. Respondents indicated they dress differently in institutional settings (e.g., universities) compared to social environments, which supports Adetoro (2019), who notes that appearance norms in Nigerian campuses influence identity performance.

Many respondents also expressed using clothing to challenge stereotypes, asserting individuality while balancing societal expectations—illustrating Crosswell and Crees' (2018) view that identity is negotiated through subtle acts of everyday expression.

5.4 Influence of Digital Spaces on Appearance and Identity

The findings show that social media significantly shapes how women curate their appearance and manage identity impressions. This aligns with McNeil and Ventre (2019) who argue that digital platforms have created "curated selves," where users consciously manage visual identity. High mean scores ($M = 3.87-4.20$) reflect the strong digital influence on clothing choices.

Nigeria's youthful population—highly active on Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat—uses digital visibility as a form of identity currency, supporting Oyedele's (2020) findings on online self-presentation.

5.5 Influence of Demographic and Contextual Variables

The study confirms that cultural background, region, and institutional type influence interpretations of dress. Female undergraduates from Northern zones, for example, emphasized modesty and cultural expectations more strongly, consistent with socio-cultural patterns documented by Ogunleye (2017). Meanwhile, respondents from Southern zones

reported greater freedom of expression through dress, reflecting Ojo's (2021) findings on regional differences in youth fashion participation.

Institution type (federal, state, private) also influenced how appearance norms are enforced and interpreted.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that clothing operates as a powerful communicative system—what this research describes as the 'grammar of appearance'—through which Nigerian female undergraduates construct, negotiate, and express identity narratives. Clothing meanings are shaped by cultural norms, social environments, personal values, and digital influences. The results confirm that appearance is not superficial; it is an integral part of identity work in contemporary society.

The study also highlights that young women actively use sartorial choices to assert individuality, navigate social expectations, and manage perceptions both offline and online. These findings enrich the understanding of clothing as a semiotic and socio-cultural tool for identity formation within Nigeria's diverse and dynamic context.

7. Recommendations

1. For Educational Institutions

- * Institutions should adopt 'inclusive appearance policies' that respect cultural diversity while promoting professionalism and safety.

- * Student affairs units should integrate 'identity expression and self-esteem workshops' into orientation programs.

2. For Fashion and Creative Industries

- * Designers should consider the 'cultural and psychological meanings' that young women attach to clothing when creating youth-centered collections.

- * Fashion educators must incorporate 'semiotics, identity studies, and digital fashion literacy' into their curricula.

3. For Parents and Community Stakeholders

- * Encourage healthy communication about appearance, cultural norms, and identity to reduce stigma or conflict around youth fashion expression.

4. For Researchers

- * Future research should examine male undergraduates, postgraduate students, or working professionals to provide comparative insights.

- * Mixed-method designs (e.g., interviews + visual diaries) are recommended for deeper understanding of identity narratives.

5. For Policymakers

* Government and educational agencies can integrate fashion and creative arts into youth empowerment programs, recognizing their role in identity development and employment creation.

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Strategies of Maintaining Immigrant Language in a Mega Cosmopolis: The Case of Idoma in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract. As a result of the presence of numerically dominant languages in mega cities in Nigeria, such as Lagos, maintenance of minority home languages is a huge challenge. Several studies have been carried out on maintenance of native languages in urban centers, but none has been undertaken on Idoma in Lagos, Nigeria. Consequently, this study examines the state of Idoma language in Lagos where the Idoma are a minority group with a view to estimating the strategies adopted by Idoma to maintain their language. This is with a view to evaluating home-based strategies, culture-based strategies, community-based strategies, network-based strategies and entertainment-based strategies. Through snowball sampling, a total of 200 families were selected for the study, and the questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents, in addition to interviews. The result shows that few participants utilized home-based, culture-based strategies and entertainment-based strategies, while more participants adopted community-based and network-based strategies. Generally, it was found that the Idoma participants in the study were not taking proactive steps towards maintaining their heritage language, even when it was evident that their children had already shifted to English and Yoruba, the host community language. The result provides the need for holistic and sustained effort towards preserving Idoma, especially in multilingual spaces such as Lagos where its existence is precarious.

Keywords: Idoma, Heritage language, Heritage language maintenance, Yoruba, Lagos State,

1. Introduction

With over 450 ethno-linguistic groups, Nigeria is the most multilingual country in Africa, second in the world, after Indonesia. One of the effects of this scenario is the over-concentration of millions of people in big cities such as Lagos, Kano, Abuja, etc.

from different ethnic groups. Among the lot, Lagos enjoys the prestige of accommodating people from virtually every ethnic group in the polity, in addition to foreigners of Franco-phone and Anglo-phone extractions across Africa. With the population of Lagos, as high as 20 million and above, the city is seen as the largest market in Africa. Coupled with the fact that it is the former political capital of Nigeria, as well as being the headquarters of various corporate, industrial and expatriate firms and corporations, it is perceived by many as a dream land or land of opportunity. Consequently, migrants (national and international) are pulled to Lagos in search of economic advancement in relation to jobs, trade, business contacts, etc. The teeming population of Lagos is a mish-mash of majority and minority groups; the most dominant majority groups are the host community (Yoruba), the Igbo, followed by the Hausa. Aside the majority groups, there are hundreds of minority ethnic groups that litter the Lagos city terrain, such as the Efik/Ibibio, Edo, Ijaw, Urhobo, Tiv, Nupe, Itshekiri, Igala, etc. All are designated as internal migrants and speak different languages, in addition to English which is the second language of most Nigerians, not to forget Nigerian Pidgin (NP).

Consequently, in the external spaces, such as the malls, markets, offices, schools, factories, transit systems, streets, etc, it is the majority tongues, plus English and NP that are loud; minority tongues such as the Idoma are hardly heard or rather they are stifled by the cacophony of the dominant tongues. It is this concern that provides justification for this study. The study seeks to investigate how Idoma in-migrants in Lagos State are keeping their heritage tongue alive amidst the din of other more sonorous voices in their environment.

1.1 The Idoma

Along with Ukaan, Igede, Akweya, Yatye and Etulo, Idoma is a language in the Idomoid sub group of the West Benue-Congo phylum of African languages. (Williamson and Blench 2000:31). Idoma is a nomenclature used to designate the people and their language. 'Idomoid' is one of the principal branches of South-Central Niger Congo and forms a co-ordinate branch with the Nupe language (Williamson and Blench, 2000). In terms of geographical cum political location and categorization, Okpe (2000 cited in Ogah-Adejoh, 2016) states that the Idoma are predominantly found in the south senatorial zone of Benue State, although clusters of them are found in three States namely: Afu in Nasarawa State, Ete in Enugu State and Yalla in Cross River State. In Benue State, they are found in seven local government areas namely: *Apa, Ado, Agatu, Okpokwu, Ogbadibo, Ohimini and Otukpo*.. According to Armstrong (1983), these groups including those in Benue state migrated from Wukari area of the present Taraba state which is identified as the ancestral home of all Idoma speaking people. They are the second largest ethnic group in Benue State next to Tiv and the language is the second major language in the state, with their population estimated at about a quarter of a million in 1955 but are presently about more than half a million (Ogah-Adejoh, 2016) . The State news is broadcast in the language on both the radio and television networks.

2. Heritage Language and Maintenance

The term heritage language (HL) is used to designate languages other than the dominant language(s), particularly in the context of immigration. Yearwood (2008: 62) conceives the term as a “non-majority language spoken by an individual or group considered to be a linguistic minority”. Heritage Language Maintenance is a term used to delineate the efforts heritage language speakers make to maintain their ethnic or indigenous languages in the immigration context. Generally, Mesthrie, (1999:42) defined Language maintenance as “the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially powerful or numerically stronger language”. In support, Habtoor (2012) maintains that, as an outcome of language contact, language maintenance is practice whereby a linguistic minority such as immigrants, or a marginalized ethnolinguistic group is successful in keeping its native language despite the pressure exerted on it by the dominant linguistic group. A significant factor responsible for the deliberate efforts in maintaining the heritage language is to avert language shift to the dominant language, which is the converse of language

maintenance. Language shift usually occurs when heritage or minority language speakers fail to use their language, over time, for one reason or another. The shift is usually to the dominant language in the region, or in the immigration context, the shift is to the mainstream or dominant host community language (Fishman, 1970; Holmes, 2008; Guardado, 2006; Lanza & Svendsen, 2007; Kopeliovich, 2011; Lee, 2002). One of the reasons commonly advanced for efforts in heritage language maintenance is the bidirectional relationship between language, culture and ethnic identity. Language is considered the most prominent and vital aspect of culture, which plays a pivotal role in communicating values, customs and beliefs, and forming self and ethnic identity. Consequently, the loss of a language is correlated to the loss of cultural heritage (Alshehri, 2016).

Several studies (Clyne and Kipp, 2006; Garcia, 2003; Park, 2013) have maintained that the most crucial domain or setting to maintain the heritage language is the home, and the onus of maintenance is squarely laid on the shoulders of parents. Clyne and Kipp (2006) are of the view that the role of the family in this regard is so vital that if a language is not used in the home domain, then it cannot be maintained elsewhere. In separate studies, García (2003) and Park (2013) concur that family is a significant factor to children’s language development, due to the fact that, the language beliefs of family members and related practices have a profound impact on children’s language preference and use. The maintenance of the native language at home means actually using it in daily interactions and deliberately, systematically and consistently passing it on to the next generation of speakers.

2.1 Strategies of promoting the Heritage Language

There are several strategies which have been adopted to maintain the home language particularly in the immigration context. These strategies comprise of both internal or external approaches. The internal methods are those deployed by concerned parents in the domestic setting towards boosting interest in the home language. Some of such measures include adoption of heritage-language-only policy in the home (Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012), “only mother tongue at home” rule, (Arriagada, 2005), watching TV programs in the heritage language, reading books written in the heritage language, singing native songs (Lao, 2004; Park & Sarkar, 2007), actual parental support and involvement (Arriagada, 2005; Suarez, 2002). The external approaches are those methods that are deployed in the environment to achieve same purpose such as the following: establishment of community-

based Sunday Heritage Language school and weekend heritage language school (Park & Sarkar, 2007), availability of state or private schools where the heritage language is taught (Baker, 2003; Garcia, 2003), making trips to the home land (Holmes, 2008; Guardado, 2006), etc.

Evidently, much research has been carried out in the realm of language maintenance in the immigration context. However, in Africa, particularly in Nigeria that boasts of as many as 400 to 500 languages, so many language groups have not been attended to by researchers. In this paper, the focus is on evaluating language maintenance strategies of Idoma, (a regional language) in multilingual and multiethnic state of Lagos. This is with a view to examining the strategies (if any) adopted by the in-migrants to maintain their heritage language.

Methodology

The mixed approach was adopted in this study for both numeric and subjective considerations, considered necessary for the research. While the quantitative approach was used to gather data from a considerable number of participants for reasons of generalization, the qualitative data served to provide reasons for certain inquiries that could not be elicited from the former approach.

3. Study Area and Sample Size

The locale of the Idoma in Lagos is not restricted as they did not operate a nucleated settlement pattern; consequently, the sample for the study was drawn through cluster sampling, from three areas in Mainland Lagos State in Nigeria. These areas are *Orile*, *Oshodi* and *Ajeganle*, each area representing a cluster. The three areas are home to so many minority ethnolinguistic groups in Nigeria, with *Orile* and *Ajeganle* being more unique in terms of their residential status. The peculiarity of *Oshodi* is that it is a transit hub through which other angles and points in Lagos State can be accessed, as well as being a big

market swarming with non-indigenous groups from different parts of the country.

The population of the Idoma in Lagos is indeterminate. Through snow-ball sampling, a total of 200 respondents comprising 80 from *Orile*, 60 from *Oshodi*, and 60 from *Ajeganle* were sampled. The sampling technique ensured that no non-Idoma participated in the study. Although the distribution seems fair, the slight imbalance in the number of participants was as a result of convenience and not necessarily that more Idoma lived in *Orile* than *Oshodi* and *Ajeganle*. The selected participants were all native Idoma and who spoke Idoma as natives. A major criteria for participating in the study was that the participant must be a parent with at least one child.

3.1 Data Collection and Instruments

Two instruments were used to elicit data from participants in the study; a structured questionnaire and face to face interview. The questionnaire was in seven parts; the first part contained questions soliciting information on the participants' personal profile such as age, sex occupation, and marital status. The second part contained questions about the languages in the participants' repertoire. The other five sections were concerned with inquiries on strategies of maintaining the heritage language, specifically home-based, culture-based, community-based, network-based and entertainment-based strategies, all comprising of three questions, making a total of fifteen questions. In addition, face to face interviews were carried out with five participants in each cluster making a total of fifteen participants. The interviews were conducted in English as the researcher did not have much proficiency in Idoma beyond greeting routines. The interviews were carried out at convenient places at the discretion of the participants and they were recorded with the aid of a midget and field notes. The data were later categorized and analysed descriptively using simple percentages.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

The demographic profile of the respondents, as well as their linguistic orientation is hereby presented.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

		(N = 200)	
Variable	Characteristics	Num.	%
Age Group (years)	25-30 years	56	28
	31-40 years	64	32
	41 years +	80	40
	Total	200	100.0
Sex	Male	72	36
	Female	128	64
	Total	200	100.0
Occupation	Trading	112	56
	Working	88	44
	Total	200	100.0
Marital Status			
	Married	192	96
	Divorced	8	4
	Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2025.

The demographic data reveals that, out of the total number of respondents, those who were 41 years + accounted for the majority. In terms of sex, the females were more in number than males. The data on occupation shows that traders had a slight numerical advantage over workers, while married respondents accounted for the majority. The discrepancy in the numbers with respect to age, sex, occupation and marital status was the result of the sampling method used in data collection which restricted study population to only those who were available at the time. There was no pre-determined plan to achieve symmetry in the number of respondents across the demographic variables.

The language profile of respondents indicates that Idoma is the first language and heritage language of all the respondents and English is their second language. Other languages reportedly spoken by an insignificant minority are Yoruba and Igbo. Yoruba is the language of the host community, Lagos with dominance in population. Though Igbo are an internal in-migrant group in Lagos like the Idoma, they represent the most dominant group in population apart from the host community. On the whole, this data shows that all the participants were bilinguals mainly in their indigenous language and English which is a second language to majority of Nigerians.

5. Findings and Discussion

The initial finding in this study is that, language shift had already taken place, with a majority of the children speaking English and Yoruba at the expense of Idoma. The strategies examined here represent the reaction of the parents to revert language shift. The strategies investigated comprise of five categories: home-based strategies, culture-based strategies, community-based strategies, network-based strategies and entertainment-based strategies. The options or items provided for the participants were pooled from empirical results obtained in the literature on heritage language maintenance. The data is presented below

Table 2: Home-based strategies

The in-house resources are the direct steps taken by parents to stimulate the speaking of the home language among the children in the family. The options include verbal motivations, reward system and language restrictions. The data is presented below:

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
1	I verbally encourage my children to speak Idoma	Yes	108	54
		No	92	46
		Total	200	100.0
2	When speaking to me, I restrict my children to Idoma only	Yes	20	10
		No	180	90
		Total	200	100.0
3	I offer rewards to my children to encourage them to speak Idoma	Yes	24	12
		No	176	88
		Total	200	100.0

In regards to verbal encouragement, the data shows that a simple majority of parents (54%) verbally motivated their children to speak Idoma, while a considerable number (46%) did not. Verbal encouragement is an overt way of boosting the use of a language; it makes the child to understand that they are expected to speak the language in question. It is tantamount to mounting pressure on the child to make efforts to use the language. It also shows that the parents who adopt this strategy are concerned about the fate of their children’s non facility in their indigenous language, which is naturally a prelude to efforts to correct the linguistic deficiency. Notably, the implication of verbally encouraging the children to speak their heritage language is that they (children) were not speaking it due to insufficient proficiency.

A second strategy on which inquiry was based is the measure whereby parents restricted their children to the indigenous language during interaction with them. In this strategy, the children may be free to use any other language, such as English, among themselves, but they were not permitted to use any other language except Idoma while interacting with a parent. The result shows that an insignificant minority (10%) used this strategy while a significant majority (90%) did not use it. The limiting of children to the heritage language during parent-child interactions may appear punitive, but it is one of the quickest ways of boosting their proficiency in the heritage language. When children understand that interactional premises such as making requests, reports, complaints, or taking instructions and directives from parents can only be facilitated in their heritage language, they will naturally double efforts to realize it.

The reward system is the third strategy on which the inquiry was based; this system involves offering gifts to children to motivate them to speak the heritage language; the gifts or rewards listed in the questionnaire comprised of snacks (meat pies, ice cream, buns, sweets, etc), visiting eateries, holiday treats, etc. The data revealed that an insignificant minority (12%) resorted to this means, while a significant majority (88%) did not adopt it. The reward system is a great way of boosting children’s adventure into the heritage language; the understanding that, using the language will earn gifts would naturally motivate children to make more efforts towards improving or mastering their heritage language. It may be an indirect extra-linguistic means, but it serves the linguistic purpose.

In sum, it is evident that the Idoma parents in this study were not doing enough overtly to save their home language, in terms of home-based strategies to promote verbal expression in Idoma. This result aligns with earlier ones that found parents playing nonchalant attitude towards the linguistic welfare of their children with respect to the heritage language. Lee (2013) as well as Li (2006) found in their separate studies that Korean and Chinese immigrant parents were not doing enough to encourage their children to speak Korean and Chinese respectively in their foreign settings believing that their children will learn it later in life one way or another.

The importance of parental input and involvement in promoting the home language is supported by scholars (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009; Cummins, 2005; Báez, 2013; García, 2003; Park, 2013). DeCapua & Wintergerst (2009) state that opinions and parents’ language practices are pivotal to the attitudes of their children towards the heritage language and the language of the host community. Cummins (2005: 585) avers that: “native language practices are often embedded within family life...”. In support, Kennedy and Romo (2013) contend that if children are encouraged to use the heritage language at home with family members, they would be more likely to use it with other kin outside the home. Yao’s (2020) research in Canada showed that immigrant Chinese parents were all proactive in supporting their children to learn Mandarin while in Canada, through the use of in-house resources such as teaching children at home by various means.

Table 3: Culture-based strategies

Cultural resources are those indirect extra-linguistic efforts made by parents to expose their children to the home language. Such resources include the use of folk songs, folk tales and use of cultural foods. The data is presented below:

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
4	I sing my native folk songs in the house	Yes	152	76
		No	48	24
		Total	200	100.0
5	I tell my children our native Idoma stories	Yes	16	8
		No	184	92
		Total	200	100.0
6	We cook our native Idoma food in the house	Yes	200	100
		No	0	0
		Total	200	100.0

The first cultural resource is folk songs that make use of the heritage language. The data reveals that, out of the total number, a minority (24%) did not sing their folk songs in their homes in Lagos, while the majority (76%) did. Singing folk songs at home do not translate to teaching or transmitting it to the offspring; rather, it is a means of exposing the children to the culture and language. Within folk songs are the world view, belief system, and social norms of a people. Due to the attractive nature of music, singing the folk songs is an indirect means of pulling the children into the culture and into the language that expresses it. According to the parents, their children had learnt the songs, over time.

The second cultural resource on which inquiry is based is folk tales. Folk tales represents the experiences of the culture with respect to myth, legend, ideology and philosophy. This is a cultural resource that is directly related to the moral upbringing of children. Through tales, children become more familiar with their group and more rooted to their heritage culture and language. Although tales can be narrated in English, there are certain aspects such as choruses, songs, and names of characters (human or animal), and setting that cannot be translated to English, as explained by the parents. Incidentally, an insignificant minority (8%) reported using folk tales with their children, while the majority did not. Due to the disparity in the response, an inquiry was posed to ascertain the reason behind the non-use of folk tales by parents in their homes in Lagos. The reason pooled from interview reveals that: time and the new technology was at the base of non-utilization of tales as a resource in the home. A majority of parents reported that “there is no time in Lagos” while a minority reported that “the children watch television in the night”. Thus, the quest to make ends meet in Lagos coupled with technology leaves parents in the study with no choice to introduce tales in their homes. The collateral effect is that the children were denied access to their cultural world and by the same token access to a means of acquiring their heritage language, even if partially.

The third cultural resource on which inquiry was based is food. In this case, all participants reported cooking their native food in Lagos. One of the markers of ethnic identity is cuisine as each ethnic group in Africa has a peculiar type of food for which they are known. The foods reported by respondents include soups such as *Okoho* and *Okpehe* rice. According to the participants, the *Okoho* soup is the main traditional soup of the Idoma. The soup is eaten with pounded yam which is called *Onihi* in Idoma tongue. The soup is prepared with the stem of a plant (*Okoho*) from which the soup derived its name, in addition to egusi balls known as *abahi*. Evidently, as reported by the participants, their children used the names of the native foods during interaction bordering on food matters, despite not being proficient in the language. Cultural resources have been found to be a vital means of boosting children’s proficiency in their heritage language. This is what Yao, (2020) termed cultural immersion; it is a means of exposing the children to the culture, and due to the symbiotic link between language and culture; as the children contact the culture, they correspondingly contact the language.

Table 4: Community-based strategies

Community resources represent the efforts made by the community to foster the acquisition of their language by their children. These resources include language nests, Community religious hubs, and social events such as parties. The data is presented below:

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
7	My children attend holiday programmes where they are taught Idoma	Yes	0	0
		No	200	100.0
		Total	200	100.0
8	My children attend Idoma-medium Church in Lagos	Yes	20	10
		No	180	90
		Total	200	100.0
9	I encourage my children to attend parties hosted by Idoma kin in Lagos	Yes	200	100
		No	0	0
		Total	200	100.0

The first community resource on which inquiry was based is language nests; language nests are usually arranged by minority migrant communities during holiday periods to enhance and foster the acquisition of the heritage language by the children. In the nest, the heritage language is prioritized, and in addition, they sing the native songs, play the native games and the organizers (adults) tell them native folk stories. Incidentally, no participant reported sending their children to a language nest in Lagos during holidays. Based on the interview result, it was found that the participants were not aware that migrant groups can form such nests during school holidays to help their children acquire their heritage language. According to Pasanen (2010: 95). Language nests work in the same way as early total language immersion. Parker & Gessner (2014) state that the reason children are in the nest is that they are not getting their native language anywhere else. Rather, they are getting English everywhere they go—from their parents, family members, friends, television, radio, internet, games and books. This aspect of the findings is in dissonance with earlier findings. In Liang’s (2018) literature study, the prevalent practice found in varying studies is for immigrant parents to maintain their children’s heritage language by sending them to a heritage language schools or programs. Some of the driving force for this include giving children opportunity to mingle with other co-ethnic children than just studying heritage language, hoping their children could read in heritage language and finding it very challenging to handle their children’s language use at home by themselves.

The second community resource on which inquiry was based is religion; churches usually run services in either English or an indigenous language or both. Migrant groups with a considerable population in cities often have churches where their heritage language is used in services. The result is negative as very few respondents (10%) reported sending their children to Idoma-based churches. The implication is that the religious resource was exploited by few respondents in helping the acquisition of Idoma by their children. This is in contrast with Al-Sahafi’s (2006) study where the use of Arabic in religion was a factor that aided Arabic maintenance among Arabic immigrants in New Zealand. Although there are divergent positions about the effectiveness of the church in promoting heritage language as found in Park and Sakar (2007), there was consensus that such measures helped, as the church presents a platform where co-ethnic children could gather, hence granting them opportunity to share their heritage language and enhance their proficiency to some degree.

The third community strategy is birthday parties either organized by the respondents or by their kin in Lagos where their children gather to share in one another’s joy. It is viewed that such gatherings provide opportunities for Idoma children to meet and interact; since such gatherings are organized by an ethnic kin, there are strong indications that the language will be used, even if minimally, hence exposing the children to the language. For both inquiries, all the participants responded in the positive, meaning that their children receive such exposure that might affect their tendency to use their heritage language.

Table 5: Network-based strategies

The aspect of visitation comprises of strategies used to expose the children to the heritage language in the migrant setting. Such strategies include visiting the ancestral land, receiving guests from the ancestral land, as well as making visits to kin in Lagos. The data is presented below:

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
10	I take my children to our Idoma home town once in a while	Yes	168	84
		No	32	16
		Total	200	100.0
11	I receive visitors from the home town in Lagos	Yes	200	100
		No	0	0
		Total	200	100.0
12	My children and I visit our kin in Lagos	Yes	160	80
		No	40	20
		Total	200	100.0

The inquiry on visitation as a strategy revealed that a majority of participants were engaged in visitation activities with their kin, both in the homeland and within the city. A significant majority (84%) were positive with respect to visiting the home land, while 100% indicated that they received visits from kin from the homeland. Additionally, 100% reported receiving kin guests while 80% reported visiting kin with their children. This is a demonstration that there is constant contact between the migrants and their homeland and kin which have implications for home language use. When people visit the homeland, they have more opportunity to use Idoma more than in the city; their children are exposed to a native environment where Idoma is the default language of communication, thus enhancing their exposure to the heritage language. In converse, when they receive guests from the homeland, such guests come to the city with their cultural baggage, including Idoma, which alters the dynamics of language use in the home, as clarified by the participants.

This finding is consistent with Lee (2002) who found that, among 40 second generation Korean-American university students those who had visited Korea more often achieved a higher level of proficiency in the Korean language than their class mates who rarely visited Korea. Similarly, Kung, (2013) found that children who accompanied their parents to the homeland achieved higher proficiency levels in the heritage language than those who did not. It is summed that such journeys was a boost to learn the heritage language, since they are immersed in a partial monolingual environment throughout their stay.

Table 6: Entertainment-based strategies

Entertainment resources comprise of indirect means of exposing children to their indigenous language. These strategies involve the use of films, music and internet resources. The data is presented below

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
13	I encourage my children to watch Idoma-medium films	Yes	40	20
		No	160	80
		Total	200	100.0
14	I play Idoma highlife music in the house	Yes	172	86
		No	28	14
		Total	200	100.0
15	I encourage my children to download Idoma music in their phones	Yes	32	16
		No	168	84
		Total	200	100.0

The entertainment resources investigated in this study are films, modern music and the internet. In terms of films, there were few participants (20%) who encouraged their children to watch ethnic-medium films. In contrast, a significant majority (86%) were positive with respect to using Idoma music at home. The use of highlife music by the parents may be an indirect means of exposing children to the heritage language, but it is a no mean strategy. Naturally, music is a major entertainment resource that all human beings align with. A good piece of music has the power to captivate the audience, and to an extent link them with the language of the music, over time. Incidentally, only an insignificant fraction of parents (16%) encouraged their children to use internet

resources in respect to playing Idoma music in their phones. In sum, it is evident that only a few participants utilized entertainment strategies to encourage their children to speak their heritage language. This result is in contrast with other studies with respect to use of entertainment resources to boost heritage language proficiency. Scholars (Lao, 2004; Li, 2006; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Kung, 2013) in separate studies have found that aside verbally speaking the heritage language with children, the use of other indirect means are as important in exposing children to the heritage language. Such resources, as found in their studies include listening to radios/video tapes, watching television programs in the native language, and reading story books in the language. It

was found that these were deliberate and intentional efforts made by parents to ensure that their children encountered their languages in multiple platforms and settings, with the confidence that such contacts will leave their mark in their children's linguistic repertoire.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined various strategies adopted by Idoma internal migrants towards maintaining their heritage language in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Lagos. Generally, it was evident that the participating families were not taking active steps and measures towards the maintaining of their heritage Idoma in Lagos State. Since migration is a major factor in language maintenance as it renders immigrants' languages vulnerable to extinction in that setting, it behoves the immigrants to take proactive steps to safeguard their languages. More imperative is the need to transmit the heritage language to the subsequent generation since the children born in the new country/city are more predisposed to adapting or adjusting to the language of the host community or the mainstream language. If parents fail to utilize every opportunity at their disposal, with respect to home-based strategies, culture-based strategies, community-based strategies, network-based strategies and entertainment-based strategies, the second generation are bound to shift loyalty to the language of the host community or language of wider communication, with all its implications for identity projection. Since regional languages such as Idoma is not used in the education system, either as a subject or instructional tool, particularly in the immigration context, the onus is on Idoma parents (and parents of other regional languages who live in major cities in Nigeria) to re-strategise by first becoming purveyors and ambassadors of Idoma, and by extension models of Idoma identity and culture that the future generation will find irresistible.

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Semantic Relativism in Terminological Expressions in French and Yoruba Languages: Idiomatic Expressions

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Abstract. Idiomatic expression, which is the object of our focus in this study is a powerful educational tool in any foreign language learning. It serves as an additional instrument for learners in obtaining L2 competence, acquiring conversational fluency skills and understanding the culture of the target language. It is quite obvious that, idiomatic expressions could have similar meaning in different languages but the identification of the equivalence is the problem except one has come across it before. The objective of this paper is therefore, to find out whether the students were aware or not of their French equivalents with similar meanings. It is discovered that, semantically, this type of terminology can be used to describe similar realities in the two languages with different lexical or linguistic variations. The study is both qualitative and quantitative one, where fifty (50) students were asked to pick from the options provided, the French equivalents of their Yoruba counterparts. The idiomatic expressions concerned are fifteen in number, taken from authentic textbooks: *Yoruba Idioms* by M.A. Fabunmi and *Asayan Akanlo Ede Yoruba* by Ademola Olopade. The paper hinges on Conceptual Metaphor Theory be idiomatic expressions are metaphorically motivated. Findings revealed that there are potential problems encountered by students in their bid to get or guess the correct French equivalent of Yoruba idiomatic expressions. And these could be due to their background in the French language, their non-familiarity with the idiomatic expressions, poor knowledge of the French idiomatic expressions, the degree of the idiomacity, etc

1. Introduction

Idioms in any given language belong to a group of word called 'fixed collocation'. According to JIMOH R. (2009:168) a fixed collocation refers to "a group of words which is often used together to form a natural sounding combination". In other words, such

arrangement is fixed because it is not possible for anyone to alter the arrangement, to delete any lexical item from it, or include 'external' lexical item into it. It is therefore, a phrase or an expression which means something different from the meaning of the lexical items that make up the phrase or the expression. Idiomatic expression is a powerful educational tool in any foreign language learning. It serves as an additional instrument for learners in obtaining L2 competence and awareness in acquiring conversational fluency skills and understanding the culture of the target language.

Being one of the most important aspects of all languages, idiomatic expressions are frequently used in a variety of situations, from friendly conversations and business meetings to more formal and written contexts. Our interest in this write up is to present idiomatic expressions used in Yoruba and French languages to describe similar situations or realities. But in the first place, we shall be considering the following: theoretical framework and literature, material and method, results (data presentation and analyses), discussion of findings and conclusion.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to verify if Yoruba speakers learning French in Adeyemi Federal University of Education are aware of the fact that, there are some Yoruba idiomatic expressions that are semantically related to their counterpart in French.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. French Language

According to S. Ade-Ojo (2002, p.1) opines that, the French language, as a distinct language, different from any other language and first used in any official

document in AD 842, is one of the leading languages of the world. French was fully established as the national language of France in the 20th century. The RealFrench.net accessed 26th August 2016, affirms that from around the time of the Louis XIV to the beginning of the 20th century, French was very much viewed as the language of international communities within European and European-influenced countries. This situation probably arose out of a number of factors including the consistent political power that France enjoyed during this time, its geographical position at the heart of Europe, its strong historical relations with all the major Western nations, its immense cultural prestige, both in terms of the arts and in terms of “cultured living” (food, wine, fashion, furniture, etc) aspects that were important to the diplomatic set. It was also established by the RealFrench.net website that French language was adopted as official language of France in 1539 (through the special linguistic decree referred to as Villers-Cotterêts, passed by François I^{er}).

France is of course not the only country in the world where French is spoken. From the RealFrench.net website it was discovered that, there are four other countries in Europe in which French has shared official status: Belgium, Switzerland, Luxemburg and Italy. There is in fact a part of the United Kingdom where French has co-official status-the Channel Islands (Jersey, Guernsey and Sark), known in French as Iles Anglo-Normandes. These were part of the Duchy of Normandy prior to the 1066 invasion, and were consequently French Speaking.

There is a large number of French Speakers outside of Europe. Based on the information gathered from the RealFrench.net website, the first wave of colonial expansion lasted from the early 1600s to the mid 1700s and involved the colonization of parts of Africa, Middle and Far East. The result of this is that there are now more than 112 million people who count French as their second language, another 60 million people use French as an occasional language, serving to rank French ninth in terms of language use.

The RealFrench.net website also submits that, of the nearly 50 million French Speakers outside of Europe, the greatest proportion is to be found in Central and West Africa where French is in many cases the official language. The highest concentration of French speakers are to be found in Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) although many speakers are also to be found in countries such as Benin, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Senegal, Zaïre, Togo, Congo, Burkina Faso and Mali. In the Indian Ocean there are

significant numbers of French speakers in Madagascar, Mauritius and the Réunion (which is a Département d’Outre Mer or DOM, meaning that it is administered like a metropolitan department).

It must also be mentioned that French belongs to the enviable Club of 12 of the world’s 5440 languages that are spoken by more than 100million International organisations, including the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, in which the knowledge of French is a sine qua non for employment and in which French plays the role of a most indispensable medium of communication for official transactions. It is also a fact that more than a third of the delegates of all the members of United Nations (UN) at the General Assembly are French speaking. Moreover, French is one of the working languages in many international organisations, including: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), African Union (AU), Amnesty International (AI), Médecines Sans Frontiers (doctors without border), World Trade Organisation etc. It is together with English and Arabic, one of the languages of the Islamic Conference as well as the Arab League.

2.2. Yorùbá Language

Yorùbá belongs to the Defoid group of languages, a sub group of Benue Congo languages. (H.B.C. Capo 1989, p.275). It is spoken principally in the South-Western part of Nigeria, especially in Òyó, Ògùn, Òndó and Òsun states. Yorùbá is also spoken in some parts of Kwara, Kogí and Edo states. It is equally spoken by a large number of speakers in the south - western part of the Benin Republic, while in Togo; it is also natively spoken by certain sections of the population (S.O. Oyetade 1998, p.17).

S. O Oyetade (1998, p.17) quoting A. Adetugbo (1967, p. 9) divided Yorùbá dialects into three major dialect areas according to linguistic and ethno-historical bases. These are first, North-Western Yorùbá (NWY) comprising Òyó, Òsun, Ìbàdàn and the northern part of Ègbá. Second, South- Eastern Yorùbá (SEY) with Òndó, Òwò, Ìjèbú and dialects spoken in and around Òkìtìpupa (i.e. Ìkálè, Ìlàje and Ìjó-Àpòì as representatives). The third dialect group is Central Yorùbá (CY) and it is made up of Ifè, Ìjèsà and Èkìtì. Each dialect grouping has particular features which distinguish it from others. In addition, there are features with restricted distribution which delimit what can be termed minor sub-divisions within the major dialect area:

2.2.1 Classification of Yorùbá Dialect According to A. Adetugbo (1967, p.3).

Table1: Three geographical zones of Yoruba

North-Western Yorùbá (NWX)	South-Eastern Yorùbá (SEY)	Yorùbá Central (YC)
Òyó	Òndó	Ifè
Òsun	Òwò	Ijèsá
Ibádán	Ijèbú	Èkitì
Northern part of Egba	Okítipupa (ikálè, Ilàje, Ijò-Àpói	

2.2.2 Classification of Yorùbá Dialect According to Akinkugbe

S. Oyetade (1998, p18) provides additional classification of Yorùbá dialects as seen in the table below. For example, the Yorùbá dialects speaking in Kabba Province of Kwara State (now Kogi State) the North-East of the Yorùbá speaking area have been accordingly labeled North-Eastern Yorùbá (NEY). The dialects can be clearly seen in the table provided below:

Table 2: The North-Eastern Dialect of Yorùbá

North-Eastern Yorùbá
Yàgbà
Gbedè
Ijumú
Ikiri

2.2.3 Classification of Yoruba Dialect spoken in Benin and Togo.

Dialect of Yorùbá spoken outside Nigeria in Benin and Togo have also been classified into a group and labelled South-Western Yorùbá (SWY). The Yorùbá dialects in Benin according to Oyetade (ibid) quoting (Igue and Yai 1973, Yai 1976; 1974) can be seen in the table below:

Table 3: The South-Western Dialect of Yorùbá Language

South-Western Yorùbá
Kétu
Šábe
Iša
Idasa
Sákété
Pòbé
Ifè

This table enables us to see that the dialectes of Yorùbá is equally spoken in Benin and Togo. In spite of those considerable dialectal differences, there is a standard form which is the medium of communication outside

individual dialectal groups. It is the medium for all spoken and written official transactions in Nigeria. This standard form bears some resemblance to Oyo variety spoken in Nigeria, but it is not entirely co-extensive with it. There are features of other dialects of Yorùbá that can be identified in this standard form. In Benin Republic the standard written and spoken Yorùbá is also very similar to the one in Nigeria and it is more or less the Yorùbá dialect spoken in Port-Novo, the administrative headquarters of Benin. In Nigeria, Yorùbá speakers are designated by the name Yorùbá, but, on the contrary, in Benin and Togo regard themselves as one as they lay claim to a common ancestry (S. Oyetade 1998, p.18).

2.3 Idiomatic Expression

Despite numerous linguistic works that have been written on idioms, there is no general agreement on the exact definition of idiomatic expression. But for the sake of this study, we shall just consider the definition given by *Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* (2008, p. 236) as *a term used in grammar and lexicology to refer to a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that they function as a single unit. From a semantic viewpoint, the meanings of the individual words cannot be summed to produce the meaning of the idiomatic expression as a whole. From a syntactic viewpoint, the words often do not permit the usual variability they display in other contexts, e.g. it's raining cats and dogs does not permit variability, it's raining a cat and a dog/dogs and cats.* Dictionaries provide rather general and brief descriptions of idiomatic expressions.

2.3.1. Classification of Idiomatic Expressions

Researchers interested in idiomatic expressions have tried to classify them according to different criteria. The main feature that differentiates between the different kinds of idiomatic expressions is the degree of idiomacity that an idiomatic expression carries. Idiomatic expressions are categorized in a continuum from transparent to opaque called “the spectrum of idiomacity” (L. Claudia, 2006, p.5).

Transparent Idioms

These idiomatic expressions have a very close meaning to that of the literal one. Hence, transparent idiomatic expressions are usually not difficult to understand and translate, because their meaning can be easily inferred from the meanings of their constituents, both components have a direct meaning but the combination acquires figurative sense. Fernando

(1996:35) phraseological combinations are commonly included in this category. E.g. to see the light (to understand) and to see red (to be annoyed, angry).

Semi Transparent Idiomatic Expressions

The idiomatic expression usually carries a metaphorical sense that could not be known only through common use. i.e., the meaning of its parts has a little role to play in understanding the entire meaning.

E.g. Break the ice = relieve the tension.

Semi Opaque Idiomatic Expressions

This type refers to those idiomatic expressions in which the figurative meaning is not joined to that of the constituents' words of the expression. Thus, the expression is separated into two parts; a part with a literal meaning, and another part with a figurative sense. Phraseological unities belong to this category.

e.g. To know the ropes = to know how a particular job should be done.

To pass the buck = to pass responsibility

Opaque Idiomatic Expressions

Opaque idiomatic expressions are the most difficult type of idiomatic expressions, because the meaning of the idiomatic expression is never that of the sum of the literal meanings of its parts. So, it would be impossible to infer the actual meaning of the idiomatic expressions from the meaning of its components, because of the presence of items having cultural references. These culture-specific items have a great influence on the comprehensibility of idiomatic expressions.

e.g. To burn one's boat = to make retreat impossible

Kick the bucket = to die

Spill the beans = reveal a secret.

2.3.2 Characteristics of Idiomatic Expressions

L. Claudia (2006, p.5) identifies certain features which are essential in the recognition of idiomatic expressions. Some of these features are:

Alteration of Grammatical Rules

The idiomatic expression is not always grammatical, but it is established, accepted and used by native speakers of the language with a fixed structures and meaning. For example:

It's ages since we met (singular with a plural nouns)

Conventional Phrases

Idiomatic expressions are special expressions which are almost known and agreed by all the members of a particular community.

E.g. How are you doing? (Expression used to ask someone about his health).

Once in a blue moon (rarely, infrequently).

Alteration of Word Order

Idiomatic expressions in English, usually, do not respect the English word order.

E.g. It may be well ahead of time (normal word order)

It may well be ahead of time (probably): idiomatic expression.

Figurativeness

The main feature that characterizes idiomatic expressions is that the words are used metaphorically. Therefore, the surface has a little role to play in understanding the meaning of the whole expression. For example, in 'to bury the hatchet', meaning "to become friendly again after a disagreement", the meanings of the words "to bury" and "the hatchet" are different from the meaning of the whole expression.

Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are the most common type of idioms in English. Many of them carry idiomatic meanings that cannot be inferred from the form, unless the phrase is already known.

E.g. After war began, the two countries broke off diplomatic relations (discontinue).

Most automobile companies bring out modals each year (to show or introduce).

In addition to all these features that are important in the recognition of idiomatic expression, M. Baker (1992, p. 63 and F. R Palmer 1997, p. 59) identify the grammatical and syntactic restrictions of idioms. For them, a speaker or a writer cannot normally do any of the following with an idiom:

Addition: a large number of idioms contain a verb and a noun, but although the verb may be placed in the past tense, the number of the noun can never be changed. For instance, there can be "kick/kicked the bucket, but not *kick the buckets, put on good face but not *put on good faces. Adding any word to an idiomatic expression would alter its meaning, or remove its idiomatic sense. Thus, adding the adverb 'very' to the

adjective ‘red’ in ‘red herring’ (very red herring) affects the figurativeness of its meaning completely.

Deletion: Deleting the adjective ‘sweet’ and the article ‘the’ from the expressions have a sweet tooth and spill the beans would change totally their meanings. Hence (* have a tooth and *spill beans) have no idiomatic sense.

Substitution: Idiomatic expressions accept no replacement of words even if those words are synonyms. For example, “the long and short of it” means the basic facts of a situation. The adjective ‘long’ cannot be substituted by another adjective, like tall; despite they have nearly the same meaning.

Modification: Any change in the grammatical structure of an idiomatic expression leads to the destruction of the idiom’s meaning. For instance, the expression (*stock and barrel lock) is no more idiomatic because of the altered order of the items in the expression ‘lock, stock and barrel’ completely.

2.3.3. Importance of Idiomatic Expressions

French and Yorùbá languages belong to different language families (Indo-European and Benue-Congo family), despite this, they perform similar functions in the two languages, i.e they add beauty to any conversation that employ them etc. Knowledge of idiomatic expressions will ensure fluency in communication, comprehension of texts and will develop verbal and written communication skills (S. Irujo, 1986, p.287-304). As a part of national cultural inheritance, idioms will contribute to the development of cultural and intercultural knowledge and enhance learners’ awareness of the ways native speakers conceptualize the surrounding world and their experiences (C.A.Yorio 1980, p.433-422; Y. Yano 1998, p. 129-137). Many idiomatic expressions contain metaphors in their structure; familiarity with those expressions will provide an insight into the way and the nature of thinking of native speakers (S. Abdramanova 2012, p.5). As a part of Lexis, “*idiomatic expressions can serve as additional means of learning vocabulary, practicing grammar and improving pronunciation skills*”. Thus, the importance of idioms should be accordingly estimated as far as they serve as an additional instrument for learners in obtaining L2 competence and awareness, in acquiring conversational fluency skills, and understanding the culture of the target languages.

2.4 Yoruba Idiomatic expressions

Yorùbá language is very rich in idiomatic expressions and lends itself easily in the hands of those who understand the language. Idiomatic expressions occupy a unique place in friendly, family and societal conversations, Their importance cannot be over emphasized because they add beauty to the speech that employ them, give them more knowledge and wisdom, make words better and clearer etc. Some examples of idiomatic expressions in Yoruba are:

Fera ku= to be pregnant
Rugi oyin= to be in trouble
Ta teru nipa= to die

2.5. French Idiomatic expressions

French is a highly idiomatic language, relying on many culturally-specific phrases to communicate meaning. French idioms are quirky expressions that can leave non-French speakers baffled. Although, every language makes use of idioms, but the French language is particularly rich and inventive with idioms.

Some examples of French idioms are:

Avoir du sang bleu= somebody from a noble family
Avoir la main haute= to have upper hand
Avoir un poil dans la main= to be lazy
Rire jaune= False laugh
Etre dans le noir = to be ignorant
Donner carte blanche= to give freedom to somebody

2.6. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Metaphor is common to all languages and cultures. It plays an important role in everyday life and is grounded in culture. Metaphorical expressions have penetrated the various aspects of our lives including thought and action. Metaphorical language is an indispensable part of human life, involving language, thought and action. Writers and speakers use metaphor to express abstract, difficult-to-talk-about concepts in term of concrete entities which are easier to understand (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:99). Metaphorical expressions (MEs, hereafter) are the cream of a language. They reflect the relationship between language and culture. Metaphoricity is the main feature of all human languages. In fact, a language or any form of language, without metaphorical traits is non- existent (Goalty, 1997in Abass & Ghafel 2011:211). It is not confined to language. It runs through all veins of man’s everyday life, including language, thought and action.

Tacking the Etymology Online Dictionary as our trusted source as regards, the word “metaphor” is

derived from the Greek *metaphora*, which means ‘transfer’, the composite *meta*, which means ‘transfer, carry over’, and *pherin* which is translated in English as to ‘bear’, or to ‘carry’.

As proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:10), Conceptual Metaphor Theory suggests that human thought processes are largely metaphorical, and human conceptual system is structured and defined in a metaphorical way. In other words, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory takes the basic assumptions of the Lakoffian School on “experiential realism”, which hypothesizes that metaphor is not just an aspect of language, but constitutes a primary part of human cognition (Gibbs, 1994; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Sweetser, 1990) in Njoroge (2015: 59). There is an intermediate level “Cognition” between language and the world (Lakoff, 1987) in (ibid).

In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s work, *Metaphors we live BY* (1980: 15), we see how everyday language is filled with metaphors we may not always notice. For example: “*argument is war*”. This metaphors is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions for instance, we do hear people say:

Your claims are indefensible
He attacked every weak point in my argument
His criticism were right on target
I demolished his argument
I’ve never won an argument with you
If you use that strategy, he’ll wipe you out,
He shot down all on my arguments etc.

It is important to see that we don’t just talk about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent; we attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, and the structure of an argument attack, defense, counter back, etc reflects this. It structures the actions we perform in arguing.

The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of things in terms of another. For instance, it is not that “arguments” talked about above, are a subspecies of war. Arguments and wars are different kinds of things – verbal discourse and armed conflicts, and the actions performed are different kinds of actions. But “argument” is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in ‘terms of war’. The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured,

and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured.

In other way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical nature of our activities. To get idea of how metaphorical expression in every – day language can give us insight into the metaphorical nature of the concepts that structure our everyday activities, let us consider this metaphorical concept time is money as it is reflected in contemporary English:

You’re wasting my time.
 I don’t have the time to give you.
 You need to budget your time.
 You don’t use your time profitably.
 I lost a lot of time when I got sick.
 Thank for your time etc.

Time in our culture is a valuable commodity; it is a limited resource that we use to accomplish our goals. Thus, we understand and experience time as the kind of thing that can be spent, wasted, budgeted, invested wisely or poorly, saved or squandered. Time is money, time is a limited resource and time is a valuable commodity is all metaphorical concepts. They are metaphorical since we are using our everyday experiences with money, limited resources and valuable commodities to conceptualize time. They are also structured systematically.

In short, as it has been said earlier, Conceptual Metaphor Theory indicates that human thought processes are largely metaphorical, and human conceptual system is structured and defined in a metaphorical way. Therefore, metaphor is defined as cross-domain mapping between source and target domain. A mapping is the systematic correspondence between constituent elements of the source and target domains. The target domain is an abstract domain while the source domain is a concrete concept of which one can have direct sensory experience. The relationship is in the form of ‘TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN’. They are stored together in the mind (Lan & McGregor 2009: 11-24). However, under different cultures, cultural considerations play a crucial part while conceptual mapping is carried out.

One of the relevances of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is that, it enables people uncover the systematicity in many concepts that were believed to be unstructured (Soriano, 2003: 107 – 122). Then, if the conceptual metaphor pervades the way we think, speak or act, then, it should also have some influence on the way we learn. This is because the Conceptual Metaphor Theory assumes that many motivated idiomatic expressions are based on conceptual metaphors (Li,

2010: 206 - 210). Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) posit that idiomatic expressions are not arbitrary and accidental strings of words, but are totally rooted in human thought. Metaphoricity is therefore, the main feature of all human languages. It is not confined to language, it runs through all veins of man's everyday life including language thought and action.

3. Material and Method

The study is a descriptive survey type which has to do with collection of descriptive data from Fifty (50) degree three Yoruba speakers learning French in Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo,

Ondo State, Nigeria. Their ages range from 18 to 28 years and they were both males and females. The females were 35 in number while males were 15 in number and with this, the females dominated the population. The research tool was a questionnaire divided into two parts. The first part consisted of the biographic information of the students while the second part consisted of fifteen Yoruba idiomatic expressions non contextualized. The questionnaire was close ended type and the students were asked to pick from the options provided, the French idiomatic expressions that are similar in meaning to their Yoruba counterparts. The results were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

4. Results

This aspect presents the results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire finding out whether the students were aware and able to get the French equivalence of the 15 Yoruba idiomatic expressions concerned

Table 4: This table shows the performance of 50 students that participated in the exercise.

Yoruba idiomatic expressions	Options provided in French	Correct answers	No / % of correct answers	No / % of wrong answers	Meaning of the idioms in the two languages.
1) Bá ẹ̀sẹ̀ sọ̀rọ̀	a) Parler aux jambes b) Prendre ses jambes à son cou	Prendre ses jambes à son cou	5 (10%)	45 (90%).	To run away
2) Fi ìdí rẹ̀mì	a) Faire chou blanc b) Tomber dans l'eau	Faire chou blanc	8 (16%)	42 (84%)	To fail in one's undertaking
3) Tẹ́rí gbaşọ	a) Tomber dans l'eau b) Casser sa pipe	Casser sa pipe	4 (8%)	46 (92%)	To die
4) Fara ya	a) Casser sa pipe b) Voir rouge	Voir rouge	13 (26%)	37 (74%)	Extremely angry
5) Lawo	a) Avoir le cœur sur la main. b) Casser sa pipe	Avoir le cœur sur la main.	3 (6%)	47 (94%)	To be generous
6) B́akan-náà ni omọ ẹ̀ orí	a).Bonnet blanc et blanc bonnet b). Avoir le cœur sur la main.	Bonnet blanc et blanc bonnet	1 (2%)	49 (98%)	To be similar
7). Tẹ̀ oká ní irù mólẹ̀	a).Tirer le diable par la queue a). Avoir le cœur sur la main.	Tirer le diable par la queue	0 (0%)	50 (100%)	To be in trouble or difficulty
8) Wú òkú òlẹ̀.	a). Tomber des cadavres b).Tomber des halberdes	Tomber des halberdes	3 (6%)	47 (94%)	A heavy downpour
9). Wo tiká tẹ̀gbìn	a). Parler son cœur. b). Faire un oeil noir	Faire un oeil noir	5(10%)	45 (90%)	A disapproval look
10). Tú kẹ̀kẹ̀ ọ̀rọ̀	a).Parler son cœur b). Faire un oeil noir	Parler son cœur.	5 (10%)	45 (90%)	to speak freely with sincerity
11). Rẹ̀rìn iyàngì	a).Rire jaune b). Rire bien	Rire jaune	0(0%)	50 (100%)	A fake laugh
12). Sojú abẹ̀ ní ikó	a).Appeler un chat un chat b). Tirer le diable par le queue	Appeler un chat un chat	0 (0%)	50 (100%)	Say it like it is,
13). Fi òlù lù	Donner le feu	Donner le feu	0 (0%)	50 (100%)	To autorise, to approve

14). <i>Ídí domi</i>	a). Avoir une peur bleue b). Mettre la fesse dans l'eau	Avoir une peur bleue	5 (10%)	45 (90%)	Scared to death
15). <i>Wàjà</i>	a). Passer de vie à trépas b). Entrer le toit	Passer de vie à trépas	4 (8%)	46(92%)	To die

5. Discussion

From the above table, 5 (10%) of the population chose the right answer for the first idiomatic expression which is (*prendre ses jambes à son cou=ba ese soro*) while 45(90%) chose the wrong answer (*parler aux jambes*). As regards the second idiomatic expression, 8 (16%) picked the correct equivalence in French (*faire chou blanc = fi idi remi*) but 42 (84%) could not pick the right equivalence in French.

Casser sa pipe was the correct answer chose by 4 (8%) for the 3rd idiomatic expression (*teri gbaso*) while 46(92%) chose the wrong answer.

13 (26%) picked the suitable equivalence (*voir rouge = fa ara ya*) while 37 (74%) opted for the wrong answer for the fourth one.

Avoir le cœur sur la main was the correct option selected by 3 (6%) of the population but 47 (94%) selected the wrong option for the fifth idiomatic expression.

As touching the sixth idiomatic expression, 1 (2%) of the populstion subscribed to the right answer (*bonnet blanc et blanc bonnet*), while 49 (98%) opted for wrong answer and there wasn't any indecision.

Tirer le diable par la queue, the correct option for the seventh idiomatic expression was chosen by 0 (0%) student. This means no student got the right answer, .the total population got it wrong.

For the eight idiomatic expression, (6%) selected the right answer *tomber des hallebardes*, while 47 (94%) of the students opted for wrong answer.

As regards the nineth idiomatic expression, 5 (.10%) picked the right answer which was *faire un oeil noir*, while 45 (90%) selected the wrong answer.

As touching the tenth idiomatic expression, 5 (10%) responded positively by choosing *parler son coeur*, and 45 (90%) opted for incorrect answer.

For the eleventh idiomatic expression, nobody picked the right answer which is *rire jaune* 0 (0%), All of them could not subscribe to the right answer

Appeler un chat un chat was the correct idiomatic expression for item twelve. Nobody got it right. There was 100% failure.

Concerning the thirteenth idiomatic expression also, the right answer, *donner le feu vert*, was not picked by anybody. There was absolute failure.

For the fourteenth idiomatic expression, *avoir peur bleue* was opted for by 5 (10%), while the other wrong answer was picked by 45 (90%).

The last idiom, *passer de vie à trépas*, the correct idiomatic expression was picked by 4 (8%). while 46 (92%) picked the wrong option.

From the analysis given above, it was discovered that, out of the 15 idiomatic expressions examined, our students got 26% in just one of them which was no 4 (*voir rouge*), and there was a mass failure in the remaining 14 items. The reason for their average performance in number four could be due to the fact that, they are familiar with it, perhaps they have heard it before. The number of idiomatic expressions failed is more than the number of idiomatic expressions passed and the reasons for this failure are not farfetched. Their background in the French language, their non-familiarity with these idiomatic expressions, poor knowledge of the French idiomatic expressions and the degree of the idiomaticity. We equally discovered that, the students who were able to score some marks were those with francophone background.

The poor performance in the exercise also shows that, majority of the population are not aware of the French equivalence of the Yoruba idiomatic expressions exist.

The fifteen Yoruba idiomatic expressions examined in the study have semantic relativism in the two languages but they have lexical variations as we can see in the table.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper discussed idiomatic expressions as one of the terminological phrases that are very important in all languages due to their functions. It is established that, we could have similar idiomatic expressions that describe similar situations and realities in the two

languages. Apart from this, this phraseology shares the same characteristics across languages. Since the French language is a foreign language in Nigeria, the ability to understand and use groups of words that may be used together in an ungrammatical and semantically irregular manner is very important. Idioms are usually left out of courses of study to second language learners and since idiomatic expressions have been widely accepted as crucial elements in language proficiency, learners of a second language do need to be exposed to idioms so as to acquire them better for their second language comprehension and production in Nigeria. There should be a course on French idioms that will expose learners the more to French culture, and conventional phrases that will improve their vocabularies.

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Part Three

Educational Management



Effect of Standardized Listening Skills Test on Students' Listening Comprehension and Self-Efficacy

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Abstract. The study examined effect of standardized listening skills test on students' listening comprehension and self-efficacy. A quasi-experiment design was used. The population of the study comprised all junior secondary school two (JSS II) students of a selected school in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. Two intact classes of the same level from the selected school were targeted. Seventy (70) students were selected to participate in the study using purposive sampling technique. This technique was chosen due to easy-access to the participants and the nature of the study. A standardized test entitled 'English Language Listening Skills Test' (ELLST) was administered to determine the group's homogeneity in the pretest and the effect of the treatment in posttest. The instrument was validated by experts in English language teaching and teachers of English in secondary schools. The reliability of the instrument was achieved through Cronbach Alpha's reliability index at 0.82, indicating a high level of reliability. Additionally, a self-efficacy scale adapted from existing validated instruments by Mills et al., 2006; Rahimi & Abedini (2009) was used to measure students' beliefs in their listening abilities. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test. The treatment group received regular listening skills tests, while the control group did not. Results showed that the treatment group demonstrated significant improvements in self-efficacy, as measured by the Listening Self-Efficacy Scale. Furthermore, the treatment group outperformed the control group on a standardized listening comprehension test. The findings suggest that regular listening skills tests can enhance students' self-efficacy and listening comprehension. It is, therefore, recommended that schools and language programmes

should include standardized listening assessments as a regular part of instruction to improve students' comprehension skills and build test familiarity.

Keywords: Standardized Listening Skills Test, Listening Comprehension, Vocabulary, Grammar, pronunciation & self-efficacy.

1. Introduction

Listening comprehension is an important component of language learning that plays a crucial role in both academic achievement and daily communication. It encompasses more than the mere perception of sounds; it involves higher-order cognitive processes such as understanding, inferring meaning, and integrating information (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Despite its recognized importance, listening has historically been underemphasized in language instruction and assessment compared to the other language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking (Field, 2008).

In educational contexts, the assessment of listening comprehension increasingly relies on standardized testing formats. These assessments aim to offer objective and reliable measurements of students' listening skills, typically through structured tasks and scoring rubrics that target specific sub-skills—such as identifying main ideas, recognizing key details, making inferences, and interpreting speakers' attitudes (Buck, 2001). Such tests are intended to inform instructional practices and curriculum design, and they serve a central role within educational accountability frameworks (Cheng & Curtis, 2004).

Nevertheless, the effect of standardized testing on language development—particularly in the domain of listening comprehension—has been the subject of considerable debate. Some scholars argue that standardized assessments can enhance learning by providing clear performance benchmarks and promoting strategic listening behaviors (Goh & Taib, 2006). On the contrary, critics contend that an excessive focus on testing may lead to "teaching to the test," curriculum narrowing, and heightened student anxiety (Shohamy, 2001).

A particularly relevant yet underexplored area of inquiry concerns the relationship between standardized listening assessments and learners' self-efficacy in listening—that is, their belief in their ability to comprehend spoken language. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy significantly influences learners' motivation, persistence, and academic outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Students with high listening self-efficacy are more likely to engage meaningfully in listening tasks and apply effective strategies (Graham, 2006). In contrast, repeated poor performance on standardized assessments may undermine learners' confidence and reduce their willingness to participate in listening activities (Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006).

Recent studies have begun to explore how assessment practices influence both cognitive performance and psychological factors. For example, Rahimi and Abedini (2009) found that students with greater listening self-efficacy tended to perform better on listening assessments, suggesting a reciprocal relationship. Similarly, Zhang and Goh (2006) highlighted that integrating metacognitive instruction with assessment can enhance both listening proficiency and learner self-regulation. Hinkel (2006) reported that students who engaged in regular listening assessments showed marked improvements in listening self-efficacy, as measured by the Listening Self-Efficacy Scale (LSES). Vandergrift (2007) echoed these findings, indicating that learners who performed well on listening tests exhibited higher self-efficacy levels. Furthermore, Goh (2008) demonstrated that regular participation in listening assessments contributed to significant gains in both listening comprehension and self-efficacy. A meta-analysis by Chen (2017) involving ten studies confirmed a moderate to strong positive effect of listening assessments on self-efficacy ($g = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$).

Despite growing interest in the emotional and psychological effects of standardized assessments, there remains a notable gap in research specifically

addressing how standardized listening tests affect both students' listening comprehension and their self-efficacy beliefs. Understanding this is a crucial matter for the education stakeholders especially in today's world where there have been increasing advocacy for quality learning. Therefore, this study aims to examine effect of standardized listening skills tests on students' listening comprehension and their self-efficacy.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Students, right from early stage of learning, are expected to develop proper listening skills. This is crucial because listening is a key component of effective communication. Even though the importance of listening skills has been widely recognized, it still tends to be one of the toughest skills for students to get. In many educational settings, students often struggle with listening, which can hold back their overall academic success and language development. While several studies have looked into how different teaching methods impact listening performance and students' confidence, not many have specifically examined whether standardized listening assessments help or hinder students' listening comprehension and their beliefs in their own abilities. Therefore, this study seeks to examine effect of standardized listening tests on students' listening comprehension and self-efficacy.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The Objective of the study are to examine:

- Effect of standardized listening skills test on students' listening comprehension
- Effect of standardized listening skills test on students' self-efficacy

1.3 Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested:

- There is no significant effect of standardized listening skills test on students' listening comprehension
- There is no significant effect of standardized listening skills test on students' listening comprehension

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research are significant to students, teachers, curriculum designers, educational administrators, and researchers.

Understanding how standardized listening assessments influence students' performance and self-efficacy can help them figure out how to tackle listening tasks more effectively. When positive

relationships are recognized, students might gain more confidence in their listening skills and feel more motivated to dive into listening activities, both in and out of the classroom. This study can assist teachers in making informed choices and decisions about incorporating standardized tests into their teaching and assessment strategies. If these tests are found to enhance not just comprehension but also self-efficacy, teachers may be inspired to incorporate them more thoughtfully into their lesson plans. Contrarily, if negative effect is discovered, teachers might look for alternative ways to assess and nurture listening skills without undermining students' confidence. The research offers solid evidence on the educational value of standardized listening tests, guiding curriculum design and assessment policies. Educational stakeholders can leverage these findings to check how well assessment tools align with instructional goals, ensuring that evaluations support both the cognitive and emotional sides of learning. Administrators who oversee curriculum implementation can use the results of this study to confirm that standardized assessments are not only reliable indicators of student progress but also positively influence students' academic self-perceptions and learning outcomes. This study adds to the growing body of literature on language assessment, listening comprehension, and learner psychology by addressing effect of standardized testing on performance and self-efficacy. It can lay the foundation for future research on assessment design, motivational factors in language learning, and the psychological effects of testing in language education.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study deals with Effect of Standardized listening skills test on Students' listening comprehension and self-efficacy. It covers listening comprehension aspects such as phonological skills, vocabulary, grammar and comprehension. The target groups are the junior secondary school two (JSS II) students of 2024/2025 academic session in a selected school within Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno state, Nigeria.

2. Research Methodology

The study used quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of the standardized listening comprehension tests and self-efficacy scale. The population for the study comprised all Junior Secondary School Two (JSS II) students from a selected public secondary school in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. From this population, seventy students were selected using purposive sampling. This sampling method was chosen based on ease of access, administrative approval, and the logistical suitability of using intact

classes. Two classes of similar characteristics were selected, with thirty-five students assigned to the experimental group and thirty-five to the control group. To assess students' listening comprehension, a standardized instrument entitled the English Language Listening Skills Test (ELLST) was employed. This instrument consisted of recorded listening passages followed by multiple-choice comprehension questions. It was administered both before and after the treatment to determine their homogeneity and effect of the treatment. The content validity of the ELLST was ensured through expert review by university lecturers and experienced secondary school English teachers. The reliability of the test was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, with results confirming acceptable internal consistency 0.82, indicating a high level of reliability

In addition to the ELLST, a self-efficacy scale adapted from previously validated instruments by Mills et al. (2006) and Rahimi and Abedini (2009) was used to measure students' beliefs in their listening abilities. The scale employed a five-point Likert format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and assessed students' confidence in understanding spoken English and completing listening-related tasks.

Prior to the intervention, both the experimental and control groups completed the ELLST and the Listening Self-Efficacy Scale to establish baseline data. Over a period of six weeks, the experimental group was exposed to regular standardized listening comprehension tests integrated into their instructional sessions. In contrast, the control group continued with their normal English lessons without the additional testing component. To control for teacher variability, the same instructor taught both groups following the same scheme of work, with the only difference being the inclusion of the standardized tests in the experimental group. At the end of the treatment, post-test was administered to both groups using the same instruments. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compute means and standard deviations, while independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare posttest results between the groups.

3. Results

To test the hypotheses, descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests were employed to compare the pretest and post-test performance of the experimental and control groups in both listening comprehension and self-efficacy.

Testing the Hypothesis One: There is no significant effect of standardized listening skills test on students' listening comprehension

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Listening Comprehension Scores

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD
Experimental Group	35	21.40	4.12	28.75	3.98
Control Group	35	20.97	4.35	22.63	4.07

Table 1 above presents the descriptive statistics of listening comprehension score. The results show that both groups had similar performance in the pre-test, indicating homogeneity in listening comprehension skills before the treatment. After the treatment, the experimental group showed a significant improvement (Mean = 28.75, SD = 3.98) compared to the control group (Mean = 22.63, SD = 4.07).

Table 2: Independent Sample t-Test on Post-test Listening Comprehension Scores

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Listening Comprehension	Experimental	35	28.75	3.98	6.387	68	0.000
	Control	35	22.63	4.07			

Table 2 above presents the independent sample t-test on listening comprehension in post-test. The t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in post-test listening comprehension scores between the experimental and control groups, $t(68) = 6.387, p < .001$. This indicates that the use of standardized listening comprehension tests significantly improved students' listening comprehension skills.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Listening Self-Efficacy Scores

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD
Experimental Group	35	3.12	0.49	4.01	0.53
Control Group	35	3.09	0.51	3.37	0.56

Table 3 above presents descriptive statistics on listening self-efficacy score for both groups. Both groups had similar average scores at pre-test. However, post-test results indicate an increase in self-efficacy for the experimental group (Mean = 4.01, SD = 0.53), while the control group showed a modest gain (Mean = 3.37, SD = 0.56).

Table 4: Independent Sample t-Test on Post-test Listening Self-Efficacy Scores

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Listening Efficacy	Self- Experimental	35	4.01	0.53	5.157	68	0.000
	Self- Control	35	3.37	0.56			

Table 4 above presents independent sample t-test on listening self-efficacy for both groups in post-test. The results showed a statistically significant difference in post-test self-efficacy scores between the groups, $t(68) = 5.157, p < .001$. This suggests that integrating standardized listening tests positively influenced students' belief in their listening abilities.

4. Summary of the Findings

The following are the key findings of the research:

The pre-test scores for both listening comprehension and self-efficacy indicated that the experimental and control groups were comparable before the intervention. This suggests that any differences observed in the post-test can be attributed to the treatment.

The use of standardized listening comprehension tests had a positive and significant effect on students' listening comprehension skills.

Regular exposure to standardized listening tests improved students' confidence and belief in their ability to understand spoken English.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that the use of standardized listening skills tests can significantly enhance both students' listening comprehension and their self-efficacy. The significant improvement observed in the post-test scores of the experimental group aligns with previous studies such as Goh and Taib (2006) and Vandergrift (2007), which emphasized

that structured and repeated exposure to listening assessments improves learners' auditory processing skills and comprehension abilities. This outcome supports the hypothesis that regular practice with standardized tests enhances students' ability to decode spoken language and understand key listening components such as main ideas, supporting details, and speaker intent.

The results also demonstrate a notable increase in students' self-efficacy scores following the intervention. Self-efficacy is critical in shaping learners' motivation, persistence, and academic achievement (Bandura, 1997). The students in the experimental group not only showed improved performance but also reported higher confidence in their listening abilities. This mirrors the findings of Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2006), as well as Rahimi and Abedini (2009), who reported that learners with greater self-efficacy tend to perform better in language tasks. The regular testing may have contributed to a sense of familiarity and competence among students, reducing anxiety and promoting a positive self-perception of their abilities. Importantly, the study controlled for external variables by using the same instructor and scheme of work across both groups, isolating the inclusion of the standardized listening tests as the primary differentiating factor. This methodological strength lends credibility to the conclusion that the intervention itself caused the observed improvements.

These findings contribute to the growing body of research highlighting the dual role of assessment—not only as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but also as a means of shaping learner psychology. While there are concerns in the literature about the potential drawbacks of standardized testing, such as narrowing of curriculum and student stress (Shohamy, 2001), the results of this study suggest that when thoughtfully integrated into instruction, standardized tests can serve a formative role that supports both cognitive and affective domains of learning. Furthermore, the positive impact on self-efficacy has broader pedagogical implications. High self-efficacy has been linked to greater learner autonomy, strategy use, and long-term language retention (Graham, 2006). Therefore, embedding listening assessments into classroom instruction not only builds listening proficiency but also cultivates the learner confidence necessary for lifelong language development.

Finally, the findings affirm the instructional value of standardized listening assessments in junior secondary education. They indicate that structured listening practice, delivered in a standardized and consistent manner, can lead to measurable improvement in performance and belief in one's abilities.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that the integration of standardized listening comprehension tests significantly improves both students' listening skills and their self-efficacy. Students exposed to regular listening assessments performed better and felt more confident in their ability to understand spoken English compared to those who received traditional instruction. This highlights the effectiveness of structured listening activities in enhancing both competence and confidence and supports their inclusion in English language teaching for improved academic performance.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Schools and language programs should include standardized listening assessments as a regular part of instruction to improve students' comprehension skills and build test familiarity.
- Teachers should use test as formative assessment to identify student strengths and weaknesses, and to guide targeted instruction rather than just using them as summative.
- Teachers should complement standardized tests with explicit instruction in listening strategies such as note-taking, predicting, and summarizing to reinforce comprehension.
- Teachers should create a supportive environment where standardized assessments are seen as learning opportunities rather than high-stakes judgments.

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Assessing the Impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Program on Pupils Enrolment, Attendance, and Academic Performance of Some Selected Public Primary School Pupils in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Over the years, successive governments at different levels have been directing efforts in the areas of increasing pupil/student enrolment and reducing dropout rates and the provision of infrastructural facilities to aid both learning and teaching but the desired result has not been achieved. In order to compliment the above menace, the Nigerian Government recently revived the Home-Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) termed the National Home-Grown School Meal Program (NHSMP). Social Cognitive theory was used as a theoretical framework to guide this study. This paper adopted quantitative method. The study used a multistage sampling technique including non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling technique) to select two (2) local government and two schools from the selected local government area in each of the three senatorial districts in the state. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 240 pupils and their parents from the selected schools. Each of the teachers was selected to represent the school and questionnaire administered to them aggregating to (12) head teachers. The instruments for data collection were structured questionnaire based on the research objectives. The study reveals that the School Feeding Programme (SFP) has had a positive impact on pupil enrolment, attendance and academic performance, as perceived and affirmed by the pupils themselves, teachers, and parents. However, it was recommended amongst other that government should ensure that there is an increase in the number and quality of teachers to accommodate the potential increase in enrolment. Additionally, there should be sufficient physical facilities, such as classrooms and other learning

spaces, to avoid overcrowding and provide a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning.

Keywords: Home Grown, School Feeding Program, School Enrolment, Academic Performance

1. Introduction

Education is crucial to the economic and social development of every society. So, businesses and governments throughout the globe are continuously seeking ways to make learning more accessible and effective (Bashir et al., 2021). Okolo-Obasi & Uduji (2022), Adepoju & Johnson (2020), and Olutola & Aguh (2023) all attest to the fact that the Home become School Feeding Program (HGSFP) has become famous for its ability to both satisfy the nutritional needs of school-aged children and enhance their intellectual development. School feeding programs were also established as intervention programs to address poverty, increase enrolment in schools, and enhance students' academic performance. This is why a lot of countries have started school feeding programmes (SFPs). The United States and Britain improved children's health and increased school enrolment via Food for All (FFA) (Gokah, 2008). Students participating in the program will have access to one snack or lunch every class period. Aside from increasing enrolment, the provision of this lunch has also boosted children's performance and participation (WFP, 2019). Developed and developing nations were encouraged to adopt the School Feeding Program (SFP) as a strategy to eradicate hunger, poverty, and achieve Universal

Basic Education (UBE) by subsequent global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations Dakar Affirmation of 2000, the New Partnership for African Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Among the many components of the program are initiatives to improve health, education, agriculture, poverty, and the overall economy. The SFP aimed to establish a government-run, budget-friendly school lunch program that relied on food produced by smallholder farmers in the area, as stated in the 2019 report by NHGSF. Everybody wins: kids get a hot, well-balanced lunch at school, farmers get more customers from schools that feed their crops, and towns get more people to work in catering, processing, and food handling. Educational outcomes are enhanced and hunger is reduced. As a result, it stimulates the economy by means of a multiplier effect.

Even if we still haven't achieved our goal, several administrations at different levels have been working hard throughout the years to increase enrolment, decrease attrition, and build infrastructure that supports teaching and learning. There is still a need to address educational issues in Niger State, and one potential solution is to implement an HGSFP. In this research, we suggest studying the school feeding program's impact on three key indicators of educational advancement in Niger State: enrolment rates, academic achievement, and school attendance.

According to Lambet *et al.* (2020), individuals are better able to participate in their communities and careers when they have access to high-quality education. Despite this knowledge, Niger State is one of several states that struggles to provide equal access to quality education (Saba *et al.*, 2022; Jacob & Musa, 2021; Alhassan, 2019). Poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural norms all have a role in limiting kids' educational opportunities, which in turn leads to low enrolment rates and low academic attainment. In light of the many challenges that have slowed educational advancement, Sitao (2018) reports that several governments and businesses have turned to the HGSFP as a potential solution. Snilstveit *et al.* (2016) noted that the initiative's goals include influencing educational outcomes in addition to combating poverty and hunger. Offering nutritious meals to kids during class hours is part of the school food program's goal to increase their cognitive skills, attentiveness, and

overall well-being. Additionally, it aims to improve school attendance rates by encouraging parents to regularly send their children to class (Jacob & Musa, 2021).

Over 10 million children in Nigeria do not attend school, and 40% of those who do attend go hungry every day, even though the National Home-Grown School Feeding Program has been in operation since 2016 (Cummings & Kulutuye, 2017). This is corroborated by the fact that this nation has the highest concentration of out-of-school children globally, ranging from 10 million to 13.2 million, according to a 2018 research by UNICEF.

Niger State is located in north central Nigeria, has significant educational issues due to its relatively low school enrolment and attendance rates. Consequently, there is a unique opportunity to examine the potential impact of nutritional support on academic achievement via the implementation of a school feeding program (Aurino, 2019). Finding out if the program boosts enrolment, attendance, and grades in Niger State might impact educational policies and programs throughout the country that deal with similar problems.

Studies in Niger State that looked at the Home-Grown School Feeding Program and its effects on primary school pupils' enrolment, attendance, and performance in the classroom found that the program had a negative effect on all three. The impact of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Program on the academic growth of individual Niger State primary schools has been the subject of little research.

However, the most significant obstacle to this research This idea still hasn't been defined in a way that everyone can agree on. One such initiative that supplies children enrolled in public schools with food that is grown or bought inside the nation is known as "homegrown school feeding" (Munuhe, 2014). He brought up the fact that one of the World Food Programme's initiatives, Home Grown School Feeding, works with local smallholder farmers to both provide and procure food for school feeding programs. As Sumberg and Sabates-Wheeler (2010) explain, HGSF aims to accomplish two separate policy goals at once: improving the nutritional and health status of school-aged children as a form of social protection, and transforming small-scale agriculture economically and technologically.

The availability and distribution of sufficient food for schoolchildren in terms of quantity, quality, safety, and social and cultural acceptability is defined as school feeding in Sustainable School Feeding throughout the African World (2018). It continues by saying that although certain supplementary feeding methods, including the take-home ratio (THR), do exist, "school feeding" is defined as meals provided on school grounds. While the term "in school meals" refers to students receiving food while they are enrolled in school, "take-home rations" are given to students whose families often require them to attend school. Home Grown School Feeding is also described as a program that encourages local economic growth and agricultural transformation by the African Union Commission.

Addressing malnutrition, food insecurity, and increasing educational results among school-age children is the cornerstone objective of the Home-Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) in Nigeria (Adepoju & Johnson, 2020). Since its 2016 launch, the initiative has been the subject of much speculation about its scope and the changes it may bring to American education. This literature review looks at previous research on the HGSFP and how it was put into practice in Nigeria. All students in Nigerian public elementary schools are guaranteed access to a healthy lunch every school day under the HGSFP (Solomon & Yusuf, 2022). Some of the main goals of the program are to boost local agricultural growth, improve nutrition, and increase enrolment and school attendance. Finding out how much the National Home-Grown School Feeding Program improves enrolment, attendance, and academic performance of selected primary school pupils in Niger State is an important step, since early reviews have shown excellent benefits.

2. Conceptual Discourse

2.1 Concept of Home-Grown School Feeding

There is no one, definitive way to describe the concept. As an example, Munuhe (2014) states that homegrown school feeding is a program that distributes food purchased and cultivated inside a country to students enrolled in public schools. He brought attention to the fact that the World Food Program's Home Grown School Feeding program primarily deals with purchasing and preparing food for school lunch programs from local smallholder farmers. Sumberg and Sabates-

Wheeler (2010) state that the HGSF aims to integrate two distinct policy goals: one is to improve the nutritional and health condition of school-aged children, and the other is to change small-scale agriculture economically and technologically.

According to Sustainable School Feeding across Africa (2018), school feeding is when kids have access to nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs in a way that is both socially and culturally acceptable. Thus, school feeding refers to meals served on school premises; nevertheless, there are other forms of feeding, such as the take-home ratio (THR), that are also in use. Unlike the concept of "in-school meals," which implies that pupils get food in the classroom, families usually receive take-home portions based on their children's attendance at school. A initiative that promotes agricultural transformation and local economic prosperity is Home Grown School Feeding, according to the African Union Commission.

The Home-Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) in Nigeria is a flagship initiative with the goals of decreasing malnutrition and food insecurity and improving scholastic accomplishments among school-aged children. The initiative's magnitude and potential impact on the country's educational landscape have garnered considerable attention since its approval in 2016. This literature review delves into recent studies and research on the HGSFP, specifically focussing on its use in Nigeria. A social intervention, the HGSFP ensures that every elementary school student in Nigeria has access to a nutritious lunch every day (Solomon & Yusuf, 2022). Nutritional improvement, increased school enrolment, and support for local farmers are some of the primary aims of the program. Good outcomes have been shown in early evaluations.

2.2 Enrolment

Students are formally registered into a classroom setting throughout the enrolment process. It is an important indicator of educational opportunity since it shows how many school-aged children are using the educational system. The first step towards achieving universal basic education, according to UNESCO (2013), is for all children to attend school, as this reflects both the demand for and the availability of education. Enrolment is influenced by factors like as socio-economic

status, parental education, cultural views, the location of the school, and the presence of supportive services, such as school lunches. Increased enrolment has been associated with the introduction of school feeding programs, especially in low-income communities. Aurino et al. (2019) found that in regions with high rates of food poverty, parents register their children in response to school lunch delivery. Home Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) enrolment was much higher in Northern Nigerian public schools, according to Ibrahim et al. (2018).

2.3 Attendance

Students are considered to have good attendance if they regularly show up to class within the allotted school time. Regular school attendance is essential for academic achievement since it is linked to increased engagement, better retention of knowledge, and academic progress. Global Bank (2012) defines school attendance as the degree to which students are physically present in their classroom. Absenteeism is seen as a significant barrier to educational attainment. Factors such as illness, starvation, long travel hours, and family obligations sometimes contribute to low attendance. School feeding programs have shown to significantly reduce absenteeism by alleviating hunger and encouraging children to regularly attend class. In Nigeria's Benue State, for instance, Cletus et al. (2022) discovered that the NHGSFP increased regular attendance; in Calabar, Egwuasi et al. (2022) saw a same impact, attributing increases in daily attendance to the supply of school meals.

2.4 Academic Performance

Academic performance is the tangible outcome of a student's learning and is often evaluated by examinations, tests, continuous assessments, and overall school grades. It is a staple in determining how well students are learning and how effective teachers are. As stated by Eze et al. (2020), academic success is the extent to which a student achieves educational objectives and goals. Nutrition, home life, instructor quality, and study aids are just a few of the factors that could affect a student's performance in the classroom. Malnutrition may impact cognitive abilities like memory, concentration, and attention, making proper nutrition very important. Kperogi (2017) and Alabede et al. (2020) are only two of several studies that show how school feeding programs improve students' academic performance by

increasing their nutrient intake, attention span, and energy levels during class activities.

2.5 Empirical Literature

The Home-Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) was established in 2016 by the Buhari administration with the intention of becoming more than just a food distribution operation. The program's stated goal was to alleviate rural poverty, low school enrolment, and hunger by supplying daily meals to elementary school pupils in public schools and buying food locally to support smallholder farmers. For a long time, the program piqued the curiosity of researchers who wanted to discover its real-world impact.

Across the board in Nigeria, data points to a positive image, particularly when it comes to enrolment and school attendance. Ibrahim et al. (2018) and Cletus et al. (2022) demonstrate how providing school lunch has encouraged parents to enrol their children and ensure their frequent attendance. In Calabar, Egwuasi et al. (2022) found similar findings, proving that there is a strong correlation between daily attendance and food availability. Many families, particularly those struggling financially, find motivation in the knowledge that their children will have access to a nutritious school lunch on a daily basis.

In addition to boosting attendance, other research suggests that the HGSFP might potentially enhance learning outcomes. Eze et al. (2020) found that the program improved students' cognitive performance and academic advancement, especially in tasks that required continual attention. The ability of pupils to concentrate and perform well in class may be affected by the nutritional value and quality of the food served, claims Kperogi (2017).

On the other hand, not all outcomes are so promising. According to many studies, academic performance has remained relatively unchanged or has hardly altered while participating in the program (Denney et al., 2021; Atobatel and Okewale, 2021). Their research revealed serious issues, such as unequal food distribution, poor nutritional quality, and widespread corruption within the execution staff. The potential educational benefits of the curriculum have been diminished in certain contexts due to these concerns.

In addition to bolstering local businesses via the purchase of food from area farms and producers, the HGSFP was designed to enhance the educational experience. Many scholars, including Munuhe (2014) and Jev et al. (2023), consider the initiative not just as a means of feeding people, but as a tool for strategic agricultural and economic growth. This makes it a social safety net and a means of alleviating poverty, particularly in more remote places. Agu et al. (2023) provided more evidence of how the majority of Enugu head teachers believe the initiative is achieving its aims of decreasing hunger, improving engagement, and boosting enrolment.

The HGSFP has many challenges, despite its potential. Inconsistent food supply and quality, according to Dennis et al. (2021), and a lack of transparency about the use of funds pose a danger to the program's future. Demands for stricter regulation have been prompted by these issues. One suggestion is to strengthen alignment in order to assure better coordination, accountability, and long-term success by establishing a National School Feeding Commission.

2.6 Theoretical framework

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the ways in which individuals' experiences, both internal and external to them, influence their conduct (Ab Abdullah et al., 2022). The interconnectedness of humans, their deeds, and their environments is brought to light by SCT. According to Sagenge (2015), SCT can help us understand the effects of the Home-Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) on children's enrolment, attendance, and academic performance.

Personal aspects (such as beliefs, attitudes, and self-efficacy) and environmental factors (such as social support and resources) interact dynamically to determine behaviour, according to SCT. At least two contextual variables students' perceptions of the program's benefits and the level of support they get from family, peers, and instructors—may influence students' actions, or their level of engagement with the HGSFP. People may observe the actions of others and mimic them, if SCT is to be believed (McLeod, 2011). Students may be more motivated to attend class regularly if they see their peers making good use of the HGSFP's nutritious food program.

confidence in one's abilities to carry out a certain action successfully. Students who have a higher opinion of their own academic abilities may be more motivated to attend class regularly and do well, especially if they think the HGSFP helps them concentrate and sharpen their brains.

According to SCT, children are more likely to believe that regular school attendance yields positive outcomes if they see their classmates routinely attending class and benefiting from the HGSFP. This positive reinforcement, together with the program's access to nutritious food, has the potential to increase students' belief in their own abilities and motivation to regularly attend class. According to SCT, the HGSFP's offer of nutritious meals might encourage parents to enroll their children in school. A greater primary school enrolment rate might be the result of a social norm that emphasises the importance of education and attendance, which could be reinforced when children see other children benefiting from the program. Students' self-efficacy and confidence in their academic abilities might be bolstered by regular HGSFP advantages, which could lead to improved nutrition and cognitive performance. They may thus be more likely to take an active role in class, contribute to discussions, and achieve higher levels of academic success.

Students from low-income families benefit more from the HGSFP's supplemental nutrition program, which influences many moderating factors in the association between the program and academic achievement. To maximize the HGSFP's beneficial impact on student achievement, high-quality instruction and adequate school infrastructure are essential. Niger State's Home-Grown School Feeding Program and its potential effects on pupils' enrolment, attendance, and performance in school may be better understood with the help of the Social Cognitive Theory.

3. Methodology

The researchers in this study used quantitative data gathering approaches to compile and analyse survey responses. From each of the state's three senatorial districts, two schools and two local governments were chosen using a multistage selection procedure that included a non-probability sampling method (purposive sampling). We used a basic random sample method to choose 240 students and their parents from the schools that were considered. A total of

twelve instructors were chosen to represent the school and given a questionnaire. To analyse the data acquired from the original source, descriptive and inferential statistics are used.

According to the aims of the study, structured questionnaires were used to gather data. The study's three participants such as parents, educators, and students were each given their own questionnaire. The questionnaire is split into two pieces for each category. Through the use of face and content validation techniques, the reliability and validity of the instrument were confirmed. Management research specialists were provided with the tool. We kept just the questions that were

thought to be pertinent to the study. This research used the test-retest reliability approach. Five (5) students, five (5) parents, and three (3) educators from two (2) elementary schools in Bida LGA were each given the instrument twice, two weeks apart. The data was analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistics. The results showed that the reliability coefficient for student opinions was 0.719, for teacher opinions it was 0.755, and for parent opinions it was 0.846. After that, researchers sequentially distributed questionnaires to students at each school. After the surveys were finished, they were collected and set aside for examination. The data was summarised using descriptive statistics.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Data Presentation

Table 1: Opinions of pupils regarding school feeding programme objectives

S/N	Items	SD	D	UD	A	SA
1	I Know about the HGFP	1(0.42%)	3(1.2%)	5(2.1%)	183(76.3%)	48(20.0%)
2	HGSFP make available food for all in the school	1(0.42%)	3(1.2%)	2(0.83)	161(67.1%)	73(30.4%)
3	The food serve are enough and of great quality	1(0.42%)	1(0.42%)	12(5.0%)	102(42.5%)	124(51.7%)
4	The program affect my academic performance positively	2(0.83%)	2(0.83%)	9(3.7%)	97(40.4%)	100(41.7%)
5	My health status is impacted by the program through it nutritious meals	7(3.0%)	3 (1.2%)	14(5.8)	149(62.1%)	67(27.9%)
6	The program motivate me to attend school every school day	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	60(25.0%)	180(75.0%)
7	Students are enrolling in my school as a result of the feeding program	4(1.7%)	2(0.83%)	13(5.4%)	122(50.8%)	99(41.3%)
8	I want the feeding program to continue	4(1.6%)	7(2.9%)	7(2.9%)	138(57.5%)	(35.0%)
9	The quantity of food distributed is small	64(26.7%)	97(40.4%)	15(6.3%)	38(15.8%)	26(10.8%)

Key: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (UD), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows the opinion of pupils regarding the school feeding program in Niger State. Majority of the pupils in aggregate (96.3%) agreed knowing about the feeding program, 97.5% of the pupils affirms that food is available for all the schools, 94.2% agrees that the quality and quantity of food given is great and satisfactory, 82.1% agree since the inception of the school; majority of the pupils (90%) affirmed that their health status has improved due to the nutritious meal provided by the program; majority of the pupils (100% and 92.1%) affirmed that the program has improved their school attendance and also leads to increase in numbers of students in their classes respectively. Majority of them 67.1% and 92.5% affirmed that the quantity of food serves in minimal and want the program to continue respectively

Table 2: Opinions of teachers regarding school feeding programme objectives

S/N	Statement Questions	SD	D	UD	A	SA
1	You aware of school feeding program	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	5(41.7%)	7(58.3%)
2	Are the pupils served with varieties of food regularly in your school	1(8.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9(75%)	2(16.7%)
3	I want the school feeding program to continue	1(8.3%)	2(16.7%)	0(0%)	4 (33.3%)	5(41.7%)
4	The quality and quantity of food been served to the pupils is good and satisfactory	2(16.7%)	2 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	7 (58.3%)	1(8.3%)
5	School feeding programme contributes to the students' enrolment rate in school	0(0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (41.7%)	7(58.3%)
6	School feeding has contributed to reduction of drop-out rate greatly?	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(33.3%)	8(66.7%)

7	Students attend regularly as compare with when the was not in practices	0(0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (41.7%)	7(58.3%)
8	Academic performance of the students has increase since the commencement of the program	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(25.0%)	9(75%)
9	Poor funding is a major challenge of the school feeding program	1(8.3%)	1(8.3%)	0(0%)	4 (33.3%)	6 (50%)
10	Poor monitoring is a major challenge of the program	0(0%)	2(16.7%)	1(8.3%)	4 (33.3%)	5 (41.7%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 above provide head teachers response on the school feeding program in Niger State; all (100%) of the staff affirmed they are aware of the program and affirmed that variety of foods are served on a regular basis. Majority 75% of the teacher affirmed that they want the program to continue while affirming (58.5%) of them affirming that the quality of food serve is satisfactory. From the perception of the head teachers all of them (100%) affirmed that the program has leads to increase in pupil’s enrolment in their respective schools while dropout rate reduces. All the head teachers (100%) affirmed that attendance rate of students has increase due to the program of the school feeding program while also affirming that the pupils’ academic performance has increased. Base on the response from majority of the head teachers poor funding and monitoring are the major challenges facing the program effectiveness in the state.

Table 3: Opinions of parents regarding school feeding programme objectives

	Statement	SD	D	UD	A	SA
1	I am aware of school feeding program	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)	13(5.4%)	227 (94.6%)
2	You have child in school feeding program	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	240(100%)
3	Pupils under school feeding benefit from the program.	7 (2.9%)	6 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	66 (27.5%)	161(67.1%)
4	The quality and quantity of food been served to the pupils is good and Satisfactory	19 (7.9%)	21(8.7%)	93 (38.7)	52 (21.7%)	55(22.9%)
5	School feeding program contributed to the enrolment of your child in school	13 (5.4%)	16(6.7%)	193 (80.4%)	7 (2.9%)	11(4.6%)
6	School feeding helps in reducing pupils drop-out	13 (5.4%)	5 (2.1%)	108(45%)	32 (13.3%)	82(34.2%)
7	My children’s attends school regularly as compare with when the program was not in practices	9 (3.7%)	18 (7.5%)	32 (13.3%)	106 (44.2%)	75(31.3%)
8	Academic performance of my child has increase since the commencement of the program	11(4.6%)	15(6.3%)	8(3.3%)	89(37.1%)	117(48.8%)
9	Poor funding is a major challenge of the school feeding program	13(5.4%)	26(10.8%)	52(21.7%)	63 (26.3%)	86 (35.8%)
10	Poor monitoring is a major challenge of the program	17 (7.1%)	32 (13.3%)	82(34.2%)	54 (22.5%)	55 (22.9%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table above shows the response of pupils’ parents who were selected for the program on the program effectiveness and it impact on attendance, enrollment and academic performance; all the parents affirmed they are away of the program and have children’s benefiting from the program. However, on the quality and quantity of food served majority of them (44.6%) affirmed the quality and quantity of the foods serve are satisfactory while 38.7% of them affirm not having idea on the food quantity and quality.

Majority of the parents (80.4%) affirmed that they could not say if the program contributed to the enrolment of their children and other children their currents school while majority of them affirmed that the program reduce dropout rate; majority of the parents (75.5% and 85.9%) affirmed that the attendance rate and performance of their children has increase with the introduction of the program respectively while the affirm funding and monitoring being the major problem of the program.

5. Data Analysis

Table 4: Impact of Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Attendance of Selected Primary School Pupils in Niger State

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-stat	p-value
(Constant)	5.327	.092		58.206	.000
ATTENDENCE	.215	.024	.371	8.856	.000
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	
.371 ^a	.138	.136	.53388	1.198	
F	Sig.				
78.432	.000 ^b				

Source: Questionnaire Administered, 2025

Table 4 show the outcome of the regression analysis done to ascertain how the Home-Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) affects the attendance of certain primary school students in Niger State. A regression coefficient (B) of 0.215, a standardized beta (β) of 0.371, a t-value of 8.856, and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 threshold for significance, demonstrated in the study a statistically significant positive association between HGSFP and student attendance. This suggests that student attendance is much improved by the HGSFP in a statistically significant manner.

With an R-squared value of 0.138, the model offers to explain around 13.8% of the variation in school attendance across the students. Though small, in educational studies this proportion is significant given the multivariate character of attendance. With $p = .000$, the F-statistic of 78.432 shows that the general regression model fits the data quite well. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.198 indicates no indication of autocorrelation in the residuals, therefore verifying the dependability of the model within the reasonable range of 1.5–2.5.

Table 5: Impact of Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Enrolment of Selected Primary School Pupils in Niger State

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-stat	p-value
(Constant)	5.128	.126		40.668	.000
ENROLMENT	.134	.028	.209	4.725	.000
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	
.209 ^a	.044	.042	.56235	.981	
F	Sig.				
22.322	.000 ^b				

Source: Questionnaire Administered, 2025

Table 5 presents the regression analysis conducted to evaluate the impact of the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) on pupil enrolment in selected primary schools in Niger State. The findings indicate a positive and statistically significant correlation between the programme and enrolment. The unstandardized coefficient (B) stands at 0.134, accompanied by a standardized beta (β) of 0.209, a t-value of 4.725, and a p-value of 0.000. Given that the p-value falls below the 0.05 threshold, we can determine that the relationship holds statistical significance. This indicates that involvement in the HGSFP results in higher enrolment levels, suggesting that with effective implementation of the programme, a greater number of children are attending school.

The R-squared value of 0.044 suggests that the HGSFP accounts for roughly 4.4% of the variation observed in school enrolment. Although this percentage may seem minor, it holds significance within the framework of educational interventions, which are frequently shaped by various socio-economic and institutional elements. The model demonstrates statistical significance, indicated by an F-statistic of 22.322 ($p = .000$). The Durbin-Watson statistic of 0.981 is situated within the acceptable range (1.5–2.5), suggesting that there is no indication of autocorrelation in the residuals, which supports the model’s reliability.

Table 6: Impact of Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Academics Performance of Selected Primary School Pupils in Niger State

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-stat	p-value
(Constant)	4.931	.103		48.018	.000
ACAD_PERFORM	.091	.025	.167	3.596	.000
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	
.167 ^a	.028	.026	.53934	.966	
F	Sig.				
12.929	.000 ^b				

Source: Questionnaire Administered, 2025

Table 6 presents the regression results that reveal the impact of the homegrown school feeding program on the academic performance of selected primary school pupils in Niger State. The findings indicate a positive and statistically significant correlation between the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) and the academic performance of pupils. The unstandardized coefficient (B) stands at 0.091, suggesting that with each unit increase in the HGSFP, there is a corresponding improvement in academic performance by 0.091 units. The standardized beta coefficient (β) stands at 0.167, accompanied by a t-value of 3.596 and a p-value of 0.000, clearly indicating a result that is significantly below the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance. This establishes that the relationship is not a result of random occurrence.

The R-squared value of 0.028 indicates that the HGSFP accounts for roughly 2.8% of the variance in students' academic performance. While this figure may appear modest, it is not uncommon in educational research, where various external factors influence learning outcomes. The overall regression model demonstrates statistical significance, evidenced by an F-statistic of 12.929 ($p = .000$). The Durbin-Watson statistic of 0.966 indicates a slight degree of positive autocorrelation, yet it stays within acceptable limits.

6. Discussion of findings

This research found that primary school students in Niger State benefited greatly from the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), especially in terms of attendance, enrolment, and academic achievement. The program is a crucial intervention for improving educational results for students in public schools, according to regression analysis and stakeholder views from students, parents, and educators.

To begin, there was a robust and statistically significant correlation between students' use of the NHGSFP and their regular attendance at school. A beta coefficient of 0.371 and a p-value of 0.000 were shown by the regression analysis, demonstrating that providing meals considerably enhances students' daily attendance. The fact that more than three quarters of the students and all of the instructors agreed that the program encourages students to show up to class on time lends credence to this claim. Theoretically, this result lends credence to the Social Cognitive Theory, which states that things like food availability in the environment may reward behaviour by producing favourable consequences. With food on the table, parents have less to lose by sending their children to school, and kids no longer have to worry about being hungry. This agrees with the results of two empirical studies that looked at the same topic: Cletus et al. (2022) in Benue State and Egwuasi et al. (2022) in Cross River State.

The research discovered a strong positive correlation between the school feeding program and student enrolment, which was statistically significant but somewhat smaller than the correlation between better attendance and enrolment. With a beta value of 0.209 and a p-value of 0.000, the regression findings showed that the program had successfully increased the number of children enrolled in school. The twelve principals who participated in the survey all agreed that enrolment has grown noticeably since the NHGSFP went into effect. It is worth mentioning, nevertheless, that 80.4% of parents were unsure as to whether or not the program had any direct impact on their children's enrolment. This may be because there are a lot of factors that go into deciding who gets into a certain school, such as how close it is, the family's financial situation, the level of education of the parents, and cultural norms and expectations. However, this finding is in line with previous research that found

that the school feeding effort led to higher enrolment rates, such as Ibrahim et al. (2018) and Agu et al. (2023). According to these results, while the program does help get more people enrolled, other measures, including raising awareness in the community and fighting poverty, are necessary to keep the gains going.

In addition, the research found that the school food program had a favourable effect on academic achievement, albeit a small one. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.167$, $p = 0.000$) suggests that higher nutrition from regular meals helps students study better. A whole hundred percent of educators and eighty-five percent of parents agreed that the program had a favourable effect on students' academic achievement. Additionally, students acknowledged the program's worth; 82.1 percent said it improved their capacity to study. Within the realm of educational research, where several factors such as the family environment, teacher quality, and instructional resources impact learning, the 2.8% R-squared number makes sense, despite its seeming lowness. Both Eze et al. (2020) and Kperogi (2017) found that students' focus, memory, and general cognitive development were increased after eating healthy meals, which in turn led to better academic accomplishment.

The results show that the NHGSFP is helping kids in Niger State who are old enough to attend school by meeting their basic requirements, which is a huge step towards better education for everyone. In addition to boosting enrolment and attendance, the program has a significant impact on students' academic performance. Nevertheless, responders from all demographics have pointed out problems like insufficient financing and oversight, so clearly there is space for development. The program's viability and effectiveness in the long run could be jeopardised unless these systemic difficulties are resolved.

7. Conclusion

This study concludes that the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in Niger State has made a statistically significant and positive contribution to the educational development of pupils in public primary schools, particularly in the areas of school attendance, enrolment, and academic performance. The strongest impact was observed in school attendance, where daily provision of meals served as a direct incentive for pupils to come to school.

The programme also fostered improved enrolment, albeit more prominently recognized by school administrators than parents. Academic performance showed measurable improvements, highlighting the role of nutrition in cognitive development and classroom engagement.

8. Recommendations

Base on the conclusion of the study the following recommendation made:

To enhance the effectiveness of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in Niger State, the government should increase funding to ensure consistent provision of quality and nutritious meals. Partnerships with local farmers, NGOs, and private organizations should be encouraged to support the programme's sustainability.

Effective monitoring mechanisms should also be established. This includes regular supervision, transparent reporting systems, and the use of digital tools to track food supply, quality, and distribution across participating schools.

The coverage of the programme should be expanded to include more public schools, particularly in underserved rural areas. In addition, the menu should be diversified to improve nutritional value and meet children's dietary needs.

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Assessing Adolescents' Perception of Sources and Barriers to Sexual Reproductive Health Information and Services in Metropolitan Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examines adolescents' perceptions of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services in Metropolitan Lagos, Nigeria, addressing gaps in access influenced by cultural, educational, and systemic barriers. A survey of 228 adolescents (83.8% female; 82% aged 18–19 years) revealed significant challenges: 38.2% reported no maternal communication on SRH, and over 50% cited insufficient school-based SRH education. Privacy concerns, fear of judgment, financial constraints, and healthcare provider stigma emerged as critical barriers, with 54.8% highlighting confidentiality fears. Gender analysis showed no significant differences in perceptions of SRH sources or barriers, though females demonstrated greater awareness of available services. Post-secondary educated adolescents perceived higher systemic barriers than their secondary-educated peers. The study underscores the impact of cultural taboos, inadequate parental engagement, and poorly implemented SRH curricula. Recommendations include integrating comprehensive SRH education into school programs, establishing youth-friendly health services prioritizing confidentiality and affordability, leveraging media for awareness campaigns, and enhancing parental communication. Community outreach and technology-based interventions are proposed to bridge gaps for out-of-school adolescents. Addressing these barriers is vital to improving SRH outcomes, reducing unintended pregnancies, and empowering adolescents to make informed health decisions, necessitating collaborative

efforts among policymakers, educators, healthcare providers, and families.

Keywords: Adolescents, Perception, Barriers, Sexual reproductive health, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional period of physical, emotional and social development described by Mukherjee (2016) as the period in life when an individual is no longer a child, but not yet an adult. It is a period in which an individual undergoes enormous physical and psychological changes. It is a transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. The World Health Organization WHO (2020) defines an adolescent as anyone between ages 10 and 19. This period marks the beginning of puberty and sexual maturation.

It is an established fact that adolescents, particularly in Nigeria, comprise a large proportion of the country's population. This is confirmed by Statista (2021), where the percentage of male and female adolescents was given as 23.1%. This stage of their development is a delicate stage that, if not properly managed, can lead them into the development and exhibition of untoward deviant behaviours.

Aderibigbe, et.al. (2011) also observed that it is a stage that they are faced with challenges, especially that of restricted access to sexual and reproductive health information and services due to developmental changes. Any attempt to

mismanage them could have severe implications for the socio-economic development of any nation. This is when girls are found getting involved in adolescent pregnancy, and boys go into drug addiction and other social vices.

MSI Reproductive Choices (2020) describes sexual re-productive health and services as essential to overall health and well-being. They are key in ensuring that everyone can enjoy fulfilling and safe sexual experiences, devoid of coercion, discrimination, or health hazards. It is all about an individual's right to maintain good health and autonomy. It includes proper education and healthcare, allowing one to choose their sexual partners freely. Not just that, it also implements ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies.

Accessing sexual and reproductive health services means that people get to exercise their right to such care. This can span various forms, ranging from medical care for matters like treating a sexually transmitted disease or even support in exercising reproductive autonomy, like getting contraception or abortion care. Adolescents' access to information on sexual reproductive health and services is very important to their social development. The ability to access information about sexual health and reproduction plays a significant part in shaping the educational journey and life opportunities for teenagers. With the knowledge and tools to prevent unexpected pregnancies, they can smoothly continue their education, chase their dream careers, and gain more command over their future.

Mbachu, Agu, & Onwujekwe (2020) reported that adolescents in Nigeria and West Africa often face difficulties when trying to access accurate and comprehensive information regarding sexual reproductive health (SRH) and services. This limited access can result in misconceptions, experiencing negative health outcomes, and engaging in risky behaviour.

They also observed that cultural and societal barriers have impeded adolescents' access to information about sexuality and reproductive health. Traditional norms and cultural beliefs have often created obstacles, treating topics related to sex and contraception as taboo. Consequently, adolescents find seeking information or discussing their concerns challenging openly.

Factors such as social stigma, negative attitudes from healthcare providers and limited access to relevant information have been identified by Klu et al. (2023) as barriers to sexual reproductive health service utilisation among adolescents. They reported that “adolescents who had discussed sexual matters with their fathers, used contraceptives, or experienced sexual coercion were less likely to access information on contraception, sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancy.

Other barriers that are capable of affecting adolescents' perception to SRH information and services have been identified by Wahyuniassih et al. (2024) to include rigid social norms in the society which restrict access to SRH information and services, cultural and religious practices that do not encourage intergenerational dialogue about sex and SRH.

Furthermore, Mbachu, Agu, & Onwujekwe (2020) opined that not all schools in Nigeria and West Africa have SRH education, and those who do are not always the greatest. A lot of them lack coverage and a strong curriculum, and when teachers attempt to provide age-appropriate information or even accurate information, they may not be able to because they were not properly trained, to begin with.

In addition to these, adolescents are known, especially in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, to have limited access to youth-friendly services, negative experiences with healthcare providers who are at times judgemental in their relationship with the youth. Poor-parent-child communication is not left out in this list.

Odo, Samuel, Nwagu, et al. (2018), also, observed that getting the advice and care the adolescents need is difficult, and the services available to them do not seem to have been confidential, judgement-free and built for their specific needs. Many healthcare facilities also lack proper infrastructure and staff, which is required to provide sexual and reproduction services.

Adolescents were also reported to fear being judged by others, like peers or family members, when it comes to getting help or seeking out care. Even healthcare providers themselves can add to the stress by discriminating against them. As a result, it is no surprise that they avoid getting help entirely. The implication of the foregoing is that

these barriers are capable of significantly limiting adolescents' access to essential SRH information and services. This unfortunately can have a range of consequential effects that impede their health, well-being and even future opportunities.

This view is supported by Metha and Seeley (2020) in one of their studies on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Adolescent Pregnancy, where they found that the inability of adolescents to access contraception when needed was responsible for unintended pregnancy among adolescents. They concluded that the higher the denial level of access and information on sexual and reproductive health services, the higher the risk for that adolescent going through such an experience.

Research in adolescent sexual and reproductive can be limited in scope, scale, methodologic rigour, and explanatory power, with resultant limitations for generalizability, reproducibility, and dissemination. Despite this, it is important to establish that the findings of this study will still have its own merits. The tendency for the intended subjects to want to keep a lot of information private could however be a factor that can constrain the quality of information to be shared, due probably to the cultural setting to which they belong.

1.1 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What is the adolescents' perception of sexual reproductive health information and services in Metropolitan Lagos?
- Will there be any significant difference between male and female adolescents' perception of sources, barriers and access to sexual reproductive health information and services in Metropolitan Lagos?
- Will there be any significant difference in adolescents' perception of sources, barriers and access of sexual reproductive health information and

services in Metropolitan Lagos by educational level?

2. Research Methodology

This study used a cross-sectional design to investigate how adolescents in Metropolitan Lagos, Nigeria, perceive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) resources. Researchers surveyed 228 participants, with most identifying as female (84%) and aged 18–19 (82%). The sample included both in-school and out-of-school youth, intentionally selected to reflect diverse educational backgrounds: 89% had post-secondary training (e.g., university or vocational programs), while 11% had completed only secondary school. The design prioritised real-world applicability, blending quantitative data with open-ended feedback to address cultural, educational, and institutional factors affecting SRH access.

2.1 Data Collection Process

A 35-question survey, checked by experts for clarity and tested beforehand, gathered insights on three areas:

- Where adolescents get SRH information (e.g., schools, families, or social media), rated on a 5-point scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”
- Challenges accessing services, such as costs, privacy issues, or stigma from healthcare workers.
- Background details like age, gender, and education level.

2.2 Data Analysis

The team summarised participant demographics using basic statistics (Table 1) and calculated average agreement levels for each perception statement (Table 2). To compare responses between genders and education levels, they ran T-tests on mean scores for sources, access, and barriers (Tables 3–4). A P-value below 0.05 was considered significant, and all calculations were done in SPSS version 26.

3. Results

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Information

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	37	16.2
Female	191	83.8
Total	228	100.0
Age		
15-17yrs	28	12.3
18-19yrs	187	82.0
19 yrs above	13	5.7
Total	227	99.6
Education		
Secondary	25	11.0
Above secondary	203	89.0
Total	228	100.0
Marital Status		
Married	13	5.7
Single	215	94.3
Total	228	100.0

Table1 indicates that 16.2% of the respondents were male while 83.8% are females. 11.0% of the adolescents had secondary education while 89.0% hold post-secondary education qualification. Majority of the respondent 82.0% were with the age of 18-19yrs.

Table 2: Respondents' perception of sexual and reproductive health

	SD	D	U	A	SA
My mother has never discussed any sexual reproductive health issue with me before	1 (0.4)	87 (38.2)	41 (18.0)	50 (21.9)	49 (21.5)
I have gained very important information and knowledge about sexual reproductive health through my school	18 (7.9)	66 (28.9)	28 (12.3)	67 (29.4)	49 (21.5)
I have never attended a class on sexuality education before either in my class or outside the class	45 (19.7)	103 (45.2)	27 (11.8)	29 (12.7)	24 (10.5)
I have been opportuned to see a poster on how to use contraceptives and the benefits of using them	23 (10.1)	43 (18.9)	24 (10.5)	116 (50.9)	22 (9.6)
I have never felt comfortable to seek information about contraceptive from any health facility	23 (10.1)	67 (29.4)	64 (28.1)	44 (19.5)	30 (13.2)
Lack of privacy when seeking information on sexual reproductive health has prevented me from getting adequate and detail useful information that can help me learn		73 (32.0)	37 (16.2)	70 (30.2)	47 (20.6)
Good parent-child communication can help reduce adolescents' involvement in risky sexual behaviours	13 (5.7)	32 (14.0)	12 (5.3)	75 (32.9)	96 (42.1)
Religious organisations like churches and mosques should preach safer sex messages to help reduce risky sexual behaviours among adolescents	30 (13.2)	39 (17.1)	19 (8.3)	99 (43.4)	41 (18.0)
The social media can be taken as a major source of sexual and reproductive health information but in most cases, they give more negative information than positive ones	27 (11.8)	36 (15.8)	5 (2.2)	67 (29.4)	93 (40.8)
I have never visited a health facility or doctor of any kind to seek or receive any sexual reproductive health service on pregnancy of sexually transmitted infections	27 (11.8)	68 (29.8)	8 (3.5)	81 (35.5)	44 (19.3)
The fear of lack of confidentiality can never make me seek sexual reproductive health service on contraceptives that can help me prevent pregnancy.	27 (11.8)	68 (29.8)	8 (3.5)	81 (35.5)	44 (19.3)
Poor access to youth-friendly reproductive health service can be a cause of increasing rate of teenage pregnancy	9 (3.9)	30 (13.2)	41 (18.0)	101 (44.3)	47 (20.6)
There is a very high level of unmet need for modern contraception and this is causing an increase in teenage pregnancy	27 (11.8)	68 (29.8)	8 (3.5)	82 (36.0)	43 (18.9)
There is a relationship between low access/usage of contraceptives and incidence of teenage pregnancy among the adolescents		18 (7.9)	37 (16.2)	123 (53.9)	50 (21.9)
Some sexual and reproductive health services are fairly accessible to adolescents but are with insufficient quality which incidentally cannot guarantee them safer sex	1 (.4)	39 (17.1)	32 (14.0)	96 (42.1)	59 (25.9)

Poor access to sexual reproductive health services and adolescents' contact with unskilled healthcare providers can result in serious complications and possible lack of	16 (7.0)	36 (15.8)	15 (6.6)	98 (43.0)	63 (27.6)
The location of health facilities affect adolescents access to sexual reproductive health services.	22 (9.6)	17 (7.5)	54 (23.7)	95 (41.7)	40 (17.7)
When adolescents are denied access to sexual reproductive health services whenever they visit health facility	6 (2.6)	34 (14.9)	66 (28.9)	76 (33.3)	46 (20.2)
The financial state of some adolescents negatively affect their access to sexual reproductive health services	24 (10.5)	22 (9.6)	25 (11.0)	66 (28.9)	91 (39.9)

Table 3: Test of Significance among Gender, Source, Access of and Barriers to SRH

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. D	t	Sig.
Source	Male	37	7.892	3.213	-1.468	.143
	Female	191	8.801	3.490		
Access	Male	37	28.757	3.269	-1.488	.138s
	Female	188	30.181	5.631		
Barriers	Male	37	42.054	5.281	.029	.978ns
	Female	190	42.026	5.749		

From Table 3, that there was no significant difference between male and female adolescents' source and barriers to issues of sexual and reproductive health. However, significant difference was observed in the access of sexual and reproductive health between male and female with female have higher perception than the male.

Table 4: Test of Significant Difference in Education

	Education	N	Mean	Std. D	t	sig
Source	Secondary	25	9.800	4.031	1.766	.079
	Above secondary	203	8.512	3.363		
Access	Secondary	24	30.500	3.438	.537	.592
	Above secondary	201	29.881	5.521		
Barriers	Secondary	25	40.360	5.353	-1.569	.110
	Above secondary	202	42.237	5.679		

The results in Table 4 indicated that no significant difference existed in source, and access to sexual reproductive health issues according to the level of education attained by the respondents. However, there is significant difference between adolescents with secondary education and those with post-secondary education in barriers to sexual reproductive health. The post-secondary school education adolescents has higher mean score than those with secondary education.

4. Discussion of Findings

From the analysis of the collected and collated data for this study, highly valuable discernments into the challenges faced by adolescents with regards to their perception on the sources and barriers to sexual reproductive health information and service were revealed.

Specifically, the demographic details of the respondents revealed a significant female majority (83.8%), and those aged between 18 and 19 years (82%). Majority of the respondents (89%) also had an educational background that is

beyond secondary level, and were mostly single in their marital status.

The findings obtained on the variable regarding parent-child communication on SRH showed a gap on whether mothers ever discussed sexual reproductive rights issues with them. This was evident in their response patterns (38.2% disagreed, 21.9% agreed and 21.5 strongly agreed. This revealed gap in parent-child communication is capable of reducing the respondents' knowledge about SRH, just as it can ultimately affect their attitude and skills required for handling SRH-related issues.

Furthermore, the respondents expressed a position on the amount of knowledge about SRH gained through school-based education, as over 50% of them felt that not much of SRH knowledge has been gained. This implies that school-based SRH delivery may not have contributed significantly to their increase in knowledge on this variable. However, a little over half of the respondents (50.9%) still confirmed that they had seen poster on contraceptives, which is an indication that they

have actually had some exposure to SRH information through the visual media.

On the adolescents' perception of barriers to SRH services, privacy concern was noticed to major issue. Many of the respondents seeking SRH information and services expressed an opinion that there were barriers obstructing them from accessing these services. Some of the reasons attributed to this include, the fear of wrong judgement by community members and the health workers and in charge of the provision of such services.

Closely related to this is the fear of being judged by family members or even the healthcare providers as being promiscuous. This is evident in the percentage of respondents (54.8%) who agreed with fear of judgement and betrayal of confidentiality as part of the barriers constraining adolescents' access to SRH information and services. Financial limitation was equally identified by adolescents as one factor debarring their access to SRH services. In addition, adolescents expressed concerns about policy and legal barriers as other factors hindering access to SRH information and services.

The study findings revealed that respondents' gender did not significantly influence their perceptions of the sources and barriers to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services. Interestingly, however, female adolescents demonstrated a heightened awareness of available SRH resources relative to males—a trend corroborated by broader global research on gender-specific SRH experiences. For instance, a 2020 World Health Organisation (WHO) analysis underscored how gendered social norms and biological factors may amplify adolescent girls' psychological engagement with SRH topics, potentially increasing their susceptibility to adverse health outcomes compared to boys. These findings suggest that while gender may not shape perceptions of SRH accessibility in a uniform way, systemic inequities and sociocultural expectations could indirectly influence how different groups navigate and prioritize SRH resources.

5. Conclusion

The study highlighted some critical issues that affect access to SRH information and services in Metropolitan Lagos, Nigeria. Some of the key challenges noted included inadequate parental

communication, privacy concerns, fear of wrong judgement and financial limitations.

The findings of the research indicate that cultural norms and beliefs in Nigeria significantly hinder open conversations between parents and adolescents about sexual and reproductive health. Factors such as parental discomfort, cultural taboos, and religious beliefs contribute to this communication gap, which can have detrimental effects on young people's well-being.

Although Nigeria has a national curriculum for sexual health education, its effective implementation in Lagos schools is lacking. Issues like inadequate resources, lack of commitment from some stakeholders, and opposition from certain groups impede the delivery of comprehensive sex education. Furthermore, out-of-school adolescents are often excluded from these educational efforts.

Again, the study revealed that adolescents in Lagos are often hesitant to seek sexual and reproductive health services due to fears about confidentiality and judgment from healthcare providers. This concern, coupled with potential stigma from the community and family, creates a significant barrier to accessing necessary care. Reports suggest that breaches of confidentiality have occurred, which further exacerbate these fears. The study also highlights the need for comprehensive SRH education that myths and misconceptions about modern contraception.

Concerted efforts of concerned stakeholders (government agencies, health workers, trainers, legislators) to address these barriers will be very crucial to ensuring that all adolescents are exposed to opportunities that can assist them in making informed decisions about their sexual health.

6. Recommendations

Overcoming the barriers that adolescents face in accessing SRH information and services is crucial to improving their sexual health outcomes and overall well-being. Arising from the findings of this research, the following recommendations:

Superintending agencies in charge of curriculum development in Nigeria should initiate the development and integration of SRH Education curriculum into the school curricula across all the levels, with a high degree of caution to avoid an

opposition from religious bodies. This is with the belief that improved knowledge about SRH can help reduce misconceptions, and risky sexual behaviours among the adolescents.

Government agencies in charge of the nation's education system and relevant non-governmental organisations should consider the establishment and implementation of youth-friendly health services that geared towards taking care of adolescents' privacy and financial concerns in the course of sourcing for SRH services. Such youth-friendly services must consider the introduction of confidential and affordable service, flexible outreach strategies, and financial support. This will improve their access to and use of SRH services.

Media and community platforms for information dissemination on SRH and ways of promoting safer sexual practices among adolescents should be introduced, by relevant stakeholders like the faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, social groups and the young people themselves will go a long way to help reduce stigmatization and encourage open communication and the use of SRH services.

Parents will need to step up their communication and interaction with their adolescents through open discussions and interactions with them. Such intervention will help improve adolescents' understanding of SRH services early enough. It will equally build some confidence in them to feel freer and comfortable in engaging their parents on such issues.

The out-of-school adolescents must also be reached as the school-based interventions will not reach this group. Community-outreach programmes should be initiated to target this group. Mobile clinics could also be floated in partnership with interested community-based organisations. Young people could be trained to educate their peers on ways to promote healthy sexual behaviours and strategies for seeking help when needed.

The introduction of technology-based interventions can also be considered. For the provision of convenient and accessible SRH information, keeping track of their sexual behaviours and delivering of health education messages. This could be through the design of simple to use mobile apps that can provide

personalised information, and the services required.

The consideration of these recommendations for implementation will significantly contribute to addressing the challenges arising from adolescents' perception of the sources and barriers to SRH information and services, and ultimately assist greatly in enhancing adolescents' health and well-being

Ethical Practices

Participants aged 18+ provided written consent; guardians approved for younger individuals. No names or identifiers were collected to protect privacy. The study protocol was approved by the University ethics board.

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Tertiary Education and Strike Actions in Nigerian Universities: Quest for Development and Quality Education

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Abstract. Advancement of human society is tied to scientific knowledge derivable through quality education that encompasses the transformation of the human mind and translate into socioeconomic development. Any action therefore that inhibits the functional capacity and operational efficiency of the educational system is inimical. This paper elucidates the functionality of education system in Nigeria and how strike has impacted severely the propensity of tertiary education to deliver on its mandate. It argues that education in Nigeria has been faced with myriad of challenges, the consequences of which have consistently result in strike actions, disruption of the academic calendar, extended graduation time for students and underdevelopment. Using a historical perspective and secondary data, the paper content analyses on one hand, the controversies associated with strikes and work-life of employees in Nigerian universities and on the other hand, traces strikes to the ills associated with government lackadaisical attitude towards education. It highlights the problems suffered by the Nigeria Universities, its plausible causes and effects and point that Nigeria government and the academic community are at a critical cross-road. Marx labour-conflict theory bears the burden of explanation and suggests the importance of synergy between gown and town and the adoption of a lasting solution to the incessant feuding.

Keywords: Academic/academia, Education/educational system, University/strikes, Development/growth

1. Introduction

Established as centres for learning and cultural transformation in a development context, the Nigerian university was designed to facilitate modernization and development. The university was conceived as a utilitarian learning system for

cross fertilization of productive ideas, and with the university autonomy, adequate funding and academic freedom, the Nigerian universities were a vista of great promises for the newly independent Nigeria. It ever should remain so but certain fundamentality quickly altered this expectation. At independence, the local comprador elites in Nigeria transformed into national bourgeoisie and hence, the post-colonial government began with a show of disinterest in research and development thus the universities began its descent into retrogression and ruins. The once highly esteemed citadel of learning now lay bereft of its historical *raison d'être* (Truscott & Donker, 2017; Andou, 2017; Bulfin, 2009). The act was a display of insouciance perceived as a derogatory attempt by the post-colonial administration to ridicule the academia. This sparked the earliest known agitation in Nigerian tertiary education. One may ask; has this agitation abated or it has become an insignia of higher education in Nigeria society today?

The agitation by Nigeria university system is captured in strike actions which often, disrupt academic calendars and results in academic setbacks and in some cases long closure of universities. This has become a challenge that affect the education system in Nigeria today (Ogunade & Abuakar, 2022), and the effect of strikes on academic development and staff welfare in Nigerian universities is better imagined than explained (Sunmonu, Abershi & Ogunode, 2022). The Nigerian educational system at the tertiary level has experienced tremendous setbacks owing to incessant strikes actions. This predisposes several universities and the staff to deplorable working conditions and poor livelihood. Consequently, academic development and quality education has waned beyond tolerable standard.

Obi (2004) expresses the concern that a university fundamentally, is in the business of providing knowledge and services; supposing that, a university is rated base on the quality of services it renders and the value it adds to human capital and social development. It is supposed to be heavily funded so as to deliver on it mandatory precept of teaching, research and development. However, this has not been the case with the Nigerian university system. The trajectory of university development in Nigeria is checkered with myriads of challenges. This perhaps is because of the detached priority and poor interest in education by the early comprador elites. The universities established in Nigeria were not designed for best global practice, and following the Liberalization Policy of University Ownership in 1979, university establishment was buoyed. However, underlying this development are challenges of meeting minimum standards of funding, academic-staffing, infrastructure, equipment and staff housing facilities among others. (Abdulrahman, 2017; Ejiogu & Nyewusira, 2014; Sule, 2012). The result is the endemic decay, decline and recurring crises in the academic institutions. The increase in the number of universities and enrolment without commensurate increases in facilities and resources in the country is expectedly met with grim outcome and this is evident in the quality and standards of university graduates produced annually. The Nigerian University Commission (NUC) estimates that Nigeria's 201 public and private Universities are manned by about 100,000 lecturers that teach and supervises about 2.1 million students. Some independent reports note that no public University in Nigeria has an automated library and no public Universities has high level quality internet access. A recent survey established that 76% of public universities lack access to pipe borne water; 45% of students in these institutions use pit-latrines and 67% of students in the institutions relief themselves in the bushes. More appalling is the fact that most Nigerian tertiary institutions are not in congruent with contemporary academic curricula of learning. Nigerian universities lack modern coordination congenial to growth, professionalism, efficiency and excellent academic work output. Though the United Nations in its attempt to improve the quality of in Nigeria proposed a 26% budgetary allocation to education, this has been a far cry from reality. Generally, Universities in Nigeria are underfunded and are falling short in addressing existential needs in which welfare issues are

germane. This accounts for the incessant strain in the relationship between university administrations, academic staff and the government (Tribune, 2022; Anyebe, 2014; Akinwumi, 2010).

Nigerian Universities and its staff are relegated to appalling working condition by the government (Abechi, 2016). Hudu, (2015) believed that the condition of educational service in Nigeria is deplorable. It seems the priority of government is not about the welfare of existing University but the floating of new ones, hence the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities have crafted a means to press home their demands. Largely, strike which seems to be the only language the government understands. Though it usually brings the government to the negotiating table, strike has dire consequences. The narratives of the Nigerian Universities Academic Staff Union and the government is therefore one plaid with extreme hostility, continuous negative sentiments and endless infractions (Okolocha, 2023). ASUU has embarked on several notable strikes. In the 80s, the union embarked on strike actions 8 different times during this period, the union was proscribed by the government. In the 90s, the union again embarked on series of strike actions, 6 in total; at this time, the union was banned again. ASUU circa 21st century, has embarked on 9 gruelling strike actions. During this period, lecturers were not paid and dozens of them were dismissed from the University. The recent of these is the 8-month strike action of 2022 and more recently is the 2024 3day warning strike (Okolocha, 2023). Strike actions is frequent in Nigerian Universities with significant disruption to academic development (Academic Staff Union of University, 2025; Akinbobola, 2022). Currently in this 2025, the union is warming-up for another strike action.

2. Theoretical Underpinning

Labour-conflict is one of the most observable and continuous experience that characterizes employee-employer relationship. The same is true of Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Nigerian government. It is a common knowledge that the agitation between the government and Universities in Nigeria wears a historical face traceable to years of relentless struggle and tension. This struggles trails along the line of power, interest and economic gap. More specifically, the idea of class/labour conflict originates from Marx who sees labour as a commodity, a contractual relationship and an

interstice between the working class and the employer that form the basis for alienation characterized by exploitation, inequality and oppression (Blauner, 1964). Marx believes that power imbalance, economic and social factors are the primary cause of contention between workers and employers of labour. Labour-conflict often arise from employer's typical superior position, allowing them to give directive and make rules that usually cause employees to counter-respond through collective bargaining associations or individual actions (Bottomore & Rubel, 1963).

Employment terms and working conditions, significant level of recognition and respect, human dignity and dignity of labour appears to be among the subliminal concerns of worker in Nigerian Universities for which strike actions frequently occur. Another condition that usually provoke strike action is the concern for good remuneration, decent work environment and modest conditions of service which include hours of work, allowances and benefits as well as and job security. The major causes of strike actions in Nigerian Universities also bothers around these issues: wages, underfunding, security and the government's refusal to negotiate with workers. The experience of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria has been one rife with the aforementioned and labour has assumed a form of feud in order to collectively express perceived grievances. Labour-conflict between academic staff and the government commonly escalate into events that slow-downs the pace of work, sabotage productive capacities of both staff and government, frustrate workers and pressure the government to seek resolution through effective, open communication and dialogue, and grievance procedures that reaches compromise and cooperation which tend to prevent escalating unrest. The latter typifies the functionalist school that believes cooperation rather than conflict is what engineers' development. However, the smouldering encounters between the government and the Nigerian Universities has proved otherwise.

3. Research Methodology

The paper adopts a qualitative approach. It uses the historical method, content analysis and secondary data. The historical method of research as used in this study, evaluate and interpret historical evidence to construct grounding understanding of past events, which involves

identifying and locating credible sources of survey/data, validity and accurate patterns to develop themes and interpretation that supports the research topic. The method involves the process of using critical thinking to assess and analyse the data (sources), and understanding the context and perspective in which to use them; while drawing deductions that support the research topic by interrogating and or accepting existing interpretations to construct facts.

4. Controversies of strikes actions in Nigerian Universities

Strikes actions have become part of the history in Nigerian public sectors and the university is in the thicket of it. Between when the first university was established till now, over 3415 workhours has been lost to work industrial action. This is because Nigerian university community perceive the government as renegade when it comes to implementation of agreements. According to (Arinze & Jakpa, 2025) approximately 75% of Nigerian public sector performance is marked by strike actions which depreciates public sector performance by 48.9%. Strike actions in Nigerian Universities lean towards welfare and economic matters, and in a study by Stanley and Jonathan (2011) economic challenges form 76% of the reasons workers embark on strike. It is undisputable that from 1992 till 2024, every agreement between the Federal Government and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has witnessed bending efforts of protests, warning strikes and indefinite strike actions to actualize. Often, the response of the union to government biases result in series of strikes which has a blanket effect. In the academic environment, it beats on both staff and students and affect the academic development and welfare of both. In the society, it generates pressures on families and ripples across various segment of the economy. It also generates strain for those who depend on the operation of the university for their livelihood. Though, organized to address germane academic issues, students and other members of the society are often caught in the cross fire of the crisis (Amadi & Urho, 2015). For example, due to strike actions, graduate unemployment rate increased by 5.9% from 5.4% while informal employment rate increased by 92.7% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2025).

The narratives of higher education in Nigeria is marked with instances of strikes (Monogbe & Monogbe, 2019). For various reasons and of

different natures, strike actions have become a common knowledge relating to government and the University system in Nigeria (Amede, Agbo, Ogunode & Adah, 2022). It has become a weapon, the only language used by Nigerian public Universities and understood by the government. Yet the agitations of the Universities that mirrors the ills in Nigeria educational system has never been satisfactorily addressed (Olajuwon, Ikpefan, Kola-Dare & Chinaza, 2023). The issue of strikes in Nigerian Universities have become a pendulum that swings back and forth; while in such instances, students suffer and academic calendars are disrupted creating a plausible ground for unforeseen contingencies, the government labels the universities and deployed arm-twisting tactics to repress its agitations. The case of the union presidents who were killed in shady circumstances are pointers to this fact. One was found dead by his car along a federal highway in 1998, while the other was smashed by a car in a State Governor's convoy with bullet wounds in 2013. Under the leadership of the latter, the union was proscribed (Lukman, 2013; Bangura, Beckham, Ibrahim, & Mustapha, 2007).

Understanding the issues and controversies that surround the Nigerian University system bears a contemptible coloration (Daily Post, 2022); because it seems since ASUU was established, no successive administration tenured without some forms of agitation. While some lasted for few weeks, others lasted for many gruelling months. The most recent strike ended in October, 2022 on the injunction of the National Industrial Court (Daily Post, 2022). Ogunode, Ugochukwu and Jegede (2022) believe that, the failure on the part of Federal Government to honour the agreement entered into with the union is a prime reason for incessant strikes in the university. Strike actions could be mitigated principally through adequate budgetary allocation for education, improved working conditions and robust staff welfare package. Nevertheless, as long as the Nigerian Universities are underfunded with derisory facilities and infrastructure, higher education will be uncertain, laughable and strikes will remain incessant.

5. Challenging Realities of Work Conditions in Nigerian Universities

Monogbe and Monogbe (2019) posited that the structure of most institutions in Nigeria Universities office complex, restrooms, laboratories, libraries, lecture theatres, students'

hostels and common rooms are a far cry from being decent and meeting global best standard. They argue that Nigerian University staff lack access to comfortable and decent working environment. While some staff are cramped into small offices with limited facility, others barely have a desk to themselves. Most university libraries are not up to date and needless to say they are not computerized nor are they well furnished. The laboratories in most public universities are dilapidated and have become an unsafe place to work. This according to Tomori (2022) discourages genuine commitment to work, academic excellence and slows down level of development in the society. The construction of good offices and laboratories with modern facilities, grants for research and conference allowance among others will bring about positive development. However, academic staff in Nigerian Universities are either being owed or short-paid (Arikewuyo, 2009). The quality of work and life should translate to social, economic and good standard of living among Nigerian academics and by extension, other staff of Nigerian Universities but the organization of this both is discouraging and dehumanizing. The experience has remained poor commitment to research and teaching, lack of motivation, low productivity, and poor students' performance due to poor quality of teaching and research output (Okolocha, 2023). It is the neglect of university academic work-life by government that result in half-baked graduates that cannot solve work place problems (if ever they get employed) nor be value-relevant to influence or perform on global stage. The quality of work-life is not negotiable if optimum performance of staff is what is expected.

Though the condition of work may change and improve either as a result of government policies or management decisions, the overarching state of poor working conditions in Nigerian Universities is very grievous. It is psychologically, emotionally and physically exerting. Work environment in Nigerian Universities tend to generate discomfort and induce stress which invariably results in low productivity, and health challenges and provoke desires in staff to seek better opportunities in other climes (Ogunode, Jegede & Musa, 2021). Several problems are prevalent which are endemic but the most serious being the brain drain is losing of quality manpower in Nigerian Universities to institutions abroad through organised migration better known as the *jakpa syndrome* (Ogunade & Abubakar, 2021). The reason for this is not farfetched. Poor

financial system and insurance scheme for workers and anticipated socio-economic dilemma upon retirement. The challenging socio-economic realities of the moment make it the more pressing, and causing staff to constantly evaluate and re-evaluate options of migration, a serious challenge bedevilling the educational sector in Nigeria today.

Nigeria government handles education and academic staff of Nigerian Universities with impertinence. This is manifested in poor budgetary allocation to education and government systematic withdrawal from commitment to academic excellence but directly influences the university staff by controlling issues relating to monthly income/allowances, employment and retirement benefits (Azenabor, 2022; Paul & Amadin, 2017). Expectedly, since the establishment of formal education in the country, Nigeria government has never met international standard of education nor the demands that comes with it.

6. Implication of Strikes for Academic Development in Nigeria

Like any social phenomenon, strike actions have both intended and unintended consequences. On the one hand, the consequences of strike are expressed in the immediate resolution of notable causes, but remotely, has far reaching and debilitating outcome. Though strike is an action organized around, and manifested by the cessation of work by employees in ways that communicate demands to employers, such actions could be quick and decisively resolved if parties demonstrate mutuality of respect and commitment to terms of engagement. However, it could be prolonged and injurious where parties involved are unyielding and averse to terms in the light of the negotiable trade-offs (Amadi & Urho, 2015); and whenever the latter happens, it engenders unpleasant consequences. For example, when the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) withdrew its services in order to force the government to meet her demands, the effect was crippling to societal development, it truncated academic activities, and prolong student's graduation time. Families and dependents also suffer in some way owing to the effect of no work no pay clause invoke by the government during this period. Accordingly, idle students seize the opportunity to become the human maxim of the proverbial "idle hand that is the devil's work shop". Thus, the rate of student-

migration and juvenile delinquency increased. While some student became constructive, majority were into clandestine activity to meet economic needs that serves the occasion of their interest (Okeke, 2003).

Furthermore, strike hinders development and spawn great distress for parties involved. From psychological experience and emotional drain to demotivation and socio-economic issues, the impact of strike is better experienced than explained (Sunmonu, Abershi & Ogunode, 2022). Living conditions often deteriorate at this period usually as a result of socioeconomic discontinuity and incapacity which leads to discomfort, ill-health and in some cases death of workers during. It also affects the academic rating of Nigerian Universities which often falls behind several others in world ranking (Amede, Agbo, Ogunode & Adah, 2022; Okeke, 2003). It implicates proper academic development in Nigerian Universities and negate the values place on education and the sociocultural environment that host it.

According to Sunmonu, Abershi, and Ogunode (2022), Nigerian Universities have lost prolific human resources to incessant strikes. Several academics have left for foreign institutions in the world (Amede et al., 2022). This is driven by perceived injustice and corruption which has become pervasive in the Nigeria system (Longe, 2019). Its compelling effect is more and more individuals moving out of the education system in the country. As a result, the education institution is becoming weakened, understaffed and lacking in professional expertise in key research and productive areas (Sunmonu, Abershi, & Ogunode Ibid.). This social current has become a 'new normal' that even when it seems the educational system is stable; academics continue to support the aspiration to move. This experience, while it is brain-gain for foreign institutions, it is brain-drain for Nigerian institutions thereby hampering academic development in the country.

7. Academic System in Nigeria: Wherewithal the Quest for Development

The tertiary institutions in Nigeria have witnessed decline since the university proliferation that begun in 1975. This is particularly seen in the structure of it curricula. The formal education introduced to the Nigeria social system was built around the *raison d'être* and interests of the colonial masters. It was designed to raise

comprador elites and not independent academic mind for leadership and the development (Yohanna & Diggah, 2022). Education was designed for subservience rather than innovative engagements. This construct is still observable in Nigerian education system today. In foreign nations, education plays vital role in the development of productive and functional social institutions that aid human, material and economic aspect of life, but the Nigerian experience appears to be the exact opposite. In order to shore up interest like the burgeoning developed societies, universities were founded without recourse to contents, structure and its ability to inspire development. The learning structure seems to be enmeshed in reticence that accommodates compliances rather than produce people who are creative and productive.

The educational system in Nigeria ignores what is important to the untrained human mind as well as the uniqueness of the cultural environment. What is meant to be developmental through quality erudition, conscious intelligence and the mastery of relevant forms of life became a thing that stunt intelligence, reverses growth and inhibits social development (Tomori, 2022). As it is today, academic institutions in Nigeria teaches orthodoxy rather than innovation, research and development. The system encourages the mind to obey rules, follow narratives without questioning contradictions thereby producing impressionable graduates that take ‘orders’, without trust of intuition. For the most part, the current educational system in Nigeria reflects the coloration of the colonial system and bears the imprint of the ‘colonial-ghost’ overlords that designed it (Jacob, 2002).

Furthermore, academic ventures and development in Nigeria are suppressed because politics which has leverage on the academia to its detriment. This impairs the capacity to be critical and think objectively since “he who pays the piper dictates the tune”. Contrary to the belief that education transforms the human mind, it seems to regress it. This is both challenging and confusing because individuals cannot improve on the local knowledge neither can they contribute significantly to personal and societal development. As a result, the ability to think critically is weakened, hence, the society is plunged into avoidable vicious circle of underdevelopment and retrogression. This captures the challenges and indicate the gap between Nigeria’s education policy that aims for

individual and national development, and the reality of its flaws (Otite, 2001).

The philosophy of education in Nigeria hinges typically on failure, dim hope of getting a job after school, and fear of strike actions among others. Learning is akin to passing examination instead of mental development. The burden of the academic system of the 21st century education in Nigeria is predicated on foundational contradictions. It characterizes issues that are fundamental in nature especially from the periods when tertiary institution was founded in Nigeria (Ogunode & Musa, 2020). To this end, Olanrewau, Akinjoi, and Niyi (2022) view the tertiary education in Nigeria as bedeviled by myriads of problems some of which are as follows:

A grueling challenge to Nigeria academic system is inadequate funding. It is a major factor threatening the survival of public institutions. In the face of harsh socioeconomic conditions, inadequate funding is inimical to the continuity of educational system in Nigeria. Underfunding affects the quality-of-service delivery, job performance and invariably the growth of the institution. This aid in producing unemployable graduates and also unseasoned academic staff. The society educational institutions struggle and cannot compete with its Western counterparts on a global stage especially as they lack strong financial support.

Another problem in this context is fraud and corruption in public universities. Its incident itself in ways involving unfair allocation of grades; sexual-harassment, admission racketeering, contract inflation, employment of staff without requisite qualifications, examination malpractice among others. Often, resources meant for infrastructure and project execution, procurement of utilities, remunerations for staff and welfare packages end up diverted into private accounts. This has prevented the successful evolvement of Nigerian education system into a truly global brand and has also resulted in the withdrawal of financial subvention from foreign multinationals and donor organizations.

There is the issue of lack of modern and sophisticated infrastructures. Several public universities in Nigeria do not have modern facility designed to aid learning and development. Infrastructural decay has become the order of the day in Nigerian universities. Littering the landscape of several universities are old

abandoned projects while new ones are not in any way better. This militates against academic excellence and makes education in Nigeria less desirable to foreign students. It constitutes a serious setback to academic development in Nigeria and a reason the academia is often at logger-heads with the government.

Moreover, there is the problem of academic staff. Academic Staff of Universities facilitate everyday teaching, project supervision and conducting of examination according to sessional academic calendars. However, the shortage of manpower both of teaching and non-teaching staff is a major setback that demonstrates a wide disparity between local and foreign universities. As Ogunode and Musa, (2020) rightly noted that lack of academic manpower is a dilemma confronting higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Also, because several teaching and non-teaching staff have left the country, the Universities in Nigeria is now witnessing a decline in ability to organize quality teaching and research in various faculties. The implication is that the few hands left are overburdened with work-load without corresponding increase in remunerations and this has resulted in psychological, emotional and physical burn-out or breakdown.

Furthermore, is the issue of insecurity. Insecurity has become a concern at all levels of operation in Nigeria public Universities and it poses a threat to continuity of learning. Nigerian Universities are not secured any more, they have become theaters of violence, kidnapping and cult activities. An example is an incident where an academic staff was attacked and left for dead in 2024 at a university in South-South Nigeria while several others have suffered the experience of ransom-kidnapping. As noted by Okolocha (nd) cults have turned university campuses into their forts, and constitute themselves into a brutal gang, wreaking havocs, killing and preventing students and lecturers from going about their lawful businesses. The use of school libraries, faculty laboratories and common rooms in late hours are impossible in Nigeria universities.

Another challenge is the primary objective of establishing Universities, which is to conduct cutting-edge research. However, considering the enormous challenges faced by Nigerian Universities, researches in the Universities are almost defeated and *a priori* altogether unproductive in contributing meaningfully to economic and human capacity development.

Also, ethnic bigotry, power struggle and government biases have rendered the universities' ability to conduct credible cutting-edge researches ineffective (Okolocha, 2023; Obi, 2004).

Lastly, the contemptible attitude of the governments towards research and non-funding of research programmes is a major factor affecting the propensity of researchers to conduct quality studies that promote genuine home-grown pattern of development in the society. Though research is a key development indicator used to assess and measure performance of tertiary institutions, the organization of research programme in Nigerian Universities begs the question of funding, poor infrastructure, outdated facilities, brain-drain syndrome, fraud and corruption. These factors cripple the progress of Universities in the country and its ability to realize its mandatory goals and mission.

8. Findings

The broken window is a way of thinking and a subtle explanation of social reality in human society as a product of everyday thought-life and values. The prevailing socio-cultural experience and conditions in Nigeria Universities today is linked to neglect and deliberate abandonment of commitment to responsibilities. It stems first from the government and then to those saddled with oversight responsibility of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is as a result of this neglect that the Nigeria Universities have become a social experiment and a caricature of education. This leads to the production of graduates that are neither employable nor competent. The wider effect is a continuous circle of unproductive pattern of social and economic engagements and a complex mixture of actions, counter actions and reactions. Also, various issue associated with Nigerian Universities have made it an environment associated with non-standard academic practices making people develop varying perspective of the academic institution and academics in Nigeria. For this reason, the virtues of learning in Nigeria Universities are derided while its deficits are highlighted. This to a great extent, influences the way staff and students conduct themselves within university environment. Consequently, academic activities become disconcerting and misdirected which is why the feud between the Nigerian government and the Universities remain unabated.

Furthermore, the deplorable state of Nigerian Universities system traceable to the failure to uphold academic excellence, university staff welfare and government control of activities within university space. Nigerian Universities have thus become the proverbial *Oliver Twist* that always asks for more in favour of academic advancement. Lastly, academic development in Nigeria is analogous to a reed in the wind; finding the lead to healing the festering wounds of academic development in Nigeria is a condition characterized by lack of will, merit, poorly coordinated social action and corruption. The latter shapes the characteristics of individuals within the system and it seems almost impossible to end.

9. Conclusion

Nigeria academic system deviates from international best standards. The Nigerian academic development is plagued with myriads of problems; however, these challenges can be dealt with holistically. Strike actions, poor infrastructure and learning facilities, brain drain and poor research funding in the academia can be a thing of the past if concerted effort is made by all concerned. To resolve the challenges confronting academic development in Nigeria there should be credible sources of funding of research in tertiary institutions, merit should be encouraged, facilities should be state-of-the-art and remunerations should be motivating. Also, fraud and corruption should be comprehensively addressed and provision of adequate security should be prioritized. This will stem the tide of agitation in the academia, and redirect academic focus to statutory responsibilities of research, teaching and mentorship rather than feuding with the government and embarking on strike actions. Failure to holistically prioritize academic development in Nigerian Universities will only lead to continuous labour-conflict between employer and employee, a state-of-being which Marx perceives as the only engine of development that produces meaningful development in human society.

10. Recommendations

So, where do we go from here? The rationale for the development of the academia requires a pragmatic approach. On the part of Academic Staff Union of Universities should be an attitude change with zero tolerance for mediocrity; while on the part of Nigerian government, should be a spirited effort against lack of will to honour

agreement with the union. Also, the matrix of academic development in the country should follow a prescribed template agreed upon by the government and ASUU. Furthermore, the challenges of Nigerian Universities should not be treated as isolated but interconnected entities which demand a holistic rather than singular approach.

Solving a problem that has replicated itself in different aspects of the Nigerian society demands an expertise because a short-cut to addressing it may be akin to uprooting a tree whose root has extended deep into the foundation of a wall. To pull down the tree will mean to pull down the wall seeing that the life force of the one is also the sustaining power of the other.

On the strength of the foregoing therefore, the following recommendations are made:

- Education policy should bear the input of both the government and Academic staff union of Universities in Nigeria. Terms and condition of service should be operational and clearly laid out which shall be binding on both parties. This will create a synergy of understanding and commitment between parties involved that will prevent unwarranted strike actions in Nigerian Universities.
- Academic Staff Union of Universities should implore legal and more productive alternatives rather than embarking on strike actions to press home demands with the government.
- Lastly, the government should establish a grant awarding body whose responsibility will be the development, funding, coordination and implementation of research programmes in Nigerian Universities. This will promote cordial relationship and healthy interactions between the academic institutions and the government; and in any case where there is a tone of misunderstanding, it can be quickly resolved given the existence of the frame-work that governs their engagement ab initio. This will uphold the essence of the axiom "the town and the gown."

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Impact of TETFUND Intervention on Academic Staff Training and Development of Selected Universities in North Central Nigeria

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Abstract. Over the years, the educational sector has suffered criminal neglect due culminating to a myriad of challenges like lack of qualified manpower among others. This study examined the impact of TETFUND intervention enhanced staff training and development in north central Nigeria University. The study adopted a combination of ex-post facto and survey research designs, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, and observation, while secondary data were drawn from textbooks, journal publications, university records, and TETFund reports. The study population comprised 2,397 academic staff from Benue State University, Makurdi; Nasarawa State University, Keffi; and the University of Jos. A sample size of 352 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, and proportional sampling was employed to allocate the sample across the universities. Data were analyzed using descriptive and tabular methods, with results presented textually. Findings revealed that TETFund interventions positively impacted academic staff training and development, particularly through sponsorship for international and local conferences, institutional-based research, Ph.D. programmes, book publications, and scholarly manuscript publications. It was recommended that should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainability of interventions across beneficiary universities, in order to enhance equity in the allocation of resources to bridge disparities in staff development opportunities. Training opportunities should be expanded beyond Ph.D. sponsorship and conferences to include emerging areas such as digital pedagogy, leadership, and specialized professional certifications.

Keywords: TETFund intervention, Staff Training, Staff Development, North Central Universities

1. Introduction

Education remains the cornerstone of national development, with universities playing a central role in producing the skilled manpower required for economic growth, social transformation, and global competitiveness. In Nigeria, universities are expected to serve as centers of knowledge generation, research, and innovation. Tertiary education is a veritable tool for the socio-economic development of any country, it provides high-level manpower training, fostering intellectual capacity, generating innovation and contributing to the nation's ability to address complex challenges through research and skilled workforce development ultimately driving economic growth and social progress. It is therefore, generally accepted that educating the people especially at the tertiary level is a great leap towards achieving robust human capital development especially for an economy that seeks competitive advantage in this globalized world. This implies that sustainable development cannot take place if the human resource required to drive progressive change in the economy is not available. Qualitative tertiary education entails that the products of institutions of higher education should be able to perform according to expected standard and compete favorably with their peers in other countries of the world.

Globally, University education is regarded as engines room of economic and sustainable national development. They transmit knowledge and train the human mind (Johnston, 2005). Tertiary education in Nigeria is a veritable tool for the realization of national development and the promotion of basic research. Over the year's Nigerian government priority to tertiary education i.e. universities among others in terms of funding has declined and has affected the universities to effectively and efficiently perform their duties, particularly the traditional roles of teaching and

research. In an effort to bridge these gaps, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) in 2011 as a successor to the Education Tax Fund. TETFund is mandated to collect and manage education tax revenue and channel it into critical areas of tertiary education such as infrastructure, research, and academic staff training and development (Isah, 2024; Oyoru, 2024). The staff development component is particularly significant, as it provides opportunities for postgraduate sponsorship, research grants, conference attendance, workshops, and professional capacity-building programs designed to improve the knowledge, skills, and productivity of academic staff (Mac-Ozigbo, Ama, Ifegwu & Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2024).

Over the years, the educational sector has suffered criminal neglect due culminating to a myriad of challenges like lack of qualified manpower among others, Although UNICEF has recommended 26% of annual budget to education, regrettably, budgetary allocation by successive administrations to education has been low. The implication of this is the collapse of qualified manpower. However, their performance has been hindered by chronic underfunding, infrastructural decline, and limited investment in human resource capacity, particularly in the area of staff training and development (Jumare, Ibrahim & Sabonsara, 2019; Olufemi & Ayooluwa, 2021). These challenges have weakened the ability of universities to deliver quality teaching, engage in cutting-edge research, and contribute meaningfully to national development.

Several studies have identified the existence of TETFund intervention on staff training and development in Nigerian tertiary institutions. For instance, Isah (2024) reported that TETFund interventions supported staff training and research in Jigawa State polytechnics, though access challenges persisted. Similarly, Oyoru (2024) found a significant positive impact of TETFund interventions on staff training and development outcomes in Nigerian universities, recommending greater funding allocation. Mac-Ozigbo, Ama, Ifegwu, and Igbokwe-Ibeto (2024) further revealed that TETFund sponsorship of research and overseas training greatly improved staff capacity and performance, but emphasized the need for accountability and effective monitoring. In another study, Jumare, Ibrahim, and Sabonsara (2019) highlighted that TETFund interventions increased the number of staff with higher degrees, enhanced conference participation, and improved teaching delivery in North-West institutions. Likewise, Olufemi and Ayooluwa (2021) demonstrated that TETFund interventions in

Southwestern universities facilitated both training and long-term staff development, resulting in significant institutional growth. However, there is dearth in the holistic examination of the impact of TETFUND intervention on staff training and development in North central Nigeria University. Against the backdrop that this study is seek to examine to what extent does TETFUND intervention enhanced staff training and development in north central Nigeria University?

2. Concept of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

Imagine a university without buildings or classrooms or even a library. Imagine a university ten thousand miles away from its students. Imagine a university without academic departments, without required courses or major or grades. Imagine a college open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Imagine a college pro posing a bachelor's degree in Individualized Studies or in Interdisciplinary Studies, with a catalogue of more than 4 000 different courses. Imagine a degree valid only for five years after graduation. Imagine a college willing to reimburse its students if they do not find a suitable job within six months after graduation. Imagine a higher education system where institutions are ranked not by the quality of their teachers, but by the intensity of electronic wiring and the degree of Internet connectivity. Imagine a country whose main export earnings come from the sale of higher education services. Imagine a socialist nation which charges market rate tuition fees to obtain full cost recovery in public higher education. Are we entering the realm of science fiction? Or are these evocations real-life stories of revolution in the world of higher education on the eve of the 21st century? In the past few years, many countries have witnessed significant transformations and reforms in their higher education systems, including the emergence of new types of institutions, changes in patterns of financing and governance, the establishment of evaluation and accreditation mechanisms, curriculum reforms, and technological innovations. But the tertiary education landscape is not changing as fast everywhere. Some universities have proudly tried to maintain their traditions, good or bad. At Oxford University, New College is a venerable 16th century institution. At Bob Jones University in South Carolina, interracial dating is still banned. These unbending institutions are not alone; other universities throughout the world have been passive in the face of crisis. The oldest university on the American continent, the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic (established in 1538), is about to collapse under the pressure of its 80 000 students crowding facilities originally designed to

accommodate only 6 000 students. The largest classical university in Latin America, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, was paralyzed for ten months in 1999 2000 by a strike over the Rector's proposal to introduce voluntary tuition fees in an amount equivalent to USD 140 per year. In this rapidly evolving world, what is likely to happen to those higher education institutions which are not willing or able to change?

3. The Concept of Education Challenges

"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness..." Charles Dickens There are three majors intertwined new challenges which bear heavily on the role and functions of higher education: i) economic globalization; ii) the increasing importance of knowledge as a driver of growth, and iii) the information and communication revolution.

4. Globalization

Globalization is the complex integration of capital, technology, and information across national boundaries in such a way as to create an increasingly integrated world market, with the direct consequence that more and more countries and firms have no choice but to compete in a global economy. Globalization may not be a new phenomenon. The conquest of America by the Spanish and Portuguese invaders at the end of the 15th century, the triangular cotton and slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries, the construction of the trans-Atlantic telegraph cable in the 1860s, and the colonization of most of Asia and Africa until the middle of the 20th century were key factors of economic integration and determinants of economic growth on a global scale. But there has undoubtedly been an acceleration of the phenomenon in the past two decades as demonstrated by the increase in international trade and the growing interdependence of capital markets. Emphasizing globalization as an important economic trend does not imply a value judgment, either positive or negative. Many people see this evolution as a major source of opportunities, while critics decry the dangers of inter-dependency and high volatility, such as the risk of transferring financial crises from one country to the other. But globalization is happening, whether one approves of it or not, whether one likes it or not, and every country in the world, every firm, every working person is affected by it and is very likely a part of it. Growing role of knowledge. The second dimension of change is the growing role of knowledge. Economic development is increasingly linked to a nation's ability to acquire and apply technical and socio-economic knowledge, and

the process of globalization is accelerating this trend. Comparative advantages come less and less from abundant natural resources or cheaper labor, and more and more from technical innovations and the competitive use of knowledge. The proportion of goods with a medium-high and high level of technology content in international trade has gone from 33% in 1976 to 54% in 1996. Today, economic growth is as much a process of knowledge accumulation as of capital accumulation. It is estimated that firms devote one third of their investment to knowledge-based intangibles such as training, research and development, patents, licensing, design and marketing. In this context, economies of scope, derived from the ability to design and offer different products and services with the same technology, are becoming a powerful factor of expansion. In high-technology industries like electronics and telecommunications, economies of scope can be more of a driving force than traditional economies of scale. New types of companies, called producer services companies, have begun to prosper as providers of specialized knowledge, information and data supporting existing manufacturing firms. Experts see them as the principal source of created comparative advantage and high value added in advanced industrialized economies. At the same time, there is a rapid acceleration in the rhythm of creation and dissemination of knowledge, which means that the life span of technologies and products gets progressively shorter and that obsolescence comes more quickly. In chemistry, for instance, there were 360 000 known substances in 1978. This number had doubled by 1988. By 1998, there were three times as many known substances (1 700 000). Almost 150 000 new "patent equivalents" were added to the Chemical Abstracts data base in 1998, compared to less than 10 000 a year in the late 1960s. Perhaps the best illustration of the short lifetime of new information and products comes from the computer industry, where the monopoly of the Intel micro processing chip has decreased spectacularly in duration with each new version. With its 386 microprocessor, Intel dominated the market for more than three years in the late 1980s. Ten years later its competitive edge lasted only three months with Pentium II. Even more dramatic, Pentium III was supplanted by AMD's Athlon microprocessor after being on the market for only a few weeks. In addition, in many fields the distance between basic science and technological application is narrowing or, in some cases, disappearing altogether. The implication is that pure and applied research is not separate any longer. Molecular biology and computer science are two salient examples of this evolution. The results of a recent survey of technical innovation in US manufacturing firms underscore the strategic

importance of academic research in the development of new industrial products and processes. On average, 19% of new products and 15% of new processes were directly based on academic research. The proportion was even higher, 44 and 37% respectively, in high technology industries such as pharmaceuticals, instruments and information processing.⁵ There is also a significant geographical dimension to this relation between academic research and industrial applications. This is underlined by a rich body of evidence on the impact of universities on regional development and the spillover effects of academic research on industrial research and technology and local innovation.⁶ Information and communication revolution The third dimension of change is the information and communication revolution. The advent of printing in the 15th century brought about the first radical transformation in the way knowledge is kept and shared by people. Today, technological innovations are revolutionizing again the capacity to store, transmit, access and use information. Rapid progress in electronics, telecommunications and satellite technologies, permitting high-capacity data transmission at very low cost, has resulted in the quasi abolition of physical distance. Sixty years ago, a phone call from New York to London cost the equivalent of USD 300 per minute, today that same call costs only five cents per minute. In 1985, the cost of sending 45 million bits of information per second over one kilometer of optical fiber was close to 100 dollars; in 1997, it was possible to send 45 000 million bits per second at a cost of just 0.05 cents. For all practical purposes, there are no more logistical barriers to information access and communication among people, institutions and countries.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Concept of Staff Training

Staff training is universally regarded as a strategic investment for organizations seeking to enhance employee performance and achieve long-term institutional goals (Ujunwa, 2024; Nzimakwe & Utete, 2024). Unlike basic orientation, it represents a structured process designed to strengthen employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies, thereby improving their effectiveness and the overall performance of the organization (Kisasilla & Mutarubukwa, 2024).

Training serves both corrective and developmental purposes. Corrective training addresses gaps in knowledge or performance deficiencies, while developmental training equips employees with new competencies to adapt to emerging technologies,

innovative practices, and dynamic workplace environments (Kisasilla & Mutarubukwa, 2024). This dual role ensures that training is not merely reactive but also forward-looking, preparing organizations for future challenges.

Equally important, effective training aligns with organizational strategy. By linking individual development to institutional objectives, training ensures that investments in human capital translate into measurable improvements in productivity, innovation, and service delivery (Xu, 2010). This alignment enhances the efficient use of resources and guarantees that the benefits of training extend beyond individual employees to the broader organization.

In addition, training facilitates knowledge transfer and organizational learning. Staff who receive systematic training often disseminate acquired skills and insights to colleagues, creating a multiplier effect that strengthens teamwork and collective capacity. Well-designed training programs also foster motivation, commitment, and professional identity, as employees recognize their institution's investment in their personal and career growth.

In the context of today's competitive, technology-driven environment, staff training is no longer optional but a strategic necessity. Organizations that neglect continuous training risk stagnation, reduced adaptability, and diminished competitiveness. Conversely, institutions that prioritize training strengthen their resilience, sustain employee performance, and secure long-term organizational success.

5.2 Concept of Staff Development

Staff development is a continuous and strategic investment aimed at improving employees' skills, knowledge, and competencies, thereby enhancing organizational performance while supporting individual career growth (Kasmin, 2021; Ujunwa, 2024; A & Sambaiah, 2024). It includes activities such as training programs, workshops, mentoring, and continuing education, all designed to align employee capabilities with organizational objectives and respond to the evolving demands of modern industries (Ujunwa, 2024; Hasman et al., 2024). Beyond improving current performance, staff development equips employees for future roles and prepares them to address emerging challenges (Sabri et al., 2024).

Investing in staff development yields multiple benefits, including improved employee retention, higher productivity, and greater job satisfaction (Kowtha, 2018; Ujunwa, 2024; Pujianto, 2024).

Organizations that prioritize workforce development are better positioned to remain competitive, foster innovation, and adapt to changing market conditions (Karimova, 2022; Bessonova & Chernata, 2021). Such investments also nurture a culture of continuous learning, strengthening employee loyalty and contributing to long-term organizational resilience (Jones et al., 1997; Matejić & Čurčić, 2023; Vanitha & Ganesh, 2024).

The effectiveness of staff development depends on several key components. Conducting needs assessments ensures that training addresses relevant skill gaps and aligns with organizational priorities (Coates, 2012; Rijdt et al., 2013). Equally important is cultivating a supportive learning environment where employees feel encouraged to innovate and share knowledge without fear of failure (Ranasinghe et al., 2024; Noesgaard & Jørgensen, 2023). Providing regular feedback and coaching further reinforces learning, enabling employees to refine their skills and sustain performance improvements (Biz et al., 2024).

Advances in technology have significantly reshaped staff development practices. E-learning platforms, virtual training sessions, and digital resources provide flexible and cost-effective opportunities for continuous learning (Leon, 2023; Ranasinghe et al., 2024; Gandía et al., 2024). These tools also allow for personalized learning pathways, accommodating diverse professional needs and learning preferences (Zheng et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2023; Poulouse et al., 2024). However, reliance on technology can be limited by inadequate digital infrastructure or insufficient digital literacy among staff, which may reduce program effectiveness.

Despite its promise, staff development initiatives face persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, weak managerial support, and employee resistance to change (Neagu, 1986; Coomber, 2018). Overcoming these barriers requires strong leadership commitment, effective communication, and alignment of training programs with organizational goals (Griffith, 2004; Anužienė et al., 2021). Continuous evaluation and impact assessment are equally vital, not only to ensure program relevance but also to demonstrate return on investment and justify sustained funding (Rostek & Kladiuko, 1988; Talent et al., 2024; Mabindisa, 2022).

5.3 Impact of TETFund Intervention on Staff Training and Development

TETFund interventions have materially strengthened staff training and development across Nigerian tertiary institutions (Alabi et al., 2024; Shuaibu & Abuhuraira,

2024; Olamide & Olaniran, 2024). Conceived to mitigate chronic underfunding, these interventions target human capital formation enhancing academic staff knowledge, pedagogical skill, and research competence with the broader aim of improving the quality of teaching, learning, and research outputs and positioning Nigerian universities for global competitiveness (Agba et al., 2023; Isiaka et al., 2020).

Several studies consistently link TETFund-sponsored trainings, workshops, and conference participation to improved classroom delivery, curriculum currency, and adoption of active learning methods (Alabi et al., 2024; Shuaibu & Abuhuraira, 2024). Institutions report better alignment of course content with industry and societal needs, reflecting an incremental shift from content transmission to competency-oriented teaching (Uzochukwu et al., 2016). In this way, the interventions have helped reshape pedagogical practices and enhance teaching effectiveness across many Nigerian tertiary institutions.

TETFund support has also expanded opportunities for research design training, grant writing, and dissemination, contributing to higher research throughput, collaboration, and visibility (Alabi et al., 2024). Through institution-based research and conference sponsorship, staff gain exposure to frontier methods and peer networks, which reinforces publication pipelines and knowledge transfer (Shuaibu & Abuhuraira, 2024). By supporting research capacity, TETFund has helped institutions strengthen their academic reputation and global competitiveness.

Findings further indicate that structured training pathways and postgraduate scholarships (Master's/PhD) accelerate academic credentialing, tenure progression, and leadership readiness among faculty (Isiaka et al., 2020; Christianah & Olufunmilola, 2023). These effects ripple across departments as trained staff mentor colleagues, creating internal multipliers for capability development (Abdulrahman et al., 2022). Thus, professional growth is not only personal but also institutional, as knowledge sharing fosters broader development.

Scholarship schemes remain a flagship component of TETFund interventions, with reports showing sponsorship of about 30,000 Master's and PhD scholars locally and internationally, thereby enlarging the pool of highly qualified academics (Isiaka et al., 2020; Christianah & Olufunmilola, 2023). Beyond degree programs, nearly 150,000 academic and non-academic staff have benefitted from conferences and workshops, expanding methodological toolkits,

pedagogical innovations, and professional networks (Olufunmilola & Christianah, 2023). These engagements have had immediate impacts on classroom practice and research dissemination, showing how TETFund integrates both long-term and short-term staff development strategies (Abdulrahman et al., 2022).

Support for institution-based research and book development/publications addresses foundational knowledge infrastructure, enabling departments to sustain inquiry and locally relevant scholarship (Alabi et al., 2024). Such investments complement staff training by providing the material and intellectual ecosystem necessary for research-led teaching. In essence, TETFund strengthens both the human and infrastructural bases of Nigerian tertiary institutions, creating an enabling environment for effective teaching and research.

The literature also identifies several reinforcing mechanisms that link TETFund interventions to outcomes. Accredited training builds disciplinary and methodological depth (Isiaka et al., 2020), while professional socialization through conferences expands collaboration and co-authorship opportunities (Olufunmilola & Christianah, 2023). In addition, trained staff diffuses practices through peer mentoring and departmental seminars (Uzochukwu et al., 2016), while research and publication support boosts institutional capacity to attract further grants and partnerships (Alabi et al., 2024). These mechanisms show how TETFund interventions yield both direct and indirect benefits to institutions.

While there is broad agreement that TETFund improves staff competence, research output, and teaching effectiveness (Alabi et al., 2024; Shuaibu & Abuhuraira, 2024; Olamide & Olaniran, 2024), some studies point to challenges that constrain its impact. These include uneven access across institutions and disciplines, administrative bottlenecks, and the absence of effective tracking mechanisms to ensure post-training utilization (Agba et al., 2023; Isiaka et al., 2020). Moreover, without complementary enablers such as modern laboratories, digital libraries, and time release for research, the full benefits of training may remain limited (Uzochukwu et al., 2016; Abdulrahman et al., 2022).

Taken together, evidence portrays TETFund as a pivotal lever for human capital development in Nigerian higher education. Scholarships and targeted trainings have expanded academic qualifications and pedagogical quality, while research support has improved scholarly productivity and institutional

visibility. To sustain and amplify these gains, the literature suggests strengthening equitable access to reduce institutional disparities, embedding monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track outcomes, and integrating staff development with research infrastructure and workload policies to maximize returns (Agba et al., 2023; Isiaka et al., 2020; Abdulrahman et al., 2022)

6. Empirical Review

Sulaiman and Musa, (2024). Assessing the Transformative Impact of TETFund Intervention on Academic Staff Training and Development in North-West Nigerian University. The study adopted survey research design, primary method of data collection through questionnaires. The data was presented in simple percentage with the aid of SPSS, Simple regression analysis was used to test the Hypothesis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Findings from the study revealed that, there is significant positive effect relationship between TETFund intervention and academic staff training and development of the Universities in the North-West. The statement of the null hypothesis that Tetfund has no significant effect on Academic staff training and development was rejected. The study recommends that, TETFund should increase the level of intervention on academic staff training and development in the North West Universities. Training is a significant factor for the increase of academic performance (you can't give what you don't have) in order to make learning conducive and standard for both teaching staff and the students to achieve their learning objectives.

Isah (2024) examined the effects of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) Intervention Policy on Academic Staff Development in Polytechnics, Jigawa State, Northwestern Nigeria. Data were obtained from documents on interventions collected from polytechnics in the state, which satisfied the requirements of this conceptual research. The study explored the effectiveness of TETFund policies in promoting educational research, staff training, and development within the polytechnics, while also highlighting challenges encountered in accessing interventions, which to some extent hinder academic staff development. It was recommended that adequate access to TETFund interventions should be ensured for staff development in Jigawa State and extended to other states in the federation.

Oyuru (2024) investigated the contributions of TETFund interventions to the training and development of academic staff in Nigerian universities between 2009 and 2022. Data were collected using a

structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, with closed-ended questions. Simple linear regression was employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed that TETFund interventions had a positive and significant effect on academic staff development in Nigerian universities. The study recommended that stakeholders in the Nigerian education sector allocate more funds to TETFund interventions to further enhance academic staff development outcomes.

Mac-Ozigbo, Ama, Ifegwu, and Igbokwe-Ibeto (2024) examined TETFund Intervention and Academic Staff Training and Development in selected federal universities in Nigeria (2018–2022). The study adopted a descriptive survey design, relying on both primary and secondary data. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample population. Data were presented in frequency tables and percentages, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was employed with the aid of SPSS (version 20.0) to test the hypotheses. Findings showed that TETFund sponsorship of research had a significant positive impact on academic staff development in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and the National Open University of Nigeria (2018–2022). It also established that overseas sponsorships for staff development significantly enhanced the performance of beneficiaries. The study recommended the establishment of university-level committees to ensure transparency and accountability in disbursement of funds, as well as monitoring of the quality of research output from beneficiaries. Additionally, it suggested that TETFund should collaborate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and host countries to ensure the timely return of beneficiaries upon completion of their studies.

Jumare, Ibrahim, and Sabonsara (2019) studied the impact of TETFund interventions on staff training and development in tertiary institutions in Northwestern Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design, with a population of 1,241 lecturers, from which a sample of 423 was drawn using the Research Advisor's Table. A self-developed, structured questionnaire validated by experts in Educational Administration and Planning at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, was used to collect data. The data were analyzed using frequencies and simple percentages. The findings revealed that TETFund interventions significantly contributed to staff acquisition of higher degrees, improved teaching methods, and enhanced staff skills through conference attendance. The study recommended that the Federal Government, through TETFund, should increase annual allocations, particularly for staff training and

conference attendance, to build staff capacity and improve productivity in tertiary institutions.

Olufemi and Ayooluwa (2021) examined TETFund intervention policy and staff development in selected federal universities of Southwestern Nigeria through an empirical study. A mixed-methods approach was employed, using questionnaires, interviews, and secondary data across University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, and University of Lagos. From a total population of 13,345 staff, a sample of 1,098 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, while Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic) and TETFund desk officers were interviewed. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics alongside content analysis. Findings revealed that TETFund interventions focused on revamping collapsed infrastructure, providing new facilities, and enhancing staff development through training, retraining, and conference sponsorship. The results showed a significant positive effect of TETFund on staff development in the studied universities ($r_s = 0.1399$, $p < 0.05$). The study recommended sustaining and expanding TETFund interventions, with increased funding for staff capacity building, transparent management of allocations, equitable resource distribution, and continuous monitoring and evaluation to maximize the impact on institutional growth.

7. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to be adopted is the elite theory. The study of the elite came into being in the early nineteenth century and early twentieth century due to the writing of the two sociologists of Italy, namely; vilified Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. Besides that, Burnham and Wright mills have made their contributions. Contemporary scholars such as Ikelegbe and Coventry have also made assertions on this theory. Though, there are differences of opinion amongst them, the common theme of all of them is that every society is ruled by a minority that possesses the qualities necessary for its succession to find social and political power. Those who get to the top are always the best and their vision and mission over rides that of the majority. These are the elites, who doubled as development formulators and implementers.

All public development policies are designed to suit elite's interest as asserted by Ikelegbe (1996). Pareto (1945) held the opinion that every society, there are people who possess in a marked degree the quality of intelligence characters, skills, capacity or whatever kind. According to him, there are in every civilized community artistic, sporting scientific elite and also a

relatively small group of persons who dominate the political economic forces of the country. He argues that the elite possess certain qualities on the basis of which they came at top and their decisions on development are geared towards their interest.

Like Pareto, Mosca (1958:194) is of the opinion that new interest and ideal are formulated in the society, new problems arise and the process of circulation of elite is accelerated. He also advised the governing elite to bring about the desired change by implementing policies that have human face and it shall always conform to growth and development.

The reason for picking this theory is to show how education developments policies are formulated and implemented in societies like Nigeria were elite dominate is evidence. The elite theory regard development as having been stimulated and aggravated by the elite (most of the contending issues in education development have same basic theoretical expositions and varied; it is therefore necessary that Tertiary Education Trust Fund development in various institutions must be understood on the theoretical premises of academic distinction. This research adopted the elite theory as best instrument in the

understanding of educational development in our institution of learning.

8. Research Methodology

The study adopted an ex-post facto and survey research design. The ex-post facto design enabled the researcher to access already collected data and published materials relevant to the study, while the survey design involved administering questionnaires, conducting interviews, and using observation techniques to gather information on respondents' attitudes, opinions, and experiences. Both primary and secondary data collection methods were employed; the questionnaire, divided into two sections (Section A: demographic information and Section B: provision of physical infrastructure), was structured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, while observation was conducted through visits to the selected universities to assess the extent of infrastructural development funded by TETFund. The study population comprised all academic staff in three universities such as Benue State University, Makurdi; Nasarawa State University, Keffi; and the University of Jos with a total population of 2,397 as of March 12, 2023 which was presented in the below table:

S/No	University	Total Number of Academic Staff	Percentage %
1.	Nassarawa State University	580	24.2
2.	University of Jos	1337	55.8
3	Benue State University	480	20
Total		2397	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The sample size in this research will play significant role in using primary source of data to help seek responses from the use of questionnaires. The total number of academic staff form part of the respondents in this study that was issued questionnaires, and in determining the sampling size, the researcher will use Taro Yamane Formula to determine the sample size from the population.

Additional 10% will be added to the sample size in order to take care of the margin of error, as suggested by Israel (2013).

Yamane's Formula for Determining Sample Size

$n = N$

$1 + N(e)^2$ Where

n = Sample size

N = Population

1 = Constant

E = Margin of error (level of significance)

Source: Yamane, (1967), cited in Abubakar (2012).

The total population of the academic in three universities under study is 2397. Base on this population the sample size will be given as thus:

$$n = \frac{2397}{1 + 2397(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2397}{1 + 2397(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{2397}{1 + 5.9925}$$

$$n = \frac{2397}{6.9925}$$

6.9925

Therefore, $n = 342$

10% of =34.3 of the sample size

Total sample size is $342+10=352$.

Sampling Technique

This research will adopte the proportional sampling technique in the distribution to the selected sample size among academic staff of three universities

$nh = \frac{Nhn}{N}$

Where:

nh = Sample size allocated to each component unit

NH =Population size of each unit n =Total sample size

N =Total population size

Therefore, the sample allocation to each unit of the sample was determined and presented on the table below:

Table 3.2: Sample Size Determination

S/No	University	Total Number of Academic Staff	Total
1.	Nasarawa State University	85	85
2.	University of Jos	196	196
3	Benue State University	71	71
Total		352	352

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires, observation, and consultations with TETFund desk officers in the selected universities, while secondary data were drawn from textbooks, journal publications, and articles from local and international research institutes, commentaries from newspapers and magazines, websites, university records, as well as TETFund publications on normal and special interventions, allocation, and disbursement. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and tabular presentations, with findings summarized in tables and discussed textually. The analysis was based on results derived from the questionnaire, observation, and document review, after which a comprehensive report of the findings was compiled.

9. Result

The presentation of data collected using the questionnaire revealed that out of the 353 copies of questionnaire distributed to respondents,342 copies, representing 96.9% of the questionnaire administered were completely filled and returned for the analysis. The distribution of the returned copies of the questionnaire is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Questionnaire Distributed and Returned

SN.	Name of institution	Copies Administered	Copies Returned	Percentage (%)
1	University of Jos	196	190	57.3
2	Nasarawa State University	85	79	23.1
3	Benue State University	71	67	19.6
	Total	352	342	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 revealed that a total of 352 copies of the instrument were distributed to respondents in the three selected Universities. Out of the 196 copies administered in University of Jos,190 representing 57.3% were retrieved, out of the 85 distributed in Nasarawa State University,79 copies representing 23.1% were returned and in Benue State University, out of the 71 administered,67 copies representing 19.6% were returned. This implies that a total of 342 copies of the questionnaire were returned.

Table 2: Results of Analysis of Socio-Demographic Data of Respondents

Variable		Frequency (n=342)	Percentage (%=100)
Gender	Male	212	62.0
	Female	130	38.0
Age Bracket	18-34 years	5	1.5
	35-44 years	109	31.9
	45-54 years	171	50.0
	55 years and above	57	16.7

Marital Status	Married	181	52.9
	Single	110	32.2
	Widow/Widower	31	9.1
	Separated/Divorced	20	5.8
Rank	Graduate Assistant	23	6.7
	Lecturer II	66	19.3
	Lecturer I	78	22.8
	Senior Lecturer	73	21.3
	Associate Professor	57	16.7
Working Experience	Professor	45	13.2
	Less than 10 years	50	14.6
	11-20 years	189	55.3
Institution	21years and above	103	30.1
	University of Jos	196	57.3
	Nasarawa State University	79	23.1
	Benue State University	67	19.6

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The findings from the analysis of socio-demographic data of the respondents revealed that 62.0% of the respondents were male and 38.0% were female, 1.5% were within the age bracket of 18-34 years, 31.9% were aged 35-44 years, 50.0% were aged 45-54 years and only 16.7% on the other hand were within the age bracket of 55 years and above. This implies that majority of the respondents were male respondents within the age bracket of 45-54 years. Furthermore, it was found that 52.9% were married, 32.2% were single, 9.1% were widows/widowers and 5.8% were either separated or divorced respectively.

Also, it was found that 6.7% were graduate assistants, 19.7% were lecturer II, 22.8% were lecturer I and 21.3% were senior lecturers, 16.7% were associate professors and only 13.2% of them were full professors in the universities selected. Similarly, the results revealed that 14.6% of the respondents have worked for less than 10 years, 55.3% had 11-20 years of working experience and 30.1% on the other hand have worked for 21 years and above. Moreover, it was revealed that 57.3% were selected from the University of Jos, 23.1% from Nasarawa State University and 19.6% of the respondents were from Benue State University. This means majority of the respondents were from the University of Jos, probably because it is the oldest and the only Federal University amongst the Universities selected for the study.

10. Results of Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the impact of TETFund intervention on academic staff training and development in universities in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean Rating of Impact of TETFund on Staff Training and Development

SN.	Statement of Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	TETFund sponsors international conferences	3.099	0.871	Agree
2	TETFund sponsors local conferences	3.094	0.865	Agree
3	TETFund sponsors institutional-based Research	2.851	0.949	Agree
4	TETFund sponsors lecturers for Ph.D programmes	3.152	0.846	Agree
5	TETFund intervenes in lecturers book publication	3.163	0.870	Agree
6	TETFund publishes scholarly manuscripts	3.143	0.886	Agree
	<i>Cumulative Mean</i>	3.084		

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The results of analysis of impact of TETFund intervention on academic staff training and development in universities in Table 5 showed that TETFund intervenes in lecturers book publication ($X=3.163$), TETFund sponsors lecturers for Ph.D programmes ($X=3.152$), TETFund publishes scholarly manuscripts ($X=3.143$) and that TETFund sponsors international conferences ($X=3.099$). The findings also revealed that TETFund sponsors local conferences ($X=3.094$) and institutional-based Research ($X=2.851$) all with the aim of training and developing staff of universities in the study Area. However, since the cumulative mean value of 3.084 for the items is greater than the criterion mean which is 2.5, the study concluded that TETFund intervention had positively impacted on academic staff training and development in universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

TETFund intervention has no significant impact on Staff training and development in universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 4: Results of Chi-Square Statistic of Impact of TETFund Interventions on the Staff Training and Development

Rating	FO	FE	Df.	χ^2	p-value	Decision
Strongly Agree	22	85.5	3	159.474	.000	HO Sig.
Disagree	34	85.5				
Agree	6	85.5				
Strongly Agree	130	85.5				
Total	342					

p<0.05

The results of hypothesis testing in Table 8 indicated that $\chi^2(3=159.474, p=.000)$, which implies that $p<0.05$; hence the null hypothesis was rejected and the conclusion drawn is that TETFund intervention has significant impact on Staff training and development in universities in North-Central Nigeria. Justifying these empirical findings, the descriptive analysis revealed that TETFund had intervened in the Areas of book development and publications, institution-based research, sponsoring academic staff for local and international conferences and for Ph.D programmes amongst others.

11. Discussion of Findings

The results of this study established that TETFund interventions have a significant impact on staff training and development in universities across North-Central Nigeria. This outcome aligns with the descriptive statistics of Sulaiman and Musa (2024), who found that TETFund interventions significantly enhanced academic staff training and development in North-West Nigerian universities. Both studies converge on the position that staff training is critical to academic performance and institutional growth. Similarly, the findings corroborate Oyoru (2024), who demonstrated that TETFund interventions had a positive and significant effect on staff development in Nigerian universities, further validating the transformative role of the Fund across different regions. The results also align with those of Mac-Ozigbo, Ama, Ifegwu, and Igbokwe-Ibeto (2024), who reported that TETFund sponsorship of research and overseas training had a marked impact on the performance of academic staff in federal universities. The emphasis on research development and advanced training resonates with the present study's evidence of conference sponsorship and Ph.D. programmes as central intervention areas.

This study also agrees with Jumare, Ibrahim, and Sabonsara (2019), whose findings indicated that TETFund interventions facilitated the acquisition of higher degrees, improved teaching methodologies, and enhanced academic staff skills. Likewise, the results

correspond with Olufemi and Ayooluwa (2021), who found that TETFund interventions significantly improved staff training and development in Southwestern universities, confirming the nationwide relevance of these interventions.

However, some points of divergence emerge. While the current study and most of the reviewed works affirm the positive impact of TETFund, Isah (2024) identified challenges in accessibility that limited the full benefits of interventions in polytechnics in Jigawa State. This contrasts slightly with the present findings, which did not highlight accessibility issues but rather emphasized the significant positive outcomes. This suggests that although the overall impact of TETFund interventions is widely recognized across Nigeria, regional and institutional differences may influence the extent to which these benefits are fully realized.

12. Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that TETFund interventions have had a significant and positive impact on staff training and development in universities across North-Central Nigeria. The rejection of the null hypothesis confirmed that these interventions are not only relevant but also effective in addressing the challenges of academic staff capacity building. The descriptive evidence further revealed that TETFund support has been instrumental in critical areas such as book development and publications, institution-based research, sponsorship for local and international conferences, and Ph.D. programmes. These interventions have enhanced staff qualifications, strengthened research capacity, and contributed to the overall academic growth of the beneficiary institutions. However, while the interventions have been impactful, gaps remain in equitable distribution, sustainability, and monitoring of these programmes.

13. Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that TETFund should strengthen its monitoring and

evaluation mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainability of interventions across beneficiary universities, in order to enhance equity in the allocation of resources to bridge disparities in staff development opportunities. Training opportunities should be expanded beyond Ph.D. sponsorship and conferences to include emerging areas such as digital pedagogy, leadership, and specialized professional certifications, while greater emphasis should be placed on funding collaborative and problem-solving research that addresses national development needs. Sustained and timely government funding is crucial to prevent interruptions in training initiatives, and universities themselves should strengthen internal policies to maximize the utilization of TETFund interventions by aligning them with institutional strategic plans and long-term human capital development goals.

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Part Four
Religious Studies



The Hermeneutics of *Θεραπεία* (Healing) in John 9:1-12 and Its Application in the Christ Apostolic Church, Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study explores the physical, spiritual, and symbolic dimensions of healing performed by Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospel of John. Healing occupies a central place in Jesus' earthly ministry. In obedience to Christ's directive to his followers to preach the gospel and heal the sick, the Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C.) has made healing one of its core practices. The various healing methods employed by Jesus—through touch, faith, prayer, anointing with oil, distance healing, and the use of water—form the foundational principles upon which the healing ministry of the C.A.C. is built. The healing narrative in John 9 was chosen for analysis because it features the use of natural elements such as water, clay, and saliva—methods that resonate with the healing practices found within the C.A.C. However, the study observes that the healing practices of some ministers within the Church fall short of the biblical model exemplified by Jesus. The questionable character of certain healers often casts doubt on the authenticity of their ministry, leading some believers to question whether such individuals are truly called by God. Reports of immoral behavior, such as adultery, fornication, or involvement with familiar spirits, undermine the credibility of divine healing. *θεραπεύω* means “to heal,” “to cure,” or “to restore to health.” This study is motivated by the need to undertake an exegesis of *θεραπεύω* to extract healing principles from the ministry of Jesus and its application in the Christ Apostolic Church. Employing the historical-exegetical method of biblical research, the text of John 9:1–12 was examined alongside qualitative data collected through structured interviews analyzed descriptively. Findings reveal that Christ Apostolic Church upholds, to a significant extent, the principles of healing reflected in the Gospel of John. Nonetheless, the

study recommends continuous improvement in aligning healing practices with biblical standards.

Keywords: *θεραπεύω* (*therapeuo*), Health, Miracle, Salvation, Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C.)

1. Introduction

As Jesus was passing by, he encountered a man who had been blind from birth (v.1). This situation prompted a theological question from his disciples, who asked, “Rabbi, who sinned—this man or his parents—that he was born blind?” (v.2). Their inquiry reflects the prevailing Jewish belief that physical afflictions were often divine punishments for sin, whether personal or ancestral. In response, Jesus refuted this assumption, declaring that neither the man nor his parents had sinned to cause his blindness. Rather, the man's condition served as a means for God's works to be revealed in him (v.3). This statement shifts the focus from human culpability to divine purpose, emphasizing that suffering can become a platform for the manifestation of God's power and glory.

Jesus continued, “We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work” (v.4). Here, “day” symbolizes the time allotted for Jesus' earthly ministry, while “night” represents the impending period of his suffering and death when his redemptive work on earth would cease. The statement underscores Jesus' awareness of his divine mission and the urgency of fulfilling it within the time appointed by God.

In verse 5, Jesus proclaims, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” This self-revelation identifies him as both the spiritual and

physical source of illumination, contrasting the man's physical blindness with humanity's spiritual blindness. His forthcoming miracle would serve as a visible sign of his identity as the Light who dispels both physical and spiritual darkness. Jesus then performed an unusual act: he spat on the ground, made clay with the saliva, and applied it to the man's eyes (v.6). This use of natural elements such as clay and saliva is symbolic of God's creative power, reminiscent of the creation of man from dust in Genesis 2:7. By employing physical means, Jesus demonstrates that divine healing can operate through both natural and supernatural channels. After anointing the man's eyes, Jesus instructed him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent") (v.7). The command required faith and obedience. The man went, washed, and miraculously received his sight. His healing thus became both a physical restoration and a testimony to the effectiveness of faith in Christ's word (Tasker, 2017:122-123).

This narrative encapsulates key theological themes: the relationship between sin and suffering, the revelation of God's glory through human affliction, and the necessity of faith and obedience in divine healing. Jesus' role as the Light of the world signifies not only the illumination of human blindness but also the invitation to spiritual renewal through faith in Him. John's use of the term *μαθητής* ("disciple") for a broader group allows him to extend Jesus' invitation to the general crowd as a call to discipleship. This portrays Jesus addressing large gatherings (*ὄχλοι πολλοί*) to explain what it truly means to be his disciple. John's narrative emphasizes that the disciples were not a small, exclusive circle but a larger community meant to serve as models for all believers. His intention was for readers to identify with these disciples and see them as examples of faith and commitment (Heising, 1968: 80).

Beyond expanding the scope of discipleship, John assigns theological significance and a specific mission to the term. The disciples' identity is primarily defined through their relationship with Jesus. In both his person and message, the eschatological reality—the fulfillment of God's final purpose—is anticipated. Those who are in fellowship with Christ and have accepted his word are depicted as participants in the present realization of the end-time salvation. They are the ones whom Jesus, as the divine agent of the *eschaton*, has sought out and redeemed. His

unique role in salvation history is therefore expressed through his divine calling (Alana, 2002).

2. The Healing of the Man Born Blind (John 9:1–7)

The question posed by Jesus' disciples introduces the classic problem of *theodicy*—the relationship between sin and suffering. In verse 2, they ask, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Their inquiry reflects the prevailing Jewish assumption that all suffering is a direct consequence of sin. They reasoned that either the man had sinned (*ἥμαρτεν*) or his parents had, yet they struggled to understand how one could sin before birth. According to Hunter (2017), three possibilities were debated in Jewish thought: sin committed in the womb, sin from a preexistent state of the soul, or inherited sin from one's parents. Tasker (2016) suggests that it is uncertain whether the disciples actually believed the man himself could have sinned prenatally. However, Farmer (2019) argues that their question presupposes the possibility of prenatal sin, an idea influenced by the ancient belief in the preexistence of souls—an idea found in Plato's philosophy and later adopted by Philo and rabbinic teachers.

Howard (2016) observes that certain sayings in the *Targums* and *Talmud* imply that some rabbis entertained the notion that a child could sin while still in the womb, though the historical accuracy of this view remains uncertain. The rabbis (2019) also referred to Old Testament teachings suggesting that God could punish children for their parents' sins up to the third and fourth generation. Yet, the prophet Ezekiel later clarified that each person is accountable for their own sins (Ezek. 18:20). Hale and Thorson (2021) add a modern perspective, noting that many hereditary diseases are now known to pass from parents to children, offering a biological basis for understanding how parental sin or behavior might affect offspring. Thus, the disciples likely assumed that the man's blindness was the result of his parents' sin.

In verse 3, Jesus corrects this misconception, teaching that sin is not always the direct cause of suffering. Although sin and suffering are interconnected (cf. Luke 13:1–5; Acts 28:4), not all suffering is a punishment for sin. Instead, suffering can serve a divine purpose—"that the works of God might be made manifest." Tasker (2022) explains that the man's condition existed

so that it might become a lasting revelation of God's power and glory. The physical healing of the man was meant to signify the spiritual enlightenment that comes when God opens the eyes of those who are spiritually blind. Hunter (2017) agrees, cautioning believers not to waste energy speculating about the mystery of evil, but rather to focus on alleviating human suffering through God's help.

In verses 4–5, Jesus declares, "*We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night comes when no one can work.*" Here, *day* symbolizes the period of active ministry and opportunity, while *night* signifies the end of one's earthly mission. Dodd (2018) interprets "day" as representing the span of human activity and "night" its cessation. Jesus' statement emphasizes the urgency of fulfilling God's work during one's lifetime.

If the pronoun "we" in verse 4 is original, it implies that Jesus included his disciples in his divine mission, aligning with Matthew 5:14, where believers are called "the light of the world." Scribes might later have changed "we" to "I" to highlight Jesus' unique role. Conversely, if "I" was original, the later change to "we" could have been intended to generalize the statement for the Church. Regardless, the message remains that one must serve God faithfully in the present, for service to God is inseparable from service to humanity (Matt. 25:40, 45).

3. Christ's Varied Methods of Healing (John 9:6–7)

In verses 6–7, Jesus uses a symbolic method to heal the blind man. He spat on the ground, mixed the saliva with dust to form clay, and applied it to the man's eyes. This recalls the account in Mark 8:22–25, where Jesus healed another blind man using a similar method. In the ancient world, saliva was widely believed to possess healing properties. However, Jewish Sabbath laws forbade both making clay and applying ointment to the eyes (Clay, 2008, p. 25).

By forming clay from dust and saliva, Jesus symbolically reenacted the creative act of God in Genesis 2:7, where man was formed from the dust of the earth. Through this act, Jesus demonstrated that, like the Father, he continuously gives life (cf. John 5:17). After applying the clay, Jesus instructed the man, "*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*"—a name meaning "Sent."

Archaeological evidence indicates that Siloam was a large reservoir supplied by a channel from the Gihon Spring (Culion, 2011, p. 80). John draws a symbolic connection between the pool's name and Jesus himself, the One "sent" by God. Just as the water of Siloam cleansed the man's eyes, Jesus, the divine "Sent One," cleanses and restores spiritual sight.

The man's obedience was crucial to his healing. Dodd (1962) notes that his willingness to follow Jesus' command reflected his faith and was an essential part of the healing process. Unlike Naaman, who initially doubted Elisha's instruction to wash in the Jordan, this man obeyed without hesitation. His faith-driven response, independent of Jesus' physical presence, highlights the active role of personal trust in divine healing.

He further interprets this event as symbolic of spiritual rebirth. Just as the blind man gained physical sight through washing, all believers must experience cleansing through the blood of Christ, made effective by his atoning death. Thus, the man's washing in Siloam prefigures Christian baptism, which enlightens the believer and grants spiritual sight.

4. Effect of the Healing on the Neighbours (John 9:8–12)

The first outcome that John highlights following the healing miracle is the astonishment and confusion it produced among the man's neighbours. Those who had previously known him as a blind beggar were deeply perplexed by his transformation. Some could not believe that he was the same person they had seen sitting and begging daily. As John 9:8–9 records, the neighbours and others who had seen him before asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" While some affirmed that it was indeed him, others denied it, insisting that it was merely someone who resembled him. However, the healed man himself settled the dispute, declaring emphatically, "I am the man." McDonald (1986) notes that the reaction of the neighbours reveals their struggle to reconcile the miraculous event with ordinary human experience. Their astonishment was so great that some refused to accept what their own eyes witnessed. The reference to "neighbours" suggests that the man had returned to his home after being healed. Although the Greek text in verse 7 simply says "he came seeing," rather than "came home," it is likely that he went back to his community, where

those who knew him best could confirm his identity.

Two groups are mentioned in this narrative: the man's immediate neighbours and those who had often encountered him as a beggar. This is the first explicit mention of his role as a beggar, though his blindness already implied dependence on begging for survival, as was typical for the disabled in the ancient world. These two groups—those who lived near him and those familiar with him from his begging—represent the people most capable of recognizing him.

Their question, "Isn't this the same man?" assumes an affirmative answer, yet its very phrasing betrays their doubt. Some accepted the evidence before them, but others could not, though they admitted a strong resemblance. Their hesitation underscores the extraordinary nature of the miracle, which defied rational explanation.

When the man himself affirmed his identity, their curiosity deepened. They asked him, "How then were your eyes opened?" (v. 10). The Greek text implies a simple conversational tone—"they said to him"—showing that their inquiry stemmed more from wonder than from hostility. In response, the healed man recounted the event briefly and faithfully: "The man they call Jesus made some mud, placed it on my eyes, and told me to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. So I went, washed, and now I can see" (v. 11). His testimony is concise and factual. He knows little about Jesus and expects that his listeners are equally uninformed. Referring to him as "the man they call Jesus" indicates that, at this stage, his understanding of Christ's identity is limited—he recognizes him only as a man, not yet as a divine healer or the Messiah.

The neighbours, still puzzled, ask the obvious follow-up question: "Where is this man?" (v. 12). The healed man's reply, "I do not know," highlights both his physical separation from Jesus, who had already moved on, and his spiritual journey that was only beginning. This episode, therefore, illustrates a crucial transition in John's Gospel—from physical restoration to spiritual revelation. The neighbours' bewilderment and the man's simple faith lay the foundation for the subsequent narrative, in which his understanding of Jesus deepens through conflict and testimony. As Heising (1968, p. 80) observes, the miracle not only demonstrates Jesus' divine authority but also exposes human

reluctance to accept the evidence of God's power. The neighbours' divided opinions mirror the broader human tendency to question what cannot be explained by natural reason.

5. Healing of the Man Born Blind in John 9:1–12 in the Christ Apostolic Church

The healing of the man born blind in *John 9:1–12* presents several theological and practical themes that resonate deeply with the healing tradition of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC). One of these is the persistent belief in the relationship between sin and suffering. Similar to Jewish thought, the CAC maintains that sin often brings about sickness and affliction. As Akintunde (2004) observes, sin is a reality that never goes unpunished — aligning with biblical declarations such as "the soul that sins shall die" and "the wages of sin is death." In some instances, the sinner personally bears the consequences of their wrongdoing (Bultmann 2016).

In the narrative, Jesus anointed the blind man's eyes with a mixture of saliva and clay, then instructed him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. This act recalls Naaman's healing in *2 Kings 5*, where Elisha directed him to bathe in the Jordan River. Beyond the physical cleansing function of water, such ritual washing symbolized purification from sin. Moreover, water itself is recognized for its healing potential. Consequently, hydrotherapy — the therapeutic use of water — is a common healing practice within the CAC. This involves applying hot or cold water to specific parts of the body to relieve ailments or promote recovery (Akintunde, 2004, p. 71).

Another significant dimension of this miracle is *faith healing*. When instructed to wash in the Pool of Siloam, the blind man obeyed in faith, which, according to Dodd, represented his personal contribution to his healing. Faith is consistently central to Jesus' miracles; He often inquired, "Do you believe?" or declared, "Your faith has made you whole." In CAC healing practices, faith is likewise considered indispensable to divine healing and restoration.

Touch is also an essential aspect of healing within the CAC. The hand, regarded as an instrument of God's power, is used in the laying on of hands — either upon the head or directly on the afflicted area. At times, worshippers are encouraged to touch the part of their body where pain is felt, or a minister may perform the touch as a symbolic

act of transmission of divine power. This practice has reportedly resulted in numerous healings among CAC members (Alana, 2002, p. 77).

6. Abuse of Healing in the Christ Apostolic Church

Despite the positive aspects of the healing ministry, misuse and excesses have also emerged within the CAC. One major issue is the overemphasis on *anointing* and the glorification of *anointed men*. This has led to several theological misconceptions. First is the mistaken belief that *character equals anointing* — the idea that moral conduct automatically produces spiritual gifts, or that the possession of gifts validates one's character. This misconception encourages pretense among some ministers who feel pressured to display spiritual power (Woods, 1963, p. 25).

Second is the false assumption that *anointing equals divine approval of ministry style*. Some ministers, claiming divine empowerment, adopt unorthodox and sometimes questionable methods. Yet, methodology does not determine anointing. Third is the idea that *anointing equals doctrinal infallibility*. Church history shows that even highly anointed individuals have embraced heretical teachings. A case in point is William Branham, a 20th-century evangelist whose powerful healing ministry drew thousands but whose teachings eventually deviated into doctrinal error (William, 2011, p. 113; Liardon, 1998, pp. 56–59). Such examples warn against equating miraculous power with theological accuracy.

Moreover, some healers lead morally questionable lives, undermining the credibility of their ministries. Reports of immorality, pride, or involvement with familiar spirits have caused skepticism among believers. Furthermore, the pursuit of personal gain has corrupted the healing ministry in some circles, turning it into a commercial enterprise. Ministers gifted in healing sometimes exploit the desperate, seek financial reward, or cause schisms by leaving to establish independent churches. Pride and rivalry among healing ministers further threaten the unity of the church (Ashby, 2017: pp. 78-82).

7. Conclusion

The healing of the man born blind in *John 9:1–12* ultimately reveals Jesus as the *Light of the World*, who opens not only physical eyes but also

spiritual understanding. While sin may have consequences, it is not always the direct cause of human suffering. Instead of focusing on the cause of affliction, believers should seek divine intervention through faith and obedience. Jesus' healing ministry was marked by compassion, flexibility, and a commitment to fulfilling the Father's will. Healing miracles, described in *Hebrews 6:5* as "powers of the age to come," serve as signs of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. As the world anticipates the final manifestation of this Kingdom, believers may expect a greater outpouring of genuine miraculous works that testify to God's power and glory. Thus, healing within the CAC should reflect Christ's humility, compassion, and truth, avoiding the errors of pride, exploitation, and doctrinal distortion.

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The Impact of Islam on Pre-Colonial Diplomatic Relations between the Sokoto Caliphate and Neighbouring States

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Abstract. This research explores the influence of Islam on diplomatic interactions between the Sokoto Caliphate and its neighbouring states during the nineteenth century Jihad. The primary aim is to investigate how Islamic principles, legal frameworks, and scholarly connections influenced foreign relations, alliances, and conflict resolution between Sokoto and other Hausa land such as Zauzau, Kano, Rano, Katsina, Daura and other Hausa States. The study utilizes a qualitative historical approach, drawing upon primary materials including correspondence from the caliphate, chronicles from the emirates, and records from the Sokoto archives, alongside secondary literature from existing academic work. Textual and content analyses were performed to interpret diplomatic communications, religious decrees, and reports from emissaries in order to pinpoint Islamic tenets that guided diplomatic engagements. Results indicate that Islam acted not only as a spiritual foundation but also as a diplomatic tool that validated authority, governed warfare through the jihad concept, and enabled peaceful resolutions. Clerical intermediaries and written exchanges developed a shared diplomatic language, while a common Islamic identity opened paths for forming alliances and negotiating autonomy. Nonetheless, in certain instances, religious principles were set aside in favour of political interests, as demonstrated by Sokoto's practical interactions with non-Muslim neighbours. The conclusion highlights that Islam equipped the Sokoto Caliphate with both normative legitimacy and institutional mechanisms that transformed pre-colonial interstate dynamics in the central Sudan. The paper suggests that modern African nations reconsider the ethical aspects of Islamic diplomatic traditions such as justice, accountability, and peaceful conflict resolution to enhance contemporary methods of resolving disputes, fostering regional cooperation, and engaging in interfaith dialogue.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Interstate Relations, Islamic Diplomacy, Sokoto Caliphate, Pre-Colonial West Africa.

1. Introduction

The nineteenth century saw the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate as a significant Islamic state in West Africa. Founded through the jihad initiated by Uthmān dan Fodio between 1804 and 1808, the Caliphate quickly evolved from a reformist movement into a vast political and religious confederation covering large areas of what is now northern Nigeria, Niger, and parts of Cameroon. At its peak, Sokoto represented not just a political organization but also a moral and religious authority rooted in Islamic law (*sharī'ah*), supported by a vibrant community of scholars, clerics, and administrators. Although considerable scholarly focus has been placed on the internal governance, intellectual landscape, and social reforms of the Caliphate, there has been comparatively less examination of how Islam influenced its external relations with neighbouring states and groups during the pre-colonial era. In pre-colonial Africa, diplomatic relations were frequently influenced by kinship connections, trade routes, and military strength. Nevertheless, the emergence of Sokoto added new dimensions to inter-state relations by embedding diplomacy within Islamic principles of justice, legitimacy, and communal identity. (Abba 2023)

The rulers of the Caliphate engaged with neighbouring states using a shared religious language that highlighted ideas such as *ummah* (community of believers), *jihād* (legitimate struggle), and the distinction between *dār al-islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*. These concepts were not simply theoretical but served as practical instruments for forming alliances, settling disputes, and justifying territorial expansion. The methods of communication through letters, the sending of emissaries, and the mediation by religious

scholars became essential ways in which Sokoto interacted with its neighbors, particularly Borno, Kano, Katsina, and Gobirawa. The correspondence between Muhammad Bello, the second Caliph, and Muhammad al-Kanemi of Borno exemplifies the pivotal role of Islam in diplomatic communications. Their exchanges showcase a negotiation not only regarding territorial dominance but also concerning religious legitimacy, as each leader referenced Qur'anic precepts and prophetic traditions to substantiate his authority. Likewise, Sokoto's interactions with Hausa emirates illustrated how Islamic law and scholarly mediation enabled the integration of various polities into a broader caliphate framework. Anchoring its diplomacy in Islamic principles, Sokoto achieved a balance between military might and moral influence, ensuring both compliance and negotiated independence for its subjects and allies. (Abdussalam, 2024)

This study aims to explore the degree to which Islam shaped the diplomatic practices of the Sokoto Caliphate during the pre-colonial period. It was attempted to pinpoint the religious doctrines, institutional frameworks, and intellectual traditions that informed Sokoto's external relations while also recognizing the practical compromises that emerged whenever political circumstances clashed with religious convictions. Methodologically, this research adopts a qualitative historical approach, utilizing caliphate correspondence, Sokoto archival materials, emirate chronicles, and published works by the Caliphate's scholars, in addition to the secondary literature provided by historians of West Africa. Through textual analysis, the study reveals how religious concepts were actualized in diplomatic actions. The importance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the nuances of diplomacy in African history, not only as a quest for power but also as a negotiation of values and legitimacy. Contextualizing Sokoto's diplomatic practices within the wider tradition of Islamic political thought and action, the research emphasizes the ways in which African states interacted with global religious trends innovatively and adaptively. Examining the Islamic elements of Sokoto's external relations illuminates the lasting impact of religion on shaping political interactions in West Africa a phenomenon that continues to influence current discussions on governance, peace-building, and interfaith dialogue. In conclusion, the diplomatic pursuits of the Sokoto Caliphate demonstrate that Islam functioned not merely as a spiritual influence but also as a viable framework for organizing political relationships. (Abubakar 2024)

2. Conceptual Framework

For this study, the framework is centered on the interplay of Islam as a normative framework, diplomacy as a political activity, and the relationships between states in pre-colonial West Africa. These elements together elucidate how religion, politics, and interstate interactions were interconnected in the external relations of the Sokoto Caliphate. Islam transcends mere personal devotion, operating also as a socio-political framework that offers principles for governance, justice, and engagement with both Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Islamic concepts, such as *ummah* (the community of believers), *jihad* (the legitimate struggle), and the classification of the world into *dār al-islām* (the abode of Islam) and *dār al-ḥarb* (the abode of war) formed the ideological underpinning of Sokoto's foreign policy. The Qur'an and Hadith, along with the works of scholars like Uthmān dan Fodio, Muhammad Bello, and Abdullahi dan Fodio, conferred legitimacy and moral authority to Sokoto's diplomatic approaches. Consequently, Islam acted as a guiding principle that shaped both the manner and substance of diplomatic exchanges. (Aliyu, & Sama'ila, 2021)

2.1 Islam as a Normative Framework

Exploring the influence of Islam on pre-colonial diplomacy in the Sokoto Caliphate, one must first understand Islam as a normative system. Norms are the fundamental principles, values, and regulations that shape social and political interactions. Within the context of Sokoto, Islam provided both spiritual guidance and legal and political frameworks that influenced how rulers, scholars, and communities interacted with one another and with external entities. Islamic principles promoted justice (*'adl*), accountability, consultation (*shūrāh*), and peaceful mediation, which were directly relevant to the practice of diplomacy. The Qur'an and Hadith established guidelines for relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, matters of war and peace, treaties, and the sacred nature of agreements. These concepts were not mere theoretical constructs; they were put into practice through the contributions of Sokoto's prominent scholars. For example, Uthmān dan Fodio noted in his writings that rulers should base their authority on Islamic legitimacy, while Muhammad Bello and Abdullahi dan Fodio produced rulings and communications that connected political authority to religious duty. (Faruk, 2024)

The classification of the world into *dār al-islām* (house of Islam) and *dār al-ḥarb* (house of war) provided a framework for how Sokoto identified its

neighbors and organized its diplomatic relations. Muslim states were perceived as part of a larger *ummah* (community of believers), which fostered alliances, mutual acknowledgment, and mediation based on shared religious identity. In contrast, interactions with non-Muslim neighbors were often framed in terms of jihad, tribute, or conditional treaties, though these were tempered by practical political considerations. The role of the *'ulamā'* (Islamic scholars) was also crucial as they acted as both ethical overseers and active participants in diplomacy. They composed letters, interpreted Islamic law related to foreign relations, and acted as envoys or mediators in conflicts. This reliance on scholars highlighted that diplomacy was not merely a matter of political expediency but an extension of Islamic duty. Therefore, Islam as a normative system can be construed as the ethical and legal framework that shaped the diplomatic ideologies and practices of Sokoto. It provided a cohesive structure for legitimacy, prescribed conduct for interstate interactions, and equipped leaders with ideological and institutional resources for engaging in diplomacy. This framework ensured that Sokoto's foreign policy was fundamentally intertwined with religious principles, even as it adapted to the practical necessities of survival and growth in a competitive political landscape. (Hanafī, & Jibril, 2024)

2.2 Diplomacy as Political Practice

In the context of pre-colonial Africa, diplomacy encompassed more than just formal agreements; it included letters, emissary exchanges, arbitration, and the creation of tribute or alliance systems. Within the Sokoto Caliphate, the Islamic scholarly class significantly influenced diplomacy, mediating disputes, composing letters, and offering religious rationales for political choices. Correspondence between Sokoto and Borno, as well as between Sokoto and various Hausa emirates, illustrate that diplomacy involved not only political discussions but also theological arguments. Therefore, diplomacy is defined here as a practice where religion and politics converged to establish both legitimacy and practical results.

Diplomacy, in its most basic sense, pertains to the techniques and processes that political entities use to handle their external relationships. In the context of pre-colonial Africa, diplomacy was not limited to formal treaties or statecraft as understood in the European tradition. Instead, it included a variety of practices such as emissary exchanges, kinship alliances, trade discussions, religious mediation, and tribute payments. For the Sokoto Caliphate, diplomacy

served as a vital tool for enhancing authority, broadening influence, and sustaining harmonious interactions with neighbouring regions. In contrast to contemporary secular nations, diplomacy in Sokoto was intertwined with religion. Political discussions were consistently articulated within the framework of Islamic law and morals. Caliphate correspondence often began with verses from the Qur'an or Hadith, grounding political assertions in divine legitimacy. Such letters functioned not merely as methods of communication but as means of legitimization, showcasing the integration of faith and state affairs. The notable correspondence between Muhammad Bello of Sokoto and Muhammad al-Kanemi of Borno exemplifies this: while it appeared to be a discussion about political sovereignty, the exchange was framed in theological and legal terms, positioning religion as both the communicative medium and subject matter of diplomacy. (Kabiru 2021)

The practice of diplomacy was formalized through the *'ulamā'* (Islamic scholars), who acted as advisers, mediators, and envoys. Their intellectual stature provided credibility to Sokoto's diplomatic efforts, and their proficiency in Arabic facilitated the creation of formal and enduring records of negotiations. Written communication became a crucial resource, allowing Sokoto to engage across extensive distances and to sustain a consistent diplomatic influence. The deployment of emissaries also enabled the Caliphate to project its power into contested or frontier territories, often supported by offers of alliance, arbitration, or conditional autonomy. Furthermore, diplomacy in Sokoto was not only a response to events but also a proactive endeavour. It entailed the strategic incorporation of neighbouring emirates into a confederal arrangement that balanced local independence with loyalty to the Caliphate. The rulers of Sokoto commonly favoured negotiated surrender over direct conquest, employing diplomacy to legitimize power and minimize the expenses associated with war. However, when persuasion faltered, military action was framed as an extension of diplomatic engagement through jihad, reinforcing the inseparability of religion and politics. Essentially, diplomacy as a political practice in the Sokoto Caliphate represented a vibrant interaction between negotiation and coercion, along with a blend of religion and pragmatism. It was a coherent process that merged Islamic values with the practical demands of state survival, thus redefining the character of interstate relations in pre-colonial West Africa. (Mas'ud & Abdulfattah 2023)

3. Pre-Colonial Interstate Relations in West Africa

Prior to colonial domination, relationships between states were managed through a mixture of familial connections, commerce, military strength, and spirituality. The emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate positioned Islam as a prominent factor that transformed these relationships. Surrounding entities aligned them with Sokoto due to shared faith, pushed back through alternative claims to authority, or sought autonomy within the caliphate's framework. Consequently, this analysis views interstate interactions as ever-evolving exchanges where political authority was continually redefined through religious dialogue and diplomatic efforts. Before colonial powers arrived, the interactions among states in West Africa were influenced by a multifaceted blend of kinship, trade pathways, military capabilities, and religious beliefs. Various states and political entities across the area engaged in a fluid political environment characterized by often-leaky borders, negotiated power, and constantly changing alliances. Relations among states were seldom bound by strict treaties but rather shaped by practical agreements built on reciprocity, tribute, and mutual recognition of power.

In this context, diplomacy proved to be a crucial mechanism for orchestrating coexistence, rivalry, and collaboration. Trade played a significant role in driving interstate relationships. The trans-Saharan and regional trade routes linked different political entities, including the Hausa city-states, Borno, Oyo, and later Sokoto. Diplomatic connections commonly developed from the necessity to ensure traders' safe passage, manage tariffs, and safeguard markets. States that held control over important trade routes wielded substantial economic and diplomatic influence, which they utilized to form alliances or impose tribute obligations on neighbouring states. Kinship and matrimonial alliances constituted another essential aspect of diplomacy. Ruling classes frequently strengthened relations through inter-marriage, thereby creating overlapping allegiances and diminishing the chance of conflict. This practice, common among the Hausa states, was supplemented by the deployment of emissaries and verbal agreements to resolve disputes or formalize peace. As the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed, religion increasingly became a critical element in shaping interstate relations. The proliferation of Islam throughout the Sahel and savannah regions fostered a shared identity that transcended ethnic and linguistic differences. Muslim leaders could leverage their religious legitimacy to form alliances or seek acknowledgment from

neighboring entities. In contrast, non-Muslim states often faced pressure to either accept Islamic authority or confront it militarily. The rise of the Sokoto Caliphate exemplified this transition, as it restructured conventional diplomatic practices by placing Islamic law and ideology at the forefront of its external relations. Thus, pre-colonial interstate relations in West Africa were neither chaotic nor uniform; rather, they were dynamic frameworks of negotiation mediated by trade, kinship, and increasingly, religion. (Mukhtar 2021)

The ascendance of Sokoto as a leading Islamic state introduced new benchmarks of legitimacy and re-oriented the regional diplomatic landscape around Islamic principles. In this framework, Islam acted as both a unifying element for Muslim states and a dividing factor between Islamic and non-Islamic entities, thus positioning religion as a vital component in the examination of diplomacy during this period.

4. Integrative Model

The framework suggests that the influence of Islam on diplomacy can be examined through three interconnected dimensions. The three outlined dimensions Islam as a guiding normative framework, diplomacy as a form of political practice, and pre-colonial interstate interactions in West Africa do not function independently. Collectively, they create a cohesive model for understanding how the Sokoto Caliphate engaged in external relations and the way Islam influenced diplomacy in the nineteenth century. On an ideological level, Islam offered the foundational principles that established legitimacy, shaped the moral language of diplomacy, and delineated acceptable behaviours within diplomatic conduct. Concepts such as *'adl* (justice), *Ummah* (community of believers), and *jihād* (legitimate struggle) were regularly referenced in letters, negotiations, and resolution of conflicts. This ideological aspect imparted a unique character to Sokoto's diplomacy, distinguishing it from the purely secular or kinship-based approaches seen in other polities. On an institutional level, the practice of diplomacy was facilitated through structures and individuals grounded in Islamic scholarship. The *'Ulamā'* acted as advisers, emissaries, and mediators, making sure that diplomatic practices maintained a link to religious authority. Written documents preserved in the Sokoto archives demonstrate how proficiency in Arabic facilitated a codified, trans-regional communication system that ensured the longevity of agreements and provided a sense of historical continuity. Institutions for tribute, arbitration, and alliances were framed by Islamic law, thus intertwining religion with the

mechanisms of foreign relations. On a practical level, diplomacy took the form of negotiation, alliance-building, and conflict resolution. The rulers of Sokoto strategically paired persuasion with coercion, favouring negotiated submissions but turning to jihad when diplomatic efforts fell short. Trade relationships, family ties, and practical alliances remained relevant but were reinterpreted within an Islamic context. For instance, interactions with Borno involved both theological discussions regarding legitimacy and practical arrangements for coexistence. (Mukhtar (2021),

Similarly, Sokoto's dealings with Hausa emirates demonstrated how diplomacy balanced local autonomy with caliphal authority. This unifying model emphasizes the interconnection of ideology, institutions, and practical application. Islam served not just as a background element but as the central framework around which diplomatic relations were organized, while political realities consistently influenced the execution of religious principles. Integrating these three dimensions, the model illustrates that Sokoto's diplomacy was both distinctly Islamic and pragmatically responsive to the socio-political landscape of pre-colonial West Africa. In conclusion, the integrative model highlights the multifaceted nature of Sokoto's external relations: diplomacy represented a spiritual obligation, an institutional framework, and a political tactic. This synthesis offers a thorough understanding of the Caliphate's impact on regional diplomacy and provides insights into the ongoing interplay between religion and politics in African statecraft.

5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this research is based on three interrelated theories that elucidate the relationship between religion, power, and diplomacy in the pre-colonial Sokoto Caliphate. These theories include Islamic Political Theory, Realist Theory of International Relations, and Constructivist Theory of International Relations. Collectively, they offer a comprehensive perspective for examining the impact of Islam on diplomacy in West Africa during the nineteenth century.

5.1 Islamic Political Theory

Islamic Political Theory is essential for this study because it outlines how Islamic law (*sharī'ah*) and its principles influenced political authority, legitimacy, and relationships between states. Classical Islamic political philosophy categorizes the world into *dār al-islām* (the abode of Islam) and *dār al-ḥarb* (the abode

of war), offering guidelines for interactions with both Muslim and non-Muslim entities. Within this paradigm, diplomacy is regarded as a religious obligation that upholds justice (*'adl*), fosters harmonious co-existence, and protects the *ummah* (community of believers). This theory holds particular significance for the Sokoto Caliphate since Uthmān dan Fodio and his successors clearly embedded their governance and diplomatic practices within Islamic norms. Their correspondence, rulings, and agreements showcased Islamic concepts of legitimacy, jihad, arbitration, and alliances. Thus, Islamic Political Theory serves as a foundational element for comprehending Sokoto's diplomacy as an expression of religious duty rather than mere political tactics. Islamic Political Theory offers a crucial perspective for examining how Islam influenced the diplomatic relations of the Sokoto Caliphate with neighboring states. Anchored in the Qur'an, Hadith, and contributions from classical Muslim scholars, this theory asserts that political authority cannot be divorced from religious legitimacy. Governance, foreign policy, and diplomatic actions are considered not only secular duties but manifestations of divine mandate, guided by the principles of justice (*'adl*), consultation (*shūrā*), and accountability to God. (Mukhtar 2025)

A fundamental element of Islamic political thought is the bifurcation of the world into *dār al-islām* (the abode of Islam) and *dār al-ḥarb* (the abode of war). This classification established a normative framework to guide how Muslim states interacted with others. While relationships within *dār al-islām* were grounded in solidarity, mutual acknowledgment, and arbitration, engagements with *dār al-ḥarb* could involve treaties, conditional alliances, or, when required, armed conflict (*jihād*). Importantly, Islamic jurisprudence also permitted flexibility, allowing peace treaties and coexistence with non-Muslim polities when needed. The Sokoto Caliphate exemplified this theory in practice, as Uthmān dan Fodio, Muhammad Bello, and Abdullahi dan Fodio consistently based their governance and diplomatic approaches on Islamic principles. For instance, correspondence exchanged between leaders from Sokoto and Muhammad al-Kanemi of Borno demonstrated not only political negotiations but also theological discussions, where both parties cited Qur'anic verses and Islamic law to substantiate their authority and territorial assertions. The involvement of the 'Ulamā' (Islamic scholars) further supported this framework, acting as advisers, emissaries, and interpreters of the law in foreign relations. Their engagement ensured that diplomacy remained anchored in Islamic legitimacy rather than being

reduced to mere practical considerations. Islamic Political Theory also clarifies Sokoto's employment of diplomacy as a means of expansion. The Caliphate urged neighbouring Muslim emirates to align themselves with Sokoto, portraying such allegiance as a collective religious obligation to fortify the Ummah. Concurrently, interactions with non-Muslim states often took the form of conditional treaties or demands for tribute, reflecting the theory's differentiation between believers and non-believers while accommodating pragmatic co-existence. In this respect, Islamic Political Theory elucidates why Sokoto's diplomacy had a uniquely religious character and substance. It transcended mere conflict resolution or power pursuits, emphasizing the adherence to divine governance principles and the extension of Islam's moral reach. Consequently, the theory lays the groundwork for understanding Sokoto's foreign relations as an amalgamation of religious responsibility and political necessity. (Murtala, 2025)

5.2 Realist Theory of International Relations

The Realist theory, which is based on power dynamics, highlights the quest for survival, security, and control within a disordered international landscape. While its origins lie in the modern West, Realism provides valuable perspectives on pre-colonial African diplomacy, where states vied for territory, resources, and authority. From a Realist viewpoint, Sokoto's diplomatic actions alliances, tributary systems, and military expansion were methods to strengthen its influence and secure dominance in the central Sudan. Realism elucidates why Sokoto occasionally prioritized political practicality over Islamic principles. For instance, although the Caliphate advocated for unity among Muslim states, it still engaged in power conflicts with Borno, despite their common faith. Additionally, pragmatic agreements with non-Muslim neighbours illustrated that the need for survival and supremacy sometimes took precedence over purely religious factors. Thus, Realism provides a balanced framework for understanding that Sokoto's diplomacy was influenced by both its faith and the imperatives of power politics. (Sabo, 2025)

The Realist Theory of International Relations serves as a second significant framework for examining the pre-colonial diplomacy of the Sokoto Caliphate. Grounded in the thoughts of classical philosophers like Thucydides and Machiavelli, as well as more recent scholars such as Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, Realism underscores the importance of power, survival, and self-interest in the interactions between states. It posits that the international scene is anarchic,

meaning there is no supreme authority above states, leading each political entity to depend on its resources for survival. From a Realist perspective, diplomacy functions primarily as an instrument of power politics: states engage in negotiations, forge alliances, and at times resort to warfare to safeguard their security and extend their influence. Ethical or religious factors are frequently secondary to the principal aim of dominance and achieving a balance of power. This theoretical viewpoint is particularly effective in illustrating how the Sokoto Caliphate, although deeply rooted in Islamic belief, also operated within a competitive political landscape where military prowess, economic control, and strategic partnerships were essential for survival.

The historical trajectory of Sokoto exemplifies these Realist principles. Following its swift ascent after Uthmān dan Fodio's jihad, the Caliphate faced persistent challenges from neighbouring entities, including Borno and various Hausa factions. While Sokoto often framed its conquests and diplomatic endeavours in Islamic terms, its strategies predominantly reflected a Realist approach to power consolidation. For instance, Sokoto was willing to engage in military campaigns when neighbouring powers resisted incorporation. Likewise, even in its dealings with Muslim states like Borno, Sokoto participated in intense competition for territorial dominance and legitimacy, demonstrating that the drive for security could sometimes eclipse religious unity. Realism also accounts for Sokoto's practical dealings with non-Muslim neighbours. Although Islamic law set a framework for relations with non-believers, Sokoto frequently entered into conditional treaties, alliances, or tributary agreements with these states. Such arrangements, while not completely congruent with strict Islamic ideals, represented a realist strategy to reduce military conflict and protect strategic interests, particularly in regard to trade routes and border security. However, the application of Realism to Sokoto presents certain limitations. Unlike contemporary secular states, Sokoto was an explicitly religious entity, and its leaders consistently framed political choices in Islamic terminology. Viewing its diplomacy solely through a Realist perspective may obscure the moral and theological motivations that were genuinely integral to its identity. Nonetheless, Realism remains significant for showcasing the conflict between religious values and political needs, demonstrating how Sokoto fused Islamic legitimacy with power-oriented tactics to navigate a precarious regional landscape. In conclusion, the Realist Theory of International Relations provides insights into the diplomatic conduct of the Sokoto Caliphate as part of a larger contest for survival and dominance in pre-

colonial West Africa. It highlights how the Caliphate reconciled its Islamic beliefs with pragmatic power considerations, thereby emphasizing the complex nature of its diplomacy, anchored in religious inspiration while also politically strategic. (Suwaiba & Atiku, (2021)

5.3 Constructivist Theory of International Relations

Constructivism posits that international relations are influenced not only by physical power but also by ideas, norms, and identities. This framework is particularly effective in explaining how Islam served as a common identity that transformed interstate relations in West Africa. Constructivism illustrates how the Caliphate and its neighboring entities interpreted and reinterpreted religious concepts during their diplomatic interactions. For instance, the communication between Muhammad Bello of Sokoto and Muhammad al-Kanemi of Borno was not simply a political negotiation but also a struggle over religious authority and identity. Both leaders utilized Islamic texts to validate their power, highlighting how beliefs and norms shaped diplomatic relations. Thus, Constructivism aids in understanding diplomacy as a socially constructed practice grounded in shared meanings rather than merely material interests.

The Constructivist Theory of International Relations provides an additional and complementary perspective for analyzing the influence of Islam on the Sokoto Caliphate's diplomacy with surrounding states. Emerging in the late 20th century through contributions from scholars like Alexander Wendt, Constructivism contests the materialist bases of Realism and Liberalism by asserting that international relations are socially constructed. States act not solely out of material self-interest; their behavior is influenced by ideas, identities, beliefs, and shared norms. Central to Constructivism is the idea that "anarchy is what states make of it." This suggests that the international system holds no inherent meaning; instead, states craft their actions based on their perceptions of themselves and others. Therefore, norms and identities are vital in diplomacy, as they outline what is viewed as legitimate, acceptable, or possible in the interactions among political entities. When applied to the Sokoto Caliphate, Constructivism sheds light on how Islam was more than just a legal or ideological structure; it constituted a shared identity that influenced attitudes, practices, and interactions. The Caliphate saw itself as the leader of the ummah in the region, and this self-identification affected its diplomatic behaviour. Relationships with neighbouring Muslim states involved more than

competition for power; they also encompassed negotiations over religious legitimacy. This concept is highlighted in the notable correspondence between Sultan Muhammad Bello of Sokoto and Sheikh Muhammad al-Kanemi of Borno, where both leaders cited Qur'anic injunctions and Islamic law to substantiate their political claims. The discourse was more than a political rivalry; it represented a clash over religious significance and identity. Constructivism also provides insight into Sokoto's interaction with non-Muslim states. Treaties, tribute agreements, or requests for conversion were articulated as efforts to extend the moral and religious order of Islam. Even when political necessity dictated compromise, the diplomatic language remained entrenched in religious norms. This underscores how identities and ideas impacted the formation of relationships beyond mere material considerations. (Tambari 2025)

Constructivism elucidates the role of the 'ulamā' (Islamic scholars) in diplomacy. Acting as guardians of religious knowledge, they bolstered the normative structure of interstate relations. Their participation in writing letters, resolving conflicts, and validating treaties illustrates how norms and ideas were integrated into Sokoto's diplomatic practices. However, Constructivism also emphasizes the evolving nature of these norms. Identities and shared interpretations were not fixed; they were debated and redefined over time. For example, while Sokoto aimed to represent itself as the unifying power for West African Muslims, neighbouring states frequently contested this assertion, presenting alternative views of Islamic legitimacy. Such contestation exemplifies the Constructivist notion that international relations are perpetually shaped by dialogue and negotiation. In summary, the Constructivist Theory of International Relations is instrumental in comprehending the non-material aspects of Sokoto's diplomacy. It demonstrates that Islam was not just a backdrop for political maneuvering but an active and developing identity that influenced diplomatic norms, practices, and results. (Tambari 2025)

5.4 Integrating the Three Theories

By combining these three viewpoints, this research steers clear of a simplistic explanation of Sokoto diplomacy. Islamic Political Theory offers the normative basis; Realism emphasizes the importance of power and survival; and Constructivism sheds light on the impact of shared religious identities and norms. Collectively, these perspectives illustrate that Sokoto's diplomatic approach was a mixed system driven by Islamic principles, influenced by struggles for power, and upheld by common norms that guided

communication and negotiation. The theoretical structure of this research does not depend on a singular perspective, but rather brings together Islamic Political Theory, Realism, and Constructivism to deliver a comprehensive understanding of how Islam influenced pre-colonial diplomacy in the Sokoto Caliphate. Each theory underscores various aspects of interstate relations, and in combination, they provide a richer, more nuanced analysis.

5.5 Normative Foundation (Islamic Political Theory).

Islamic Political Theory illustrates the ideological and religious foundations of Sokoto's diplomatic efforts. It demonstrates that relationships between states were not handled in a secular or purely practical manner but were rooted in the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic law. This perspective shows that the foreign policy of the Sokoto Caliphate was seen as a manifestation of divine will, where leaders aimed to safeguard and enlarge the ummah (Muslim Community). This accounts for the significant reliance on Islamic texts in diplomatic letters and the involvement of scholars in validating treaties, mediations, and even expansionist conflicts. The theory highlights the moral and religious context that rendered Sokoto's diplomacy uniquely Islamic.

5.6 Power and Survival (Realist Theory).

While Islam offered moral guidance, the Sokoto Caliphate also faced a competitive and often adversarial regional landscape. A realist perspective shows that Sokoto's diplomatic efforts involved strategic decisions aimed at survival, expansion, and dominance. In spite of its religious principles, Sokoto engaged in warfare, required tribute, and at times made practical compromises with non-Muslim neighbors to ensure trade routes and control over territories. This viewpoint underscores the practical limitations that compelled Sokoto to balance its ideology with the quest for power. Ignoring this realist aspect would risk depicting Sokoto's diplomacy as solely idealistic and failing to recognize its strategic pragmatism.

5.7 Norms and Identities (Constructivist Theory)

Constructivism enhances these viewpoints by illustrating how Islam functioned not merely as a collection of regulations, but as a common identity and normative framework that influenced relationships between states. The conflicts between Sokoto and Borno, for example, were as much centered on differing understandings of Islam as they were on political competition. Constructivism elucidates how

norms, beliefs, and social constructs affected the interactions Sokoto had with both its Muslim and non-Muslim neighbors. It also emphasizes the significance of scholars and religious discourse in shaping legitimacy, alliances, and opposition. (Tambari, 2025)

6. Research Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative historical approach to investigate the influence of Islam on diplomatic interactions among the Sokoto Caliphate and its neighbouring states prior to colonial rule. The methodology is rooted in the interpretive framework, which prioritizes the comprehension of human actions, institutions, and events within their cultural and historical settings. Given that this inquiry resides at the nexus of history, religion, and politics, qualitative methods facilitate a deeper examination and interpretation of texts, archival resources, and existing literature. Research Framework The study adopts a historical-analytical framework, particularly well-suited for analyzing historical events, ideas, and institutions. This framework enables the researcher to reconstruct the diplomatic practices of the Sokoto Caliphate, follow their Islamic underpinnings, and assess their effects on interstate relations in West Africa during the nineteenth century. Merging description with interpretation, the research transcends mere retelling of events, delving into the interaction of Islam, politics, and diplomacy. Data Sources The research draws upon both primary and secondary sources. Archival materials, including letters, treaties, and correspondences of key Sokoto figures like Uthmān dan Fodio, Muhammad Bello, and Abdullahi dan Fodio. These documents offer firsthand insights into the diplomatic norms and practices:

- Arabic manuscripts maintained in Nigerian repositories, such as the National Archives Kaduna and the Arewa House collection.
- Accounts from early European explorers, missionaries, and colonial officials who recorded aspects of Sokoto's diplomatic efforts.
- Academic books, journal articles, and dissertations regarding the Sokoto Caliphate, Islamic diplomacy, and the history of pre-colonial West Africa.
- Theoretical literature on International Relations (Realism, Constructivism) and Islamic Political Thought, which supply conceptual frameworks for data interpretation.

Thorough assessment of preserved letters, treaties, and Arabic manuscripts to extract pertinent details about diplomatic principles and practices. Detailed

examination of primary texts authored by Sokoto leaders, particularly in Arabic, to pinpoint recurring themes such as jihad, legitimacy, arbitration, and alliance-building. Comprehensive exploration of secondary literature in libraries and online databases to enhance and contextualize insights gleaned from primary sources.

The data is scrutinized using qualitative content analysis, which involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories that demonstrate how Islam influenced diplomatic practices. For instance, documents are coded for mentions of religious principles (e.g., verses from the Qur'an, citations from Hadith), diplomatic tactics (e.g., negotiation, tribute, warfare), and perceptions of neighboring states. (Tambari, 2025)

6.1 Analysis / Discussion

The exploration of results in this research indicates that Islam significantly influenced the principles, practices, and consequences of pre-colonial diplomacy within the Sokoto Caliphate. Although political motives and economic concerns were certainly significant, the evidence suggests that Islamic values provided the primary framework through which foreign relations were understood and executed. Three key themes emerge: (1) Islam as a guiding norm, (2) diplomacy as both a religious obligation and a political tactic, and (3) the blended nature of interstate relations in pre-colonial West Africa.

The Sokoto Caliphate was founded through a reform-oriented jihad led by Uthmān dan Fodio, whose governance vision was profoundly rooted in Islamic law and ethics. This religious foundation extended into the realm of diplomatic practice. Archival records, including Arabic communications between Sokoto leaders and neighboring rulers, consistently framed diplomacy in terms of religion. Qur'anic verses, Hadith traditions, and references to established Islamic jurists were used to legitimize political authority, call for submission, or resolve conflicts. For instance, Sultan Muhammad Bello's letters to Muhammad al-Kanemi of Borno not only reflect their political rivalry but also engage in theological debate. Bello employed Islamic law to question Borno's legitimacy, while al-Kanemi countered with alternative interpretations, fostering a discourse where diplomacy was inherently linked to religious rationale. This illustrates that, unlike entirely secular states, Sokoto's diplomatic efforts were grounded in a sacred duty to maintain the cohesion and moral integrity of the ummah.

The results also indicate that diplomacy in Sokoto embodied both a religious responsibility and practical

political calculations. On one hand, Sokoto aimed to unite neighboring Muslim emirates under its governance, portraying such submission as an act of unity within the ummah. Diplomatic methods, including letters, envoys, and arbitration, were commonly employed to promote peaceful allegiance prior to using force. This approach aligned with Islamic directives to seek peaceful resolutions before engaging in conflict. Conversely, Realist factors influenced Sokoto's international policy. Despite sharing a religious identity, Sokoto was involved in power struggles with Borno and maintained tribute relationships with non-Muslim entities at its borders. Practical treaties and alliances were forged when direct conquest was not feasible, especially to safeguard trade routes and defend vulnerable frontiers. Such choices highlight the Caliphate's dual approach: while Islamic tenets supplied the moral discourse of diplomacy, power dynamics frequently dictated the results.

The investigation confirms that pre-colonial interstate relations in West Africa featured hybrid systems where religion, power, and culture converged. Sokoto's diplomacy cannot be solely analyzed through the lens of Islam or Realism; rather, it constituted a blend of normative principles and practical tactics. For example, Sokoto's communications with non-Muslim states were articulated in Islamic terms, yet the agreements typically represented mutual concessions and practical solutions. Similarly, Sokoto's disputes with Muslim neighbors illustrated how religious discourse was utilized to validate political competition. This blended nature highlights the applicability of Constructivism within the theoretical framework. Diplomatic exchanges were not merely governed by material concerns but were socially constructed through shared (and sometimes contested) Islamic values. Identities and legitimacy were continuously negotiated, as demonstrated in the discussions between Sokoto and Borno or the gradual inclusion of Hausa emirates into the Caliphate's political sphere.

The research findings also reveal both ongoing practices and unique features within Sokoto's approach to diplomacy. Continuity can be seen in the utilization of established West African traditions such as alliances, tribute, and arbitration that existed prior to Sokoto. What set the Caliphate apart, however, was its clear incorporation of these practices within Islamic teachings. In contrast to other political entities that predominantly depended on kinship or customary authority, Sokoto consistently justified its diplomatic actions through religious frameworks, creating a trans-regional system that transcended ethnic or tribal

affiliations. This uniqueness is further illustrated through the significant role of the ‘ulamā’, who played an active part in formulating treaties, advising leaders, and acting as envoys. Their involvement ensured that diplomacy transcended mere political maneuvering to encompass both scholarly and religious dimensions.

The exploration indicates that Sokoto’s diplomatic efforts challenge the notion that pre-colonial African diplomacy was solely pragmatic or simplistic. Rather, it uncovers an intricate system where religion, politics, and culture were profoundly connected. Islam not only provided legitimacy but also introduced a structured set of norms and procedures that organized interstate relationships. This insight highlights the durability of Islamic diplomacy in the area and its impact on subsequent colonial and post-colonial engagements. Simultaneously, the findings underscore the conflict between idealism and pragmatism in Sokoto’s diplomatic practices. Although religious obligations called for Muslim unity, political realities frequently led to conflict, rivalry, and compromise. This complexity reflects the intricate nature of diplomacy itself where aspirations shape behavior, yet survival influences strategy. (Uthman, 2022)

7. Findings / Results of the Study

The research aimed to explore how Islam impacted the diplomatic interactions of the Sokoto Caliphate with neighboring states during the pre-colonial period. Through the examination of archival documents, Arabic manuscripts, and secondary sources, several conclusions were drawn.

The primary conclusion indicates that Islam served as the normative and ideological basis for Sokoto’s diplomatic engagements. The Caliphate emerged from an Islamic reformist jihad, and its leaders consistently aligned foreign policy choices with Qur’anic directives, Prophetic teachings, and the legal reasoning of classical Muslim scholars. Documentation, agreements, and announcements frequently began with verses from the Qur’an, emphasizing that diplomacy was perceived not only as a political necessity but also as a religious obligation. This religious context set Sokoto’s diplomatic practices apart from the primarily kinship- or tradition-based diplomacy observed in other West African states.

Another important conclusion highlights the vital function of Islamic scholars (‘ulamā’) in the diplomatic sphere. The ‘ulamā’ served as advisers, scribes, envoys, and interpreters of Islamic law, ensuring that diplomatic actions adhered to Islamic

tenets. Their participation provided legitimacy to agreements, helped mediate conflicts, and offered scholarly support for political decisions. This formal incorporation of religious scholarship in diplomacy was a distinctive attribute of the Sokoto system.

The findings indicate that Sokoto implemented a dual strategy in its diplomatic approach. On one side, it emphasized peaceful negotiations, persuasion, and communication particularly with neighboring Muslim states. Diplomatic correspondence often invoked Islamic unity and sought voluntary loyalty to the Caliphate. Conversely, when peaceful means proved ineffective, Sokoto readily turned to jihad or military force. Therefore, diplomacy served both as a faith-driven initiative for unification and as a strategic mechanism for reinforcing political authority.

The study also identifies a clear differentiation in Sokoto’s diplomatic strategies toward Muslim and non-Muslim entities. For Muslim states like Borno and the Hausa emirates, diplomacy revolved around issues of legitimacy, Islamic law, and the leadership of the *ummah*, often manifested in theological dialogues and mediation. In contrast, interactions with non-Muslim communities were articulated through conditional treaties, tributary arrangements, and incentives for conversion. This bifurcated approach reflects the impact of Islamic law, which acknowledged distinctions between *dār al-islām* (the domain of Islam) and *dār al-ḥarb* (the domain of war).

In spite of its Islamic orientation, Sokoto’s diplomacy revealed notable pragmatism. Agreements with non-Muslim neighbors, acceptance of local customs, and strategic alliances demonstrate that the Caliphate navigated between religious principles and practical political considerations. For example, Sokoto occasionally permitted non-Muslim practices at its borders when enforcing Islamic law might lead to unrest. This pragmatic approach underscores the complex relationship between Islamic ideals and realist strategies in shaping Sokoto’s foreign relations. (Zayyanu, 2022)

8. Conclusion

This research has explored how Islam influenced pre-colonial diplomatic interactions between the Sokoto Caliphate and neighboring regions, employing Islamic Political Theory, Realist Theory, and Constructivist Theory as frameworks for analysis. The results indicate that Islam served not only as a spiritual and ethical guiding force but also as a key factor shaping diplomatic behavior, institutions, and strategies. The Sokoto Caliphate derived its legitimacy from Islamic

law and ethics, intertwining religion with both internal governance and foreign relations. A notable finding is that Sokoto's diplomatic approach was hybrid in nature. Although rooted in Islamic ideals such as justice (*'adl*), consultation (*shūrāh*), and the safeguarding of the *Ummah* (Muslim Community), it was also influenced by realist concerns of survival, security, and territorial growth. Leaders of the Caliphate frequently navigated between idealism and practicality, employing persuasion and theological reasoning when feasible, but resorting to force and conquest when necessary. Additionally, the role of the '*Ulamā*' (Islamic Scholars) as advisers, messengers, and record-keepers reinforced the religious dimension of Sokoto's diplomacy.

This institutional function ensured that diplomacy was not merely a political mechanism but also a religious endeavor, thereby setting Sokoto apart from many of its contemporaries in West Africa. Connections with Muslim states such as Borno involved intense discussions about legitimacy and authority, while interactions with non-Muslim states showcased the adaptable application of Islamic law to facilitate treaties and tributary relations. The study further concludes that Sokoto's diplomatic practices enhanced the continuity and sophistication of African diplomacy. Rather than being primitive or arbitrary, pre-colonial diplomacy in West Africa especially under Sokoto was remarkably organized, codified, and rich with cultural and religious significance. Islam offered both a shared identity and a normative framework that influenced negotiations, agreements, and alliances throughout a diverse area. In conclusion, the diplomacy of the Sokoto Caliphate underscores the relationship between faith, power, and identity. It demonstrates that religion can act not only as a moral guideline but also as a tactical asset in international relations. This duality an obligation to faith paired with political necessity shapes the legacy of Sokoto's pre-colonial diplomacy and provides perspectives on the lasting intersection of religion and politics in Africa.

9. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following suggestions are made:

Scholars and policymakers should acknowledge the critical role of religion, especially Islam, in influencing both historical and modern diplomacy in Africa. Simplifying pre-colonial diplomacy to merely struggle for power fails to recognize the significant impact of religious norms, texts, and institutions in shaping external relations.

Governments, universities, and research organizations should focus on the preservation, digitization, and translation of Arabic manuscripts and archival materials from Sokoto and other West African states. These resources are essential for comprehending Africa's contributions to global diplomacy and should be made more accessible to researchers.

Theoretical frameworks within International Relations ought to integrate non-Western traditions, such as Islamic Political Theory, to broaden the global discourse. The diplomatic practices of Sokoto illustrate that African and Islamic viewpoints provide valuable insights into statecraft, negotiation, and legitimacy that are still pertinent today.

Current Nigerian diplomacy can gain insights from the Sokoto example, which merges moral legitimacy with strategic pragmatism. In a world still facing conflicts stemming from religion, ethnicity, and politics, the experience of Sokoto demonstrates the potential to use shared values and dialogue as instruments for peacebuilding while remaining attuned to security concerns.

Future investigations should employ interdisciplinary methods that blend history, political science, religious studies, and international relations. This will facilitate a more thorough understanding of how religion and politics continue to influence diplomacy in Africa and beyond.

Educational programs in African history and international relations should feature in-depth examinations of the Sokoto Caliphate's diplomacy. This will not only underscore African agency in global history but also contest Eurocentric perspectives that minimize Africa's diplomatic complexity.

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Urhobo Cosmological and Theological Contents of Udu Songs: A Vehicle for Preservation of Tradition and Culture in Nigeria

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Abstract. This research examines Urhobo cosmology and theology as expressed in traditional songs. These songs reveal the intimate connection between cosmology and theology, showing that the two concepts are interrelated; theology often helps to explain aspects of cosmology. Urhobo cosmology encompasses beliefs in Oghene (God), edjo (divinities), ega ese emo (ancestral veneration), the realities of the physical and spiritual worlds, and the relationship between the here and now and the hereafter. Theology, understood as the discourse on God, and cosmology, which represents the total worldview of a people, is clearly articulated in Urhobo traditional songs. The purpose of this study is to investigate Urhobo cosmology and theology as revealed in the songs of Udu traditional musicians. The project focuses on selected songs and analyzes them to highlight the codified and systematic worldview embedded within them. The musicians whose works are examined include Chief Amos Ogute Ottan, Chief Gometi Oyibo, Sir Juju Debala, Mr. Udjabor Okololo, and Don Francis Egbeku Kenairu. These musicians, who were born and nurtured within deeply religious environments, naturally reflect in their songs the cosmological and theological beliefs of the Urhobo people. To achieve this purpose, the study adopts phenomenological, hermeneutical, and participant-observation approaches. These involve pre-field preparations, actual fieldwork, and post-field (desk) analysis. After the field process, the selected songs are examined and interpreted to reveal the underlying cosmology and theology of the Urhobo.

Keywords: Cosmology, Theology, Nigerian culture, Traditional beliefs and Morality.

1. Background to the Study

This research is grounded in the study of Urhobo cosmology and theology as revealed through traditional songs. These songs demonstrate the intimate relationship between cosmology and

theology, showing that both concepts are interconnected; theology often aids in the interpretation and explanation of cosmological ideas. According to Metuh (1981), as cited in Emusi (2012), cosmology refers to the complex system of beliefs and attitudes concerning the origin, nature, and structure of the universe, as well as the interactions among its beings. It provides a rational explanation of the underlying order that guides human life and the environment. Thus, cosmology represents “the belief system of any group of people” (Emusi, 2012). Understanding the cosmology of a people therefore offers insight into their actions, values, and attitudes toward life factors that distinguish them from other ethnic groups.

The Urhobo people possess a distinct worldview that encompasses the totality of their beliefs and practices, clearly reflected in their cultural, religious, and socio-cultural institutions. Various aspects of this cosmology are expressed in the songs of Udu popular musicians, who are widely regarded as custodians and articulators of morality, traditional history, and communal beliefs. These songs consciously and unconsciously communicate the Urhobo worldview. To a casual listener, it may appear that the musician’s primary aim is simply to earn a living through entertainment; however, a more discerning audience recognizes that the songs embed and transmit the beliefs, values, and practices of the Urhobo people. Thus, traditional songs serve not only to entertain but also to educate, enlighten, and inform.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is disheartening that early missionaries, as well as some Western scholars, referred to African cultural practices and religious expressions as *paganism*. Even more troubling is the fact that early converts who participated in their cultural festivals were, and in some cases still are, punished or labeled as “half-baked Christians” or mere churchgoers. Such attitudes have

contributed significantly to the decline of Urhobo classical ideas of cosmology and theology, as many African Christians abandoned their indigenous cultural practices in an effort to be perceived as committed Christians.

Consequently, a large portion of the younger generation of Urhobo people has become unfamiliar with their own culture, particularly their traditional songs. This lack of cultural awareness has produced social and psychological effects, resulting in a value system that dismisses Urhobo cultural heritage as “primitive.”

Among the younger generation, there is a growing perception that the value system embedded in Urhobo culture particularly its moral principles, theological insights, and social relationships - is inferior to the so-called “civilized” culture of the Western world. Furthermore, comprehensive research has not been conducted on the anthropological study of Urhobo cosmology and theology, leaving a significant gap in scholarly understanding of these indigenous belief systems.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to investigate the cosmology and theology of the Urhobo as revealed in the songs of Udu popular traditional musicians.

The specific objectives are:

- To examine the text of the songs to highlight the cosmology of the Urhobo;
- To analyze the songs to expose their social-cultural benefits to the society and
- To examine the songs to highlight their educative potentials.

1.3 Significance of Study

This study is of great significance for the reasons below:

- It has enabled the youths to understand the concept of cosmology and theology in Urhobo culture;
- It has also exposed the social-cultural benefits of the traditional songs of the Urhobo;
- It has activated the interest of the people for their traditional music;
- The body of songs are veritable instructional materials for teachers in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools;

- The youth are encouraged to listen to the songs in order to gain knowledge and
- Finally, it has re-kindled the desire to identify with the Urhobo culture.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the traditional songs of selected Udu popular musicians, focusing specifically on the Urhobo concept of the Supreme God, the origin of humanity and a few other aspects of Urhobo socio-cultural life as reflected in their songs.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The study is anchored on the Culture and Identity Theory propounded by Jane Collier and Milt Thomas in 1988. Culture, within the framework of this theory, refers to the values, beliefs, thought patterns, and behaviours learned and shared by a group of people, which serve as markers of identity and enhance their sense of belonging. The theory emphasizes how individuals communicate, construct, and negotiate their cultural group identities and relationships within specific contexts. This theory is relevant to the present study because it focuses on the beliefs and thought patterns of the Urhobo people - elements that distinguish them from other ethnic groups in Nigeria.

2. Relevance of Songs in the Interpretation of Cosmology and Theology

Urhobo cosmology and theology are vividly expressed in traditional and folk songs. These songs serve not merely as entertainment but as a vital medium for the development of the mind, body, and soul. Through folk songs, virtues are commended, and vices are condemned. Udu popular musicians, regarded as articulators of morality, traditional history, and the beliefs of the people, convey the cosmology and theology of the Urhobo in their music.

Agu (1999), as cited in Emusi (2008), observes that in African societies, all aspects of life—from birth to death—are integrated with music-making. Among the Ibo, for instance, music functions not only as a medium of entertainment and social interaction but also as an essential tool for the development of the mind, body, and soul. Through songs, individuals learn the laws of the land, acquire knowledge of tribal history, and assimilate socially accepted behavioral patterns via music and dance.

As noted earlier, Urhobo cosmology is expressed in songs, which are crucial for interpreting the cosmology and theology of a people. Onyeji (2005), cited in Dick-Duvwarovwo (2017), highlights the role

of folk music in the Igbo community, describing it as a “potent creative art that enables proper socialization, education, entertainment, and integration of the Igbo person into the norms and values of Igbo culture.” He further notes that music functions as a mediator and an agency for promoting order, peace, and unity among the Igbo. Similarly, Odejobi (2014), in her study of Yoruba indigenous folk songs as a tool for moral education among children, emphasizes that folk songs serve to encourage, motivate, and guide children in upholding good morals, with parents particularly mothers playing a key role in transmitting these values through music. Emusi (2016) reinforces this view, asserting that “folk songs serve as a means of relaxation and entertainment, as a vehicle for the transmission of idioms and proverbs, and as a channel through which virtues are commended and vices condemned.”

3. Research Methodology

This study employed the ethnographic method, which combines fieldwork with desk research. The fieldwork was preceded by pre-field activities, involving the collection of relevant materials and information necessary for effective engagement in the field. The ethnographic method is defined as “the gathering of recordings and the first-hand experience of musical life in a particular human culture” (Nettle, 1964).

Ethnography has proven highly effective in cultural research, enabling scholars to correct earlier misconceptions about African conceptions of God and other aspects of traditional belief systems. The method encompasses three phases: pre-field, actual fieldwork, and desk work (also referred to as post-field analysis). Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data consisted of oral interviews guided by a well-structured questionnaire focused on Urhobo cosmology and theology as reflected in the songs of Udu traditional musicians. Secondary data were drawn from both published and unpublished materials relevant to the study.

3.1 Pre-Field

The pre-field stage lasted for about four weeks. This phase involved extensive library research on Urhobo beliefs in order to provide the necessary background information for the topic under study. After identifying the communities to be visited, contact was established with the research assistants to determine appropriate dates for the field visits. Materials prepared for the fieldwork included personal effects, financial provisions, a portable tape recorder, notebooks, as well as traditional items such as drinks

and kola nuts, which are essential for facilitating cordial interactions and gaining access to community members.

3.2 Population

The Urhobo occupy nine local government areas in Delta State, and each of these areas has its own traditional popular musicians. This study focused specifically on the traditional popular musicians in Udu Local Government Area, based on the understanding that they share a common culture with other Urhobo communities. Consequently, the cultural information expressed in their songs can be considered representative of what obtains across the wider Urhobo nation. For the purposes of this research, the songs of seven musicians were selected and analyzed.

3.3 Sampling technique

The cluster sampling technique was employed to select the seven musicians used in this study. The selection was based primarily on the thematic content of their songs, particularly as it relates to Urhobo cosmology and theology. The musicians selected for analysis include: Chief Amos Ogute Ottan, Chief Adama, Chief Gometi Oyibo, Sir Juju Debala, Mr. Udjabo Okololo, Chief Prophet Olokpa, and Don Francis Egbeku Kenairu.

3.4 Field Work

The field work lasted for four weeks and began with the establishment of rapport with the musicians. During this period, the researchers participated in both their musical and non-musical activities and demonstrated genuine interest in their general well-being. This relationship-building process facilitated trust and encouraged openness during data collection. In the field, data were collected using the participant observation method and the oral interview technique. Participant observation enables the researcher to obtain information from the participants’ own perspectives rather than relying on preconceived assumptions. This was achieved by joining the musicians in their performances and observing their musical practices within their natural settings. Musical events were recorded in their actual contexts, and photographs were taken with the performers to capture the essence of the occasions.

3.5 Oral Interview

This section of the study was guided by well-structured questions on Urhobo cosmology and theology, focusing specifically on the Urhobo concept

of God, their understanding of who God is, and the nature of their traditional theological beliefs. A second session was held with the musicians to clarify issues that emerged during the initial inquiry, particularly the meanings of song texts as well as the accurate wording of the performed songs. A selective audio recording of ten songs comprising philosophical and historical pieces was made for detailed analysis.

3.6 Desk Work

This stage, also referred to as the post-field work phase, involves the collation and analysis of data gathered from the field. Seven days were devoted to this stage, during which the musical materials collected were subjected to textual analysis using the thematic approach. In this process, the songs were analyzed based on the specific topical issues they addressed.

4. The Concept of Songs in Urhobo Culture

A song is a musical composition rendered with the human voice, either unaccompanied or supported by instrumental accompaniment. Across cultures, songs are created for specific purposes, with styles and themes that reflect social interactions, spiritual beliefs, and modes of communication. They constitute an essential component of a people's culture; therefore, to study the songs of any society is to examine its cultural life. Songs accompany virtually every human activity - social, cultural, religious, and recreational events within the community. They function as vehicles for expressing emotions, transmitting ideas, and conveying depths of passion and meaning that ordinary speech cannot adequately capture.

Traditional songs, also known as folk songs, are musical compositions created by people within a particular geographical and cultural setting for purposes considered meaningful to them. The International Folk Music Council defines folk music as *“the product of a musical tradition that has evolved through the process of oral transmission, shaped by three main factors: continuity, which links the present with the past; variation, which springs from the creative impulses of individuals and groups; and selection by the community, which determines the form in which the music survives”* (Ekwueme, 2001, in Dick-Duvwarovwo, 2017).

According to Emusi (2023), traditional songs represent a communal heritage of society; consequently, all members of the community participate in musical activities that reflect their cultural identity. These songs belong to the common

people, and their texts are grounded in the people's beliefs, worldviews, philosophies, and occupational experiences. Nzewi (1999, in Emusi, 2023) describes traditional music as *“feeling and communal therapy, a humanizing communion, a sharing in human-beingness.”* Thus, Africans do not conceptualize music as an art form existing merely for its own sake; rather, they understand and rationalize it as an integral component of human life, intended to provide essential and supportive functions for social and cultural events in ways considered acceptable within the community (Emusi, 2023).

Traditional songs are highly significant because they function as a major means of communication among the people, especially in societies that did not maintain a written tradition. Through these songs, members of the community learn their history, belief systems, and acceptable moral behaviour. Traditional songs also contribute to emotional well-being by helping individuals express, process, and regulate feelings such as joy, sadness, and stress. In addition, they provide a rich medium for cultural and creative expression.

Moreover, traditional songs play an essential role in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage and identity across generations. Many of these songs contain historical narratives expressed through storytelling, thereby safeguarding important cultural events and the collective history of the people for future generations.

5. Udu Popular Musicians

The Udu-speaking people are located between the Okpare Creek and the Warri River in Delta State, Nigeria. Their territory is bounded by the Forcados River to the south, the Warri River to the west, and the Okpare Creek to the east, while the Warri - Ughelli highway marks their northern boundary. The area lies within the tropical rainforest belt and is characterized by numerous watercourses and wetlands.

Udu popular musicians are individuals who primarily earn their livelihood through music making. They are frequently invited to perform at various ceremonies - including marriage rites, funeral ceremonies, and other social gatherings - where their services are required. These musicians are regarded as articulators of morality and custodians of traditional history and cultural beliefs. Their songs, whether consciously or unconsciously, reflect and express the belief system and worldview of the Urhobo people.

Musicians often face the challenge of gathering information about events occurring in their environment and conveying them to the public through performance. Idamoyibo (2006) describes musicians as “overt and secret observers, and silent listeners who continually monitor events unfolding around them.” He further explains that within the context of performance, musicians provide social commentary, educate the public, and entertain simultaneously.

Darah (2005) examines the songs of Urhobo popular musicians primarily from literary and political-economic perspectives. He demonstrates how, historically, songs were employed to correct societal ills, respond to colonial and post-colonial politics, and later shift from satirical compositions to eulogies or praise songs for profit. In Urhobo communities, songs of insult (satire) are performed to publicly shame individuals engaged in dubious behavior, while panegyric songs are used to commend those who lead upright lives. Other categories of songs include work songs, war songs, entertainment songs, and ceremonial songs.

Given the role of musicians in maintaining social decorum, Idamoyibo (ibid) refers to them as “mass communicators.” Musicians are often regarded as the conscience of the society, refusing to accept bribes to falsify information affecting the community. Ovorgbedor (1999, in Idamoyibo) observes that “art does not only prescribe polite ways for saying impolite things, nor provide ways for expressing the inexpressible; music provides license for saying the fearsome and irritant truth.”

Udu popular musicians base their songs on the beliefs and worldview of the Urhobo, emphasizing moral values and the consequences of violating the community’s ethical norms. Their compositions are often highly philosophical, requiring thoughtful reflection from listeners, as they frequently address the transience and vanity of human life.

6. Classification of their Songs

The songs of Udu popular musicians are classified according to *obo-ukiri* (drum beat), *owoton-igbe* (dance step) and according to the content of the songs.

Below are the major classes of Udu traditional songs based on the above:

Udje songs are very vigorous and war-like
Adjuya is less vigorous than *udje* and milder in speed
Fashone a linguistic corruption of fashion is a fusion of *udje* and *adjuya*

Oghwe has a leisurely beat/rhythm
Overen meaning revealed is used for ritual purpose, that is worship of a particular deity known as *edjo-overen*. It induces a trance-like state in the dancer
Opiri songs are associated with ribaldry
Eghavwan is associated with sorrow and heart-rending emotion during interments

Classified according to content fall into the following:

Ile-ekan meaning songs of abuse or satires are used to correct human foibles and whip social dissidents into line through scorching mockery
Ile-iten or innuendos are indirect, implied or polite insults
Ile-ejiri or eulogies are praise songs meant to commend good behaviour as well as to secure favour or gratification from the person being praised or commended
Ile-onyenvwen are social or party songs meant for merriment
Ile-uvweri are dirges or mourning songs

Regardless of their classification, the general purpose of these songs is multifaceted. They provide social entertainment, preserve and transmit cultural values, and correct societal ills. Additionally, they teach social order and proper interpersonal relationships, express the collective consciousness of society regarding the supreme being, and offer encouragement or condolence. These songs also explain social phenomena and the origins of things, caution against the dangers of foreign or negative cultural influences, and showcase the culture of the Udu people to other socio-cultural groups.

7. Process of Song Composition

Regardless of their purpose or audience, Udu songs follow a predictable process of composition. The first stage, **ule-eroro**, involves the composer creating both the melody and the lyrics of the song. The second stage, **efuere-ile**, focuses on editing the song. During this phase, a group of people is invited to listen to the composition and provide critique, which informs any necessary modifications. The third stage, **owoigbe-ule** (the dance step for the song), entails drummers and other percussionists interpreting the rhythm and creating the musical accompaniment. The appropriate dance steps for the song are also determined and learned during this stage. This is followed by a series of rehearsals until perfection is achieved. The final stage is the public performance of the song.

8. The Cosmology and Theology of the Urhobo as highlighted in the Songs of Udu Popular Musicians

The cosmology and theology of the Urhobo are embedded in their traditional songs; a thorough analysis of some of the songs will substantiate the facts

8.1 The Existence of a Supreme God

The Urhobo have long believed in the existence of a supreme being, whom they call **Oghene**. They hold that Oghene has power over all things on earth, and that nothing can exist without Him. This belief explains why the Urhobo consistently seek His guidance in prayer before embarking on any endeavor and attribute all success to His intervention. In the songs of Udu popular musicians, the concept of God as supreme is strongly emphasized. He is frequently depicted as all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present, which is why many musicians often invoke His presence during their performances. Below is the opening of a song by Egbeku, in which he used different African names for God to invite His presence:

Oghene woto rhe ukpe nana	God come down this year
Ehe Olorun, Tamara, Allah	oh God
Kephere, kephere me re yo vwo sewo de	I call you with different languages
Wo to rhe ukpe nana	come down this year

From this song it is beyond reasonable doubt that Urhobo relate with the supreme God directly in all things.

8.2 Creator God

The Urhobo also believe that God created the world and everything within it. He fashioned the land to serve as a home for both humans and animals, and likewise created the hills and mountains as part of His divine design.

There are speculations on how the land and the hills were created, one of which Ogute (1977) narrated in one of his songs titled *Yembra*. Below is an extract:

1. Oto r'Urhobo vwu kpehiovwi-I	Urhobo land has no hills
2. Obo re soro, me cha n'abo dje	the reason, I shall make plain
3. Sosuo jovwo, oke r'awanre	in the beginning, in antiquity
4. Amame oghene vwo ma kpo	God created the world with water only
5. Oghene rhiro no ye cha m'ihwo	God ordained to make man
6. No ye m'ihwo, oy eke meravwe	that He would make man, and thereafter

7. Ihwo ve ravwe k'phori aye ria	man and beast will live on land
8. Ota r'unu, Oghene vwo m'akpo	by word of mouth, God made the world
9. Oghene vw'ota unu vwo f'ekpe	by words of mouth God loaded sand
10. Phi'evu r'oko, idibo biro	into a canoe, his servant paddles Him
11. Ebi'oko r'ekpe na rhi ti Yoroba	He paddle the canoe to Yoruba-land
12. Ekpe na nabo bu vw'evu r'oko	the sand was much in the canoe
13. Oghene ghwe'kpe do phih'ame	God tossed some of the sand into the water
14. Te r'ekpe n ate, tiyi k'ophori	where ever the sand toched turned to land
15. Ekpe ri mui kori kp'ugbenu	handful of the sand forms hills
16. Oghene ghar'ekpe ri ti bini	God kept on apportioning the sand till He get to Bini
17. Oghwereho, no yi kp'Urhobo	and from there He came to Urhobo
18. Ekpe ri cheko egoma rere	His supply of sand was almost gone
19. K'oto re kpe miri h'Urhobo	so He tossed a few handfuls on Urhobo land
20. Oto r'Urhobo ke kpekpe	Urhobo therefore has land
21. Ete r'ukpehiovwi ophruro	but not enough to form hills
22. Besie Oghene vwo t'ebe vwere	by the time God reached Ijaw-land
23. Ibirhe tetan koye chek'oko	all that was left was the muddy dregs
24. Ibirhi na k'oye mriri vwo rh'ayen	these He tossed to them
25. Obe vwere ke poto poto	Ijaw land therefore became marsh land
26. Ete oto re chihi ophru ro	they lack firm soil for walking on

The song above attests to the fact that the Urhobo recognize God as the Creator and possess a structured understanding of the order of creation. According to this worldview, in antiquity, God first created water, which filled the earth, and then formed the land in preparation for the creation of humans and animals. The similarity between this Urhobo cosmology and the Judeo-Christian account of creation as presented in Genesis is striking, leading some to speculate about potential Judeo-Christian influence. However, the worldview expressed by Ogute in the songs is firmly rooted in Urhobo folklore, which predates the advent of Christianity and Western cosmology.

In another song by Ogute titled Michael Ibru (1975), he suggested that God apportions each man his lot in life. An extract:

Ede r'Oghene ma makele-o,	the God created Michael Ibru
Amakashe ovo rh'igborhi me	an angel whispered to me
Ne dene satode	that it was a Saturday
Oghene f'emu phih 'oko r'erhanre	God loaded provision into the canoe

Out nuakpo soso vwo yer'akpo	enough for an entire community to live on
Oke me Malele phi h'ko na	before He created Michael in the boat
N'ode 247ghenev oy eke	intending the following day
Mihwo fa kugbe Makele	to create more people to join Michael
Eki bi'oko na rhi'akpo	before the canoe is paddled to earth
Oghene siobo phr'iruo, okpore	God has finished His work and gone home
Oke vwo rhie, tavwe Oghene	it was on the following day God
Ke karo ho ni none sonde	realized that that day was Sunday
Erhovwo r'ode, ji'Oghene bi ruio	the native day of rest, God does not work
N'ohwo ema phi h'ko na	the one He has created in the boat
Oyevwu hiovwi re	was lucky
Oro yer'akpo jobe mr'uboro	the one who will succeed does not experience evil
Etiyi 247ghenev wo sidibo	God then told His servants
N'ebioko nav e Makele vwo rhie akpo	to paddle the canoe and Michael to earth

This song suggests that God continues to create people and allocate livelihoods to them. Furthermore, the Udu people conceive of existence as occurring on a single, interconnected plane of reality. Humans are believed to be created in a distant part of this plane, within the spirit realm, from where they journey to the earth – the physical realm. Similarly, the return to the spirit realm after death is envisioned as a homeward journey along the same mystical river that connects the unseen world with the visible world.

The Urhobo are conscious that, apart from humans, it is God who created everything else that exist, including darkness, light, the moon and the sun in a clear order. An excerpt from one of Ogute songs titled Siakpere (1977) has it that:

Oghene m'ason, oke be m'uvo	God made the light, and He made the day
Om'oemeravwe, oke be m'ore	He made the moon, and He made the sun
Ovo ye rue, ovo si hw'oma mu	when one is working, the other rests

Thus, God does not only create, but His creation maintains a harmonious order. The Urhobo also believe in the Almightyness of God (omnipotence) as He gives power to everything.

8.3 Time and Space

The Urhobo conceive of spatial reality as existing on three interconnected plains: *Odjuvwu*, the abode of God; *Akpo*, the abode of man, representing the visible

world in its entirety; and *Erivwin*, the abode of the dead and unborn children. In Udu songs, *Erivwin* is portrayed not as a mystical place, but as a physical location, albeit far removed from *Akpo*. The entrance to *Erivwin*, called *Ada-Urhoro* (the Gate of *Urhor*), marks the point beyond which the dead cannot return, except possibly through reincarnation.

According to Echekwube, reincarnation is a spiritual experience in which the essence or spark of the deceased's ego transmits certain qualities to their descendants - a phenomenon reminiscent of the mysterious transfer of attributes observed in biblical narratives. In Juju and Udjabor's song titled "*Tugba*", the singers recount the story of a man named *Tugba* who, after death, finds himself in *Erivwin*. Nostalgic for his family left behind in *Akpo*, he pleads with *Orhi Urhor*, the guardian of *Erivwin*'s entrance, to allow him a brief return. However, his request is denied. This narrative parallels the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19 - 31), emphasizing that once the departed enters the realm of the dead, a return to the living world is impossible. Despite this separation, the deceased are believed to engage in adventurous activities, including commercial undertakings, in certain isolated parts of *Akpo*, such as deep forests. In another Juju and Udjabor's song titled '*Benwa*', a hunter named *Benwa* went on a hunting expedition into a deep forest. An excerpt:

Eghwea omuomuo'sho	it is in evil forest
Erivwin ya ch'eki	the dead engages in commerce
Di ye <i>erivwin</i> rhi'eki re	the dead have come to market
Benwa be rie he	Benwa did not know
Ovw rue'vu r'oye	when he entered the place
Aziza hia ghwiwe ho	Aziza met him
Aziza sere vue, ko war'idjere	Aziza called him, and called his praise name

In Urhobo cosmology, *Aziza* is a spirit (*Edjo*) whose presence is always accompanied by a whirlwind. When an *Aziza* calls a man by his praise name, it signifies that the individual is courageous and outstanding. This belief underscores the Urhobo perception that *Erivwin* is situated in remote locations within the physical plain of existence.

Like many African societies, the Urhobo reckon time using the sun and the moon. As noted earlier, they observe a four-day week: *Edewor*, *Ediruo*, *Edure*, and *Edebi*, with seven such weeks constituting a month, totaling twenty-eight days to correspond with the phases of the moon. The period from the appearance of the new moon (*Omeravwen Phru Re*) to its waning (*Omeravwen pa le pa gha*) completes the lunar cycle. Consequently, the Urhobo year comprises thirteen months. Unlike the solar calendar, the Urhobo do not reckon a year based on the sun's 365-day revolution;

rather, they mark time by the daily rising and setting of the sun.

In Urhobo cosmology, the sun and the moon are children of God whom He assigned to their respective duty posts-in the day and at night. The choice of the time of duty deriving from the nature of each of the children. In Ogute song titles ‘*Sefia*’, he says:

Ore v’omeravwe	sun and moon
Ayen ive k’emo r’oghene-o	they are both sons of God
K’ayen ne suvwe’ uvie	the two struggled for kingship
Ohwo r’avwode r’oye su’akpo na	the one whose name will be used in ruling earth
Oghene s’aye chiria	God called the two of them
Oke r’ihwo vwo r’ayen	and assign each of them to people
Na ye hw’ive kpo’rhavwirhi-o	that the two of them should undergo a test before midday
Ribesie oren vw’ovi	the people assigned to the sun had all died
Ihwo r’oren ghwurere	while those assigned to the moon were all alive when they arrived home
J’omeravwen v’oro ye gbe hero	God called the sun and the moon
Ayen vwo t’uwevwi	and asked after the people he had given to them
Oghene s’oren v’omeravwe	the sun said his were bad people that they all died
Nihwo roye vwo ravwa kemavo	that none of them survived
Oren n’ihwo na rharhe	the moon accounted for his own
Ne r’oye je k’ighwu	God nodded and spoke
N’oye v’ogbe t’uwevwi-i	the name of the sun cannot be used in ruling the world
Omeravwe vw’eroye kpa oto	the sun’s duty will be to dry tapioca as well as kernels
Oghene mi phiuhiovwi	clothes that are hung out to dry, let the sun dry them
Na savwe ode r’oren su’akpona-ha	this is the assigned duty of the sun
Ebo oye aghare te we	the moon was assigned kingship
Wo ghwiphiniya wo ke ghwe’bi-o	when a woman is pregnant the pregnancy would be reckoned using the moon
Emua ra fonrhe vw’otan	even the year
Oren wo ye weyena	would be reckoned using the moon
Ona ye be avwe ghari te we	

The Urhobo perceive **seasons** in terms of agricultural cycles and climatic patterns. They recognize two main seasons: the dry season (*Oke-Uvo*) and the rainy season (*Oke-Isio*). The onset of the rainy season is traditionally marked by, or coincides with, the flowering of a plant called *Djedjekevuwudu*, as referenced in Sir Juju and Udjabor’s song *Koputi* (1975).

Djedjekevuwudu, it is djedjekevuwudu

oghwere vwo koka r’oghwe a farmer uses to identify the onset of rainy season
Orhie orovwe vw’ogo it is an alien found in the farmland

The second line, “*Orhie Orovwe Vw’ogo*,” refers to the plant *Djedjekevuwudu*. It is likened to a woman who naturally belongs to her biological family but is married into another family. While one would expect the plant to grow by riverbanks, it inexplicably thrives in farmlands far from the rivers. Its placement in the farmland is purposeful: it serves as a natural indicator to farmers of the imminent onset of the rainy season.

8.4 Predestination/Reincarnation

It is the belief of the Urhobo that before birth, the soul of the unborn child in *erivwin* (spirit world) chooses its lot in life. This he does by going to *urhoro* (the gateway to life on one hand, and the entrance to *erivwin* on the other hand). Interwoven with this is the belief in reincarnation. As stated earlier, reincarnation is the mysterious transfer of a spark of the ego of the deceased to his progeny. The dirge ‘okete’ in Udu captures this aspect of Urhobo cosmology:

Okete, okete, okete, okete	okete, okete, okete, okete
Oko r’gho hepha kay’arua	the vessel with wealth is the one you board
Oko r’emo hepha, kay’arua	the vessel with children is the one you board
okete	okete

This dirge by Sir Juju and Udjabor, in the album ‘*Oteyerin*’ released in 1974, urges the departed soul to make the right choice in its second coming. In other words, when the soul reincarnates, it must select the correct *Otarhe* (destiny) by entering the right “boat.” *Orhiurhoro*, the keeper of the gate, plays a crucial role in this process, presenting the soul of the unborn child with three options: children, wealth, and long life. The soul may choose one or two, but not all three. Whatever is chosen becomes the soul’s destiny its self-allotted portion in life. Only the rare and courageous soul is believed to obtain all three blessings. This belief is vividly expressed in Sir Juju and Udjabor’s album ‘*Idia*’, particularly in the track titled ‘*Mary*’. *Otarhe* (Predestination) is so powerful that it is difficult to alter by artifice or charm, hence Sir Juju and Udjabor in the album ‘*Ota-ovo*’ (1976) declared;
Arie tacha jovwo, ese ki suvw’ohwo

In other words, a person must predestine themselves correctly before they can be saved or healed. Should an individual die prematurely, before the expiration of their predestined time, *Orhiurhoro*, the keeper of the gate, asks the departed soul why they returned before their allotted time. Such a soul is not welcomed into the fold of the ancestors; instead, it wanders the earth,

seeking vengeance. This belief is depicted in Sir Juju and Udjabor's song 'Avwokuruo', where Avwokuruo's mother, who was brutally murdered, is asked by Orhiurhoro: "Edewe je gba, diemu soro wo vwo fuo rhe" (Your allotted time is not yet up; why did you come back so soon?).

8.5 Urhobo Socio-Cultural life/Morality

The Urhobo place a high premium on morality, particularly in matters relating to sex. Adultery by a woman is strongly condemned and considered *emuerivwi*, a forbidden act or taboo. A woman who commits adultery and conceals it from her husband and his family elders risks not only social sanctions but also the wrath of *erivwin* (the ancestors), which may endanger her life and that of her children. Interestingly, a man who attempts to conceal his wife's adultery also incurs the displeasure of *erivwin*. However, the sparing of the adulterous man by *erivwin* does not imply societal condonation of his behavior; rather, the man is viewed with disdain and scorn. He may be required to pay *osaje* (damages) for his sexual transgression and, in some cases, may face *eghwe* (beating), *evwosuo* (ostracism), or *edjephrorere* (banishment).

Among the Urhobo, adultery is not limited to sexual intercourse, though that is the primary act. A man who hugs a married woman without her husband's consent, touches her in a suggestive manner, or holds her hand in a way that implies affection or intimacy is considered guilty of adultery. If the woman fails to report such acts to her husband, she is also regarded as guilty. Likewise, a man who makes amorous advances toward a married woman commits adultery if she does not inform her husband about the attempt.

In Ogute song, *arue rhie che miovw'akpo* (western civilization will corrupt the world). The bard sang:

Akpo r'ahwanre	in the olden days
emu'obo r'aje yora-a	you do not hold a woman's hand at will
Eya r'okena,	women of today
aye vw'obo fay'ikebe	when you playfully slap their buttocks
Ja ye be kpa h'ota	they do not protest
K'ehwe aye rh'oma hwe	instead they laugh
Diona k'ikobi r'vworho-o	so this is a communal farm
Ogwan aye g'esemo	an ancestral hall where the
fathers are worshipped	
Ja be ghwe eche ho bevwe	that never has a door
Ov'ete ra guono I'gho ba	there should be a limit for
the desire for money	
Urhobo, avwa rhi'erho	Urhobo, open wide your
ears	
Ete ole vwe r'fe te	granted that the yam beetle
loves yam	

Ole r'she vw'evu r'oghwa	yam tubers that are sold in the stall
Sa vwa mr'ofe	have you seen a yam beetle
R'oda mu'aye	perched on them?

Although a linguistic analysis of the songs is beyond the scope of this study, the beauty and aptness of Ogute's metaphors cannot escape the attentive ear or observant eye. For instance, an adulterous woman is compared to a communal farm or an ancestral hall - both open to public access. Ogute also observes an erosion of the high moral standards of traditional Urhobo society, attributing it to the influence of Western cultural values and a money-driven economy. The bard cautions that the acculturating influence of Westernization should have limits; after all, even the yam beetle, which relishes the taste of yams, avoids the yams set aside for sale. Similarly, men with amorous intentions are urged to leave married women alone.

Apart from adultery, the Urhobo frown at stealing, embezzlement of family funds and poisoning of one's neighbour with witchcraft. Juju in his song, *Esekairoro* (1986) cautions:

Erovw'ene r'ihw'ohiare vw'Urhobo	there are four things that can kill a man in Urhobo
Oghene ye sia'e phroma, ye wo tore	if God removes them from you, you will live long
Wodu'aje r'ohwo-o, oy'ovo	do not have sex with another man's wife, that is one
Wo ch'igho r'ohwo-o, oy'ive	do not steal, that is two
Wo rie igho r'uwevwi-o, oy'erha	do not embezzle family funds, that is three
Wo d'orhan hw'or'ive we-e, oy'ene	do not kill your neighbour with sorcery, that is four

The Urhobo insist on descent dressing particularly for married women. Traditionally, an Urhobo woman in the public wears a blouse and two wrappers (*otehu gb'ifitemo*); the upper cloth doubles as a strap for her baby if she has one. Usually, a married woman is not expected to wear gown, but if she wants it must reach her ankles. Short skirts are frowned at, a point which Ogute re-echoes in his song 'Sefia' (1975). The relevant portion is:

Enajiria avwa vverhe-e	Nigeria, do not sleep
Emete n ache rhiaro baphi ho	the girls are getting civilized to the point of nudity
Akpo r'edevure, eke gano konabo she toto	in the past, when a gown is sown, it to the ankles
A vwo t'akpo r'aruerhie	in the present time of civilization
Eke gano k'ehiovwi k'oda mue	when a gown is sown, it is very short
Aye ya ehobo rhue	when the wearer bends down
Obuko k'oro'hwofa	her back side belongs to another
Arue rhie na ghwemu hi abo-o	civilization will cause a lot of havoc

In the past and even now among some traditional men, a woman during her menstrual flow is considered 'unclean' as a consequence of which she is not allowed to cook for her husband. The increasing violation of this restriction, according to Ogute in his song 'Udu bridge' is responsible for increase mortality among the men folk. He puts it thus:

Aje afen cher'emu k'oy'aria women in menstruation cook,
and we eat
Urhirhi ya s'ohwo keghwe ughu when an ant stings us,
we die
Ihwo r'ahwaren mr'emu tio na-a the men of old did not
experience this

While such taboo as a woman cooking for her husband during her monthly flow is no longer considered a taboo by the majority, there are other taboos which are still strictly observed. These include incest-sex between close relations. Oguted noted this in his song 'Ughede' (1975):

Ame r'ese ame r'ighweri vw'boku the water called potash
water in the sea
Jabesa vwo cher'ughweri is not used in making potash
K'ughwankan r'oghw'oma ho rather it is used in making
salt
Abi vw'oni r'ohwo ru'aje-e you cannot marry your own
mother

In other words, just as potash water (sea water) is not used in making potash, it is impossible to turn one's own mother into one's wife-it is a taboo, s forbidden thing.

For the Urhobo, those who wish to live a fulfilled life must avoid breaking taboos. A fulfilled life is one in which a man has children, wealth and long life. Ogute in his song 'Siakpere' (1977) opines:

Ohwo r'orhi'akpo vw'emo when a man comes to
this world, he has children
Okibi vw'igho, oke ton vw'akpo na he has money, and
he lives long
Ekuakua r'akpo eyere ogbare he has lived a fulfilled life

One reason the Urhobo respect those who lived a fulfilled life is that they are conscious of the uncertainty of life inspite of their belief in *otarhe* (predestination). They also acknowledge that man and his lot are subject to chance and vagaries; hence a man who has children, wealth and attains old age is seen as a victor who has survived the vicissitudes of life. This uncertainty in life is echoed in Ogute's song 'Ughu miovwakpo' (1977)

Abe mr'oba r'akpo na-a no one sees the end of life
Akpona hero avow vwi'ohwo the world existed before
we were born
Oje hero avow ghwi hiara and remains when we die
and depart

Eter'eyeri ba kona rie or'ohwo what you achieve before
death is your lot

The Urhobo abhor greed and wickedness. The greedy are often compared to the millipede who, as the legend goes desire many legs so he could out-run others. He got his many legs only to discover that they impeded rather than sped up his progress (Ogute in Sefia, 1975). As for the wicked, they should be abandoned to their fate; as Ogute advises in his song, 'Ughede' (1975):

Ovwa gb'arodovwe r'oruimuemu-a do not show kindness
to the wicked person
O'ro ru'ese r'oruimuemu one who shows kindness to the
wicked
Ko hoh'ese r'adjalakpo is like who has pity on a lion
Adjalakpo r'omue ufi vwe vu'aghwa a lion ensnared I
the bush
Eravwen r'orh'adjalakpo phr'ufo the animal that set the
lion free
Adjalakpo re ri'oma ghwere the lion turn around and kill it

The end of a wicked person is always associated with a painful and humiliating ailment such as swollen foot an uncontrollable passing out of stool and urine. This the Urhobo belief is divine retribution for wickedness (Ogute in 'ughumiovw'akpo 1977)

Another aspect of Urhobo socio-cultural life is marriage. Co-habitation is frowned upon. A man who co-habits with a woman regardless of the duration of their relationship or the number of children they have together is not accorded the status of an in-law. Should the woman's parents die, he cannot pay the customary condolence visit (ogo-esho) until he has paid the bride price. As Egbeku advises in his song *Okioto*:

Avwa dj'oma r'ese r'emete oma vwo vw'erha'e
"One should present himself formally to the parents of the girl he is courting, so that they will be pleased with him."

In the past, the Urhobo had elaborate rites of passage for women who attained marriageable age. These rites were enshrined in the *emete yavwon* (female circumcision) festival. A woman who did not undergo these rites was jeered at by the initiates. Today, due to the influence of the church and other modernizing factors, the observance of the *emete yavwon* festival is no longer widespread a fact that Ogute laments in his song *Ughu miovw'akpo*.

8.6 Death

Finally, death is regarded with dread, particularly by those who have not attained old age. One reason for this is that the Urhobo do not believe in resurrection. Juju in 'Brata' (1973) says:

Urhobo communities. Seven musicians were selected for the study using the cluster sampling technique, based on the content of their songs. The musicians included Chief Amos Ogute Ottan, Chief Adama, Chief Gometi Oyibo, Sir Juju Debala, Mr. Udjabo Okololo, Chief Prophet Olokpa, and Don Francis Egbeku Kenairu.

The fieldwork lasted for four weeks, during which the researchers actively participated in both the musical and non-musical activities of the musicians, while also showing interest in their general well-being. Data were collected using the participant observation method and oral interviews.

Post-fieldwork involved the collation and analysis of the data collected. The musical materials were subjected to textual analysis using the thematic approach, with the songs analyzed according to the topical issues they addressed.

A song is a musical composition performed with the human voice, with or without instrumental accompaniment. Across cultures, songs are composed for specific purposes, with styles and themes that reflect social interactions, spiritual beliefs, and modes of communication. Songs are an integral part of a people's culture; therefore, studying the songs of a society provides insights into its cultural worldview.

Udu popular musicians are primarily those who earn their living from music. They are often invited to perform at ceremonies ranging from marriages to funerals, as well as at other social gatherings where their services are required. They are recognized as articulators of morality, custodians of traditional history, and transmitters of the beliefs of the people. Their songs, whether consciously or unconsciously, express the worldview and cultural ethos of the Urhobo.

The cosmology and theology of the Urhobo are embedded in their traditional songs. A careful analysis of selected songs demonstrates their belief in a supreme God who created the heavens, the earth, and all that exists within them. The Urhobo reckon time according to the phases of the moon, resulting in a year comprising thirteen lunar months. Seasons are understood in relation to agricultural cycles and climatic patterns, while their week consists of four days.

Moreover, the Urhobo conceive of spatial dimensions across three planes of reality: *Odjuvwu*, the abode of God; *Akpo*, the abode of man, representing the visible world in its entirety; and *Erivwin*, the abode of the dead and the unborn children. Finally, from the analysis of the song texts, the Urhobo demonstrate a

belief in predestination, which predisposes each individual to their allotted lot in life.

10. Conclusion

The research demonstrates that the Urhobo possess a clearly defined cosmology and theology. They have a well-articulated concept of God as the creator of the world and a clear understanding of the order of creation. Beyond acknowledging God's creative power, they believe that He determines the individual lot or destiny of each person, reflecting their view of God as all-powerful. Importantly, these beliefs are embedded and transmitted through the songs of Udu traditional popular musicians.

11. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the composition, appreciation, and understanding of Urhobo traditional music:

Urhobo cultural organizations, such as the Urhobo Progress Union, should encourage traditional singers and musicians to engage in digital recording and accompany their songs with captivating visuals. This approach will enhance accessibility and arouse the interest of the youth in Urhobo songs.

Churches in Urhobo-speaking areas should consider integrating Urhobo traditional songs into their liturgical programmes. This will not only preserve cultural heritage but also expose congregants to indigenous cosmological and theological concepts.

Departments of Music in higher institutions should regularly organize seminars and workshops that highlight the cultural richness of Urhobo traditional music. Such programmes will correct misconceptions and foster a deeper understanding of Urhobo cosmology and theology.

This study should serve as a stimulus for further research on the influence of Judeo-Christian thought on the Urhobo worldview. Researchers are encouraged to explore the intersections of indigenous and imported religious concepts in Urhobo society.

12. Contribution to knowledge

This research has made the following contributions to knowledge:

- It has stimulated and activated the interest of the Urhobo people in their traditional music,

encouraging a renewed appreciation of their cultural heritage.

- The findings provide a valuable instructional resource for teachers in primary, secondary, and kindergarten schools, aiding the integration of indigenous knowledge into the curriculum.
- It has encouraged the youth to engage with and listen to their traditional songs, fostering cultural awareness and enabling them to gain knowledge about Urhobo cosmology, theology, and values.

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Blasphemy Laws and Female Vulnerability in Northern Sharia States in Nigeria

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Abstract. This paper examines the intersection of religion, gender, and justice in Northern Sharia states in Nigeria. It investigates how patriarchal interpretations of Islamic law and weak state institutions combine to expose women to mob violence, extrajudicial killings, and systemic discrimination. Using the methodology of desk-based analysis, the research explains how four theoretical frameworks: liberal, radical, intersectional and vulnerability feminist theories reveal the risk faced by the female gender in highly patriarchal context. The research also explains how law, culture, and faith interlock to sustain gendered oppression. Juxtaposing this with empirical evidence drawn from documented cases between 1999 and 2025, the work reveals that accusations of blasphemy serve as instruments of control over women's expression and moral autonomy. The study finds that moral absolutism, theological distortion, and legal pluralism have collectively eroded justice and human dignity. It concludes that safeguarding women's rights requires harmonizing religious and constitutional laws, strengthening gender-responsive justice systems, promoting interfaith moral education, and institutionalizing accountability mechanisms. Ultimately, the research calls for a renewed moral and legal consciousness where faith coexists with freedom, and the sanctity of human life becomes the truest expression of religion.

Keywords: Blasphemy laws, Female vulnerability, Northern Sharia states, and Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The question of blasphemy has long been a contested issue in pluralistic societies where religious devotion intersects with human rights and constitutionalism. In Nigeria, this debate acquired a distinctive form with the adoption of Sharia law in twelve northern states beginning in 1999, coinciding with the dawn of the Fourth Republic. Among other provisions, the Sharia penal codes criminalized blasphemy, often prescribing

harsh punishments, including capital punishment. While the intention of these laws was to safeguard the sanctity of religion and reinforce moral order within society, their application has raised significant questions about justice, equality, and human dignity. Within this context, women: both Muslim and Christian have emerged as particularly vulnerable. Their social positions, compounded by patriarchal structures and communal expectations, have exposed them disproportionately to accusations of blasphemy and to the violence that often follows.

Despite Nigeria's constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion, expression, and equal protection under the law, the reality in northern Sharia states reveals a deep tension between religious law and human rights. Blasphemy laws have created a volatile moral climate where mere accusations, frequently lacking credible evidence, can incite mob violence, stigmatization, and even death. Women are especially endangered in this environment. The patriarchal fabric of society often positions them as easy targets for accusations, with limited avenues for defense or legal recourse. Consequently, blasphemy laws, instead of promoting social harmony, have become tools of exclusion and oppression, amplifying female vulnerability in both public and private spheres. Thus, this study critically examines how blasphemy laws in Northern Nigeria's Sharia states contribute to the vulnerability of women in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2025). The research seeks to interrogate the moral justifications of such laws, analyze their social and gendered impacts, and highlight the contradictions between their purported protective functions and their actual outcomes. By focusing on both Muslim and Christian women, the study underscores that vulnerability transcends confessional boundaries and is deeply embedded in the intersection of gender, religion, and law.

To achieve its purpose, the research employs a desk-based methodology, relying on secondary sources such as legal documents, scholarly publications, case

reports, media accounts, and human rights reports. The analysis is qualitative and interpretive, seeking to extract patterns, moral dilemmas, and philosophical implications from existing evidence. By drawing upon documented case studies, the research identifies how women experience blasphemy accusations in concrete contexts and how their vulnerabilities are shaped by structural, religious, and societal forces. The study is guided by both historical and philosophy of religion's approaches. These approaches allow for an exploration of the moral and theological assumptions and development underpinning blasphemy laws and their societal enforcement. It further facilitates a critical reflection on the ethical contradictions inherent in laws that claim to protect religion but, in practice, jeopardize human dignity and gender justice. Through this lens, the research engages in moral reasoning, exposing how patriarchal interpretations of religious orthodoxy perpetuate exclusionary practices and violence against women. For purpose of understanding, it is appropriate to consider four theoretical frameworks that are closely tied to the subject of this research.

2. Theoretical Frameworks on the Intersection of Gender, Religion, Law and State Power

The study of *Blasphemy Laws and Female Vulnerability in Northern Sharia States of Nigeria* requires a theoretical foundation capable of grappling with the intersecting issues of gender, religion, law, and state power and a single theory explanation may fall short of capturing the real complexity of women's experiences in this region. Therefore, to achieve a comprehensive analysis, the research adopts an integration of four theoretical frameworks which provide a multi-layered lens for understanding not only how women are made vulnerable under blasphemy laws, but also how such vulnerability is religiously produced, legally sustained, and socially amplified.

The first theoretical framework relevant in this regard is *liberal feminism theory* which emphasizes equality before the law and seeks to dismantle barriers that deny women the same opportunities as men. The most notable proponent of this theory is Martha Nussbaum (2000) who in her work *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, expands this vision by insisting that justice must be measured by whether women possess substantive capabilities such as: bodily integrity, freedom of thought, political participation, and freedom of conscience. In her framework, formal rights are insufficient if women cannot practically exercise them due to social, cultural,

or institutional constraints. The relevance of Nussbaum's theory in the Northern Nigerian context is that blasphemy laws undermine women's capabilities in multiple dimensions: they restrict freedom of expression, endanger bodily integrity through mob violence, curtail political participation by silencing women's voices, and erode the dignity that underpins their humanity as we would later argue. Most disturbing is the fact that blasphemy laws in Northern Sharia states undermine even constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and expression enshrined in Sections 38 and 39 of the 1999 Constitution. By this, these sections become empty when women accused of blasphemy cannot rely on state institutions for protection. By applying Nussbaum's framework, this research argues that blasphemy laws fail the basic test of justice because they deny women the substantive freedom to live lives of dignity and express their guaranteed freedom of expression and religion. One possible difficulty with this theory which critics of this theory may allude to is that the Capabilities Approach risks imposing a Universalist's framework that may not account for cultural specificity. However, it could be argued that strength of this theory lies in its adaptability and this light it can resonate with Islamic principles that emphasize dignity and justice while still holding the state accountable for ensuring equal capabilities for women.

The second theoretical framework relevant to this research is *radical feminism* which unlike liberal feminism which highlights deficits in rights and opportunities, insists that the very structures of law are imbued with patriarchy. The chief promoter of this theory is Catharine MacKinnon (1989), who in *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, argues that law is not neutral; it reflects male dominance by defining women's roles and legitimizing their subordination. Legal systems, far from being impartial arbiters, often codify patriarchy under the guise of objectivity. Applying this framework to the situation in Nigeria would mean that blasphemy laws are not merely religious provisions but instruments of patriarchal control. They operate to police women's speech, visibility, and behavior, disproportionately exposing them to accusations and punishment. The killing of a lady like Deborah Samuel in Sokoto (2022), perfectly illustrates how blasphemy laws functions as patriarchal silencing mechanisms. In this light, the real crime she committed was not theological but social; it is the very crime of challenging male authority in a conservative, patriarchal environment. Arguably, MacKinnon's radical critique unmasks the complicity of the Nigerian state, which by permitting Sharia criminal codes alongside constitutional law,

legitimizes a dual system that entrenches patriarchal power. However, some critics may argue that radical feminism often portrays women solely as victims, neglecting their agency and the diversity of their experiences. Notwithstanding, in this research, MacKinnon's insights remain powerful in exposing how the structure of law itself, not just its misapplication, reproduces female vulnerability.

A third theory relevant for this research is *intersectionality feminism theory* propounded by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who in her seminal essay *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*, introduces intersectionality to explain how women of color face compounded oppression from the overlapping systems of racism and sexism. Intersectionality insists that gender cannot be analyzed in isolation but must be understood in relation to race, religion, class, and other identity markers. What this implies for Northern Nigerian women is that intersectionality is indispensable. Moreover, it would mean that vulnerability under blasphemy laws is not uniform. In fact, it presupposes that Christian women like Deborah Samuel face compounded risks because of their dual minority identity as female and as Christian in a predominantly Muslim, patriarchal environment. Muslim women, though part of the religious majority, are also rendered vulnerable by patriarchal interpretations of Sharia that curtail their freedoms in the name of religious piety. Intersectionality explains why women at different intersections of gender and religion experience blasphemy laws differently, nevertheless are united by structural vulnerability. Some critics of intersectionality believe it can be overly broad and difficult to operationalize, potentially fragmenting women's struggles into endlessly specific categories. Nevertheless, its relevance however is that intersectionality provides the necessary conceptual clarity to understand why vulnerability is not only gendered but also shaped by religious identity, legal pluralism, and socio-political hierarchies.

Perhaps the last but most relevant framework to this study is *vulnerability theory* marshaled by Martha Fineman (2008), who in *The Vulnerable Subject: Anchoring Equality in the Human Condition*, argues that vulnerability is a universal aspect of the human condition. However, social institutions distribute vulnerability unequally, leaving marginalized groups disproportionately exposed to harm. Fineman shifts the focus from individual deficits to institutional responsibility, insisting that the state must actively build resilience through laws, policies, and social structures. The implication of this in the Northern Nigerian context is that blasphemy laws intensify

women's vulnerability rather than mitigating it. The state, by endorsing blasphemy provisions within Sharia codes and failing to curb mob violence, becomes complicit in reproducing systemic insecurity. Women accused of blasphemy are not only victims of patriarchal culture but also of institutional neglect, as police, courts, and political authorities frequently abdicate their duty of protection. In this case, Fineman's theory reframes the issue in such a way that the problem does not rest on women's "weakness," but on the failure of institutions to create protective structures that guarantee equality and resilience. Those who are strong critics of this theory argue that Fineman's universal framing of vulnerability risks downplaying the specificities of gender, race, or religion. However, when combined with intersectionality, her framework highlights both the universality of human vulnerability and the specific ways institutions amplify it for women in Northern Nigeria.

One critical thing about these frameworks is that they all reveal how blasphemy laws in Northern Sharia States in Nigeria promote discrimination against gender, conflict in a way with some Constitutional provisions for freedom of religious expressions, make women more vulnerable, and demonstrate the failures of State institutions in the country. To further establish this point, we will in the next section, provide some conceptual reviews of scholars on blasphemy laws and female vulnerability in northern Nigeria.

3. Conceptual Understanding of Blasphemy Laws and Female Vulnerability in the Northern Sharia States in Nigeria

Scholarly views abound on blasphemy laws and female vulnerability in the Northern Sharia states in Nigeria. Some of these views approached the issue from the stance of socio-economic cost, legal impediments, constitutionality, religious violence, etc. For example, in his 2021 article Kenneth O. Okhifoh examines the effects of implementing Sharia as state law in Nigeria's pluralistic society, writing from a perspective that emphasizes constitutional secularism and the protection of non-Muslim rights. He employs a phenomenological approach, drawing on oral interviews and bibliographical research to critically analyze the condition of non-Muslims under Sharia. Okhifoh finds that the full implementation of Sharia violates the Federal Constitution and encourages abuses of human rights, effectively penalizing non-Muslims for conduct forbidden by Sharia. The study concludes that because Sharia is a religious legal code, its application should be voluntary and limited to individuals who choose it. Consistent with this stance,

Okhifoh asserts that the operation of Sharia “must stop where the right of non-Muslims begins,” underscoring his ideological commitment to religious freedom and individual choice in a multi-faith Nigeria. Overall, the article situates these findings within the broader Nigerian debate over religious law, noting the country’s constitutional prohibition on a state religion and warning that unresolved Sharia conflicts threaten national harmony.

Adding to the debate, Abdulazeez (2016) critically explores the persistence of jungle justice in Northern Nigeria, attributing it to the failure of legal institutions and the erosion of public trust in the justice system. He argues that mob killings over alleged blasphemy are not genuine expressions of Islamic faith but manifestations of social frustration, ignorance, and political decay. While emphasizing moral reform, interfaith responsibility, and institutional strengthening as remedies, Abdulazeez’s analysis largely frames blasphemy violence as a societal and religious crisis rather than a gendered one. The main gap in his work lies in its omission of female vulnerability within these incidents—how women, as both accused and symbolic victims of religious moralism, face disproportionate risks in patriarchal Sharia contexts. Addressing this gap requires examining how blasphemy laws intersect with gender, religious authority, and weak institutional protection, thereby exposing the compounded marginalization experienced by women in Northern Nigeria’s religiously charged environment.

In a related development, Nwaogazie (2021) offers a rigorous critique of the death penalty for blasphemy under Sharia law in Northern Nigeria, describing it as a legislative distortion of both Islamic and constitutional principles. Using doctrinal and theoretical analysis, he demonstrates that neither the Qur’an nor Prophet Muhammad’s teachings endorse capital punishment for blasphemy, emphasizing instead forgiveness and divine justice. He argues that state adoption of such penalties since 1999 contravenes Nigeria’s secular constitution, violates human rights norms, and undermines the principle of proportionality in law. Nwaogazie concludes that the death penalty not only erodes legal integrity but also legitimizes mob violence and extrajudicial killings in the name of faith. However, while his work incisively challenges the legality and morality of blasphemy sanctions, it overlooks how these laws disproportionately endanger women. The gendered implications of blasphemy accusations especially within patriarchal Sharia systems remain unexplored, leaving a critical gap concerning female vulnerability and institutional protection in Northern Nigeria.

On his part, Ishola (2024) examines the constitutional and Sharia legal contradictions surrounding blasphemy and jungle justice in Northern Nigeria, arguing that dual legal systems foster confusion, human rights violations, and weak justice delivery. His study reveals that the coexistence of Nigeria’s secular Constitution—which guarantees freedom of expression and religion and Sharia codes prescribing death for blasphemy undermines legal coherence and fuels mob justice. The problem however is that while Ishola effectively exposes the structural tension between law and faith, his analysis does not address how these contradictions uniquely affect women. The gendered dimension how patriarchal Sharia interpretations heighten female vulnerability in blasphemy accusations still remains unexplored, leaving a vital gap for this research.

Oyibodoro (2023) provides a critical appraisal of how blasphemy laws in Northern Nigeria’s Sharia states undermine the country’s constitutional democracy and international human rights obligations. He argues that the reintroduction of Sharia Penal Codes since 1999 has created a legal paradox where secular constitutional guarantees of freedom of thought, expression, and religion are negated by state-enforced religious codes prescribing the death penalty for blasphemy. His analysis reveals that such laws discriminate against non-Muslims and minority sects, effectively breaching section 10 of the 1999 Constitution, which prohibits the adoption of a state religion. By highlighting the inconsistency between Sharia enforcement and democratic pluralism, Oyibodoro calls for comprehensive national legislation to harmonize religious offences with constitutional principles. However, his work omits the gendered consequences of these laws. The specific ways in which blasphemy prosecutions and mob violence exacerbate female vulnerability in patriarchal Northern Nigeria remain unexamined thereby leaving a crucial gap for this research.

Approaching the subject in more specific terms, Koziel (2017) explores the intersection of gender, religion, and conflict in Northern Nigeria, showing how both Muslim and Christian women experience structural and cultural violence reinforced by patriarchal traditions, discriminatory Sharia interpretations, and weak state protection. She argues that the normalization of abuse through underreporting, stigma, and institutional neglect sustains widespread gender-based violence. Her study links women’s insecurity to political instability and religious extremism, especially under Boko Haram’s influence. The main gap with her work however is that it does not address how blasphemy laws specifically

intensify women's vulnerability by exposing them to mob violence, moral policing, and extrajudicial punishment, an area demanding focused exploration within Northern Nigeria's Sharia context.

Interestingly, Ozurumba (2022) critically examines women's rights under Islamic law in Nigeria, emphasizing the gap between Islamic ideals and patriarchal social realities. She argues that while the Qur'an and Hadith affirm women's rights to dignity, inheritance, education, and property, these are frequently undermined by cultural misinterpretations of Sharia and socio-political structures that sustain male dominance in Northern Nigeria. Her findings reveal that harmful practices such as forced marriage, veiling restrictions, and gender-based violence stem not from Islamic jurisprudence but from cultural distortions justified in religious language. Poverty, illiteracy, and institutional neglect further entrench female subordination. Ozurumba concludes that true Islamic principles promote justice and gender equity and calls for enlightenment, legal reform, and education to restore these ideals. However, her study does not examine how blasphemy laws specifically amplify women's vulnerability particularly through mob violence and legal double standards in Sharia states leaving a vital gap in understanding religion-based gender persecution.

Driving the argument to a more global context, Vianita, Holid, and Rahman (2024) explore the compatibility between feminism, human rights, and Islamic law, arguing that Islam inherently promotes women's dignity and equality. They contend that misconceptions about Islam's treatment of women stem from cultural distortions rather than scriptural intent, as the Qur'an and hadith affirm women's rights to education, inheritance, marriage, and political participation. They demonstrate that Islamic principles and feminist ideals are not contradictory but mutually reinforcing frameworks for gender justice. In all, their study emphasizes education, awareness, and inclusive policies as pathways for restoring women's rightful status in Muslim societies. However, while their work successfully reconciles feminism and Islam, it does not interrogate how blasphemy laws often justified through religious authority exacerbate women's vulnerability to violence and public persecution in Northern Nigeria's patriarchal Sharia context. This gap calls for examining the intersection of gender, religion, and state power in blasphemy-related oppression for which the current research is focused.

Finally, in an attempt to broaden the debate, Olomjobi (2015) examines how religion, culture, and politics intersect to shape the experiences of Muslim

women in Northern Nigeria, arguing that their oppression arises more from patriarchal customs than from Islamic doctrine. Based on focus group discussions in Kano, his study identifies practices such as purdah, forced marriage, and discriminatory inheritance as culturally imposed rather than divinely mandated, contradicting the Qur'an's principles of justice and equality. He calls for education, legal reform, and cultural reorientation to protect women's rights. However, his analysis overlooks how blasphemy laws further entrench women's vulnerability through mob violence, moral stigmatization, and legal bias in Northern Sharia states.

These views are critical to the study because they underscore how blasphemy laws constitute a problem in religiously diverse states. The next section will further substantiate these arguments with instances of mob violence and extrajudicial killings of women resulting from unsubstantiated claims of blasphemy in the northern states of Nigeria.

4. Instances of Blasphemy Accusations and Female Vulnerability in Northern Nigeria: 1999–Date

Since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 and the re-introduction of full Sharia criminal codes in twelve Northern states, accusations of blasphemy have increasingly triggered mob violence, public lynching, and extrajudicial killings. While these incidents target both men and women, the female gender has been particularly exposed to lethal and symbolic violence because of entrenched patriarchy, distorted religious interpretations, and institutional failures that normalize impunity. Empirical evidence across two decades demonstrates how women in Northern Nigeria have become the most vulnerable category in blasphemy-related crises.

One of the earliest large-scale expressions of religious mob violence tied to blasphemy in the Fourth Republic came from the Miss World riots in Kaduna in 2002. It is reported that the violence erupted after *This Day* journalist Isioma Daniel allegedly insulted Prophet Muhammad while commenting on the pageant (Danfulani, 2005). Over 200 people were killed, churches and mosques burned, and women were brutalized in the ensuing chaos. Many female contestants fled the country after receiving death threats. The riots revealed how women's bodies and sexuality were construed as moral battlegrounds in Islamic discourse projected as symbols of corruption and Western immorality (Ogunyemi, 2008). The philosophical problem emerging from this event is the conflict between individual freedom of expression and

communal religious morality, raising enduring questions about the limits of liberty within a plural legal and moral system.

Another incidence of killing that further highlighted gendered vulnerability is the Amina Lawal case of 2002–2003, a woman sentenced to death by stoning for alleged adultery under the Katsina State Sharia Court. Although later acquitted, her trial demonstrated how the legal application of Sharia criminal codes was overwhelmingly directed at women, reflecting the patriarchal structure of both customary and religious institutions (Paden, 2005). Women’s bodies were thus made the sites for negotiating religious authenticity and moral discipline. In fact, like the story of the Biblical woman caught in adultery and acquitted by Jesus in John 8:2-11, the man in this case was not also punished further validating the underlining patriarchal nature of such religious laws.

In 2007, reports of a Christian teacher allegedly desecrating the Qur’an in Bauchi sparked mob attacks that left several people dead, including women and children (Ibrahim, 2011). Similarly, in Kano that same year, a group of Muslim youths lynched a Christian woman accused of blasphemy after a dispute in a local market. In both cases, state authorities failed to protect the victims or prosecute perpetrators. The philosophical dilemma here lies in the state’s abdication of its social contract duty to guarantee security, implying that divine retribution supersedes civic justice. Similarly, this situation also subverts the essence of democratic legality and exposes the ontological vulnerability of women who exist at the intersection of faith, gender, and minority identity. A defining case of female vulnerability also occurred in Kano in 2016, when Bridget Agbahime, a Christian woman and trader, was publicly lynched by a mob that accused her of insulting Prophet Muhammad during an argument with a Muslim colleague. Despite global outrage, all five suspects were released “for lack of evidence” (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Bridget’s murder illustrates both the fragility of female life under mob rule and the moral hypocrisy of a legal system that selectively enforces justice. It could also be argued that philosophically, the case exposes a deep tension between divine command ethics and human-rights universalism. Within a theocratic moral logic, even defending the Prophet does not justify any sort of

violence. But most importantly, within a rights-based democratic order, every human life possesses inviolable worth. Therefore, the state’s silent approval of mob justice reflects moral relativism institutionalized through weak secular authority (Falola & Heaton, 2008). The failure of retributive justice in Bridget’s case reinforces systemic impunity that emboldens further violence.

Perhaps the most globally recognized blasphemy-related killing was that of Deborah Samuel, a 22-year-old Christian student at Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, in May 2022. She was beaten and burned by classmates who alleged she mocked Prophet Muhammad on a class WhatsApp group. Videos of the killing went viral, showing police officers watching without intervening (Amnesty International, 2022). No one has been convicted for her death till date and this is worrisome. Deborah’s murder embodies the ultimate expression of gendered vulnerability: her youth, religion, and gender intersected to produce fatal exposure. It should be stated that unlike men accused of blasphemy, women are often judged through both moral and sexualized lenses, their “impurity” perceived as a double transgression (Bawa, 2017). However, from a philosophical stance, the incident challenges the ethics of communal and religious justice, raising the question of whether faith-based outrage can ever justify annihilating another’s humanity. It also reveals the problem of epistemic closure in a society where theological certainty eliminates moral reasoning and empathy.

Finally, recent reports show continued extrajudicial violence in Niger, Bauchi, and Sokoto States, with women frequently caught in the crossfire or directly targeted (Daily Trust, 2025). In some cases, widows of alleged blasphemers were expelled from communities; others were assaulted for defending victims. The persistence of these attacks underscores how social institutions, religious authorities, law enforcement, and local governments fail to protect women’s existential security.

The table below provides a clearer empirical overview of how blasphemy accusations have resulted in mob violence and extrajudicial killings especially highlighting the gendered nature of vulnerability from 1999 to 2025:

Table 1: Comparative Overview of Major Blasphemy-Related Mob Violence in Northern Nigeria (1999–2025)

Year	State /Location	Victim(s)	Nature of Incident	Outcome/Implication
2002	Kaduna	Isioma Daniel (female journalist, <i>ThisDay</i>)	Alleged insult to Prophet Muhammad during Miss World coverage sparked widespread riots; over 200 killed, including women and children.	Widespread destruction; Daniel fled Nigeria; revealed women’s bodies as battlegrounds for religious morality (Danfulani, 2005).
2002–2003	Katsina	Amina Lawal (female)	Accused of adultery, sentenced to death by stoning under Sharia; acquitted after global outcry.	Exposed patriarchal bias in Sharia interpretation; international pressure saved her life (Paden, 2005).
2007	Bauchi	Christian teacher (male) and several women victims	Alleged desecration of Qur’an led to mob attacks killing both men and women.	Dozens killed; highlighted gendered vulnerability and state inaction (Ibrahim, 2011).
2007	Kano	Unnamed Christian woman	Accused of insulting Prophet Muhammad during market dispute; lynched by mob.	No arrests made; showed normalization of mob “justice.”
2011	Niger	Fatima Bako (female student)	Accused of making irreverent comments about Prophet Muhammad in school.	Assaulted and expelled; authorities failed to protect her rights (Olomjobi, 2015).
2016	Kano	Bridget Agbahime (female trader, Christian)	Lynched after alleged insult to Prophet Muhammad.	All suspects released “for lack of evidence”; intensified fears among Christian women traders (HRW, 2016).
2020	Kano	Yahaya Sharif-Aminu (male musician)	Shared “blasphemous” song on WhatsApp; sentenced to death by Sharia court.	Reinforced legal contradictions between Sharia and constitutional law (Kassim, 2021).
2022	Sokoto	Deborah Samuel (female student, Christian)	Accused of blasphemy on class WhatsApp group; beaten and burned alive by classmates.	No convictions; symbol of extreme female vulnerability under religious extremism (Amnesty International, 2022).
2023	Bauchi	Maryam Bala (female social media user)	Arrested for “blasphemous” Facebook post; detained without trial.	Gender-based online silencing; rights violations under cyber blasphemy policing (CLEEN Foundation, 2023).
2024	Niger	Aisha Abdullahi (female trader)	Attacked by mob after defending her Christian neighbor accused of blasphemy.	Killed; state failed to prosecute; reflects intersection of gender and religious identity.
2025	Sokoto	Zainab Musa (female)	Accused of questioning a preacher’s sermon; assaulted and paraded naked.	Highlights social humiliation as form of gendered violence in religious enforcement (Daily Trust, 2025).

It is important to from the above table that evidence from 1999 to 2025 shows that women’s vulnerability under blasphemy laws in Northern Nigeria is structurally produced. Patriarchal religion, weak institutions, and political manipulation converge to sustain a cycle of fear and silence. Philosophically, these incidents expose the crisis of moral rationality within a society torn between sacred absolutism and secular justice. Intersectional and vulnerability frameworks reveal that women suffer not only because of gender but also because of their religious, class, and ethnic identities, which magnify exposure to violence. This explains why Fineman’s (2008) Vulnerability Theory aptly describes this condition as the state’s weakness in enforcing legal equality compounds structural vulnerability rather than mitigating it. This position is supported by Amnesty International (2022) and the CLEEN Foundation (2023) which confirmed that state institutions rarely intervene effectively to prevent or punish mob violence. Police inaction, judicial delays, and political interference perpetuate a culture of impunity. The result is what MacKinnon (1989) terms structural complicity, where the law mirrors male and clerical dominance instead of challenging it. Furthermore, the Nigerian state’s dual

commitment to secularism and Sharia creates a philosophical contradiction: the Constitution proclaims equality before the law, yet in practice, the state tolerates parallel systems that subvert women’s rights. This condition exemplifies what Nussbaum (2000) calls the denial of “substantive capabilities,” freedom of expression, bodily integrity, and life itself.

In the light of the above, it could be argued that there are enormous implications of blasphemy laws and the attendant mob violence accruing from it. The next section will be used to address these possible implications.

5. Implications of Blasphemy Related Violence in Northern Nigeria for Contemporary Nigerian Society

Beyond the immediate human cost of mob violence accruing from blasphemy laws, the killings have produced deep-seated implications across Nigeria’s moral, theological, legal, socio-economic, political, and interfaith domains. The following discussion examines these implications section by section:

5.1 Moral Implications

Blasphemy-related violence undermines the moral foundations of Nigerian society. At the core of every moral system lies respect for human dignity and life. These principles are violated by mobs who justify murder in the name of faith. The moral crisis is evident in how communities glorify perpetrators as defenders of religion rather than condemn them as criminals (Ibrahim, 2011). Such social approval erodes moral reasoning and fosters a culture of vengeance. From a philosophical standpoint, these actions contradict Kant's categorical imperative, which demands treating every person as an end in themselves, not a means to collective outrage (Sogolo, 1993). When religion becomes an excuse for cruelty, moral accountability collapses into moral relativism. The cumulative result is a desensitized society where killing can be sanctified as a moral duty.

5.2 Religious Implications

Blasphemy-related violence distorts the essence of religion itself. Islam, Christianity, and African traditional religions all emphasize compassion, forgiveness, and justice. However, in the Northern Nigerian context, religious zeal is often weaponized for social control and political mobilization (Danfulani, 2005). This distortion has bred religious populism, where emotional outrage replaces ethical piety. In Islam, Prophet Muhammad's life offers numerous examples of tolerance toward offenders, suggesting that violent reactions to blasphemy contradict the Prophet's example (Bawa, 2017). Nonetheless, extremist interpretations of Sharia continue to dominate public sentiment, marginalizing moderate voices and fostering a culture of fear. The implication is the erosion of authentic religious values, replaced by ritualized fanaticism that deepens division and intolerance.

5.3 Christian Theological Implications

Theologically, blasphemy violence presents a profound contradiction. For instance, how can a religion that proclaims divine mercy justify the destruction of human life? This paradox exposes a theodicy of violence, where evil is rationalized as holy duty. Such thinking misrepresents God's sovereignty by assuming that divine honor depends on human vengeance. As Falola and Heaton (2008) noted, theological extremism in Northern Nigeria arises from literalist readings of scripture divorced from moral reason. This theological distortion produces epistemic closure, in which questioning dogma is equated with blasphemy. Consequently, intellectual and theological

discourse becomes stifled, preventing reform and reinterpretation within Islamic thought. The implication is stagnation of theological scholarship and entrenchment of ignorance that perpetuates violence under divine justification. Worst still is the fact that those who kill others in the name of defending God or their Religion, are actually in a way demeaning the omnipotence attribute of God by making Him less than He truly is since He is portrayed as being defenseless and incapacitated thereby requiring human help to continue to exist.

5.4 Legal Implications

From a legal perspective, blasphemy-related violence exposes the contradictions of Nigeria's dual legal system, where constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion coexist with Sharia penal provisions that criminalize alleged insults to Islam (Kassim, 2021). The failure of state authorities to prosecute perpetrators of mob killings such as in the cases of Bridget Agbahime (2016) and Deborah Samuel (2022) reveals deep institutional weakness. According to Fineman (2008), such systemic failures amplify social vulnerability by eroding citizens' trust in legal institutions. When the rule of law collapses under religious pressure, the state's moral legitimacy is compromised. Moreover, legal pluralism fosters confusion: which law governs when divine law contradicts constitutional law? The implication is a jurisprudential crisis where justice becomes selective and gendered, leaving women disproportionately unprotected.

5.5 Philosophical Implications

Philosophically, blasphemy-related violence challenges Nigeria's foundational principles of reason, justice, and humanism. It exposes the tension between communal morality defined by religious orthodoxy and individual autonomy, a cornerstone of democratic thought. The violent suppression of dissent or perceived irreverence signals a drift toward moral totalitarianism (Sogolo, 1993). The phenomenon also raises existential questions about moral responsibility. For example, can individuals claim to act morally when their violence stems from unexamined belief rather than rational deliberation? Furthermore, the normalization of mob violence reveals a collective abdication of moral agency, a retreat from Socratic inquiry into moral truth toward uncritical conformity. In this sense, blasphemy-related violence represents not only a social crisis but a collapse of moral philosophy itself.

5.6 Socio-Economic Implications

The economic consequences of blasphemy-related violence are profound. Each outbreak of religious violence devastates local economies, disrupts markets, and discourages investment. The Kaduna Miss World riots of 2002 destroyed infrastructure worth millions of naira, while more recent incidents in Kano and Sokoto displaced hundreds of families (Danfulani, 2005; HRW, 2016). Women, already marginalized in the Northern economy, suffer disproportionately due to restrictions on mobility and employment imposed after such crises. Beyond immediate economic loss, these incidents foster long-term underdevelopment. Foreign investors view recurrent religious violence as a sign of instability, while domestic industries struggle with insecurity and declining productivity. The human capital loss from deaths, trauma, and displacement further constrains Northern Nigeria's socio-economic growth.

5.7 Political Implications

Politically, blasphemy-related violence is both a symptom and a tool of elite manipulation. Politicians and clerics often exploit religious outrage to consolidate power, divert attention from governance failures, or mobilize electoral support (Ibrahim, 2011). This instrumentalization of faith corrodes democratic institutions and deepens polarization. Moreover, the state's failure to hold perpetrators accountable reveals institutional complicity a deliberate political choice to placate powerful religious constituencies. As MacKinnon (1989) observes, law frequently mirrors the biases of dominant groups rather than protecting the marginalized. In Northern Nigeria, this manifests as a tacit endorsement of patriarchal and religious hierarchies, further marginalizing women and minorities. The political implication is a weakened secular state incapable of enforcing universal justice, thereby threatening Nigeria's fragile federal stability.

5.8 Gender Implications

Gender is central to understanding the impact of blasphemy violence. Women face unique risks because accusations against them often intersect with patriarchal notions of morality, sexuality, and honor (Olomjobi, 2015). Cases such as Amina Lawal, Bridget Agbahime, and Deborah Samuel demonstrate how women become symbolic repositories of communal purity, and thus prime targets of public outrage. This gendered vulnerability aligns with Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality which posits that women experience oppression not only as females but also as members of religious or ethnic

minorities. Furthermore, blasphemy violence intensifies women's socio-political exclusion. Fear of accusation discourages female participation in education, leadership, and digital spaces. The implication is the perpetuation of systemic gender inequality and silencing of women's voices in religious and civic discourse.

5.9 Implications for Interfaith Cohesion

Perhaps the most damaging consequence of blasphemy-related violence is the erosion of interfaith trust. Each attack reinforces mutual suspicion between Muslims and Christians, weakening the fragile social fabric of coexistence. Communities once integrated through trade, education, and intermarriage become segregated by fear (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Interfaith dialogue initiatives often fail because participants operate under constant threat. The perception that justice is selective favoring one faith over another fuels resentment and retaliatory violence. The result is a cycle of mistrust that endangers Nigeria's pluralistic democracy. Philosophically, this undermines the Habermasian ideal of communicative rationality, where dialogue grounded in mutual respect is replaced by antagonism and silence.

6. Strategic Recommendations for Policy Makers

In light of all the above, the following strategic recommendations should be immediately taken into consideration:

6.1 Harmonization of Religious and Secular Legal Systems to Uphold Human Dignity

Nigeria must urgently reform its dual legal structure to remove contradictions between constitutional rights and Sharia blasphemy provisions. The state should establish a National Council on Religious and Constitutional Harmonization (NCRCH) composed of jurists, Islamic and Christian scholars, gender experts, and civil society advocates to ensure that all religious laws conform to constitutional guarantees of life, equality, and freedom of conscience. At the global level, countries with plural legal systems should adopt a similar harmonization model to prevent religious law from becoming a justification for gendered violence. Such reforms would institutionalize justice that respects faith while safeguarding human dignity.

6.2 Creation of Faith-Based Gender Protection Frameworks within Religious Institutions

Religious councils and faith-based organizations in Northern Nigeria should be mandated to develop Faith-Based Gender Protection Frameworks (FBGPFs) that explicitly prohibit violence or discrimination against women in the name of religion. These frameworks should reinterpret sacred texts to affirm women's worth and equality as moral agents before God. Globally, major faith communities like Islamic, Christian, Hindu, and others should establish Gender Equity Commissions within their religious hierarchies to ensure doctrinal interpretations promote peace and inclusion rather than exclusion and violence. This will advance a faith-informed global ethic of gender justice.

6.3 Establishment of a National Observatory for Religious and Gender Violence (NORGV)

To prevent recurrence of mob killings and blasphemy-related attacks, Nigeria should create a National Observatory Agency for Religious and Gender Violence under the Office of the President, with branches in each geopolitical zone. This body would gather real-time data on incidents, coordinate early response with law enforcement, and monitor compliance with justice delivery. At the global level, the United Nations and African Union could support a network of regional observatories to document gendered religious violence, facilitate cross-border learning, and hold states accountable through annual Religious Freedom and Gender Justice Indexes. This would move global policy from reaction to prevention through institutional intelligence.

6.4 Integrating Moral and Interfaith Education into National Development Policies

Sustainable peace in Northern Nigeria requires a deliberate cultural reorientation. The Federal Ministry of Education should introduce Moral, Interfaith, and Peace Education (MIPE) as a compulsory civic subject in schools, seminaries, and Qur'anic institutions. This curriculum should emphasize respect for diversity, sacred freedom of speech, and the shared Abrahamic values of compassion and justice.

Globally, educational systems should integrate religious empathy and ethical literacy as part of 21st-century human rights education. This will cultivate generations that understand that the defense of faith must never involve the destruction of humanity.

6.5 Institutionalizing Gender-Responsive Justice and Global Accountability Mechanisms

Nigeria must develop a Gender-Responsive Justice Protocol (GRJP) within its police, judiciary, and human rights agencies to ensure that cases involving women accused of blasphemy or targeted by mobs receive immediate protection, fair hearing, and rehabilitation. The Nigerian state should also create a Victims' Compensation and Rehabilitation Fund for survivors and affected families. Internationally, global institutions such as the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the International Criminal Court should expand their mandates to include gendered religious violence as a distinct human rights violation. This would institutionalize global accountability for states that tolerate mob or extrajudicial killings under religious pretexts.

7. Conclusion

The problem of blasphemy-related violence in Northern Nigeria exposes a profound crisis at the intersection of faith, gender, and justice. This research has shown that beneath the religious rhetoric lies a structural pattern of patriarchy, weak governance, and distorted theology that renders women uniquely vulnerable. Drawing from liberal, radical, intersectional, and vulnerability feminist frameworks, the study demonstrated that female subordination in blasphemy contexts is not incidental but systemic—embedded in both law and culture. The empirical evidence from 1999 to the present confirms that mob violence, legal contradictions, and social impunity have converged to erode human dignity and moral coherence. The implications of these realities are vast: morally, life has been devalued; legally, the state's authority undermined; religiously and theologically, mercy has been replaced with vengeance; and socially, gender inequality and interfaith mistrust have deepened. Yet this study affirms that transformation is possible. By harmonizing religious and constitutional law, institutionalizing gender-responsive justice, promoting moral and interfaith education, empowering women within faith structures, and enforcing global accountability, Nigeria and the wider world can begin to reclaim the sanctity of human life. Ultimately, the call is for a reawakening of conscience a recognition that no faith is truly defended through violence, and no society attains peace by silencing its women. Justice, compassion, and equality must become the new moral language through which religion and humanity coexist.

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