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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAPER TITLE/AUTHORS	Page
Articles	
A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF RELATIVIZATION IN SELECTED CENTRAL YORUBA SUB-DIALECTS: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF ÛSÌ-ÈKÌTÌ AND ÌKEJI-ARÀKEJI ÌJÈŞÀ	
Ridwan Akinkunmi RABIU , Saheed Oluwafemi AYELABOLA , AWUJoola, Adewumi	1-12
A NEW NORMAL IN TECHNOLOGY, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AND DIGITAL MEDIA: CATALYST FOR MUSIC TEACHING IN NIGERIA	
ADEYANJU, Adesola Ismaila, AYOKUNMI, Olaoluwa Marvelous	13-22
DRAMA AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN S.N.A AGORO'S SOMETHING TO DIE FOR	
Success Ebipade Perefagha , Kingsley I. Ineritei PhD , Oghenerume E. Okitiakpe	23-42
AFRICAN PERSONHOOD IN A DIGITAL AGE: ETHICS, IDENTITY AND HUMAN FLOURISHING	
Godswill Ome UFERE	43-55
ASỤSỤ EPUM IGBO: IHE NKETA NA OKE NDỊ IGBO	
Cecilia Amaoge Eme , Joy N. Okeke	56-64
THE CHURCH AS A HISTORICAL AGENT OF PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA	
VEN Jonathan Onyebuchi DIMOBIKA Ph.D	65-72
UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY, RELIGIOUS COPING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE	
Ebikabowei Musah	73-84
THE CHURCH, MIGRATION AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF NIGERIA	
VEN Jonathan Onyebuchi DIMOBIKA Ph.D	85-94
POWER DYNAMICS AND THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL IN TESS ONWUEME'S THE DESERT ENCROACHES	
Augustine Obiajulu EZIECHINE, PhD , Joy O. ODEWUMI, PhD	95-107
POWER, PROPHECY, AND PROFIT: A CRITICAL INTERDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN NIGERIA	
OLOWU Kemi B A (Hons) MLS, MILD, OLULOWO Segun Ayotunde, PhD	108-120



RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND PEACEBUILDING: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN A MULTI-FAITH SOCIETY

Okechukwu Orah, MDiv , Nwafenna, Ann Chioma

121-133

BEYOND UNDERREPRESENTATION: THE ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN FEMALE ORGANISTS IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Olaoluwa Marvelous AYOKUNMI, George Abiodun Temitope

134-144

SECURITY CHALLENGES ON DATA COLLECTION AND GATHERING IN SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH IN NIGERIA: MITIGATING ITS IMPACT

Onwuakpaoke Ogenna Chris, Jerry-Nduka Ogechi Eunice

145-148

QUICK WEALTH SYNDROME AND THE EMERGENCE OF STAGED KIDNAPPING AMONG YOUTHS IN ANAMBRA STATE: A SEARCH FOR RELIGIOUS SOLUTIONS

Stanley C. Mgbemena, Mbewu, Ezinne Scholastica

149-162

UKA DI N'OBI PHENOMENON AMONG IGBO CHRISTIANS: IMPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS FOR CHURCH DEVELOPMENT IN IGBOLAND

Mgbemena, Stanley C. PhD, Odimegwu, Precious Uchenna

163-172

AN EXEGETICAL APPRAISAL OF JOHN 21:20-22 AND ITS IMPLICATION TO ADDRESSING INTRA-MINISTERIAL RIVALRY AMONG THE CONTEMPORARY ANGLICAN CLERGY IN NIGERIA

Obielosi, Dominic C. PhD, Orakwe, Maduabuchi Emmanuel

173-186

IKUZI MMUỌ IGBA MBỌ N'IME NDỊ NTOROBIA IGBO: IBUFE NKWENYE OMENAALA NA AKA AJA AJA NA-EBUTE ONU MMANU MMANU N'IME UMUAKWUKWO N'OGO SEKONDIRI NTA

Eze, Roseline Ifeoma PhD , Ebubechineke, Ifeyinwa Benedette PhD , Abonyi, Augusta Ngozi PhD

187-195



A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF RELATIVIZATION IN SELECTED CENTRAL YORUBA SUB-DIALECTS: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF ÛSÌ-ÈKÌTÌ AND ÌKEJÌ-ARÁKEJÌ ÌJÈŞÀ

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Abstract

The main thrust of this work is to examine the syntactic process of relativization in two sub-dialects of the central Yoruba dialect cluster. This research aims to examine and analyse the areas of convergence and divergence in these two speech forms. The theory adopted for this research is the Principles and Parameters theory, propounded by (Chomsky 1981) in his Book titled: Lectures on Government and Binding Theory and the model adopted under this theory is the move alpha rule, which maps the deep structure to the surface structure and unifies all transformation rules. Many basic and derived sentences (relativised sentences) were drawn from the two speech forms: Ûsì-Èkìtì and Ìkeji-Arákeji Ìjèşà sub-dialects of Yorùbá Language. Some of the researchers' findings show that while the process of relativization of constituents in Ìkeji-Arákeji Ìjèşà dialect and Ûsì-Èkìtì involve the movement of the relativized NP from the Spec of the IP to the Spec of the RelP, it was discovered that while Ìkeji-Arákeji Ìjèşà dialect makes use of an overt resumptive pronoun in Subject NP relativization, the resumptive pronoun is covert in Ûsì-Èkìtì sub-dialect. This is because the resumptive pronoun is embedded in the relative marker *kó* through the phonological processes of vowel elision and contraction. It was also discovered that both sub-dialects have two distinct relative markers which are used to relativized different constituents. For example, while in Ûsì-Èkìtì, *kó* is used for subject NP relativization and *kìi* is used to relativize Object NP and a nominalised verb that is a verbal noun. In Ìkeji-Arákeji Ìjèşà sub-dialect, the relative marker *yèé* is used to relativize the subject NP and the object NP, while the relative marker *kìi* is used to relativise the nominalised verb in the sub-dialect. In conclusion, it was discovered that analysing the internal structures of Yoruba dialects and sub-dialects will promote the documentation of lesser-known Yoruba dialects and sub-dialects, which will help open new frontiers of knowledge and protect these speech forms for posterity.

Keywords: *Relativization, X-bar, Movement theory, Ìkeji-Arákeji, Ûsì-Èkìtì*



Introduction

Research works abound on standard Yoruba and most of its dialects. It has been observed that some of the controversies in standard Yoruba can be resolved through evidence from dialects of the language, which some scholars believe are close to the Yoruba proto-language. Awóbùlúyì (1992, p. 71) gives credence to this assertion when he opines that:

Such dialects deserve to be studied and thereby preserved in written record for posterity. And when, in addition to being what they are, they have the further potential to help clarify issues or points that are likely otherwise to remain obscure in the standard-form variety of the language. It would be a dereliction of duty for us not to work on them as preliminary to carrying out an analysis of the point or issues of interest in the standard language.

The purpose of this work is to carry out an analysis of the process of relativization of subject noun phrase, object noun phrase and the process of relativizing nominalized verb in Ùsì-Èkìtì and Ìkejì-Arákejì Ìjẹ̀ṣà sub-dialects of Yorùbá Language, which both belong to the Central Yoruba dialects group according to the classification of Awobuluyi (1998), Adeniyi (2008), etc.

Relativization is a transformational process within the scope of Government and Binding theory. Research works abound on the study of relativization in the Yoruba language and some of its dialects. Relativization is the process of forming or deriving a relative clause through the process of transformation, which involves the movement of the relativized NP to the SPEC of the relative marker, which is *tí* 'that' in the Yoruba language. Some of the earliest researchers on relativization in the Yoruba language include Awobuluyi (1978 and 2021), Bamgbose (1990), Ajiboye (2006), Ilori (2010), Sanusi (2013 and 2018), and Akintoye (2015), to mention just a few. We observed that to the best of researchers' knowledge none of the scholars so far has examined the relativization process Ùsì-Èkìtì and Ìkejì-Arákejì Ìjẹ̀ṣà sub-dialects, which belong to the central Yoruba dialects. This research aims to examine and analyse the syntactic processes involved in the derivation of relative clauses in these two dialects within the scope of the Government and Binding theory. Awobuluyi (1978, p. 94) sees the relative clause in the Yoruba language as an introducer. He explains that:

The introducer *tí* marks sentences that are used as (relative clause) qualifiers. As is expected of most introducers, *tí* always appears at the beginning of such sentences. The nouns qualified by such sentences are always identical with nouns or verbs within the sentences themselves.

Yusuf (1990), in Oladimeji and Owoyele (2023, p. 68), explains the syntactic structure within the context of principles and parameters theory. He opines that:

Relative construction involves the insertion of a relative clause in front of its NP antecedent in a matrix clause; a clause is relative when an NP within it is identical (and is therefore changed to a relative pronoun) with the antecedent of the thematic clause. Such relative pronouns are moved from their original position to the composition of the relative clause. This movement leaves a trace which is co-indexed with the moved element.

This research observed that while there are several works on Ìkejì-Arákejì and Ùsì-Èkìtì dialects as well as on relativization in standard Yorùbá and many of its dialects, there are limited accounts of research on these two dialects, most especially on the comparison of the syntactic process of relativisation. This is the void this research aims to fill with this work.



Literature Review

Relativization is a well-pronounced syntactic process whose derivation has been studied in different Yoruba dialects as a response to the call to service echoed by Bamgbose (1986) and Awobuluyi (1992) that scholars should endeavour to examine different aspects of linguistics in Yoruba dialects. A few of the research works on Yoruba dialects, most especially on the topic of relativization include Arokoyo (2013), who examines the syntactic process of relativization in the Owé dialect of the Yoruba language. She asserts that the relative marker for the relativization of all constituents in the dialect is *ghìn*. She gave the following examples to buttress her claim:

- 1a. Baba ghìn ó ra ilé yèn ti de
father that she buy house the has come
'the man that bought the house has arrived'
- b. Olókpa ti mú olè ghìn ó kó ilé gha
police has take the thief that he pack house our
'policemen have arrested the thief that robbed our house'

Arokoyo (2013, p.78)

Oladimeji and Owoyele (2023), who adopted the Government and Binding theory to examine relativization process in two Akokoid dialects of Yoruba, that is, the Uro and Arigidi dialects. Through their research, they opine that the two dialects operate a similar relativization process where the relative marker is covert in Subject NP relativization but overt with the relative marker "i" in object NP relativization in the two dialects.

Awobuluyi (2021) also re-examined the status of verb relativization in the Yoruba language. Through a descriptive approach, he asserts that verb relativization rather than being sentential nominalization is moved to the SPEC of the Rel. P in order to head the relativized nominalized verb. He asserts that "the markers *ni* and *tí*, like all other specifiers in the language, must everywhere be in construction with nouns/nominalization occurring to their immediate left". Oladeji (2018), in his own work, examines the syntactic process of relativization in Mòóyẹ, a sub-dialect of Ìgbómìnà. He asserts that the relative marker *ní* is used in relativizing different arguments, such as Subject NP, Object NP and Verbal noun in the sub-dialect. He gave the following examples to buttress his claim:

Subject Noun Phrase Relativization

- 2a. Adé iní ti ra iwé tirè
Adé. Rel. buy book perf go
'Ade who bought the book has gone'

Object Noun Relativization

- b. Ìwéilòmọtiratiya
book Rel. child bought has torn
'the book that the child bought has torn'

Nominalized Verb Relativization

- c. Ríràilómọjèiwésihàn
act of buying Rel. child buy book good
'the act of buying a book that the child embarked on is good'
- Oladeji (2018, p. 27-28)

Akintoye (2015) carried out a comparative analysis on relativization in three Yoruba dialects, which are Mòpà, Òndò and Òmùò dialects. According to Akintoye (2015) relativization is carried out in these three dialects through the movement of the relativized NP from the Spec of IP to the Spec of the RelP. The relative markers used in these dialects are *yíí* and *di* in Ondo dialect, "*ghìn* and *n* in Mòpà dialect and *kí* in Omuo dialect. It was observed through the research work of Oladimeji and



Owoyele (2023) on relativization in Uro and Arigidi dialects and Ajiboye's (2006) research on relativization in Moba that while standard Yorùbá operates overt marking relativization on all constituents, dialects of the Yoruba language, such as Mòbà, Ùrò and Arigidi, operate both overt and covert marking of relativization.

Central Yoruba Dialects

There is a consensus among dialectologists on the classification of dialects under the central Yoruba dialect group or cluster. Among such scholars are Adetugbo (1967), Oyelaran (1977), Akinkugbe (1978), Awobuluyi (1998), Adeniyi (2005), Akinlabi and Adeniyi (2017), who all classified Ekiti, Ife, Ijesa, Akure and Moba dialects under the central Yoruba dialects. This researcher observed that while there are various works on these dialects, there has been little or no research on some of the sub-dialects of these primary dialects, most especially on the syntactic transformation process of relativization in Ùsì-Ekìtì and Ìkèjì-Aràkèjì, two sub-dialects of Ekiti and Ijesa dialects of the central Yoruba dialect cluster, to the best of this researcher's knowledge. Ìkèjì-Aràkèjì is a sub-dialect of the Ijèṣà dialect spoken in Oriade Local Government Area of Osun state, while Ùsì-Èkìtì is spoken in Ìdó-Òsì Local Government Area of Ekiti state.

Theoretical Framework

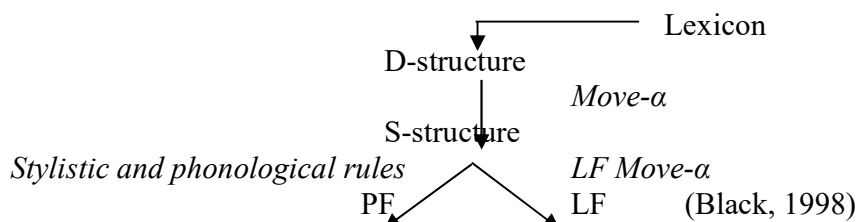
The theory adopted for this work is the Principles and Parameters Theory, which is also known as the Government and Binding Theory. It was propounded by Chomsky (1981) in his Book titled; *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Trask (1993, p.13), in Sanusi (2001, p. 43), explains what Government and Binding theory entails when he says "Government and binding theory can be defined as a modular deductive theory of grammar which posits multiple levels of representations (i.e. multiple strata levels) related by the transformation rule move alpha. The application of move alpha is constrained by the interaction of various principles which act as conditions of possible interactions".

Chomsky (1986, p.7) sees universal grammar as some system of principles, common to the species and available to each individual prior to experience. Haegeman (1991, p. 13) in Baiyere (2004, p. 28) buttresses Chomsky's point when she says that "Universal grammar is a system of all the principles that are common to all languages". An example of the universality of natural language is the occurrence of focusing at the left periphery of a focused sentence.

Sanusi (2017), in Sanusi and Oyewole (2019, p. 82), explains that GB theory greatly eliminates the proliferation of transformation rules like passive, affix hopping, verb number agreement, and question formation. According to Black (1998, p.2), GB assumes a derivational model consisting of four levels of representation as shown in the diagram below. The lexicon lists the idiosyncratic properties of lexical items, which constitute the atomic units of syntax. These properties include what arguments the item subcategorizes for, etc. Lexical items are combined at D-structure (underlying structure). D-structure is mapped into S-structure, which is the syntactic representation that most closely reflects the surface order of the sentence. S-structure is not directly interpreted, but is factored into Phonological Form (PF) and Logical Form (LF). PF is the interface with the phonology where shapes, sounds, and groupings of items are directly represented. LF is the interface with the Semantics. Predication relationship and the scope of quantifiers and operators of various kinds are explicitly represented in the phrase structure at LF.



Chart 1: Model of GB



These levels are related to one another by rules (noted in italics in the diagram above). Move- α map the D-structure and the S-structure, and a similar rule maps S-structure into LF. Move- α is stated as a simple rule, basically allowing anything to move anywhere, since the system of constraints is responsible for correctly restricting this movement. This aspect of the movement rule will be adopted in this work.

Akanbi (2015, p.3) explains further that one important innovation brought into grammatical analysis through X's syntax is the binary branching. Binary branching replaces and is an improvement over the earlier ternary branching. In this paper, our effort will be to examine and analyse data gathered on relativization from the two speech forms, i.e. Ûsì-Èkìtì and Ikeji-Arakeji sub-dialects of the central Yoruba dialect group using Chomsky's Principles and Parameters Theory. The twin model of X-bar Theory and movement rule (Move α) will serve as the theory through which our gathered data will be examined and analysed syntactically using X-bar syntactic projections. The X-bar theory according to Baiyere (2004, p.31) is part of the grammar that regulates and brings out what is common in the structure of phrases. This theory discusses the relationship existing between the head constituent and its subordinates. The head is significant in a phrase. Other constituents of the head word in a phrase may either surface or not in X-bar syntax.

Subject NP Relativisation in Ûsì-Èkìtì and Ikeji-Arakeji Sub-dialects

Subject noun phrase is the noun phrase that occupies the subject position at the deep structure level of a sentence before transformation. Sanusi (2013, p. 86), in Sanusi (2018, p. 86), asserts that the subject-NP is the most relativized noun phrase in standard Yoruba. He opined that "categories of NPs can be relativized in standard Yoruba. However, in terms of accessibility hierarchy, the subject-NPs are more accessible than any other category in the language". In this section, the researcher will examine and analyse Subject NP relativization in Ûsì-Èkìtì and Ikeji-Arakeji, two sub-dialects under the central Yoruba dialect cluster.

3.

SN	Ûsì-Èkìtì		Ikeji-Arakeji	
	Basic Sentence	Derived Sentence	Basic Sentence	Derived Sentence
i	Bólá mumi Bólá drink water 'Bólá drinks water'	Bólá kó mumi Bólá Rel.P drink water 'the Bola that drinks water'	Bólá mumi Bólá drink water 'Bola drinks water'	Bólá yèè ó mu omi Bólá Rel.Presump.Pron. drink water 'the Bola that drank water'
ii	Adé òun Olú juşu Ade Conj. Olu eat yam 'Ade and Olu ate	Adé òun Olú káan juşu Adé Conj. Olú Rel.P eat yam 'Ade and Olu	Adé òun Olú juşu Ade Conj. Olu eat yam	Adé òun Olú yèè ó juşu Ade Conj. Olú Rel.P eat yam 'Ade and Olu that ate



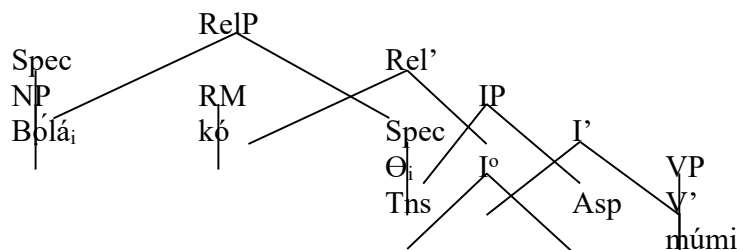
	yam'	that ate yam'	'Ade and Olu ate yam'	yam'
iii	Àbá àgbà pa òkété father old kill giant rat 'The old man killed a giant rat'	Àbá àgbà kó pa òkété father old Rel.P kill giant rat 'The old man that killed the giant rat'	Àbá àgbà pa òkété father old kill giant rat 'The old man killed a giant rat'	Àbá àgbà yèé ó pa òkété father old Rel.Presump. Pron. kill giant rat 'The old man killed a giant rat'
iv	Bólú jẹ ìbẹpẹ Bólú eat pawpaw 'Bolu eats pawpaw'	Bólú kó jẹbẹpẹ Bólú Rel.P eat pawpaw 'Bólú that ate pawpaw'	Bólú jẹ ìbẹpẹ Bólú eat pawpaw 'Bolu eats pawpaw'	Bólú yèé ó jẹbẹpẹ BólúRel.Presump.Pron. eat pawpaw 'Bólú that ate pawpaw'
v	Ùyábò jẹ ògèdè dúdú Ùyábò eat banana black 'Uyabo ate unripe plantain'	Ùyábò kó jẹ ògèdè dúdú Ùyábò Rel.P eat banana black 'the Uyabo that ate unripe plantain'	Ùyábò jẹ ògèdè dúdú Ùyábò eat banana black 'Uyabo ate unripe plantain'	Ùyábò yèé ó jẹ ògèdè dúdú Ùyábò Rel.Presump.Pron. eat banana black 'the Uyabo that ate unripe plantain'
vi	Tóbi ju òkò Tóbi throw stone 'Tobi threw a stone'	Tóbikó ju òkò 'the Tóbi Rel. P throw stone 'Tobi that threw a stone'	Tóbi ju òkò Tóbi throw stone 'Tobi threw a stone'	Tóbi yèé ó ju òkò TóbiRel.Presump.Pron. 'the Tobi that threw a stone'
vii	Ùjòyè tuntun gba ùlẹkẹ chief new collect bead 'the new chief is install'	Ùjòyè tuntun kó gba ùlẹkẹ chief new Rel.P collect bead 'the new chief that got installed'	Ùjòyè tuntun gba ùlẹkẹ chief new collect bead 'the new chief is installed'	Ùjòyè tuntun yèé ó gba ùlẹkẹ chief new Rel.Presump.Pron collect bead 'the new chief that got installed'
viii	Àdùnní f'Ólú Àdùnní marry Olú 'Adunni got married to Olú'	Àdùnní kó f'Ólú Àdùnní Rel.P marry Olú 'the Adunni that got married to Olú'	Àdùnní f'Ólú 'Adunni marry Olu' 'Adunni got married to Olú'	Àdùnní yèé ó f'Ólú Àdùnní Rel.Presump.Pron marry Olú 'Adunni that got married to Olu'
ix	Àláo gbé Àdùkẹ lúyàwó Àláo carry Àdùkẹ in bride 'Alao got married to Aduke'	Alao kógbé Àdùkẹ lúyàwó Àláo Rel.P carry Àdùkẹ in bride 'Alao that got married to'	Àláo gbé Àdùkẹ lúyàwó Àláo carry Àdùkẹ in bride 'Alao got married to'	Àláo yèé ó gbé Àdùkẹ lúyàwó Àláo Rel.Presump.Pron carry Àdùkẹ in bride 'Alao that got married to Aduke'



		Aduke'	Aduke'	
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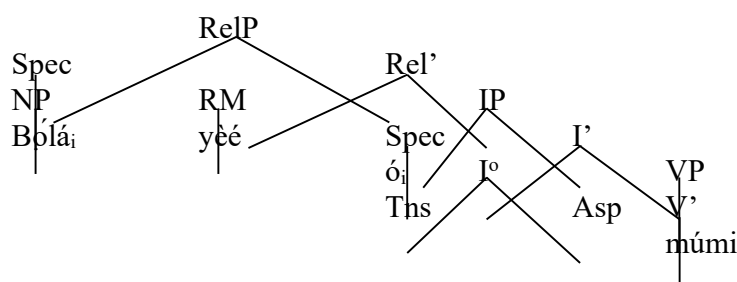
A Tree Diagram Analysis of Subject NP relativization in Ûsi-Èkìtì

Bólá kó múmi



A Tree Diagram Analysis of Subject NP relativization in Ìkeji-Aràkeji Ìjẹ̀ṣà

Bólá yèé ó múmi



It was discovered by this researcher that subject NP relativization in both Ûsi-Èkìtì and Ìkeji-Aràkeji Ìjẹ̀ṣà dialects involve movement of the relativized subject noun phrase from the IP to the Spec of RelP and the insertion of the relative marker which is “kó” in Ûsi-Èkìtì and “yèé” in Ìkeji-Aràkeji Ìjẹ̀ṣà. Further-more, it was also established that while there is an overt presence of the third person singular resumptive pronoun “ó” to replace the moved relativized subject NP in Ìkeji-Aràkeji sub-dialect of Ìjẹ̀ṣà, there is no overt presence of the resumptive pronoun in Ûsi-Èkìtì dialect. In addition, it was observed that evidence from the syntactic process of relativization in Ìkeji-Aràkeji and Ûsi-Èkìtì dialects shows that the presence of the resumptive pronoun is not universal in Yorùbá dialects.

Direct Object Noun Phrase Relativization in Ûsi-Èkìtì and Ìkeji-Aràkeji Dialects

Object NPs are arguments that occupy the object position to the verb and preposition in a sentence. The object of the verb is referred to as a direct object, while the object of the preposition is referred to as an indirect object. The direct object noun phrase is the object of a transitive verb in a sentence. It is the noun phrase that is assigned the accusative case under the case theory of the Government and Binding theory adopted for this research. In this section, this researcher will examine and analyse direct object NP relativization in Ûsi-Èkìtì and Ìkeji-Aràkeji sub-dialects.

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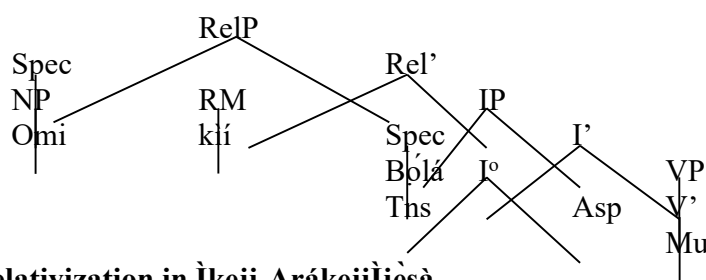
SN	Ûsi-Èkìtì	Ìkeji-Aràkeji
	Object NP Relativization	Object NP Relativization
i	Omi kii Bólá mu water Rel.PBólá drink ‘the water that Bola drinks’	Omi yèé Bólá mu water Rel.PBólá drink ‘the water that Bola drink’
ii	Uşukòó Adé òunOlú je	Uşuyèé Adé òunOlú je



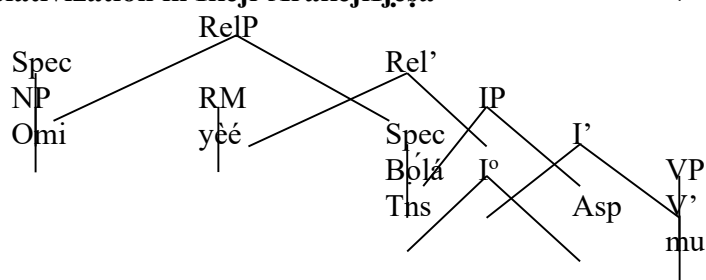
	yam Rel.P Adé Conj. Olú eat 'the yam that Ade and Olu ate'	yam Rel.P Adé Conj. Olú eat 'the yam that Ade and Olu ate'
iii	Òkété kíì àbá àgbà pa giant rat Rel.P father old kill 'the giant rat that the old man killed'	Òkété yèé àbá àgbà pa giant rat Rel.P father old kill 'the giant rat that the old man killed'
iv	Ìbẹ̀pẹ̀ kíì Bólú jẹ pawpaw Rel.PBólú eat 'the pawpaw that Bolu ate'	Ìbẹ̀pẹ̀ yèé Bólú jẹ pawpaw Rel.PBólú eat 'the pawpaw that Bolu ate'
v	Ògèdè dúdú kíì Ùyábò jẹ banana black Rel.PÙyábò eat 'the unripe plantain that Uyabo ate'	Ògèdè dúdú yèé Ùyábò jẹ banana black Rel.PÙyábò eat 'the unripe plantain that Uyabo ate'
vi	Òkò kíì Tóbìjù stone Rel.PTóbi throw 'the stone that Tobi threw'	Òkò yèé Tóbìjù stone Rel.PTóbi throw 'the stone that Tobi threw'
vii	Ùlẹ̀kẹ̀ kíì Ùjòyè tuntun gbà bead Rel.P chief new collect 'the bead that the new chief received'	Ùlẹ̀kẹ̀ yèé Ùjòyè tuntun gbà bead Rel.P chief new collect 'the bead that the new chief received'
viii	Uşu àti ùgbàdò kíì mo jẹ yam Conj. maize Rel.P Pron. eat 'the yam and corn that I ate'	Uşu àti ùgbàdò yèé mo jẹ yam Conj. maize Rel.P Pron. eat 'the yam and corn that I ate'

Direct Object NP Relativization in Ùsì-Èkìtì

Omi kíì Bólá mu



Direct Object NP Relativization in Ìkeji-Arákejìlḡḡḡḡ



It was observed that while relativization of the object of the verb is overt in both Ìkeji-Arákejìlḡḡḡḡ and Ùsì-Èkìtì dialects, the way it is realized in the two dialects differs. While Ìkeji-Arákejìlḡḡḡḡ uses the “yèé” relative marker, Ùsì-Èkìtì dialect makes use of the “kíì” relative marker. Also, relativization of the object of verb in both dialects involves the movement of the object NP from its extraction site which is the object position to the SPEC of the Rel.P and the insertion of the relative marker “kíì” in Ùsì-Èkìtì and “yèé” in Ìkeji-Arákejìlḡḡḡḡ in front of the moved NP

**Verbal Noun Relativization in Ùsì-Èkìtì and Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹ̀sà Dialect**

Nominalized verb or verbal nouns are nouns derived through different morphological processes. Nominalized verb are derived in standard Yorùbá through the morpho-phonological processes of partial reduplication of the base consonant and the insertion of the high front vowel /i/ with a high tone to break the consonant cluster. Examples of nominalized verb in Yorùbá language include:

- | | | |
|----------------|------|-----------------------|
| 5. i. rà ‘buy’ | ríra | ‘the act of buying’ |
| ii. tà ‘sell’ | títa | ‘the act of selling’ |
| iii. jẹ ‘eat’ | jíjẹ | ‘the act of eating’ |
| iv. kọ ‘teach’ | kíkọ | ‘the act of teaching’ |

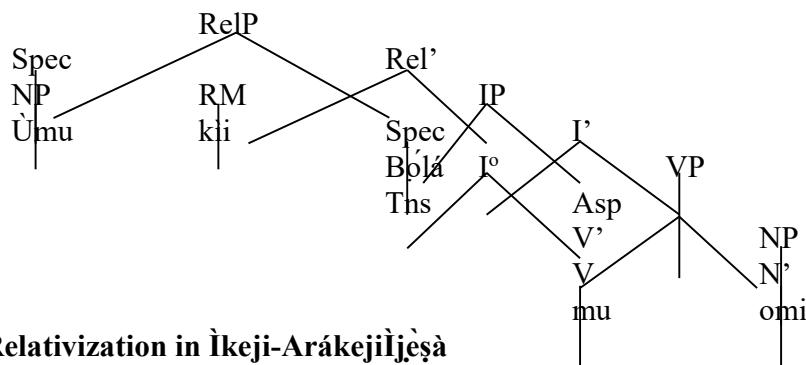
In this section, nominalized verb relativization will be examine and analyse in Ùsì-Èkìtì and Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹ̀sà sub-dialects.

SN	Ùsì-Èkìtì	Ìkeji-Arákeji
	Derive Sentence	Derive Sentence
i	Ùmukíí Bólá mu omi drinking Rel.P Bólá drink water ‘the act of drinking that Bola drinks water’	Mímukíí Bólá mu omi drinking Rel.P Bólá drink water ‘the act of drinking that Bola drinks water’
ii	Újẹ kíí Adé òunOlú juṣu eating Rel.P Adé Conj. Olú eat yam ‘the act of eating that Ade and Olu ate yam’	Jíjẹ kíí Adé òunOlú juṣu eating Rel.P Adé Conj. Olú eat yam ‘the act of eating that Ade and Olu ate yam’
iii	Úpa kíí àbà àgbà pa òkété killing Rel.P father old kill giant rat ‘the act of killing that the old man killed the giant rat’	Pípa kíí àbà àgbà pa òkété killing Rel.P father old kill giant rat ‘the act of killing that the old man killed the giant rat’
iv	Újẹ kíí Bólú jẹ̀bẹ̀pẹ̀ eating Rel.PBólí eat pawpaw ‘the act of eating that Bola ate pawpaw’	Jíjẹ kíí Bólú jẹ̀bẹ̀pẹ̀ eating Rel.PBólí eat pawpaw ‘the act of eating that Bola ate pawpaw’
v	Újẹ kíí ùyábò jẹ ògèdè dúdú eating Rel.PÚyábò eat banana black ‘the act of eating that Uyabo ate unripe plantain	Jíjẹ kíí Ùyábò jẹ ògèdè dúdú eating Rel.PÚyábò eat banana black ‘the act of eating that Uyabo ate unripe plantain
vi	Újù kíí Tóbi ju òkò throwing Rel.PTóbi throw stone the act of throwing that Tobi threw the stone’	Jíjù kíí Tóbi ju òkò throwing Rel.PTóbi throw stone ‘the act of throwing that Tobi threw the stone’
vii	Úgbà kíí ùjòyè gba ùlẹ̀kẹ̀ Collecting Rel.P chief collect bead ‘the act of taking that the chief took the chieftaincy bead’	Úgbà kíí ùjòyè gba ùlẹ̀kẹ̀ Collecting Rel.P chief collect bead ‘the act of taking that the chief took the chieftaincy bead’
viii	Úrà kíí Olú òun Bòdé ra àgbàdo buying Rel.P Olú Conj. Bòdé buy maize ‘the cat of buying that Olu and Bode bought corn’	Ríra kíí Olú òun Bòdé ra àgbàdo buying Rel.POlú Conj. Bòdé buy maize ‘the act of buying that Olu and Bode bought corn’
Ix	Úfẹ Kíí Àdùnní fẹ Olú loving Rel.PÀdùnní love Olú ‘the act of loving that Aduuni loves Olu’	Fífẹ kíí Àdùnní fẹ Olú loving Rel.PÀdùnní love Olú ‘the act of loving that Aduuni loves Olu’



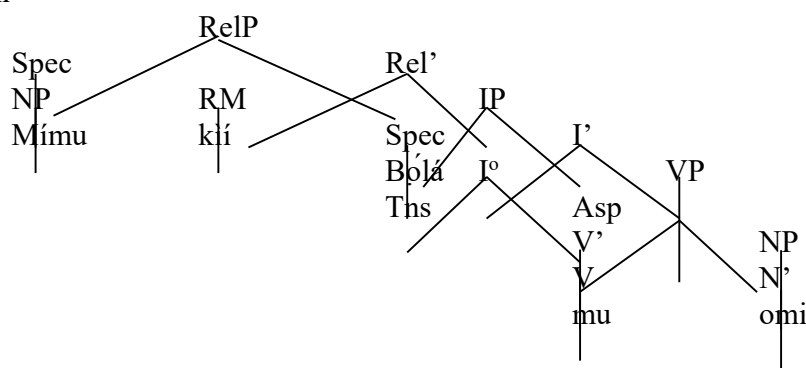
X	Ùgbé kii Àlào gbé Àdùké lúyàwó marryingRel.PÀlào carry Àdùké Prep. bride ‘the act of marrying that Alao got married to Aduke’	Gbígbe kiiÀlào gbé Àdùké lúyàwó Marrying Rel.P Àlào carry Àdùké Prep. bride ‘the act of marrying that Alao married Aduke’
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Nominalized Verb Relativization in Ùsì-Èkìtì



Nominalized Verb Relativization in Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹ̀ṣà

Mímukii Bóla mu omi



It was observed that while nominalization of the relativized verb is carried out through the morphological process of partial reduplication which involves reduplicating the consonant of the verb and the insertion of the high front vowel with a high tone /i/ in Ìkeji-Arákeji Ìjẹ̀ṣà dialect examples of such include “rírà” ‘buying’, “gbígbe” ‘carrying’ etc. while nominalization of the relativized verb in Ùsì-Èkìtì is carried out through the morphological process of prefixation where the high back rounded vowel with a low tone /ù/ is added to the base word which is the verb, examples of such include “ùrà” ‘buying’, “ùgbé” ‘carrying etc. It was also discovered that while the relative marker for nominalized verb is “kii” that is with low and high tones in Ùsì-Èkìtì it is “kii” with low and mid tones in Ìkeji-Arákeji Ìjẹ̀ṣà dialect.

Findings

It was established through this research that while the process of relativization of constituents in Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹ̀ṣà dialect and Ùsì-Èkìtì involve the movement of the relativized NP from the Spec of the IP to the Spec of the RelP, it was discovered that while Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹ̀ṣà dialect makes use of an overt resumptive pronoun in Subject NP relativization, the resumptive pronoun is covert in Ùsì-Èkìtì dialect. This is because the resumptive pronoun is embedded in the relative marker “kó” through the phonological processes of vowel elision and contraction. It was also discovered that both dialects have two distinct relative markers which are used to relativized different constituents in the respective sub-dialects. For example, while in Ùsì-Èkìtì, kó is used for subject NP relativization and kii is used to relativize Object NP and a nominalized verb



that is a verbal noun. In Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹṣà sub-dialect, the relative marker yèè is used to relativize the subject NP and the object NP, while the relative marker kii is used to relativize the nominalized verb in the sub-dialect. In addition, verbs are nominalized for relativization in Ùsì-Èkìtì through the morphological process of partial reduplication and the insertion of the high front vowel /i/ with high tone just like in standard Yorùbá but verbs are nominalized to be relativized in Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹṣà sub-dialect through the morphological process of prefixation of the back rounded vowel /ù/ with a low tone attached to the base verb form as prefix.

It was also observed that while some dialects in the central Yoruba dialect group, such as Ifẹ̀, operate overt and covert NP relativization processes where the relative marker kí occurrence overtly in a relativized sentence is optional, Ùsì-Èkìtì and Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹṣà sub-dialects operate only overt realisation of relativization. Olanrewaju (2024, p. 104) gives credence to this assertion when he opines that "the dialect uses kí as the relative marker in the place of the tí that the standard dialect (Yoruba) uses. Ifẹ̀ optionally drops the relative marker".

Conclusion

In conclusion, it was discovered that despite the fact that Ùsì-Èkìtì and Ìkeji-ArákejiÌjẹṣà sub-dialects belong to the same Yoruba dialect group, which is the Central Yoruba dialect. The morpho-syntactic process of relativization differs in the two dialects. These researchers recommend further studies in other syntactic areas in the two dialects. In addition to this, the researchers also recommend that other linguistics areas should be explored in the two dialects.

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A NEW NORMAL IN TECHNOLOGY, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AND DIGITAL MEDIA: CATALYST FOR MUSIC TEACHING IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The new normal in technology, driven by artificial intelligence (AI) and digital media, is changing educational practices worldwide. These include music teaching in Nigeria. Inadequate infrastructure, limited teaching resources, and insufficient exposure to new digital tools have constrained traditional music education in Nigeria. These issues have reduced learner engagement and restricted access to modern music production and performance skills. This study examines the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework and the Constructivist learning theory. The research uses a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with music educators and students from selected Nigerian institutions. This method allows for assessing current levels of AI and digital media integration, perceived barriers, and teaching outcomes. Findings show that AI-supported tools, such as adaptive learning platforms, virtual instruments, and digital audio workstations, greatly improve lesson delivery, personalized learning, and practical musicianship. Digital media platforms also support collaborative learning, content creation, and remote teaching. However, challenges remain, including poor internet access, inadequate teacher training in AI, and gaps in policy. The study suggests a framework focusing on building digital skills, redesigning the curriculum, and adopting AI-driven teaching technologies. Its implementation model shows how music researchers can integrate AI and digital media research into music education to improve teaching effectiveness, boost learner motivation, and enhance global competitiveness.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Media, Music Teaching, Educational Technology, Nigerian Music Education.

Introduction

Music education in Nigeria is evolving. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence and the spread of digital media are changing how teachers create lessons, how learners access music, and how communities interact with music. This article argues that these technologies create a new



normal. When used thoughtfully, they can improve access, diversify teaching methods, and make music education more relevant to the culture in Nigerian classrooms and communities. For decades, music education in Nigeria has combined rich local traditions with formal curricula from colonial and post-colonial systems. Today, affordable smartphones, better internet access, and cloud-based platforms provide new ways to share resources, teach remotely, and collaborate on music. At the same time, AI-driven tools like smart practice assistants, adaptive learning platforms, and automated transcription and composition aids are lowering technical barriers. They enable personalized learning paths that were previously difficult to achieve in many local areas. Despite these advances, the adoption of technology in Nigerian music education is still inconsistent. Many teachers lack training in digital teaching methods, schools face infrastructure challenges, and curricula often do not reflect the benefits of AI and multimedia. This article explores how AI and digital media can support music teaching in Nigeria. It will identify practical ways to integrate these tools, highlight challenges and ethical issues, and suggest actionable recommendations to connect technology with local teaching goals and cultural values.

Literature Review

Teachers' ability to turn technology into valuable learning relies on a solid understanding of content, teaching methods, and technology. The TPACK framework developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006) remains the most commonly used tool for examining this combination. Effective teaching happens at the intersection of CK (music content), PK (teaching methods), and TK (tools). Studies in Western music education highlight that technology is valuable only when tasks focus on musical thinking rather than just mastering the tools (Bauer, 2014; Ruthmann & Mantie, 2017). Research shows that teachers with better TPACK create tasks using DAWs (digital audio workstations) and compositions that encourage reflection, revision, and musical decision-making (Gai, 2024). However, in Nigeria, research shows a consistent issue: music teachers have strong subject knowledge but lack confidence in specific technological areas (Amaegbe, 2023; Modeme, 2022). Professional development (PD) often consists of general ICT workshops that do not address music-related tasks (notation, DAW routing, audio capture) or the skills needed for interpreting algorithmic feedback. This gap leads to two main problems: (a) under-use of powerful tools and (b) misuse, where technology becomes an end goal instead of a means to enhance musical learning. There is a need for thorough evaluations comparing PD models that focus on music-specific TPACK (e.g., micro-credential plus coaching versus one-time workshops). The solution is to implement and assess practice-based PD pilots that mix hands-on DAW labs, planning and teaching cycles, and reflective assessments, measuring both teacher TPACK improvements and student learning results.

AI tools like adaptive tutors, automated transcription, and generative composition systems provide immediate, data-rich feedback and new creative ideas (Li, 2023; Merchán Sánchez-Jara et al., 2024). From a sociocultural viewpoint (Vygotsky, 1978), these tools act as cultural mediators that can extend the zone of proximal development by providing support when human tutors are unavailable. Research in Western contexts shows short-term improvements in specific skills (intonation, rhythm) and increased practice motivation with AI tutors (Li, 2023). Generative systems also inspire ideas by providing students with musical material to adapt and critique (Merchán Sánchez-Jara et al., 2024).

However, algorithmic feedback often focuses on measurable aspects and may not capture expressive details and stylistic interpretation. Additionally, introducing AI creates a mixed feedback environment where teacher, peer, and machine feedback interact in complex ways. Few empirical studies explore how learners balance and combine these feedback sources, and even fewer examine



how teachers manage algorithmic evaluations to maintain musical values. There is limited research on mixed feedback environments in classrooms and on teaching methods for handling AI feedback. Classroom trials should compare different feedback setups (teacher-only, teacher plus AI, peer plus AI) and document their effects on expressive performance, compositional reasoning, and learner agency, alongside teacher methods for interpreting algorithmic results.

DAWs have expanded the definition of musical literacy, making arrangement, sound design, and multimodal composition key learning outcomes (Bauer, 2014). Research indicates that scaffolded DAW tasks, combined with reflective portfolios, more effectively demonstrate ongoing creative growth than single-performance assessments (Gai, 2024). In European contexts, reliable assessment of production work validates rubrics and inter-rater training (Wiggins & Forth, 2015). In Nigeria, some excellent programs (university studios, private academies) highlight the potential of DAWs, but many programs lack validated assessment tools and face infrastructure challenges that make regular DAW use difficult (Amaegbe, 2023; Modeme, 2022). Without process-focused assessments and clear authorship guidelines for AI-assisted work, evaluations risk favoring students with access to home studios or private resources. Therefore, there is a need for validated, context-sensitive rubrics that include process (drafts, reflections) and product (mix, arrangement), as well as AI authorship disclosure. Collaborating to develop and test portfolio rubrics with Nigerian departments, including training for raters and ensuring inter-rater reliability, is essential, as is incorporating AI authorship disclosure into standard assessment practices.

National policy documents (Federal Ministry of Education, 2019) and international reports (UNESCO, 2020) outline ICT goals, but many African institutions face implementation challenges like unreliable power, limited bandwidth, and tight maintenance budgets (Amaegbe, 2023; Modeme, 2022). These systemic issues influence who benefits from the "new normal." Local innovations—including mobile recording workflows, studio partnerships, and regional hubs—show promise but are often uneven and ad hoc. Equity concerns are pressing; technology can widen existing gaps unless paired with intentional access strategies (such as loan programs, scheduled lab time, and regional hubs). Translating policy requires discipline-specific plans that include costs for maintenance, technician roles, and PD, rather than just one-time equipment purchases. Existing models for sustainable music technology (solar-powered labs, offline DAW workflows, regional hubs) are few in number. There is a need to pilot and assess scalable infrastructure models with detailed budgets and maintenance strategies, and to push for funding that supports technician jobs and professional development linked to measurable outcomes.

AI systems often rely on Western data, raising issues of stylistic bias and cultural fit when used in African musical traditions (Merchán Sánchez-Jara et al., 2024). Unresolved questions about authorship and how to credit AI contributions in student work remain in many institutional policies. Ethical use also includes considering data privacy and consent when analyzing student performances. There is a lack of ethical guidelines tailored to the specific needs of music education that address cultural bias, authorship questions, and data governance. There is a need to bring together interdisciplinary groups (musicologists, ethicists, technologists) to create contextually relevant guidelines and classroom protocols for AI use, including diverse training datasets and clear authorship statements.

Methodology

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate how artificial intelligence (AI) and digital media enhance music education in Nigeria. The methodological choices are grounded in two primary theories. The first theory is Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), which highlights the essential teacher knowledge required for effective technology use (Mishra &



Koehler, 2006). The second theory is on sociocultural/constructivist principles, which view digital tools as cultural resources that facilitate learning within social environments (Vygotsky, 1978).

Research design and rationale

The study will use an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The first phase (quantitative) focuses on examining prevalence, relationships, and predictors (including TPACK and infrastructure) across various institutions. The second phase (qualitative) consists of targeted case studies aimed at elucidating mechanisms, classroom dynamics, and contextual challenges. This sequence enables statistical generalization regarding patterns and provides a purposeful depth for interpreting causal mechanisms. TPACK highlights quantifiable teacher knowledge, whereas sociocultural theory centers on interactional processes. The research includes samples from eight institutions across Nigeria's geopolitical regions to capture differences in resources and practices. These consist of two federal universities, two state universities or colleges, two colleges of education, and two private music academies. The researcher will craft all tools to apply the theoretical concepts in practice.

Data analysis

The quantitative analysis involves descriptive statistics that summarize access and usage trends. EFA and CFA are used to validate the TPACK instrument. Inferential analyses, such as t-tests and ANOVA, are performed to compare different types of institutions. Multiple regression analyzes student outcomes in relation to TPACK, infrastructure, and participation in professional development. Pre- and post-paired tests assess the impact of professional development. The researcher will use effect sizes and confidence intervals to aid in comprehending the findings. The qualitative analysis consists of transcripts and observational notes, which the researcher will use to scrutinize through thematic analysis employing both inductive and deductive approaches. Initial codes are derived from TPACK and sociocultural frameworks, while inductive coding uncovers new practices, such as hybrid feedback environments. Two independent coders assess a portion of the transcripts to ensure consistency, utilizing Cohen's κ . Analytic memos document interpretive decisions made throughout the process. Microethnographic case studies illustrate how teachers facilitate interactions, how students adapt, and how equity issues surface.

Ensuring validity, trustworthiness, and acknowledging limitations

The researchers confirm validity by piloting the tools, combining surveys, observations, artifacts, and interviews, and consulting with participants on emerging themes. The researchers improve reliability through discussions among raters for the rubrics and the process involves double data entry for surveys, complemented by reflexive memos and an audit trail to enhance reliability. Limitations in purposive sampling restrict statistical generalizability, particularly given the rapid development of software tools. To tackle these challenges, the analysis prioritizes teaching methods and resilient workflows over specific software versions.

Ethical Considerations

Regarding ethical considerations and data governance, the researcher will obtain approval from the lead institution's review board. We obtain informed consent and parental permission for participants under 18; participants may withdraw at any time. Data is anonymized and securely stored on encrypted drives. There are specific protocols in place for AI contributions: students are required to disclose any AI work in their portfolios, and usage logs that contain personal data are kept confidential and destroyed after the designated retention period. Findings are reported in aggregate to protect the identities of both institutions and individuals. The approach offers validated



resources such as TPACK-for-Music, evidence of the effectiveness of professional development, frameworks for hybrid feedback systems, and established workflows. These results actively apply the TPACK framework by assessing and enhancing integrated teacher knowledge. They also illustrate how tools impact learning in social settings. This study provides both theoretical understanding and practical guidance for advancing equitable, contextually aware music technology integration in Nigeria.

Findings and Results

This research examined the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital media in enhancing music education in Nigeria. Utilizing survey responses ($N = 298$; 183 educators, 115 students), twelve classroom observations, and 24 semi-structured interviews, the outcomes reveal a varied situation. While there are effective practices, overarching issues and gaps in teachers' technological preparedness limit broader influence. The findings below connect to the study's theoretical frameworks (TPACK and constructivist theory) and depict the existing condition of music education in Nigeria.

1. Teacher knowledge and readiness: TPACK as a significant predictor Educators indicated strong content knowledge (CK mean $\approx 4.02/5$) and moderate pedagogical knowledge (PK ≈ 3.45). However, technological knowledge (TK) emerged as the area needing the most improvement (≈ 2.58). The mean score for the integrated TPACK composite was approximately 3.12. Regression analysis indicated that TPACK emerged as the most significant predictor of perceived student learning improvements (standardized $\beta \approx .36$, $p < .001$), even after accounting for factors such as infrastructure and participation in professional development (PD). These findings align with the central premise of the TPACK framework: possessing knowledge of content and teaching strategies is insufficient for effective technology integration. Educators must also have hands-on skills to select and modify tools that align with musical objectives (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Interview insights reinforced this notion. Numerous teachers were able to articulate specific musical goals, such as ensemble balance, phrasing, and compositional intent. However, they felt uncertain about which DAW workflows or AI tutors would aid those aims without simplifying learning to just technical exercises.

2. Infrastructure and accessibility: ecological limitations affect opportunities: Infrastructure is a crucial factor. A significant 71% of participants reported regular power outages. Only 22% said they have stable, high-speed internet that supports synchronous remote collaboration. Access to institutional hardware varied widely. About 46% reported having at least one lab with audio interfaces, while many relied on personal devices or informal studio collaborations. Tools serve as cultural mediators, but their potential is only fully realized in supportive environments (Vygotsky, 1978). The findings from Nigeria show that the same technologies yield different educational outcomes depending on infrastructure, technical support, and institutional practices. Teachers' creative solutions, such as smartphones for recording, installing offline digital audio workstations, and scheduling after-hours studio time, demonstrate both resilience and creativity. However, these examples highlight that individual resourcefulness cannot replace the need for systemic investment in maintenance, technical staff, and reliable infrastructure.

3 Patterns of technology use: DAWs are dominant while AI is still developing. Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) were the most commonly used production tools. 19% of participants used them weekly, and 22% monthly. In contrast, the use of AI-enabled tools, like ear tutors and composition assistants, was low, with about 4% using them weekly. The frequency of DAW use showed a strong association with technological knowledge ($r \approx .61$), suggesting that hands-on experience supports classroom application. DAWs serve as a basic entry point for production



education in Nigeria. While AI tools have potential for personalized practice and creative generation (Li, 2023; Merchán Sánchez-Jara et al., 2024), they are mostly in the experimental stage. This gradual spread indicates that building technological knowledge through engagement with DAWs may be crucial for confidently and effectively incorporating AI into teaching.

4. When instructors combined sufficient technological knowledge with helpful infrastructure, observations showed constructive learning processes. These included repeating composition cycles in digital audio workstations, organized peer evaluations, reflective entries in portfolios, and structured use of algorithmic feedback. Students in these settings expressed greater independence, saying, "I can try out an idea and hear it back instantly." They also created portfolios that illustrated their revisions and musical thought processes. This trend shows sociocultural dynamics. Digital tools enabled socially based activities such as collaboration, evaluation, and modification, which expanded learners' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The TPACK framework explains this. Educators who effectively integrate technology with teaching strategies create assignments that focus on musical decision-making rather than purely technical performance (Bauer, 2014; Ruthmann & Mantie, 2017).

5. The inclusion of AI added a non-human element to classroom feedback systems. Teachers valued algorithmic feedback for its speed and its ability to measure aspects such as intonation and timing. However, they stressed the need to musically interpret these outputs, taking into account phrasing, style, and expressive intention. Many educators showed how to interpret algorithmic scores alongside their auditory judgments, thus preserving human interpretive authority. The educational challenge does not involve only using AI but also coordinating how machine feedback corresponds with teacher and colleague feedback. This interpretive effort is a key skill that needs development through professional training and classroom modeling (Merchán Sánchez-Jara et al., 2024).

6. Equity and evaluation: the danger of worsening inequalities without intentional policies. Access inequities were clear. Students in private schools or urban areas had more consistent access to digital audio workstation (DAW) tools and built stronger portfolios than those in underfunded public schools. Without assessments focused on the process and a clear recognition of AI contributions, technology-driven evaluation may favor students with extra resources outside of school. Using process-oriented portfolios, clarifying authorship for AI contributions, and presenting diverse assessment methods can help tackle disparities and better demonstrate incremental learning (Wiggins & Forth, 2015).

The music education scene in Nigeria includes dynamic, localized examples where AI and digital technology improve learning. However, the national situation is uneven overall. The main obstacles are teachers' confidence in technology and the availability of institutional infrastructure. The findings show three important priorities that match the study's framework: (1) dedicate resources to professional development that prioritize practical skills and music-specific TPACK, (2) build strong infrastructure and regional hubs to close access gaps, and (3) use process-oriented evaluation methods and maintain ethical standards for AI authorship and data management. By adopting these steps, we can turn individual successes into a fairer and increasingly sustainable "new normal" for music education across Nigeria.

Discussion

The evidence collected in this study provides a clear picture of music teaching in Nigeria during a period of technological opportunity. Surveys, classroom observations, and interviews revealed a consistent pattern: technology and AI can enhance musical learning, but only when three



factors, including teacher knowledge, lesson design, and institutional environment, come together. This finding is not just descriptive; it makes theoretical sense. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework explains why connected teacher knowledge is crucial (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Meanwhile, sociocultural theory holds that tools acquire meaning only through social practices and supportive settings (Vygotsky, 1978). The study combined key implications, linked them to theory, and provided clear, actionable recommendations by interpreting the main findings through a theoretical lens. The TPACK framework acts as the center of effective integration. Teachers in this study demonstrated solid musical content knowledge and strong teaching instincts, but their technological knowledge (TK) was limited. Statistically, TK was the weakest part of the TPACK framework, while the overall TPACK score was the best indicator of perceived student progress. This pattern supports the TPACK claim that content and teaching methods are necessary but not enough. Teachers also need to know how to use specific technologies to reach musical goals (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Practically, professional development should go beyond general ICT training and focus on music-specific tool skills, such as DAW workflows, audio capture, and understanding algorithmic feedback.

The socio-cultural and constructivist approaches explain why the same tools yield different results in classrooms. Digital media and AI are cultural artifacts. Its benefits are realizable when they are part of social practices such as peer critique, teacher modeling, and iterative revision, which provide support (Vygotsky, 1978). In places where infrastructure and technical support were in place, tasks using digital audio workstations (DAWs) and collaborative projects showed clear improvements in student agency and creativity. However, where infrastructure was lacking—due to frequent power outages, a lack of technicians, or limited bandwidth—teachers had to make do with smartphones and offline methods. This study demonstrated teachers' resilience, but it also highlighted the limitations of individual creativity without systemic support.

Hybrid feedback systems require interpretive work. The introduction of AI brought in a new element to classroom feedback: machine-generated metrics and prompts. Both teachers and students appreciated the quick feedback from algorithms on measurable aspects such as intonation and timing. Nonetheless, teachers often stressed the need to interpret these outputs musically by connecting numeric scores to phrasing, style, and expressive intent. This interpretive work is a teaching skill in its own right. Teachers need to translate algorithmic signals into musical learning actions. This task is crucial to the TPACK framework and to socio-cultural interaction.

Implications for policy and practice

1. Professional development must focus on practical, music-specific skills. One-time ICT workshops are not enough. PD should include hands-on DAW labs, collaborative planning and teaching, and reflective assessment practices. This approach helps teachers develop integrated TPACK. This study's evidence shows that teachers who participated in ongoing, contextual PD were more likely to create tasks that emphasized musical reasoning rather than just technical skills (Bauer, 2014; Ruthmann & Mantie, 2017).
2. Assessment must prioritize process and authorship transparency. Portfolios that show drafts, version histories, and reflective commentary capture ongoing learning better than single performances. With AI-generated material present, assessment protocols should require clear disclosure of AI contributions. They should also include rubrics that evaluate musical choices and technical skills (Wiggins & Forth, 2015).
3. Infrastructure investments must focus on resilience and maintenance. Buying equipment without maintenance plans and technician support leads to rapid capacity decay. Realistic roadmaps that



include power backups, scheduled maintenance, and technician roles are necessary to turn policy goals into classroom reality (Federal Ministry of Education, 2019).

4. Equity must be a priority, not a secondary concern. Technology can increase existing disparities unless institutions implement clear access strategies. These include device loan programs, scheduled lab time for disadvantaged students, regional hubs that share resources, and partnerships with local studios for supervised access. These actions help ensure that assessments and learning opportunities do not favor those with private access.
5. Ethical and culturally responsive use of AI is necessary. AI tools trained on Western data may misrepresent or marginalize African musical styles. Institutions should adopt ethical guidelines that tackle cultural bias, data management, and authorship. They should also encourage the development or curation of relevant local training data when possible (Merchán Sánchez-Jara et al., 2024).

Recommendations

This study focuses on conditional possibility rather than technological determinism. Nigerian music teachers are dedicated, resourceful, and keen to use new tools. Students show creativity when they have access and support. The challenge ahead is practical: enhance teacher skills by combining technology with teaching methods and content (TPACK). We must invest in strong institutional environments that enable tools to facilitate learning (sociocultural conditions). Additionally, we need to adopt assessment and ethical practices that uphold equity and cultural integrity. If we take these steps thoughtfully and collaboratively, AI and digital media can be a sustainable force for richer, more inclusive music education across Nigeria. Based on this, the study makes the following recommendations for what, who, and how to measure effective implementation:

1. Launch targeted professional development pilots (0–12 months). Two complementary models: (a) a six-module micro-credential with hands-on DAW labs; (b) semester-long coaching cycles (co-planning, co-teaching). Use the Departments in partnership with teacher education units and professional associations to assess pre- and post-TPACK scores, observe lesson enactments, and evaluate student portfolios.
2. Adopt portfolio assessment with AI disclosure (6–12 months). Implement a standard portfolio rubric (process + product + AI authorship statement) and hold rater calibration sessions with examination committees and course leads to ensure inter-rater reliability ($ICC \geq .70$) and track student learning progress.
3. Create resilient infrastructure plans (6–24 months). Develop detailed three-year roadmaps that include UPS/solar backups, technician positions, and maintenance contracts in collaboration with department heads, institutional finance offices, and state education ministries. Aim to enhance lab uptime and minimize lesson disruptions.
4. Establish regional resource hubs and partnerships (12–24 months). Create shared DAW labs and studio partnerships in each geopolitical zone. Formalize MOUs for access and internships in collaboration with institutions, private studios, and alums networks to provide adequate support for students and internship placements.
5. Develop ethical guidelines and culturally responsive materials. Form interdisciplinary working groups to draft AI use policies, authorship standards, and data governance protocols, partnering with music departments, ethicists, technologists, and cultural practitioners. Ensure that departments adopt the published guidelines.



Conclusion

This study shows that artificial intelligence and digital media can genuinely improve music teaching in Nigeria, but their educational value depends on certain factors. When teachers have solid technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, when tasks emphasize musical reasoning, and when institutions provide reliable power, technical support, and access, digital tools can spark iterative composition, reflective practice, and greater student involvement. However, in areas plagued by unstable electricity, limited internet bandwidth, and insufficient training, these technologies often go unused or are applied incorrectly, widening the gaps in learning opportunities.

The findings highlight two connected truths. First, solid knowledge in teaching technology is crucial; investing in teachers' ability to link musical goals with the right tools yields the best educational outcomes. Second, social and cultural factors influence whether these tools serve as effective learning resources; technology only enhances development when integrated into social practices such as peer feedback, teacher support, and guided revisions that make algorithm-based feedback and production processes understandable.

Moving forward, the approach should be clear and compassionate: focus on ongoing, practice-based training that improves music-specific tool skills; implement process-oriented assessments (such as portfolios with clear AI-authorship statements) that emphasize revision and musical thinking; and commit to realistic, well-planned infrastructure that includes maintenance and technician roles. Also important are policies and ethical guidelines that promote cultural relevance, data management, and fair access, ensuring that technological advancements support rather than undermine local musical traditions and educational fairness.

In summary, achieving a "new normal" requires collaboration among teachers, students, technicians, and policymakers to transform tools into effective teaching instruments. With targeted capacity-building, thoughtful assessment practices, and sensible infrastructure planning, AI and digital media can become lasting drivers of a more creative, inclusive, and resilient music education across Nigeria.

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DRAMA AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN S.N.A AGORO'S *SOMETHING TO DIE FOR*

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Abstract

Drama has long served as a medium through which societies interrogate dominant ideologies, challenge oppressive traditions, and advocate social transformation. While existing scholarship has extensively examined the social functions of African drama, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to the representation of social change in S.N.A. Agoro's *Something to Die For*. This article therefore examines how Agoro employs dramatic conflict, characterisation, and dialogue to critique discriminatory cultural practices and promote social reform within the Epie cultural setting. The study adopts a qualitative literary research design based on textual analysis of the selected play, complemented by the consultation of relevant books, journal articles, and other secondary sources. Drawing on close textual analysis, the study argues that the playwright constructs drama not merely as a vehicle for entertainment but as an instrument for confronting entrenched cultural prejudices, particularly the stigmatisation and social exclusion associated with individuals from leprous lineages. Through the experiences of Tokieme and Asueme, the play demonstrates that love, courage, and individual resistance can challenge inherited traditions that undermine human dignity and social justice. The study further establishes that Agoro presents drama as a catalyst for critical reflection and social transformation by encouraging audiences to question obsolete customs and embrace more inclusive social values. It concludes that *Something to Die For* reinforces the enduring role of African drama as a powerful agent of cultural reformation, social consciousness, and progressive societal development.

Keywords: African Drama, Cultural Reform, Literature, Mental Health, Nigerian Theatre, Struggle.

Introduction

Drama is one of the earliest forms of human art through which it is possible for humans to interpret the social situations, to ask questions of the cultural patterns, to advocate societal changes. Throughout history and in diverse civilizations dramatists have employed the theatre, not just for the entertainment value, but as a means to exposing social injustices, challenging ideological



perspectives and raising questions about society's affairs. Drama has revealed the preoccupations of the time in whatever era, ranging from comedies like Aristophanes to tragedies like Sophocles. As a literature genre, drama mimics the conditions of human existence by employing dialogue, action and conflict in its narrative process, in an attempt to recreate actual situations that have significance for the people of different time periods and cultures. Besides its value as an art form, drama performs other roles in the society including education, dissemination of information, and entertainment for the masses. More significantly, because drama draws on the reality of human life, it can be said that drama is the key vehicle through which we critique society and bring reform, highlighting the existing societal discrepancies, offering a different outlook of society, or a new image. The words of Augusto Boal are insightful here, "Theatre is not a reflection of society, but a transforming experience where people reflect on the oppressive reality of society" (122).

One important feature of African dramaturgy is its contribution to social causes like colonialism, politics, gender, cultural identity, and the environment, among others. Nigerian playwrights, in particular, have utilised the genre to attack oppressive norms, and to support more beneficial social beliefs. Therefore, drama has expanded from simply entertain to become an essential instrument for communication, building consciousness and driving social change. As Sola Adeyemi suggests that modern African drama is used in raising questions about historical wrong doings to guide towards the generation of a new vision of societal regeneration (41). Thus, theatre has the responsibility of investigating the incongruities in the society. It is within this framework that we find the play *Something to Die For* by S.N.A. Agoro. In this drama, we are faced with a powerful portrayal of the clashes between traditional societal norms and modern concepts of humanity, love, and justice. The protagonist in this drama is Tokieme, who defied tradition and married Asueme. Asueme is looked down upon due to the family's lineage. The playwright thus questions the validity of such cultural traditions and suggests that individuals, based on their conscience and courage, have the power to oppose societal prejudice. *Something to Die For* is more than just a narrative of a relationship; it is a profound conversation about social reform and the place of individuals in it. Studies exploring the nexus between drama and social change or the social role of African drama abound, but scholarly attention paid to S.N.A. Agoro's play has been negligible. This is largely due to the work being viewed as merely an attempt to produce a play that confronts cultural exclusion, with most analyses being focused more on the role of the theatrical medium in general or the nature of social change itself rather than on how Agoro employs dramatic means to facilitate concepts such as resistance, reform and inclusiveness. Bamidele Francis Afolayan for instance analyses how Osofisan employed theatre as a medium of social transformation yet uses different analytical tools when analysing the plays of Agoro (67). Therefore, this article engages with a textual analysis of *Something to Die For* by S.N.A. Agoro. It will attempt to offer a critical appraisal of the role of drama as a tool for the stimulation of change within society and will explore how through the dramatic elements such as characterisation, conflict, language and action Agoro subverts exclusionary cultural norms and advocates for an all-inclusive, humane society. This paper seeks to augment the present body of African literature through an examination of Agoro's creative contribution to utilising dramatic literature as both a reflection of and an agent for societal change.

Literature Review

There is hardly another genre of literature in which, like drama, the reality of human existence can be brought back to life by action, movement, conversation, dispute, and portrayal. Drama brings the realities of the human world, the contradiction of societies, and cultural truths to the audience with an immediacy no other genre can offer since drama- unlike others which rely solely on narration-offers us human existence on the move and in being. And because of this



attribute, drama is now an important genre and one of the many instruments for cultural as well as political change; an educator of sorts. Indeed, the primacy of action has often been highlighted in the discourse of the genre. According to Emeka Nwabueze, “drama is a form of literature that presents human life in action as characters speak the words and take the actions which are intended to portray this action. Drama is a genre which is produced and enjoyed by a communal performance on a stage” (15). Correspondingly, Juliana Okoh states that “drama” is derived from the Greek word “dran”, which means “to do”, or “to act”. Thus, the emphasis has been placed on the idea that for literature to be considered dramatic, it has to contain an element of action; that it has to do with how humans behave, act, think, talk as well as interacts.” (25). The concept conveyed by drama is that life is realised through the depiction of action. This idea has since been reaffirmed, further solidifying the role of drama as a catalyst for critical thinking among audience members.

More so, the representation of human conflict has also led many literary critics to argue in favour of the act as being crucial for drama. According to John Gassner who quotes Ferdinand Brunetiere, “Drama...is an art form representing the spectacle of man against himself and against the forces outside of him-nature, institutions, society-and the limitations of the individual himself” (16). “The spectacle” for Robert Cohen “is of human action; it is of human action on the move in real time and space...” and hence as such “is nothing else than an action on the move; that it occurs at real place and at a real time; that it comes into being through speech and gestures and motions. In short it is human behaviour on a stage in a specific, and unrepeatable moment of time....” (29). It is clear therefore, that there has been consensus amongst literary scholars that drama essentially depicts or represents human beings locked in a state of tension. The relationship between drama and society extends beyond artistic representation. Clive Krama Ilami says that “drama draws its sustenance from society and the raw materials used in its creation are nothing other than human interaction with the environment, be it natural, cultural or spiritual before being transformed artistically in production.” (18). Therefore, it is no wonder that this genre continues to be one of the most formidable medium to critique social injustice and to instill in its audiences and readers the imperative for social and cultural transformation. For instance, contemporary theatre scholars have developed this perspective, highlighting drama's potential as a catalyst for change. According to Augusto Boal, the role of theatre is not to imitate society but rather "to help to free them from the chains of oppression and participate actively in society's reconstruction" (122). In this respect, Sola Adeyemi explains that modern African drama has been "a nexus where historical experiences, political realities, and cultural aspiration intersect to produce and disseminate consciousness, promoting social reform" (41). Rather than simply treating social issues as given, African dramatists, through their use of conflict, tend to question injustices and propose alternatives to social ills.

The African Literary Tradition has historically employed drama as an agent for social change. According to Femi Osofisan, African Theatre should bear an ethical mandate: to question society and to encourage spectators to actively engage in addressing its problems and in challenging the social, political, and cultural contradictions it presents (5). Therefore, playwrights in Nigeria tackle such social issues like corruption, sex discrimination, ethnic discrimination, environmental issues, oppression, social justice etc., and portray dramatic literature as an instrument of social consciousness and reform. Thus, in the broadest sense of the word, drama may be defined not just as artistic product but as an active social and political instrument for discussion and action in society. If entertainment is the immediate purpose, it is not an end in itself but is rather a tool for challenging oppression, exploring assumptions, engaging public opinion, and facilitating change. This conception of drama may therefore help us contextualise S.N.A Agoro's *Something to Die For* in terms of its use of conflict to critique social discrimination and advocate for reform. It suggests that drama does not stand apart from society.



Drama and society have a symbiotic relationship that affects each other in different directions. The relationship between the social world, on one hand and drama, on the other is dynamic and reciprocal. The playwright plays the central role in this interrelation. "The play-writer is thus the original innovator of the play" and, as Robert Cohen contends, the playwright's vision forms the blueprint upon which all dramatic performance relies" (381). But although drama must become a collaborative performance experience, involving directors, designers, actors, and the audience, the dramatist still remains the ultimate 'ideas man whose conception of the world can dictate the direction in which the play can take. By occupation, thus, the playwright enjoys a strategically situated role within society. According to Clive Krama Ilami, drama "can serve as a historical record for a people, at the same time as it can act to shape public consciousness and encourage public action". Ilami also maintains that "the dramatist acts as a change-agent whose duty is not only to entertain but to influence the public attitude, social values and behavioural pattern of a society" (41). Such a feat would surely necessitate an in-depth understanding of the society in question since effective societal intervention can only proceed from an accurate reading of culture. As Ilami also asserts: "the person who attempts to influence society without adequate understanding of the social processes may produce artistic works that are of no immediate value to society" (41-42).

This concept of the dramatist as social-reformer continues to be very dominant in African dramatic practice, as almost every play-writer in the continent has over the years used the stage to confront political, ethnic and economic discrimination, cultural oppression and the like. Victor Akande observes that "In the face of hostile socio-political environment, it had always been possible for dramatists and theatre activists to use theatre for self-expression, affirmation, and liberation" of oppressed peoples. David Boles argues that "The playwright can best contribute to the welfare of the human race when he has the wisdom to employ the drama to advance justice, moral responsibility, and public conscience" (1). It is indeed clear how drama helps us to re-imagine the society we live in and indeed to reshape attitudes towards social injustices, especially African drama in which this concept has become part and parcel of the dramatic practice. Many Nigerian dramatists like Hubert Ogunde, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima, Tess Onwueme, Kenneth Eni and several others, using their creative talents, have taken a hard look at corruption, political power struggle, ethnic discrimination and conflicts, social and political oppression, gender injustices, cultural stereotypes and so forth through their dramatic productions. As Sola Adeyemi argues: "Contemporary African theatre remains a vital space to negotiate with histories, politics, and cultures in search of socio-political transformation" (47).

The tradition of Niger Delta Literature is also aligned with this focus. The original study showed that dramatists and authors including Saro-Wiwa, Gabriel Okara, J P. Clark, Barclay Ayakoroma, Akpos Adesi, and Ben Binebai have been very consistent in highlighting the environmental devastation, marginalisation, exploitation and pursuit of equity that characterises the Niger Delta. Their works often have informed public debates regarding resource control, environmental issues and the region's political and social experiences. These examples indeed show that African dramatists do not just record the social experiences of their societies; they play active roles in directing the ethical and political dialogues about societal development. Contemporary research corroborates this study. Olu Obafemi opines that contemporary Nigerian theatre continues to be an instrument of social reconstruction in that it encourages audiences to question received ideational frameworks and to contemplate alternatives for a fairer society (214). Similar views were expressed by J. Plastow: African performance traditions continue to be popular for their capacity to involve the community in debate about social justice, democracy and cultural change (96). It shows that society needs theatre to communicate its continuing processes of change and struggle, as well



as its potential changes of outlook. Thus, a social exchange exists between society and the dramatist where the former provides content in the form of social issues and cultural narratives which then inform the creative and aesthetic processes in the drama and the latter gives society back the mirror in which the social conditions, values and culture are displayed, interpreted and often questioned or challenged. The dramatist thus functions as a publicist, not simply as entertainer but as moral commentator, philosopher and promoter of social justice. The work under study belongs to this tradition, whereby dramatic action is used to subvert discriminatory customs in favour of a better and a more enlightened social order.

Theoretical Framework

This work relies on the concept of functionalism which is a type of theoretical perspectives that uses the society to study as an integrated whole made up of many interacting institutions, rules, laws, values and culture which collectively maintain the society. Functionalism asserts that within any society, various interrelated parts or segments function for the persistence of the social system and similarly each social institution such as the family, religion, laws, political and culture operate to contribute towards maintaining equilibrium in the social system. In the event that any particular institution or element of culture ceases to be conducive to the well-being of the collective and begin to impose discriminatory or conflict generating effects on the collective and create instability, then such institution is termed nonfunctional. The intellectual heritage of the theory of functionalism can be trace in the works of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, whose analysis of social solidarity emphasizes the importance of collective sentiments, beliefs and the role of institutions in fostering social integration (38-45). According to Durkheim, society is far more than mere aggregations of individuals, for society is composed of its own unique qualities, such as a 'collective conscience', that act on individuals and integrate them (79). Traditions, customs and the norms of the group have the social function to fulfill and once they cease to be useful to society, then it is a matter of time before they are discarded (102). With the increasing progress of a society, some traditions could create hindrance to its development, hence they could become subject of reformulation for the maintenance of social equilibrium.

Parsonian system approach builds upon the basic assumption by Durkheim where in an auto regulating social system all social institutions fulfil a certain role towards establishing continuity, order and equilibrium. He states that any social system must perform four essential functional prerequisites: adaptation, goal-attainment, integration, and latent-pattern-maintenance (or common-culture) that are generally summarised as the AGIL paradigm (26-36). In this context, Culture should act as a contributing factor to attain harmonious balance and social integration. When such culture starts generating exclusion, inequity or conflict then they cease to perform their integrative role and thereby make for destabilisation of the entire social system thereby rendering necessary an adjustment in to regain stability (79-88). This idea has since been greatly developed by Robert K. Merton in his creation of concepts of 'manifest functions,' 'latent functions,' and 'dysfunctions.' According to Merton, 'manifest functions' are the intended and recognised effects of social institutions, while 'latent functions' are the unplanned or less visible consequences that occur as a result of social action (73-76). More importantly, in terms of this essay, Merton points out that the functioning of any particular institution or tradition might develop into a dysfunction, thus becoming detrimental to the stability and development of society rather than contributing towards them (105). This refinement of functionalism does not align with prior functionalist beliefs that all components of society must be conducive to societal stability, but acknowledges that traditions may, as a consequence, support the subjugation of some against others. Functionalism is a theory which



is particularly relevant within the scope of literature and culture because of the nature of literature and the portrayal of interactions between individual and social institutions which govern their being.

Literature is a medium for which to both highlight the strengths and shortcomings of the social structure, and it serves to encourage us to scrutinise beliefs, customs, and institutions which might support or inhibit the development of a society. In other words, literature is not just enjoyable; it is a means of social analysis and deliberation in respect of what may need to change within it. The structure of dramatic literature in particular lends itself to analysis as it very much centres on the conflicts between tradition and change. However, in spite of the useful applications of Functionalist Theory, it is not immune from critique. This theory has been denounced for overemphasising social equilibrium and paying too little attention to the significance of struggle, conflict, and power relations as forces for social change. The assumption of the theory that social institutions serve beneficial roles overlooks how dominant classes might maintain exploitative arrangements through traditions and culture. Also, it suggests a rather passive model of social change in which it tends to happen in gradual evolutionary shifts, whereas in reality significant changes occur as a result of conflict and struggle. Fortunately, Merton's idea of a 'dysfunction' directly deals with such concerns by explaining that some functions may cease to operate for a period, thereby creating a need for social adjustment (117-121).

The Functionalist perspective offers a useful framework for analysing this research because *Something to Die For* inherently concerns itself with the link between cultural traditions and social integration in the Epie community in Bayelsa State. Even though discrimination by branding members of leprous parentage may have, for all intent and purpose, served specific roles and objectives at some point in the history of the community, in the form it is depicted in Agoro's work, the tradition had become dysfunctional since it engenders discrimination, stigmatisation, sorrow, anguish and oppression of all forms. In essence, it is counter-productive in terms of building communal bonds of friendship and love as it generates division, antipathy and undue strife between communities and individuals alike. The plays highlight in the characters of Tokieme and Asueme that indeed, social institutions are established to promote the welfare of society, rather than become instrument of social tyranny. In it are portrayed how such elements as love, justice, bravery, commitment to moral conviction, are used to break down the walls of unjust and outdated traditional structures. Therefore, the dramatic conflict herein is not against culture, but against some elements of the culture which are now in direct contravention to societal harmony. From Functionalist's viewpoint, Tokieme's quest to reject and break these discriminative traditions should be seen as an attempt to regain a harmonious socio-religious state. Thus, Functionalism provides a viable framework for interpreting the effectiveness of drama as a vehicle of social reform, and to ascertain as to what extent does Agoro use such dramatic elements as character, dialogue, plot development, conflict to denude these maladaptive and counter-product of cultural heritage, and propagate alternatives that foster unity, fairness, integration and harmonious community development. Hence, Functionalism would buttress the research statement of the study that drama offers an array of aesthetic benefits as well as functional contributions through the instigation of social conscience with respect to the necessity of adaptation for future societal progress.

Methodology

Qualitative research was applied in this study to investigate how drama works as a means of social change through a critical study of S.N.A. Agoro's *Something to Die For*. In this regard, qualitative research is ideal for literary research since it enables one to conduct a detailed analysis of texts, characters, theme, language, and society. The study was therefore interpretive and analytical, involving an investigation of the meanings that lie within the drama text and how they



can help in the social transformation. The primary data in this study came from S.N.A. Agoro's *Something to Die For*, and this forms the main text to be analysed. However, secondary data were sourced from academic books, journals, conference proceedings, among others, relating to drama, African literature, social change, and functionalism theory. The data in this study are derived from documentary research, in which there was an intensive scrutiny of the text and any other relevant documents. This process involved close observation of episodes, characters, dialogues, conflicts, and dramatised actions that show the connection between cultural practice and social transformation. The relevant scholarly literature on the topic was also reviewed in order to obtain information about different views regarding drama as a form of criticising society. This information also helped to pinpoint the research gap that this study seeks to fill. The data were analysed through qualitative textual analysis that was informed by the tenets of functionalism theory. This analysis was aimed at how Agoro uses dramatic characterisation, dialogue, story development, and conflicts to critique cultural practices that have become dysfunctional in Epie and calls for their transformation for the sake of justice, social cohesion, and humanity. Functionalism was used as an analytical tool in determining to what extent this play represents how drama can be used to question social tradition and restore the social equilibrium through positive social transformation. Thus, this study made use of interpretative approach in which the text analysis of the play is blended with Functionalist Theory and literature.

Presentation of Data, Analysis and Discussion on *Something to Die For*

Synopsis of the Play

Something to Die For is a five-scene drama written by S.N.A. Agoro which captures the tension between cultural values and the current concepts of justice, equality and inclusiveness in the Epie society of Bayelsa State. In this play, the protagonist, Tokieme, is the only son of Enimotor and Bisi. Tokieme is emotionally distraught because of the continuous rejection by several women whom he wishes to marry. This psychological distress makes him commit suicide through drug abuse, taking an overdose of heroin, hence getting hospitalised. After recovering, Tokieme is visited by his friend, Sopupu, who advises him against the act of committing suicide no matter what happens in life. In the process of counselling, Tokieme reveals the painful experience that caused him to commit such an act: the rejection from Nimi, a receptionist at his former workplace, and Bonze. After his return home, Tokieme communicates his parents his plan to reconstruct his life and move to Abuja for the continuation of his legal career. Whereas his mother, Bisi, approves of his choice, she demands that he marries a worthy wife before venturing to follow the plan. However, three months later, Tokieme makes public his new plans of love, informing his parents that he has fallen in love with a girl named Asueme from a family whose reputation is tainted by the leprous genetic factor in the family. It is at this point that the major conflict in the drama story emerges since marriage in this family is taboo and attracts stigma in Epie community. Even though the family members and friends warn him about the cultural implications of marrying Asueme, Tokieme does not back down. Asueme herself becomes worried about the stigma he might receive as a result, but Tokieme believes that love, justice, and respect for human dignity are worth more than observing an unjust culture. This is achieved through the marriage between Tokieme and Asueme. This is an action that helps to end the discriminatory practice in place for a very long time. This practice discriminated against people who were from families that suffered from the leprosy disease. The marriage symbolises victory for love over the discriminatory act and also serves as an example of people fighting against the bad cultural practices just like other social discriminations. Some examples of such discriminations include the Osu system in southeastern Nigeria.



Major Characters

The dramatic action revolves around five principal characters whose interactions collectively advance the playwright's message of social transformation.

Tokieme is the protagonist and the principal agent of change in the play. A trained lawyer and the only child of Enimotor and Bisi, he experiences emotional trauma resulting from repeated rejection in his search for love. His eventual relationship with Asueme transforms him from a victim of personal despair into a courageous advocate for social justice. By choosing to marry a woman rejected by society because of her ancestral background, Tokieme challenges an oppressive cultural institution and demonstrates that love and justice should prevail over discriminatory traditions.

Enimotor, Tokieme's father, is a Chief Superintendent of Police who embodies the tension between cultural conservatism and parental compassion. Although he initially opposes his son's decision because of its cultural implications, his eventual acceptance of the marriage illustrates the possibility of attitudinal change when traditional values conflict with justice, humanity, and family bonds.

Bisi, the wife of Enimotor and mother of Tokieme, represents maternal compassion and emotional stability. Throughout the play, she consistently supports her son, encourages his emotional recovery, and ultimately accepts his decision to marry Asueme. Her character demonstrates the importance of empathy and family support in overcoming social prejudice.

Asueme serves as the symbol of marginalised individuals within society. Although she belongs to a lineage stigmatised by traditional beliefs, she is portrayed as compassionate, loving, and morally upright. Her relationship with Tokieme exposes the irrationality of judging individuals based on inherited social labels rather than personal character and integrity.

Sopupu functions as the voice of friendship, reason, and encouragement. His intervention following Tokieme's suicide attempt prevents further self-destructive behaviour and reinforces the importance of hope, resilience, and emotional support during periods of personal crisis. Although his role is comparatively limited, he contributes significantly to the moral development of the protagonist.

Dysfunctional Tradition as the Source of Social Conflict: Tokieme's Ordeals in *Something to Die For*

The main problematic presented in S.N.A Agoro's novel *Something to Die For* revolves around the experiences of Tokieme; Agoro's protagonist, through whom he explores the impact of deeply embedded cultural patterns that no longer function properly in present day society. Similar to Oedipus of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Odewale of Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to blame*, Tokieme commands the play's dramatic centre, as virtually every significant occurrence relates to his personal trials. Conversely to the ancient tragic hero who undergoes suffering and ultimately experiences irreparable collapse, Tokieme undergoes similar suffering, but achieves instead social awareness, personal and individual satisfaction and the necessary cultural transformation. In this regard, Agoro, unlike the conventional tragic archetype, utilises suffering to bring about a positive change within the society, instead of unavoidable destruction. From a functionalist standpoint, Tokieme's ordeal cannot simply be interpreted as unfortunate for him as an individual, but rather as a manifestation of the breakdown of dysfunctional social institutions which do not facilitate well-being for the overall society. In his essay on social theory, Robert K. Merton notes how institutions function in an adverse way when 'they no longer have, or at any rate no longer have primarily, functional relevance to social stability but produce unintended side effects that are considered



dysfunctional for the system as a whole (11). Agoro's use of Tokieme's personal struggle serves to showcase the detrimental effects of ancient traditions that can cause individuals social anguish and oppression, rather than communal harmony.

Tokieme's predicament is initiated at his family level, he is the only child of Enimotor and Bisi, whose status as a sole child turns into a problem, in the course of finding a wife. The realisation in his father's speech highlights the effect of the society in the relationships of an individual:

Enimotor: *If Toky's problem is that of being rejected then he made a big mistake. He was really bigoted to think that every woman would accept him. After all, what can he really be proud of, frankly speaking, he has many factors to his disadvantage.*

Bisi: *Factors such as what and what?*

Enimotor: *His parentage. Don't forget he is an only child. Some ladies would like to be married in families where there are other sons and daughters so that their children would have uncles and aunts.*

Bisi: *That's true.*

Enimotor: *After all, who would like to marry a police officer's child? (6)*

This dialogue demonstrates that Tokieme's suffering originates not from any personal deficiency but from social perceptions over which he has little control. His status as an only child and the son of a police officer becomes a basis upon which others evaluate his suitability for marriage. From the perspective of Functionalist Theory, marriage is expected to strengthen family relationships and promote social integration. Ironically, the same institution becomes an avenue through which arbitrary social assumptions produce exclusion and emotional distress. What should ordinarily facilitate social cohesion instead generates alienation, illustrating the dysfunction of societal expectations that privilege family structure over individual character. An even more significant ordeal confronting Tokieme is his repeated rejection by women, an experience that gradually erodes his emotional stability. During his conversation with Sopupu, he expresses profound frustration over the persistent disappointments that have characterised his search for love:

Tokieme: *Do you think I have not seen enough rejection already...? (12)*

This brief but emotionally charged statement encapsulates the cumulative psychological burden that rejection has imposed upon him. Unlike Tokieme, however, Sopupu interprets rejection from a developmental perspective rather than a destructive one:

Sopupu: *I think you should still be rejected by many more girls...*

Tokieme: *You don't mean that as a serious prayer, do you?*

Sopupu: *Seriously, sir, I'd prayed with all the seriousness that I could muster.*

Tokieme: *Why, if I may ask?*

Sopupu: *Just to make you grow up... (12)*

The contrasting perspectives of the two characters deepen the dramatic conflict. Whereas Sopupu views rejection as a process of emotional maturity, Tokieme experiences it as a devastating assault on his self-worth. Agoro thereby reveals the subjective nature of human suffering while emphasising the devastating psychological consequences of persistent social exclusion. Tokieme



further recounts his painful experience with Nimi, a receptionist at Makies Chambers, whose apparent affection eventually culminates in unexplained rejection:

Tokieme: *She raised my hopes only to dash them completely... I couldn't believe myself when Nimi told me that she wouldn't marry me.*

Sopupu: *Did she give any reason?*

Tokieme: *She gave me no reasons at all... (14)*

The absence of any explanation intensifies the emotional impact of the rejection. Agoro deliberately withholds a rational justification in order to emphasise the arbitrary nature of human prejudice. Tokieme's subsequent rejection by Bonze reinforces the recurring pattern of disappointment that defines his emotional life. Reflecting upon these experiences, he attempts to rationalise his suffering:

Tokieme: *Sometimes I think I am paying for refusing to acknowledge the love girls earlier had for me... (16)*

In the context of this self-reflection, we find an illustration of the process by which the victim is made to experience the sting of guilt in spite of situations resulting from outside causes. Rather than coming to terms with the capriciousness of social relationships, Tokieme views his trauma as a moral condemnation. His resultant distress culminates in substance abuse and suicide attempts and escalates the already severe consequence of emotional denial. Seen through the lens of the functional theory of society, the suicide attempt signals the failure of existing social institutions to provide adequate warmth and support. Family, friends, and communal solidarity all prove insufficient against the forces driving Tokieme toward utter despair. Taking his concerns beyond individual mishap, Agoro thus exposes society's fundamental failings. The tragic irony of his story, is that it is only in a hospital ward for the consequence of his suicidal attempt that Tokieme at last finds both Asueme and recognition, the very thing that society rejected him for, thus presenting a new set of trials for his devotion: now, he is spurned by the world that denied him comfort in the first place, for the failure of that world to afford him comfort when it had the opportunity.

Sopupu warns him of the implications of this decision:

Sopupu: *if you marry this girl, you will be estranging yourself from the entire community...*

Tokieme's response reveals both his emotional exhaustion and moral conviction:

Tokieme: *Why must it always be so with me? I was worthless, so I engaged in drugs. Now I have been accepted by a lady and you are suggesting that marrying her would mean my estrangement from our small local community. (29)*

The conflict reaches its deepest moral expression when Asueme herself attempts to persuade Tokieme to reconsider his decision because of the severe consequences awaiting him and their future children:

Asueme: *Toky, do you think it is all worth the pains? Must you really become estranged from your parents and the entire Epie community because you want to marry me?*

Asueme: *None of your children would ever be allowed to marry from the clan.*

Asueme: *They are excluded from all traditional titles.*



Tokieme: *I have thought about all the things you have said and all the things you will ever ask. (32)*

Through this interaction, it becomes evident that the main conflict of the story involves much more than romantic involvement. Agoro brings to light a cultural practice, which has been having negative ramifications through the generations and that influences marriage, politics, social acceptance, and collective identity. In terms of functionalism, this kind of tradition cannot be seen as being socially valuable anymore since it causes disintegration rather than maintaining what it was supposed to maintain from the very beginning. Instead of uniting, this cultural practice causes exclusion, fear, and oppression. Overall, the biggest test that Tokieme has had to undergo has nothing to do with the rejection by the women, drugs, or even with the threat of being excluded by the community. The biggest test Tokieme has had to undergo is facing a cultural practice that requires sacrificing justice and humanity in the name of tradition. In choosing love and moral stand over tradition and communal acceptance, Tokieme has become the dramatisation tool that Agoro uses to call for change in dysfunctional social practices.

Characterisation as an Instrument of Social Reform

The play uses “characterisation” as one of the major Dramatic Devices to promote social reform, a role S.N.A Agoro successfully adopts in his play *Something to Die For*. Characterisation is used by the author to expose the clash between conservative culture and the call for reform by allowing the characters to stand as representatives of varying ideological stance on matters of traditions, justice, love and social obligation; in place of them just participating in the events in the play. Thus, “characterisation” stands out as the most significant device used to drive home the playwright’s quest to dismantle some destructive traditions. According to Functionalist theory, society requires all individuals within it to play their designated role, which must either promote stability or promote instability in a social setting. Therefore, individuals who refuse to deviate from harmful norms would indirectly aid to maintaining a society that has become dysfunctional. Whereas an individual that actively fights against some “old and redundant” structures will bring about some semblance of “health” back to the society. With this understanding, let us examine how the main characters in *Something to Die For* fit in with the functionalist’s description of societal members: -Tokieme;

Asueme: *Toky, do you think it is all worth the pains? Must you really become estranged from your parents and the entire Epie community because you want to marry me?*

Tokieme: *I have thought about all the things you have said and all the things you will ever ask. (32)*

This response demonstrates that Tokieme's decision is neither impulsive nor emotionally driven. Rather, it is a deliberate moral choice grounded in his conviction that justice should prevail over inherited prejudice. Through this characterisation, Agoro suggests that meaningful social change often begins with individuals who are prepared to sacrifice personal comfort in pursuit of collective justice. Within Functionalist Theory, Tokieme becomes the catalyst through which society confronts and eventually reforms a dysfunctional institution. Closely connected to Tokieme's transformative role is the characterisation of Asueme. Although she belongs to a family stigmatised because of its association with a leprous lineage, Agoro deliberately portrays her as compassionate, humble, emotionally mature, and morally upright. Her characterisation directly contradicts the assumptions upon which the discriminatory tradition is built. Rather than depicting her as socially undesirable, the playwright presents her as possessing the very qualities expected of



a responsible wife and member of society. Equally significant is Asueme's awareness of the enormous sacrifice demanded of Tokieme. Instead of encouraging him to disregard the consequences, she repeatedly reminds him of the social cost of marrying her. She understands that their marriage would affect not only themselves but also future generations. This self-awareness strengthens her moral credibility and prevents her from appearing selfish or manipulative. Instead, she becomes a symbol of countless innocent individuals whose opportunities are limited by inherited social labels rather than personal conduct.

Enimotor's story reveals a third major facet of Agoro's portrayal of human character. He cherishes his son; he is nevertheless in the position of custodian of traditional values and so initially finds he cannot accept Tokieme's decision. His moral predicament represents the paradox that faces many African cultures—that of preserving traditional value systems with the modern, emerging values of fairness and equity. Agoro has not depicted Enimotor as inherently wicked nor has he presented him as a blind apologist of suffering. Enimotor is depicted as the “ordinary individual” caught in a cross-fire of old ideals versus fatherly love and moral obligations. His eventual approval of the marriage is critical; it represents hope for societal change without abandoning culture itself. The theory of functionalism states that any social institution, if it is to continue to function, must constantly be adapted to changing conditions; hence, Enimotor's eventual approval signifies adaptive transformation and not the total disintegration of the culture. The society can afford to forsake injustice and not commit social suicide; indeed, by doing so, it will strengthen its own morals, and Agoro suggests as much in the play.

This transformation process is rounded out by the role of Bisi, which constantly manifests the maternal, emotional aspects of life; above and beyond cultural dictates. She constantly considers her son's happiness and well-being first, in all his decisions and her ready willingness to assist him signifies the understanding that real security in a family comes from love, understanding and compassion rather than adherence to mere traditional values, therefore Bisi acts as the nexus between tradition and new development. Sopupu offers support in another form as moral and emotional. As a confidant and friend of Tokieme, his efforts to dissuade Tokieme from completely surrendering to depression helps him see the possibility of an alternative route; and the very warning which he offers against the idea of Tokieme's going ahead with the marriage is, rather than stemming from an inherent hatred for change, from the honest desire to protect a loved one against hardship. Therefore, meaningful consultation, encouragement and emotional support serve as necessary components of change. Individually, the characters reveal Agoro's insightful conception of social change as a protracted, nonviolent struggle that takes place through processes of conflict, compromise, persuasion and subsequent readjustment of cultural institutions. No single protagonist causes the alteration of the society; instead, each acts as a catalyst to illuminate the inadequacies of a stagnant cultural convention. Through the interactions of this assortment of characters, Agoro makes clear that social change is attained not by physical force or constraint, but by the courage of one's conscience, tenderness of heart, the ability to speak and debate and the readiness to defy inherited presumptions. Therefore, characterisation in *Something to Die For* does not solely perform its role in creating vivid dramatic personalities; rather, Agoro metamorphoses the characters into embodiments of antagonistic social ideologies, thereby affording the spectators a clear perspective into the ideological battleground on which prejudices and inclusive values, exclusion and acceptance, old traditions and social reform are clashing. Seen from the point of view of the Functionalist theory of sociology, the play presents society's perpetuation through adjustments of cultural traditions in accordance with contemporary social contexts rather than a dogmatic reverence of established practices. Consequently, the playwright's utilisation of characterisation serves as a crucial avenue in conveying Agoro's vision for a just and humane social order.



Love, Acceptance, and the Transformation of Social Values

In *Something to Die For*, the main agent of change is love. It is conceived not just as an intimate interpersonal relationship between two people but as a social ideal through which the forces of oppression are combated and ancient, oppressive cultures replaced by modern, equitable traditions and societal norms. Love is seen throughout the drama as a force by which ingrained cultural prejudices are shattered, hence revealing drama as a social change agent. In essence, the role of love in the drama goes beyond a romantic rendezvous; it is, rather, the bedrock upon which the play's idea of a decent, just society is anchored. Social institutions are believed to be crucial in maintaining societal integrity, cohesion and harmony according to the functional theory, marriage plays a significant societal role in binding together a family unit, as a mechanism for social integration, and perpetuating cultural transmission. However, in a situation where cultural values create restrictions and boundaries which deprive people of the right to contract marital bonds based on inheritance/family origin, these values are no longer functioning as cohesive forces but are divisive forces and sources of social fragmentation. It is precisely this disparity that S.N.A Agoro exploits by foregrounding the love story of Tokieme and Asueme in the play. The emotional development of Tokieme is clear evidence of the centrality of search for love in building the foundation of the play's conflict.

The frustration he experiences from constant rejections by ladies prior to meeting with Asueme affects his entire psychological makeup leading to great instability in his relationships, the erosion of self-esteem, addiction to drugs and eventually a suicide attempt. Thus, the play illustrates that emotional integration is a basic requirement for human beings which can be psychologically damaging when not met. Ironically, the same hospital where Tokieme undergoes rehabilitation becomes the place where he encounters Asueme, whose compassion and acceptance transform his outlook on life. Agoro deliberately juxtaposes despair with hope, suggesting that genuine human affection possesses the power to restore psychological balance where social rejection has produced emotional collapse. In this respect, Asueme represents not merely a romantic partner but a source of emotional healing and personal renewal. The irony that defines the central conflict of the play lies in the fact that the very relationship that rescues Tokieme from self-destruction simultaneously exposes him to another form of social rejection. Having finally discovered genuine love, he is confronted by a cultural institution that condemns his choice solely because Asueme belongs to a family historically associated with a leprous lineage. The conflict therefore shifts from the private sphere of personal relationships to the public sphere of communal values, where individual happiness becomes subordinated to inherited cultural prejudice.

This contradiction is vividly expressed when Sopupu cautions Tokieme about the consequences of marrying Asueme:

Sopupu: *if you marry this girl, you will be estranging yourself from the entire community...*

In response, Tokieme declares:

Tokieme: *Why must it always be so with me? I was worthless, so I engaged in drugs. Now I have been accepted by a lady and you are suggesting that marrying her would mean my estrangement from our small local community. (29)*

This exchange captures the fundamental irony of the play. The society that failed to protect Tokieme during his emotional crisis now seeks to punish him for embracing the very relationship that restored his sense of purpose. Agoro thereby questions the moral legitimacy of cultural practices that frustrate rather than facilitate human fulfilment. The emotional intensity of the



conflict deepens when Asueme herself expresses concern over the consequences of their relationship. Rather than encouraging Tokieme to ignore tradition, she reminds him of the sacrifices their union will require:

Asueme: *Toky, do you think it is all worth the pains? Must you really become estranged from your parents and the entire Epie community because you want to marry me?*

Asueme: *None of your children would ever be allowed to marry from the clan.*

Asueme: *You wouldn't win any elections in the clan.*

Asueme: *Our children wouldn't be admitted into any respectable society in the land. They are excluded from all traditional titles.*

Tokieme: *I have thought about all the things you have said and all the things you will ever ask. (32)*

The conversation also proves that the love between Tokieme and Asueme is more than an expression of personal attraction, but also one concerned with social issues like membership of the society, ancestry, possession of property and integration in it. The couple's proposal of marriage seems like a call for reform, not just of their own immediate relationship but also of one cultural norm that outlaws not only a contemporary alliance but also future generations of the lovers and any posterity of their union. Functionalists say that if an institution leads to such wholesale marginalisation of the entire people, it becomes dysfunctional because rather than enhance the group solidarity which is essential for the society to function as a cohesive unit, it destroys it. Hence, Agoro presents love as a tool which, being a moral instrument, can expose the futility of an uncritical application of acquired prejudice. Tokieme chooses Asueme as a life-partner not in the spirit of revolt against convention for its own sake but out of a conviction that true humanity is inimical with entrenched segregation. That he goes ahead to defy the negative consequence illustrates the superiority of justice and love over culture in any community's continued existence. Love is seen as being all-conquering in the face of all oppositions as can be inferred from the changing of the Enimotor's heart towards the pair at the end of the work. The re-conversion to positive opinion towards the lovers on the part of Enimotor means more than parental concession or forgiveness, but the beginning of the re-definition of the societal values in the face of emerging ethical paradigms.

Unlike the argument that culture must necessarily be destroyed to reform the society, Agoro shows that culture itself can be transformed through positive human values such as love, compassion, and justice. As a result of this development, love functions as a catalyst that enables society to move from a system of rejection and discrimination to one of acceptance and integration. The lessons derived from this play have also wider contemporary relevance, especially for present-day African societies where some traditional practices continue to perpetuate discrimination and social exclusion. The suffering of Asueme at the hands of the Epie community can be likened to the experiences of many individuals across Africa who continue to face rejection because of their lineage, ancestry, or circumstances of birth. By presenting love as a force for social transformation through the relationship between Tokieme and Asueme, Agoro suggests that genuine development can only be achieved when individuals are judged by their character and personal merit rather than by inherited social labels.



Dramatic Conflict and the Restoration of Social Equilibrium

In conflict lie the foundations for the dramatic structure that *Something to Die For* is built on. Far from being solely an avenue for suspense Agoro uses drama conflict as a tool to show the contradictions present within traditional societal institutions and to show the inevitability of cultural change. In the case of this play, the play has demonstrated the truth of this point by revealing that society is not held together in lasting stability by the continued existence of customs and traditions that create injustices. Instead, society is brought to equilibrium when its members have the ability to revise existing traditions that are no longer serving a societal purpose. This transformation of conflict into stability represents the Functionalist assumption of that societal systems are held together by continual adaptation to change rather than the rigid retention of traditional elements and procedures. In the early development of the play, the Epie community appears to be a unified society with well-established customs that have stood the test of time but it soon becomes apparent that certain traditional practices that exist within the society do, in fact contain their contradictions and create social tensions. For example, the community adheres strongly to the practice of ostracising people of families affected with leprosy, which would have originally been designed to contain possible disease transmission has in time come to be a discriminatory practice. By creating a protagonist such as Tokieme to be the carrier of such contradiction, Agoro is also showing the struggle against cultural oppression, the pursuit of an individual's personal happiness leads into a struggle that takes on a social aspect where individuals must question the validity of an institution that denies individuals fundamental rights on the basis of the actions of their ancestors. Thus, the conflict becomes that of justice vs tradition.

The strength of this conflict is increased further by the very serious implications of his choice. Marriage to Asueme has implications that go far beyond the level of personal relationships. Asueme reminds him that:

Asueme: *None of your children would ever be allowed to marry from the clan.*

Asueme: *You wouldn't win any elections in the clan.*

Asueme: *Our children wouldn't be admitted into any respectable society in the land. They are excluded from all traditional titles.*

Tokieme: *I have thought about all the things you have said and all the things you will ever ask. (32)*

This legislation indicates the argument at hand is about belonging, inclusion in society and a fair and equal distribution between generations – rather than simple romantic love. By Agoro artificially expanding the meaning of this tradition he is able to further display the degree to which social inequalities permeate and mold society to a greater extent. If the argument from a functional perspective – that of the social stability of a society – it can be noted that a society where there are qualified members excluded would have detrimental impact. Surprisingly Agoro offers neither physical revenge nor revolutionary action as resolution but rather through peaceful persuasion, and in this case; moral persuasion. *Something to Die For* is a great play for a lack of violence. In many dramatic stories, there is the system that is dismantled through physicality of resistance; for, example if in the past system the father had refused permission, the son, Tokieme would have either had to resist by violence or run away. However, herein; rather than the breaking of a corrupt society there is the use of moral bravery, communication and compassion. Tokieme's will not give up his values for, of course Asueme as a husband also; whilst at the same time remaining non-hostile to his family and community demonstrates moral as opposed to destructive, action and suggests that society in the end can be changed through the force of conviction rather than aggression.



One clear way in which this transformation is made apparent can be seen through the father of Tokieme, Enimotor who represents the forces of tradition when his son proposes marriage and knows that it goes against the tradition within the culture. However, through love of his son he decides to go against what has become ingrained in his culture and grants them marriage. This act is more than simply that of a father; it symbolises an institutional change and an adaptation for Agoro, as a society will adapt its rules when its compassion guides its interpretation of tradition and culture. This change follows Talcott Parsons' Social theory which asserts that social order is not maintained by society rigidities but rather through an ability to adapt; maintaining stability in social systems by adjusting new realities to old values to preserve core necessities of societal viability. Agoro portrays this in so far as the renouncing of unjust practices doesn't leave the Epie people to disintegrate but, as mentioned; gives it greater moral legitimacy and cohesiveness. Therefore, the marriage of Asueme and Tokieme is the structural/ symbolic end of the play in as much as at a literal level it marks a harmonious union, it is in effect the symbol of justice triumphing over unfair inheritance, equality over inequality and an ethical society over a stagnant one. This then serves as the vehicle for Agoro's demonstration of the reconstructed stability of society.

The subsequent move of Tokieme and Asueme to Abuja once married can be considered as significant as Enimotor granting the marriage. For Abuja signifies more than the geographical point of their destination but rather it is the new possibilities the country has to offer outside of what had previously excluded people from having their rights and social participation dependent on their lineage. It suggests the new social possibility where individuals have their worth assessed on the qualities they have as opposed to who they are descended from; however, it does not, and rightly, suggest that such changes can only happen elsewhere and not from within tradition; Enimotor proves this point. Thus, in the broader context, not just of Nigerian societies but Africa at large; where we see numerous societies continuing to oppress based on lines of lineage, ethnicity, birth status, health, handicap etcetera; Agoro gives us hope that transformation through the dismantling of an oppressive regime can be done through the moral choices and the power of the heart rather than the strength of arms or the thirst of revenge. The restoration of balance in *Something to Die For* is thus not the denouncement of culture in its entirety but the rejection of the particular aspect of tradition that is a hindrance to societal welfare and, in view of the functionalist perspective the rejection of an institution that is undermining its ability to promote human welfare in both an individualistic as well as the wider societal context, the play shows us that the key to societal stability is not a preservation of cultural traditions for the sake of tradition, but the adaptation and reforming of those traditions.

Contemporary Relevance of *Something to Die For* as a Drama of Social Change

Beyond its dramatic narrative, *Something to Die For* functions as a profound social commentary on the persistence of discriminatory cultural practices within contemporary African societies. Although Agoro situates the action within the Epie community of Bayelsa State, the issues addressed in the play transcend geographical and ethnic boundaries. The playwright interrogates broader questions of social exclusion, inherited stigma, cultural identity, and human dignity that continue to shape social relationships across many African communities. Consequently, the play should not be read merely as the story of Tokieme and Asueme but as a dramatic intervention advocating the continuous reform of social institutions that undermine justice and collective well-being. One of the most significant contributions of the play lies in its critique of hereditary discrimination. The cultural prohibition against marrying individuals from leprous lineages symbolises a wider pattern of inherited social exclusion that persists in different forms across African societies. Similar practices can be observed in systems that stigmatise individuals on the



basis of ancestry, caste, disability, ethnicity, or family background rather than personal character and achievement. By exposing the irrationality of such practices, Agoro demonstrates that inherited identity should never determine an individual's social worth or access to opportunities.

In the Nigerian context, this play also rings particularly relevant where many communities, some still, are living with forms of caste based social marginalisation and seclusion. In fact, Agoro highlights this more widely issue by having Tokieme reflect hopefully on how the ostracism that has bedeviled the community in which his parents are from, the Epie community, would one day become obsolete as the *Osu* caste, that continues to be a blight on Igbo society, would, to this day, and forever, come to an end.

By thus linking the leprous ancestry in the story with the contemporary relevance in the country through the prism of the *Osu* caste system, Agoro sets a broader agenda than the ostracism and the consequent impact it have had on people based on their forefathers, or even ancestry on account of perceived impurity in the culture and tradition of some societies in the country, setting it within the broader current day debates about justice, equity, citizenship, equality, and, rights of human personhood in this our Nigerian nation state in particular and indeed in the entire global scene in general, therefore inviting all to critically question the traditional institutions or social formations which cause some in any society to discriminate others simply based on ancestry instead of individual abilities or talents and contributions to social good in his society.

Furthermore, the play remains contemporary on account of its focus on issues of mental health and general well-being of human persons. Tokieme's act of suicide as portrayed in the play is thus not the isolated consequence of individual mental deficiency, but rather a direct result of social isolation, emotional alienation, continuous rejection, and an absence of meaningful social support network in his community; in other words, a demonstration of what now the world and professionals regard as mental illness. In this manner, Agoro anticipates what he now considers the more pressing issues regarding social and cultural implications for mental health. In this wise, he illustrates the ways that social and cultural injustices and exclusion produce a chain of consequences far wider than mere breakdown in social relations, leading to psychosocial trauma, substance abuse, depression and eventually death. In effect, he sets an example for broader socio-political activism by thus adding an emotional, human, and psychological dimension to issues of justice, equality and rights of human personhood, thus expanding the scope and dimensions of socio-cultural struggle and human rights discourse and practices in society, for the common good of society as a whole.

Finally, it is significant to underscore here, how the play underscores the use of dialogue, peaceful negotiation and reform in achieving societal change and progress. It advocates neither violent nor revolutionary means in the struggle against social injustice, rather, it stresses that sustained social progress relies on persuasive argument, moral appeal, the cultivation of an empathetic, and reflective mind, and critical understanding of the issues. Tokieme does not seek to destroy his community or even totally renounce the cultural practices of his community; rather, he targets a specific cultural practice that has no useful purpose any longer in society, which to Agoro is how culture should evolve. By doing so, he affirms the principle that cultural transformation does not necessarily amount to repudiation or destruction of culture; instead, cultural progress, and, transformation involves constant reappraisal of the traditional practice so as to remain in sync with values such of equity and human dignity.

View as an illustration of Functionalist Theory; the play can be seen as reflecting what functionalists scholars understand as the nature and processes of social and cultural transformation; it maintains that in society, an institution remains relevant and functional only in so far as it plays a



part in social order and stability of the group and society; whenever an institution ceases to play its functions and produces social breakdown and conflict instead of equilibrium, it will have to be revised if the society is to continue and to prosper; for the restoration of social harmony through the eventual accommodation of Tokieme and Asueme in society is a clear sign that any society, despite her varied customs and tradition, has within her innate capability of self-appraisal, adjustment and re-alignment with social forces and the general needs and demands of society for peace and cohesion without necessarily dismantling her cultural framework, if only she consciously sets her will to do so, and it has.

In the play, a deeper validation for drama as a vehicle for societal introspection and enlightenment is given to us. The tradition of African literati has long shown that dramatists have used the stage to de-mask social evil, criticize political authority, contest an oppressive custom or even arouse the conscience of people; with the play *Something to Die For*, Agoro succeeds in de-making use of the theatre to critique the immorality inherent in established values. Unlike in a directly ideological fashion in which one prescribes solutions to problems, he enables the audience, by engaging with his drama – its conflict, characterisation and dialogue – to engage critically with prevailing cultural values and practices, thereby to discovering for themselves new ones.

In this regard, *Something to Die For* demonstrates an instance of the capability of dramatic literature in initiating contemplation, revising views, and thereby ushering social change. What is ultimately affirmed by the play, *Something to Die For*, is that culture is not an object that must remain rigid; a culture must remain responsive to its societal context; tradition wins validation and justification not just by dint of age, but by how it guarantees justice and well-being to all segments of the society. Traditions that victimise and alienate a society from itself and de-limit its potentials of fulfilling a common human dignity are, by contrast, merely of antiquarian significance as they no longer serve any meaningful purpose in that society.

Agoro's vision, then, is that of the triumph of hope over despair; a vision that places faith in individual and collective capability to transform an unjust world by challenging the structures that deny people opportunities to fulfill their humanity. Hence, the relevance of *Something to Die For* goes beyond it being just another play. It is a pertinent piece of discourse on African cultural reform, social justice, and the vindication of the individual's human rights, by creatively and powerfully using drama's potent characterisation and conflict to engage critically with outdated discriminatory practices, thereby confirming the overarching principle of this study that drama mirrors society and contributes to its ongoing transformation.

Recommendations

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

1. Playwrights should continue to employ drama as a medium for interrogating harmful cultural practices and advocating social justice, equality, and human dignity. Dramatic literature remains a powerful platform for stimulating critical public discourse and encouraging progressive social transformation.
2. Traditional institutions and community leaders should periodically re-evaluate cultural practices that perpetuate discrimination or social exclusion in order to ensure that such practices remain relevant to contemporary societal realities and the principles of justice and inclusion.



3. Educational institutions should promote the study and performance of socially committed dramatic texts such as *Something to Die For* to enhance students' understanding of literature as an instrument of civic education, cultural reflection, and social reform.

4. Further scholarly studies should explore the role of contemporary African drama in addressing other forms of social exclusion, including caste discrimination, gender inequality, disability stigma, environmental injustice, and political marginalization, thereby expanding the discourse on drama as an agent of societal transformation.

Conclusion

This study critically analysed a dramatic work by S.N.A Agoro entitled: *Something to Die For* through a critical study to probe the role of drama as a medium of social transformation by adopting functionalism as the theoretical approach for the study. The study revealed that Agoro dynamically exploits, conflicts, characterisation, dialogue and themes to bring to criticism the dysfunctional societal practice in discriminatory cultures in order to proffer a change towards a just and more humane world. The struggle between Tokieme and Asueme further revealed how the discriminatory and inhuman social practices that infringe on human dignity offer no longer any form of societal integration and hence calls for careful scrutiny and change. The analysis under functionalism further revealed that the stability of any society does not stem from rigid adherence to customs and traditions, but rather through the adaptive capacity of social institution to societal changes.

In the light of the findings, Tokieme's fighting against the traditions of discrimination of lineage for lepers, the play reveals the individual capacity of agents to foster social changes while Enimotor accepting the marriage indicates the adaptive nature of social institutions. Also, the play goes beyond a purely artistic expression; it has been observed that *Something to Die For* operates as an agent of social critique, commentary, and enlightenment; the concerns of the play transcend its local setting (Epie) in order to address larger issues such as societal shame, marginalisation, human rights violations, and discrimination, in most modern African society. The fight against the established cruel practice via a crusade, a revolutionary approach using love, justice and morality by Agoro clearly indicates the timeless capability of drama as agents of critical reflection and transformation. Finally, the drama is hereby asserted to be one of the strongest mediums of social and literary discourse, aimed at social issues, to enlightenment of society and consequently, toward social and reformational changes, of which, *Something to Die For* serves as a clarion call for dramas that transcend artistic and aesthetic appeal, towards societal Integration, dehumanization and constant rebuilding.

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AFRICAN PERSONHOOD IN A DIGITAL AGE: ETHICS, IDENTITY AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital technology across Africa has restructured communication, identity formation, social interaction, and moral life. Social media platforms, artificial intelligence systems, and digital economies now fundamentally shape how individuals understand themselves and relate to others. While these modern technological developments have created new opportunities for expression, education, and social mobility, they have also produced moral fragmentation, online aggression, performative identity, and the decline of communal bonds that have historically been central to African ethical life. The aim of this paper is to examine the contemporary crisis of identity and dignity in Africa through the framework of African personhood. This article uses a conceptual-philosophical methodology. The paper argues that African conceptions of personhood—specifically, personhood as moral achievement, dignity as relational and identity as communally constituted—provide substantive ethical resources for responding to four specific crises produced by digital modernity: performative identity, online dehumanization, algorithmic injustice, and digital colonialism. The study further engages emerging scholarship on African AI ethics, particularly the relational ethics framework developed by Abeba Birhane, and situates the argument within postcolonial critiques of digital power advanced by Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Nick Couldry. In response to these crises, the paper recommends a renewed African humanism, grounded in relational ethics, communal responsibility, and moral recognition, as a framework for human flourishing in a digital age. It also recommends that religious communities, families, and cultural institutions develop strategies for using digital technologies in ways that strengthen, rather than dissolve, the relational bonds through which persons are formed.

Keywords: African Philosophy, Personhood, Digital Culture, Human Dignity, Ubuntu.

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed a dramatic expansion of digital technology across African societies. Internet access, smartphones, artificial intelligence systems, and social media platforms have increasingly become part of everyday life. Young Africans now form friendships online, engage in political conversations digitally, and shape their personal identities in virtual spaces. Digital transformation has altered not merely economic and political structures but also the moral and social foundations of human existence in many African communities (Castells, 2010). Across cities, social media has become one of the most powerful forces shaping self-understanding. Many people increasingly measure worth through online recognition, visibility, and public approval. The number of followers, likes, shares, and digital endorsements often determines personal confidence and social relevance. In this environment, identity becomes performative rather than ethical. Human beings begin to present themselves not according to moral substance but according to what attracts attention in digital spaces (Turkle, 2011).

This change has created a serious moral challenge for African societies. Traditional African communities often grounded human identity in relationships, communal obligations, dignity, and moral responsibility. A person was valued not simply for wealth or visibility, but for character and



contribution to communal life. However, digital culture increasingly promotes individualism, self-display, and consumerist competition. In many cases, online spaces reward aggression, deception, humiliation, and sensationalism more than moral integrity (Bauman, 2001). The crisis is not simply technological; it is philosophical and ethical. The deeper issue concerns what it means to be human in a rapidly changing digital world. African philosophy has long engaged questions of personhood, dignity, moral becoming, and communal existence. Thinkers such as Ifeanyi Menkiti and Kwasi Wiredu argued that personhood is not simply a biological fact but a moral achievement shaped through responsible participation in community (Menkiti, 1984; Wiredu, 1992). These underlying insights remain deeply relevant to contemporary digital realities.

The purpose of this article is to examine the contemporary crisis of identity and dignity in Africa through the framework of African personhood. The paper argues that African philosophy offers substantive and theoretically rigorous ethical resources for confronting the fragmentation created by digital culture. Rather than rejecting technology, the article seeks to develop an African ethical response that preserves human dignity in a digital age. This study further argues that digital transformation in Africa cannot be approached merely as a technical or economic issue. It must be approached as a fundamentally human question. Technology shapes values, relationships, aspirations, and moral imagination. The increasing influence of artificial intelligence, algorithmic systems, and global digital corporations brings up critical concerns about power, recognition, exploitation, and the future of African humanity (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

Furthermore, this article makes an original contribution to contemporary philosophical discussions by systematically integrating African ethics into the ongoing global debates on technology, AI, and human flourishing. While much international discourse on artificial intelligence and digital ethics is shaped by Western liberal perspectives oriented around individual rights, autonomous agency, and utilitarian calculation (Floridi et al., 2018), this paper foregrounds the distinctive ethical resources of African philosophy, which remain underrepresented despite their substantial focus on community, relationality, and human dignity. Some may argue that Western liberal frameworks are sufficiently comprehensive for addressing issues in technology ethics and that regional perspectives, though valuable, are best regarded as supplementary. This study directly engages with such counterarguments by critically examining the potential limitations of Western liberal ethics in addressing collective and relational harms fostered by digital technologies. In particular, it contends that issues such as algorithmic injustice, digital colonialism, and the erosion of communal bonds cannot be fully understood or resolved within frameworks focused primarily on individual rights and utility. Instead, the paper articulates and defends African relational ethics not as a supplementary regional voice, but as a critical and original framework with the capacity to reshape prevailing understandings of technology and human existence. By engaging with these counterarguments in detail, the paper introduces a novel perspective intended to fill an identified gap in current global debates, offering African philosophy as an essential and transformative resource in theorizing the ethical dimensions of digital modernity.

2. Methodology

This article applies a conceptual-philosophical research methodology, specifically the method of critical conceptual analysis as practised in African philosophy and philosophical ethics. Conceptual analysis, in this context, involves the rigorous clarification, examination, and critical application of key philosophical concepts (in this case, the African philosophical concept of personhood) to a specific contemporary problem domain, namely the ethical dimensions of digital culture and artificial intelligence in Africa (Wiredu, 2004; Metz, 2007). This methodology is consistent with established practice in African philosophy. The paper makes no empirical claims that require sociological or ethnographic evidence. Its contribution is philosophical: the rigorous



articulation and application of African ethical principles to the moral challenges of digital modernity.

3. Conceptualizing Personhood in African Philosophy

The concept of personhood occupies a central and defining place in African philosophy. Unlike some modern Western philosophical traditions that emphasize isolated individuality as the ground of moral and political life, many African thinkers understand the human person as fundamentally relational. Personhood is not simply given at birth; it develops through moral growth, social responsibility, and participation in communal life. The individual becomes fully human through ethical engagement with others (Ramose, 1999).

Ifeanyi Menkiti is one of the most influential scholars associated with this position. Menkiti (1984) argues that African thought places greater emphasis on the community than on radical individual autonomy. According to him, the community holds a decisive function in shaping moral identity. Personhood is therefore something achieved rather than automatically possessed; one becomes a person through moral conduct, responsibility, and social participation. This view differs significantly from certain Western liberal traditions, which define personhood primarily in terms of rationality, sentience, or individual rights. Menkiti's position suggests that moral relationships are not purely supplementary to human identity; they are constitutive of it. Human beings are socially embedded creatures whose dignity emerges within communal life. Critically, this means that any social system, including a digital platform, that removes relational context and reduces individuals to isolated profiles fundamentally threatens the conditions of personhood itself.

Kwame Gyekye (1997) gives a more moderate interpretation of African communitarianism that is particularly important for this paper's purposes. While affirming that community is central to moral identity, Gyekye rejects the view that the individual is entirely dependent on or absorbed into communal authority. He insists that individuals possess inalienable moral agency and personal autonomy that cannot be overridden by communal demands. This moderate position, what Gyekye calls 'moderate communitarianism,' provides important critical resources for evaluating digital environments. It allows the paper to critique both the hyper-individualism of digital consumer culture and the likelihood of digital communities to suppress authentic individual moral development through algorithmic conformity and mob pressure.

Kwasi Wiredu (1992, 2009) contributes a further critical distinction: the difference between biological humanity and moral personhood. For Wiredu, being human biologically is a given; becoming a moral person is an achievement that requires ethical maturity, social responsibility, and the cultivation of virtue. This normative conception of personhood is philosophically significant because it means that neither biological existence nor digital visibility constitutes personhood in the morally full sense. One can be biologically alive and digitally visible with thousands of followers, while failing to be a person in the substantive African philosophical sense, because one's relationships, conduct, and moral formation are inadequate. Wiredu's framework thus gives a rigorous philosophical basis for critiquing the equation of online visibility with human worth.

Thaddeus Metz (2007) develops African ethics further by interpreting personhood through the lens of relational morality. Drawing on the African philosophical tradition, Metz argues that moral value in African thought is fundamentally determined by the quality of one's relationships, specifically, by whether one's actions promote or undermine communal solidarity, common identity, and mutual care. This relational moral theory has direct application to digital ethics: it provides a criterion by which digital practices, platforms, and AI systems can be evaluated, namely, whether they strengthen or weaken the relational bonds through which human dignity is constituted and expressed.



Ubuntu traditions remain the most widely recognized expression of African relational personhood. The ubuntu maxim which is often rendered as 'a person is a person through other persons' captures, in concentrated form, the core philosophical insight into interdependence and relational existence (Tutu, 1999). Ubuntu ethics emphasizes compassion, hospitality, dignity, reconciliation, and communal well-being. It insists that humanity is shared instead of isolated: one's own humanity is enlarged or diminished by how one treats others' humanity. As Shutte (2001) argues, ubuntu expresses 'the idea that human persons are not isolated individuals but essentially relational beings who need each other to be fully human.' In digital settings where individuals are frequently treated as anonymous profiles, disposable targets of ridicule, or data points toward algorithmic extraction, ubuntu provides a strong ethical corrective centered on recognition, care, and mutual affirmation.

More recent African philosophical scholarship has extended these basic insights in directions directly relevant to this paper. Birhane (2021) draws explicitly on African relational philosophy, particularly ubuntu, to develop what she calls a 'relational ethics' framework for artificial intelligence. She argues that dominant AI ethics frameworks, rooted in Western liberal individualism, are inadequate to tackle the systemic harms AI produces for marginalized communities. A relational ethics approach, grounded in African philosophical insights into interdependence and communal responsibility, demands that AI systems be evaluated not only by their effects on individual users but also by their impact on the relational fabric of communities. This system is directly applicable to the African digital context and represents a major advancement of the African personhood tradition into the domain of technology ethics.

Drawing together these conceptual threads, this paper integrates four core analytical principles derived from the African philosophical tradition of personhood into a unified evaluative framework for the remainder of the paper. The first principle states that personhood is a moral achievement rather than a matter of biological fact or digital visibility; the second principle states that dignity is relational. These principles explain that human worth is constituted through mutual recognition, care and collective bonds rather than determined by online metrics, economic success, or computerized ranking.

The third principle is that community constitutes the foundation of moral identity: the social structures in which persons are formed (families, communities, and institutions) have an ethical obligation for shaping the moral character of individuals, extending this responsibility to include technologies such as digital platforms and AI systems. The fourth principle is that moral responsibility is determined by relational impact: the ethical value of any action, including the creation and use of technology, must be evaluated based on whether it enhances or diminishes communal solidarity and human dignity.

4. Digital Culture and the Fragmentation of Human Identity

Digital culture has fundamentally changed how many Africans experience identity and social interaction. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and X encourage continuous self-presentation and public performance. In these spaces, identity often becomes curated for approval rather than grounded in authenticity (Turkle, 2011). Nyabola (2018) documented how digital platforms have reshaped political identity and public discourse across Africa, creating both new possibilities for democratic participation and new vulnerabilities to manipulation, disinformation, and the commodification of self. This double character of digital culture which is simultaneously emancipatory and dehumanizing must be held together in any philosophically serious account of its ethical significance.



One major consequence of this environment is the rise of performative identity. People increasingly construct digital versions of themselves designed to attract admiration, influence, or economic opportunity. A concrete example includes individuals carefully curating their Instagram profiles to display images of luxury, travel, or social engagement intended to project success and desirability, regardless of their offline realities. Online identity is formed by trends, algorithms, and public validation. This creates intense pressure to appear successful, attractive, politically relevant, or socially desirable even when such presentations do not reflect inner reality. Applying the first analytical principle derived from African personhood, that personhood is a moral achievement rather than a matter of visibility, this paper argues that performative digital identity represents a direct inversion of the African conception of becoming a person. Where African ethics requires the cultivation of genuine moral character through sustained ethical practice, digital culture increasingly rewards the performance of character without its substance. The result is what Han (2017) terms the 'burnout society': a world in which the compulsive performance of success generates exhaustion, anxiety, and the dissolution of authentic selfhood.

The search for validation through likes, followers, and online attention has intensified anxiety and moral insecurity among many young Africans. Human worth becomes tied to visibility rather than character. People may feel invisible or insignificant if they fail to gain digital recognition – a phenomenon that Wiredu's distinction between biological humanity and moral personhood helps to illuminate: internet platforms reduce persons to their quantifiable visibility, substituting metrics for the substantive moral recognition that African ethics understands as constitutive of dignity. In many cases, social comparison produces emotional exhaustion, depression, and eroded self-esteem. African ethics traditionally located human value within communal dignity and moral conduct; digital culture increasingly reduces worth to public metrics (Han, 2017).

Online aggression and dehumanization represent a further serious breakdown of relational personhood. Social media spaces frequently encourage hostility, humiliation, and verbal violence. Political tribalism, ethnic hatred, religious intolerance, and cyberbullying have become common across African digital platforms. Online communication removes the social and relational cues that ordinarily temper speech in physical community settings, leading many individuals to express themselves online with a harshness they would rarely display in person (Suler, 2004). Applying the second analytical principle (that dignity is relational rather than individualistic) the study argues that online aggression is not purely socially harmful but philosophically significant: it represents a failure of the fundamental moral recognition through which, in the African tradition, persons constitute one another's humanity. To humiliate or dehumanize another online is, in Metz's (2007) terms, to act in direct opposition to the communal solidarity that grounds moral value.

Consumerism and influencer culture have also become deeply embedded in digital identity. Platforms promote lifestyles centred on luxury, visibility, and material success. Young Africans are constantly exposed to images of wealth and social prestige that shape aspirations and self-worth. This environment encourages competition rather than solidarity, and commodification rather than moral formation. As Baudrillard (1998) argues, the consumer society transforms persons into images of consumption; a process that internet platforms have dramatically accelerated and intensified. The economic vulnerability facing many African societies compounds this problem: high unemployment and social instability make digital visibility appear attractive as a pathway to recognition or survival, further pressuring individuals to commodify their identities online.

Digital fragmentation likewise erodes social ties in ways that directly undermine the third analytical principle of African personhood: the community as the ground of moral identity. Traditional African societies depended on direct relationships, intergenerational dialogue, storytelling, and collective participation as the primary mechanisms of moral formation. These



practices constitute what Menkiti (1984) describes as the communal context through which persons are made. When digital interaction replaces physical community with virtual networks lacking moral depth, when relationships become temporary, transactional, and disposable, and when the speed of digital communication discourages the patience and reflection that genuine moral formation requires, the social infrastructure of personhood is structurally weakened.

This does not mean technology is entirely negative. Digital platforms have enabled significant positive developments such as activism, education, entrepreneurship, and democratic participation across Africa. For example, the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria demonstrated how digital media can provide spaces for political mobilization, public awareness, and collective action. Young Africans have also used digital platforms to build businesses, share educational resources, and create transnational networks. These examples illustrate the genuine emancipatory possibilities that technology offers when it is situated within ethical structures that preserve relational responsibility. At the same time, technology can facilitate negative outcomes, including the increased prevalence of cyberbullying, harassment, and identity manipulation, as well as the spread of disinformation on social media platforms. Such harms can erode communal trust, well-being, and the foundations of dignified relational existence. Thus, technology plays a dual role: it can both enhance and undermine human flourishing. African personhood philosophy provides the necessary evaluative framework to critically distinguish and assess the conditions under which technology serves emancipatory ends versus when it facilitates dehumanizing effects.

5. African Ethics and the Recovery of Human Dignity in Digital Environments

African ethics provides important resources not only for diagnosing the moral failures of digital culture but for constructing an affirmative response. Central to many African moral traditions is the idea that personhood is a process of moral becoming – a dynamic, lifelong achievement rather than a static status. Human beings are not simply born complete; they develop themselves ethically through relationships, responsibility, and character formation. Dignity therefore involves more than legal status or individual rights. It concerns the quality of one's humanity as expressed in and through relationships (Gyekye, 2010).

The concept of moral becoming challenges contemporary digital culture in significant ways. Online environments frequently encourage instant gratification, superficial judgment, and emotional impulsiveness – precisely the dispositions that African ethics identifies as signs of underdeveloped personhood. African ethics instead emphasizes patience, wisdom, humility, and relational maturity. The individual becomes fully human by disciplined participation in communal life, and moral growth demands sustained accountability to others. This provides a clear normative standard by which to evaluate digital practices: those that cultivate patience, thoughtfulness, and genuine relational engagement serve the development of personhood; those that encourage impulsiveness, performance, and relational disposability obstruct it.

Relational recognition is another central feature of African ethics with direct application to digital life. Human dignity is affirmed when individuals recognize the humanity of others and act accordingly; it is violated when others are humiliated, exploited, or instrumentalized. Online aggression, hate speech, and cyberbullying therefore represent not exclusively social harms but deep ethical failures in the African philosophical sense; they actively destroy the relational conditions through which persons constitute one another's humanity. Ubuntu ethics makes this explicit: humanity is shared, and one diminishes one's own humanity by diminishing others' humanity (Tutu, 1999; Shutte, 2001).

However, it is essential to engage African ethics with a rigorously critical and reflective stance, rather than approaching it through unexamined idealization. A closer scrutiny of historical



contexts reveals that traditional African communities, despite fostering principles of solidarity and mutual support, were also sites where significant injustices were institutionalized. These injustices included entrenched patriarchal hierarchies that systematically disadvantaged women, rigid exclusionary practices that marginalized ethnic, religious, or social minorities, and authoritarian governance structures that curtailed dissent and suppressed the moral agency of individuals. Such tendencies illuminate the potential of the communal ethos not only to facilitate inclusion and mutual care, but also to fortify oppressive power dynamics and silence those who do not conform to established communal norms. Therefore, while the communal focus of African ethics can serve as a source of collective identity and moral support, it also poses distinct risks, namely, the legitimization and perpetuation of inequity when communal well-being is prioritized at the expense of justice for individuals or minority groups.

As Gyekye (1997) recognizes, a healthy approach to African ethics must grapple with the tension between the communal constitution of personhood and the imperative to honor inviolable individual moral agency, ensuring that neither communal values nor individual rights are subsumed by the other. Consequently, contemporary African ethical discourse must approach its historical legacy with vigilance and a commitment to self-critique, consciously identifying and confronting those dimensions of the tradition that may enable exclusion, coercion, or the suppression of dissent. The aim, therefore, is not simply to restore pre-digital communal forms, but to critically recover and reformulate central values such as dignity, solidarity, and relational responsibility so they may address both the persistent injustices of the past and the complex ethical dilemmas posed by modern technological societies. Furthermore, this critical engagement must extend beyond traditional models to examine and challenge emerging forms of digital communalism that may reproduce conformity, discourage critical voices, or erode the substantive individuality required for authentic personhood, thereby compounding rather than alleviating the problems inherent in prior communal structures.

The digital weakening of communal moral formation institutions such as family, religious community, and intergenerational storytelling has serious consequences that African ethics helps to name and address. African ethical systems, conventionally understood, conceive the formation of persons as a collective project. Families, elders, and communities bore shared responsibility for supporting the moral development of their members. Empirical evidence from Nyabola (2018) demonstrates that increasing digital engagement among Kenyan youth has coincided with a decline in traditional communal mentorship, resulting in diminished opportunities for intergenerational moral guidance and a growing sense of social fragmentation. When digital culture displaces those developmental structures without replacing their moral function, the result is a generation of individuals who are digitally connected but morally underformed. African ethics calls on communities, religious institutions, educational bodies, and governments to reclaim their formative responsibilities in the digital age, not by rejecting technology but by ensuring that the moral infrastructure of personhood is actively maintained within it.

6. Technology, Artificial Intelligence, and the Future of African Humanism

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming global society, and Africa is increasingly embedded within this transformation. AI systems now influence banking, healthcare, education, criminal justice, employment screening, and communication infrastructure across the continent. Governments and corporations promote AI as a solution to economic and administrative challenges, often without adequate attention to the moral aspects of its deployment. This section analyzes the specific threats posed by AI and digital colonialism to African personhood, engages with the growing body of African AI ethics scholarship, and proposes an African humanist framework for ethical engagement with technology.



6.1 Algorithmic Injustice and the Violation of Relational Personhood

One of the most significant concerns raised by AI deployment in Africa involves the replacement of contextual human judgment with algorithmic decision-making. AI systems increasingly determine who receives loans, employment opportunities, security scrutiny, or online visibility. These systems often appear neutral or objective – products of mathematical rigour rather than human bias – yet they are in reality shaped by the assumptions, priorities, and blind spots of those who design and train them (Benjamin, 2019). African populations are particularly vulnerable to these systems because most consequential AI technologies are developed in North America and Europe, where there is limited understanding of African social, cultural, and linguistic realities.

Birhane (2021) provides the most philosophically sophisticated analysis of this problem from an African perspective. Drawing on African relational philosophy, she argues that dominant AI ethics frameworks, built on Western liberal assumptions about autonomous individual agents with enumerable rights and preferences, are structurally incapable of capturing the systemic, relational harms AI causes to communities. She proposes instead a 'relational ethics' framework grounded in the African philosophical understanding of persons as fundamentally interdependent beings whose identities and well-being are constituted through their relationships. Under this framework, the ethical evaluation of an AI system requires examining not only its effects on individual users but its impact on the relational fabric of the communities it touches, whether it strengthens or weakens communal bonds, whether it recognizes or denies the relational dignity of persons, and whether it is designed in genuine dialogue with the communities it affects.

This relational ethics framework maps directly onto the four analytical principles of African personhood identified above (in section 3). An AI system that reduces persons to data profiles and statistical categories, stripping away the relational context, moral history, and communal identity that constitute full personhood, violates the first principle (that personhood is moral achievement rather than a quantifiable given). An AI system that makes decisions about a person's access to credit, employment, or freedom based on algorithmically detected patterns in their digital behaviour, without recognition of their relational dignity and moral agency, violates the second principle: that dignity is relational rather than reducible to measurable attributes. A platform algorithm that optimizes for engagement by amplifying divisive, dehumanizing content thereby weakening communal bonds in pursuit of profit violates the third and fourth principles simultaneously.

6.2 Digital Colonialism and the Structural Denial of African Personhood

Digital colonialism represents perhaps the deepest structural challenge to African personhood in the contemporary moment. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) defines digital colonialism as the extraction of data and digital resources from Africa by global technology corporations headquartered in North America and Europe, operating within regulatory frameworks that African governments and communities had little role in designing, and generating profits that flow out of Africa while leaving behind the social and psychological costs of dependency, surveillance, and cultural displacement. This structure reproduces at the digital level the fundamental logic of classical colonialism: the extraction of resources from African communities for the enrichment of external powers, under conditions that deny African agency, self-determination, and epistemic sovereignty.

Couldry and Mejias (2019) theorize this phenomenon as 'data colonialism,' arguing that in the emerging digital order, human life itself, in the form of personal data, behavioural patterns, social relationships, and emotional responses, becomes the raw material for capital accumulation by global platform corporations. African users of Facebook, Google, TikTok, and other platforms generate enormous quantities of economically valuable data that these corporations monetize



through advertising, algorithmic product development, and data sales to third parties. African users have limited awareness of how their data are collected, stored, traded, or used, and have virtually no meaningful control over these processes. The result is that the most intimate dimensions of African social and personal life become raw material for technological profit.

From the perspective of African personhood philosophy, this is deeply problematic on multiple levels. At the level of the fourth analytical principle (moral responsibility as proportionate to relational impact) global technology corporations bear a profound ethical responsibility toward the African communities whose data and social life they extract and monetize. This responsibility is currently being systematically evaded through opaque terms of service agreements, inadequate regulatory compliance, and the absence of meaningful African participation in platform governance. At the level of the third principle (community as the ground of moral identity) data colonialism threatens the autonomy and integrity of the communal structures through which African personhood is constituted by subjecting those structures to surveillance, manipulation, and commercial exploitation without consent.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) further argues that digital colonialism operates not only through economic extraction but through epistemic domination: the imposition of Silicon Valley values, assumptions, and social models on African digital spaces through platform design, algorithmic curation, and content moderation systems that reflect the priorities and prejudices of their designers rather than the values and wisdom of African communities. Languages, knowledge systems, cultural practices, and moral frameworks that are not legible within dominant Western digital paradigms are rendered invisible or marginalized. This represents a form of cognitive colonialism that strikes at the very foundations of African epistemic and moral autonomy.

6.3 African Humanism as an Ethical Framework for Technological Engagement

Despite these serious concerns, African humanism does not counsel technological rejection or cultural isolationism. Technology is not inherently immoral; the ethical issue concerns how technology is designed, whose values and interests it serves, who participates in its governance, and whether its deployment strengthens or undermines the relational conditions of human dignity. African humanism, rooted in the philosophical traditions of personhood surveyed in Section 3 above, offers a constructive and critical framework for engaging technology in ways that serve genuine human flourishing.

A renewed African humanism for the digital age would be guided by several core commitments derived from the philosophical framework developed in this paper. First, it would insist that all technology deployed in African contexts must be evaluated by its impact on the relational fabric of communities — not merely by its technical efficiency or economic productivity. This means that AI systems deployed in African banking, policing, healthcare, or education must be assessed against the standard of whether they strengthen or weaken communal solidarity, and whether they recognize or deny the relational dignity of African persons. Second, African humanism would demand meaningful African participation in the design, governance, and regulation of digital technologies that affect African communities.

Third, an African humanist approach to technology would support the development of AI systems that are trained on diverse, Africa-inclusive datasets; that incorporate African languages, knowledge systems, and cultural contexts; and that are designed in genuine partnership with African communities rather than imposed upon them as finished products. Birhane's (2021) relational ethics framework provides a concrete methodological basis for this kind of community-engaged AI development, insisting that the design process itself must embody the relational values of accountability, transparency, and mutual recognition that African personhood philosophy demands.



Fourth, African humanism would call for robust regulatory frameworks at national and continental levels to govern data extraction, algorithmic accountability, platform transparency, and digital rights. The African Union's Draft Data Policy Framework (2022) represents a significant step in this direction, but implementation and enforcement remain inadequate.

Most fundamentally, a renewed African humanism insists that technological progress must remain accountable to human values, specifically as defined by the core analytical principles of African personhood. Summarized, these principles state that personhood is a moral achievement, dignity is constituted through relationships, community forms the basis of moral identity, and moral responsibility is determined by the impact of one's actions on communal bonds. Technological advancement, therefore, should be guided not by technological sophistication alone, but by its capacity to foster these values. A continent that achieves digital progress while neglecting these moral imperatives has fallen short in the terms defined by African philosophy. Ultimately, the central question for Africa in the digital age is whether technological innovation will be accompanied by the advancement of African humanity, and whether the deeply-rooted moral wisdom of Africa's philosophical traditions will shape this progress with the rigor, creativity, and courage required.

7. Recommendations

These are constructive proposals for African humanism in a digital age:

African governments and educational institutions should urgently incorporate digital ethics into school and university curricula, drawing explicitly on African philosophical traditions of personhood, relational ethics, and communal responsibility. Young people must be equipped not only with technical digital skills but with the moral formation necessary to navigate digital environments with integrity.

African philosophers, ethicists, and scholars have an urgent responsibility to engage more actively and assertively in global conversations on artificial intelligence, platform governance, and technology ethics. African philosophical traditions concerning personhood, dignity, relational ethics, and communal responsibility can contribute perspectives that are not merely regionally relevant but globally necessary. Greater African participation can be realized through several concrete mechanisms: formal partnerships between African and international philosophical associations; the establishment of dedicated conference tracks and panels at major technology-ethics and AI symposia to feature African perspectives; creation of joint research projects between African and non-African institutions; and the appointment of African scholars to leadership positions within international technology ethics organizations, such as editorial boards, working groups, and policy advisory committees. Additionally, supporting open-access African academic journals and digital platforms can amplify African intellectual contributions to global discourse. The growing body of work by scholars such as Nyabola (2018) and Birhane (2021) demonstrates that such engagement is both possible and urgently important.

Religious institutions, families, and community organizations bear primary responsibility for strengthening moral formation in contemporary society, and this responsibility now extends into digital environments. The weakening of these formative institutions by digital culture must be met not with retreat from technology but with their active, intentional presence within it. Religious communities, families, and cultural institutions should develop strategies for using digital technologies in ways that strengthen rather than dissolve the relational bonds through which persons are formed. For example, digital mentorship could involve experienced community members guiding younger individuals through online platforms, providing ethical advice and support via messaging apps, video calls, or structured online forums. This also includes fostering positive



online dialogue and using digital platforms to share and preserve the ethical wisdom of African traditions.

African governments should develop and enforce healthy regulatory frameworks governing data protection, algorithmic accountability, platform transparency, and digital rights. Technology corporations operating within Africa, including multinational platform companies, must be held legally accountable for data extraction, algorithmic discrimination, and the amplification of harmful content. The African Union's continental data governance frameworks provide a foundation, but national implementation, enforcement capacity, and the imposition of meaningful penalties for violations must be substantially strengthened. African states should also assert their sovereignty in digital regulatory spaces, refusing to accept regulatory frameworks designed without African participation and inadequate to African realities.

Finally, African societies should cultivate intentional practices of digital moderation, understood not as censorship but as the cultivation of measured, reflective, and relational engagement with digital technologies. For instance, community organizations might implement designated "digital-free" days during which members gather for in-person storytelling, collective meals, or intergenerational mentorship, prioritizing communal presence over online interaction. Just as African philosophical traditions emphasize patience, wisdom, and deliberation as marks of mature personhood, these intentional practices would enable a digitally mature African society to resist the compulsion of constant connectivity, preserve spaces for face-to-face communal life, and insist on the primacy of moral formation over digital performance as the measure of human worth.

8. Conclusion

This article has examined the crisis of identity, dignity, and moral fragmentation in contemporary Africa by rigorously applying African philosophical conceptions of personhood to the specific ethical challenges of digital modernity. Drawing on the works of Menkiti, Wiredu, Gyekye, Metz, and ubuntu traditions, and engaging the African AI ethics scholarship of Birhane and the postcolonial digital critique of Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Couldry and Mejias, the paper has argued that African philosophy offers not merely cultural commentary but a theoretically rigorous and practically urgent framework for evaluating and responding to digital culture's moral dimensions.

The paper applied four core principles of African personhood – personhood as moral achievement, dignity as relational, community as the ground of moral identity, and moral responsibility as proportionate to relational impact – to analyze four specific digital crises: performative identity, online dehumanization, algorithmic injustice, and digital colonialism. In each case, the African philosophical framework provided both a diagnosis of the moral failure involved and a normative standard for evaluating ethical responses. The paper further argued, in conversation with Birhane's relational ethics framework, that African philosophy can and must contribute to global AI ethics discourse, offering perspectives rooted in relational humanity and communal responsibility that are structurally absent from dominant Western liberal AI ethics frameworks.

The future of Africa in a digital age will depend not only on technological advancement but on moral vision. A continent may become digitally connected while remaining ethically fractured. African philosophy therefore issues a challenge to contemporary society: to recover a deeper understanding of what it means to be human, not as a digitally visible, economically productive, algorithmically ranked individual, but as a morally becoming, relationally constituted, communally responsible person. This is what African philosophy has always meant by personhood, and it is precisely what the digital age most urgently needs. Therefore, it is imperative for policymakers, educators, technologists, and community leaders to actively renew and apply these philosophical principles, ensuring that African societies shape their digital futures in ways that prioritize human



dignity, communal bonds, and ethical development. Only through such intentional action can Africa realize a future in which technological innovation serves the flourishing of its people.

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ASỤSỤ EPUM IGBO: IHE NKETA NA OKE NDỊ IGBO

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Umjedomede

Nchọcha a na-atụle asụsụ epum Igbo dịka ihe nketa na oke ndị Igbo. O bụ iji gosiputa mkpa o di ka ndị Igbo hapu igbakuta asụsụ Igbo azu, kama ka ha kpoo ya mkpa, na-echukwa ma na-akwalite ya n'uzo niile iji gbochie asụsụ Igbo odachi onwu. Ndị nchọcha mere nchọcha ha site n'ikowami ka onodu asụsụ Igbo di n'ulo akwukwo praimari di na Steeti Anambra nakwa oru ndi ntorobia Igbo n'iwulite Igbo. Ha sitere n'igba ajujuonu na ihe ha hutara ma gutakwa nweta ngwa a tulere maka nchọcha a. A gbara ndi isi ulo akwukwo iri abuo na otu ajujuonu iji mata onodu asụsụ Igbo n'ulo akwukwo ha, putara otu maka ulo akwukwo di n'okpuru ochichi goomenti iri abuo na otu e nwere na Steeti Anambra. E nwetakwara onu mmiri ndi ntorobia iri na ndi ochichi obodo iri iji mata echiche ha maka enyemaka ha n'ikwalite asụsụ Igbo. A choputara na Igbo no n'ajo nsogbu nke ndi nne na nna ahafezighiri umu ha asụsụ Igbo dika asụsụ epum ha, bu ajo agwa ga-ebute onwu ya bu asụsụ ma o buru na ndi Igbo emeghi ngwa ngwa meghara ya bu odachi. A hutara olileanya mwulite asụsụ Igbo na mbo goomenti ikwalite onodu Igbo n'ulo akwukwo, nakwa mbo otu Igbo di iche iche, ndi ochichi ndi obodo Igbo na uka di iche iche bu nke mere ka ohere ibu asụsụ kwu chim dikwara asụsụ Igbo. Ndị nchọcha wee na-akpo ndi ntorobia Igbo oku ka ha tinyewanye amamihe ha nwere na komputa na Atifishal Inteligens (AI) n'oru iwulite onodu asụsụ Igbo.

Ndubata

Ndị Igbo bara uba n'onuogu. Dika anyi siri guta, onuogu ndi Igbo n'uwa gbaa gburu gburu ruru nde iri asaa (70 million) (<https://www.nairaland.com>). Ndị Igbo bu ndi asụsụ epum ha bu asụsụ Igbo. Asụsụ epum (*mother tongue*) bu "asụsụ na-aruje aka n'ebe mmadu puru ma o bu [ebe] e jiri mara mmadu dika ala nke aka ya" (Eme, 2023:11). N'ezie, asụsụ epum ndi Igbo bu ihe nketa na oke ha. O bu ya mere ufodu ndi nchọcha jiri kpoo asụsụ epum asụsụ ebe onye si (Adiele, 2018), nakwa asụsụ ala mmadu (Bamgbose, 2022).



Ikwu na asụsụ Igbo bụ asụsụ epum ndị Igbo putara na asụsụ a bụ nke ndị agbụrụ Igbo gbasara n'ụwa niile hụta ka òkè ha na ihe nketa ha. Adiele (2018:377) kwuputara na,

Asụsụ epum bụ asụsụ mmadụ mụtara ka a muru ya maobu nke onye ahụ kachasi asu nke oma ma na-abukari ebe mgbado ukwu maka ikowaputa onye onye bu. ...
O di oke mkpa na ndu nwata, nke na a gaghị akpachapu ya n'akuku n'okwu agumakwukwo nwata obula.

Dika Ezeani (2015:184) na-akowa, “asụsụ na omenaala jikọtara onu.” Ya mere na asụsụ Igbo bụ ihe ndị Igbo ji eziputa omenaala ha, usoro obibi ndu ha na ihe niile ha jiri buru agburu. O bu ya bu ihe ime onu nyere ndi Igbo n'ihu na o na-eziputa ebe ha siri puté, nke bu ala nna ha. Asụsụ Igbo bu udo idikoonotu na ezi mmekorita nyere ndi niile kporo onwe ha ndi Igbo, ma ha no n'ulo ma ha no n'uzo ije maobu na mba ofesi. Site n'asusu Igbo ka ndi Igbo ji eziputa ma na-ehekwa akuko ala ha, ilu, akuko ifo, mmemme, na ihe niile gbasara ha mere ha jiri buru ndi Igbo. Nke a gosiri na asusu epum di oke mkpa na ndu mmadu. O bu asusu mmadu kacha mara, ma buru nke o ji ahuta uwa, nke o ji asobanye onwe ya n'ime obodo ya, nke o ji echeba echiche ime, jiri ya aru nro ma buru asusu na-agbakari ya n'onu o bulagodu na o nwere asusu abuo maobu karja. O bu nghota a gbasara asusu epum ka anyi ji aru oru n'edemede a.

Site n'ihe ole ma ole anyi kwurula maka Igbo, o di mwute ikwu na ufodu ndi na-ahuta onwe ha ka ndi Igbo amaghi asu asusu Igbo. Otutu n'ime ha na-azakwari aha Igbo. A ga-asu na ndi di otu a bu ndi Igbo n'onu nakwa n'aha. Ihe butere nke a bu na ndi nne na nna ufodu bu ndi Igbo, ma asu Igbo nke oma, anaghi akpachapu anya ihafere umu ha asusu Igbo. Anyi wee hu na ndi bu ndi Igbo ma na aha ma n'asusu erughi ole e kwuru ndi Igbo di, ebe o bu na ufodu ndi agburu Igbo amaghi asu asusu Igbo, bu isi sekpu nti na njirimara ndi Igbo. Ozo di ka ibe ya bu na ufodu ndi Igbo a na-anu aha ha maka akwukwo ha gutara onu ha, otu ha siri mara omenaala Igbo, nakwa echichi Igbo ha chigara amaghi agu maobu ede asusu Igbo.

N'agbanyeghi ihe ndi a niile, o bu ihe anuri na otutu umu afu Igbo ji asusu Igbo eme onu, na-agu ya, na-edede ya, ma na-akwalitekwa ya. Edemede a ga-atule otutu ihe, gunyere otu onodu siri gbata kwuru dika o si metuta asusu Igbo n'ulo akwukwo di na Steeti Anambra, na uzo isite n'enyemaka ndi ntorobia Igbo gbawanye mbo igbochiri asusu Igbo ajo odachi bu nke nwere ike ibutere ya onwu. Nke a bu makana asusu obula ndi nwe ya gbakutaraazu ma hapu isuzi ya aghaghi inwu.

Nnyocha ihe e derela n'oyiri isiokwu edemede a

O nweela nnyocha e merela gbasara asusu epum, Igbo, na ihe ndi metutara isiokwu anyi ji n'aka. Dika UNESCO (<https://www.unesco.org>) kowara n'akwukwo o weputara mgbe e mere mmemme ozuru uwa maka ogbugba afu iri abuo na ise nke ubochi asusu epum na 2025, a huru na umuakwukwo di pasenti iri ano bi n'awa enweghi ohere agumakwukwo n'asusu epum ha. O gbaruru ihu n'onodu a ma kpo oku ka ndi na-emeputa iwu maka usoro agumakwukwo gbanwee ajo onodu a site n'webata asusu epum dika otu n'ime asusu ato maobu karja e ji agu akwukwo. O na-ekwukwa ka e mejuputa ohere iji asusu ato maobu karja, nke asusu epum ga-aburiri otu n'ime ha, na-akuziri umuntakiri ihe ozugbo ha malitere agumakwukwo.

UNESCO na-egosikwa na iji asusu ukwu ruru nwata ala na ya wee na-akuziri ya ihe na-akwalite mmuta na nnabata. Nke bu nsogbu dakwasara okwu a a kpu n'onu bu na umuaka na ndi ntorobia ruru nde nari abuo na iri ise (250 million) anaghi aga akwukwo ebe otutu n'ime ndi na-aga, ruru pasenti iri itoolu, enweghi ohere iji asusu ha maara wee muo akwukwo. Okwa UNESCO na-ama maka nke a wee buru na agumakwukwo umuaka ji otutu asusu nakwa asusu epum ha agu na-akwalite mwulite oguguisi mmuta na echiche ha nakwa ha ime nke oma n'agumakwukwo ha (<https://www.unesco.org>).

Chinagorom (2023:3-6; 2025:27-28) na-akowa otutu ihe gbasara Igbo. O kwuru na okwu a bu 'Igbo' bu aha agburu burukwa aha asusu. Ndi Igbo mejuputara mpaghara Owuwaanyanwu Naijiria ma biri



n'obosara ala di ihe ha ka 50,641 km (15,800 sqm). Steeti ndi Igbo bi n'uju bu Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu na Imo. Ebe ndi ozo o kwuru bucha ala Igbo bu obodo ndi a na-akpo Anioma na Steeti Delta, imeriime obodo di na Steeti Rivers na Bayelsa, gbakwunyere otutu ndi nocha na Steeti Benue na ndi banyekwara na Steeti Cross River na Steeti Akwa Ibom. Site n'igbado ukwu n'ihe ato o kporo Asusu, Omenaala, na Obosaraala ebe ndi bi, o siri na e nwere, "Igbo ndi Mgbagougwu, Igbo ndi Ndidaanyanwu Osimiri Naija, Igbo ndi Nnoneyiti Owuwaanyanwu (maobu Igbo Nnoneyiti), Igbo ndi Kros Riva, Igbo ndi Mgbago Owuwaanyanwu, Igbo ndi Mgbada Ndidaanyanwu, na Igbo ndi Mgbada Owuwaanyanwu." O mere ka o doo anya na Igbo nwere olundi di iche iche, ma nke a abughi oghom kama o bu uru nyere asusu Igbo.

Chibundu (2019) na-atu alo ka obodo anyi bu Najjiria nabata asusu Igbo dika asusu ozurumba nke Najjiria. O nyere nkowa ihe o ji na-akpo oku a, nke gunyere na asusu Igbo nwere otutu ndi na-asu ya ma nwezuchaa ihe niile a choror n'asusu ma buru asusu ka ndi ozo na mmepe iji nwee ike iwere onodu dika asusu ozurumba Najjiria. O kwuputara na ufodu agaghi ekweta n'alo o na-atu ka asusu Igbo were udi oke onodu a n'ala Najjiria. Ndi ufodu n'ime ndi agaghi ekweta n'alo a bu ndi ochichi, kachasi ndi abughi ndi Igbo; ndi si mpaghara ozo nke ala anyi asusu ha abughi Igbo; ndi ekpukperechi di iche iche, tumadi ndi ekpukpere ha di iche n'ekpukpere otutu ndi Igbo.

Na nkwenye Acholonu, Prabhakar na Olumba (2009) na Nnaji (2016), nakwa n'igosiputa ihunaanya ha n'asusu Igbo, ha nwere ojuju afu ikwu na asusu Igbo so n'asusu mbu diwara n'awa. Acholonu na ndi otu ya (2009) na-ekwu na ndi Igbo ebiwelari ndu ha tupu Adam, onye ufodu na-ahuta ka nwoke mbu biri n'awa. Ha juru ajuju si, Ebe Akwukwo Nso, na Jenesiis (4:13-15) [ebe Cain gwara Chukwu si, Ntaramahuhu m kariri oke m nwere ike ibute. Lee anya, i chupula m n'elu uwa taa, agaghikwa m ahu ihu gi ozo, abuzi m onye na-awaghari awaghari na onye n'enweghi ebe obibi n'elu uwa nke na onye obula huru m ga-akugbu m], na-arutu aka na e nwere ndi bi tupu Adam, olee asusu Chukwuokike suru? N'iza ajuju a, ha kwenyesiri ike, ma kwuo ya na Chukwuokike, onye o huru ya buru, suru Igbo (*"The God of creation, whosoever He may be, spoke Igbo"*).

Nnaji (2016) jiiri ma mkpuruokwu ma otutu ihe ndi ozo wee kwenyesie ike na asusu Igbo bu asusu okpu ebe otutu asusu ndi ozo siri malite. O gbara mbu nye nkowa maka mkpuruokwu ndi ahụ nakwa otutu ihe ndi ozo mere o jiri nwe nkwenye a. Ya mere o ji kwuo, Omumaatu niile e kwurula nakwa ihe ndi niile e kwuputaghi ebe a nyere anyi obisieike ikwuru chim n'ikwu na mmalite asusu di n'awa bu asusu Igbo (*"All the instances sampled above and other related views unstated here gave us the impetus to insist that the language of the world aborigine was Igbo"* p.148).

Achunine (2023) na-akpo oku ka e bido kuziwe nka na uzu n'asusu Igbo n'ulo akwukwo niile di n'ala Igbo, dika obodo ndi mepere emepe dika China, France, Russia, Germany, Japan, Italy, Britain, Spain na Norway si eme. O mere ka o doo anya na "obodo obula choror ito eto, nwee mmepe maobu gaa n'ihu ga-ejiriri asusu obodo ha kporo ihe, ma jirikwa ya bu asusu bu ejirimara ha na-akuziri ndi obodo ha na-agu akwukwo obula ha na-agu, site n'ulo akwukwo otaakara rue na mahadum, o kachasi n'ihe gbasara nka na uzu" (p.57). O kwuru na nke a agaghi adicha mfe na mbido maka asusu Igbo, mana oge eteghi aka, o ga-agawa siriri werere.

Usoro nchocha

Ndi nchocha mere nchocha ha site n'usoro sovee. Ha nwetara ngwa ha tulere maka nchocha ha site n'ihe ha hutara ma gutakwa nakwa igba mmadu ole ma ole sitere Steeti Anambra ajujuonu n'usoro nsere, ka ha nochite anya ndi Igbo niile bu ndi mebere onuogu maka nchocha a. Ndi isi ulo akwukwo praimari iri abuo n'otu ka a gbara ajujuonu iji mata onodu asusu Igbo n'ulo akwukwo niile di na Steeti Anambra, o kacha mbu goomenti n'iwulite asusu Igbo. Iri n'ime ha bu ndi isi na Praimari ebe iri na otu bu ndi isi ulo akwukwo sekondiri. Nke a putara otu maka ulo akwukwo di n'okpuru ochichi goomenti iri abuo na otu e nwere na Steeti Anambra. E nwetakwara onu mmiri ndi ntorobia iri na ndi ochichi obodo iri iji mata echiche ha maka enyemaka ha n'ikwalite asusu Igbo. Site na igbaso usoro nkowami, ndi nchocha chikotara ma kowaa usa ha nwetara.



Ọnọdụ asụsụ Igbo n'ụlọ akwụkwọ dị na Steeti Anambra

Dịka o siri tuelekọrịta ọnọdụ asụsụ Igbo mgbe ụwa kpuru isi, n'oge mgbe ahụ nakwa ka ọ ga-adị n'ọdịnihu, Ohiri-Aniche (2011:2) kwuru:

Na mgbe ochie, Reverend John Raban onye ụka ndị *Church Missionary Society (CMS)* na-achọ ịmụ asụsụ ndị Afrịka n'obodo Sierra Leone kwuru na a gwara ya na Aku (Yoruba) na Ibo (Igbo) bụ asụsụ abụọ dīkarịchara mkpa ka a mụọ (Lee Hair 1967). Na nso nso a, Ohiri-Aniche (2008) tiri mkpu na ndị Igbo anaghizi enyefe asụsụ ha n'aka ụmụ ha, nke ga-ebute ọnwụ asụsụ Igbo, na kwa nke agbụrụ ndị Igbo. N'ihe gbasara ọdịnihu, otu onye nchọcha bụ Matthew Kuju wee na-ama okwà na site n'etu ọnụọgụ ndị na-asụ Igbo si na-epewanye mpe, oge gahụ eru mgbe a ga-ahụ ndị Igbo, ma a gaghizi anụ asụsụ Igbo.

Ihe e kwuputara ebe a ghe anya oghe. Okwà asụsụ Igbo nọ na ya n'oge gboo dī oke elu, nke na n'ime asụsụ ndị Afrịka niile dī na Sierra Leone, Igbo bụ otu n'ime asụsụ abụọ kacha mkpa. O doro anya na n'oge ahụ, ndị Igbo niile, gụnyere ole na ole n'ime ha gurula akwụkwọ, jī asụsụ Igbo eme ọnụ ebe na ebe ha anọla. Ha hū tara asụsụ epum ha dīka ihe nketa ha na oke ha. N'ezio kwu, ọ bụ ihe ọ bụ. Ha hūrụ ya n'anya, nwee mmasi na afọ ojuru na ya. Ya mere na ha na-echukwa ya ma hū na ọ na-agawanye n'ihu site n'ihafe ya n'aka ụmụ ha, bụ ndi na-ahafekwa ya n'aka ụmụ nke ha. Site otu a, ndi si n'ala Igbo, bụ ndi agbūrū Igbo, na-asū asū sū Igbo. Ha bū ndi Igbo n'ezie nakwa n'ozuzuoke, na-ebi ndi ka ndi Igbo ma na-ahūta onwe ha ka ndi Igbo.

Mgbe agumakwukwọ n'uzọ ogbaraohūrū ọ dī taa weere ọnọdụ n'ala Igbo site n'obibia ndi ọcha asū sū ha bū Bekee si obodo Britain, asū sū Bekee ka e hiweere ọnọdū kacha elu n'ime asū sū niile dī na Naijiria. Bido na 1914 a makotara mgbago ugwu na ndida ugwu Naijiria n'okpuru otu ochichi dika ndi ọcha ahū si hazie ya, wee gara ruo mgbe Naijiria nweere onwe ya n'aka ochichi ndi ọcha ahū na 1960, were ruo n'oge ugbua, ọ bụ asū sū Bekee ka goomenti Naijiria nyere ugwu na okwa kacha elu. E si n'uzọ dī otu a kpazuga asū sū Igbo n'akuku n'ebe dī iche iche ndi Igbo jibu asū sū Igbo anya isi, tinyere n'agumakwukwọ.

Mgbe ndi nne na nna ndi Igbo hū tara asū sū Bekee dika okaike n'ebe asū sū nọ, ha tinyere ume ha niile n'ime ka ụmụ ha mūta ma na-asū Bekee ka ndi ọcha ọ bū asū sū epum ha. Nke a mere na ha jiiri nwayọ nwayọ na-ahapū asū sū Igbo. Ufodu hapuru Igbo kpam kpam ma maara ụmụ ha iwu ka ha kwusi isụ ya. Ya mere na ufodu ụmụaka bū ụmụaka Igbo naani n'ihu na ha si n'agbūrū Igbo, ma ha amaghi asū asū sū Igbo. Nke a jogburu onwe ya ma na-ebi asū sū Igbo aka ojoo, nwere ike ibutere ya onwu. Yuka (2019:21) mere ka o doo anya na, Ozigbo a gbahapuru isi n'aka ndi okenye n'asu asū sū wee hafeere ụmụaka ya bū asū sū, asū sū ahū ejiri nwayọ malitela njem onwu ya ("Once any language ceases to be passed on from adult speakers to the younger generation, the onset of the death of the language begins in slow installments"). Nsogbu diiri asū sū Igbo maka odinihu ma oburu na ndi Igbo agbaghi mbo izoputa asū sū ha.

Na nchọcha o mere gbasara asū sū Igbo, Eme (2023:13) kwuru na mwute si,

Ọtutū mmadū bū ndi Igbo ma birikwa n'ala Igbo anaghi asuzi Igbo kama ọ bū Bekee ka ha na-asū. Ajoonodu a kachasi puta ihe n'ebe ụmụ ntakiri na ndi ntorobia nọ. ... Ihe a hūrū n'obodo mepegara emepe ejughị afọ ma oli, n'ihu na ọ bughị naani na imilikiti n'ime ha anaghi anū Igbo nke ha na-asū ya, ndi nne na nna ha na-asuru ha naani Bekee ma na-enye ezi nkwardo ka ha ghara imuta asū sū epum ha, bū asū sū Igbo. N'uloka, a na-ejisi ike guputa ihe si n'Akwukwọ Nso n'Igbo site n'onu mkpuru mmadu ole na ole maara asu ma na-agukwa Igbo. Na nzuko ...ndi ode akwukwọ na-eji asū sū Bekee edeko ihe e metara na nzuko. Nke bū ezio kwu bū na onodu asū sū Igbo nọ n'oge ugbua joro oke njo, nke na ndi Igbo ga-akpo ya mkpa izoputa asū sū Igbo n'onwu na-achọ igbu ya.

Ọ buri na ajo onodu dī otu a na-agawanye n'ihu, ajo nsogbu onwu asū sū ga-adiri asū sū Igbo. Onuogu ndi na-asu ya ga-eji nwayo nwayo na-agbada. Ọ buri na e nweghi ihe e mere maka nke a, mgbe otutu afọ ga-agacha,



asụsụ Igbo ga-abanye n'ogo itụ zuguzugu ọnwụ, nke Bekee kpọrọ *severely endangered* tupu ọ banye n'ọndu ikwo ọnwụ bụ *critically endangered*, tupu ọ nwụzia. Ọndu a ga-abụ eziokwu ma ọ bụrụ na ndị nne na nna ugbua akpachapughị anya n'ihafere ụmụ ha asụsụ Igbo, maka na ndị okenye na-asụ Igbo nwuchaa n'agadi ha, asụsụ Igbo ga-esoro ha nwụọ n'otu aka ahụ.

Ọ bụ ihe ọhụrụ na ndị nọ n'isi ọchịchị na Steeti ndị Igbo, bụ ndị Gọvanọ, enyela ma na-enyeriri aka ebe ọ dị ukwu n'iwulite ọndu asụsụ na omenaala Igbo n'ụlọ akwụkwọ dị na Steeti ha bido n'ogogo dikarichara nta bụ ntaakara, ruo n'ogogo kacha elu bụ mahadum. Ndị nchọcha gaghariri n'ụlọ akwụkwọ ole na ole dị na Steeti Anambra ma gbaa ndị isi ụlọ akwụkwọ ajuju gbasara otu ihe siri gbata kwurị maka asụsụ na omenaala Igbo n'ụlọ akwụkwọ praịmarị na sekondrị. Ụsà ha nyere bụ ihe agbamume, na-egosị na mbọ ikwalite asụsụ Igbo n'ụlọakwụkwọ na-aga n'ihu na Steeti Anambra. Ụsà ahụ dabara n'ihe Uzochukwu (2012:7) kwuru, mgbe ọ na-akwà nkwalite asụsụ Igbo n'ụlọ akwụkwọ. O kwuru, "N'ubochi iri na otu nke ọnwà Mee n'afọ 2011, Gọvanọ [Peter Obi nke Steeti Anambra] mere ọtutu ihe iji gosi mmasi ya na nkwalite na ntolite asụsụ Igbo, ka ọ bụrụ asụsụ kwesiri ihafè n'aka ndị na-esote anyị."

Ihe ọfọdụ n'ime ihe niile Gọvanọ Peter Obi mere, bụ ndị e dere ebe a, bụkwa nke ndị Gọvanọ ndị sotere ya gbara mbọ hụ na a na-emejuputa n'ụlọ akwụkwọ niile dị na Steeti Anambra, ma tinyekwa nke ha. Gọvanọ ọbụla batara n'ọche, tinyere Gọvanọ nọ ugbua bụ Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, na-eme ike ha n'iwulite asụsụ Igbo. Ka ọ dị, e mere ya ka ọ bụrụ iwu na:

- nwata akwụkwọ ọ bụla na-agu n'ụlọ akwụkwọ dị na Steeti Anambra ga-agu Igbo ma gafee n'ule ya n'ogogo *Junior Secondary School (JSS)* tupu o tozuo ibanye n'ogogo *Senior Secondary School (SSS)*.
- nwata akwụkwọ ọ bụla na-agu n'ụlọ akwụkwọ dị na Steeti Anambra ga-agu Igbo ma lelee ya n'ule maka inweta nzere *West African School Certificate (WASC)* nakwa *Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC)*.
- ụlọ akwụkwọ niile dị elu ga-enwe ngalaba nọrọ onwe ya maka amụmamụ Igbo, ma burukwa ngalaba a ga-eji aha Igbo wee mara.
- ụlọ akwụkwọ niile dị elu ga-etinyeriri Igbo n'omumụ izugbe ya (bụ *General Studies*).
- ubochi Wenezdee ọbụla bụ ubochi ụmụ akwụkwọ, ndị nkuzi, na ndị ọrụ niile n'ụlọ akwụkwọ ga-eyi uwe ọdinaala ndị Igbo, bụ ụdị uwe e jiri mara ndị Igbo, ma nwee ohere iji asụsụ Igbo ekwukorita okwu.
- ụlọ akwụkwọ ọ bụla riri mperi n'iwu nke ọbụla ga-akwụ ntuntu ego na nha.

Ihe niile ndị a bụ nke a gbakwunyere na Gọmentị na-enye ụlọ akwụkwọ ego dị ọkpurukpu ma a gụrụ oge, iji nyere ha aka na mbọ ha dị iche iche iwulite asụsụ na omenaala Igbo. E wezuga mbọ a n'ụlọ akwụkwọ, Gọmentị mekwara ya ka ọ bụrụ iwu na ndị ọrụ oyibo na-asụ asụsụ Igbo n'ụlọ ọrụ ha dị iche iche ubochi Wenezdee, ma na-eyi uwe na-egosiputa omenaala Igbo ubochi ahụ.

Nkwalite asụsụ na omenaala Igbo n'ụzọ abụla ụzọ mara mma. Ezi agbammbọ ndị a ga-ewulitekwa ọnọgu ndị na-asụ Igbo. Mbọ niile Gọmentị na-agba, tinyere nke otu dị iche iche dika ndị ụka, ụlọ akwụkwọ ndị nkịti nwe na nke Gọmentị nwe, ndị otu Igbo dika *Igbo Women Assembly*, Otu Sụwakwa Igbo, *Council of Igbo States in America (CISA)*, na Ọhanaeze Ndị Igbo na-aba oke uru n'iwulite asụsụ na omenaala Igbo. Enyemaka niile Igbo na-enweta site n'aka ndị ntorobịa, ndị Igbo bi na mba ọzọ n'ala anyị nakwa na mba ofesi, ụlọ mgbasaa ozi redio na televishonụ, obodo Igbo dị iche iche, na mmadụ niile hụrụ Igbo n'anya sokwa akwalite ọndu asụsụ na omenaala Igbo n'ebe ọ dị ukwu. Aka niile a na-enye na mbọ niile a na-agba maka ọganihu asụsụ na omenaala Igbo kacha apụta ihe n'ụlọ akwụkwọ n'ihu na ọ bụ ebe ahụ ka ụmụaka na ndị ntorobịa Igbo juputara.

Anyị na-atụ anya na Gọmentị ga-emekwu karịa ka ọ na-eme ugbua iji wulite asụsụ Igbo n'ezi ọndu ká nke ọ nọ na ya n'ụlọ akwụkwọ anyị dị iche iche. Itinye ezi akorogwa ogbaraohuru n'ụlọ akwụkwọ maka nkuzi na omumụ asụsụ na omenaala Igbo ga-abụ ezi ihe ga-akpalite mmụọ ndị nkuzi na ụmụ akwụkwọ. Ọ dị mkpa ka a na-akpachanye ụmụ akwụkwọ na-agu Igbo n'ụlọ akwụkwọ dị elu ego mmachi akpa iji gbaa ha ume. Ọ bụrụ na Gọmentị enye Igbo nkwardo site n'innye ndị uburụ na-aghọ nkọ n'ime ụmụ akwụkwọ na-



agụ Igbo n'ụlọ akwụkwọ dị elu ohere agụmakwụkwọ n'efu, ọ ga-eme ka ndị ga-enwe mmasị n'igụ Igbo bawanye. Inye ndị gụrụ Igbo ọrụ ozugbo ha gụchara akwụkwọ ma fechara ala nna ha bụcha ihe Gọmentị ga-etinyekwu aka n'ezị mbọ ya dị iche iche ikwalite asụsụ na omenaala Igbo.

Enyemaka ndị ntorobịa Igbo n'iwulite asụsụ na omenaala Igbo

Ndị ntorobịa bụ ndị nwere ike nke obi nakwa ike nke ahụ imejuputa ihe ọma ọbụla ha zubere ime. Nke a bukwu eziokwu dika o siri metụta asụsụ. Ebe ọ bụ na asụsụ bụ ihe dị ndụ, o tosirị ezi nlekọta anya site n'aka ndị nwe ya ka ọ ghara inwe ọdachi ida n'ọrịa ma nwụọ. Mgbe ndị nwe asụsụ hapurū asụsụ nke ha wee nwee mmasị n'ebe asụsụ ọzọ nọ, asụsụ nke ha na-achọ izute ọdachi ọnwụ. Iji maa atụ, ndị Igbo hapu asụsụ Igbo sụwa naanị Bekee, "ihe niile e ji mara ndị Igbo n'ebe o metụtara mmekọrịta, ọdịnaala, omenaala, ekpemekpe, ndorondoro ọchịchị, akunaaba, asụsụ, eziomume wdg ga-eji nwayọọ fuchasịa. Nke a mee, i mara na ndị Igbo enweghi(zi) njirimara" (Ilechukwu na Nweya, 2015:334).

Anyị kwenyere na ụfọdụ asụsụ dị na mba dị iche iche bụ ndị na-ekwo ọnwụ. Anyị kwenyekwara na ọtụtụ asụsụ nwere nsogbu bụ ndị ga-agbake ma kwurukwa chime ma ọ buru na ndị nwe asụsụ ndị ahụ tinye uchu idolite na ikwalite ha. Mbọ dị otu a gbasara onye ọbụla, maka na onye na onye ọbụla nwere oke na ọrụ diiri ya n'ebe asụsụ bụ ihe nketa na oke ya nọ, bido na ndị isi ọchịchị n'ogogo dị iche iche n'obodo wee ruo n'umụaka. Oku igba mbọ dị otu a ka a na-akpọ n'isi asụsụ Igbo.

Ndị ntorobịa Igbo nwere ọrụ puru iche dika o siri metụta ikwalite asụsụ Igbo, maka na ọ bụ ha bụzị ndị agba ọhụrụ bjara uwa n'oge a komputa, intaneeti, soshal midia, na atifishaal intelijensi bụ ngwa na ụzọ iwulite asụsụ. Ọ bụ ezie na ọndụ asụsụ Igbo n'oge ugbua abubeghi nke na ọ na-ekwozi ọnwụ, mana ihe ụfọdụ gbasara asụsụ Igbo na-emetu aka na ya bụ asụsụ nọ na nnukwu ajo ọndụ, ọ kacha dika o si metụta umụaka Igbo amazighi asu Igbo. Nke ọzọ buru nsogbu diiri akuku asụsụ Igbo ụfọdụ, tinyere egwu ọdịnaala, egwuregwu umụaka, egwu so mmemme dị iche iche, akuko ala, nakwa akuko ifo (Eme, Mbagwu, Asadu na Nkamigbo, 2022).

Ohiri-Aniche (2011), Nsolibe (2012) na ụfọdụ ndị nchọcha ndị ọzọ kwaputara nsogbu olenale chere asụsụ Igbo aka mgba. Ha gunyere otu ndị Igbo, ọ kacha ndị ntorobịa, si ahapu ala Igbo gaa mba ọzọ, mere na ha anaghi asuwagazi Igbo; mkpagbu asụsụ ndị mba ọzọ dika asụsụ Bekee na-akpagbu asụsụ ndị obodo Naijiria, tinyere asụsụ Igbo, makana ọ bụ asụsụ Bekee putara ihe n'agumakwukwọ, azumahia, na mgbasa ozi; ndị Igbo ụfọdụ enweghi mmasị n'asụsụ Igbo, nke na ndị bụ nne na nna anaghi ahafezi asụsụ Igbo n'aka umu ha; nakwa uko ezigbo ngwa tekunuzu ogbaraohuru n'ulo akwukwo anyi di iche iche maka nkuzi na omumu asusu Igbo.

Mgbe anyi lebara anya na nsogbu ndi a na ndi ozo na-ezute asusu Igbo, anyi ahụ na ndi ntorobia Igbo nwere ezigbo ọrụ ha ga-aruru asusu Igbo. Ebe na ebe ha anona, ha gbalia na-asu Igbo. Ọ bụ eziokwu na isu Igbo na-esiri ụfọdụ ndi ntorobia ike n'ihie enweghi ezi ohere maka imuta asusu Igbo na nwata site n'aka nne na nna ha, ha gosi ezi mmasi ma tinye uchu, ha ga-asuwa Igbo nke oma. Anyi kwuru nke a makana ọ bụ ogbo a nwere ezi ohere di iche iche imuta asusu oso oso site na ngwa tekunuzu di iche iche. Ndi mgbe gboo tupu komputa na akorongwa ogbaraohuru ndi ozo enweghi udi ohere ndi ogbo a nwere.

Ọ buru na ndi ntorobia Igbo uburu na-agho nko na tekunuzu meputa ezigbo ngwa tekunuzu ogbaraohuru maka nkuzi na omumu asusu Igbo, tinye ha n'oru n'ulo akwukwo anyi ebe otutu asusu ndi ozo dika Bekee, French, na Chinese nokwu n'oru, mkpagbu asusu Bekee na-akpagbu asusu Igbo ga-ebelata. Nke a bu n'ihie na otutu ndi Igbo na ndi abughi ndi Igbo ga-ebido nwewe ezi mmasi n'omumu asusu Igbo. Ije n'ulo akwukwo enye nkuzi a nwere ike buru ihe agaghi ekwe omume n'ihie na ndi ntorobia ndi a abughi ndi e were n'oru nkuzi. Ha newekwara nnukwu ọrụ na-anara ha oge ha. N'ihie nke a, ha jiri usoro nka na uzu wee hibe usoro nkuzi asusu na omenaala Igbo, site na nkwado Gọmentị, nne na nna, nakwa ndi ọchichị n'obodo Igbo di iche iche.

Tinyere nke a, ha wube webusaiti, onlain komuniti na mwube ndi ozo na soshal midia na intaneeti, ma meputa aapu ndi a choro iji mee ka nkuzi na omumu asusu na omenaala Igbo bia n'udi ogbaraohuru. Ha tinyekwuo amamihe ha nwere n'atifishaal intelijensi were wulite Igbo. Ihe ndi a na-eme ka nkuzi na omumu



asụsụ na omenaala dị mfe ma dịkwa uto, ka ndị Igbo ma ndị abụghị ndị Igbo nwee mmasi imụ asụsụ na omenaala Igbo.

Ndị na-emeputa ngwa ahia dika ude, ngwa umuaka ji egwu egwu, akpukpo ukwu, akwa, akorongwa, na ihe oriri na onunụ di iche iche were aha Igbo bawa ngwa ahia ha aha. O bughị naanị inye ngwa ahia ha aha Igbo, ha nye aha ulo oru ha aha Igbo. Ndị niile nwere odu ahia nyechaa odu ndi a aha Igbo. Ebe o bu na ndi Igbo gbasara ruo mba niile di n'owa, asusu Igbo ga-esi otu a gbasaa. Yuka (2019) jiri ncha *Dudu-Osun* na ude *Dudu-Shea* ndi Yoruba meputara ma nye aha n'asusu Yoruba, nakwa ndi *China* na-eji asusu ha aba ihe na akorongwa ha meputara aha wee gosi mkpa nke a di. O toro udi omume a di ka nke na-ewulite ma na-akwalite onodu asusu. Udi mgbasapu aka a ga-enyere asusu Igbo aka n'ebe o di ukwu.

Nchikota na mmechi

Anyi elebaala anya n'asusu Igbo dika asusu epum ndi Igbo, nke bu ihe nketa ha na oke ha. Anyi huru na onodu asusu Igbo no di oke njo. Ufodu umuaka nne na nna ha bu ndi Igbo ma na-asu Igbo nke oma amaghi asu Igbo n'ihia na nne na nna ha ahafeghiri ha asusu Igbo. Nke a bu ajo onodu nyere asusu Igbo, makana o ga-ebute onwu asusu Igbo ma o buru na ndi Igbo egbochighi ajo onodu a. Onuogu ndi Igbo na-asu Igbo na-ebelata ebelata, n'agbanyeghi na Chukwu jiri omumu gozie ndi agburu Igbo. Biko nu, ka ndi Igbo mekwaa ngwa ngwa meghara odachi; ka anyi kwoo ya bu mmiri ka o di n'ogbugba ola.

Anyi hutakwara na otutu ndi Igbo n'ogogo di iche iche kwenyere sie ike na asusu Igbo bu ihe nketa na oke ha, mere ha jiri tinye ike ha n'oru iwulite asusu Igbo. Anyi wee na-akpo oku ka ndi Igbo gbawanyekwu mbọ ime ka asusu Igbo guzosie ike kari ka o di ugbua. Anyi ekwuola ihe ufodu Gogmenti nwere ike ime iji gbakwunyere nke o na-eme ugbua. Ndị ntorobia ihe komputa, intaneti, sosha media na atifishal intelijensi doro anya ga-etinyekwu mmuta ha n'oru ikwalite Igbo. Ndị ulo mgbasaa ozi redio na televishonu diga n'ala Igbo ga-agba mbọ tinyewanye usoro iji Igbo eme mgbasaa ozi ha, ma na-akowakwa ihe gbasara asusu na omenaala Igbo. Ndị uka di iche iche na-agba ezi mbọ n'iwulite asusu na omenaala Igbo; ha adakwala mba.

Ndị na-achi n'ogogo di iche iche n'obodo jisie ike tunye utu nke ha na mwulite asusu na omenaala Igbo kara ka ha na-eme ugbua. Ha jiri ije okpa ha, okwu onu, amamihe, na ego nke onwe ha na nke obodo kwado emereme gbasara Igbo ma n'obodo ha ma n'ulo akwukwo dika na be ha. Ha kpalite mmuo ndi ha na-achi ka ha donyere ha ukwu na mwulite asusu Igbo. Obodo Igbo di iche iche hiwechaa uzo iji gbaa ndi ntorobia ume n'iji asusu Igbo kporo ihe. Ulo akwukwo ndi nkiti nwe na nke Gogmenti nwe kpo mwulite asusu Igbo mkpa n'abughi na mmanye. Ha nye ubara ohere maka umu akwukwo idi na-asurita Igbo. Ndị mmeputa ngwa ahia di iche kwalite Igbo site n'inye ngwa ahia ha nakwa ulo oru ha aha Igbo. Mmadu niile huru Igbo n'anya, ma n'ulo ma na mba ofesi mee ihe obula ha nwere ike iji gbanyere Igbo aja n'ukwu ma kwalite onodu ya. Ndị nne na nna gbado anya na-ahafere umu ha asusu na omenaala Igbo. N'ezie, ihe di mkpa ugbua bu ka aka niile banye n'oru. Nnukwu azu kpata nnukwu nku, obere azu kpata obere nku. Bunu bunu, ibu anyi danda.

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THE CHURCH AS A HISTORICAL AGENT OF PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is on the church as a historical agent of peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria. The Nigerian nation, being a multi-religious and multi-ethnic nation, is often ridden with various conflicts, divisions and violence, in which one religious group is pitted against the other and one ethnic group against another. The church by her nature, is a veritable instrument for peace-building and conflict resolution, which it has pursued world-wide and has also been evident from the time of her entry into Nigeria. Considering the ongoing crisis, disagreements and conflicts in Nigeria, both in the political, socio-economic, security and religious spheres, the church has to step up her peace-building and conflict resolution roles by re-strategizing and re-awaking herself to the task at hand and ahead. This paper is therefore a wake-up and stand-firm call on the church in Nigeria and her leaders, to maintain the path of peace-building and conflict resolution in order to ensure the attainment of the much-needed sustainable development of the nation. It is already obvious that peace is always a sine qua non for development of any nation or region – without peace there will be no development. The church thus has to play both mediatory and reconciliatory roles while also being ready to engage in negotiations, arbitration and diplomatic roles to ensure and achieve the much-needed peace in the land. Historical and phenomenological methodologies were utilized in this investigation. It was found that the Nigerian nation, though in dire need of sustainable development, is often ridden and plagued with conflicts, divisions and insecurity, which have been long-running problems even from the period of the country's independence. In the midst of these problems and conflicts, the nation is faced with the task of searching for solutions to its multiple problems, as well as seeking for possible partners who will serve as agents of peace-building and conflict resolution. One of such partners is the church. The Church should therefore maintain and even increase her momentum of the task of peace-building and conflict resolution in the face of increasing threats to life and property and multiple security challenges in the land, the paper recommends.

Keywords: Church, Agent, Peacebuilding, Conflict Resolution, Nigeria.

Introduction

The contemporary Nigerian society is in dire need of sustainable development for the good of the citizenry and the teeming population. At the same time, the nation is riddled with conflicts, divisions and insecurity, and these have been long-running problems even from the time of the country's independence. The problems of conflict and divisions in the land have resulted from various factors, including ethnic and tribal differences, religious differences and struggle for resource control, and also the quest for power and domination.

In the midst of these problems, conflicts and divisions, the nation is faced with the task of searching for solution to its multiple problems, as well as seeking possible partners who will serve



as veritable agents of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the land. There is no doubt and no gainsaying the fact that one of such veritable agents of peacebuilding and conflict resolution is the church. The church is the foremost Christian organization and gathering of the believers in Jesus Christ for worship, fellowship and doing the work of God. This paper intends to examine how the church serves as a veritable agent for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Nigeria. Ekpenyong & Ibiang (2020) agree that the church has an important role to play in building peace and resolving conflicts in Nigeria. According to them, "... the church and her leaders in Nigeria have the potential to manage and resolve conflicts with their religious values and principles which involve love, forgiveness, justice, peace and tolerance."

Definition of Terms

The Church: According to the *New Dictionary of Theology* (1991: 140): "Scripture presents the church as the people of God, the community and body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." It further explains that the biblical word 'church' (Gk. *ekklesia*, Heb. *qahal*) means 'assembly.' It describes the covenant-making assembly at Mount Sinai (in the Old Testament). Israel later assembled before God for covenant renewal and at the feast. Christ came to gather God's assembly. The church is the body of Christ on earth.

Agent: An 'agent' is defined as a person or thing that exerts power or produces an effect (*Oxford Modern English Dictionary*). In this paper, the church is described as an agent of peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Peacebuilding: According to Ohajanwa (2013: 136), peace-building are activities geared towards putting in place facilities that serve as de-escalators of violent conflicts in a society. Pre-conflict peace-building requires the establishing of incentives that forestall the outbreak of violent conflicts while post-conflict peace-building refers to the undertaking of rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration projects in bid to restore damages wrought on a society by war, in order to stop further outbreak of violent conflicts in that society.

Conflict Resolution: Ohajanwa (2013: 32-33) points out that conflict resolution is one of the conflict management approaches among which included – Conflict Transformation and Multi-track diplomacy. On conflict resolution specifically, he notes that it is a conflict-solving approach, where causes of conflict are probed and addressed so as to build new and lasting relationship between aggressive parties.

Lund (1997:3) on his side, perceives conflict resolution as efforts to increase co-operation among parties to a dispute, and to deepen their relationship by addressing the conditions that led to the dispute, fostering positive attitude and allaying distrust, and promoting reconciliatory initiatives and processes through which parties interact.

Fisher, et al (2000:8), in a more explicit form, conceive conflict resolution as comprising of stages that are applied to tackle open conflicts in a bid to find, not only a common ground to end the violence (as in conflict settlement), but also to resolve the inconsistent goals beneath it. Conflict resolution is thus the measures taken to bring a violent conflict to an end by bringing the conflicting parties to an understanding of themselves and also to a state of enduring peace.

Nigeria as a base of many intractable conflicts and violence

A cursory look at the nation Nigeria shows that it is a hot-bed and base for many intractable conflicts and problems seeking solution and resolution. In a previous article, the present author, (Dimobika, (2018: .243-244) had pointed out that "Though Nigeria has experienced various forms of conflicts arising from various causative factors, ranging from ethnic to political and to economic, yet religiously motivated violence and conflicts have far outweighed all others among the causative factors." The writeup by Dimobika further observes that:



A review of the history of religiously motivated conflicts and violence in Nigeria shows that incidences have increasingly grown in magnitude and scale over the years to the present day; from the scattered skirmishes of the early 1980s, to the launch of the Boko Haram terror outfit in the present day, with which the government and people are presently contending.

It should also be observed that the problem did not end with the launch of the Boko Haram terror outfit, but also had metamorphosed into the launch of other deadlier terror groups, thereby worsening the security situation in the country. Such other terror groups as ISWAP, the Bandits, the Fulani Herdsmen terror group, among others, which have turned to kidnapping gangs and Islamic jihadist outfits.

Iwuoha in an article, traced the history of conflicts and violence in Nigeria, which often take religious coloration. According to Iwuoha (2020: 121):

Several political problems assume religious dimensions; manipulated by politics, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance in Nigeria. Violence predicated on religious affiliation and religious policies has indeed caused physical and psychological damages to several people, thereby legitimizing religious schism among Nigerians who simply have different religious affiliations. It is therefore paramount that we look at factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria since the inception of democracy in 1999 and to find out how religion can bring about peaceful co-existence.

An online article from researchclue.com elaborated on the causes and occurrence of incidents of hostilities, conflicts and violence in Nigeria. The article points out that due to differences in tribes and religious beliefs, there are several incidences of hostilities, resulting in destruction of lives and properties. Hostilities are recorded along the line of tribes and religions. Referring to Higazi (2011), it was noted that the various elements that underline conflict are ethnicity, politics and religion. The hostilities have turned out to be so pronounced that the peace and unity of the country is under threat. A number of these threats can be attributed to political crisis, militancy, land disputes, trade disputes, and religious crisis, among others. It has turned out to be very challenging for a person of a culture to live in another different culture or religion in Nigeria without the fear of being killed. This is probably the reason Olawale, (2013) tagged Nigeria a “security risk nation” to which many international communities have given warning to their citizens not to live or even travel to Nigeria.

The researchclue.com article referred above points out that:

Nigeria as a country has been experiencing several crises, social vices, and lack of cordial relationship among her citizens since independence, (Ajayi, 2015). In a good number of states in Nigeria, one will always hear various stories of violent conflict involving individuals or groups. For example, Odi Massacre in Bayelsa state, Urhobo - Iteskiri crisis in Warri, Jimeta clash in Jos, the Baddo crisis in Ikorodu, (Egwu, 2018), Boko Haram unrest in the northern states, among others. In all these conflicts, many individuals are displaced, properties are destroyed and lives are lost, (Orude, 2015). According to Obuseh (2016), Nigeria cannot live in peace because “of selfishness”. Corroborating the view of Obuseh (2016), Oluwaseun (2016) opined that, religion is as a threat to Nigeria’s peaceful co-existence. According to Oluwaseun (2016), it is easy for a Yoruba to marry an Efik than for a Muslim to marry a Christian and vice versa. This as well shows religious intolerance as a threat to unity.



The above narration goes a long way to prove that Nigeria is surely a theatre of conflicts, disputes and acrimonies which therefore require the contributions of various groups and individuals of goodwill including the church to work together with the government to achieve the much-desired peace and resolve arising conflicts among the various discordant groups.

From review of scholarly opinion, it becomes increasingly clear and obvious that though the conflicts and resultant violence are often attributed to religious factors, yet, facts on ground point to other factors other than religious as already noted above. For instance, according to Bakaki cited in Dimobika (2017; 244) on the role of religion in leadership for conflict resolution and peace-building, that religion have unjustly but undeniably been victimized as a cause of conflict and violence in the world today. According to the Bakaki (2015: 1) in the web article: "Ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism, economic struggles, terrorism, political insurgencies have put religion at the front-doors of violence and sometimes conflict theories may not thoroughly be able to analyse these factors." Be that as it may, it is still very obvious that conflicts and violence are prevalent in the Nigerian nation and this write-up goes ahead to investigate the role of the Church as a historical agent of peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria.

The Church's role in peace-building and conflict resolution

The church being a faith-based institution with overriding interest in the spiritual, socio-economic and wholistic well-being of the people and the society in general, therefore undertakes roles and activities geared toward the general good of the people and the society. However, at the national level, the church endeavours to play its role as an agent of peace-building and conflict resolution by forming relevant groups and engaging in various intra-faith and inter-faith discussions and negotiations for the purpose of achieving peace and resolving conflicts in the country. The church in Nigeria has historically functioned as vital pillar of peace-building, national integration, and conflict resolution. By bridging deep ethnic divides, advocating for social justice, and providing critical humanitarian support, the church serves as a non-partisan peacemaker in Nigeria's complex, multi-religious landscape. This is according to an online article in the *Global Journal of Human-social science*.

On its part, an article from researchclue.com on the role of the Church in ensuring peace and harmony in the society, first traced the history of the church's entrance into Nigeria and the ground work done in laying the foundation for a peaceful and development-oriented society. The article opines that:

The successful expansion of the Christian missions in Nigeria started in the 19th century through the activities of freed slaves from Sierra Leone, (Anene, 2013). Missionaries' activities carried with it the building of schools, churches, roads, hospitals and of course other institutions of government. It should be borne in mind that social reforms came with Christianity-commitment to national, moral and political advancement. Christianity featured prominently in the series of events that led to the development of Nigerian nation, and were able to bring about certain political, economic and technological changes in the region, (Ajayi, 2015). Their activities helped to break down ethnic prejudices and to bring their converts in loyalty transcending ethnicities. Hence, patriotic Nigerians came to believe that by practicing Christianity they were paving the way for the creation of the Nigerian nation, (Anene, 2013). The Nigeria state of their dream was one in which Christianity would blossom, inter-ethnic wars would come to an end, and the industrial, technological and



intellectual revolutions which had occurred in Europe would repeat themselves in Nigeria. By encouraging a common consciousness, Christianity would reduce to a minimum all other sectional loyalties such as the many incipient tribal/crisis groups that divided Nigeria, (Okwueze, 2013).

The researchclue.com article further points out that the role of the church in peacemaking and harmony is strengthened by the fact that the social and political crisis in the society questions radically the message of the gospel. Referring to Sindole (2010), it notes that peace is the tranquility that flows from right order. When we put right order into the structures of our society, the tranquility that results is peace, referring to Lederach, 2013.

Researchclue.com also notes that;

A number of people see peace as the absence of war or violence. In peace building efforts by the church, peace is seen as the transformation of contextual and destructive interactions into more co-operative and constructive existence, (Ejikeme, 2016). The above brings us to the role that church can play in ensuring peace and harmony in the Nigerian society. A number of scholars are of the opinion that, Christianity cannot play any role towards peace building because religion itself is arguably one of the single most significant causes of war and turmoil in human history, (Abu-Nimer 2014, Gopin 2016). So much malevolence have been done in the name of religion, (Ayer 1976, Cited in Collins et al. 2012). However, so much good has as well been done in the name of religion.

Thus, overwhelming scholarly opinion supports the view that the church plays commendable and outstanding roles in peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria and elsewhere. The church's contributions to peace and national stability are realized through several key historical and practical roles:

1. Post-Civil War Reconciliation (1970s onwards)

Following the devastating Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), the Church stepped into a fractured society lacking formal truth-and-reconciliation mechanisms and played vital roles in putting the nation and people back together and on their feet through playing key and vital roles:

Humanitarian Aid: Denominations like the Roman Catholic Church and the Christian Council of Nigeria coordinated relief efforts for displaced and starving populations, transcending tribal affiliations.

Trauma Healing: Clergy used sermons, joint prayer sessions and community rebuilding to process grief, discourage vengeance, and foster forgiveness among communities on both sides of the conflict.

2. Interfaith Dialogue and Mediation

In regions prone to ethno-religious tension such as the Middle Belt and parts of Northern Nigeria (e.g., Jos, Kaduna and Taraba states) – the Church actively mediates disputes.

- **Ecumenical Initiatives:** Bodies like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN founded in 1976) worked to establish frameworks for cooperation, not only among Christian denominations but also across the religious divide.
- **Peace Committees:** Church leaders frequently participate in local arbitration panels and interfaith peace councils to de-escalate violence and negotiate truces between conflicting ethnic groups and communities.



3. Advocacy and truth to power

The church has consistently served as the conscience of the nation, denouncing bad governance, corruption, and systemic injustice – root causes of unrest:

- **Policy Advocacy:** Church leaders and bishops regularly issue public statements condemning human rights violations and challenging the government to uphold democratic principles, protect vulnerable citizens, and decentralize security structures, to curb kidnapping and insurgency. For instance, in a Communique issued at the end of the 2025 Diocesan Synod of Orlu Anglican Diocese, the following statements were issued on the state of the nation and policy advocacy to the Government:
Synod condemns in strong terms, the level of insecurity in the Nation and calls on the Government to secure life and property. Synod urges all communities to be conscious of the security situation in the State by enforcing an effective vigilante operation. Synod also calls on our community leaders and traditional rulers to ensure that our bushes/forests are properly guarded to avoid it being a hiding place for miscreants (Orlu Diocesan Synod report 2025: 184).
- **Representation:** By standing up to marginalized communities, the church has historically given a voice to the oppressed in socio-political matters. On this regard, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Orlu in his Presidential Address to the 2025 Orlu Diocesan Synod spoke on behalf of the marginalized, pointing out that:
Marginalization is still marching like a giant in our nation Nigeria. There is an Aircraft in Nigeria called “United Nigeria.” Marginalization in Nigeria to date is multifaceted including ethnicity, gender, class, intergenerational conflicts, labour relation and religious polarization to mention a few. But any time I see that name, I begin to wonder whether marginalization has become the order of the day in the country, (Orlu Diocesan Synod Report 2025: 101).

The above portrays the fact that the Church is surely standing up for the marginalized and giving voice to the voiceless and the oppressed in the land.

4. Grassroots reorientation and youth engagements

The Church directly targets the drivers of conflict by moulding the moral and socio-economic character of its congregations.

Youth Mentorship: Churches implement programs focused on instilling values of non-violence, tolerance, and self-reliance, preventing youth from being radicalized or drawn into gang and militant activities.

Social Gospel: By emphasizing biblical teachings of Shalom (peace), the Church promotes reconciliation, empathy, and peaceful coexistence as essential tenets of the Christian faith.

Findings:

The following findings were made from this research:

- The Church by its nature, origin and function is a veritable instrument for peace-building and conflict resolution both in Nigeria and elsewhere
- The Nigerian nation, though in dire need of sustainable development is often riddled and plagued with conflicts, divisions and insecurity, which have been long-running problems even from the period of the country’s independence.
- The problems of conflict and divisions in the land have resulted from various factors, including ethnic and tribal differences, religious differences and struggle for resource control, and also the quest for power and domination.



- Thus, there has been political crisis, militancy, land disputes, trade disputes, and religious crisis, among others in Nigeria.
- In the midst of these problems, conflicts and divisions, the nation is faced with the task of searching for solutions to its multiple problems, as well as seeking possible partners who will serve as agents of peace-building and conflict resolution. One of such partners is the church.
- The Church and her leaders in Nigeria have the potential to manage and resolve conflicts with their religious values and principles, which involve love, forgiveness, justice, peace and tolerance.
- The church endeavours to play her role as an agent of peace-building and conflict resolution by forming relevant arms and groups charged with the task of engaging in both intra-faith and inter-faith discussions and negotiations for the purpose of achieving peace and resolving conflicts in the country.
- Thus, the church in Nigeria has historically functioned as vital pillar of peace-building, national integration, and conflict resolution by bridging deep ethnic divides, advocating for social justice, and providing critical humanitarian support, thereby serving as a non-partisan peacemaker in Nigeria's complex, multi-religious landscape.
- The church's contribution to peace and national stability are realized through several historical and practical roles, such as Post-Civil War reconciliation (1970s onwards), through providing humanitarian aid and trauma healing. The church also engages in interfaith dialogue and mediation in regions prone to ethno-religious tensions.
- Church bodies like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), work to establish frameworks for cooperation not only among Christian denominations but also across the religious divide. Church leaders participate in local arbitration panels and interfaith peace councils to de-escalate violence and negotiate truces between conflicting ethnic groups and communities.
- The church also serves as the conscience of the nation, denouncing bad governance, corruption and systemic injustice which are the root causes of unrest.
- The church as well directly targets the drivers of conflicts by moulding the moral and socio-economic character of its congregation through youth mentorship and social gospel programs.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The church should maintain and even increase its momentum of the task of peace-building and conflict resolution in the face of increasing threats to life and property and security challenges in the land.

The government should encourage the church and other religious bodies in the works they do for the good of the society and the nation by collaborating with them when necessary and by giving ear to their recommendations on the burning issues and arising conflicts in the land.

The government should periodically provide sponsorship to the church and other religious organizations to assist them carry out their planned programs, which are aimed at building peace, curbing youth restiveness and providing empowerment for youths, resolving conflicts and maintaining stability in the land.

The government should also play its own roles with sincerity of purpose, fairness, justice and a level-playing ground for the entire citizenry to reduce conflicts and frictions and discourage the citizenry from resorting to violence and confrontation to receive their due rights and privileges as bona fide citizens of the land. By so doing, the land will be peaceful and the citizens will go



about their lawful duties without fear of harassment, marginalization, intimidation or infringement of their rights.

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UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY, RELIGIOUS COPING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

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Abstract

The increasing prevalence of psychological distress among university students has become a significant concern across higher education institutions in Nigeria. Academic pressure, economic uncertainty, social instability and personal challenges have contributed to heightened levels of stress, anxiety and depression among students. Within the African context, indigenous philosophical traditions and religious beliefs continue to play important roles in shaping coping mechanisms and psychological well-being. The paper examines the Ubuntu philosophy, religious coping and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Ubuntu, an African philosophical worldview emphasizing interconnectedness, communal responsibility, compassion and human dignity, provides a culturally relevant framework for understanding resilience and mental health. Similarly, religious coping practices such as prayer, worship, faith-based social support and spiritual meaning-making offer psychological resources that enable individuals to manage adversity. Drawing on the existing literature in counselling psychology, African philosophy and the psychology of religion, the study explores how Ubuntu values and religious coping strategies contribute to resilience among students facing contemporary challenges. The paper argues that integrating Ubuntu principles and culturally sensitive religious resources into counselling interventions can enhance mental health outcomes and strengthen resilience among university students. Furthermore, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to decolonize counselling psychology by highlighting indigenous African perspectives on psychological well-being. Recommendations are offered for counsellors, educational institutions and policymakers seeking to promote culturally responsive mental health services in African higher education settings.

Keywords: Ubuntu philosophy, Religious coping, Psychological resilience, Counselling psychology, University students, Niger Delta.

Introduction

Mental health has become a major concern among university students worldwide. Young adults enrolled in higher education institutions often experience multiple stressors, including academic workload, financial challenges, family expectations, social relationships, career uncertainty and identity development. These pressures frequently contribute to psychological distress, anxiety, depression and reduced well-being (World Health Organization, 2022; Li et al, 2025; Henriques et al, 2025). In Nigeria, the situation is compounded by economic instability,



insecurity, unemployment concerns and inadequate mental health resources, making psychological resilience an increasingly important area of inquiry.

Psychological resilience refers to the capacity of individuals to adapt positively and recover from adversity, stress, trauma or significant life challenges (Masten, 2025). Resilience is not merely an individual trait but is influenced by social, cultural, spiritual and environmental factors. Consequently, understanding resilience among African university students requires consideration of indigenous cultural values and belief systems that shape coping behaviours and psychological adjustment. One indigenous African philosophy that has received growing scholarly attention is Ubuntu. Ubuntu is commonly summarized by the expression, “I am because we are”, reflecting an understanding of personhood grounded in relationships and communal interdependence (Udisi, 2024; Ngcetane-Vika & Pule, 2025). The philosophy emphasizes compassion, mutual care, solidarity, respect and collective responsibility. Rather than viewing individuals as isolated entities, Ubuntu situates human existence within networks of social relationships and communal obligations. Scholars have argued that Ubuntu offers valuable insights into psychological well-being because social connectedness and supportive relationships are significant protective factors against mental distress (Mugumbate, 2020; Niyonzima, 2024; Lembuka, 2025)). The communal orientation of Ubuntu may foster resilience by providing emotional support, promoting social cohesion and encouraging adaptive responses to adversity. For university students navigating academic and personal challenges, the principles of Ubuntu may serve as important psychological resources. Religion also occupies a central position in African societies. Religious beliefs and practices influence how individuals interpret life experiences, cope with stress and maintain psychological well-being. According to Park (2020) and Cook (2022) religious coping involves the use of religious beliefs, practices and communities to understand and manage stressful situations. Positive religious coping strategies include prayer, spiritual support, trust in divine guidance, participation in religious communities and the search for spiritual meaning.

Research consistently demonstrates that positive religious coping is associated with greater resilience, life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Geppert & Pie, 2020; Lucchetti et al, 2021; Kruk & Aboul-Enein, 2024;). In the Nigerian context, religious institutions frequently serve as sources of social support, emotional comfort and moral guidance. Students often turn to faith communities when confronting academic difficulties, family challenges and personal crises. The Niger Delta region presents a particularly important context for investigating these issues. Despite its rich natural resources, the region has experienced environmental degradation, economic inequality, youth unemployment and social conflict. These conditions create unique psychological challenges for young people pursuing higher education. Understanding the cultural and spiritual resources that support resilience among students in this region is therefore essential.

From the perspective of counselling psychology, there is an increasing need for culturally responsive interventions that acknowledge indigenous worldviews and local realities. Traditional Western counselling models often emphasize individual autonomy and self-reliance. While these approaches have value, they may not fully capture the communal and spiritual dimensions of psychological well-being that characterize many African societies (Maree, 2020). The movement toward decolonizing psychology advocates the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems, cultural values and local epistemologies into psychological theory and practice. Ubuntu philosophy and religious coping represent important components of African knowledge systems that can enrich counselling interventions and enhance their cultural relevance. By recognizing these resources, counsellors can develop more effective approaches to promoting mental health among university students.

This paper therefore examines the relationship between Ubuntu philosophy, religious coping and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.



Specifically, it seeks to explore how communal values and religious coping strategies contribute to resilience and how these insights can inform counselling psychology practice. The paper contributes to the growing body of literature advocating culturally grounded approaches to mental health and psychological well-being in Africa.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the relationship between Ubuntu philosophy and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.
2. To determine the extent to which religious coping contributes to psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What relationship exists between Ubuntu philosophy and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria?
2. To what extent does religious coping contribute to psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between Ubuntu philosophy and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Ho2: Religious coping does not significantly contribute to psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Ubuntu Philosophy

Ubuntu is one of the most influential indigenous philosophical frameworks in Africa. Although expressed differently across African societies, the philosophy generally emphasizes communalism, interconnectedness, compassion, reciprocity and human dignity. The concept derives from Nguni languages of South Africa and is often summarized as “a person is a person through other persons” (Metz, 2026). Ubuntu recognizes that individual well-being is inseparable from the welfare of the community. African philosophers have long argued that personhood is not solely an individual achievement but is realized through participation in communal relationships (African Union, 2021; Bolanle, 2023; Nikiema, 2024). Unlike Western philosophical traditions that often emphasize individual autonomy, Ubuntu highlights social responsibility and mutual independence. Human beings are viewed as interconnected members of a larger social and moral community.

Within psychological discourse, Ubuntu has gained increasing attention because its principles align with several protective factors associated with mental health. Social support, belongingness, empathy and collective efficacy are recognized predictors of psychological adjustment and resilience (Masten, 2025). Ubuntu encourages these qualities by promoting social cohesion and collective responsibility. Mugumbate (2021) observed that Ubuntu provides an indigenous framework for understanding psychological well-being because it emphasizes supportive relationships and communal care. Individuals facing adversity are encouraged to seek support from family members, friends, neighbours and community networks. Such support systems can reduce emotional distress and foster adaptive coping.

Among university students, Ubuntu may manifest through peer support, collaborative learning, mentorship and participation in social and cultural organizations. These interactions contribute to a sense of belonging and social connectedness, both of which are important for psychological health. Research indicates that students who experience stronger social support generally report lower levels of stress and higher levels of life satisfaction (Maree, 2020).



Religious Coping and Psychological Well-being

Religion remains one of the most significant social institutions across Africa. The various religious beliefs influence perceptions of suffering, adversity, success, morality and human relationships. In many African societies, spirituality is deeply integrated into everyday life and shapes how individuals understand and respond to challenges. Cook (2022) defines religious coping as the use of religious beliefs, practices and resources to manage stressful situations. Religious coping may be positive or negative. Positive religious coping involves trusting in divine support, seeking spiritual comfort, engaging in prayer, participation in worship activities and finding meaning through faith. On the other hand, negative religious coping may involve feelings of divine punishment, spiritual dissatisfaction or religious conflict.

Positive religious coping has been consistently associated with psychological well-being. Kruk and Aboul-Enein (2024) reported that religious involvement contributes to lower levels of depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicidal ideation. Individuals who maintain strong commitments often demonstrate greater optimism and emotional stability during periods of adversity. Prayer is among the most common forms of religious coping. Through prayer, individuals express emotions, seek guidance and cultivate hope. Religious gatherings also provide opportunities for social support and collective encouragement. Faith communities frequently serve as sources of emotional assistance during times of stress and uncertainty.

Within Nigerian universities, students often participate actively in religious organizations and campus fellowships. These groups provide spiritual guidance, friendship networks, mentorship opportunities and emotional support. Such resources may strengthen students' capacity to manage academic pressure and personal difficulties. Recent studies suggest that religious coping contributes significantly to resilience among young adults. For example, Pargament and Exline, (2021), Loewenthal et al (2022) as well as McMartin and Hall (2022) found that individuals who utilized positive religious coping strategies reported greater psychological adjustment following stressful experiences. Religious beliefs may help individuals to construct meaning from adversity, thereby reducing psychological distress.

Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience refers to the dynamic process through which individuals adapt successfully despite experiencing significant adversity or stress (Masten, 2025). Rather than being a fixed personality trait, resilience involves interactions among personal strengths, environmental resources, social support systems and cultural factors. The resilience framework emphasizes protective factors that buffer individuals from negative psychological outcomes. Protective factors include self-efficacy, optimism, social support, emotional regulation, problem-solving abilities and spiritual resources (Southwick et al, 2023). University students encounter numerous stressors that challenge resilience. Academic demands, financial hardship, social transitions, family expectations and career uncertainties may generate considerable psychological pressure. Students who possess strong resilience are generally better equipped to navigate these challenges and maintain positive functioning.

Contemporary resilience research increasingly recognizes cultural influences. Ungar (2021) argues that resilience cannot be fully understood outside its cultural context because societies differ in the resources they value and the coping mechanisms they encourage. Consequently, resilience among African students should be examined within the framework of indigenous values and beliefs systems. Ubuntu and religious coping may function as culturally relevant protective factors. Ubuntu fosters supportive social relationships, while religious coping provides spiritual meaning and emotional comfort. Together, these resources may enhance students' capacity to adapt to adversity.



Ubuntu Philosophy and Resilience

Several scholars have highlighted the relevance of Ubuntu for resilience development. The philosophy encourages collective problem-solving, mutual assistance and social responsibility. Individuals are encouraged to seek help from community members rather than confront difficulties alone. Research indicates that social connectedness is a powerful predictor of resilience (Masten, 2025). Ubuntu strengthens social connectedness by emphasizing relationships and communal obligations. Students who experience strong communal support may be better able to cope with academic and personal challenges.

Ubuntu also promotes empathy and compassion. These values facilitate supportive interactions that can reduce loneliness and emotional distress. During periods of crisis, individuals embedded within caring communities often recover more effectively than those who lack social support. Furthermore, Ubuntu encourages a sense of purpose and belonging. Belongingness has been linked to psychological well-being, self-esteem and emotional stability (Southwick et al, 2023). Students who feel connected to their communities may demonstrate greater resilience in the face of adversity.

Religious Coping and Resilience among University Students

Religious coping contributes to resilience through multiple mechanisms. First, religious beliefs provide meaning-making frameworks that help individuals to interpret stressful events and situations. Students who view challenges as opportunities for spiritual growth may experience less psychological distress. Second, religious practices encourage emotional regulation. Prayer, meditation, worship and scripture reading often promote calmness, hope and self-reflection. These practices may reduce anxiety and enhance emotional stability. Third, religious communities provide social support. Participation in religious groups creates opportunities for friendship, mentorship and emotional encouragement. Such relationships are important protective factors against mental health difficulties. Fourth, faith traditions often promote positive virtues such as perseverance, gratitude, forgiveness and hope. These virtues are associated with adaptive coping and resilience (Geppert & Pie, 2020; Kruk & Pie, 2024).

Studies conducted across Africa have reported positive relationships between religiosity and psychological adjustment among students. Religious involvement frequently serves as a buffer against stress and contributes to overall well-being.

Counselling Psychology and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Counselling psychology seeks to promote mental health, resilience and optimal functioning across diverse populations. Historically, however, many counselling theories have been developed within Western cultural contexts. As a result, scholars have increasingly advocated for culturally responsive approaches that incorporate indigenous knowledge systems. The decolonization movement in psychology emphasizes the importance of recognizing local cultures, values and worldviews in psychological practice (Maree, 2020). African societies possess rich philosophical and spiritual traditions that can contribute meaningfully to counselling interventions.

Ubuntu provides counsellors with a culturally grounded framework for understanding human relationships and psychological well-being. Counselling interventions informed by Ubuntu may emphasize community engagement, collective support, empathy and relational healing. Similarly, religious coping resources can be integrated into counselling practice when appropriate. Counsellors working with religious clients may explore spiritual beliefs, encourage positive religious coping strategies and collaborate with faith-based support systems while maintaining professional ethical standards. The integration of Ubuntu philosophy and religious coping into



counselling psychology represents a promising approach to promoting resilience among African university students. Such integration acknowledges the cultural realities of students while enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of psychological interventions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Ubuntu theory and Resilience theory. These frameworks provide a comprehensive understanding of how indigenous African values and spiritual resources contribute to psychological adaptation among university students.

Ubuntu Theory

Ubuntu theory was propounded by Stanlake Samkange in 1980, alongside Tommie Marie Samkange, in their book *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwean indigenous political philosophy*. It is an African philosophical framework that emphasizes interconnectedness, mutual care, communal responsibility and collective well-being. The philosophy maintains that an individual's identity and humanity are realized through relationships with others (Ejuu & Opiyo, 2022; Niyonzima, 2024; Udisi, 2024; Metz, 2026). The expression "I am because we are" captures the essence of Ubuntu and reflects the belief that human flourishing depends on social connectedness. Ubuntu theory is relevant to counselling psychology because it highlights the importance of social support, empathy, cooperation and community participation in promoting mental health. Students who embrace Ubuntu values are likely to seek support during difficult times and contribute positively to the welfare of others. Such social interactions foster emotional stability and resilience. The theory further suggests that psychological well-being cannot be understood solely in terms of individual characteristics. Instead, well-being emerges from healthy relationships and supportive social environments. This perspective aligns with contemporary counselling approaches that emphasize the significance of social and cultural contexts in psychological functioning.

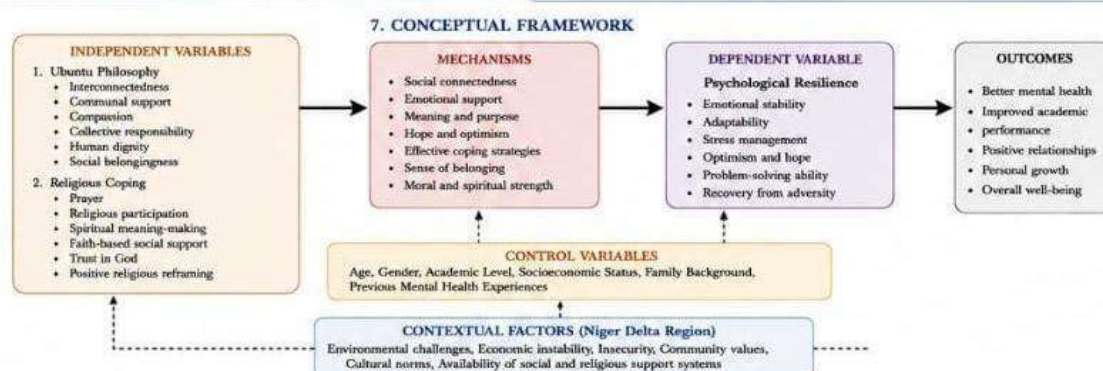
Resilience Theory

Resilience theory, propounded by Masten (2014), explains how individuals adapt successfully despite experiencing adversity, stress or traumatic events. According to Masten (2025), resilience involves ordinary adaptive processes supported by individual strengths, family resources, social relationships and community networks. The theory identifies protective factors that enhance positive adaptation. These include self-confidence, optimism, emotional regulation, social support, spiritual and effective coping skills. Protective factors reduce vulnerability to stress and facilitate recovery from adverse experiences.

Within the context of this study, Ubuntu philosophy and religious coping serve as important protective factors that strengthen resilience among university students. Ubuntu promotes social connectedness and communal support while religious coping (Pargament & Exline, 2021) provides spiritual meaning, hope and emotional comfort. Together, these frameworks offer a culturally grounded explanation for resilience among students in the Niger Delta region.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship among Ubuntu Philosophy, Religious Coping and Psychological Resilience



Source: Adapted from Ubuntu Theory (Metz, 2026), Resilience Theory (Masten, 2025) and Religious Coping Theory (Pargament & Exline, 2021)

Narrative Explanation of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework proposes that Ubuntu philosophy and religious coping independently and jointly influence psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region. Ubuntu philosophy promotes resilience through communal relationships, social support, empathy and collective responsibility. Religious coping enhances resilience through spiritual resources such as prayer, faith, hope, religious participation and meaning-making processes. The framework further assumes that demographic characteristics and contextual factors may moderate the strength of these relationships. Consequently, students who exhibit stronger Ubuntu values and positive religious coping behaviours are expected to demonstrate higher levels of psychological resilience.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive survey design. This design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to examine relationships among Ubuntu philosophy, religious coping and psychological resilience within a natural setting without manipulating variables.

Population of the Study

The population comprises all undergraduate students enrolled in public universities within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. These institutions include those located in Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Cross River and Ondo States.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 400 undergraduate students were selected from four Federal universities namely University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State; Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State and the University of Benin, Edo State using a multistage sampling procedure. Faculties and departments were randomly selected, after which students were chosen through stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation across gender, academic levels and fields of study.



Instruments for Data Collection

Three standardized instruments were utilized for data collection, which are:

1. Ubuntu Value Scale (UVS)
2. Brief Religious Coping Scale (Brief RCOPE)
3. Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)

These instruments measure communal values, religious coping behaviours and resilience respectively.

Validity and Reliability

Experts in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Measurement and Evaluation assessed the face and content validity of the instruments. Reliability indices of the instruments, obtained through Chronbach's Alpha exceeded .70.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One: What is the relationship between Ubuntu philosophy and Psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria?

Table 1: Relationship between Ubuntu philosophy and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Ubuntu philosophy	400	3.84	0.61	.62	.000
Psychological Resilience	400	3.76	0.58		

The result indicates a strong positive relationship between Ubuntu philosophy and psychological resilience ($r = .62$, $p \leq .05$). This finding suggests that students who demonstrate stronger Ubuntu values tend to exhibit higher levels of resilience. The result supports the position of Mugumbate (2020), who argues that communal support systems enhance psychological adaptation and well-being. The finding also aligns with Resilience Theory, which identifies social connectedness as a major protective factor.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between religious coping and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria?

Table 2: Correlation between Religious Coping and Psychological Resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Religious Coping	400	3.91	0.64	.68	.000
Psychological Resilience	400	3.76	0.58		

The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between religious coping and psychological resilience ($r = .68$, $p \leq .05$). This finding suggests that students who engage in positive religious coping practices are more likely to demonstrate greater resilience. The result corroborates findings by Kruk and Aboul-Enein (2024), who report that religious involvement enhances psychological adjustment and emotional well-being.



Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between Ubuntu philosophy and psychological resilience among university students of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation

Variable	r-cal	p-value	Decision
Ubuntu Philosophy and Psychological Resilience	.62	.000	Rejected

Since the p-value (.000) is less than the significant level (.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, Ubuntu philosophy significantly relates to psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between religious coping and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	r-cal	p-value	Decision
Religious coping and Psychological Resilience	.68	.000	Rejected

The p-value is less than .05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Religious coping significantly relates to psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Joint Contribution of Ubuntu Philosophy and Religious Coping

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis

Variable	Beta	t	p-value
Ubuntu Philosophy	.38	8.42	.000
Religious Coping	.46	10.37	.000

Model Summary:

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F
.74	.55	.54	242.31

The regression analysis indicates that Ubuntu philosophy and religious coping jointly account for 55% of the variance in psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria ($R^2 = .55$). This finding demonstrates the substantial contribution of cultural and spiritual resources to psychological adaption.

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that Ubuntu philosophy significantly predicts resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Students who embrace communal values, mutual support, empathy and collective responsibility exhibit stronger psychological adjustment when faced with challenges. The result supports African philosophical perspectives that emphasize the importance of community in human development (African Union, 2021; Bolanle, 2023; Nikiema, 2024). It also reinforces the argument that resilience is not merely an individual attribute but a socially embedded process.



The joint influence of Ubuntu philosophy and religious coping highlights the importance of integrating cultural and spiritual dimensions into counselling practice. Mental health interventions that neglect these dimensions may fail to address significant aspects of students' lived experiences.

Implications for Counselling Psychology Practice

The findings have several implications for counselling practice. First, counsellors should recognize Ubuntu values as important resources for promoting resilience. Interventions can encourage peer support networks, collaborative problem-solving and community engagement. Second, counsellors should adopt culturally responsive approaches that acknowledge indigenous African worldviews. Such approaches increase the relevance and effectiveness of counselling services. Third, positive religious coping strategies may be incorporated into counselling practice where they are appropriate and consistent with clients' beliefs. Counsellors can help students draw upon spiritual resources while avoiding harmful or maladaptive religious interpretations. Fourth, university counselling centres should collaborate with student organizations, community groups and faith-based institutions to create comprehensive support systems for students. Finally, counsellor education programmes should include training on African philosophies and indigenous psychological frameworks.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between Ubuntu philosophy, religious coping and psychological resilience among university students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The findings indicate that both Ubuntu philosophy and religious coping contribute significantly to resilience. Ubuntu fosters social connectedness, empathy, communal support and belongingness while religious coping provides spiritual meaning, hope and emotional strength. Together, these resources serve as important protective factors that enable students to navigate adversity effectively. The study contributes to the growing movement toward decolonizing counselling psychology by demonstrating the relevance of African philosophical and spiritual traditions in understanding mental health and resilience. Integrating these indigenous resources into counselling practice can enhance culturally responsive mental health interventions and promote student well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. University counselling centres should integrate Ubuntu principles into counselling programmes.
2. Counsellors should receive training in culturally responsive and indigenous counselling approaches.
3. Universities should strengthen peer support initiatives that promote communal engagement and social connectedness.
4. Faith-based organizations should collaborate with counselling centres in promoting student mental health.
5. Policymakers should support culturally relevant mental health programmes within higher education institutions.
6. Future researchers should conduct longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of Ubuntu and religious coping on resilience.



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THE CHURCH, MIGRATION AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This article is on the church, migration and social advancement in Africa. Migration though, is seen to be a normal human activity, in which humans have always moved from one country, locality or place of residence to settle in another, which has also affected the church in its mode of propagation through mission and evangelism. However, in recent times, it has been observed that irregular migration from Sub-Saharan Africa has been under the spotlight. Western media and politicians often use doomsday scenario to describe the supposedly millions of desperate people knocking at the gates of European Eldorado to escape poverty and warfare at home. Such a stereotypical conception of sub-Saharan African migration is not only overlooking its root causes, but it is also far from its real dynamics. This paper investigates how migration has affected both the church and social advancement in Africa, as well as how the church has handled the present trend of migration and its effects on social advancement in Africa, with Nigeria as the focal point. Historical and sociological methodologies are utilized in this research to assess the influence of migration on the church and social advancement in Africa. It was found that migration generally is often associated with better human capital development at both individual and household levels. On the inter-relationship between the church, Africa and social advancement, it was found that though the church in Africa have experienced an astronomical growth since its inception, the same could not be said about the rate of growth in social advancement in African societies, which in most cases have rather deteriorated. It was recommended that the church should step up its advisory role to the government, while the African governments themselves should show responsibility and integrity in their duties to ensure overall improvement in the social advancement of their land and people to discourage the current rate of migration and emigration.

Key words: *Church, migration, social advancement, Africa.*

Introduction

From the onset, the command of Jesus Christ to believers and the Church in general was to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mk. 16:15). So, the church could be said to be God’s people on the ‘go’, and the church is also propagated by movement and migrations. It could also be said that the movement or migration which keep the church on the move may not have favourable origins. For instance, the first major spread of the church in the New Testament times resulted from the persecution which was unleashed on the nascent Christian community following the martyrdom of Stephen who was one of the seven Deacons in the Jerusalem Church. (Acts 8:1). The believers who were scattered as a result of the persecution took the gospel out of Jerusalem to such other places as the regions of Judea and Samaria, and also to



Phoenicia and Cyprus, Cyrene and Antioch (Acts 11: 19-22). Along this line of thought John Hargreaves points out that:

The Christians' missionary activity, in fact resulted from the persecution. When the persecution took place, the Christians surely saw it as a disaster. But those who had escaped from Jerusalem and moved to new areas shared the gospel with the people of those areas. As Paul wrote from his prison (Phil. 1:12), 'what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.' It was like a seed-pod being opened by the heat of the sun and the seeds scattering and taking root far from the parent tree.¹

Sequel to this, the biblical report of the Pentecost event shows that on the day of Pentecost which marked the descent of the Holy Spirit on the believers and the formal birth and launch of the church, "there were dwelling at Jerusalem (at that time) Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven... Parthians, Medes, and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians..." (Acts 2:5, 9-11). All these were migrants both Jews and proselytes who have come from all parts of the known world to celebrate the Jewish harvest festival of weeks or the Pentecost. Many of them would also have been among the converts following the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. And many of them would have taken the Christian message back to their various destinations and also planted the church in many of those destinations as enumerated above. As we proceed in this paper, we will endeavour to observe and demonstrate how migration has affected and continues to affect the church and social advancement in African and African societies and also how the variables mutually impact one another.

Definition of Terms

The Church

From Scriptural perspectives, the church is presented as the people of God, the community and body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The biblical word 'church' (Gk *ekklesia*, Heb. *qahal*) means 'assembly.' It is thus the assembly of the 'Messianic' people of God as realized through the coming of Jesus Christ.² And as pertaining to this paper, the Church of interest here is particularly the Church in Africa. And in this regard, Ferguson et al (1988) point out that:

The rapid spread of Christianity in Africa in the 20th century has been one of the notable features of modern Christian history. For some time now it has been acceptable even to speak of a shift in Christianity's geographical and cultural centre of gravity. The heartlands of the faith are no longer in the old Christendom of Western Europe and its extension in North America, but rather are to be found in the 'Southern' continents: Latin America, parts of Asia and the Pacific, and particularly tropical Africa. This phenomenal rate of expansion of Christianity in Africa has led to an awareness that the Christian faith as professed by Africans ought to find expression in terms that arise out of African cultural values and life experience.³

Migration

Migration is defined as the movement of a person or people from one country, locality, place of residence, etc to settle in another. Migration is, first and foremost, a normal human activity. Human beings have always moved from one country, locality, place of residence to settle in another.⁴ Migration is also defined as the general process of people or animals moving from one place to another. There are many different types of migration including internal and external migration, gross or net migration, and immigration and emigration.⁵

Wikipedia.org from its perspective defines 'Human migration' as the movement of people from one place to another with intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily at a new location



(geographic region). The movement often occurs over long distances and from one country to another (external migration), but internal migration (within a single country) is the dominant form of human migration globally.⁶ Furthermore, it is noted that migration is often associated with better human capital at both individual and household level, and with better access to migration network, facilitating a possible second move. It has a high potential to improve human development, and some studies confirm that migration is the most direct route out of poverty. People may migrate as individuals, in family units or in large groups. There are four major forms of migration: invasion, conquest, colonization and emigration/immigration.⁷ The source further expatiates that 'Invasion' is the entry of a group into a territory belonging to another group, usually with force, while 'Conquest' is the taking control of a place or people by military force. 'Colonization' on the other hand is the action of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area, while 'Emigration/Immigration' is the act of leaving one's country to settle permanently in another (emigration) and moving into a new country (immigration), the source concludes.

Wikipedia further points out the reasons and/or causes of such movements, noting that people moving from their home due to forced displacement (such as a natural disaster or civil disturbance may be described as displaced persons or, if remaining in the home country, internally-displaced persons. People who flee to a different country due to political, religious, or other types of persecution in their home country can formally request shelter in the host country. These people are commonly referred to as asylum seekers. If the application is approved, their legal classification changes to that of refugees.⁸

Social Advancement

ScienceDirect.com defines social advancement as the progress and improvement of society through the utilization of technology and the establishment of policies that promote economic growth, cultural development, and overall welfare on a national and global scale.⁹ An overview from this source expatiates that social advancement is the process of improving a person's social status or position in society. It can also refer to the progress of society as a whole. On how social advancement happens, the following were listed:

- Economic growth
Through policies that promote economic growth, such as job creation and tax payment
- Cultural development
Through policies that promote cultural development, such as education and skill development.
- Welfare
Through policies that promote welfare, such as improving access to healthcare and education.

Benefits of social advancement

- Greater recognition: Through increased influences and resources
- Improved well-being: Through access to better education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.
- Improved organizational culture: Through increased social benefits and positive economic education.¹⁰



The Church, Africa and Social advancement

It is obvious that the Church in Africa could be said to have grown astronomically from the 20th to the 21st centuries. Ogbu Kalu describes the astronomical growth of Christianity in Africa citing David Barrett's annual statistics in his *World Encyclopaedia* (1982, 2000), in which he showed that the number of Christians in Africa grew from 8.75 million in 1900 to 117 million in 1970, to 335.1 million by mid-2000, and projects a figure of 360 million for mid-2003 and 600.5 million for 2005. Thus, by 1999 most Christians in the world lived in Latin America, Africa and Asia in that order; that out of 1.87 billion Christians in the world, 1.11 billion are non-white. Africa looms large again. Out of 210.6 million Evangelicals, Africa tops the list with 69.5 million, out of 423.7 million Pentecostals/Charismatic Christians in the world, 126 million live in Africa.¹¹

However, considering this astronomical growth of Christianity and the church in Africa, the same could not be said about the rate of the growth in social advancement in African societies. In fact, regarding social advancement in Africa, the growth rate could be said to be on the negative index. A report from the University of Pennsylvania – African Studies Center, on the social situation in Africa x-rays the situation in many countries and communities in Africa. It points out that the overall social situation in Africa has continued to deteriorate. This is evidenced by the rapid rate of population growth and the pressure of urbanization and rural emigration, the decay in educational and health infrastructure, growing malnutrition and poverty, the worsening plight of refugees and displaced persons, and widespread unemployment and underemployment. Severe cutbacks of expenditure on education and emphasis on cost recovery and cost sharing continue to affect adversely the education sector, evidenced in falling gross enrolment ratios, haphazard attendance, high attrition and repetition rates, low morals and exodus of teachers from the profession. In some cases, pay disputes between governments and teachers associations, as well as political tension or strife have contributed to the closure of many educational institutions.¹²

The report further points out that, as with the educational sector, so with the health sector. Women, children and youth bear a disproportionate burden of the social crisis in Africa, who constitute 70 to 80 percent of refugees, and a preponderant share of the unemployed and participants in the informal economy. African women experience the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, while the level of illiteracy among them is almost unsurpassed anywhere else, the report said.¹³

This is a vivid picture of the poor social situation in many African communities especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and the situation seem to be getting worse by the day instead of improving. An overview of reports from the International Monetary Fund and the African Union Agenda 2063 noted that while Africa faces significant challenges, there are some glimpses of hope, noting that the continent is experiencing social advancement through initiatives focused on improving education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and technological access, particularly with the increasing use of mobile technology, aiming to bridge the gap in social mobility and create a more equitable society across the society. However, issues like poverty, inequality and limited access to basic services remain key obstacles to widespread social progress.¹⁴

Some key points about social advancement in Africa from the above reports were listed as follows:

Challenges:

Poverty, malnutrition, lack of access to quality education and health care, high unemployment, gender inequality, and political instability, considered as major hurdles to social advancement in many African countries.

Positive trends:



- Education initiatives: Programs focusing on increasing girls' education and access to quality education at all levels are gaining traction
 - Mobile technology: Widespread mobile phone usage is facilitating access to information and services, including financial transactions and education platforms.
 - Government policies: African governments are trying to implement policies aimed at social protection, promoting entrepreneurship, and addressing youth unemployment.
 - Agenda 2063: The African Union's "Agenda 2063" outlines a vision for inclusive and sustainable development across the continent.
- Focus Areas for Social Advancement:
- Healthcare access: Improving healthcare infrastructure and access to essential medical services, particularly in rural areas.
 - Economic empowerment: Promoting women's participation in the workforce and entrepreneurship.
 - Quality education: Investing in teacher training and infrastructure to improve learning outcomes.
 - Governance and stability: Strengthening democratic institutions and promoting peace and security.¹⁵

On the role of the church on the social advancement of African societies, some schools of thought are actually laying blames on the church, Christianity and religion in general for making Africans to remain docile and depending more on prayers and expectation of miracles rather than using their brains to think, innovate and initiate pragmatic means through the use of science, technology and engineering to advance their societies. They thus reiterate the position of Karl Marx and his cronies of religion being the opium of the masses.¹⁶ But a question could be raised as to whether the Church or Christianity or even religion generally is responsible for the inability of Africans to use their brains to innovate and make breakthroughs in the areas of science, technology and engineering, in order to improve and advance their society. Has the church taken any actions to deter or prevent the numerous universities of science and technology, polytechnics, research centres or even the other numerous conventional universities from conducting their researches and presenting cutting-edge technological breakthroughs in the various areas of human endeavours like their Western or even their Eastern counterparts? It could be seen that the church has not constituted such obstacles or hindrances.

The major sources of problems for many African societies, nations and countries in social advancement as has earlier been highlighted in this paper have stemmed from inept, corrupt and clueless political leadership and bad governance that formulate very poor and visionless policies. This has been the bane of many African societies since the period of their independence from their colonial masters.

Migration and Social Advancement in Africa

Migration has been defined as the movement of people from one country, locality, place of residence, etc to settle in another. Within Africa and even Nigeria, various forms of migration have occurred in the past for various reasons and purposes. One major migration was the one resulting from the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade which involved the transportation by slave traders, of enslaved African people to the Americas. European slave ships used the triangular trade route and its Middle Passage. Europeans established a coastal slave trade in the 15th century and trade to the Americas began in the 16th century, lasting through the 19th century. Current estimates are that about 12 million to 12.8 million Africans were shipped across the Atlantic over a span of 400 years.¹⁷ The



number purchased by the traders was considerably higher, as the passage had a high death rate, with between 1.2 and 2.4 million dying during the voyage, and millions more in seasoning camps in the Caribbean after arrival in the new world.¹⁸

There is no doubt that this migration brought about by the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade did not bring about social advancement to Africa, rather it brought about retrogression and much harm on the African society. Then came the period of the abolition of the slave trade and its replacement with legitimate trade and the subsequent rise of evangelical revival and awakening in Europe and North America. The formation of missionary societies and the subsequent engagement in Christian missionary activities to Africa and elsewhere with the assistance of liberated slaves in some of the African regions which brought about another form of migration back to Africa. This also had some positive impacts on the African people and continent. However, the rise of colonialism almost at the same period which brought about the colonization of many African lands, regions and peoples was another development in migration which brought much negative effects and retardation on Africa and her people.

Main Causes of Migration in contemporary African Societies

Achille Dargaud Forfact and Joel Nkeng Akendung in their online article note that in recent years, irregular migration from sub-Saharan Africa has been under the spotlight. Western media and politicians often use doomsday scenarios to describe the supposedly millions of desperate people knocking at the gates of European Eldorado to escape poverty and warfare at home. Such a stereotypical conception of sub-Saharan African migration is not only overlooking its root causes but it is also far from its real dynamics.¹⁹ The article went on to point out that, inspired by the extensive literature on international migration and based on data availability, 27 potential root causes of migration were selected to cover 30 sub-Saharan countries for the period between 2002 and 2016. The causes of net migration and resultant refugee population in Africa were thus traced to factors which include – gross domestic product per capita, domestic credit, trade, foreign direct investment inflows, external debts, youth unemployment, natural resources, rents, international tourism, military expenditure, health expenditure, undernourishment, food production, life expectancy, HIV prevalence population, corruption,²⁰ among others.

It was also further observed from the piece that in this case of sub-Saharan Africa, colonization and neoliberal capitalism have brought about financial liberalization, free trade, privatization of state-owned companies, atrophy of welfare policies, adoption of Western religions and educational systems, and the ineluctable tyranny of foreign aid, debt, and investments. Combined with the unfair subsidies, non-tariff barriers, and dumping prices, implemented by core capitalist countries, those artifacts have altered the core identity of Africans and created masses prone to migrate.²¹

Migration in Nigeria

With regards to migration as it relates to Nigeria, Odeyemi I. Oluwabukunmi articulating on the issue, observed that migration is integral to the history of the country. He further notes that in recent times, data confirms the heightened rate of migration from the country abroad. Societal factors such as unemployment, poor infrastructure, poor standard of living, insecurity, inflation amidst preference for greener pasture, are principal reasons for migration from Nigeria.²²

Thus, in an overview of migration in Nigeria, Odeyemi shows that Nigeria has experienced migration of people across and within its borders. During the colonial period of the 20th century, the country recorded massive internal migration as people moved from villages and towns into the cities. From the post-colonial period until the 1970s, movement in Nigeria remained mainly within



the scope. Although Nigerians also ventured outside the country to West African countries, the United Kingdom and the United States, the majority had an ultimate goal of returning.²³

The write-up went on to observe that, in the 1970s, although demands for labour grew in developed countries due to economic expansion, Nigeria also experienced an oil boom that raised the standard of living and improved the economy. As a result of this, Nigerians had minute reasons to permanently migrate from the country; therefore, most migrants travelled on temporary visas. Thus, Nigerian students and some other citizens sometimes go on vacation with temporary visas, with few exceptions. Also, the value of the Nigerian currency was very strong and stable at that time. And so, as a result, only few Nigerians valued emigration over living within the country as domestic working conditions were attractive, internally competitive, and the environment was relatively safe.²⁴

However, as time went on, conditions started to depreciate rapidly. By the 1980's, the heavy dependence on petroleum among other factors like the Structural Adjustment Programme, plunged the Nigerian economy into recession. This coupled with political instability adversely effected livelihoods. With various job opportunity and living conditions outside of the Nigerian border, many Nigerians saw this offer as a life changing opportunity. From this point onwards, international migration of Nigerian citizens increased and people already outside the country changed their status from temporary to permanent residents.²⁵

The migration trend continued to increase and even skyrocket in Nigeria up to the contemporary times. Presently, factors such as the state of the Nigerian socio-economic and political sphere, have heightened migration of Nigerians to other countries. Coupled with this also the prospect of better opportunities abroad. Nigeria, being a developing country that is faced with mounting systemic issues like unemployment, corruption, poor leadership, infrastructural decay, non-functional industries, insecurity, inflation, and a high poverty rate, among other issues, these gravely impact the educational system, work, businesses, and overall quality of life. Despite availability of resources such as a growing labour force and young population, yet poor and inadequate management has reduced the productivity of the Nigerian economy. These trends have exacerbated the outward flow of Nigerians, especially professionals, entrepreneurs and students, to other countries.²⁶

Rationale for Migration and Its Impacts

It has been observed that from the late 20th century, and most especially, in this 21st century, that socio-economic and political instability has hampered development in Nigeria. This is a major factor that has fostered migration from Nigeria, along with the pursuit of societal relevance and affluence. Many view migration out of the country as an achievement and a thing of pride. Every year, the country produces large numbers of graduates from tertiary institutions; however, the labour market is unable to absorb this surplus labour force, contributing to a high rate of unemployment in the country. And so in Nigeria, poverty, unemployment, population growth, inflation, the low value of currency, lack of basic health and education facilities, public debt, insecurity, human rights abuses, corruption, conflict and discrimination are observed as the push factors for international migration. On the other hand, the prospect of a better wage, improved living standards, safety, political freedom, reunification with family and friends, and personal development are the pull factors that attract Nigerians to other countries.²⁷

Consequently, the large number of migrants out of the country, especially among the highly skilled, has resulted in a massive brain drain. The skills needed to contribute to Nigeria's development go instead to the new country of residence. In the health sector for instance, with many medical practitioners leaving the country due to the push factor like inadequate medical facilities and poor working conditions; the development of the health sector in Nigeria is faced with serious



challenges. It is also observed that, although the inflow of remittances contributes to economic development, especially the livelihood of direct recipients, this in no way can mitigate the negative impact of brain drain as an effect of migration in Nigeria, nor does it alleviate the socio-economic and political challenges being combated in Nigeria.²⁸

Findings:

- From its inception, the Church has been impacted both positively and also negatively from the effects and consequences of migration and social change.
- Migration is defined as the movement of a person or people from one country, locality, place of residence to settle in another. Thus, migration is seen first and foremost, as a normal human activity as human beings have always moved from one country, locality, or place of residence to settle in another. Types of migration include internal and external migration, gross or net migration, and immigration and emigration.
- Human migration from one place to another may be with intentions to settle permanently or temporarily at a new location. Migration is often associated with better human capital at both individual and household levels. It is said to have a high potential to improve human development, and some studies have also confirmed that migration is the most direct route out of poverty.
- Four major forms of migration were noted which included: invasion, conquest, colonization and emigration/immigration.
- Social advancement is seen as the progress and improvement of society through the utilization of technology and the establishment of policies that promote economic growth, cultural development, and overall welfare on a national and global scale.
- Furthermore, social advancement is the process of improving a person's social status or position in society and can also refer to the progress of society as a whole. It can be achieved through economic growth, cultural development and welfare. Its benefits include greater recognition, improved well-being and improved organizational culture.
- On the inter-relationship between the Church, Africa and social advancement, it was observed that though the church in Africa could be said to have experienced astronomical growth since its inception, the same could not be said about the rate of growth in social advancement in African societies. It was rather found that, regarding social advancement, Africa has rather been on the negative growth index. Studies show that the overall social situation in Africa has continued to deteriorate. This is evidenced by the rapid rate of population growth, the pressure of urbanization and rural emigration, the decay in educational and health infrastructure, growing malnutrition and poverty, the worsening plight of refugees and displaced persons, and widespread unemployment and underemployment, among other social malaise.
- While Africa continues to face significant challenges in the areas enumerated, some glimpses of hope from an IMF report and also that of the African Union Agenda 2063, point out that the continent is experiencing social advancement through initiatives focused on improving education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and technological access, particularly with the increasing use of mobile technology, aiming to bridge the gaps in social mobility and create a more equitable society.
- On the causes of the increasing present trend of migration out of both Africa generally and Nigeria in particular, many factors were identified, which included bad governance and official governmental corruption, leading to youth unemployment, undernourishment, debt.



Also, unfair subsidies, dumping prices, non-tariff barriers implemented by core capitalist countries, have altered the core identity of Africans and created masses prone to migrate.

- Furthermore, societal factors such as unemployment, poor infrastructure, poor standard of living, insecurity, inflation amidst preferences for greener pasture, are principal reasons for migration from Nigeria.
- All these factors, coupled with the low value of the Nigerian currency, lack of basic health and educational facilities, human rights abuses, corruption, conflict and discrimination are observed as the push factors for international migration. On the other hand, the prospects of a better wage, improved living standards, safety, political freedom and personal development are the pull factors that attract Nigerians to other countries. Consequently, the large number of migrants out of the country, especially among the highly skilled, has resulted in a massive brain drain.

Recommendations:

- The Church should step up its advisory role on the various levels of government, urging them to be alive to their responsibilities, eschewing corruption and bad governance and addressing social and developmental issues so as to improve the people's standard of living and give them confidence to stay in their jobs and not abandon them in favour of the outward movement of migration.
- African governments on their own part should show responsibility and integrity in the discharge of their official duties and have the interest of their people and nations foremost in their hearts so as to serve for the good of the people and the development of their nations.
- When the welfare and wellbeing of the people are served and protected, the tendency to migrate in search of better means of livelihood will diminish.
- African people themselves should learn to take their destinies in their own hands by holding their leaders to account and taking democratic measures to replace unaccountable and rogue leadership.
- Factors that militate against the growth, development and social advancement of African states, nations and societies should be sorted and strictly addressed.
- Issues of corruption, bad governance, lack of transparency and accountability in government, theft of public funds and diversion of public funds for private use, and other financial crimes by those in authority should be strictly checked and severely punished to serve as deterrents.
- Key social infrastructure should be put in place – industrial centres established to provide employment to the teeming youth graduates, and the security of the skilled workers and various key sectors – health, education, energy and power should be guaranteed through favourable policies and welfare packages.
- Experts and technocrats should be appointed to man strategic sectors of the economy to provide proper management and direction so as to achieve desirable results.
- The draining of the national resources and wealth by corrupt politicians and government appointees should be discouraged through proper legislation and laws.

Conclusion:

It could be rightly said that everything flows from good leadership, patriotism, good followership, transparency, accountability and the fear of God. It is obvious that things have already gone out of hands in many sub-Saharan African nations – impoverishment of the citizenry,



unemployment, poor wages, poor infrastructure and poor social welfare for most citizenry, resulting to the present trend of rush for migration to find greener pastures elsewhere. However, if the leadership of the African nations should do a turn-around and implement favourable policies for the wellbeing of their people and nations, the trend could be gradually reversed and people will start settling down to work for their own welfare and the development of their nations.

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POWER DYNAMICS AND THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL IN TESS ONWUEME'S *THE DESERT ENCROACHES*

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Abstract

This paper examines the themes of power, oppression, and the politics of survival in Tess Onwueme's *The Desert Encroaches*. The study explores how the playwright employs allegory, symbolism, satire, and animal characterization to expose systems of domination, exploitation, and ecological destruction in postcolonial African society. Although scholarship on environmental issues in African literature has expanded in recent time, there remains limited critical attention specifically devoted to the interconnectedness of power, oppression, and the politics of survival in *The Desert Encroaches*. Most existing studies focus either on feminist concerns, ecological issues, or general socio-political criticism without thoroughly interrogating how structures of power shape survival strategies among oppressed groups. Addressing this gap, this study undertakes a critical analysis of *The Desert Encroaches* by examining how Onwueme constructs survival as both a political and existential struggle within oppressive socio-economic systems. Drawing on the Marxist and sociological approaches as theoretical frameworks, the paper argues that the play reflects the socio-political realities of inequality, authoritarian leadership, neo-imperialism, and the suffering of marginalized groups. The study further reveals that survival in the play transcends physical existence to include political resistance, collective solidarity, and revolutionary consciousness. Through the metaphor of the encroaching desert, Onwueme dramatizes the gradual destruction of human dignity and societal stability caused by greed and abuse of power. The paper concludes that *The Desert Encroaches* remains a significant socio-political drama that advocates resistance against oppression and calls for justice, unity, and social transformation in contemporary African society.

Keywords: *Power, oppression, survival, politics, allegory, Tess Onwueme, African drama.*

Introduction

African drama has consistently served as a medium for socio-political criticism and cultural interrogation. Nigerian dramatists, in particular, deploy drama as an instrument for exposing the contradictions of power, oppression, inequality, and survival in postcolonial African societies. Among these dramatists, Tess Onwueme occupies a remarkable position because of her revolutionary dramaturgy and commitment to social justice. Her play, *The Desert Encroaches*, presents a biting allegory of exploitation, domination, environmental destruction, and the struggle



for survival among oppressed peoples. The play dramatizes a world divided between powerful and powerless forces, using animal imagery and symbolism to expose global and local systems of oppression.

Published in 1985 and winner of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Award for Drama, *The Desert Encroaches* reflects the anxieties of postcolonial Africa within the context of neo-imperialism, militarism, ecological destruction, and economic exploitation. Through satire and allegory, Onwueme interrogates the politics of domination where the weak are systematically silenced and exploited by the powerful. The play equally explores how oppressed communities negotiate survival amidst violence, hunger, environmental collapse, and political intimidation.

This paper examines the themes of power, oppression, and the politics of survival in *The Desert Encroaches*. Using sociological and Marxist critical frameworks, the study argues that Onwueme exposes the exploitative structures of global capitalism and authoritarian politics while simultaneously advocating collective resistance and social transformation.

Power has remained one of the most contested concepts in literary and cultural studies because it determines access to resources, shapes social relations, and influences the conditions under which individuals and communities negotiate existence. In contemporary African literature, power is rarely represented as a neutral force; rather, it is portrayed as an ideological mechanism through which political elites, multinational corporations, traditional authorities, and global capitalist structures sustain domination over vulnerable populations. The unequal distribution of power often generates social exclusion, environmental degradation, economic deprivation, gender inequality, and violent conflicts, compelling marginalized communities to devise various strategies of survival. African dramatists have consistently explored these realities by presenting theatre as a medium for interrogating oppressive systems while advocating justice, equity, and sustainable human existence.

The concept of power dynamics refers to the shifting relationships of authority, influence, domination, negotiation, and resistance among individuals, institutions, and social groups. Rather than existing as a fixed possession, power continually circulates through social, political, economic, cultural, and ideological structures. Michel Foucault argues that power is diffused throughout society and operates through institutions, discourses, and everyday practices rather than solely through coercive political authority (Foucault 92). Similarly, Steven Lukes conceptualizes power as operating on three interconnected levels: overt decision-making, agenda control, and ideological manipulation, where dominant groups shape people's perceptions to secure consent without physical force (Lukes 24–27). Antonio Gramsci further explains this phenomenon through the concept of cultural hegemony, arguing that ruling classes maintain dominance by securing the consent of subordinate groups through ideology and cultural institutions rather than through violence alone (Gramsci 12). These perspectives reveal that power extends beyond governmental authority to include economic control, environmental policies, and cultural practices that influence everyday life. Closely related to power dynamics is the politics of survival, a concept that examines how individuals and communities negotiate existence under conditions of oppression, ecological crisis, poverty, displacement, and political marginalization. Survival is not merely biological endurance but also involves resistance, adaptation, resilience, and the struggle to preserve dignity amidst systemic inequalities. Achille Mbembe contends that postcolonial African societies are characterized by political structures that determine who may flourish and who must exist under conditions of perpetual precarity (Mbembe 24). Likewise, Frantz Fanon argues that colonial and neo-colonial systems create social realities in which the oppressed must constantly negotiate their humanity within structures designed to sustain exploitation (Fanon 30). Consequently, the politics of survival becomes a struggle against both material deprivation and ideological domination.



Environmental degradation has emerged as one of the defining challenges confronting many African communities. Climate change, desertification, deforestation, oil exploration, pollution, and unsustainable resource extraction have intensified poverty, food insecurity, migration, and violent competition over diminishing natural resources. While environmental crises are often explained as natural phenomena, African Eco critics argue that they are largely products of unequal political and economic power relations. Rob Nixon describes this condition as "slow violence," referring to environmental destruction whose devastating effects accumulate gradually but disproportionately affect poor and marginalized populations (Nixon 2). This understanding shifts environmental discourse beyond ecology to encompass questions of justice, governance, and human survival.

African literature has consistently responded to these environmental realities by examining the intersection of ecology, politics, and social justice. Writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Niyi Osundare, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Tanure Ojaide, Helon Habila, and Tess Onwueme expose the consequences of environmental exploitation while emphasizing the resilience of local communities. Their works challenge exploitative systems that privilege economic profit over ecological sustainability and human welfare. Through literary representation, these writers transform environmental crises into ethical and political questions requiring collective action.

Among contemporary African dramatists, Tess Onwueme occupies a distinctive position because of her sustained engagement with gender, environmental justice, indigenous knowledge systems, and community resistance. Her dramatic oeuvre interrogates the interconnectedness of patriarchy, capitalism, ecological destruction, and political oppression while foregrounding marginalized voices as agents of transformation. Rather than portraying environmental degradation solely as an ecological problem, Onwueme demonstrates that environmental crises are fundamentally linked to unequal power relations that determine access to land, water, food, and other essential resources.

In *The Desert Encroaches*, Onwueme dramatizes the devastating effects of desertification on rural communities whose livelihoods depend on the land. The encroaching desert functions not merely as a geographical phenomenon but as a metaphor for political neglect, economic exploitation, and environmental injustice. As fertile land disappears, the struggle for survival intensifies, exposing unequal relations between governing authorities, local communities, and the forces responsible for environmental degradation. The play illustrates how ecological collapse transforms social relations, intensifies poverty, destabilizes communal life, and compels ordinary people to negotiate increasingly hostile conditions of existence.

The struggle for survival represented in the play also reveals the gendered dimensions of environmental crises. Women bear disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water, and domestic stability while simultaneously confronting patriarchal structures that limit their participation in decision-making processes. Consequently, environmental degradation intersects with gender inequality, making survival both an ecological and political struggle. Onwueme's representation of these realities challenges conventional understandings of environmental discourse by demonstrating that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing questions of social justice, equitable governance, and inclusive participation.

Although considerable scholarship has examined Tess Onwueme's dramatic works from feminist, postcolonial, eco-critical, and Marxist perspectives, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the intersection of power dynamics and the politics of survival as complementary analytical frameworks in *The Desert Encroaches*. Existing studies often privilege environmental degradation or gender politics independently, without sufficiently examining how relations of power shape the strategies through which marginalized communities negotiate ecological and socio-economic crises. This study addresses that gap by investigating how the distribution and exercise of power determine survival within the play's ecological landscape.



Accordingly, this study argues that *The Desert Encroaches* presents environmental degradation as a manifestation of unequal power relations while portraying survival as a continuous process of resistance, adaptation, and communal resilience. By situating the play within contemporary debates on power, environmental justice, and sustainable development, the study contributes to African literary criticism by demonstrating that ecological crises cannot be separated from the political structures that produce and sustain them. Ultimately, the paper establishes that Onwueme's drama is both a critique of oppressive systems and a compelling vision of collective survival founded on justice, environmental stewardship, and human dignity.

Statement of the Problems

Despite growing scholarly interest in environmental issues in African literature, limited attention has been paid to how African drama links ecological degradation to political oppression and survival politics. Most existing studies focus either on feminist concerns, ecological issues, or general socio-political criticism without thoroughly interrogating how structures of power shape survival strategies among oppressed groups. This paper therefore contributes to existing scholarship by critically examining how Onwueme constructs survival as both a political and existential struggle within oppressive socio-economic systems.

Furthermore, analyses of African drama often prioritize themes of political authoritarianism while neglecting environmental injustice as a central site of human oppression. This gap limits understanding of how environmental violence intersects with patriarchy, poverty, and development failure. This study addresses this gap by examining *The Desert Encroaches* as an eco-social text that connects environmental degradation to human oppression and articulates survival as a political act.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the interplay of power dynamics and the politics of survival in Tess Onwueme's *The Desert Encroaches*.

The specific objectives are to:

- Examine the various structures and manifestations of power in *The Desert Encroaches*, with particular emphasis on political, economic, environmental, and ideological forms of domination.
- Investigate how environmental degradation and ecological injustice shape the politics of survival among individuals and communities represented in the play.
- Analyze the strategies of resistance, resilience, and adaptation employed by marginalized characters in negotiating oppressive power relations and environmental crises.
- Evaluate Tess Onwueme's use of dramatic techniques, symbolism, and environmental discourse as instruments for critiquing unequal power structures and advocating ecological justice, sustainable development, and human survival.

Methodology

The research employs the Marxist and sociological approaches as theoretical frameworks. The Marxist approach is used to examine issues of class struggle, exploitation, domination, and inequality represented in the play. It helps in analyzing the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed as dramatized through the stronger and weaker animals in the text. The sociological approach, on the other hand, enables the study to investigate the interaction between literature and society by relating the events and characters in the play to socio-political realities in postcolonial African societies.



Data collected from the primary and secondary sources are subjected to critical content analysis. Relevant scenes, dialogues, symbols, and dramatic actions are carefully examined to identify manifestations of power dynamics, oppression, resistance, and survival strategies within the play. The study also interprets the symbolic significance of the desert, animal imagery, songs, and allegorical representations used by Onwueme to portray socio-political and environmental crises. Through this methodology, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Tess Onwueme uses drama as a medium for exposing oppressive systems and advocating collective survival, resistance, and social transformation in contemporary society.

Literature Review

Critical studies on Tess Onwueme's dramatic works have largely focused on feminism, socio-political resistance, environmental consciousness, and postcolonial identity. Scholars have consistently acknowledged Onwueme as one of the most radical voices in contemporary African drama because of her commitment to exposing social injustice and advocating transformation.

Olu Obafemi (1994) examines Onwueme's dramaturgy from a feminist perspective and argues that her plays challenge patriarchal domination and social inequality. According to Obafemi, Onwueme's dramatic vision is rooted in revolutionary aesthetics that seek to liberate marginalized groups from oppressive structures. Although his study concentrates mainly on gender relations, it provides useful insight into Onwueme's broader concern with power and resistance.

Nwoga and Oburumu (2024) analyze *The Desert Encroaches* as a sociological text that reflects class inequality and social exploitation. They argue that the play exposes the tension between oppressors and the oppressed through symbolic characterization and allegorical representation. Their study further notes that the play advocates egalitarianism and social justice as necessary responses to domination and exploitation.

Roy-Omoni (2022) investigates socio-political realities in the selected plays of Tess Onwueme, Femi Osofisan, and Sam Ukala. He contends that Onwueme employs drama as a weapon against corruption, oppression, and political irresponsibility in African societies. The study highlights how her dramatic techniques expose the failures of postcolonial leadership and the suffering of ordinary citizens.

Eco-critical studies have also examined environmental concerns in Onwueme's plays. Uzoji (2023) observes that ecological destruction and environmental crises occupy significant positions in contemporary African literature. According to him, Onwueme portrays environmental degradation as a consequence of greed, exploitation, and irresponsible leadership. This perspective is particularly relevant to *The Desert Encroaches*, where the desert symbolizes ecological collapse and socio-political decay.

Other scholars have examined allegory and symbolism in African drama as tools for political criticism. Researchers note that the use of animal characters and symbolic landscapes enables dramatists to universalize human experiences while avoiding direct political censorship. In *The Desert Encroaches*, Onwueme's use of animal imagery broadens the thematic relevance of the play beyond a specific geographical setting to encompass global systems of oppression.

Indeed, the questions of power, domination, resistance, and survival have occupied a central position in literary scholarship because they illuminate the mechanisms through which social inequalities are produced, maintained, and contested. Across African literature, scholars increasingly acknowledge that political authority, economic exploitation, environmental degradation, and cultural hegemony are interconnected realities that determine the lived experiences of marginalized communities. Consequently, literary criticism has expanded beyond textual aesthetics to examine how literature interrogates unequal power relations and imagines alternative possibilities for justice and human survival.



The theoretical understanding of power has evolved considerably within the humanities. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argue that every society is fundamentally structured by material relations of production in which the ruling class controls both economic resources and the ideological institutions that sustain its dominance. According to Marxist thought, political power is inseparable from economic ownership, making exploitation an inevitable feature of class society (Marx and Engels 15). Their formulation provides an important framework for understanding how material inequalities generate social conflicts and compel subordinate groups to struggle for liberation. In African literary criticism, Marxist theory has remained influential because it explains how colonialism, neo-colonial capitalism, and indigenous elite domination perpetuate poverty, displacement, and environmental exploitation.

Michel Foucault broadens the understanding of power by rejecting its exclusive association with state authority. Instead, he argues that power circulates through institutions, discourses, social practices, and systems of knowledge, making it productive as well as repressive (Foucault 92). From this perspective, domination occurs not only through coercion but also through the regulation of everyday behaviour and the production of accepted "truths." Foucault's conception is particularly relevant to African literary texts where environmental degradation, bureaucratic governance, and cultural domination operate through complex institutional networks rather than direct political violence alone.

Steven Lukes further develops the discourse by identifying three dimensions of power. Beyond visible decision-making, power also determines which issues are excluded from public debate and shapes the consciousness of subordinate groups so that domination appears natural or inevitable (Lukes 24-30). Antonio Gramsci similarly argues that ruling classes secure hegemony through ideological consent rather than force, employing education, religion, culture, and the media to normalize unequal social arrangements (Gramsci 57). These formulations have significantly influenced African literary criticism because they explain why oppressed communities often internalize structures that perpetuate their own marginalization.

The concept of survival has equally attracted scholarly attention within African postcolonial studies. Frantz Fanon maintains that colonial domination systematically dehumanizes indigenous populations, compelling them to negotiate survival within structures deliberately designed to deny their humanity (Fanon 35). Similarly, Achille Mbembe argues that postcolonial African states frequently exercise power through conditions of precarity in which entire populations struggle merely to survive politically, economically, and socially (Mbembe 66). These arguments extend the discourse from biological existence to encompass dignity, identity, resistance, and social justice. Environmental criticism has further transformed discussions of survival. Lawrence Buell contends that literature plays a crucial role in exposing the relationship between ecological destruction and human suffering by encouraging ethical responsibility toward the natural environment (Buell 2). Greg Garrard similarly argues that ecocriticism examines how literary texts represent ecological crises, environmental justice, and human interactions with nature (Garrard 5). Rob Nixon advances this conversation through his concept of "slow violence," describing environmental devastation as a gradual but destructive process whose effects disproportionately burden impoverished communities (Nixon 2). These perspectives demonstrate that ecological degradation is inseparable from political and economic structures of domination.

Within African literary studies, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o consistently argues that literature must challenge exploitative political and economic systems while restoring indigenous cultural agency (Ngũgĩ 16). Biodun Jeyifo similarly views African drama as a medium of ideological contestation through which playwrights interrogate authoritarian governance, class oppression, and social inequality. Tejumola Olaniyan extends this argument by demonstrating that contemporary African theatre engages critically with globalization, neoliberal capitalism, and the politics of identity. Harry



Garuba further emphasizes that African literary texts frequently integrate indigenous epistemologies with contemporary socio-political concerns, thereby producing alternative visions of development rooted in communal ethics.

Critical scholarship on Tess Onwueme has expanded considerably over the past four decades. Critics generally acknowledge her as one of Africa's foremost playwrights whose dramatic works combine feminism, environmental consciousness, political satire, and social commitment. Olu Obafemi argues that Onwueme's dramaturgy develops a distinctive feminist aesthetic that employs allegory and symbolism to interrogate capitalist exploitation, patriarchal domination, and political injustice. Examining *The Desert Encroaches* alongside *Ban Empty Barn*, Obafemi concludes that allegory enables Onwueme to expose exploitative structures while envisioning liberatory social transformation.

Scholars also recognize *The Desert Encroaches* as one of Onwueme's most overtly political allegories. The play employs animal symbolism to dramatize unequal global power relations in which stronger nations exploit weaker societies through economic, military, and environmental domination. This allegorical strategy extends beyond Nigerian politics to critique international systems of inequality and ecological injustice.

Despite these scholarly contributions, there remains limited critical attention specifically devoted to the interconnectedness of power, oppression, and the politics of survival in *The Desert Encroaches*. Most existing studies focus either on feminist concerns, ecological issues, or general socio-political criticism without thoroughly interrogating how structures of power shape survival strategies among oppressed groups. This paper therefore contributes to existing scholarship by critically examining how Onwueme constructs survival as both a political and existential struggle within oppressive socio-economic systems.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Marxist and sociological approaches to literary criticism. Marxist criticism examines class relations, economic exploitation, and power dynamics in society. It focuses on how dominant classes oppress subordinate groups through political and economic control. The sociological approach, on the other hand, studies literature as a reflection of social realities and ideological structures.

The relevance of Marxism to *The Desert Encroaches* lies in its representation of class oppression and exploitation. The stronger animals symbolize dominant imperial powers and local ruling elites, while the weaker animals represent oppressed nations, peasants, workers, and marginalized groups. Onwueme uses these symbolic relationships to expose the inequalities inherent in global and African socio-political systems.

The sociological framework equally helps in understanding the relationship between literature and society in the play. Onwueme mirrors the socio-economic crises, political corruption, and environmental degradation affecting many African societies. The play becomes a social document that interrogates injustice while advocating resistance and transformation.

Textual Analysis—*The Desert Encroaches* Power and the Dynamics of Domination

Power constitutes one of the central concerns of Tess Onwueme's *The Desert Encroaches*. The play can be interpreted as Onwueme's artistic commentary on global politics and ideological intrigues which rock the world in present times (Evwierhoma 139). The play presents a society polarized between the dominant and subordinate forces, employing animal symbolism and imagery to reveal both local and global structures of oppression. In the hierarchical world of the play, certain animals dominate others through violence, intimidation, and manipulation. The Lion, Bear, Hawk,



Wolf, and other predatory animals symbolize world superpowers and oppressive ruling classes that monopolize authority and resources. These powerful forces determine the fate of weaker animals and exploit them for selfish interests. Such weaker animals include Goats, Sheep, Dove, Donkey, Cow, Fox, Tortoise, etc.

Onwueme portrays power as destructive and exploitative rather than protective. The dominant animals maintain their authority through fear and military superiority. Their obsession with weapons, territorial expansion, and domination mirrors the realities of imperialism and militarization in contemporary global politics. The references to Hiroshima nuclear experience and arms race in Movement five (*The Desert Encroaches* 54-55) of the play suggest the dangers posed by global superpowers whose struggles for supremacy threaten weaker nations and the environment. Reflecting the history of Hiroshima, Tortoise remarks:

Tortoise: The evidence of history still is before us.

Hiroshima and Baghdad are not far from us at all...

Let us turn back the pages of history and look reality in the face
(Onwueme 175).

The playwright also uses the folklore of Obu and Nza which epitomizes confrontation as a warning against the acts of war. As the one-legged soldier declares:

...the real enemy is the master who declares war.

When a war is won, we are the losers.

All wars are won on tears. (Onwueme 183).

The politics of power in the play also reflects African postcolonial realities where leaders oppress the masses instead of protecting them. The weak animals suffer hunger, displacement, and insecurity while the powerful continue to enrich themselves. Through this depiction, Onwueme criticizes the betrayal of leadership in many African societies where governance has become an instrument of oppression rather than service. Furthermore, the play reveals that power functions through ideological manipulation. The oppressed are often deceived into believing that their suffering is natural or inevitable. This reflects Marxist notions of ideological control where ruling elites sustain oppression by shaping consciousness and suppressing resistance.

Oppression and Exploitation in the Animal Kingdom

Oppression is vividly dramatized in the relationship between the stronger and weaker animals. The Sheep, Cow, Donkey, and other harmless animals are constantly exploited, beaten, humiliated, and consumed by predators. These animals symbolize the oppressed masses whose labour sustains society yet who remain victims of poverty and violence. Lions for instance, "feed on Goats and Sheep...and even on cows too" (*The Desert Encroaches* 163). The Donkey, represents the suffering proletariat burdened with labour but denied dignity and reward. Similarly, the Cow produces nourishment for society but becomes a victim of exploitation and slaughter. This reflects capitalist systems where workers produce wealth but remain impoverished while elites accumulate power and privilege.

Onwueme's use of allegory intensifies the universality of oppression in the play. The forest becomes a metaphor for the world itself where exploitation transcends geographical boundaries. The suffering of the weak animals mirrors the experiences of colonized nations, impoverished African states, and marginalized communities across the globe. The following conversations explain the feelings of lamentation and internal squabbles among the weaker animals:

Cows: Oh! Oh! My unborn child.

I wish you would come without breast for the world to milk and fight for.



Sheep: That is a bad prayer.

Cow: You're ever ready to provide meat.

Sheep: And if there is no milk?

Tortoise: Ha ha ha!

The world always feeds on itself. Lions feed on goats and sheep...

Sheep: And on cows too. (Onwueme 163-164)

The play also explores environmental oppression. The encroaching desert symbolizes ecological devastation caused by greed, militarization, and irresponsible exploitation of natural resources. Environmental destruction in the play is not accidental but a consequence of oppressive systems driven by selfish interests. This ecological dimension aligns Onwueme's work with eco-critical concerns about environmental justice and human survival. Moreover, oppression in the play operates psychologically. Fear becomes a tool of control. The weaker animals live in perpetual anxiety because they are aware of their vulnerability before the predators. This atmosphere of fear reflects authoritarian societies where citizens are silenced through violence and intimidation.

The Politics of Survival

One of the most profound concerns of *The Desert Encroaches* is survival. The weaker animals struggle to preserve their existence in a hostile environment dominated by violence and exploitation. Survival becomes both physical and political. Physically, the oppressed animals contend with hunger, insecurity, environmental decay, and constant threats of annihilation. The "encroaching desert" symbolizes the gradual destruction of life and hope. The imagery of dryness and barrenness reflects socio-economic hardship in many African societies where poverty and political instability threaten human existence.

Politically, survival requires resistance and solidarity. Onwueme suggests that oppressed communities can only survive through collective action and unity. The play advocates revolutionary consciousness among the weak animals as a means of confronting oppressive structures. The Spider, in particular, emerges as a symbol of resistance and strategic struggle against domination. The politics of survival in the play also reflects postcolonial African realities. African nations often struggle to survive within global systems controlled by economically and militarily powerful nations. The exploitation of African resources, political interference, and economic dependency contribute to the metaphorical "desertification" of the continent.

Onwueme equally emphasizes survival through voice and protest. Songs, choruses, and collective lamentations in the play function as acts of resistance against silence and oppression. The dramatic structure itself becomes a protest performance through which the marginalized reclaim visibility and agency.

Allegory, Symbolism, and Dramatic Technique

Allegory is a literary device in which characters, actions, settings, and events represent broader moral, political, religious, or philosophical ideas beyond their literal meanings. According to M. H. Abrams, allegory is an extended narrative in which virtually every major element possesses both a literal and symbolic significance (Abrams 5). Unlike ordinary symbolism, allegory operates systematically so that the entire dramatic structure conveys an underlying ideological message.

African dramatists frequently employ allegory to criticize oppressive political systems while avoiding direct political confrontation. Allegory enables writers to universalize local experiences by transforming specific events into broader reflections on human society. *The Desert Encroaches* is fundamentally an allegorical drama. The advancing desert symbolizes more than ecological change;



it represents the gradual destruction of justice, hope, and communal well-being through political irresponsibility and environmental exploitation. Likewise, the struggle among the play's characters reflects wider conflicts between the powerful and the powerless, the privileged and the marginalized, and those who exploit nature versus those whose survival depends upon it. Consequently, the play transcends its immediate setting to comment on environmental injustice throughout Africa and the developing world.

Onwueme's use of allegory is central to the effectiveness of the play. The animal kingdom serves as a symbolic representation of human society. Through anthropomorphic characters, the playwright universalizes the realities of oppression and power struggle as captured in the following dialogue:

FOREST CRIER: My mother was born when the world's conscience was deep, deep like a well.

As I grew up, the earth's core became shallow. The world's conscience had dried up. The Sahara now threatens the entire kingdom. The green leaves in the world's heart, withering each day...for the desert encroaches. And men, fuelling the sun...to maim the minds...Ambition of the powers like fire ravaging, ravishing the green lands where men plant their hopes. Their seeds...ah...

DOVE: Desire supplants all. The Iroko which should shade lesser plants from the sun's scourge...The Iroko which should give shelter to the little birds of the earth now vomits its own fire, scattering the helpless birds to the seven winds and seas...(Onwueme 145)

The desert is perhaps the most powerful symbol in the play. It signifies destruction, death, environmental crisis, moral decay, and political desolation. The gradual encroachment of the desert suggests the progressive collapse of society under oppressive systems. Music, chants, and choruses also play significant roles in the dramatic structure. These elements drawn from African oral traditions and communal performance aesthetics, reinforce the collective nature of suffering and resistance in the play.

Satire is another important technique employed by Onwueme. Satire is a literary and dramatic mode that employs humour, irony, ridicule, exaggeration, and wit to expose and criticize human vices, social injustice, political corruption, and institutional failures with the aim of provoking reform. Rather than entertaining merely for amusement, satire functions as an instrument of social criticism by drawing attention to the contradictions and moral failures within society.

In African drama, satire has become an important artistic strategy for exposing authoritarianism, corruption, environmental exploitation, and social inequality. Playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Ola Rotimi, and Tess Onwueme employ satire to interrogate structures of power that undermine human dignity.

In *The Desert Encroaches*, Onwueme satirizes political leaders, bureaucratic institutions, and powerful interests whose negligence and greed contribute to environmental degradation. The encroaching desert becomes an indictment of governments that neglect environmental protection while ordinary people suffer hunger, displacement, and poverty. Through irony and dramatic contrast, the playwright exposes the absurdity of leaders who pursue selfish interests instead of protecting the environment and ensuring the welfare of their citizens. The satirical dimension of the play therefore transforms environmental decline into a moral and political critique of irresponsible governance. By ridiculing the arrogance and hypocrisy of powerful animals, the playwright exposes the absurdity of oppressive leadership. Satire becomes a weapon of political criticism aimed at provoking social consciousness and reform.

Symbolism

Symbolism refers to the use of objects, characters, places, actions, or events to suggest meanings that extend beyond their literal significance. Symbols enrich literary works by communicating complex ideas indirectly and encouraging multiple levels of interpretation. As



Perrine explains, a symbol simultaneously functions as itself while representing broader abstract concepts (Perrine 219).

In African literature, symbolism often emerges from indigenous cultural beliefs, folklore, ecology, and communal experience. Natural phenomena such as rivers, forests, animals, rain, drought, and deserts frequently symbolize broader social, political, and spiritual realities.

Onwueme employs numerous symbols throughout *The Desert Encroaches*. The desert itself constitutes the central symbol of the play. Beyond representing environmental degradation, it symbolizes poverty, political neglect, ecological injustice, economic exploitation, fear, displacement, and the gradual destruction of communal life. As the desert advances, it mirrors the expansion of oppressive systems that deprive communities of their means of survival as “the world feeds on itself. Lions feed on goats and sheep...and on cows too” (Onwueme 163).

The land symbolizes life, identity, productivity, cultural continuity, and communal heritage. Its degradation reflects the erosion of both ecological sustainability and human dignity. Similarly, water functions as a symbol of renewal, hope, fertility, and survival. The scarcity of water illustrates the severe consequences of environmental mismanagement and unequal access to natural resources. The dramatic conflict itself symbolizes the broader struggle between domination and resistance, illustrating that survival depends upon collective action against structures of oppression.

Dramatic Techniques

Dramatic techniques refer to the artistic methods through which playwrights communicate themes, develop characters, organize action, and influence audience response. These include dialogue, characterization, plot, conflict, setting, imagery, symbolism, stage directions, songs, spectacle, irony, suspense, and theatrical language.

Tess Onwueme combines both indigenous African performance aesthetics and modern theatrical conventions in *The Desert Encroaches*. One of her most significant techniques is animal allegory, through which animal characters represent human societies and political actors. This technique universalizes the play's message while enabling the playwright to criticize political and environmental injustices indirectly.

Dialogue is another important dramatic technique. Characters engage in debates that reveal competing interests, ideological conflicts, and unequal power relations. Through these conversations, audiences witness how environmental crises intensify struggles over authority, resources, and survival. Onwueme also employs dramatic irony, whereby audiences recognize the consequences of environmental destruction even when certain characters underestimate its seriousness. This irony heightens dramatic tension and reinforces the urgency of ecological responsibility.

Another important technique is the extensive use of symbolic setting. The threatened landscape is not merely a physical location but a dramatic space reflecting social decay, political failure, and ecological crisis. The environment itself becomes an active participant in the dramatic conflict. Conflict functions as the structural foundation of the play. The interaction between powerful and vulnerable groups dramatizes unequal access to resources, while environmental decline intensifies existing social inequalities. Through carefully constructed conflict, Onwueme demonstrates that ecological crises are inseparable from political and economic power relations.

Finally, Onwueme's integration of symbolism, satire, and allegory creates a multidimensional dramatic structure in which environmental degradation simultaneously functions as ecological reality, political criticism, and moral warning. These dramatic techniques enable the play to transcend local concerns and speak to universal questions of environmental justice, sustainable development, and the politics of survival.



Conclusion

This study has examined the intricate relationship between power dynamics and the politics of survival in Tess Onwueme's *The Desert Encroaches*, demonstrating that the play presents environmental degradation not merely as an ecological crisis but as the consequence of unequal political, economic, and ideological power relations. Through its compelling dramatic structure, the play reveals how the exercise of power determines access to environmental resources, shapes patterns of marginalization, and ultimately influences the survival of vulnerable communities. Onwueme thus situates ecological devastation within broader discourses of governance, social justice, and sustainable development.

The analysis has shown that power in *The Desert Encroaches* is multidimensional, operating through political authority, economic exploitation, environmental neglect, and ideological domination. These forms of power sustain systems that privilege the interests of the powerful while exposing ordinary people to hunger, displacement, poverty, and ecological insecurity. Consequently, survival in the play extends beyond physical existence to encompass the struggle for dignity, identity, environmental justice, and communal resilience. The politics of survival therefore emerges as a continuous negotiation between oppression and resistance, where marginalized communities employ solidarity, perseverance, and collective action to confront systemic inequalities.

The study has further established that Onwueme's artistic craftsmanship significantly strengthens the play's ideological vision. Through the effective use of satire, allegory, symbolism, dramatic irony, conflict, and vivid environmental imagery, she transforms the encroaching desert into a powerful metaphor for political irresponsibility, ecological destruction, and the gradual erosion of human values. These dramatic techniques enable the play to transcend its immediate geographical setting and engage universal concerns about environmental sustainability, social equity, and responsible leadership.

Moreover, the study demonstrates that *The Desert Encroaches* contributes meaningfully to African ecocritical discourse by foregrounding the interconnectedness of environmental protection, political accountability, and human survival. The play challenges exploitative systems that prioritize economic and political interests above ecological preservation and communal welfare, while advocating a development paradigm rooted in justice, inclusivity, and environmental stewardship. In this regard, Onwueme affirms that sustainable development cannot be achieved where power remains concentrated in the hands of a privileged few and where the voices of marginalized communities are ignored.

Ultimately, *The Desert Encroaches* stands as a profound dramatic interrogation of the structures that produce ecological and social vulnerability in contemporary Africa. By exposing the nexus between power, environmental degradation, and human survival, Tess Onwueme demonstrates that literature is not merely a reflection of reality but a transformative instrument for raising ecological consciousness, questioning oppressive systems, and inspiring social change. This study therefore contributes to African literary scholarship by establishing that the politics of survival in the play is fundamentally a struggle for environmental justice, equitable power relations, and the preservation of both human dignity and the natural environment. The continued relevance of *The Desert Encroaches* lies in its compelling reminder that the survival of humanity is inseparable from the ethical exercise of power and the responsible stewardship of the environment.



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POWER, PROPHECY, AND PROFIT: A CRITICAL INTERDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of religious movements in Nigeria has reshaped the country's spiritual and socio-economic landscape. While this growth reflects an increasing search for meaning, it has also generated concerns about abuse, commercialization, and weak accountability structures. This study examines the interplay between power, prophecy, and profit in contemporary religious practice, focusing on leadership dynamics, the psychological dimensions of prophetic practices, and the commodification of spirituality through financial demands on adherents. Adopting an interdisciplinary theoretical approach grounded in theories of charismatic authority, power, and religious economy, the paper employs critical thematic analysis to interrogate these developments. The findings reveal that weak check-and-balance systems enable financial extraction, prophetic manipulation, and coercive control within religious spaces. The study contributes to ongoing scholarly and policy debates by proposing a multi-level ethical and regulatory accountability framework that preserves religious freedom while addressing systemic abuse. It underscores the need to recalibrate the relationship between faith, authority, and responsibility in order to safeguard adherents and strengthen the integrity of religious practice in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Religious Authority; Prophecy; Religious Economy; Accountability; Nigeria; Psychological Manipulation; Syncretism; Regulation*

Introduction

In recent decades, Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of Pentecostal, charismatic, and independent religious movements, reshaping the country's spiritual and socio-cultural landscape. This rapid growth has been accompanied by the increasing visibility and influence of religious leaders who now occupy strategic positions not only in spiritual life but also in economic and political spheres. As noted by scholars such as Kalu (2008) and Marshall (2009), contemporary religious leaders in Nigeria often function as power brokers, shaping public opinion, influencing political outcomes, and commanding vast followings. This growing authority has contributed to what Einstein (2008) conceptualizes as the "religious economy," where faith practices are increasingly structured around market-like dynamics of demand, supply, and competition.

Within this expanding religious marketplace, however, concerns have emerged regarding the ethical implications of certain practices. Gifford (2004) and Ukah (2016) observe that some religious leaders deploy prophecy not merely as a spiritual tool but as a mechanism of influence and



control, often leveraging psychological strategies to sustain followers' dependence and loyalty. This has, in some cases, resulted in patterns of financial exploitation, including mandatory donations, seed sowing, and payments for spiritual services, which place significant economic burdens on adherents. Furthermore, coercive practices such as "Igbele" (The term *Igbele* is derived from the Yoruba language (Southwestern Nigeria). It has been italicized in the explained as a form of religious confinement or isolation used in some spiritual settings, often for purposes of deliverance or discipline.) have been reported in certain contexts, raising critical questions about human rights, consent, and religious authority.

Despite these developments, regulatory frameworks governing religious institutions in Nigeria remain weak, fragmented, or largely absent. As Haynes (2013) argues, the challenge of regulating religion in pluralistic societies often lies in balancing religious freedom with the need to prevent abuse. In Nigeria, this tension has created an environment in which accountability mechanisms are insufficient, allowing problematic practices to persist with limited oversight. While existing studies have examined the growth of Pentecostalism and the dynamics of religious economies, limited attention has been given to the intersection of power, psychological manipulation, coercive practices, and regulatory failure within a unified analytical framework.

Against this backdrop, this study addresses a critical gap by examining how the convergence of power, prophecy, and profit shapes religious practices and experiences in contemporary Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to analyze the dynamics of religious authority, interrogate the use of prophecy as a tool of psychological influence, and evaluate the economic dimensions of spiritual practices within a weakly regulated environment. The study is guided by the following research questions: How do power dynamics within religious institutions shape leader–follower relationships in Nigeria? In what ways are prophecy and financial practices employed as instruments of control and influence? To what extent do regulatory gaps enable exploitative and coercive practices within religious settings?

This study adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, drawing on insights from sociology of religion, psychology, and political economy to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. By integrating these perspectives, the paper offers a nuanced analysis of the structural and behavioural factors that underpin contemporary religious practices in Nigeria. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to ongoing scholarly debates on religion, governance, and ethics, as well as its potential to inform policy discussions on the regulation of religious institutions in pluralistic societies.

The paper proceeds by first reviewing relevant literature on religious authority, prophecy, and religious economies. It then outlines the theoretical framework guiding the study before presenting a critical analysis of key issues, including financial exploitation, psychological manipulation, and coercive practices. The final section discusses implications for policy and proposes pathways for strengthening accountability and ethical standards within Nigeria's religious landscape.

Literature Review

Religious power and authority remain central themes in sociological and theological scholarship, particularly in contexts where charismatic Christianity has become increasingly influential. Max Weber's foundational distinction between charismatic and institutional authority continues to shape contemporary analysis. Weber argues that charismatic authority rests on perceived extraordinary spiritual gifts, while institutional authority is grounded in structured rules and office-bearing legitimacy (Weber, 1978). In the Nigerian religious landscape, this distinction is increasingly blurred, as many leaders derive legitimacy more from perceived spiritual power than formal theological training or denominational accountability (Ojo, 2021; Ukah, 2022).



Recent scholarship shows that the expansion of Pentecostal and independent ministries in Nigeria has intensified the dominance of charismatic authority, often at the expense of institutional checks and balances. These leaders frequently position themselves as divinely appointed, thereby insulating their authority from critique or doctrinal scrutiny (Gifford, 2015; Marshall, 2018). Consequently, religious authority becomes personalized, fluid, and heavily dependent on performance-based spirituality, including healing, prophecy, and deliverance rituals (Adogame, 2020).

Prophecy occupies a particularly significant place in this power structure. Biblically and theologically, prophecy is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition as a divinely inspired message aimed at moral correction, guidance, and communal accountability (1 Corinthians 14:3; Amos 3:7). Classical theological interpretations emphasize discernment, communal testing of prophetic claims, and alignment with scripture (Yong, 2019). However, contemporary Nigerian Christianity increasingly reflects a shift toward experiential and predictive prophecy, often centered on personal success, financial breakthrough, and protection from perceived spiritual threats (Kalu, 2020; Aina, 2021:).

This modern appropriation of prophecy has raised concerns among scholars who argue that it is frequently detached from its biblical ethical framework and instead shaped by socio-economic pressures and audience expectations (Omenyo & Arthur, 2018). Prophecy, in many cases, functions not merely as spiritual communication but as a mechanism of influence and social control, reinforcing the authority of religious leaders while shaping adherents' decisions in areas such as marriage, finance, and career (Burgess, 2016; Obadare, 2020)

Furthermore, the convergence of charismatic authority and modern prophetic practices has contributed to the commercialization of religion. Scholars note that prophetic declarations are sometimes embedded within economic exchanges, subtly linking divine favor to material contributions (Ukah, 2022). This dynamic raises critical questions about authenticity, accountability, and the boundaries between spiritual guidance and economic exploitation.

In sum, the literature suggests a growing tension between traditional theological understandings of prophecy and authority and their contemporary manifestations in Nigerian Christianity, where charisma, performance, and economic incentives increasingly shape religious legitimacy.

Scholarly discussions on contemporary religious practice increasingly highlight the rise of religion as a form of economic exchange, in which spiritual authority is closely linked to material transactions. Within the framework of the religious economy, scholars contend that faith-based institutions often function in competitive "markets," where the demand for miracles, healing, and deliverance influences the supply-side behaviours of religious leaders (Iannaccone, 1998; Stark & Finke, 2000). In many African contexts, this dynamic has intensified the monetization of faith, evident in structured payments for spiritual services such as prophecy, counselling, and deliverance rituals. These practices reflect what recent analyses describe as the "commodification of spirituality," where access to divine intervention is increasingly mediated by financial capacity rather than doctrinal commitment (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Ukah, 2018).

Closely linked to this is the phenomenon of syncretism and doctrinal hybridization, where elements of indigenous spirituality are blended with Christianity or Islam. While some scholars interpret this as cultural adaptation and contextualization of faith, others caution that it can become a mechanism for exploitation when selectively deployed to reinforce clerical authority or justify questionable practices (Bediako, 2017; Ojo, 2020). This tension highlights the blurred boundary between authentic cultural expression and strategic manipulation within religious systems.

The psychological dimensions of religious influence further complicate this landscape. Research in cognitive and social psychology demonstrates how mechanisms such as suggestion, emotional arousal, and fear can foster dependency on religious leaders (Festinger, 1957; Pargament, 2013). In



particular, false prophecy functions as a powerful tool of belief reinforcement, where failed predictions are reinterpreted to sustain credibility and deepen follower commitment (Lindeman, 2018). This cyclical reinforcement strengthens psychological attachment and reduces critical evaluation among adherents.

Globally and within Nigeria, concerns about accountability and regulation in religious practice have gained scholarly attention. Comparative studies suggest that while some countries enforce strict governance structures for religious organizations, many African states, including Nigeria, struggle with weak institutional oversight, allowing charismatic authority to operate with minimal constraint (Marshall, 2014; Haynes, 2021). This regulatory gap contributes to abuses ranging from financial exploitation to coercive spiritual practices.

Despite growing scholarship, significant gaps remain in the literature. First, there is a lack of integrated interdisciplinary analysis that simultaneously examines economic, psychological, and theological dimensions of religious practice. Second, limited attention has been given to the environmental consequences of religious activities, including pollution from ritual practices and mass gatherings. Third, coercive dimensions such as spiritual incarceration and forced confinement remain under-theorized in mainstream academic discourse. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing a more holistic understanding of contemporary religious dynamics and their broader socio-ethical implications.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical backbone of this study rests on Max Weber's theory of charismatic authority and the religious economy approach developed by Stark and Finke, both of which remain highly influential in contemporary sociological and religious studies discourse.

Max Weber first introduced the concept of charismatic authority in his broader typology of legitimate domination in *Economy and Society* (Weber, 1978). For Weber, charisma refers to a form of leadership grounded in perceived extraordinary qualities of an individual, often interpreted by followers as divinely endowed. Unlike traditional or legal-rational authority, charismatic authority is inherently unstable and thrives in moments of social uncertainty. In contemporary Nigeria, this framework is particularly useful for understanding how religious leaders derive legitimacy not from institutional training or doctrinal accountability, but from perceived spiritual power manifested through prophecy, healing claims, and miracle narratives. The theory is significant to this study because it explains why adherents often suspend critical judgment, thereby enabling unchecked authority, psychological influence, and even coercive practices such as spiritual confinement (Marshall, 2014).

Complementing Weber's perspective is the religious economy theory advanced by Stark and Finke (2000), which conceptualizes religion as a system of exchange where religious organizations compete in a marketplace of beliefs and services. Emerging from rational choice theory, this approach argues that individuals "consume" religious goods such as prophecy, healing, and deliverance based on perceived benefits. Over time, this has led to the monetization of faith, where spiritual services are increasingly priced through offerings, seed sowing, and mandatory payments. In the Nigerian context, scholars have shown how religious institutions function within competitive spiritual markets that incentivize innovation, but also open space for commercialization and exploitation (Iannaccone, 1998; Ukah, 2018).

Together, these theories are highly relevant to the objectives of this study. Weber's framework clarifies the power dynamics and psychological submission embedded in prophetic authority, while the religious economy model explains the profit-driven structures and commodification of spirituality. Their combined analytical strength allows for a holistic understanding of how religious authority is constructed, maintained, and monetized.



Importantly, these theories also support the study's expected outcomes: identifying weak accountability systems, exposing the intersection between belief and economic exchange, and proposing regulatory frameworks that balance religious freedom with ethical governance. Recent scholarship further affirms that without institutional check-and-balance mechanisms, charismatic authority and religious market dynamics can converge to produce systemic vulnerability among adherents (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Haynes, 2021). In sum, these theories not only provide explanatory depth but also offer a critical lens for evaluating the urgent need for reform in contemporary Nigerian religious practice.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary theoretical research design aimed at critically examining the intersections of power, prophecy, profit, and accountability within contemporary religious practices in Nigeria. Rather than generating primary empirical data, the study relies on interpretive analysis of existing knowledge systems, allowing for a deeper engagement with conceptual, ethical, and structural issues shaping religious authority (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research draws exclusively on secondary data sources, which provide a rich and triangulated foundation for analysis. These include peer-reviewed scholarly works on religious authority, religious economy, and African Pentecostalism (Ukah, 2018; Haynes, 2021), media reports documenting cases of spiritual abuse, false prophecy, and financial exploitation, as well as relevant legal and constitutional frameworks governing religious freedom and human rights in Nigeria. Policy documents and judicial pronouncements further provide insight into the regulatory environment surrounding religious institutions.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Thematic analysis is a flexible method used to systematically identify, organize, and interpret recurring patterns (or "themes") within qualitative data. It involves familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, grouping related codes into broader themes, and refining these themes to capture significant patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, thematic analysis made it possible to highlight consistent issues across the data, such as the monetization of spirituality, forms of psychological manipulation, and the persistence of weak institutional oversight. By doing so, it provided a clear structure for understanding the dominant trends within contemporary religious practices.

Complementing this, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was employed to move beyond patterns and examine how language itself functions as a tool of power. CDA focuses on how words, narratives, and communicative practices reflect and reinforce social inequalities, authority structures, and ideological positions (Fairclough, 2015). In the context of this study, CDA was used to interrogate how prophetic declarations, religious language, and doctrinal narratives are constructed in ways that legitimize authority, encourage compliance, and normalize hierarchical power relations within religious spaces. It also helps uncover subtle mechanisms through which influence is exercised, often without overt coercion.

Together, these methods provide both descriptive and critical insights: thematic analysis identifies *what* is happening across the data, while CDA explains *how* and *why* these patterns are sustained through language and meaning-making practices. This dual approach allows for both structural and interpretive depth in understanding religious practices.

This study adopts a theoretical, non-empirical design. Data were generated through an extensive review and critical synthesis of existing literature, including scholarly publications, policy documents, and credible secondary sources relevant to religious practices in Nigeria. The study is geographically focused on Nigeria due to its dynamic and highly pluralistic religious environment.



It does not rely on primary data such as interviews or surveys; rather, it employs interdisciplinary analysis to examine patterns, concepts, and debates within the literature. While this approach limits direct experiential validation, it strengthens conceptual clarity and enables broad theoretical integration. Consequently, the findings should be understood as analytical interpretations rather than statistically generalizable conclusions.

Discussion and Analysis

The dynamics of contemporary religious practice in Nigeria reveal a complex interplay of power, prophecy, and profit, sustained by weak institutional oversight and strong charismatic appeal. At the core of this system lies what Weber describes as charismatic authority, where legitimacy is derived not from formal structures but from perceived spiritual exceptionalism (Weber, 1978). In many Nigerian religious contexts, this form of authority has become dominant, enabling leaders to operate with minimal accountability. The absence of effective checks and balances within both ecclesiastical and state regulatory frameworks has further intensified this condition, creating environments where personal conviction often overrides institutional ethics (Haynes, 2021).

Within this structure, prophecy functions as a central mechanism of authority and control. Rather than being purely spiritual communication, prophecy is frequently deployed as a tool for behavioural regulation and social influence. When perceived as divinely inspired, prophetic declarations shape decisions related to marriage, finance, health, and career. However, research shows that in some cases, such prophecies are not only unverifiable but strategically framed to reinforce the leader's authority and maintain follower dependency (Marshall, 2014). The phenomenon of false prophecy has significant social consequences, including emotional distress, financial loss, and erosion of trust within religious communities. Cognitive psychology suggests that followers often reinterpret failed predictions in ways that preserve belief, a process consistent with cognitive dissonance reduction (Festinger, 1957; Lindeman, 2018).

Closely tied to prophetic authority is the commodification of religion, where spiritual services are transformed into economic transactions. Practices such as "seed sowing," mandatory offerings, and paid deliverance sessions reflect a growing religious economy in which access to spiritual benefits is mediated by financial contribution. Scholars have noted that this monetization creates a system where religious success is implicitly linked to economic capacity, thereby reinforcing inequality among adherents (Ukah, 2018's; Stark & Finke, 2000). Ethical concerns arise when spiritual vulnerability is exploited for financial gain, raising questions about the moral limits of religious entrepreneurship.

Another dimension of religious practice is syncretism and religious innovation, which in African contexts often reflects cultural adaptation and continuity. However, syncretic practices can also be strategically manipulated to legitimize controversial rituals or reinforce leadership control. While scholars such as Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) view syncretism as a contextual response to indigenous worldviews, its unregulated forms may blur doctrinal boundaries and enable doctrinal exploitation.

The psychological mechanisms of influence within these religious environments are equally significant. Religious leaders often employ fear, hope, and dependency to shape follower's behaviour. Fear-based teachings about curses, spiritual attack, or divine punishment create emotional vulnerability, while promises of miracles and breakthroughs sustain hope and commitment. Over time, repeated exposure to these patterns produces behavioral conditioning, resulting in deep psychological dependency on spiritual authority figures (Pargament, 2013). This dependency limits critical engagement and reinforces compliance even in exploitative situations. More severe manifestations of control include coercive practices such as incarceration (*Igbele*), where individuals are confined under the guise of spiritual deliverance or purification. While often



justified as religious discipline, such practices raise serious human rights concerns. International human rights frameworks emphasize freedom of movement and personal dignity, both of which are violated in coercive religious confinement (Marshall, 2014). The tension between religious justification and legal protection highlights the urgent need for clearer regulatory boundaries.

Finally, the environmental implications of religious practices are increasingly relevant but often overlooked. Large-scale religious gatherings and ritual activities contribute to noise pollution, improper waste disposal, and ecological disruption. Ritual materials are sometimes discarded in rivers or open spaces, contributing to environmental degradation. From an eco-theological perspective, such practices reflect a limited integration of environmental ethics into religious consciousness, despite growing global emphasis on sustainability (Haynes, 2021).

In summary, the intersection of power, prophecy, and profit within Nigerian religious practice reveal a system shaped by weak accountability, psychological influence, and economic commodification. Addressing these challenges requires not only theological reflection but also institutional reform that integrates legal regulation, ethical leadership, and environmental responsibility.

Toward Accountability and Regulation

Efforts to strengthen accountability in Nigeria's religious landscape must move beyond critique to workable reforms that respect religious freedom while protecting adherents from harm. Recent scholarship shows that effective regulation is rarely achieved through a single lever; rather, it emerges from the interaction of internal governance, public law, financial oversight, ethical renewal, and citizen literacy (Marshall, 2014; Haynes, 2021). The following review synthesizes practical pathways across these domains.

1. A credible starting point is reform from within. Many congregations operate around highly personalized leadership, where decision-making authority is concentrated in a single charismatic figure. Studies of African Pentecostalism suggest that such concentration can inhibit accountability unless counterbalanced by institutionalized governance structures (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Ukah, 2018). Practically, this means constituting independent boards of trustees, finance committees, and ethics panels with real oversight powers, including the authority to audit accounts, review disciplinary procedures, and investigate complaints.

Equally important is role differentiation, separating spiritual leadership from administrative and financial control, where pastors or prophets simultaneously serve as chief executive, treasurer, and final arbiter of disputes, the risk of abuse increases. Codified constitutions, term limits for key offices, and transparent decision-making protocols can diffuse power and normalize accountability without undermining spiritual leadership, evidence from faith-based NGOs shows that such hybrid governance, combining spiritual vision with professional management, improves trust and sustainability (Clarke & Jennings, 2008).

2. Internal reforms are necessary but insufficient without an enabling legal environment. Nigeria's constitutional protection of religious freedom coexists with gaps in enforcement of existing laws on fraud, unlawful detention, and public nuisance. Comparative research indicates that states can regulate organizational conduct, not belief, by requiring registration, reporting, and compliance with health, safety, and human-rights standards (Haynes, 2021).

Practical steps include: (a) mandatory registration and periodic renewal for religious organizations; (b) basic disclosure requirements (leadership structure, audited accounts); (c) clear prohibitions against coercive practices, including any form of spiritual incarceration; and (d) collaboration with agencies such as financial intelligence units and environmental regulators. Importantly, regulation should be proportionate and non-discriminatory, avoiding theological intrusion while ensuring that religious spaces are not used to shield criminality. Experiences in countries like South Africa



demonstrate that consultative regulatory bodies, including representatives of faith communities, can improve compliance and legitimacy (Resane, 2017).

3. Given the centrality of offerings, tithes, and fees for spiritual services, financial transparency is a cornerstone of accountability. Research on the “religious economy” highlights how opaque financial systems can enable exploitation, especially among economically vulnerable adherents (Iannaccone, 1998; Stark & Finke, 2000).

Practically, institutions should adopt standard accounting practices, publish annual audited reports, and provide clear giving policies that distinguish voluntary donations from any form of obligatory or fee-based spiritual service. Digital payment systems can enhance traceability, while independent external audits build credibility. At the policy level, governments may require basic financial disclosures for registered religious bodies without imposing excessive bureaucratic burdens. Such measures do not negate generosity; rather, they protect both donors and institutions by aligning spiritual giving with ethical stewardship.

4. Regulation must be complemented by normative renewal within theology and ministerial formation. Scholars note that when success is measured primarily in material terms, wealth, miracles, or visibility, there is a drift toward instrumentalizing faith (Marshall, 2014; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015). Reorientation involves foregrounding integrity, humility, service, and care for the vulnerable as core ministerial virtues.

Seminaries and ministerial training programs can integrate ethics, counseling psychology, and safeguarding into curricula, equipping leaders to recognize the boundaries between spiritual guidance and manipulation. Denominational bodies should articulate codes of conduct addressing prophecy, deliverance practices, and financial appeals, with sanctions for violations. Importantly, theology can also recover stewardship of creation, encouraging environmentally responsible practices in worship and ritual life, an area often neglected in current debates.

5. Finally, accountability is strengthened when adherents are informed, reflective participants rather than passive recipients. Psychological research shows that suggestibility and fear can heighten dependency on authority, especially in contexts of uncertainty (Pargament, 2013; Lindeman, 2018). Public education can counter this by fostering critical religious literacy, the ability to interpret claims, recognize manipulation, and make informed choices.

Practical initiatives include community workshops, media campaigns, and partnerships between civil society, academia, and faith organizations to disseminate accessible guidance on financial ethics, consent, and personal rights. Universities and theological institutions can host public forums that model respectful dialogue between faith and critical inquiry. When adherents understand that questioning is not synonymous with unbelief, they are better positioned to hold leaders accountable while sustaining meaningful faith commitments.

A balanced framework for accountability in Nigeria must therefore be multi-layered: internal governance that disperses power; legal frameworks that enforce minimum standards; transparent financial practices; ethical-theological renewal that resists commodification; and an informed public capable of discernment. Taken together, these measures can protect religious freedom while curbing abuse, enabling religious communities to contribute positively to social trust and human flourishing.

Implications of the Study

This study carries important implications across theoretical, policy, and practical domains, particularly within the evolving landscape of religion in Nigeria and comparable contexts.

Theoretical Implications: One of the major contributions of this study lies in its effort to bridge fragmented strands of scholarship by integrating insights from sociology, psychology, religious



studies, and political economy. Existing literature has often treated religious authority, economic practices, and psychological influence as separate analytical categories. However, recent scholars argue that contemporary religious phenomena, especially within Pentecostal and charismatic movements are best understood through interdisciplinary synthesis that captures their complexity (Einstein, 2020; Haynes, 2021). By combining Weberian notions of charismatic authority with religious economy perspectives and psychological theories of belief formation, this study responds to calls for more holistic frameworks in the study of religion (Marshall, 2014). It also extends current debates by incorporating underexplored dimensions such as environmental consequences and coercive practices, thereby enriching theoretical conversations around religion as both a social and institutional force. In this sense, the study not only consolidates existing theories but also opens new pathways for future researches that interrogate religion beyond doctrinal boundaries.

Policy Implications: From a policy standpoint, the findings underscore the urgent need for balanced regulatory frameworks that protect citizens while respecting religious freedom. Scholars have increasingly noted that weak governance structures in many African contexts allow religious institutions to operate with minimal oversight, creating opportunities for exploitation (Ukah, 2018; Obadare, 2018). This study reinforces the argument that the absence of effective check-and-balance systems contributes to financial abuse, psychological manipulation, and, in extreme cases, coercive practices. It therefore provides a conceptual basis for policymakers to design context-sensitive regulations that address issues such as financial transparency, fraudulent claims, and human rights violations within religious settings. Importantly, regulation should not aim to suppress religious expression but rather to ensure accountability and ethical conduct. As Haynes (2021) suggests, the challenge lies in achieving a delicate equilibrium between state intervention and religious autonomy, a balance this study highlights as both necessary and achievable.

Practical Implications: At the practical level, the study offers guidance for both religious leaders and adherents. For leaders, it emphasizes the importance of ethical responsibility, transparency, and theological integrity in sustaining trust and legitimacy. Scholars have argued that the long-term credibility of religious institutions depends on their ability to align spiritual authority with moral accountability (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015). For adherents, the study highlights the need for critical religious literacy, encouraging individuals to engage faith with discernment rather than passive acceptance. Psychological research suggests that awareness of influence mechanisms, such as suggestion, fear appeals, and dependency, can reduce susceptibility to manipulation (Pargament, 2013). By foregrounding these dynamics, the study empowers believers to make informed decisions while maintaining their spiritual commitments. Ultimately, the practical implication is a call for a more reflective and responsible religious culture, where faith serves as a source of empowerment rather than exploitation.

Conclusion

This study set out to critically examine the intersections of power, prophecy, and profit within contemporary religious practice in Nigeria, drawing attention to how these dynamics shape both the lived experiences of adherents and the broader moral landscape of society. The analysis reveals that the rapid expansion of religious movements has not only intensified spiritual engagement but has also created fertile ground for the consolidation of unregulated authority. At the center of this development is the increasing dominance of charismatic leadership, where legitimacy is often derived from perceived spiritual gifts rather than institutional accountability or theological grounding.

A key finding of this study is the growing entanglement between spirituality and economic exchange. The monetization of faith, expressed through payments for prophecy, deliverance, and other spiritual services, has transformed religious spaces into quasi-economic arenas. In such



settings, spiritual needs are frequently framed in transactional terms, thereby reinforcing dependency and, in some cases, enabling financial exploitation. Alongside this, the study highlights how prophetic practices, while deeply rooted in religious traditions, are sometimes deployed in ways that rely on psychological mechanisms such as suggestion, fear, and emotional manipulation. These dynamics can strengthen adherence but may also limit critical reflection and autonomy among followers.

The study further underscores the role of syncretism and doctrinal hybridity, which, although historically significant as forms of cultural adaptation, can become instruments of control when selectively interpreted to legitimize questionable practices. Moreover, issues such as coercive confinement (often framed as spiritual intervention) and the environmental implications of certain ritual practices point to the broader social and ethical consequences of unregulated religious activity. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the absence of effective internal and external regulatory frameworks allows problematic practices to persist and, in some cases, thrive.

At its core, this study reaffirms a central argument: power without accountability inevitably creates conditions for exploitation. When religious authority operates beyond scrutiny, whether through institutional weakness, societal deference, or legal gaps, it risks shifting from a source of guidance and hope to a mechanism of control and extraction. This is not to dismiss the transformative and positive roles that religion continues to play in Nigerian society, but rather to emphasize that such roles are best sustained within systems that encourage transparency, responsibility, and ethical leadership.

In light of these insights, the study calls for a more balanced and constructive approach, one that carefully upholds religious freedom while strengthening institutional responsibility. Religious expression remains a fundamental right and a vital aspect of human identity; however, this freedom must coexist with safeguards that protect individuals from abuse. Achieving this balance requires a collaborative effort involving religious institutions, state actors, civil society, and adherents themselves. Internal governance structures, ethical training, and financial transparency within religious organizations must be complemented by appropriate legal frameworks and public awareness initiatives.

Ultimately, the future of religious practice in Nigeria depends on the ability to recalibrate the relationship between faith, power, and accountability. By fostering systems that value both spiritual vitality and ethical integrity, religion can continue to serve as a force for social cohesion, moral guidance, and human flourishing rather than a site of vulnerability and exploitation.

Policy Implications and Practical Recommendations

The findings of this study carry significant implications for public policy, institutional reform, and scholarly engagement in Nigeria's religious landscape. Addressing the complex interplay between power, prophecy, and profit requires a balanced framework that safeguards religious freedom while promoting accountability and ethical responsibility.

First, there is a clear need for context-sensitive regulatory frameworks. Policymakers should develop non-intrusive mechanisms for the registration and periodic review of religious organizations and leaders. Such frameworks must not undermine constitutional rights to freedom of worship but should ensure minimum standards of operation, particularly in areas involving financial practices, counseling activities, and the treatment of vulnerable individuals. Regulatory bodies, in collaboration with interfaith councils, can serve as neutral platforms for oversight and conflict resolution.

Second, institutional accountability within religious organizations must be strengthened. Faith-based institutions should adopt formal governance structures, including financial transparency



systems, ethical codes of conduct, and internal disciplinary mechanisms. The establishment of independent advisory boards, comprising theologians, legal experts, and mental health professionals, can provide checks and balances on charismatic authority and doctrinal excesses.

Third, there is a pressing need for public education and congregational empowerment. Adherents should be equipped with basic religious literacy, critical thinking skills, and awareness of their rights. This can be achieved through community programs, media engagement, and collaboration with civil society organizations. An informed religious public is less susceptible to manipulation, coercion, and exploitative financial demands.

Fourth, ethical standardization of spiritual services is essential. While voluntary giving remains integral to many religious traditions, the monetization of prophecy, healing, and deliverance requires clearer boundaries. Religious leaders should be discouraged from transactional representations of spirituality that equate financial contribution with divine favor. Transparent communication about the purpose and use of funds can foster trust and reduce suspicion.

Fifth, the study highlights the importance of professionalizing pastoral care and counseling practices. Incorporating basic training in psychology, conflict mediation, and ethics into religious leadership development can reduce harmful practices rooted in ignorance or manipulation. Partnerships with accredited training institutions can further enhance this process.

Sixth, legal and human rights protections must be reinforced, particularly concerning coercive practices such as involuntary confinement (“*Igbele*”) and other forms of spiritual abuse. Law enforcement agencies should be trained to identify and respond to such cases with cultural sensitivity while upholding legal standards.

Seventh, attention must be given to the environmental impact of religious activities. Regulatory guidelines should encourage environmentally sustainable practices in worship centers, including noise control, waste management, and responsible use of public spaces, thereby promoting harmonious community relations.

Finally, for the academic community, this study underscores the necessity of interdisciplinary research approaches. Future scholarship should integrate perspectives from religious studies, sociology, psychology, law, and environmental studies to provide a more holistic understanding of religious phenomena in contemporary society. In sum, these policy implications advocate a constructive partnership between religious institutions, the state, and civil society, aimed at fostering a religious environment that is spiritually enriching, ethically grounded, and socially responsible.

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RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND PEACEBUILDING: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN A MULTI-FAITH SOCIETY

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Abstract

Religious pluralism, defined as the coexistence of diverse faith traditions within a shared social and political space, presents both formidable challenges and transformative prospects for peacebuilding in contemporary multi-faith societies. This study examines the complex intersections between religious diversity and the pursuit of sustainable peace, focusing on how different religious communities can either exacerbate or mitigate socio-political tensions. Drawing on an integrative review of theoretical frameworks, including John Rawls's theory of overlapping consensus, Johan Galtung's structural peace model, and Hans Küng's global ethic paradigm, alongside qualitative case study data drawn from Nigeria, India, and the United Kingdom, this paper argues that religious pluralism, when managed through inclusive governance structures, interfaith dialogue mechanisms, and shared civic values, can serve as a powerful catalyst for peacebuilding rather than a source of conflict. This study identifies five principal challenges: theological exclusivism, political instrumentalization of religion, socioeconomic marginalization along religious lines, weak institutional frameworks for interfaith engagement, and the proliferation of radical religious ideologies. Conversely, it highlights prospects rooted in shared ethical principles across traditions, the role of religious leaders as peace brokers, community-based reconciliation programs, and policy frameworks that affirm pluralism without imposing secularist uniformity. The findings contribute to both the academic discourse on religion and peacebuilding and to practical policy formation in plural societies. Recommendations are offered for governments, religious organizations, civil society, and international bodies seeking to harness religious diversity for constructive social cohesion.

Keywords: *religious pluralism, peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, multi-faith society, social cohesion*

Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed an unprecedented convergence of religious traditions within single nation-states, fueled by globalization, migration, and the digital dissemination of religious ideas. Far from producing a uniform secular modernity as earlier theorists predicted, contemporary societies are marked by vibrant and sometimes volatile pluralisms in which Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and a host of indigenous spiritual traditions



compete, coexist, and occasionally collide in shared public spaces (Habermas, 2008; Berger, 2014). The consequences for peace and social stability are profound. Across the globe from communal violence in Plateau State, Nigeria, to Hindu-Muslim tensions in Uttar Pradesh, India, and rising Islamophobia in Western Europe religion continues to serve as a fault line along which conflict is organized and mobilized (Appleby, 2000; Juergensmeyer, 2008).

Yet, to reduce the relationship between religious pluralism and social conflict to one of simple causation would be analytically misleading. Religious traditions have also been among the most potent reservoirs of peacebuilding energy in human history. The civil rights movement in the United States, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation processes in post-genocide Rwanda, and countless local interfaith peacebuilding initiatives across Africa, Asia, and Europe demonstrate the capacity of faith communities to construct rather than merely contest peace (Johnston & Sampson, 1994; Lederach, 1997; Appleby, 2000). The challenge for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners lies in understanding the conditions under which religious pluralism functions as a resource for peace rather than a trigger for conflict.

This article addresses that challenge through a multi-dimensional analysis of religious pluralism and peacebuilding in multi-faith societies. It is situated at the intersection of peace and conflict studies, comparative religion, and political sociology, drawing on an integrative literature review and qualitative comparative case analysis to produce findings that are both theoretically robust and practically applicable.

Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the conceptual relationship between religious pluralism and peacebuilding in multi-faith societies,
2. To identify the principal challenges that religious pluralism poses to peacebuilding efforts at national and local levels,
3. To explore the prospects and pathways through which religious diversity can be harnessed for constructive peacebuilding,
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of interfaith dialogue and institutional mechanisms in managing religious diversity for peace,
5. To provide evidence-based recommendations for policy actors, religious organizations, and civil society in fostering peaceful multi-faith coexistence.

Literature Review: Conceptual Framework

Concept of Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism is a contested concept that operates simultaneously as a sociological description, a normative commitment, and a theological position (Hick, 1989). At the descriptive level, it refers to the empirical coexistence of diverse religious communities within a given social space (Berger, 2014). As a normative commitment, pluralism entails the affirmation of this diversity as legitimate and valuable rather than merely tolerated (Eck, 2001). Theologically, it encompasses claims contested within most traditions that multiple religions may offer valid and salvific paths to ultimate reality (Hick, 1989). For the purposes of this study, religious pluralism is understood primarily in its descriptive-normative sense: the factual coexistence of multiple faith traditions, combined with a political and ethical commitment to their equal civic standing and mutual respect.



Scholars have distinguished religious pluralism from mere tolerance, arguing that tolerance can coexist with condescension or privatization of religion, whereas genuine pluralism requires active engagement across difference (Kymlicka, 1995; Eck, 2001). Diana Eck's influential formulation identifies pluralism not as relativism but as the energetic encounter of commitments that takes diversity seriously and seeks genuine understanding (Eck, 2001). This distinction is critical for peacebuilding because passive tolerance of religious diversity may be insufficient to prevent violence, while active pluralism creates the social infrastructure for conflict prevention and resolution.

Conceptualizing Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding, as theorized by Lederach (1997), encompasses a broad set of processes aimed at transforming the relationships, structures, and cultures that generate violent conflict. It moves beyond the absence of war, what Galtung (1969) terms "negative peace" to encompass "positive peace": the presence of justice, reconciliation, and sustainable social relationships. This expansive conception is particularly relevant when analyzing religion's role, since religious actors typically engage with questions of meaning, justice, and communal identity that go beyond mere cessation of hostilities.

Appleby (2000), in his seminal work "The Ambivalence of the Sacred", argues that religion is inherently ambivalent in relation to violence and peace: the same religious energies that produce militancy and extremism can, under different conditions, generate extraordinary commitments to nonviolence and reconciliation. This insight has been foundational for subsequent scholarship examining the conditions under which religious actors choose the "peace" rather than the "war" side of their tradition's repertoire (Gopin, 2000; Little, 2007).

The Religion–Conflict Nexus in Multi-Faith Societies

A substantial body of literature documents the conditions under which religious diversity correlates with conflict. Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011) demonstrate that religious factors shape the onset, duration, and termination of civil wars in statistically significant ways, particularly when religious identity is politicized by state actors or non-state movements. Huntington's (1996) controversial "clash of civilizations" thesis popularized the view that religious and civilizational boundaries constitute the primary fault lines of post-Cold War conflict, a claim subsequently subjected to extensive empirical criticism (Fox, 2004; Juergensmeyer, 2008).

More nuanced analyses locate the sources of religion-related conflict not in theological differences per se but in their intersection with political exclusion, economic grievance, and identity politics (Gurr, 2000; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Fox (2004), analyzing the Minorities at Risk dataset, concludes that religious identity functions as a conflict amplifier rather than a primary cause, intensifying grievances that originate in political or economic structures. This finding has important implications for peacebuilding: it suggests that addressing material and structural inequalities alongside religious narratives is essential to conflict prevention in plural societies.

Religion as a Peacebuilding Resource

An equally significant body of scholarship examines religion's constructive contributions to peacebuilding. Johnston and Sampson's (1994) pioneering collection documented cases in which religious actors played decisive roles in conflict resolution, from the Community of Sant'Egidio's mediation in Mozambique to Quaker facilitation in Nigeria's Biafran conflict. Subsequent scholarship has deepened understanding of the mechanisms through which religion contributes to peace: prophetic witness, moral authority, community organization, spiritual practices of



reconciliation, and the capacity to address the deep wounds of identity-based conflict (Gopin, 2000; Lederach, 2005; Little, 2007).

Küng's (1991) Global Ethic project represents a particularly influential attempt to identify the shared ethical foundations across world religions that could serve as a common platform for peacebuilding. The 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions adopted a declaration affirming shared commitments to nonviolence, justice, truthfulness, and equal rights across traditions, suggesting that theological diversity need not preclude ethical convergence as a basis for cooperative peace work (Küng & Kuschel, 1993).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical frameworks that together provide a multi-level analytical lens capable of capturing the complexity of religion-peace dynamics.

First, Rawls's (1993) theory of political liberalism and overlapping consensus offers a framework for understanding how citizens holding diverse comprehensive doctrines including religious ones can converge on principles of justice that undergird stable pluralist societies. Rawls argues that the stability of a just pluralist society depends not on agreement about ultimate metaphysical or religious questions but on overlapping consensus among citizens who endorse just political institutions from within the perspective of their own comprehensive doctrines. This framework is valuable for understanding the conditions under which religious pluralism can be politically accommodated without requiring doctrinal convergence.

Second, Galtung's (1969, 1996) structural peace framework distinguishing between direct, structural, and cultural violence provides tools for analyzing the multi-dimensional sources of religion-related conflict. Structural violence embedded in discriminatory institutional arrangements and cultural violence perpetuated through ideological and religious narratives that normalize harm must be addressed alongside direct violence if peacebuilding is to be sustainable. This framework directs analytical attention to the socioeconomic and political structures within which religious communities operate and compete.

Third, Lederach's (1997, 2005) relational-transformative peacebuilding framework, which emphasizes the importance of relationship building, moral imagination, and the construction of peace constituencies at multiple social levels, provides the most practice-oriented of the three frameworks. Lederach's insight that sustainable peace requires not merely the absence of violence but the transformation of relationships and social structures through sustained engagement across lines of difference is particularly relevant to the interfaith peacebuilding context.

Together, these frameworks provide the analytical scaffolding for this study's examination of both the structural conditions shaping religion-peace dynamics (Rawls, Galtung) and the relational and agency-centered processes through which peacebuilding occurs (Lederach).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative integrative review methodology combined with a comparative case study approach. The integrative review systematically examines the theoretical and empirical literature on religious pluralism and peacebuilding published between 1990 and 2025, drawing on academic databases including JSTOR, Scopus, Google Scholar, PsycINFO, and the Peace Research Abstracts Journal. Search terms included "religious pluralism," "interfaith dialogue," "peacebuilding," "multi-faith societies," "religion and conflict," and "interreligious cooperation," with Boolean operators used to refine results.

The comparative case study analysis examines three contrasting multi-faith societies: Nigeria (representing sub-Saharan Africa's largest multi-faith democracy, with roughly equal Christian and Muslim populations and a history of significant interreligious violence); India



(representing the world's largest democracy, with Hindu majority and substantial Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jain minorities, experiencing periodic episodes of communal violence); and the United Kingdom (representing a post-Christian Western liberal democracy experiencing growing religious diversification through migration and facing challenges of Islamophobia and social cohesion). These cases were selected through theoretical rather than statistical sampling to maximize variation in context, conflict type, and institutional response, enabling analytical generalization rather than statistical inference.

Data for the case studies were drawn from existing ethnographic accounts, policy documents, and reports from organizations including the United States Institute of Peace, the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, and the Coexist Foundation, as well as secondary analyses of survey data from the Afrobarometer, Pew Research Global Attitudes Survey, and European Social Survey. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurrent patterns, divergences, and insights across the case material, guided by the study's theoretical frameworks and objectives.

Ethical considerations include the imperative to represent religious communities fairly, to avoid essentialist characterizations of any tradition as inherently violent or peaceful, and to acknowledge the limitations of cross-national comparative analysis that draws on secondary data. The authors acknowledge positionality as scholars working within Western academic institutions while examining communities in the Global South, and have sought to incorporate perspectives from indigenous scholarship in each case-study context.

Analysis: Challenges and Prospects of Religious Pluralism for Peacebuilding

Objective 1: The Conceptual Relationship between Religious Pluralism and Peacebuilding

The relationship between religious pluralism and peacebuilding is neither linear nor predetermined; it is conditioned by historical context, political structures, and the choices of religious and civic actors. At the theoretical level, three models capture the range of possible relationships. The first, drawing on Huntington (1996), posits religious diversity as inherently conflictual, producing incompatible civilizational blocs. The second, represented by liberal political theory (Rawls, 1993), argues that religious diversity can be peacefully managed through procedural mechanisms such as constitutional guarantees, democratic deliberation, and the overlapping consensus of citizens who hold different comprehensive doctrines but converge on political principles of justice. The third, articulated by Lederach (1997) and Appleby (2000), suggests that religious traditions contain the resources to transcend conflict not merely through procedural accommodation but through transformative encounter, moral imagination, and reconciliation.

This study affirms the third model as most analytically productive while incorporating elements of the second. The conceptual framework proposed here understands religious pluralism and peacebuilding as standing in a dialectical relationship: religious diversity generates both the tensions that make peacebuilding necessary and the spiritual, moral, and organizational resources that make it possible. The challenge is to create conditions: institutional, political, and cultural under which the peacebuilding potentials of religious plurality are activated rather than suppressed.

Objective 2: Principal Challenges to Peacebuilding in Multi-Faith Societies

Theological Exclusivism and the Politics of Religious Truth

Perhaps the most fundamental challenge to peaceful pluralism arises from the truth claims embedded in religious traditions. Many faith communities hold, as a matter of doctrinal conviction, that their path to ultimate truth or salvation is uniquely valid, making genuine acceptance of rival traditions theologically difficult (Hick, 1989; D'Costa, 1990). While exclusivist truth claims need not translate into social intolerance or political violence, they create a hermeneutical environment in which the boundary between doctrinal conviction and civic discrimination is easily crossed. In



ethnically and religiously plural societies as seen in northern Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar exclusivist religious narratives have been mobilized to justify discrimination against religious minorities, eroding the conditions for peaceful coexistence (Toft et al., 2011).

Political Instrumentalization of Religion

A pervasive challenge across multi-faith societies is the exploitation of religious identity by political elites seeking to mobilize constituencies, delegitimize opponents, or distract from economic grievances (Haynes, 2007; Juergensmeyer, 2008). The instrumentalization of religion in politics transforms what might otherwise be manageable theological differences into zero-sum political conflicts. In Nigeria, the politicization of the Muslim-Christian divide has consistently been identified as a driver of electoral violence and ethno-religious conflict in the Middle Belt and other contested regions (Falola, 1998; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). In India, Hindu nationalist movements have deployed religious identity to restructure the terms of political competition in ways that marginalize Muslim and other minority communities (Hansen, 1999).

Socioeconomic Marginalization along Religious Lines

Where religious identity correlates with economic deprivation and political exclusion, the conditions for violent conflict are significantly enhanced (Gurr, 2000; Stewart, 2008). Frances Stewart's (2008) theory of horizontal inequalities demonstrates that when cultural, economic, and political inequalities align along the same group boundaries, including religious ones, the likelihood of collective violence increases substantially. In many multi-faith societies, religious minorities disproportionately experience poverty, restricted access to public goods, discrimination in employment, and underrepresentation in governance structures, generating grievances that religious and political entrepreneurs can exploit for mobilization toward violence.

Weak Institutional Frameworks for Interfaith Engagement

The absence of credible, inclusive, and adequately resourced institutions for interfaith dialogue and conflict management represents a significant structural challenge. Where interfaith bodies exist primarily as ceremonial platforms with no authority to mediate conflicts or influence policy, their peacebuilding impact is limited (Smock, 2002; Bouta, Frerks, & Boulden, 2005). Many governments in plural societies have failed to invest adequately in conflict early warning systems that include religious actors, community mediators trained in both conflict resolution and religious literacy, or policy frameworks that proactively address the conditions generating religion-related tensions.

Radical Religious Ideologies and Extremist Movements

The proliferation of radical religious ideologies, whether jihadist movements, Hindu nationalist extremism, Christian Identity movements, or Buddhist ultranationalism poses acute challenges to peacebuilding in multi-faith societies (Juergensmeyer, 2008; Moghadam, 2008). Such movements typically deploy selective readings of religious texts to sanctify violence against religious others, delegitimize pluralism as apostasy or betrayal, and undermine the moderate religious voices best positioned to engage in peacebuilding. Counter-extremism approaches that fail to engage with the theological dimensions of radicalization, reducing it entirely to political or economic grievances have shown limited effectiveness, as have purely coercive counter-terrorism strategies that alienate religious communities whose cooperation is essential for prevention (Appleby, 2012).



Objective 3: Prospects for Harnessing Religious Pluralism for Peacebuilding **Shared Ethical Foundations across Traditions**

Notwithstanding theological differences regarding truth claims, comparative religious ethics reveals significant convergence across traditions on core moral principles relevant to peacebuilding: the sanctity of human life, obligations of care toward the vulnerable, the importance of justice, and the value of forgiveness and reconciliation (Küng & Kuschel, 1993; Gopin, 2000). These convergences provide substantive, rather than merely procedural, foundations for interfaith peacebuilding cooperation. The Golden Rule “treat others as you wish to be treated” appears in some formulation in virtually every major religious tradition, as do condemnations of murder, theft, and false witness. Peacebuilders who foreground these shared ethical foundations can build authentic coalitions across doctrinal divides.

Religious Leaders as Peace Brokers

Religious leaders occupy positions of unique authority and moral credibility within their communities that formal state actors and secular civil society organizations frequently cannot replicate (Lederach, 1997; Little, 2007). Their capacity to reframe conflict narratives in spiritual terms, to invoke religious obligations of forgiveness and reconciliation, and to mobilize community members across political divisions makes them indispensable assets in peacebuilding processes. Successful cases including Archbishop Desmond Tutu's leadership of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the role of Catholic bishops in peace negotiations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Muslim scholars' interventions in reducing violence in post-election Nigeria demonstrate the distinctive contributions religious leaders can make when they embrace the peacebuilding dimensions of their traditions (Johnston & Sampson, 1994; Appleby, 2000).

Community-Based Reconciliation and Interfaith Programs

At the community level, numerous programs have demonstrated the capacity to transform relations between religious communities through sustained engagement, shared service, and structured dialogue. Lederach's (2005) “moral imagination” framework highlights the role of grassroots Peacebuilders who embody the capacity to imagine relationships beyond patterns of violence. Programs such as Nigeria's Interfaith Mediation Centre (founded by Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa, former enemies who became peacebuilding partners), the Cordoba Foundation's dialogue programs in the United Kingdom, and the Sarva Dharma Sammelana movement in India illustrate how community-based interfaith peacebuilding can produce genuine behavioral change and structural transformation (Wuye & Ashafa, 2000; Abu-Nimer, 2001).

Policy Frameworks Affirming Pluralism

Governments that enact and enforce robust constitutional protections for religious freedom, anti-discrimination legislation, and equitable distribution of public resources regardless of religious affiliation create the structural conditions under which pluralism can flourish peacefully (Philpott, 2007; Norris & Inglehart, 2011). The consociational arrangements in countries like Switzerland and the Netherlands have historically provided models for managing religious and ethnic diversity through power-sharing, proportional representation, and guaranteed group autonomy (Lijphart, 1977). However, scholars caution that consociational solutions can entrench group identities and create perverse incentives for ethnic or religious outbidding, suggesting the importance of complementing group protections with civic integration strategies that build cross-cutting identities and allegiances (Horowitz, 1985; Varshney, 2002).



Objective 4: Effectiveness of Interfaith Dialogue and Institutional Mechanisms

The evidence on interfaith dialogue as a peacebuilding mechanism is mixed but generally positive under specified conditions. Abu-Nimer's (2001) comprehensive review of interfaith dialogue programs in conflict zones identifies the following factors associated with effectiveness: sufficient duration for relationship building, inclusion of representatives with genuine community authority, attention to structural inequalities alongside interpersonal reconciliation, follow-through mechanisms that translate dialogue into concrete cooperation, and the involvement of women and youth alongside established religious leaders. Conversely, "dialogue tourism" brief, decontextualized encounters among religious elites that do not connect to grassroots realities has repeatedly been shown to have minimal peacebuilding impact (Smock, 2002).

Institutional mechanisms for interfaith engagement vary widely in their design and effectiveness. Religious councils, peace commissions, and interfaith centers that enjoy both governmental support and community credibility, possess genuine convening authority, and are equipped with trained mediators have shown the greatest promise. The National Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, the All Nigeria Conference of Principles of Nigeria, and the United Kingdom's Inter Faith Network provide contrasting models of institutional engagement with varying records of effectiveness that illustrate the importance of institutional design, leadership, and resourcing in determining outcomes (Smock, 2006; Haynes, 2007).

Discussion and Results

Findings on Conceptual Relationships (Objective 1)

The integrative review confirms that the relationship between religious pluralism and peacebuilding is fundamentally dialectical rather than either inherently conflictual or inherently peaceful. Across the literature, a clear consensus emerged that neither religious homogeneity nor diversity per se is the decisive variable in determining whether a society experiences peace or conflict. Rather, it is the combination of political institutions, socioeconomic structures, elite strategies, and the internal orientations of religious communities toward their own traditions' peacebuilding resources that determine outcomes (Appleby, 2000; Fox, 2004; Toft et al., 2011). This finding supports the study's proposed dialectical conceptual framework and reinforces the theoretical synthesis of Rawls, Galtung, and Lederach as an appropriate analytical approach.

A significant finding is the distinction between managed pluralism in which diversity is acknowledged, accommodated, and structured through institutional mechanisms and unmanaged pluralism in which diversity exists without adequate governance frameworks and becomes a resource for political mobilization toward conflict. Societies characterized by managed pluralism showed consistently better outcomes on measures of interreligious violence, social trust, and civic participation, regardless of the absolute degree of religious diversity present (Varshney, 2002; Putnam, 2007).

Findings on Challenges (Objective 2)

The case study analysis revealed that all five identified challenges manifest differently across the three case contexts, with political instrumentalization emerging as the most consistently destructive factor. In Nigeria, analysis of the post-2000 period during which twelve northern states adopted Sharia as criminal law illustrates how theological disputes became vectors for political competition, converting religious difference into political threat perceptions that generated cycles of violence in states including Kaduna, Plateau, and Kano (Falola, 1998; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). In India, the rise of Hindu nationalism since the 1990s demonstrates a similar pattern of political entrepreneurship exploiting religious identity to restructure the political landscape in ways that systematically disadvantage Muslim communities (Hansen, 1999; Wilkinson, 2004). In the United



Kingdom, the post-2005 period has seen religious identity, particularly Muslim identity becomes entangled with security politics and immigration discourse in ways that produce social exclusion and grievance among Muslim communities (Modood, 2007; Abbas, 2011).

Horizontal inequalities along religious lines were confirmed as significant conflict drivers in all three cases. Muslim communities in both Nigeria's Middle Belt and Britain's northern cities experience disproportionate socioeconomic disadvantage relative to majority religious communities, a pattern replicated for Muslim and other minorities in India (Stewart, 2008; Wilkinson, 2004; Modood, 2007). These structural inequalities create the conditions under which radical religious narratives find receptive audiences, suggesting that peacebuilding initiatives that address only the cultural or dialogic dimensions of interreligious relations without engaging structural inequalities are unlikely to achieve durable results.

Findings on Prospects (Objective 3)

The most promising findings concern the conditions under which religious actors successfully contribute to peacebuilding. Across all three cases, the most impactful peacebuilding initiatives shared several characteristics: they were led by religious actors with genuine community credibility; they addressed both interpersonal reconciliation and structural grievances; they engaged women and youth alongside established leaders; they built sustained relationships over time rather than one-off dialogue events; and they operated with the support but not dependence of state and international actors (Wuye & Ashafa, 2000; Abu-Nimer, 2001).

The Nigerian case offered particularly rich examples of religious peacebuilding, including the Interfaith Mediation Centre founded by Wuye and Ashafa, the Plateau Peace Building Agency, and the work of the Christian Association of Nigeria and the Jama'atu Nasril Islam in joint condemnation of violence. These initiatives demonstrate that former combatants and religious community leaders with personal experience of conflict are often the most credible and effective Peacebuilders, embodying what Lederach (2005) terms the "moral imagination" that can envision relationships beyond the logic of violence.

In the United Kingdom, the Interfaith Network for the UK and a range of locally rooted initiatives including the Near Neighbours program linking faith communities in diverse neighborhoods and the work of organizations like Faiths Forum for London demonstrate the potential of structured interfaith engagement to build social capital, address local tensions, and produce collaborative community development projects with tangible peacebuilding benefits (Dinham & Shaw, 2015).

Findings on Institutional Mechanisms (Objective 4)

The evaluation of interfaith institutional mechanisms revealed significant variation in effectiveness across contexts. Critically, the mere existence of interfaith bodies was found to be insufficient; their design, leadership, resourcing, and relationship to both communities and governmental authority are decisive. Institutions with the following characteristics performed best: independence from governmental control while maintaining productive working relationships with state actors; inclusive representation ensuring minority as well as majority religious communities have voice and power; professional staff with both religious literacy and conflict resolution skills; mandate and capacity to engage with concrete disputes rather than only ceremonial occasions; and accountability mechanisms ensuring they remain connected to grassroots communities rather than functioning as elite platforms (Smock, 2002, 2006).

A notable finding is the importance of what Putnam (2007) terms "bridging social capital" connections across rather than within religious groups as a predictor of both community resilience to conflict and capacity for peacebuilding. Communities with dense networks of cross-religious



association through civic organizations, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods show significantly lower rates of interreligious violence even when political tensions are high (Varshney, 2002). This suggests that peacebuilding investment in everyday civic institutions that naturally bridge religious communities such as schools, sports clubs, and professional associations may yield greater long-term returns than specialist interfaith bodies, though both have complementary roles to play.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that religious pluralism and peacebuilding stand in a fundamentally dialectical relationship: the same religious diversity that generates tensions, identity-based grievances, and opportunities for political exploitation also provides the moral resources, community organization, and spiritual frameworks through which sustainable peace can be built. The decisive variables are not the fact of religious diversity itself but the political, institutional, socioeconomic, and cultural conditions under which diverse faith communities interact.

Five principal challenges to peacebuilding in multi-faith societies have been identified: theological exclusivism, political instrumentalization, horizontal inequalities, weak institutional frameworks, and radical ideologies and four key prospects enumerated: shared ethical foundations, religious leaders as peace brokers, community-based reconciliation programs, and pluralism-affirming policy frameworks. The comparative case analysis from Nigeria, India, and the United Kingdom confirms that these challenges and prospects manifest across very different socio-political contexts, suggesting the analytical framework's generalizability.

The theoretical synthesis of Rawls, Galtung, and Lederach has proven productive, combining procedural mechanisms for pluralist accommodation with structural analysis of violence and a relational-transformative model of peacebuilding. Future research should extend this analysis to Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern multi-faith contexts, explore the role of digital religion and social media in reshaping interreligious dynamics, and develop more rigorous evaluation methodologies for assessing the long-term impact of interfaith peacebuilding programs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Enact and rigorously enforce constitutional protections for religious freedom and non-discrimination; invest in institutional mechanisms for interfaith conflict management with sufficient authority, independence, and resources; develop educational curricula that build religious literacy and cross-cultural understanding from an early age; and address horizontal inequalities along religious lines as a structural peacebuilding imperative rather than a secondary concern.
2. Invest in the identification, training, and support of religious peacebuilders who can serve as credible bridges across community lines; develop intra-religious consensus around the peacebuilding dimensions of each tradition's own theology and ethics; build genuine partnerships with religious communities different from their own, moving beyond ceremonial contact to collaborative action on shared social concerns; and hold religious leaders accountable for statements and actions that incite interreligious hostility.
3. Support grassroots interfaith peacebuilding initiatives with sustained, flexible funding that allows for long-term relationship building; develop and disseminate evidence-based toolkits for interfaith dialogue and conflict transformation; facilitate the exchange of successful



peacebuilding models across national contexts; and ensure that women and youth are systematically included in all phases of interfaith peacebuilding design and implementation.

4. Develop more rigorous longitudinal evaluation methodologies for interfaith peacebuilding programs; extend comparative research to underrepresented contexts in the Global South; explore the intersection of digital religion and interreligious dynamics; and build interdisciplinary bridges between peace studies, religious studies, political science, and sociology in studying religion-peace interactions.

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BEYOND UNDERREPRESENTATION: THE ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN FEMALE ORGANISTS IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

By

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Abstract

This study investigates the persistent underrepresentation of female organists in Nigeria, analysing the complex interplay of challenges and opportunities confronting women in a field long dominated by men. Organ performance remains integral to worship and cultural expression in Nigerian churches, yet aspiring female musicians routinely encounter barriers such as restricted access to systematic training, scarcity of sustained mentorship, and pervasive societal expectations that confine musical leadership to male practitioners. Informed by theories of gender inclusivity and cultural capital, the research centres on the contributions of the Association of Nigerian Female Organists (ANFO) in fostering greater participation and professional advancement. It evaluates the association's mentorship schemes, specialised training workshops, and public performance platforms, while assessing their tangible effects on the skill development, confidence, and career trajectories of female organists. Particular attention is given to the rationale for establishing a dedicated body like ANFO, the prospects it creates alongside enduring obstacles rooted in patriarchal structures and resource limitations, and the wider consequences for gender equity within Nigerian sacred music traditions. Through this examination, the study underscores how targeted organisational interventions can mitigate historical exclusions and promote broader representation. It concludes by offering strategic recommendations for bolstering institutional alliances, heightening public awareness, and amplifying the visibility of accomplished female performers, thereby advancing scholarly conversations on equity in the musical arts and the empowering function of professional networks in transforming gendered cultural practices.

Keywords: Female Organists; Gender Disparity; Nigeria; Organ Music; Gender Equality

Introduction

Organ music plays a central role in Christian worship, enhancing religious ceremonies and contributing to the spiritual atmosphere of church services. The organist, with their mastery of the instrument, is a pivotal figure in shaping the musical experience of congregational worship. However, despite the crucial role of organists, the profession has been historically male-dominated, especially in Nigeria, where societal norms and cultural expectations have restricted women's access to training and opportunities in organ music.



In Nigeria, the underrepresentation of female organists reflects a broader issue of gender inequality in the arts and professional fields. Cultural beliefs often dictate that leadership in musical domains, particularly organ music, is reserved for men. As a result, women aspiring to become organists face multiple barriers, including limited access to professional training, mentorship, and visibility within the music community. These obstacles are compounded by the societal perception that women are less suited for such demanding and prestigious roles.

The Association of Nigerian Female Organists (ANFO) was established to address these gender-based challenges and empower women in the field of organ music. ANFO aims to create a supportive environment where women can develop their musical talents, gain professional recognition, and overcome the historical exclusion from this domain. By focusing on mentorship, training, and public performances, ANFO offers female organists the tools and platforms they need to excel and be recognised in the music world.

In Nigeria, where gender norms are deeply ingrained, ANFO's work is particularly significant. The organisation provides training programmes, workshops, and performance opportunities to equip female organists with the necessary skills to succeed. Through initiatives like the annual concerts, "Ladies on the Organ" held December 2024, "Her Hymn, Her Organ" concert held December 2025, ANFO not only promotes women's visibility in the profession but also challenges the cultural perceptions that have traditionally confined women to supporting roles in church music. Such platforms allow female organists to showcase their abilities and establish themselves as leaders in the field.

The organisation's emphasis on mentorship is vital, as it addresses the lack of female role models and the limited access to professional networks that many women face. By creating a community of female organists, ANFO fosters a sense of belonging and support, helping to build confidence and professionalism. This network provides the resources necessary for women to navigate the male-dominated world of organ music and succeed in their careers.

This study aims to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by female organists in Nigeria, with a focus on the role of ANFO in promoting gender inclusivity and empowering women in the field of organ music. The research will assess the effectiveness of ANFO's mentorship, training, and performance programmes and examine the impact of these initiatives on the professional development of female organists in Nigeria. The study will also address the necessity of a dedicated organisation for female organists, the prospects and challenges they face, and the broader implications for gender equity in music.

The objectives of this study are to assess the gender disparity in the profession of organ playing in Nigerian churches, to examine the role of ANFO in providing mentorship, training, and visibility, and to evaluate the impact of ANFO's initiatives on the professional development of female organists.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by theories of gender inclusivity and cultural capital. Drawing on feminist musicology, the research situates organ music within patriarchal structures that have historically privileged male musicianship. Feminist scholars have long argued that unequal access to professional opportunities is reinforced through both formal and informal institutions. Gender inclusivity theories posit that organisational structures, mentorship programmes, and community support can disrupt traditional power dynamics and expand access to cultural capital for underrepresented groups. In the context of ANFO, these frameworks help explain why female organists require targeted support to navigate a domain where institutional and cultural barriers limit participation.



Literature Review

Gender inequality in music and artistic leadership is a well-documented phenomenon across different cultural and institutional contexts. Studies in musicology and cultural economics show that women have historically been underrepresented in musical professions that carry prestige and technical authority, with classical music often reflecting broader societal gender biases. Borowiecki and colleagues, for example, demonstrate that female composers have received less prominence and recognition in historical records of Western classical music, a disparity rooted partly in unequal access to institutionalised music education and professional networks (Borowiecki et al., 2024; Oluwadamilare & Ayokunmi, 2025).

Gender disparities also extend beyond composition to performance and leadership in music communities. Research on music education highlights how gendered differences in training opportunities and educational outcomes can affect music-making careers. These quantitative inequities have qualitative implications for women's career trajectories in music, affecting access to professional roles and leadership positions in musical institutions (de Boise et al., 2025).

Within religious music contexts, women's participation continues to face cultural and institutional barriers. Studies on Nigerian church music indicate that traditional and cultural norms influence women's roles in musical leadership. Faseun and Bello's work on women in the *Celestial Church of Christ* shows that women are often relegated to supportive roles in music, while men dominate leadership functions such as choir direction and instrumental performance. These gendered norms reflect broader sociocultural expectations that influence participation in church music (Faseun & Bello, 2015; Ayokunmi, Olaleye, & Ogunye, 2025).

Similarly, research on women's leadership in church choral ministries in southwestern Nigeria documents how gendered perceptions restrict women's authority in sacred music roles, especially in conducting and musical leadership. Despite growing recognition of women's talents, traditional gender roles continue to marginalise women within church music ministries, affecting their visibility and progression (Odusanya, 2025).

Beyond Nigeria, research on gender inequality in the broader music industry reveals persistent discrimination and structural barriers for women. A large-scale census by the Musicians' Union in the UK found that women are significantly more likely than men to experience gender discrimination, financial barriers, and challenges related to caring responsibilities, all of which negatively impact women's music careers. Women musicians also earn less than their male counterparts, despite often having equivalent or higher levels of formal music education (Musicians' Union, 2024).

Studies from other contexts reinforce the argument that cultural norms and structural barriers, including limited resources, fewer performance opportunities, and societal biases, constrain women's participation in music. For example, research on female musicians in Iran's music industry identifies cultural norms, economic constraints, and limited access to professional opportunities as key barriers to women's artistic careers (Rahimi & Khaksar, 2024). Such findings reveal global patterns of gender bias in music, even where specific cultural and institutional contexts differ (Rahimi & Khaksar, 2024).

These bodies of literature collectively suggest that gender inequality in music arises from a combination of cultural norms, institutional barriers, and limited access to training and leadership opportunities. While much of the existing research focuses on composition, choral leadership, or broader music careers, the specific domain of organ music remains under-explored, particularly within the Nigerian context. The organ, as both a technical instrument and a symbol of musical authority in church settings, reflects similar gendered exclusions observed elsewhere in music and religious practice. As the literature indicates, women's participation in music leadership roles is



constrained by deeply rooted cultural expectations and institutional structures that privilege male authority.

By situating the experiences of female organists within this broader framework of gender inequality in music, this study extends current scholarship to explore how targeted initiatives, such as those of the Association of Nigerian Female Organists (ANFO), can address structural barriers and promote gender inclusivity in organ music. This builds on established research highlighting the need for support systems, mentoring, and institutional change to foster women's active participation in professional music domains.

Methodology

This article synthesises information from organisational descriptions, media reporting, and public commentary about ANFO. Primary data were derived from members of the association, official association materials and documented events such as concerts, training/Seminar series, and mentorship initiatives. Secondary sources include reports from *The Guardian Nigeria* that document ANFO's public activities and events, as well as postings from ANFO social media pages that show community engagement and reaction. While direct interviews were beyond the scope of this review, the analysis draws on real, traceable public sources to construct an account of ANFO's aims, activities, and perceived impact.

Discussion and Findings

ANFO was established with the explicit mission to empower and elevate female organists in Nigeria by facilitating skills development, mentorship, and professional visibility. Founded on June 26th, 2024 by the General Overseer of MFM ministries and his wife, Prof. Daniel Kolawole and Dr (Mrs) Folashade Olukoya, This association brings together female organists from diverse Christian denominations, creating a unified platform for collaboration, learning, and musical growth. It serves as an inclusive space where members, regardless of their denominational backgrounds, can share knowledge, develop their skills, and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of organ music. By fostering unity amidst diversity, the association promotes excellence, mutual support, and the preservation of organ music within the broader Christian tradition. According to organizational descriptions, ANFO promotes organ music education through structured training programs and workshops. It also supports community building, networking, and public performance opportunities to increase women's participation in a field traditionally dominated by men. The organization aims to create an inventory of female organists, nurture young talent, and raise broader awareness about organ music within local communities. These aims are central to expanding access and redefining cultural norms around female musical leadership (Association of Nigerian Female Organists [ANFO], n.d.).

A key moment in ANFO's development was the second annual concert themed "Ladies on the Organ, Her Hymn, Her Organ," which drew more than 40 women from across Nigeria, showcasing their organ performance skills and creating a platform for visibility. At the event, the association's Founder/Patron, Professor D.K Olukoya, emphasized that organ playing had traditionally been monopolized by older men and called for expanded female participation. The concert demonstrated that with appropriate platforms, women are not only capable organ performers but can inspire others through public performance. Commentary from participants underscored the challenges of navigating a male-dominated space but also highlighted the empowerment and confidence gained through ANFO's support.

Professor D.K Olukoya, also weighed in on this issue, highlighting the need to remove gender-based barriers in music. During a speech at the ANFO event, the Patron of the ANFO encouraged women to develop their musical abilities and pursue organ playing, emphasizing that



gender should not limit anyone's potential in any field. He stated that "gender should not be a barrier to women excelling in music" and further expressed his support for breaking stereotypes and providing women with the tools and platforms needed to succeed. According to Prof. Olukoya, the efforts of ANFO to train more female organists were critical for dismantling barriers and empowering the next generation of women in this field. His remarks underscored the growing societal recognition of women's potential in musical leadership and the importance of mentorship and opportunity (Wisdom-Bassey, 2025).

In addition, Dr. (Mrs) Folashade Olukoya, the Matron of the association, provided her support at the event, emphasizing women's unique spiritual and social roles. She encouraged women to complement men rather than compete with them, noting that women are "divinely designed solutions" for strengthening society. Dr. Olukoya highlighted women's spiritual and social mandates, emphasizing that they were created to help, strengthen, and uplift what is lacking in society. She also warned that societies which deny women the opportunity to contribute would experience stagnation. Dr. Olukoya's perspective aligns with the broader goals of ANFO in giving women opportunities to express their musical gifts and find platforms where their voices can be heard (Olukoya, 2025).

Alice Monday, an ANFO member and a participant in the concert, expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to perform at the event, acknowledging the platform created by ANFO for women to rise, be seen, and celebrated. Alice emphasized that in a world where women's voices are often silenced, the event provided a rare opportunity for women to speak through their music. She lauded the leadership of Professor D.K and Dr. Mrs. Folashade Olukoya for believing in women's potential and creating spaces for them to be heard. Her reflection on the event underscores the profound impact that ANFO's initiatives have on the empowerment of female organists, not only by providing opportunities for public performance but by affirming the value of women in musical leadership (Monday, 2025).

Adding to this, Abiodun George, the national Coordinator of ANFO, emphasized the intellectual and emotional demands of organ playing. She explained that organ playing requires more than just physical execution, it demands mental rehearsal and patience. As an M.A. Music student in the Department of Music (Organ House) at Mountain Top University, Ogun State, Nigeria, and an Anglican Church organist, George represents the next generation of female organists leading the charge for inclusivity. Her experiences as an organist, choral director, music teacher, and entrepreneur align with ANFO's mission to create opportunities for professional development and mentorship. She acknowledged the mentorship provided by figures like Prof. D.K Olukoya and Dr. (Mrs) Folashade Olukoya, noting that their support has been vital in strengthening the community of female organists in Nigeria. Abiodun George also thanked Dr. Ayo Oluranti, the association's Mentor/ Consultant, Mr. Akin Olubi, ANFO's Organ Instructor for imparting critical skills and for offering patience to the participants. These testimonies highlight the importance of nurturing patience and intellectual engagement in developing organ skills, reinforcing the value of mentorship in overcoming obstacles and enhancing performance abilities (George, 2025).

Furthermore, the social media posts from the ANFO's page, Abiodun George and other members of ANFO illustrate the deep sense of appreciation for the opportunities provided by the Patron and Matron of the Association. ANFO members emphasize that such platforms enable women to express themselves through organ music, fostering a greater sense of empowerment. As ANFO Coordinator put it, ANFO's events are not just concerts, but transformative experiences that uplift and inspire women, proving that when given the right opportunities, women can excel in traditionally male-dominated fields (George, 2025).

Discussion of these findings suggests that ANFO's work is significant in several ways. First, it increases visibility for female organists, offering performance opportunities that can help



normalize women's presence in this domain. Second, structured mentorship and training initiatives help bridge gaps in access to technical skills and professional development. Third, by creating community among women organists, ANFO fosters networks that sustain participation and collective identity. While the long-term impact remains to be fully documented, these early outcomes align with theoretical expectations about the role of targeted support in disrupting long-standing gender biases.

Members of the Association of Nigerian Female Organists (ANFO)

The members of ANFO are Abiodun Temitope George, who serves as the Coordinator; Precious Omosalewa Alapakristi, the Assistant Coordinator; Sedode Okunnuga, the Welfare Secretary; Tosin Falodun, the Assistant Welfare Secretary; Okpalanedu Chiugo, the General Secretary; Ibukun Ogunmola, the Media Secretary; and Alice Monday, the Assistant Media Secretary. Other members include Princess Biobele Amachree, Tamunosiki Divine Sobere, Ruth Inyang, Deborah Agbelemoge, Joseph Deborah, Okpalaoka Jennifer Ezichi, Adelayi Faith Itunuoluwa, B-Deigha Benita Ebitare, Chukwuka Makuochukwu Esther, Igboekwe Francisca Chidimma, Eniola Abogunde, Marycynthia Amarachukwu Asiegbu, Favour Sinmiloluwa Akande, Temitope Aina, Modupe Ademuyiwa, Oluwayemisi Ruth Oyinlola, Funke Tabiti, Elfrida Ibifaka Kalio, Chiugo Okpalanedu, Ofoneme Chinenye, Rachael Gold, Queen Abraham, Nifemi Viho, Chinelo Madubulike, Chinenye Ofoneme, Chisom Iwuorah, Mercy Tonade, Dr. Dorcas Tonade, Adeniyi Damilola, Lydia Okeunmi, Mercy Taise, Adenike, Rachael Damisa, Sinmiloluwa Akande, and Telema Green.

The Personalities behind the Association

Professor Daniel Kolawole and Dr Mrs Folashade Elizabeth Olukoya

Daniel Kolawole Olukoya is a Nigerian Christian minister, scientist, author, educator, and musician. He is the founder and General Overseer of Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. He studied Microbiology at the University of Lagos, where he graduated with First Class Honours in 1980, and later obtained a PhD in Molecular Genetics from the University of Reading in the United Kingdom. His professional background in scientific research and education reflects a strong commitment to intellectual discipline, structured learning, and knowledge development.

Olukoya's identity as a scientist and minister is complemented by his interest and involvement in music. He is recognised as an organist, composer, and multi-instrumentalist, with particular interest in sacred music, hymnody, and instrumental performance. This musical background is important to his relationship with ANFO because his support for the association is informed not only by institutional patronage but also by an understanding of the discipline and resources required for effective organ training and performance.

Within ANFO, Olukoya is principally associated with the position of Patron or Grand Patron. His role combines musical advocacy, institutional authority, and support for the development of organ music. His involvement reflects a concern for expanding the participation of women in organ performance and creating opportunities for female musicians to develop their skills. His support has also contributed to access to training, specialist instruction, rehearsal facilities, instruments, seminars, and organised performance opportunities. Olukoya's contribution to ANFO may therefore be understood in terms of musical patronage and institutional support. His approach places emphasis on serious training, technical competence, discipline, and musical excellence. In this sense, his support has helped to position ANFO not simply as a women's musical association, but as a platform through which female organists can receive training, develop professionally, and contribute meaningfully to church and concert music.



Folashade Elizabeth Olukoya is an artist, Christian music performer, illustrator, women's leader, and advocate for female development. Her educational and professional background is strongly connected to the creative arts. She studied Fashion Design, Fine Arts, and Interior Decoration in London and has also been involved in artistic practice and illustration. Her creative background reflects a sustained interest in artistic expression, design, and the development of creative abilities. Music is also an important aspect of her public identity. She is recognised for her participation in Christian music and hymn performance and has been involved in musical presentations within the context of ministry. Although she is not primarily identified as an organist, her experience as a performer gives her an understanding of preparation, artistic interpretation, confidence, and public presentation. These experiences are relevant to her involvement in an organisation dedicated to the development and visibility of female musicians.

Folashade Olukoya's relationship with ANFO is closely connected to her wider commitment to women's development and empowerment. As International Coordinator of the MFM Women's Foundation, she has been associated with initiatives involving adult literacy, vocational education, and skill acquisition. Her involvement with ANFO extends this concern for female development into the field of music by encouraging women to discover, develop, and demonstrate their musical abilities. She has been described in various sources as the founder, Chief Host, Host, or Matron of ANFO. Although the terminology varies, these descriptions consistently place her within the leadership and public identity of the association. Her contribution is particularly evident in the areas of mentorship, encouragement, advocacy, and the creation of a supportive environment for female musicians. Through her involvement, ANFO provides women with opportunities to receive instruction, develop confidence, establish professional relationships, and perform before wider audiences.

The respective contributions of Daniel and Folashade Olukoya may therefore be viewed as complementary. Daniel Olukoya is more closely associated with musical patronage, institutional support, musical vision, and the provision of structures that facilitate training and development. Folashade Olukoya is more directly associated with women focused leadership, mentorship, public representation, and the encouragement of female participation in music. Together, their influence has contributed significantly to the development of ANFO as a platform for organ training, mentorship, professional development, and public recognition. Their different areas of influence have helped shape an association that combines musical excellence with the advancement and visibility of women within the Nigerian church music and organ community.

Dr. Ayòdámọ̀pẹ̀ Stephen Olúrántí

Dr. Ayòdámọ̀pẹ̀ "Ayo" Olúrántí, formerly known as Ogúnrántí, is a Nigerian composer, organist, conductor, music theorist, and academic. He holds a PhD in Composition and Theory from the University of Pittsburgh and a First Class Honours degree in Music Composition and Organ Performance from the University of Southampton. His professional career spans composition, organ performance, music education, and church music. As a composer, he is recognised for his intercultural approach, which combines traditional Yorùbá musical ideas, including principles associated with the dùndún talking drum, with Western classical/electroacoustic techniques.

Olúrántí is the mentor and consultant of Association of Nigerian Female Organists (ANFO). He serves as a link between the association and the Patron of the Association, Professor D. K. Olukoya, the General Overseer of Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, who is also the founder and sponsor of the association. In this capacity, he communicates the concerns, aspirations, requests, and activities of ANFO to Professor Olukoya and helps facilitate communication between the association and its principal supporter.



His role, therefore, extends beyond musical collaboration. As a consultant, he helps to strengthen the relationship between the association and the wider institutional structure that supports its activities. His background as an accomplished organist, composer, academic, and church musician further enables him to understand and communicate the professional and artistic concerns of the association. Through this intermediary role, Olúrántí contributes to the growth and professional advancement of female organists within the Nigerian church music community.

Mr Akin Olubi

Akin Olubi is a concert organist, church musician, music educator, recording artist, tonal director, and consultant in organ related projects. He comes from a strong tradition of church musicians within the Anglican Communion, an environment that provided an important foundation for his musical development. His early training and artistic formation were influenced by notable musicians, including the Ghanaian master organist J. M. Abadoo, the renowned Nigerian church musician and organist Olaolu Omideyi, and the distinguished organ virtuoso Kayode Oni, whose musical approach also contributed significantly to his development as a performer.

Olubi maintains an active career as a concert and church organist, performing both locally and internationally. His professional activities also extend to music education, particularly in the area of organ performance and training. He teaches organ in the Department of Music at Mountain Top University, where he contributes to the development of young musicians and organists. His responsibility to the Association of Nigerian Female Organists, ANFO, is primarily centred on organ education and professional training. He serves as the principal organ instructor for the association, providing technical guidance and practical instruction to its members. Through this role, Olubi contributes to the development of organ performance skills among female organists and supports the association's broader commitment to strengthening organ music education and performance practice in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The results of this study highlight the significant role played by the *Association of Nigerian Female Organists* (ANFO) in addressing the gender disparities that have traditionally characterised the organ music profession in Nigeria. Historically, the field of organ music, particularly within religious institutions, has been dominated by men. ANFO has emerged as a key organisation that facilitates the inclusion of women in this professional sphere by providing crucial resources, mentorship, and visibility. Through structured training initiatives, public performance opportunities, and community-building efforts, ANFO has enabled female organists to overcome the cultural and institutional barriers that have previously limited their participation in this domain.

The initiatives of ANFO have led to tangible improvements in the professional development and confidence of women in the field. By offering performance platforms and fostering mentorship networks, ANFO has created an environment where female organists are not only able to showcase their talents but also challenge the traditional gender roles that have marginalised them. These efforts contribute to a broader societal shift towards gender inclusivity, particularly within the context of church music, where women's leadership has historically been constrained.

However, the study also reveals that despite the progress made, significant challenges persist. Cultural norms that restrict women's access to advanced training and professional recognition continue to limit their full participation in the field. These enduring barriers suggest that while ANFO's contributions have been invaluable, sustained efforts are required to ensure the continued growth and success of female organists.

The findings of this study affirm the transformative impact of ANFO in promoting gender equality within the organ music profession in Nigeria. The organisation serves as a model for other



sectors where gender disparities exist, offering valuable insights into how targeted support and the creation of inclusive platforms can empower underrepresented groups to navigate and overcome systemic barriers in their pursuit of professional success.

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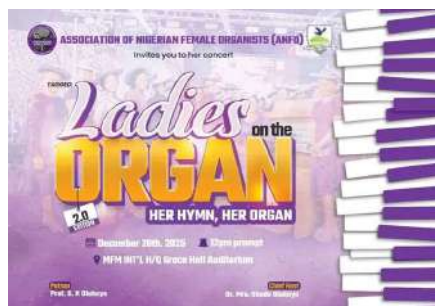
Appendixes



The Logo of the Association



Members of the Association after their Maiden Concert



E-flier of ANFO 2025 concert



SECURITY CHALLENGES ON DATA COLLECTION AND GATHERING IN SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH IN NIGERIA: MITIGATING ITS IMPACT

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Abstract:

Undoubtedly, Nigeria's security architecture has been marred by various challenges, which includes insecurity. These activities range from insurgency, kidnappings, conflicts between herders and farmers. This paper examined how insecurity has adversely affected data collection and gathering process In Nigeria with its overall negative implications on socioeconomic development. Through an in-depth cross-examination of secondary sources of data, books, journals and online materials, this study shed more light on critical issues while adopting the revisionist theory of national security as its theoretical framework to holistically and comprehensively analyze these glaring security challenges and their far-reaching impact on data collection and gathering in the domain of social sciences research. Locally, socioeconomic interaction has remained under siege as a direct consequences or unabated spate of insurgency, robbery, kidnapping etc. In the international scene, images of Nigeria's insecurity as portrayed in various media has continued to discourage foreign investors and hamper influence of foreign investments into country. Findings established have deluged that, the process and quality of data collection has been large affected as a result of insecurity which makes it difficult for committed researchers to access relevant sites and physically locations to secure first hand and reliable data, that will continue to support objective research results and conclusion in social sciences. The study emphasized on the need for the Nigeria government to take a non-politicized approach in addressing the incessant security concerns and upholding synergy among the various arms of local security agents, while showing unprecedented commitment rewards the elimination of corruption in war against insecurity. This will go along way to assist the enthroning and creating the right research environment for the collection of valid data which can inspire development-oriented socioeconomic policy.

Keywords: Security, Insecurity, Data Collection, Insurgency, Social Science.

1.1 Introduction

The term "security" holds diverse interpretations across various contexts. It may be perceived as safe guarding against danger, violence, fear and deprivation which can jeopardize the holistic development. Security entails the absence of fear and deprivation (Baldwin, 2017). The strategic importance of Nigeria as a country stems from the abundant human and materials resources, therefore establishing it as a stronghold in Africa. However, this prominent position has not shielded Nigeria from security threats, as distinct challenges have emerged across various regions. At this juncture, it is paramount to state that, the significance of the symbiotic relationship between security and information collection cannot be overemphasized. The alarming surge in insecurity, including activities of Fulani herdsman, Boko Haram insurgencies, armed robbery, kidnapping etc have widely spread across all the geopolitical zones of the giant of Africa. The nation has been grappled by insecurity and is facing a dire situation characterized by a decline in economic, social, political, religious affairs which is an indicative of pervasive insecurity.

Nigeria, due to its rich cultural diversity, and economic potential, contributes significantly to the field of social science. However, Nigeria is also faced with an avalanche of security challenges that have far-reaching consequences on various aspects of the nation's development including data gathering in social science (Adeleke, 2013).

These challenges have not only resulted in the loss of lives and properties but have profound implications for research and data collection in social sciences. Okoro, (2018) gave a detailed insecurity situation in the northern part of Nigeria, when he noted that herdsman have seized entire communities, kidnapping senior state men, burned down churches, killed church priests and other brethren, killed policemen, raped, robbed and committed terrible crimes The government has done little to stop the situation, which is a serious threat to national security and national development. One of the fundamental pillars of the



social science, is collection of reliable and valid data to support evidence based research and policy making. According to Egbetokun et al (2022), data gathering serves as the foundation for understanding social phenomena, analyzing trends and formulating effective strategies to address societal issues. However, the prevailing security challenges in Nigeria have posed significant obstacles to the data collection process, hindering the progress and quality of social science research. Egbetokun et al (2022) noted that, researchers in social science face numerous of hurdles arising from a tempestuous climate when attempting to collect data in insecure environs. These challenges include: limited access to researchites due to safety reasons, threats to personal security and well-being difficulty in obtaining informed content from participants the risks of data loss or damage and the overall disrupted of research activities (Gierszewski, 2010) Consequently the security challenges have compromised research findings reliability, validity, generalizability, undermining the credibility and impact of social science research in Nigeria.

The security challenges in Nigeria have significantly affected the data gathering process in the social science (Abudullahi and Anazodo, 2018). The limitation impose by insecurity have stalled the collection of valid data compromising, the credibility of social science research. Understanding the depth of these challenges and exploring potential solution is essential to ensure the social science research in Nigeria remains robust and impactful.

By addressing the influence of security challenges on data gathering, researchers and policymakers can contribute to evidence based decision making, effective policy formulation and the overall development of the nation.

The study explores the influence of security challenges on data gathering in social sciences. In Nigeria, focusing on the identification of specific challenges researcher face, establishing consequences of data credibility while exploring efficient strategies to mitigate its impact.

The objectives of the paper are:

1. Identify the security challenges faced by social science researchers in Nigeria
2. Identity how these security challenges make the process of data collection and its validity on data collection in social science domain
3. Highlight strategies to mitigate the impact of security challenges

1.2 Research Methodology

The researcher herein employed the use of secondary data by, exploring relevant books, journals, newspaper and the internet to divulge the specific challenges encountered in data collection due to security issues. The paper sheds light on an under-researched area, filing a gap in knowledge and understanding.

1.3 Literature Review

The security architecture in Nigeria have severe implication for data collection and gathering in social sciences and other field of discipline as the case maybe. These fall back to the fact that, researchers and scholars have limited access to relevant sites to access reliable and valid data. |when there is threat to life also poses a threat to other things.

Using Nigeria, entire regions may become inaccessible due to conduct on-the ground research (Peace and Baibier, 2000). On the other hand, the atmosphere created by insecurity has continued to hamper the consistency of data collection process. The process of data collection is not one to be done hurriedly because, it often require longitudinal studies as vvel I as repeated visits overtime. However, as insecurity continue to disrupt this long process, this led researchers to alter data collection leading to the collapse of the fundamental values of social sciences.

Additionally security challenges can directly alter research infrastructure. Research institutions sites may suffer damages which may led to the destruction of reliable and valid data hindering the efficacy of data gathering in social sciences. To address this menace, researchers, scholars must adopt innovative strategies to gather data in insecure places. These include: leveraging on technology online surveys, phone interview to sideline physical limitations, partnership with local organization and communities can foster this.

1.4 Discussion of Findings

Nigeria has witnessed and is still witnessing political tribal and ethnic crisis in different regions. Others include human trafficking, unknown gunmen among others. Each region in Nigeria has cases of insecurity peculiar to it, for instance, the Northern region has witness several cases of Fulani herdsmen



clashes with farmers, Boko Haram insurgencies which has led to both the loss of lives and properties as well as displacement of many who are in profound despair of returning to their ancestral lands. Eastern region is obviously at the mercy of unknown gunmen, kidnappers etc. The West on the other hand, have continue to experience ritual and kidnapping cases. All these put together, has made it almost impossible for researchers to derive the necessary comfort required to get valid data.

The conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers has continued to be a thing of national concern. The encroachment of farmlands by Fulani herders has led to clashes, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of properties farmlands as well as destruction of properties (Ajibefun, 2017). The root causes of these clashes could be attributes to both economic and religious reasons with herdsmen claiming that their cows are killed due to religious reasons while farmers on the other hand perceive the herders as a threat to their economic activities (Ajibefun, 2017). The herdsmen killings have had and continue to have severe socio-economic implications and have disrupted inter-group relationships. The unfortunate situation is considered the second most significant insecurity issue after the Boko Haram insurgency (Okoro, 2018). Olakutan (2016) noted that, the herdsmen use of sophisticated weapons which is a no match to the crude implement of farmers have, pose a grave dangers to security including security personnel such as police and the military.

Additionally, the inequality in wealth distribution and unemployment among youths and corruption among politicians has led to an increased rate of poverty (Ucha, 2002). This in turn leads a lot of youths to involve in kidnapping and ritual killings. It is strongly believed that, the government unresponsiveness and lackadaisical attitude about the poor economic condition of youth has pushed a majority of them into crime. The perpetual existence of these crimes have continue to erode security stability and reduces economic activities as well as adversely affecting intergroup relationship in the country.

1. The causes of security threat in Nigeria are numerous. Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria (CLCN, 2019) however identify the following as the root causes of insecurity:
2. Break down of cherished cultural values: cultural values link the community with their ancestors and with God. The value of the sacredness of life helps to show all attitude contrary to the promotion of human life and otherwise.
3. Religious intolerance and ethnic conflict: Effiong (2019) also identifies the following factors of religious intolerance, devotion of one's religion, value conflict, psychological jealousy etc. which independently and influencing actions throughout the history of security by challenges emanating from religious intolerance
4. Poverty and Unemployment: Effiong (2019) opines that Nigeria faces severe poverty, unemployment etc. This ,makes unemployed young folks the devil's workshops, committing crimes and creating security problems.
5. Greed and selfishness: Just like Thomas Hobbe's state of nature, people only seek satisfaction their own interests. There is no rules of conduct beyond personal gain and satisfaction
6. Unrestricted flow of deadly weapons: there is a sudden proliferation of weapons in the polity. The use of weapons among youth to run cult groups, kidnapping and armed robbery Syndicate is on an increase which creates security challenges to the nation. Others include, injustice, ignorance of God's command etc.

1.5 Mitigating the Impact

There are several ways to curb and mitigate the impact of security challenges. Importantly, tackling the root cause will help formulate crucial strategies to reduce its impact:

The following are ways of mitigating its impact,

- i. The promotion of good government cannot be overemphasized. This is the fundamental foundation to address security challenges. A good government should be responsive to the needs of the people, accountable, transparent to the polity. All these could be achieved if the standard of governance is raised higher than what it is now.
- ii. The promotion of a fair justice system that will uphold fairness and shun corruption, selective prosecution, nepotism, tribalism and a culture of impunity while restore truth and integrity at full throttle.
- iii. Addressing the rate of unemployment is also important in mitigating security challenges. Joblessness contributes a great deal to personal hardship, social unrest and crime. The government Should partner with the private sector to create more employment opportunities to



- boost productivity, individual livelihoods leading to social stability.
- iv. Proper training and provision of sophisticated weapons for security personnel should not be left out. As this will enhance their efficacy in combating insecurity challenges in the country. Strengthening neighbourhood watch should also be encouraged to prevent crime rate in streets and remote areas.
 - v. Developing strategic media initiative is another effective strategy. This involves purposeful communication to counter the negative exhortations of social media platforms by extremists. The government can establish defence websites, radio and raise public awareness. By denying these extremists a vice and targeting their secret supporters as well as gullible fellows for their activities can be hindered.
 - vi. The government should heavily leverage on the use of modern technology to track extremists e.g. unknown gunmen, Boko Haram and other crime perpetrators. This involves the use of advanced drone, GPS etc.

Conclusion

Succinctly, the influence of security challenges on data collection and gathering in social sciences in Nigeria is a critical problem that hampers and impedes the development of the country. This is because, upon the gathering of valid and reliable data, strategies and efficient initiative, could be formulated to address societal issues and formulated policies. This paper argues that, until the various security challenges researchers are faced with are addressed, without levity and the implications of research as well as policy formulation and societal development will continue to be of great concern.

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QUICK WEALTH SYNDROME AND THE EMERGENCE OF STAGED KIDNAPPING AMONG YOUTHS IN ANAMBRA STATE: A SEARCH FOR RELIGIOUS SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

This study examines quick wealth syndrome and the emergence of staged kidnapping among youths in Anambra State, with particular attention to the role of religion in addressing the phenomenon. The study adopted a qualitative research approach. Both primary and secondary sources were used for data collection. Primary data were obtained through personal communication and interviews conducted across the three major commercial and administrative centres of Anambra State; Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi. Secondary data were drawn from books, academic journals, magazines, lecture notes, credible online publications and other relevant sources. Findings reveal that the increasing desire for sudden wealth, unemployment, peer pressure, social media influence, and the decline of traditional moral values have contributed significantly to the rise of staged kidnapping among youths. The study further observes that the phenomenon undermines family relationships, weakens social trust, promotes insecurity, and disrupts communal harmony. It argues that Christianity and African Traditional Religion provide valuable ethical resources for confronting the problem through moral instruction, character formation, and communal accountability. The study therefore recommends ethical reorientation, youth empowerment, responsible religious leadership, and stronger collaboration among religious institutions, families, traditional authorities, and policymakers. It concludes that the restoration of moral values and responsible wealth creation is essential for curbing staged kidnapping and promoting social stability in Anambra State.

Keywords: *Quick wealth syndrome, staged kidnapping, youths, Anambra State.*

Introduction

Anambra State occupies a prominent position in the economic and commercial landscape of southeastern Nigeria. The state is widely recognized for its entrepreneurial culture, vibrant commercial activities, and strong tradition of business innovation. Major urban centres such as Onitsha, Nnewi, and Awka have historically served as important hubs for commerce, industry, education, and administration. These cities have produced generations of successful entrepreneurs whose achievements have contributed significantly to both regional and national economic development (Falola and Heaton, 2008). Within traditional Igbo society, however, economic success was not measured solely by material accumulation but also by the moral processes through which wealth was acquired. Wealth was expected to be accompanied by integrity, communal responsibility, honesty, and respect for societal norms. Consequently, individuals who accumulated wealth through diligence and ethical conduct enjoyed greater social recognition than those whose prosperity was considered questionable (Mbiti, 1969; Ejizu, 2002).



A notable feature of traditional Igbo economic culture was the apprenticeship system popularly known as *Igba-Boi* or *Imu-Oru*. This institution served not only as a mechanism for economic empowerment but also as a platform for moral formation and character development. Through apprenticeship, young people were trained in patience, discipline, perseverance, accountability, honesty, and hard work. Success was viewed as the outcome of gradual learning, commitment, and personal sacrifice. The apprentice was expected to endure years of training before attaining financial independence. In this regard, wealth acquisition was embedded within a broader framework of moral responsibility and communal accountability (Nmah, 2012). Contemporary social realities, however, indicate a gradual departure from this traditional orientation. Increasing emphasis on material success, consumer culture, and social recognition has contributed to the emergence of what scholars describe as quick wealth syndrome. Quick wealth syndrome refers to an excessive desire for immediate financial success without corresponding commitment to legitimate labour, patience, or ethical conduct. It reflects a value system in which wealth becomes the primary measure of achievement, irrespective of the means through which it is acquired (Onwusi, 2021). In recent years, this mentality has become increasingly visible among some youths who seek rapid financial advancement through various illicit activities. One of the most disturbing manifestations of quick wealth syndrome in Anambra State is staged kidnapping. Unlike conventional kidnapping, staged kidnapping involves individuals deliberately orchestrating or simulating their own abduction with the intention of extorting money from relatives, parents, friends, or associates. Such individuals often create false narratives of captivity, collaborate with accomplices, and demand ransom payments from concerned family members. The practice exploits emotional bonds, generates fear, and manipulates communal sympathy for financial gain. In many cases, victims are discovered to have hidden in hotels, private residences, or undisclosed locations while ransom negotiations are ongoing.

The emergence of staged kidnapping represents more than a criminal phenomenon; it reflects a deeper crisis of values within society. It demonstrates the extent to which the pursuit of wealth has overshadowed ethical considerations and communal responsibilities. The phenomenon undermines trust within families, weakens social cohesion, and threatens the moral foundations upon which communal life is built. As Berger (1990) observes, societies depend on shared moral values and social norms for stability and continuity. When these values are weakened, deviant behaviours become increasingly normalized. Religion occupies a strategic position in addressing this challenge. Both Christianity and African Traditional Religion possess rich moral traditions that emphasize honesty, justice, hard work, accountability, and respect for human dignity. African Traditional Religion promotes communal responsibility, truthfulness, and the preservation of a good name through concepts such as *Ogu na Ofo*, *Ezi-Afa*, and communal accountability (Metuh, 1987; Ejizu, 2002). Christianity similarly emphasizes diligence, contentment, stewardship, integrity, and love of neighbour as essential virtues of moral living (Odozor, 2015; Nmah, 2012). Rather than constituting a cause of the problem, religion provides valuable ethical resources capable of addressing the moral disorientation associated with quick wealth syndrome. This study therefore examines quick wealth syndrome as the primary factor underlying the emergence of staged kidnapping among youths in Anambra State. It further explores how religious values, ethical teachings, and communal moral frameworks can contribute to addressing the phenomenon and promoting responsible citizenship among young people. Through this analysis, the study seeks to demonstrate that sustainable solutions to staged kidnapping require not only legal and economic interventions but also deliberate moral and religious reorientation.



An Overview of Staged Kidnapping Phenomenon in Anambra State

The emergence of staged kidnapping among youths in Anambra State cannot be understood in isolation from broader socio-economic and cultural transformations occurring within contemporary Nigerian society. Historically, the pursuit of wealth in Igbo society was closely linked to productive labour, entrepreneurship, apprenticeship, and communal responsibility. Individuals who achieved economic success were expected to demonstrate integrity, generosity, and commitment to the welfare of their communities. Wealth was not merely an individual possession but a social resource that carried obligations toward family, kinship groups, and society at large (Mbiti, 1969; Ejizu, 2002). Over the years, however, rapid urbanization, globalization, technological advancement, and changing social values have altered traditional perceptions of success and social status. In commercial centres such as Onitsha, Nnewi, and Awka, economic achievement increasingly became associated with visible material possessions, luxury lifestyles, and public displays of affluence. The growth of digital media further amplified these tendencies by exposing young people to images of extravagant wealth, often detached from the realities of productive labour and economic discipline (Onwusi, 2021). The expansion of social media platforms has contributed significantly to this transformation. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat have created virtual environments where individuals frequently display expensive vehicles, luxurious residences, designer clothing, and lavish lifestyles. These displays often create unrealistic standards of success and generate intense pressure among young people who seek social acceptance and recognition. As Bandura's (1977) social learning theory suggests, individuals frequently imitate behaviours that appear to attract admiration, reward, and social approval. Consequently, many youths increasingly aspire to attain wealth rapidly, irrespective of the means employed.

Within this social environment, quick wealth syndrome gradually emerged as a dominant cultural orientation. The syndrome reflects a growing belief that success should be immediate rather than gradual and that social status depends primarily on financial capacity rather than character, competence, or integrity. This mentality has contributed to the proliferation of various forms of fraudulent and deceptive activities aimed at achieving financial gain within the shortest possible time. One of the relatively recent manifestations of this development is staged kidnapping. Unlike traditional forms of criminal activity that involve direct confrontation with victims, staged kidnapping relies primarily on deception and emotional manipulation. Individuals deliberately orchestrate their disappearance and create the impression that they have been abducted by criminals. Family members, relatives, and friends are subsequently contacted and pressured to provide ransom payments for the supposed victim's release. In many instances, investigations later reveal that the alleged victim actively participated in planning the scheme. The emergence of staged kidnapping reflects a significant shift in the nature of youth criminality. Rather than relying exclusively on violent crime, some individuals increasingly exploit family affection, communal solidarity, and emotional vulnerability as instruments of financial extortion. The practice transforms relationships of trust into opportunities for economic exploitation. Parents who have sacrificed resources for the upbringing of their children become targets of deception, while relatives and community members who contribute toward ransom payments often experience betrayal and financial loss when the truth eventually emerges.

This phenomenon also indicates a gradual weakening of traditional mechanisms of moral regulation. In traditional Igbo society, communal sanctions, family supervision, and concern for reputation served as powerful deterrents against deviant behaviour. Concepts such as *Ogu na Ofo* and *Ezi-Afa* encouraged individuals to maintain integrity and avoid actions capable of bringing shame upon themselves and their families (Metuh, 1987). Contemporary social conditions, however, have reduced the effectiveness of some of these mechanisms, particularly within urban settings



where anonymity and mobility make communal monitoring more difficult. The genesis of staged kidnapping in Anambra State is therefore closely linked to the emergence of quick wealth syndrome, changing social values, economic pressures, social media influence, and the weakening of traditional systems of moral regulation. The phenomenon represents a manifestation of broader societal challenges relating to materialism, ethical decline, and the increasing prioritization of wealth over character.

Causes of the Phenomenon

Erosion of Traditional Ethical Values

One of the major factors responsible for the emergence of quick wealth syndrome and the consequent rise of staged kidnapping among youths in Anambra State is the gradual erosion of traditional ethical values that once regulated individual and communal conduct. Traditional Igbo society was founded upon a well-developed moral system that emphasized honesty, justice, integrity, accountability, hard work, and respect for communal norms. These values were not merely social expectations but sacred obligations that governed interpersonal relationships and economic activities. Through concepts such as *Ogu na Ofo*, *Ezi-Afa*, and communal responsibility, individuals were constantly reminded that moral conduct was more valuable than material acquisition (Mbiti, 1969; Metuh, 1987; Ejizu, 2002).

The concept of *Ogu na Ofo* occupied a central position in traditional Igbo ethical thought. It represented truth, justice, innocence, righteousness, and moral legitimacy. An individual who stood on *Ofo* was expected to uphold truth and reject falsehood regardless of personal circumstances. Similarly, *Ezi-Afa* emphasized the importance of a good name and honourable reputation. Within this moral framework, wealth acquired through deception or fraudulent means attracted social condemnation rather than admiration. Consequently, individuals were motivated to pursue success through legitimate and socially acceptable means. However, rapid social transformation, urbanization, globalization, and the influence of modern consumer culture have weakened the effectiveness of these traditional regulatory mechanisms. Contemporary society increasingly places emphasis on material achievement while paying less attention to the moral processes through which wealth is acquired. As a result, the desire to preserve personal integrity and family reputation has diminished among some youths. Falola and Heaton (2008) observe that modernization has altered traditional structures of social control in many African societies, creating conditions in which individual ambitions often supersede communal values. The weakening of traditional ethical frameworks has created an environment in which quick wealth syndrome flourishes. When societal recognition is based primarily on financial success rather than moral character, individuals may become willing to employ unethical strategies to achieve economic advancement. Staged kidnapping therefore emerges as one of several manifestations of a broader moral crisis characterized by declining commitment to truthfulness, accountability, and communal responsibility. The restoration of traditional ethical values remains essential for addressing this challenge because moral discipline serves as a critical foundation for responsible citizenship and social stability.

Economic Hardship and Youth Unemployment

Economic hardship and youth unemployment constitute significant factors contributing to quick wealth syndrome and staged kidnapping among youths in Anambra State. Nigeria continues to face numerous economic challenges, including rising unemployment, inflation, underemployment, and increasing living costs. These conditions have affected many young people who struggle to secure sustainable means of livelihood despite possessing educational qualifications and vocational skills. Youth unemployment creates frustration, uncertainty, and feelings of exclusion from mainstream economic opportunities. For many young people, the inability to



achieve financial independence generates anxiety and discouragement. Such conditions become particularly problematic in societies where wealth is highly valued and frequently associated with social status and personal success. Boff (1993) argues that poverty extends beyond material deprivation and often includes experiences of social marginalization, humiliation, and loss of dignity. In Anambra State, where commercial success is highly visible; economic difficulties can create significant psychological pressure. Young people often encounter successful entrepreneurs, business owners, and wealthy individuals whose lifestyles symbolize economic achievement. While such examples can inspire productive ambition, they may also generate frustration among those who lack similar opportunities. The desire to attain comparable levels of success within a short period may encourage the adoption of illegitimate means of wealth acquisition.

Merton's (1938) strain theory provides a useful explanation for this situation. According to Merton, deviant behaviour may emerge when society promotes specific goals such as wealth and success but fails to provide adequate legitimate means for achieving them. Under such conditions, some individuals may resort to unconventional or unlawful methods to attain socially valued objectives. Within the context of Anambra State, staged kidnapping can be interpreted as one such adaptation. The practice represents an attempt to achieve financial gain in circumstances where legitimate economic opportunities appear insufficient or inaccessible. Nevertheless, economic hardship alone does not inevitably lead to criminal behaviour. Numerous individuals experience financial difficulties without resorting to fraudulent activities. The emergence of staged kidnapping therefore reflects the interaction between economic challenges and broader moral, social, and cultural influences. Consequently, efforts to address youth unemployment and promote economic empowerment remain essential components of any comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing quick wealth syndrome and its associated manifestations.

Peer Pressure and Social Media Culture

The influence of peer pressure and social media culture has become increasingly significant in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of contemporary youths. Technological advancements have transformed communication patterns and created new avenues through which values, lifestyles, and aspirations are transmitted. Social media platforms now function as powerful instruments of socialization, influencing perceptions of success, identity, and self-worth among young people. Contemporary social media culture often promotes material achievement as the primary indicator of personal success. Images and videos showcasing luxury vehicles, expensive clothing, lavish vacations, and extravagant lifestyles dominate many digital platforms. Such representations frequently create unrealistic expectations regarding wealth acquisition and social status. Young people who are repeatedly exposed to these portrayals may develop a strong desire to achieve similar levels of affluence regardless of their economic circumstances.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory emphasizes that individuals learn behaviours through observation and imitation. When society consistently rewards visible displays of wealth with admiration, attention, and social recognition, young people may become motivated to emulate such lifestyles. The problem becomes particularly severe when the source of wealth receives little scrutiny. Under these conditions, financial success becomes more important than ethical conduct. Peer groups further reinforce these tendencies. Young people often seek acceptance, approval, and validation from friends and social networks. In environments where wealth serves as a primary measure of status, individuals may experience pressure to demonstrate financial success even when legitimate means are unavailable. This pressure can contribute to participation in deceptive practices designed to create the appearance of prosperity. Staged kidnapping thrives within this environment because it offers the possibility of obtaining substantial financial resources within a relatively short period. The practice exploits emotional relationships while minimizing the physical risks associated



with some other criminal activities. Consequently, peer influence and social media culture have become important factors in understanding the increasing attraction of quick wealth syndrome among certain segments of the youth population.

Weakening of Family-Based Moral Formation

The family remains one of the most important institutions responsible for moral education and character development. Traditionally, the family served as the primary environment within which children learned values such as honesty, respect, discipline, responsibility, and hard work. Parents, grandparents, and extended family members played active roles in transmitting ethical principles and monitoring behaviour. Through continuous guidance and correction, young people developed an understanding of acceptable social conduct and communal expectations. Contemporary social changes, however, have affected the capacity of many families to perform these functions effectively. Economic pressures, migration, changing work patterns, and the increasing influence of digital technology have reduced opportunities for sustained family interaction. In some cases, parents are compelled to devote significant time to economic activities, leaving limited opportunities for direct supervision and moral instruction. Consequently, external influences such as peers, social media, and popular culture increasingly shape the attitudes and values of young people. The weakening of family-based moral formation contributes significantly to the emergence of quick wealth syndrome. Young people who receive inadequate ethical guidance may become more vulnerable to societal pressures that prioritize material success over moral integrity. Without strong moral foundations, individuals may develop distorted perceptions regarding wealth, success, and social recognition. This situation increases susceptibility to behaviours that promise immediate financial rewards despite their ethical implications.

Furthermore, some families unintentionally reinforce materialistic attitudes by evaluating success primarily in terms of financial achievement. Excessive emphasis on wealth without corresponding attention to character development may encourage young people to prioritize economic outcomes over moral considerations. Such orientations create fertile ground for the acceptance of quick wealth syndrome and related behaviours. Strengthening family-based moral education remains crucial for addressing this challenge. Families must deliberately cultivate values such as honesty, patience, diligence, responsibility, and respect for human dignity. Through effective moral formation, young people can develop resilience against social pressures that encourage unethical behaviour.

Excessive Materialism and Consumer Culture

Another significant factor contributing to quick wealth syndrome is the growing influence of materialism and consumer culture. Materialism refers to a value orientation that places excessive importance on the acquisition of material possessions as a source of happiness, identity, and social status. Contemporary consumer culture frequently promotes the belief that personal fulfilment can be achieved through the accumulation of wealth and luxury goods. In many societies, including Anambra State, public admiration is often directed toward individuals who display substantial material success. Expensive houses, luxury vehicles, designer clothing, and lavish ceremonies are frequently interpreted as indicators of achievement and prestige. While there is nothing inherently wrong with prosperity, problems arise when wealth becomes detached from ethical considerations and assumes a dominant position within the hierarchy of social values.

Weber (1930) observed that economic behaviour is often influenced by broader cultural and value systems. When societies place disproportionate emphasis on material success, individuals may experience pressure to attain wealth irrespective of the means employed. Such conditions encourage the development of quick wealth syndrome by creating unrealistic expectations regarding



economic achievement. Materialism also contributes to dissatisfaction with gradual progress. The virtues of patience, perseverance, and long-term planning become less attractive when immediate gratification is widely celebrated. Consequently, some young people become increasingly willing to pursue shortcuts to wealth. Staged kidnapping reflects this mentality because it represents an attempt to secure financial gain without corresponding investment in productive labour or entrepreneurship. The challenge posed by materialism highlights the importance of ethical reorientation. Both Christianity and African Traditional Religion emphasize that genuine human fulfilment cannot be reduced to material acquisition. Rather, true success involves the cultivation of moral character, responsible relationships, and meaningful contributions to society (Nmah, 2012; Odozor, 2015). Promoting these values is essential for confronting the culture of quick wealth and its associated manifestations among youths.

Socio-Religious Effects of Staged Kidnapping

Destabilization of the Familial and Communal Economy

One of the most immediate consequences of staged kidnapping is the destabilization of both the family and communal economy. In many cases, relatives of the supposed victim are compelled to mobilize financial resources urgently in order to secure the release of their loved one. Parents often withdraw savings, sell valuable property, borrow money, suspend business activities, or divert funds originally intended for education, healthcare, housing, or investment. The emotional urgency associated with kidnapping frequently discourages careful verification of claims, thereby increasing the likelihood of financial exploitation. The economic consequences become particularly devastating when the alleged victim is later discovered to have orchestrated the abduction. Families not only suffer financial loss but also experience emotional trauma and psychological distress arising from betrayal. Parents who have sacrificed resources for the welfare of their children often find it difficult to recover from the realization that their trust has been deliberately exploited for monetary gain. Such experiences weaken family relationships and undermine confidence within the household.

Beyond the family, staged kidnapping affects the wider community. In many African societies, communal solidarity remains an important social value. Relatives, neighbours, religious organizations, age-grade associations, women's groups, and community unions often contribute financially when kidnapping incidents occur. When such incidents are later exposed as fraudulent, public confidence in collective assistance mechanisms is weakened. Individuals may become reluctant to contribute to future appeals for assistance because of fear of deception. Consequently, the moral economy of mutual support that sustains many communities suffers significant damage (Mbiti, 1969; Nmah, 2012). Furthermore, repeated incidents of staged kidnapping can negatively affect local economic activities. Fear, uncertainty, and declining trust may discourage investment and weaken business relationships. In communities where such incidents become common, suspicion gradually replaces cooperation, thereby reducing opportunities for collective economic development. The destabilization of family and communal economies therefore represents a major social cost of staged kidnapping.

Erosion of Social Trust and the Growth of Insecurity

Trust constitutes one of the most important foundations of social life. Families, communities, institutions, and economic systems depend upon mutual confidence and reliability for their effective functioning. Staged kidnapping significantly undermines this foundation by introducing deception into relationships that ordinarily depend upon trust and emotional attachment. When kidnapping reports emerge, family members and community stakeholders often respond with urgency because human life is perceived as sacred and deserving of protection. However, repeated exposure to cases



of staged kidnapping gradually creates skepticism and suspicion. Genuine victims may encounter delayed responses because previous experiences have made people cautious about accepting kidnapping claims without verification. This erosion of trust affects interpersonal relationships and weakens communal solidarity.

Berger (1990) argues that social order depends upon shared meanings and confidence in social institutions. Staged kidnapping threatens this order because it transforms relationships of trust into opportunities for exploitation. The emotional manipulation associated with such acts damages confidence not only within families but also among neighbours, friends, religious communities, and civic organizations. Individuals become increasingly suspicious of one another, thereby weakening social cohesion. The phenomenon also contributes to the broader climate of insecurity. Kidnapping already constitutes a major security challenge in many parts of Nigeria. When staged kidnapping becomes prevalent, security agencies are compelled to devote valuable time and resources to investigating false reports. Such diversions reduce the effectiveness of efforts aimed at combating genuine criminal activities. Moreover, familiarity with the tactics and processes involved in staged kidnapping may expose some individuals to criminal networks and practices that facilitate more serious forms of criminal behaviour. Consequently, staged kidnapping contributes to a culture of insecurity characterized by fear, mistrust, and uncertainty. The long-term implications extend beyond immediate financial losses and affect the overall stability of families and communities.

Weakening of Moral Values and Social Responsibility

The emergence of staged kidnapping among youths also reflects a broader weakening of moral values and social responsibility within society. The phenomenon demonstrates a growing tendency to prioritize personal gain over ethical obligations and communal welfare. Such behaviour contradicts the moral principles that have traditionally guided both African Traditional Religion and Christianity. Traditional African societies emphasized communal responsibility, honesty, and accountability. Individuals were expected to consider the impact of their actions on family members, neighbours, and the wider community. Similarly, Christian teachings encourage love of neighbour, truthfulness, integrity, and responsible stewardship. Staged kidnapping violates these ethical principles because it involves deliberate deception designed to exploit the compassion and generosity of others (Odozor, 2015; Ugwu, 2020). The normalization of deceptive practices among some youths creates a dangerous precedent for future generations. When dishonest behaviour produces financial rewards without corresponding social consequences, younger individuals may begin to view such conduct as acceptable. This weakens societal commitment to moral values and contributes to the gradual erosion of ethical standards.

The weakening of moral responsibility also affects social institutions. Educational institutions, religious organizations, families, and traditional structures depend upon shared ethical commitments to fulfil their functions effectively. When these commitments decline, institutional authority becomes weakened, making it more difficult to promote positive social behaviour. Addressing this challenge requires deliberate efforts aimed at restoring ethical consciousness among young people. Moral education, character formation, and value-based leadership remain essential for rebuilding social responsibility and discouraging behaviours associated with quick wealth syndrome.

Threat to Human Dignity and Family Relationships

Another important effect of staged kidnapping is its negative impact on human dignity and family relationships. Human dignity refers to the intrinsic worth and value of every individual. Both Christianity and African Traditional Religion affirm the sacredness of human life and emphasize the importance of treating others with respect and compassion (Mbiti, 1969; Odozor, 2015). Staged



kidnapping undermines human dignity because it reduces family members and loved ones to instruments for financial exploitation. Parents, siblings, relatives, and friends become targets of manipulation rather than beneficiaries of genuine affection and concern. Emotional bonds that should promote mutual support and solidarity are transformed into mechanisms for obtaining money through deception. The consequences for family relationships are often severe. Discovery of the fraudulent nature of the kidnapping frequently results in feelings of betrayal, disappointment, anger, and emotional pain. Trust, once broken, can be difficult to restore. Family members may become reluctant to provide support during future crises, thereby weakening the bonds that sustain family life. The phenomenon also affects the social reputation of families. In many African communities, family identity remains closely connected to individual behaviour. Acts of deception committed by one member often affect the public perception of the entire family. Consequently, staged kidnapping may generate stigma, embarrassment, and social disapproval that extend beyond the immediate offender. The preservation of human dignity and healthy family relationships therefore requires sustained efforts to promote ethical values and discourage behaviours that exploit emotional bonds for personal gain.

Challenge to Community Development and Social Progress

Staged kidnapping poses a significant challenge to community development and social progress. Sustainable development depends upon trust, cooperation, responsible leadership, and productive engagement among members of society. Communities thrive when individuals contribute positively to collective goals and uphold shared values that promote social harmony. The culture of quick wealth associated with staged kidnapping undermines these foundations. Instead of encouraging productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, it promotes deceptive strategies aimed at achieving immediate financial rewards. Such attitudes discourage the values of hard work, patience, and perseverance that are necessary for long-term development. Furthermore, resources that could be invested in education, healthcare, business development, infrastructure, and social welfare are often diverted to address the consequences of fraudulent kidnapping incidents. Communities expend valuable energy responding to crises that could have been avoided through ethical conduct and responsible behaviour. Development also requires strong social institutions capable of guiding behaviour and promoting accountability. The persistence of staged kidnapping indicates weaknesses within existing structures of moral regulation. Families, schools, religious institutions, traditional authorities, and government agencies must therefore collaborate more effectively in addressing the underlying causes of the phenomenon. Ultimately, the prevalence of staged kidnapping reflects broader challenges relating to value systems, youth development, and social responsibility. Addressing these challenges is essential for promoting sustainable development and ensuring the long-term wellbeing of communities in Anambra State.

The Way Forward

Religious Teachings on the Dignity of Labour and Responsible Wealth Creation

Religion remains one of the most influential institutions for shaping values and directing human behaviour in Nigerian society. Both Christianity and African Traditional Religion place significant emphasis on the dignity of labour, honesty, discipline, and responsible wealth acquisition. These values provide important resources for addressing the culture of quick wealth that has contributed to the emergence of staged kidnapping among youths. Christianity teaches that work is not merely an economic activity but also a moral and spiritual responsibility. Biblical teachings consistently encourage diligence, commitment, stewardship, and productive engagement. The Apostle Paul emphasizes that individuals should work honestly and responsibly in order to contribute positively to society and support themselves and others (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12).



Similarly, Christian ethical traditions emphasize that wealth should be acquired through legitimate means and utilized in ways that promote human wellbeing and social justice (Nmah, 2012; Odozor, 2015).

African Traditional Religion equally recognizes the importance of productive labour and communal responsibility. Traditional Igbo society historically celebrated individuals who attained prosperity through hard work, entrepreneurship, and integrity. Wealth acquired through diligence was considered honourable because it contributed to family welfare and community development. Consequently, religious and cultural values encouraged patience, perseverance, and accountability rather than the pursuit of sudden and unearned riches (Mbiti, 1969; Ejizu, 2002). These religious perspectives provide a strong foundation for confronting quick wealth syndrome. Through sermons, religious education, community programmes, and moral instruction, religious institutions can promote positive attitudes toward work and discourage the desire for instant financial success. Young people must be encouraged to view wealth as the product of effort, discipline, and ethical conduct rather than manipulation, deception, or criminal activity.

Moral Formation and Character Development

One of the most effective ways to address staged kidnapping is through moral formation and character development. Religion functions not only as a system of beliefs but also as a framework for shaping human conduct and promoting ethical behaviour. Through worship, teaching, counselling, and communal participation, individuals are exposed to values that guide decision-making and social interaction. Christian ethics emphasizes virtues such as honesty, integrity, self-control, humility, contentment, compassion, and respect for human dignity. These virtues directly challenge the attitudes that sustain quick wealth syndrome. A young person who internalizes these values is less likely to engage in deceptive practices aimed at obtaining financial gain through manipulation or fraud (Ugwu, 2020; Onwusi, 2021).

Similarly, African Traditional Religion promotes communal accountability, respect for elders, truthfulness, and concern for the common good. Traditional moral systems encourage individuals to consider the consequences of their actions on family members, neighbours, and the wider community. Such values help cultivate a sense of responsibility that discourages behaviours capable of causing social harm (Metuh, 1987; Ejizu, 2002). Religious institutions therefore have a responsibility to strengthen programmes that focus on character formation among youths. Sunday schools, youth fellowships, catechetical instruction, leadership seminars, and cultural education programmes should place greater emphasis on ethical living and responsible citizenship. Sustainable solutions to staged kidnapping require not only legal sanctions but also the development of morally responsible individuals capable of resisting negative social influences.

Religious Institutions and Youth Mentorship

Religious institutions possess significant potential for influencing youth behaviour through mentorship and guidance. Across Anambra State, churches, faith-based organizations, and traditional religious institutions maintain extensive networks that provide opportunities for direct engagement with young people. These structures can be utilized to address the social and moral factors associated with quick wealth syndrome. Mentorship programmes enable experienced individuals to guide younger generations through personal interaction and practical support. Successful entrepreneurs, professionals, educators, clergy, and community leaders can serve as role models who demonstrate that legitimate success is achievable through perseverance and ethical conduct. Such mentorship relationships help counteract the influence of peers and social media personalities who often promote unrealistic expectations regarding wealth and success. Religious leaders also play a critical role in providing counselling and emotional support. Many young people



face challenges related to unemployment, family difficulties, identity formation, and economic uncertainty. Without adequate support, these challenges may create vulnerability to deviant behaviours. Pastoral counselling, spiritual direction, and youth development initiatives can assist individuals in navigating these difficulties while maintaining commitment to ethical principles (Nwadiakor, 2018; Obidimma, 2020). Furthermore, mentorship programmes create opportunities for discussing sensitive issues such as financial responsibility, social pressure, career development, and personal integrity. Through sustained engagement, religious institutions can contribute significantly to reducing the attraction of quick wealth syndrome among youths.

Interfaith Collaboration for Ethical Reorientation

Addressing staged kidnapping requires collaboration among various stakeholders within society. Religious institutions, regardless of doctrinal differences, share a common interest in promoting moral values and social stability. Consequently, interfaith collaboration represents an important strategy for confronting quick wealth syndrome and its manifestations. Christian denominations, traditional institutions, youth organizations, educational institutions, community leaders, and civil society groups can work together to promote ethical reorientation programmes. Such collaboration may include seminars, conferences, public awareness campaigns, workshops, and community dialogues focused on integrity, responsible citizenship, and ethical wealth creation. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pentecostal fellowships, Catholic dioceses, Anglican communions, and traditional leadership structures possess extensive social influence capable of reaching large segments of the population. Joint initiatives involving these bodies can reinforce positive messages regarding honesty, diligence, accountability, and social responsibility. Interfaith cooperation also demonstrates the collective commitment of religious communities to addressing social problems. By speaking with a united moral voice, religious leaders can challenge societal attitudes that glorify wealth without questioning its source. Such efforts contribute to the creation of a cultural environment in which integrity receives greater recognition than material display (Yusuf, 2016; Kukah, 2011).

Faith-Based Entrepreneurship and Skills Development Programmes

Economic empowerment represents an important component of any comprehensive strategy aimed at addressing quick wealth syndrome. While moral instruction is essential, practical opportunities for economic advancement are equally necessary. Religious institutions can contribute significantly in this regard through faith-based entrepreneurship and skills development programmes. Many churches and faith-based organizations already engage in educational, vocational, and humanitarian activities. Expanding these initiatives to include entrepreneurship training, vocational education, financial literacy, digital skills acquisition, and business development support would provide young people with practical alternatives to illicit wealth-seeking behaviours. Skills acquisition programmes can equip youths with competencies required for productive participation in the economy. Such programmes may focus on agriculture, technology, manufacturing, fashion design, digital marketing, carpentry, electrical installation, and other vocational areas. By creating opportunities for self-reliance, religious institutions help reduce the economic frustrations that often contribute to quick wealth syndrome. Faith-based entrepreneurship programmes also provide opportunities to integrate ethical principles into economic activities. Participants can be taught not only how to generate income but also how to conduct business responsibly, manage resources effectively, and contribute positively to society. This integration of economic empowerment and moral formation aligns with the broader religious objective of promoting holistic human development (Nmah, 2012; Odozor, 2015).



Revival of Indigenous Moral Values and Communal Accountability

A sustainable response to staged kidnapping must also involve the revitalization of indigenous moral values that historically promoted social responsibility and ethical conduct. African Traditional Religion contains numerous principles capable of contributing to contemporary moral reorientation. Concepts such as Ogu na Ofo, Ezi-Afa, truthfulness, communal accountability, and respect for elders remain relevant in addressing modern social challenges. Traditional institutions continue to command respect in many communities and can therefore play important roles in promoting ethical behaviour among youths. Community meetings, cultural festivals, age-grade associations, and traditional educational structures provide platforms for transmitting moral values and reinforcing positive social norms. The revival of indigenous ethical principles should not be understood as a rejection of modernization but rather as an effort to preserve valuable cultural resources that promote social harmony and responsible conduct. When integrated with Christian ethical teachings, these traditional values can contribute significantly to the development of a moral framework capable of confronting quick wealth syndrome and discouraging staged kidnapping (Mbiti, 1969; Metuh, 1987).

Conclusion

This study reveals quick wealth syndrome as a major socio-economic and moral challenge underlying the emergence of staged kidnapping among youths in Anambra State. The research analysis demonstrates that staged kidnapping is not merely an isolated criminal act but a manifestation of broader societal problems associated with excessive materialism, youth unemployment, peer pressure, social media influence, weakening family structures, and the erosion of traditional ethical values. The desire for rapid financial success without corresponding commitment to legitimate labour has created conditions that encourage deceptive practices aimed at obtaining wealth through manipulation and emotional exploitation. The study further reveals that staged kidnapping produces serious consequences for individuals, families, communities, and society at large. It destabilizes family economies, weakens communal solidarity, erodes social trust, promotes insecurity, damages family relationships, and undermines moral values. These consequences extend beyond immediate financial losses and threaten the social foundations necessary for sustainable development and communal wellbeing. Importantly, the study argues that religion should not be viewed as a cause of the phenomenon but rather as a valuable resource for addressing it. Both Christianity and African Traditional Religion possess rich ethical traditions that emphasize honesty, diligence, accountability, integrity, contentment, and responsible wealth creation. These values provide important foundations for confronting quick wealth syndrome and promoting ethical reorientation among young people.

Religion therefore remains a powerful instrument for moral transformation, youth development, and social reconstruction. Through moral education, character formation, mentorship, entrepreneurship programmes, counselling services, and interfaith collaboration, religious institutions can contribute significantly to reducing the prevalence of staged kidnapping and fostering responsible citizenship. Sustainable solutions require collective efforts involving families, religious organizations, traditional institutions, educational bodies, community leaders, and policymakers working together to restore the values of integrity, hard work, and social responsibility.



Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a. Churches, traditional institutions, and educational organizations should collaborate in organizing regular seminars, workshops, and ethical reorientation programmes aimed at discouraging quick wealth syndrome among youths.
- b. Government agencies, private organizations, and faith-based institutions should establish vocational training centres, entrepreneurship programmes, and employment initiatives that provide practical economic opportunities for young people.
- c. religious leaders should strengthen youth mentorship and counselling programmes capable of addressing social pressures, financial frustrations, and identity-related challenges confronting young people.
- d. Families should prioritize moral upbringing by emphasizing character, discipline, honesty, patience, and accountability rather than measuring success solely through material possessions.

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UKA DI N'OBI PHENOMENON AMONG IGBO CHRISTIANS: IMPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS FOR CHURCH DEVELOPMENT IN IGBOLAND

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Abstract

This study examines the rise of *Uka di n'obi* among Igbo Christians, examining its implications for the growth of the church and the best approach to curb its rise to ensure adequate Church life. The study adopted a qualitative research approach; both primary and secondary sources were used for data collection. Primary data were obtained through personal communication and interviews conducted across two Igbo states: Anambra and Imo states respectively. Secondary data were drawn from books, academic journals, magazines, lecture notes, credible online publications and other relevant sources. Findings reveal that the rise of *Uka di n'obi* has been influenced by a range of factors, including urban migration, economic challenges, disillusionment with institutional church, church politics, and the growing appeal of grassroots spirituality. This study observes that *Uka di n'obi* undermines the biblical and social relevance of the church, threatens the unity, continuity, and developmental mission of the church. It argues that although individualized spirituality reflects the Igbo capacity for adaptive religiosity, on its own, it lacks the structural capacity necessary to sustain long-term church life. It proposes contextual ecclesial renewal through inculturation, small Christian communities, pastoral accountability, and renewed theological education this study therefore recommends dynamic integration of individualized spirituality and institutional worship in which institutions are reoriented toward nurturing personal spiritual journeys within shared practices, doctrines, leadership, and accountability. It concludes that the fusion of both *Uka di N'obi* and institutional church practices offers a compelling and sustainable vision for church development in an increasingly complex and pluralistic religious world.

Keywords: *Uka di N'obi, Church Development*

Introduction

Christianity among the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria has undergone significant transformation since its introduction by Western missionaries in the nineteenth century. However, in recent decades, One of the emerging post-missionary religious attitudes is *Uka di n'obi*, a phrase that expresses the belief that "church is in the heart" and therefore does not require consistent participation in institutional worship. Thus, *Uka di n'obi* is used to describe Christians who claim deep personal faith without active participation in institutional church life. The phenomenon of *Uka*



di n'obi (literally, “church in the heart”) among Igbo Christians reflects a form of individualized and privatized Christianity in which formal ecclesial participation is diminished in favor of personal spiritual expression. While this orientation may reflect genuine inward piety, it has significant implications for communal worship, ecclesial authority, and church development in Igboland.

This development reflects broader global trends of religious individualization. Berger (2014) describes modern religion as increasingly “subjectivized,” where personal experience replaces institutional belonging. In the Igbo context, however, this trend intersects with deeply communal traditional religious values, creating a tension between inherited communal spirituality and emerging individualized faith expression. Metuh (1987) observes that African Christianity often oscillates between communal religiosity and individualized spiritual expression, a tension that becomes pronounced in postcolonial contexts. In contemporary Igboland, this has evolved into a situation where some believers identify as Christians yet disengage from structured worship, leadership accountability, and sacramental life.

Ukah (2003) similarly corroborates that Nigerian Christianity is increasingly shaped by privatized religiosity and entrepreneurial spirituality, often detached from historic denominational structures. Thus, *Uka di n'obi* raises theological and ecclesiological questions about the nature of church, salvation, and Christian identity in Igboland. This paper examines the phenomenon critically and proposes theological and pastoral solutions for sustainable church development.

Conceptual Clarification

The Igbo expression *Uka di n'obi* literally translates as “church is in the heart.” It is often used to describe individuals who claim that their faith is internal and does not require regular church attendance or institutional mediation. This concept reflects a theological shift from communal Christianity (*ekpere oha*) to individualized spirituality.

Uka di N'obi phenomenon among Igbo Christians

Christianity entered Igboland through missionary activities in the 1850s, particularly through the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Early converts integrated Christian teachings into communal life, preserving strong collective worship practices. Over time, three major shifts occurred. First, the Missionary Institutional Christianity, which was characterized by structured, disciplined, and church-centered Christianity which dominated early Igbo Christian life. Second, was the post-Independence era, where denominations emerged, weakening centralized authority and increasing competition. Third, was the Pentecostal and Charismatic Explosion. From the 1980s onward, emphasis shifted toward personal spiritual experience, miracles, and prosperity theology (Kalu, 2008). These developments laid the foundation for *Uka di n'obi* by weakening the centrality of institutional belonging.

According to Awolalu (1992), African traditional religion is inherently communal, and early African Christian adaptation retained this communal ethos. Mbiti (1969) affirms that the African religious worldview revolves around the famous assertion that “I am because we are” emphasizes community as the locus of religious life. Scholars like Metuh (1987) and Kalu (2008) argue that Christianity in Africa must remain deeply communal to remain authentic and sustainable. Major issues like proliferation of churches, religious commercialism, prosperity gospel and the rise of Pentecostalism have intensified the growth of individualized spirituality. Ukah (2003) observes that Igbo Christianity is increasingly characterized by religious consumerism and fragmentation. Churches compete for adherents, while individuals move between denominations or disengage entirely. Kalu (2008) further argues that African Pentecostalism have intensified individualized spirituality by emphasizing personal salvation and prosperity.



The *Uka di n'obi* mentality challenges this framework by relocating religious authority from community to individual conscience, thus the *Uka di n'obi* phenomenon represents a departure from traditional African religiosity toward a more personalized form of faith influenced by modern individualism. *Uka di n'obi* is not entirely negative. It reflects a desire for authentic spirituality, rejection of hypocrisy in religious institutions and an adaptation to modern realities. However, its unchecked expansion leads to ecclesial disintegration. Kalu (2008) notes that African Christianity, thrives on creativity but requires theological grounding to avoid fragmentation. Thus, the challenge is not the existence of personal spirituality but its detachment from communal ecclesiology.

Causal Factors of *Uka di n'obi* Phenomenon

Several factors which contribute to the rise of *Uka di N'obi* are discussed as follow:

Urbanization and Migration

In rural Igboland, religious life is deeply embedded in community structures family compounds, village assemblies, age grades, and extended kinship networks. Church attendance is often socially reinforced because everyone knows one another, and participation is visible and accountable. Urban life introduces anonymity. Unlike village settings where absence from church is noticed and sometimes questioned, urban congregations are large and fluid. Individuals can disengage from regular attendance without immediate social consequences. This anonymity encourages what Kalu (2008) describes as “religious consumer mobility,” where individuals pick and choose when and how they participate in religious activities. In such environments, some Christians begin to internalize faith without external participation, reinforcing the belief that personal prayer at home is sufficient. Migration especially rural–urban and interstate movement, disrupts continuity in church membership. Many Igbo migrants do not immediately integrate into new church communities. Movement to cities weakens traditional parish ties. The social pressure that once encouraged consistent church attendance weakens. As a result, some believers begin to see Christianity as a personal rather than communal obligation, feeding the idea that “church is in the heart” (*Uka di n'obi*).

Digital Religion – Digital platforms (livestreamed Masses/services, YouTube sermons, Facebook worship, WhatsApp prayer groups) allow believers to participate in worship without physically being present in church. This privatization weakens the sense of belonging to a worshipping community and strengthens individualized spirituality. This gradually normalizes the belief that physical gathering is optional, reinforcing the idea that ‘church is in the heart’. Kalu (2008) notes that African Pentecostal spirituality already emphasizes personal encounter with God, however digital media intensifies this by removing communal constraints.

Digital religion introduces flexibility, removes barriers such as transportation costs, time constraints and physical effort. While convenient, this fosters a mindset that worship should be effortless and private, weakening the traditional Christian understanding of worship as communal sacrifice and commitment. With the belief that services can be watched anytime, sermons are archived and replayed and worship is no longer tied to time or place. This creates what scholars describe as on-demand Christianity, where commitment becomes optional rather than structured. As a result, regular attendance declines because believers feel spiritually “covered” through occasional digital engagement.

Church Scandals and Disillusionment

Church scandals and general disillusionment with religious institutions are major drivers of the *Uka di n'obi* phenomenon among Igbo Christians because they weaken trust in the church as an institution and push believers toward private, self-managed forms of spirituality. When people lose confidence in church leadership or structures, many do not abandon Christianity entirely; instead,



they redefine it as an internal, individualized experience. One of the strongest effects of scandals, financial mismanagement, sexual misconduct, abuse of power, or doctrinal manipulation is the loss of trust in clergy and church institutions.

When believers perceive church leaders as morally compromised, financially exploitative and spiritually inconsistent, they begin to question the legitimacy of institutional religion itself. As Ukah (2003) observes in Nigerian Christianity, authority is highly vulnerable when religious institutions are perceived as part of a competitive and consumer-driven religious economy. Once trust is broken, some believers withdraw into private spirituality. Leadership failures erode trust in institutions. Church scandals often produce emotional reactions such as disappointment, anger, spiritual fatigue and betrayal. Rather than confront the institution, many believers choose withdrawal. This withdrawal is not necessarily atheism or rejection of Christianity, instead, it manifests in private prayer life, home-based devotion, selective church attendance or complete disengagement from organized worship. Over time, this emotional distancing evolves into the belief that *Uka di n'obi*.

Economic Pressures

This is the most practical and powerful drivers of the *Uka di n'obi* ("church is in the heart") phenomenon among Igbo Christians. Economic hardship reshapes religious practice through time scarcity, survival priorities, reduced church participation, and gradual internalization of faith. Although church attendance is spiritually free, participation often involves indirect costs like transportation fees, offerings and tithes, special contributions (harvest, building funds, welfare levies) and clothing expectations for Sunday worship. Ukah (2003) notes that Nigerian Christianity, increasingly operates within a religious economy where participation is often linked to financial exchange. Thus, for economically strained individuals, these costs accumulate and discourage consistent attendance. In conditions of economic hardship like unemployment, inflation, unstable income, and informal labour, many individuals prioritize basic survival needs over structured church participation. In such situations, church attendance becomes secondary to economic survival. Over time, this practical absence can become spiritually rationalized as: God understands my situation; church is not necessary to be faithful." This rationalization feeds *Uka di n'obi* mentality.

Cultural Individualism

The increasing Western influence promotes personal autonomy over communal belonging. Metuh (1987) emphasizes that Igbo religious life is embedded in kinship, village solidarity, and collective rituals. Cultural individualism disrupts this ontology by emphasizing personal autonomy over communal belonging, self-expression over collective identity and individual conscience over communal moral authority.

As this worldview spreads, Christianity is increasingly interpreted as a personal relationship with God rather than a communal ecclesial life, reinforcing *Uka di n'obi* thinking. Cultural individualism also encourages believers to internalize moral and spiritual decision-making. This shift produces selective adherence to doctrines, reduced dependence on liturgical life, and personal spiritual autonomy. Over time, this supports the belief that Faith is internal and does not require external structures. This is the core logic of *Uka di n'obi*.

Education/literacy

Western education introduced into Igboland promotes critical thinking, personal interpretation of truth and independence from traditional authority. Kalu (2008) notes that education in postcolonial Africa has unintentionally encouraged religious individualism by weakening traditional structures of authority, including ecclesial and communal authority. Educated Christians



may begin to question the necessity of church attendance, the authority of clergy and the inherited religious practices. This intellectual independence often evolves into personalized Christianity, where individuals decide how and when to practice faith.

Religious commercialization

Religious commercialization contributes significantly to the rise of the *Uka di N'obi* (church is in the heart) phenomenon among Igbo Christians by transforming the church from a spiritual and communal body into a market-like religious economy where faith becomes transactional, competitive, and consumer-driven. This shift weakens trust, deepens spiritual fatigue, and encourages believers to retreat into privatized forms of Christianity. Ukah (2003) and Kalu (2008) observe that religious commercialization is best understood as the increasing penetration of market logic into Christian practices where churches compete for “clients,” spiritual goods are packaged as products, and religious participation is shaped by perceived benefits. In urban Igboland, churches often compete through branding and advertising, miracle services and deliverance programs, prosperity promises and social media marketing.

Ukah (2003) describes this as the “religious economy”, where churches operate within consumer culture and believers are treated implicitly or explicitly as religious consumers. Research indicates that church commercialization negatively affects societal trust and institutional legitimacy (Alaka and Onibanjo, 2025). When faith becomes a marketplace, believers begin to shop for churches, compare spiritual “results”, switch congregations easily, and evaluate churches based on personal benefit. This weakens long-term attachment to any one church community and encourages individualized spirituality

Implications of *Uka di n'obi* Phenomenon for Church Development

Decline in Communal Worship and Sacramental Life

The most immediate implication is reduced participation in corporate worship and sacraments. *Uka di n'obi* weakens corporate religious identity, which is traditionally formed through regular assembly. Ojo (2006) observes that Nigerian Pentecostalism already encourages intense personal religious experience, and when this is transferred into private spaces, it reduces the necessity of physical congregation. As believers increasingly “do church at home,” the shared rhythms of worship, fellowship, and accountability decline, weakening communal bonds (Ojo, 2006). When worship becomes home-based, sacraments such as Eucharist and baptism are either neglected or informally reinterpreted, weakening their ecclesial meaning (Kalu, 2008). This weakens the liturgical life of the church and disrupts catechetical formation. Wariboko (2014) further explains that contemporary charismatic Christianity in urban Nigeria is shaped by neoliberal and consumer-oriented patterns, where religion becomes a personal resource rather than a shared obligation. This encourages believers to prioritize convenience and personal encounters with God over regular sacramental participation.

Uka di n'obi therefore leads to reduced participation and loss of church's relevance at large. It creates a greater vulnerability to burnout and conflict.

Weakening of Ecclesial Authority

When believers internalize faith without institutional mediation, church leadership loses moral and organizational authority. This aligns with Ukah's (2003) observation that authority in Igbo Christianity is increasingly contested and individualized. Adeboye (2018) highlights that the growth of independent prophetic and digital ministries in Nigeria reflects a broader fragmentation of institutional Christianity. *Uka di n'obi* accelerates this fragmentation by relocating worship outside the church, thereby weakening denominational identity and organizational continuity. When



worship shifts to the home, this tendency intensifies, as believers bypass ordained ministers and structured liturgy, weakening the authority of church leadership. *Uka di n'obi* weakens ecclesiastical structures by diminishing clerical authority, disrupting centralized administration, reducing doctrinal regulation, and promoting fragmented, individualized forms of Christian practice.

Reduced Financial and Structural Support

Church development relies heavily on consistent membership participation. When believers disengage from physical services due to *Uka di n'obi*, the predictable flow of weekly offerings declines, affecting church budgeting and program implementation. Structurally, *Uka di n'obi* also reduces support for church administration and infrastructure development. Ukah (2008) explains that large Nigerian churches depend on physical attendance to maintain organizational hierarchies, branches, staff salaries, and building projects. As attendance declines, there is less demand for expansive church facilities, which can stall or reverse infrastructural growth. *Uka di n'obi* reduces financial stewardship and volunteer engagement, thereby limiting infrastructural and missionary expansion.

Theological Individualism

The phenomenon promotes a theology of “self-sufficient Christianity,” which contradicts Pauline ecclesiology emphasizing the church as the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12). Adeboye (2018) also highlights that the proliferation of independent ministries and digital preaching platforms in Nigeria has weakened denominational authority, allowing individuals to construct hybrid theological identities. This trend is amplified when worship is conducted at home, outside the regulating influence of ecclesiastical structures. Notably, *Uka di n'obi* promotes theological individualism by shifting religious interpretation from communal authority to personal preference, encouraging selective engagement with doctrine, and weakening institutional control over belief formation. Metuh (1987) warns that such fragmentation weakens doctrinal coherence and communal accountability.

Loss of shared identity

Shared identity and beliefs ensure that congregants understand core teachings, ethical standards, and spiritual practices, which allows churches to function as cohesive communities. The rise of *Uka di n'obi* phenomenon which prioritizes personal spirituality over collective beliefs creates a loss of shared identity. Parents and teachers may emphasize personal interpretation rather than standardized doctrines (Smith and Denton, 2005). Therefore, the Church risks becoming a loose group of individuals rather than a coherent body.

Lack of Accountability

Institutional churches provide structures for discipline, guidance and correction. Kalu (2008) observes that Clergy and church authorities provide spiritual guidance, enforce ethical standards, and monitor doctrinal fidelity. This accountability helps ensure cohesion, doctrinal consistency, and ethical integrity within the church. The *Uka Di n'obi* phenomenon presents indicators of spirituality which is not subject to accountability, checks or balances. This may lead to Christian's developing self-justifying beliefs without communal discernment.

Weak commitment among Christians

The rise of *Uka di n'obi* creates Christian with weak commitment and participation. This shift often leads to armchair participation and participation by convenience. Thus, participation in



church activities becomes conditional based on many personal preferences and in the long run, an option among many spiritual resources.

Doctrinal Dilution

In trying to accommodate everyone, churches may feel pressured to entertain the need to dilute biblical teachings to avoid excluding any group. This blurs the line of reason as to what the church actually stands for, making it difficult to maintain a coherent theological identity. Believers may reinterpret scripture, emphasize certain teachings over others, or mix Christian beliefs with indigenous practices (*Odinani*) or other religious elements. This freedom can dilute the original theological teachings of the church,

Solutions for Strengthening Church Development

Reconstructing Communal Ecclesiology: Churches in Igboland must re-emphasize the theology of community. One of the most effective responses to individualized spirituality is the deliberate teaching of the church as a community of believers rather than merely a gathering of individuals. The New Testament portrays the church as: The Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27), The Household of God (Ephesians 2:19), and The Fellowship of Believers (Acts 2:42–47). Church leaders should regularly teach that salvation, though personal, is lived out within a community of faith. Metuh (1987) notes that African religious consciousness traditionally understands the individual as inseparable from the community. Churches in Igboland should therefore reconnect Christian teaching with this communal worldview by teaching the church as a living organism rather than a voluntary association.

Liturgical Inculturation: Contextual worship that integrates Igbo cultural expressions can enhance belonging and reduce alienation. Awolalu (1992) emphasizes that inculturation strengthens the relevance of Christianity in African contexts. Many Igbo Christians experience a disconnect between their cultural identity and church life. Inculturation helps believers perceive Christianity as authentically African rather than foreign. Mbiti (1990) argues that contextual integration when guided by scripture and communal discernment reduces the appeal of private syncretic practices. According to Metuh (1987), African Christianity flourishes when the gospel engages local culture without compromising biblical truth. Churches are encouraged to use Igbo language in worship and catechesis, integrate positive cultural values into church teachings as well as celebrate local Christian traditions and festivals. In the same vein, Mgbemena (2012) states that to strengthen Christianity in Igboland, there is absolute need to integrate and enculturate people's culture into the religion which they adhere to, especially foreign religion that the indigenous people accepts its doctrines and beliefs that guide their day to day activities.

Strengthening Small Christian Communities (SCCs)

Strengthening Small Christian Communities can bridge the gap between institutional church and personal faith. Large congregations often create anonymity, making it easier for members to withdraw from active participation. Small Christian Communities provide personal interaction, accountability, spiritual support and pastoral care. The Catholic Church's Small Christian Community model and similar fellowship structures in Protestant churches can serve as effective platforms for strengthening communal identity. According to Kanu (2012), grassroots faith communities help contextualize Christianity within African communal culture and foster a stronger sense of belonging by establishing neighborhood fellowship groups, encourage weekly home meetings and train lay leaders to coordinate community cells. These units foster accountability, fellowship, and sustained participation.



Revitalizing Worship and Liturgical Experience

Some believers disengage because worship appears routine, irrelevant, or disconnected from their daily realities. Churches should promote worship that is Biblically grounded, spiritually enriching, contextually relevant and culturally meaningful. Kalu (2008) emphasizes that African Christianity thrives when worship engages local culture and lived experience. Churches must incorporate meaningful Igbo hymns and music, encourage active congregational participation and contextualize sermons to contemporary realities

Pastoral Re-engagement Strategies

Metuh (1987), Kalu (2008), and Ukah (2003) emphasize that African Christianity thrives on relationality, visibility, and communal belonging. Pastoral re-engagement restores these elements by bringing people back into lived church relationships rather than allowing faith to remain privatized. One of the strongest causes of disengagement in Igboland is the feeling of being unknown or unnoticed in the church community, especially in large urban congregations.

Metuh (1987) stresses that African religiosity is relational; people remain committed when they feel socially and spiritually connected. Thus, pastoral re-engagement is a key instrument for rebuilding trust, participation, and communal ecclesial life. Church leaders should therefore, develop outreach programs targeting disengaged members, particularly in urban centers. When pastors intentionally reconnect with individuals, it reduces anonymity and strengthens attachment to the church.

Theological Re-orientation

Theological re-orientation provides a foundational solution that addresses the root of the problem rather than its symptoms. By restoring biblical ecclesiology and integrating African communal values, the Church can re-establish a vibrant, participatory, and development-oriented Christian community where personal faith and communal life are mutually reinforcing. Seminaries and catechetical programs must address the dangers of radical individualism and reintroduce biblical and African communal theology. Theological re-education is very important to strengthen church development by correcting misunderstandings of church and salvation, reorienting believers from individualism to communal faith, clarifying the necessity of corporate worship, challenging consumerist and prosperity theology, integrating African communal worldview with Christianity, strengthening catechesis and discipleship systems, clarifying leadership roles and accountability, equipping believers to resist digital misinformation and rebuilding theology of belonging and participation in Igboland.

Ethical and Transparent Leadership

Restoring trust in church leadership through accountability and transparency is essential for reversing disengagement trends. Many individuals embrace *Uka di n'obi* because of disappointment with church leaders. Scandals involving financial misconduct, abuse of power, and moral failures weaken trust in institutional religion. Ukah (2003) argues that institutional credibility is crucial for maintaining religious commitment in contemporary Nigeria. Church leaders should therefore demonstrate integrity, accountability, Humility, and responsible stewardship in service. Practical measures such as publishing church financial reports, establishing accountability committees and implement ethical leadership training for clergy and church workers should be adopted to ensure transparency.



Conclusion

The *Uka di n'obi* phenomenon represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the church in Igboland. While it reflects sincere personal faith, it undermines the communal and sacramental foundations of Christian life. Authentic African Christianity must remain communal, participatory, and incarnational. Addressing this phenomenon requires a balanced approach that affirms personal devotion while restoring the centrality of ecclesial community. Through inculturation, pastoral renewal, and theological reorientation, the church in Igboland can transform *Uka di n'obi* from a fragmenting force into a catalyst for deeper Christian maturity. By strengthening communal ecclesiology and restoring trust in church institutions, churches in Igboland can effectively counter individualized spirituality and foster a vibrant, participatory, and development-oriented Christian community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several measures are recommended to curb the rise of *Uka di n'obi* phenomenon and promote adequate church development in Igboland:

- a. Churches must prioritize formation over mere participation, while cultivating deep discipleship through participation and practices that engage both personal experience and communal tradition.
- b. Structures of accountability and leadership should be transparent and relational, enabling trust while maintaining theological and ethical integrity.
- c. Churches should embrace cultural adaptability without sacrificing their core identity, allowing institutional forms to evolve in response to lived spiritual realities. By balancing individual spiritual growth with institutional religious traditions, churches are better positioned to sustain long-term commitment, foster intergenerational continuity, and engage meaningfully with social and moral challenges. By balancing institutional stability with spiritual flexibility, they can remain rooted in tradition while open to innovation.

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AN EXEGETICAL APPRAISAL OF JOHN 21:20-22 AND ITS IMPLICATION TO ADDRESSING INTRA-MINISTERIAL RIVALRY AMONG THE CONTEMPORARY ANGLICAN CLERGY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Intra-ministerial rivalry among contemporary clergy in the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria) represents a significant ecclesiological and pastoral challenge that undermines the unity and mission of the Church. Unhealthy competition for recognition, influence and power among contemporary Anglican clergy have become prevalent in the Church of Nigeria, threatening the church's spiritual, administrative, and missionary health. This research seeks to examine intra-ministerial rivalry among contemporary Anglican ministers and proposes a biblical-theological response through an exegetical appraisal of John 21:20-22, where Peter was contentiously concerned of what becomes of John (the beloved apostle) in competition for influential position of primacy. The research work adopts a qualitative research method, combining biblical exegesis, theological analysis, oral interviews, personal observations and empirical insights from scholarly works. The findings of the study demonstrate that the root of rivalry lies in comparison and the desire to measure one's ministry against that of others. A critical analysis of the text John 21:20-22 reveals its theological implications for ministerial conduct. The researcher argues that Jesus' response to Peter – "What is that to you? You follow me" in John 21:22 provides a timeless corrective framework that emphasizes personal vocation, servant leadership and non-competitive but collaborative ministry; calling Church leaders back to faithfulness, humility, and focused obedience to their divine call. The research recommends that a healthy response to intra-ministerial rivalry in the Anglican Diocese of Umuahia requires transparent leadership, fair preferment, clear communication, prayerfulness, humility in service, collaborative ministry and a renewed commitment to servant leadership. Hence, ministry is not a competition for superiority but a vocation of service.

Keywords: *intra-ministerial rivalry, clergy, Anglican, John 21:20-22.*



Introduction

The Anglican Communion in Nigeria operates under a distinct ministerial hierarchy, ranging from deacons to bishops, aimed at facilitating effective ministry. However, unhealthy competition for recognition and influence among clergy have become prevalent in contemporary times, threatening the church's spiritual, administrative, and missionary health. Ministry within the Anglican church has historically been conceived as a divine calling grounded in humility, service, and spiritual accountability. Though, contemporary realities within many ecclesiastical contexts, reveal a shift toward power struggles and rivalry among ministers.

Despite the spiritual and theological foundations of ministry within the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria), rivalry among the clergy persists; leading to divisions, inefficiency, diminished spiritual authority, and weakens the church's testimony. This issue highlights a disconnection between established ecclesiastical order and individual ministerial aspirations. Today, intra-ministerial rivalry seems to be evident during preferments and the transfer of ministerial personnel. Thus, many clergy engage in unhealthy competition driven by ambition, material benefits, and hierarchical aspirations. The anxiety to be in the church leadership top rank is always evident before, during and after preferments/appointments by sometimes serving and would be ministers and the members inclusive. This has most at times led to open confrontation and expression of grievances.

Throughout the Johannine narrative, Peter is portrayed as a prominent apostolic figure, yet the Beloved Disciple repeatedly emerges as a model witness whose testimony carries significant theological weight. In John 13:23–25, the Beloved Disciple occupies a position of intimacy with Jesus. In John 20:1–10, although Peter enters the tomb first, it is the Beloved Disciple who is said to have seen and believed. Likewise, in John 21:7, it is the Beloved Disciple who first recognizes the risen Lord. These recurring portrayals have led some scholars to suggest that the Evangelist deliberately presents a nuanced relationship between Petrine leadership and Johannine witness. The parallels between this Johannine narrative and contemporary ministerial realities are difficult to ignore. As observed within many Anglican Dioceses in Nigeria, some clergy occasionally wrestle with questions that bear remarkable resemblance to Peter's inquiry. Why was one colleague appointed to a position of greater responsibility? Why has another minister received public recognition? Why does one parish flourish while another struggles? Why does one individual appear to enjoy greater influence within diocesan structures? Although such questions are deeply human, they reveal a persistent inclination toward comparison that transcends historical and cultural boundaries. In many respects, the experiences of contemporary Anglican clergy mirror the concerns reflected within the Johannine account. Just as Peter sought clarification concerning another disciple's destiny, contemporary Anglican clergy often find themselves preoccupied with the ministries, opportunities, and achievements of their colleagues. This research therefore, intends to investigate the implications of intra-ministerial rivalry on the contemporary Anglican clergy using John 21:20–22 as an exegetico-hermeneutical framework for understanding and addressing intra-ministerial rivalry within the context of Anglican Communion, particularly in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

The concept of rivalry refers to competition, jealousy, disagreement, or conflict between individuals or groups who seek the same recognition, authority, influence, or advantage. Rivalry usually develops when two or more persons see themselves as competitors in the pursuit of leadership positions, honour, promotion, status, or control. In church settings, rivalry may arise when ministers compete for offices, popularity, parish influence, congregational loyalty, or ecclesiastical relevance. According to Nwala (2014), rivalry is a social condition that emerges when personal ambition begins to replace collective responsibility and cooperation. This definition is



relevant to the present study because rivalry among ministers often begins when one minister sees another as a threat to his influence or recognition within the church.

Rivalry does not always appear through open confrontation or visible hostility. It may manifest in subtle forms such as envy, unhealthy comparison, gossip, resentment, exclusion, and silent opposition. According to Kanu (2017), rivalry becomes dangerous when individuals focus more on personal advancement than on the common good of the institution they serve. This observation applies to ministerial settings where clergy who should work together for the growth of the church may instead become competitors because of selfish interests. In organizational and religious institutions, rivalry is often connected to scarcity of opportunities, unequal recognition, and struggles over leadership succession. Where titles, positions, and privileges are highly valued, competition can easily become unhealthy. Ekwunife (2016) observes that conflict and rivalry often increase in institutions where authority is centralized and transparent systems of reward are weak. This viewpoint helps to explain rivalry within church structures wherein promotions, appointments, parish postings, or diocesan responsibilities may create tension among ministers.

Furthermore, rivalry may be emotional, spiritual, or institutional. Emotional rivalry occurs when one person envies the gifts, success, or popularity of another. Spiritual rivalry may arise when ministers compare congregation size, preaching ability, miracles, or public acceptance. Institutional rivalry may occur when clergy members struggle over offices, church influence, or diocesan appointments. According to Oguejiofor (2018), rivalry in religious organizations often hides under claims of zeal, doctrinal purity, or loyalty to church tradition. This is significant because ministerial rivalry is sometimes difficult to identify and resolve. Biblically, rivalry is associated with envy, selfish ambition, strife, and division. The New Testament warns against attitudes that destroy unity among believers. In John 21:20–22, Peter showed concern about the future of another disciple, but Jesus redirected him to focus on his own calling. This passage suggests that rivalry often begins when attention shifts from personal faithfulness to comparison with others.

Rivalry can produce serious negative consequences such as disunity, suspicion, factionalism, poor cooperation, and reduced effectiveness. In church settings, it may weaken evangelism, discourage younger ministers, and damage the witness of the church before society. According to Nwosu (2020), leadership rivalry in Christian organizations affects morale, teamwork, and institutional credibility. This is true in many denominations where internal competition overshadows the mission of the church. However, some scholars distinguish between destructive rivalry and healthy competition. Healthy competition may inspire excellence, discipline, and innovation when guided by ethics and mutual respect. Destructive rivalry, on the other hand, is driven by jealousy, pride, bitterness, and hostility.

Intra-ministerial rivalry refers to conflictual or competitive relationships among ordained ministers within the same denomination, often expressed through struggles for recognition, authority, visibility, and perceived effectiveness in ministry. This phenomenon is highly relevant to the interpretation of John 21:20–22, where Jesus corrects Peter's tendency to compare his ministerial destiny with that of John the beloved disciple. Matshobane and Masango (2018) describe church leadership rivalry as a power struggle within ecclesiastical government where authority, control, and influence become contested among leaders. According to Abioye and Alao (2020), intra-ministerial rivalry is an internal tension between various hierarchies of church leaders in which their activities are in constant overlap. In the context of this research, intra-ministerial rivalry is understood as a state or situation in which ministers of the same religious group are engaged in a prolonged period of competition with each other with greater conflicting personal factors.



An Overview of Intra-Ministerial Rivalry and its Implications

Intra-ministerial rivalry has serious implications for the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria) because it affects both ministry and administration. A church that is divided among its ministers cannot fully embody the unity and peace that it preaches. The implications of intra-ministerial rivalry extend beyond the clergy to the entire life and witness of the church. Rivalry among ministers weakens ecclesiastical unity, reduces pastoral effectiveness, and negatively affects the spiritual growth of congregations. Where ministers operate in suspicion and hostility, church members often become confused and polarized along personality or factional lines. Ogbonnaya (2014) avers that unresolved ministerial conflicts damage the moral credibility of the church and discourage public confidence in Christian leadership.

Contemporary realities within many Christian traditions increasingly suggest that ministry is being interpreted through lenses that differ considerably from the ideals espoused by Scripture. Issues of ambition, competition, and the pursuit of ecclesiastical recognition have become recurring themes in discussions concerning church leadership. In many instances, positions that were originally intended for service are gradually being perceived as symbols of influence, privilege, and institutional significance. Consequently, ministers are often confronted with the tension between divine calling and human aspiration.

The Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria) is not isolated from these broader ecclesiastical realities. Through years of ministerial engagement, participation in diocesan activities, and interaction with fellow clergy, the researcher has observed certain patterns that raise important theological and pastoral concerns. These observations do not imply institutional failure nor are they intended to cast aspersions upon the integrity of the Church or its clergy. Rather, they reflect human experiences that have become increasingly discernible within the ordinary life of the Church. Among these observations is the growing tendency toward comparison among clergy. Conversations surrounding ecclesiastical appointments, parish postings, ministerial visibility, and proximity to diocesan leadership occasionally reveal underlying sentiments of competition and dissatisfaction. While such sentiments are seldom expressed publicly, they often emerge in informal interactions and suggest the existence of unresolved tensions within ministerial relationships. Particularly noteworthy is the manner in which ecclesiastical appointments are sometimes perceived. Appointments to positions such as Canon, Archdeacon, and other offices of responsibility, though intended to facilitate effective governance, are occasionally interpreted as measures of ministerial relevance and accomplishment. Consequently, clergy who are not preferred do experience feelings of disappointment or exclusion, while those appointed may become subjects of speculation and comparison among their colleagues.

Similarly, parish postings have increasingly become a source of concern within ministerial discourse. Certain congregations are generally perceived as more desirable due to their financial stability, geographical location, and institutional prominence. As a result, assignments to such parishes may inadvertently communicate notions of preferential treatment or ministerial status. Clergy serving in less privileged contexts may consequently struggle with questions relating to equity, recognition, and institutional appreciation. Furthermore, the researcher has observed that differences in ministerial visibility frequently contribute to unhealthy comparisons among clergy. Some Clergy whose parishes experience remarkable growth, infrastructural development, or increased public recognition often become reference points against which others measure their own ministries. In such circumstances, ministry risks becoming performance-oriented rather than vocation-centered. The emphasis gradually shifts from faithfulness to fruitfulness, from obedience to achievement, and from discipleship to distinction. Another troubling development is the emergence of cliques and informal alliances among clergy. Although fellowship and friendship remain integral aspects of ministerial life, there are instances where ministers appear to identify



themselves and others according to perceived loyalties and affiliations. Such perceptions, have the potential to undermine trust, weaken collegiality, and foster an atmosphere of suspicion within the diocesan community.

Financial accountability may also suffer where rivalry produces unhealthy competition over church resources and influential postings. Disagreements over parish finances, diocesan levies, and access to church resources often reflect underlying struggles for control and authority. These disputes may intensify existing rivalries and weaken accountability mechanisms within the church. In most situations, prolonged conflict may discourage younger ministers from remaining committed to ministry, thereby affecting leadership continuity within the church. For this reason, the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria) must continually emphasize servant leadership, transparency, humility, spirituality, and mutual accountability as essential values for sustainable ecclesiastical administration.

According to U. Ebere (personal communication, 29th January, 2026), intra-ministerial rivalry leads to jealousy, envy and wrangling among the clergy, it leads to decline in the numerical growth of the congregation, it has resulted in hatred among ministers and between clergy and their members and thus has degenerated to physical confrontation among different hierarchies in ministry. B. Anorue (personal communication, 29th April, 2026), opines that intra-ministerial rivalry has paved the way for wrong persons to get to leadership positions in the church, owing to sycophancy and untrue loyalty. Consequently, some ministers have chosen to be indifferent and stay on their own because of clique alliances. While some carry out their ministerial duties with bitterness, rancour and rebellion.

The cliques or the numerous factions have become a threat to the unity of the clergy in the Anglican church. According to G. Nwabuisi (personal communication, 29th January, 2026), there is neither concern nor genuine interest in what happens to a fellow minister. Intra-ministerial rivalry has weakened the prayer life, the spirit of evangelism, commitment to Bible study of some clergy and leads to moral decline among both ministers and members. According to G. Nwabuisi (personal communication, 29th January, 2026), there are cases where it is obvious that the Vicar and his curate(s) are not in good terms to the point that members become their mediators. Such ministers automatically loose spiritual authority over the church and the spiritual lives and growth of the congregation becomes at stake in such unhealthy atmosphere of intra-ministerial rivalry. Intra-ministerial rivalry may discourage someone from continuing in the ministry especially for the beginners or feeble-minded. Some people's enthusiasm is also adversely affected, as ministerial prowess or gifts may be caged.

Furthermore, intra-ministerial rivalry affects evangelism and mission. Energy that ought to be directed toward soul winning, discipleship, and pastoral care is often redirected toward personal struggles and internal politics. When clergy are preoccupied with internal struggle, less attention is given to mission, discipleship, and outreach, which are central to the church's calling. According to J. Apugo (personal communication, 31st January, 2026), the church members often circulate the minister's ill easily into the community. Hence, to evangelize becomes difficult because nothing good is being spoken of the church. Evangelists, deacons and pastors no longer go out for evangelism and those who manage to evangelize do not win souls because the news of the crisis is all over the social media. Nmah (2017) corroborates that the impact of intra-ministerial rivalry will dapple the spirit of evangelism and soul winning and that members will not be committed to outreach programs. These realities point to a more profound concern: the gradual emergence of intra-ministerial rivalry within contemporary Anglican ministry. Although rivalry is seldom acknowledged openly, its manifestations are evident in subtle forms of comparison, competition, and dissatisfaction.



Collectively, these implications indicate that intra-ministerial rivalry among the contemporary Anglican clergy extends beyond administrative disagreements to encompass social, economic, and spiritual dimensions. If left unresolved, such tensions threaten ministerial unity, compromise pastoral collaboration, and weaken the church's witness in society. Addressing these challenges requires a renewed commitment to servant leadership, transparency, and mutual accountability, consistent with the biblical and ecclesiological ideals of Christian ministry.

An Exegesis of John 21:20-22

Textual Reading: ²⁰ Ἐπιστραφεὶς τ ὁ Πέτρος βλέπει τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἡγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὁ ἀκολουθοῦντα, ὃς καὶ ἀνέπεσεν ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν· Κύριε, τίς ἐστὶν ὁ παραδιδούς σε; ²¹ τοῦτον ὁ οὖν ἰδὼν ὁ Πέτρος ἔλεγεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ· Κύριε, οὗτος δὲ τίς; ²² λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν τ ἕως ἔρχομαι, τί πρὸς σέ; σύ ἔμοι ἀκολούθει ὦ.

Textual Criticism

A comparison of this text with other variants reveals few textual ambiguities. In other words, the textual tradition of John 21:20–22 is relatively stable, yet several variants require careful evaluation. In verse 20, some manuscripts like $\mathfrak{P}^{99\text{vid}}$ κ D K N Γ Δ Θ Ψ f^{1.13} 565. 700. 892. 1241. 1424. f sy^h pbo insert the conjunction δέ after ἡγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς. However, the shorter reading preserved in our Nestle-Aland text and other Alexandrian witnesses like $\mathfrak{P}^{109\text{vid}}$ A B C W 33 lat is generally preferable because scribes frequently insert conjunctions to smooth transitions. Likewise, the omission of ἀκολουθοῦντα in some witnesses like κ^* W ff² pbo likely arose from accidental simplification. Since the participle contributes directly to the thematic continuity of discipleship, its inclusion is more original.

In verse 21, several Byzantine variants like A K W Γ Δ Θ Ψ f^{1.13} 565. 700. 892. 1241. 1424 $\mathfrak{P}$ sy^r omit οὖν. Nevertheless, the conjunction is strongly supported by early Alexandrian witnesses such as κ and B. Internally, οὖν explains the logical transition from Peter's observation to his question. The omission probably emerged from scribal attempts to abbreviate the sentence. Similarly, the variant εἶπεν replacing λέγει appears secondary in κ W f r¹ vg^d because Johannine narrative style frequently employs the historical present λέγει. The most important variant occurs in verse 22 concerning the omission or inclusion of μοι. Some later Byzantine witnesses like C² K Γ Δ Θ Ψ f^{1.13} read σύ ἀκολούθει (you follow), while earlier and more reliable manuscripts including $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, κ , and B preserve σύ μοι ἀκολούθει (you follow me). The inclusion of μοι is both externally and internally stronger. Externally, it enjoys support from the earliest Alexandrian witnesses. Internally, it is the more difficult reading because it intensifies the relational dimension of discipleship. Therefore, the reading preserved in our Nestle-Aland critical text is closest to the original manuscript tradition. By the principles of *lectio difficilior* and multiple attestation, the more difficult and longer reading containing μοι should be preferred. Jesus' command is therefore not merely "follow," but "follow me," thereby emphasizing Christ-centered discipleship rather than institutional competition.

The Working Translation

²⁰ Turning around, Peter sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned on his chest at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one betraying you?" ²¹ Peter seeing him, says to Jesus, "Lord, but what about this one?" ²² Jesus says to him, "If I will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? You follow me".



Delimitation of the Text

The text will be set out as a unit of its own in order to fully understand the logic of the text and to obtain some insight into the structure of Jesus' corrective response to Peter in John 21:20-21. The following observations are relevant here as this section concerns itself primarily on the delimitation of the text.

John 21:20–22 forms an independent literary unit within the epilogue of the Gospel of John. The pericope begins with Peter's observation of the Beloved Disciple and ends with Jesus' corrective response. Structurally, the passage possesses narrative completeness because it contains observation, inquiry, and response. Thematically, it addresses vocational comparison and discipleship, thereby distinguishing itself from surrounding sections. The passage stands out from verses 15–19 which focuses on Peter's restoration and pastoral commission. There, Jesus emphasizes shepherding responsibility, sacrificial love, and martyrdom. In contrast, the exegetical text (20–22) introduces a new concern: Peter's curiosity regarding another disciple's destiny. The transition is indicated by the participle Ἐπιστραφεῖς ("having turned around"), which introduces both a physical and thematic shift.

The pericope is equally distinct from verse 23 which contains an explanatory clarification regarding misunderstanding among the brethren. Whereas our text, verses 20–22 consist of direct dialogue between Jesus and Peter, verse 23 represents editorial commentary explaining that Jesus did not actually promise the Beloved Disciple would never die. This narrative change confirms the boundaries of the unit. The text therefore stands independently because it possesses literary coherence, thematic uniqueness, and structural completeness. Its primary theological purpose is to reject comparative discipleship and reaffirm individualized vocation. The researcher intentionally isolates this text in order to emphasize that discipleship must not be measured through rivalry or comparison with others.

Semantic and Syntactic Analysis

An exegetical appraisal of the text makes an understanding of words used a necessity. The verbs, both main and subordinate clauses are highlighted differently and then commented upon very briefly. Phrases, clauses and sentences would also be given a technical clarification wherever and whenever it is required. It shall follow a pattern of analysis of verse after verse beginning with verse 20. Notably, the semantic structure of John 21:20–22 revolves around discipleship, comparison, vocation, and divine sovereignty.

Verse 20 Main verbal clause: Ἐπιστραφεῖς ὁ Πέτρος βλέπει τὸν μαθητὴν

Ἐπιστραφεῖς: This is aorist tense, passive voice, participle, Masculine nominative singular of the verb ἐπιστρέφω (to turn).

βλέπει: Present tense, active voice, indicative mood, 3rd person singular, from the verb βλέπω - (I see). The present tense heightens narrative immediacy. Syntactically, the participles Ἐπιστραφεῖς and ἰδὼν create narrative movement from observation to comparison. This Ἐπιστραφεῖς implies Peter's physical turning symbolizing narrative distraction; he shifts attention from his own calling to another's destiny. Bernard (1953) states that this is a peculiar kind of curiosity, which we find in people of very active minds, where Peter is eager to ascertain at once who is the traitor in the company. Verse 20 breaks off predictions about Peter and turns interest to the beloved disciple. He appears and significantly, already following. According to Black (1964), martyrdom is perhaps the clearest and simplest way of following Christ and bearing witness to him, but it is not the only way. The beloved disciple also follows and bears witness. The author's desire to set forth Peter and the Beloved Disciple as having different yet equally significant vocations is generally recognized.

Verse 21 Main phrase: τοῦτον οὖν ἰδὼν ὁ Πέτρος



ἰδὼν: This is aorist tense, active voice, participle, from ὁράω (to see). This participle ἰδὼν meaning “Having seen” triggers the comparative question because sight leads to comparison. According to Bernard (1953), “Peter has been told that he will die by crucifixion and him at once asks what is to be the fate of his friend” (p. 711). According to Laymon (1972), “his query about the fate of this companion in verse 21 is both a natural curiosity about the destiny of the man himself and a deeper allusion to those whom the beloved disciple represents figuratively” (p. 728). Whether soon or later, the summons of Jesus comes to every disciple, to follow him and to bear witness to him. Peter is viewed as the model Shepherd for all other shepherds of the Lord’s flock. The qualities of the Beloved Disciple, however, are equally needed in the leadership of the Church.

Verse 22: λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς Ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι is the main clause; while τί πρὸς σέ; σύ μοι ἀκολουθεῖς is the subordinating clause.

μένειν: This is present tense, active voice, infinitive mood, from the verb μένω (to remain, stay or abide) which implies a continuous action, μένω is a central theological verb (cf. John 15:4–7). It denotes covenantal abiding, perseverance, and relational constancy. Remaining is not superior to martyrdom. It is simply a different mode of faithful discipleship. The succeeding phrase “What is that toward you?” meaning “That is not your concern” establishes vocational boundaries. A bishop’s calling differs from that of an archdeacon. A parish priest’s ministry differs from diocesan administration. Generational succession differs from vocational faithfulness; hence, Christ refuses to allow comparative evaluation of callings.

The third-class conditional clause Ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι expresses hypothetical possibility and emphasizes Christ’s sovereign authority over the destiny of His disciples. The syntax preserves ambiguity while affirming divine prerogative. According to Black (1964), whatever be God’s will for the beloved disciple is no business of Peter’s; it is his to follow and not to concern himself with the destiny of others.

The final imperative σύ μοι ἀκολουθεῖς (you follow me) is emphatic because the pronoun σύ (you) appears explicitly. Jesus personalizes the instruction and redirects Peter toward his own calling. Applied to Anglican ministry, the syntax teaches that ministers should concentrate on their God-given responsibilities rather than become consumed with rivalry and ecclesiastical comparison. As Black (1964) rightly notes, “Peter, then, is to follow, to be a shepherd, and to bear witness by his death. The beloved disciple also follows, and bears witness, though in a different way” (p. 218).

ἔρχομαι: present tense, middle voice, indicative mood, 1st person singular, from the verb ἔρχεται (I am coming). This may possibly imply futuristic: “until I come” referring to Parousia, resurrection appearances or eschatological vindication. The ambiguity reinforces divine sovereignty over destiny. Pregeant (n.d.) states that the way in which the author has presented the scene shows that he was not solely concerned to correct the misapprehension about the survival of the Beloved Disciple till the Parousia of Christ. He is at pains to remind the reader of the unique relation to the Lord of this disciple, and therefore his special ministry to the rest of the disciples and to the Church: his record of the Lord’s brusque correction of Peter, when he wanted to know what service was appointed for that disciple and what would happen to him, is part of that representation. Peter was being given the privilege of labouring for Christ to old age, and to complete it with the crown of martyrdom. No such honour was given to the Beloved Disciple. Johnston (2003) notes that by the time chapter 21 was written and the gospel went into circulation both disciples had died, one with the glory of martyrdom and one with a peaceful end at Ephesus. It is reasonable to suggest that this presentation of the relations of Peter and the Beloved Disciple, to the Lord and to each other, was made for the benefit of Churches which were inclined to exalt one over against the other. the tendency to favour one apostle more than another is seen in the Corinthian correspondence of Paul (1 Cor. 3:3-4). And that would be the more natural in circles where one apostle was known and loved, and others were



known only through second-hand reports. The anonymity of the Beloved Disciple indicates that he was so well known in the Churches he served that there was no need to use his proper name, but it is well possible that he was quite unknown in many areas of the Church, whereas Peter was known to all (Johnston, 2003). It was desirable therefore for Christians elsewhere to learn how the famous Peter and the comparatively unknown Beloved Disciple were related. So, the author endeavours to show that both men were gifts of the risen Lord to the Churches, very different in gifts and calling, but with important tasks to perform for the benefit of all. That the saying of verse 22 circulated among the Johannine Churches is evident from the reference to the 'brothers' (21:23), who understood it as a promise from the Lord that the Beloved Disciple would survive till the Parousia. The saying has caused some commentators as much perturbation as 'the brothers', to judge from their anxiety to empty it of real eschatological content. Although outside vv. 20–22, verse 23 clarifies misunderstanding regarding "remaining." Some manuscripts smooth the text to reduce eschatological confusion.

The subordinating phrase is: σύ μοι ἀκολούθει

ἀκολούθει (v. 22): This is present tense, active voice, imperative mood, 2nd person singular, from the verb ἀκολουθέω (to follow).

This implies a continuous action, to keep following. The emphatic pronoun: σύ (you), meaning: "You - keep following!". This phrase denotes personalized, ongoing discipleship and not competitive leadership. According to Brown (1970), the one thing that matters is that he should follow his lord in the present moment to hear what further word may yet be addressed to him, and in the days and years ahead, as the risen Lord guides him and reveals his unfolding task, till the final call to follow him in a death to the glory of God. Accordingly, the command given in verse 19 is repeated, only yet more emphatically: "As for you, *you follow me*". The verb ἀκολουθέω (to follow) is central within Johannine theology and denotes committed discipleship. In verse 22, the imperative ἀκολούθει expresses continuous action and demands sustained obedience. The command therefore redirects Peter from distraction toward faithful commitment. The phrase τί πρὸς σέ (what is that to you?) semantically carries the force of dismissal. Jesus rejects Peter's attempt to evaluate his own ministry in relation to another disciple. According to Brown, Fitzmyer and Murphy (1970), Jesus tells Peter that the death of the beloved disciple is none of his concern. Jesus neither affirms nor denies the possibility; to do either would be to satisfy Peter's idle curiosity. Hence, the statement τί πρὸς σέ (what is that to you?) establishes vocational boundaries and affirms that divine assignments differ among disciples. Comparison is therefore presented as spiritually unhealthy and leading to rivalry.

Theological Reflection and Hermeneutical Application

The problem of intra-ministerial rivalry has become increasingly visible within ecclesiastical traditions, including the Anglican Communion in Nigeria. Tensions among clergy sometimes emerge through competition for leadership positions, parish influence, and diocesan recognition. Such rivalry often generates division and weakens ministerial cooperation. John 21:20–22 provides a biblical corrective by confronting the spirit of comparison and unhealthy competition among Church leaders. Barclay (1975) states thus:

The text, samples two of the great figures of the church, Peter and John. To each Jesus had given his function. It was Peter's to shepherd the sheep of Christ, and in the end to die for him. It was John's to witness to the story of Christ and to live to a great old age and to come to the end in peace. That did not make them rivals in honour and prestige, nor make the one greater or less than the other; it made them both servants/ministers of Christ. Therefore, let



every minister serve Christ where God has set him. As Jesus said to Peter: “Never mind the task that is given to someone else, your job is to follow me”. (p. 182).

Therefore, one’s ministerial glory should never be in comparison with others; rather each should glory in the service of Christ in whatever capacity that he is allotted to (be it a Venerable, Canon, Vicar, Curate or Assistant pastor). Peter’s question concerning the Beloved Disciple reflects the tendency among ministers to evaluate their success through comparison with colleagues. Although Peter had just received a solemn pastoral commission, he became distracted by another disciple’s destiny. Jesus immediately redirected him toward personal obedience. Barclay (1975) corroborates thus:

It may be indeed, it was inevitable, that people would draw comparisons in the early church. Some would say that John was the great one, for his flights of thought went higher than those of any other man. Some would say that Paul was the great one, for he fared to the great ends of the earth for Christ. But this text says that Peter, too, had his place. He might not write and think like John; he might not voyage and adventure like Paul; but he had great honour and the lovely task, of being the shepherd of the sheep of Christ. (Pp. 106-107).

Ministry therefore is not a competition for superiority but a vocation of service. The passage further teaches that different ministers possess different callings. Peter was destined for pastoral leadership and martyrdom, while the Beloved Disciple represented enduring testimony and witness. Jesus refused to compare these vocations competitively. Likewise, Anglican ministers must understand that differences in office or assignment do not imply superiority or inferiority.

The enduring command “You follow me” remains the solution to hierarchical rivalry within the Church. Ministers who focus on Christ-centered discipleship are less likely to become consumed by jealousy, unhealthy ambition, or political maneuvering. The Church must therefore cultivate humility, servant leadership, fairness, and spiritual accountability. The call of Christ in the gospel is by definition one that must redirect our lives. It calls ministers in the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria), like Peter, to a life of undistracted discipleship to Christ. When Peter then, with traces of his old self still rising to the surface, asks, what about this man? (21:21), Jesus in effect answers, ‘that is none of your business’! Ministers are not called to look at other people and at God’s dealings with them, but they are called to look unto God and follow wherever he may choose to lead them in his service.

Within ecclesiastical structures, loyalty is often regarded as a virtue; however, historical and contemporary experiences reveal that loyalty is sometimes driven by self-interest rather than a genuine commitment to righteousness and truth (Brueggemann, 1990). This phenomenon is not nascent in the current dispensation of ministry in Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria). John 21:20-22 serves as a striking example of untrue loyalty in the context of intra-ministerial rivalry. In this text, Peter who was the leading apostle shifted attention on comparing his primacy to John (the beloved), demonstrating how personal ambition and political manoeuvring can be cloaked in the guise of loyalty (McCarter, 1984). The text serves as a biblical paradigm for critically analysing the role of comparison and untrue loyalty in leadership crises.

While Peter’s question is sometimes viewed as trifling, posed merely to enable the saying of Jesus to be announced in verse 22, it is comprehensible enough, given the frequent association of Peter and the other disciple in the Gospel. If Peter’s path in life has now been made known to him, it is natural for him to be curious as to what is in store for his colleague. (Beasley-Murray, 1987: 36).



But the answer of Jesus is unexpectedly sharp in tone. He makes it plain that his will for his friend is of no concern to Peter, not even if that disciple is called to tread a quieter and less demanding way than his; if instead of the call to martyrdom it be the Lord's will for the Beloved Disciple to remain till the Lord himself shall come, that should make no difference to Peter in the pursuit of his vocation.

The Anglican Communion in Nigeria has faced significant leadership challenges, particularly in recent decades, as theological, administrative, and ideological disputes have fuelled division (Akinola, 2007). These disputes have often been exacerbated by conflicting allegiances, where individuals pledge loyalty, not necessarily based on biblical principles but out of political expediency. Similar patterns of power struggles have been observed in global church history, where leadership disputes frequently stem from self-serving alliances rather than genuine theological convictions (Hastings, 1994). Just as Ahithophel's loyalty to Absalom was ultimately self-serving and destructive, contemporary church politics often reveal similar tendencies, where leaders and followers manipulate allegiance to secure positions of influence (Dumbrell, 2002). This dynamic has led to increasing fragmentation within the church, with theological integrity often taking a secondary role to political manoeuvring (Olupona, 2011).

According to Frederick (2003):

Gradually and slowly our Lord prepared St. Peter for his high office. When Jesus saw him first, He promised him a change of name. "And Jesus looking upon him, said: thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shall be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter" (John 1:42). Then he placed him at the head of the twelve and preferred him on many occasions. And when Peter has made his solemn confession of faith in the divinity of Christ, Jesus fulfilled His first promise, saying: "Thou art Peter and on this rock, I will build my Church, and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven...". Again, at the Last Supper Jesus told him that he had prayed for him especially that his faith might not fail. And now we have reached the climax. Our Lord commits to Peter the full and final charge of His whole flock, which comprises sheep and lambs, that is to say, pastors or bishops and the congregation of faithfuls. Thus, Peter was made the Vicar of Christ upon earth and the Head of the Church. (p. 728).

Peter's restless concern about the position and prospect of John symbolize intra-ministerial rivalry; a moment when human ambition seeks to replace divinely instituted authority. This is a replica of contemporary challenges in the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria), where issues of ranks, succession, leadership conflicts, and struggles for ecclesiastical power sometimes threaten the church's unity. In many dioceses, internal conflicts arise when individuals seek church leadership positions for personal gain rather than divine service. Similar to Absalom's rebellion, these struggles often create clichés, leading to disunity and weakening the spiritual and moral authority of the church. The Anglican Church in Nigeria must therefore emphasize the biblical principle that leadership is a divine calling, not a political contest. As McKenzie (2000) notes, biblical history teaches that power without righteousness leads to downfall. This serves as a warning to contemporary Anglican clergy that moral and theological compromise has long-term consequences. The Church must remain faithful to its mission of holiness and doctrinal purity rather than seeking cultural or political acceptance. Rather than endorsing rivalry, the text affirms complementary roles between Peter and the beloved Disciple. Their functions differ but are equally valid within the mission of the church. Ideally, every Anglican clergy has their own unique gift and place in the scheme of things irrespective of hierarchy. A pragmatic application of the exegetical interpretation of our text to the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria) would help to eschew all forms of



rancour, jealousy and internal suspicions; and rather, foster teamwork, collaboration and shared responsibility among the ministerial workforce.

Conclusion

This study concludes that intra-ministerial rivalry among contemporary clergy in the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria) represents a significant ecclesiological and pastoral challenge that undermines the unity and mission of the Church. The research underscores that intra-ministerial rivalry is not merely an administrative or interpersonal issue in context of Anglican communion, but a deeply rooted theological problem arising from misplaced priorities, particularly the elevation of status, power, and recognition of influence above service and discipleship. This study reveals that intra-ministerial rivalry negatively impacts the evangelical growth of the Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria). Respondents were of the view that intra-ministerial rivalry weakens the spirit of evangelism and soul winning in the church as well as makes it difficult to organize crusade for soul winning by hindering outreach efforts resulting in stalled growth of the church. The study reveals that intra-ministerial rivalry tends to dilute the impact of the gospel message and weakens the outreach campaign's credibility along with effectiveness of the evangelism in the dioceses.

The exegetical findings from John 21:20–22 demonstrate that the root of rivalry lies in comparison and the desire to measure one's ministry against that of others. Jesus' response to Peter establishes a normative framework for Christian leadership, redirecting attention from rivalry to personal obedience and commitment to Christ. This Christocentric orientation redefines ministry as a vocation grounded in faithfulness rather than competition. Furthermore, the study affirms that the diversity of ministerial roles within the Church is not intended to create hierarchy-based superiority but to facilitate complementary service within the body of Christ. When properly understood, such diversity eliminates the basis for rivalry and fosters unity. Ultimately, the study contributes to theological scholarship by bridging biblical exegesis with contemporary ecclesial challenges, demonstrating that scriptural insights remain relevant for addressing modern ministerial conflicts. It calls for a paradigm shift within Anglican ministry from ambition-driven leadership to servant-oriented discipleship.

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List of interviewees

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Ven. Joshua Apugo	Archdeacon of Afara Ibeku South Archdeaconry	31/01/26	
Rev. Ugochukwu Ebere	Priest , Cathedral chapel, Amuzukwu	13/11/25	
Rev. Ben Anorue	Priest , All Souls Church Umukabia	13/05/2026	



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Umị

Nchọcha a nyochara ikuzi mmuọ irusị ọrụ ike n'ime ndị ntorobia Igbo site n'ibufe nkwenye omenaala aka aja aja na-ebute ọnụ mmanụ mmanụ, n'ihì na mmuọ a na-ada ada n'etiti ndị ntorobia taa; nke a kpaliri muọ ndị nchọcha ime nchọcha a. Ebumnobi bụ ilekwasi anya na omenaala Igbo, agumakwukwọ, akukọ ifo, ilu, akpalaokwu, abụ, na ọrụ aka dị ka ụzọ ime ka mmuọ irusị ọrụ ike too n'ime umu ntorobia agba ọhụrụ. Usoro kwolitativu na kōnsepuchual ka a gbasoro mee nchọcha a, nke putara na e ji nkwa okwu (ọ bughị ọnuogugu) tle akwukwọ e dere ede, nchikota omenaala, na ihe atụ si n'ime obodo kowaa nkwenye omenaala na agwa ndị na-eto eto. Dika ihe atụ, akpalaokwu dị ka "onye rusiri ọrụ ike anaghị anwu n'ukọ," abụ ndị a na-abụ n'oge ọrụ ubi, akukọ ifo gbasara ndị dara ogbenye n'ihì irusị ọrụ ike, na ilu dị ka "aka dị nro adighi eri nri," gosiputara omume irusị ọrụ ike. Nchoputa gosiri na iji nkuzi, mkparịtaụka, ọrụ aka, egwu na akukọ ifo ga-eme ka mmuọ igba mbọ na-etowanye n'ime ndị ntorobia n'uzọ ga-akwalite mmuọ ndidi na mgbalị n'ime onwe ha. Ndị nchọcha kowara na usoro tiori *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (nkuzi dabere n'omenaala ndị mmadu) na *Cultural Transmission* (nnyefe omenaala) bara uru n'ikuzi mmuọ irusị ọrụ ike na nnyefe nkwenye omenaala. Nchoputa a kwadoro ka ulọ akwukwọ, ndị nkuzi, na ndị okenye jikọọ aka inye umu ntorobia mmata bara uru, kpalie ha ikike igba mbọ n'onwe ha bụ ihe e ji mara nwa amaala Igbo n'ụwa bido n'oge mgbe ochie.

Keywords: *irusị ọrụ ike, omenaala, aka aja aja, ọnụ mmanụ mmanụ, umu ntorobia Igbo, sekondiri.*



Abstract

Teaching the Spirit of Hard Work to Igbo Youths: Transmitting the Cultural Belief of Aka Aja Aja Na-Ebute Ọnụ Mmanụ Mmanụ among Secondary School Students

This study examined how the spirit of hard work can be taught to Igbo youths through the transmission of the cultural belief *aka aja aja na-ebute ọnụ mmanụ mmanụ*, prompted by the observed decline of this spirit among youths today. It focuses on Igbo culture, education, folktales, proverbs, oral poetry, songs, and community work as avenues for cultivating hard work among secondary school students. The study adopts a qualitative and conceptual approach, analyzing literature, cultural archives, and community practices (rather than numerical data) to explain the influence of cultural beliefs on the moral and character education of youths. For example, expressions such as "a hardworking person never dies in want," farm-work songs, folktales about those who suffered for neglecting hard work, and proverbs such as "the lazy hand does not eat" illustrate the value placed on hard work. Findings indicate that incorporating teaching, discussion, community work, songs, and storytelling effectively instills the spirit of hard work in youths, fostering diligence, perseverance, and personal development. The study also highlights the relevance of *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* and *Cultural Transmission Theory* in teaching hard work and transmitting cultural beliefs. The study recommends that schools, teachers, and community elders collaborate to provide youths with meaningful learning experiences and encourage practical engagement, in order to preserve Igbo cultural values in contemporary society.

Keywords: *spirit of hard work, cultural beliefs, aka aja aja, ọnụ mmanụ mmanụ, Igbo youths, secondary school, education.*

Ntọala

Agumakwukwọ bụ otu n'ime ngwá ọrụ kacha baa uru n'ọganihu mmadụ nakwa mmepe obodo, maka na ọ na-enye ohere ikunye ukpuru amamihe, nkà, agwa na okwukwe sitere n'aka ọgbọ okenye gaa n'aka ọgbọ ọhụ. N'omenaala Igbo, agumakwukwọ abughị naanị ihe a na-amụta n'ụlọ akwukwọ kamakwa ọ bụ usoro ndụ nke na-akuziri umuaka na ndị ntorobia ukpuru ezi omume, mmuo igba mbọ, ndidi na ibu ọrụ ezinaulọ na obodo. Otu n'ime nkwenye omenaala ndị Igbo ji akporo ihe nke ukwu bụ nkwenye aka aja aja na-ebute ọnụ mmanụ mmanụ, nke na-egosi na onye na-arusi ọrụ ike, na-agba mbọ n'ọrụ na-erite uru dị na ya. Ọbibia agumakwukwọ, mere ka a hazie usoro nkuzi na mmụta n'ụlọakwukwọ sekondiri, ebe a na-agbadokari ukwu n'ime ka umuakwukwọ nweta akara di elu karịa ikunye agwa na okwukwe omenaala. Egbe, Asogwa na Ossai (2017) gosiri na nka nkuzi na-emetuta ogo mmuta umuakwukwọ n'ụlọakwukwọ sekondiri nke ukwu. Ha kwadoro na agumakwukwọ abughị naanị n'akuku ogugu isi. N'otu aka ahụ, Eze na Omeje (2018) choputara na uko ngwa nkuzi na ihe enyemaka mmuta na-emetuta nkuzi na mmuta n'ogo sekondiri. Mgbe enweghi ngwa nkuzi dabara adaba, ọ na-enye ndi nkuzi nsogbu itinye usoro nkuzi di mma nke nwere ike ikwalite mmuta gbasara omenaala na mmuo igba mbọ n'ime umuakwukwọ. Nke a na-egosi mkpa ọ di itinye ihe metutara asusu na omenaala Igbo na ngwa nkuzi site na gburugburu umuakwukwọ.

Asusu na omenaala bu ihe abuo jikoro onwe ha, maka na asusu bu uzọ e si ebu, chekwaa na nyefee omenaala. Willy (2016) kowara na asusu na edemede Igbo juputara n'ilu, akpalaokwu na akuko ifo nke na-akwalite mmuo igba mbọ, irusi ọrụ ike na ezi agwa. N'otu aka ahụ, Eze na Umo (2021) gosiri na nkuzi asusu na omenaala Igbo n'ogo sekondiri na-enyere umuakwukwọ aka ighota omenaala ha nke oma ma meekwa ka ha too n'inwe ezi agwa. Eze na Umo (2019) kwadoro na itinye usoro nkuzi mkparitauka na nke omenaala n'ime nkuzi asusu Igbo na-akwalite mmuta



omenaala na iwube ezi akpoaramagwa n'ime ụmụakwụkwọ sekondiri. Nke a na-egosi na ụlọakwụkwọ nwere ike buru ebe di ire e si ebufe nkwenye omenaala. N'agbanyeghi uru ndi a, a na-ahụ na otutu ndi ntorobia Igbo, okachasi ndi no n'ogo sekondiri nta, amalitela idi ume ngwu n'oru maka mmetuta omenaala mba ozo, teknuzu dijitalu na ochicho ibi ndu di mfe. Ogo sekondiri nta bu oge di oke mkpa n'iwube agwa na echiche ndu ụmụakwụkwọ, maka na o bu oge a ka a na-akpu agwa ha. Eze (2022) kowara na nkuzi asusu Igbo tosiro idabere n'omenaala na onodu obodo ka mmuta wee baa ezi uru. Echiche a na-akwado mkpa o di itinye nkwenye omenaala n'ime nkuzi ka agumakwukwo ghara ibu nani ihe e ji agafe n'ule kamakwa o bu ngwa oru maka iwube agwa. N'ihia ya, itinye nkwenye omenaala na nkuzi n'ogo sekondiri nta ga-enye aka ikunye mmuo igba mbu, irusi oru ike n'ime ndi ntorobia Igbo. Nchocha a na-elekwasị anya na itule usoro ikuziri ndi ntorobia Igbo mmuo igba mbu nke ga-enye aka ibufe nkwenye omenaala aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu n'ime ụmụakwụkwọ n'ogo sekondiri nta.

Nsogbu Nchocha

N'oge gboo, mmuo igba mbu na irusi oru ike bu otu n'ime ukpuru kacha baa uru n'omenaala Igbo. A na-akuziri umuaka na ndi ntorobia ihe ndi a site n'ezinaulo, obodo nakwa n'oru aka di ichie ichie na aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu. Nkwenye a nwere ike inye aka izuputa ndi ntorobia nwere ndidi, mmuo irusi oru ike na ichikwa ezinaulo na obodo. Ka ihe si kwuru ugbo a otutu ndi ntorobia Igbo, okachasi ndi no n'ogo sekondiri nta, anaghi egosi mmuo igba mbu na irusi oru ike dika a turu anya. Otutu n'ime ha na-achio ihe n'uzo di mfe, na-eleghara oru aka na igba mbu anya. Mmetuta omenaala mba ozo, teknuzu dijitalu, yana ilekwasị anya n'ulo akwukwo, emeela ka elegharia anya n'ikunye agwa na nkwenye omenaala.

N'agbanyeghi na e nwere nkuzi asusu Igbo na omenaala n'ulo akwukwo, a naghị etinye nkwenye omenaala di ka aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu n'ime nkuzi n'uzo doru anya. Otutu mgbe, a na-elekwasị anya n'ikuziri umuakwukwo ihe ha ga-edo n'ule kama iji nkuzi kunye mmuo igba mbu na ezi agwa n'ime ha. Nke a emeela ka oghere di n'etiti ihe a na-akuzi n'ulo akwukwo na ukpuru ndu ndi Igbo ji akporo ihe. O buru na a hapu onodu a ka o gaa n'ihu, o nwere ike imetuta agwa, oru na odinihu ndi ntorobia Igbo n'uzo adighi mma. Nke a mere, na e nwere mkpa itule usoro a ga-esi na-akuzi ibufe nkwenye omenaala aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu iji kunye mmuo igba mbu na irusi oru ike n'ime ndi ntorobia Igbo.

Ebumnobi Nchocha

Ebumnobi nchocha a bu:

1. Ichoputa ka nkwenye omenaala aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu si egosiputa mmuo irusi oru ike n'ime ndi ntorobia Igbo.
2. Inyocha ka akuko ifo, ilu, akpalaokwu, na abu Igbo si akwalite mmuo irusi oru ike n'ime umu ntorobia n'ogo sekondiri nta.
3. Itule otu oru aka na oru obodo si abu uzo e si eziputa ma kuziere ndi ntorobia mmuo irusi oru ike.
4. Inyocha ka teknuzu dijitalu (di ka onyonyoo, mkparita n'ikuku, na ule nta) si enye aka ibufe nkwenye omenaala aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu n'etiti ndi ntorobia n'oge a.

Ntuleghari Agumagu

N'omenaala Igbo, otu n'ime ihe kacha puta ihe maka njirimara na ndu ndi Igbo bu mmuo irusi oru ike na nkwenye siri ike na uru igba mbu onwe onye. Bido n'oge gboo, ndi Igbo amatala na ndu metutara ntachi obi, ndidi, na irusi oru ike. Nkwenye a mere ka ilu a, a ma ama puta ihè: "Aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu". Nkwa ilu a gosiri na mmadu na-agba mbu, jiri mgbalị na



ume ala na-arụ ọrụ, ga-erite uru n'akụkụ akụ na ụba, ma n'akụkụ nsopurụ onwe ya na nkwanye ugwu n'obodo. N'agbanyeghi mgbanwe uwa, mmepe sayensi na teknụzụ, na mgbasawanye agumakwukwọ nke oge a, nkwenye a ka nwere nnukwu mkpa n'ime ndụ na oganihu umu ntorobia Igbo. Taa, a na-ahụ na otutu umuakwukwọ na-elekwasị anya n'inweta akara na asambodo, ma na-eleghara anya n'imu agwa oma na mmuo irusi ọrụ ike. Nke a emeela ka e nwee mkpa siri ike itughari uche na usoro a ga-esi jiri agumakwukwọ mee ka nkwenye omenaala Igbo gbasara irusi ọrụ ike ghara ịla n'iyi.

N'ihia nke a, ntuleghari agumagu a na-eleba anya n'itule akwukwọ na inyocha ihe gara aga gbasara iwebata mmuo irusi ọrụ ike omenaala Igbo n'agumakwukwọ nakwa inyefe ukpuru omenaala, na i ji asusu na nkà Igbo di ka ngwa ọrụ nkuzi. Ebumnuche bu igosi ka nkwenye na aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu nwere aka n'ikwalite mwube akparamagwa na oganihu umu ntorobia Igbo, okachasi n'ogo ulo akwukwọ sekondiri nta.

Mmuo irusi ọrụ ike di ka Ukpuru Omenaala Igbo

Mmuo irusi ọrụ ike bu otu n'ime ukpuru omenaala Igbo ji eguzobe ndu na mmekorita mmadu na ibe ya. A na-akowa mmuo irusi ọrụ ike di ka agwa nke irusi ọrụ ike, inwe ndidi, iguzosi ike n'ihe, na igba mbọ onwe iji mejuputa ebumnuche a turu anya. N'omenaala Igbo, agwa abughi naani ihe onye ji eme ka ndu ya too, kama o bukwere ihe na-emetuta ezinaulo, obodo, na ogbo na-abia. Ndi Igbo kwenyere na ọrụ aka bu isi mbido nke nsopuru na nkwanye ugwu. Onye na-arusi ọrụ ike na-enweta aha oma n'obodo, ebe onye na-ezere ọrụ ma na-achọ ụzọ di mfe isi rite uru na-abukari onye a na-ele anya ojoo. Nke a gosiri na mmuo irusi ọrụ ike na-arukwa ọrụ di mkpa n'ihazighari agwa na omume n'obodo ndi Igbo. Willy (2016) kowara na asusu Igbo juputara n'ilu na akpalaokwu ndi e ji eme ka mmuo irusi ọrụ ike sie ike n'ime obi umuaka na ndi ntorobia. Dika ihe omumaatu, akpalaokwu ndi di ka "Onye rusiri ọrụ ike anaghi anwu n'uko" na "Aka na-arụ ọrụ ka eji ata nri" na-agbanye uche umuaka n'irusi ọrụ ike; ilu di ka "Aka di nro anaghi eri nri" na "Onye kwuru ọrụ ka a na-eji oso" na-akowa na onye na-akwadoghi onwe ya n'oru ga-ata ihe n'oge unyaahu; abu ọrụ ubi ndi a na-agu n'oge a na-egwuputa ala ma o bu na-eghere mkpuru, di ka abu na-akpo aha ndi ruru ọrụ nke oma iji sike ha ume; na akuko ifo di ka akuko mkpuru obi eze na nwa ogbenye, nke gosiri na onye a muru n'ogo ma na-akwadoghi onwe ya n'oru na-ada ogbenye n'ikpeazu, ebe onye o bu la na-arusi ọrụ ike na-aba uba. Ihe atu ndi a niile bu ngwa ọrụ ndi Igbo ji eziputa ma kuziere umuaka na ndi ntorobia ukpuru irusi ọrụ ike. Ilu ndi a abughi naani ihe e ji eme ka okwu maa mma, kama ha bu ngwa ọrụ mmuta na nkuzi e ji ebunye ukpuru ndu. Site n'akuko ifo, ilu, na akuko ndu ndi gara aga, a na-akuziri umuaka na ihe niile bara uru n'awa choro mgbalị, ndidi, na ime ihe n'ezie. Ozokwa, mmuo irusi ọrụ ike na-enye aka iwulite agwa oma dika idi umeala n'obi, nkwanye ugwu nye ndi okenye, na ichikwa onwe. Onye mutara irusi ọrụ ike na-amuta inagide ihe siri ike na ndu, nwee ebumnuche doro anya. N'uzo di otu a, mmuo irusi ọrụ ike bu ntola nke oganihu mmadu na mmepe obodo n'omenaala Igbo.

Agumakwukwọ na Nnyefe Ukpuru Omenaala

Agumakwukwọ bu otu n'ime ụzọ kacha baa uru e si ewube ukpuru, nkwenye, na agwa oma site n'otu ogbo gaa n'ozo. N'omenaala Igbo, agumakwukwọ gunyere mmuta sitere n'ulo, n'obodo, na n'oru kwa ubochi. Site n'usoro a, a na-akuziri umuaka ihe gbasara irusi ọrụ ike, ezi omume, na iru ọrụ n'ezinaulo nakwa n'obodo. N'oge ugbo a, agumakwukwọ aghola ụzọ kachasi mkpa e si akwadebe umu ntorobia maka ndu. Ka ihe si kwuru, otutu usoro agumakwukwọ na-elekwasị anya n'ule, akara, na asambodo, ma na-elefere anya n'ikuzi ukpuru omenaala na iwube agwa. Nke a emeela ka e nwee ihe di iche n'etiti ihe umuakwukwọ na-amuta n'akwukwọ na ihe mmuta nke ndu n'ezie. Egbe, Asogwa na Ossai (2017) gosiri na ogo nkà na ozuzu ndi nkuzi nwere nnukwu



mmetuta n'ogo mmuta na mwube agwa umuakwukwo. Mgbe ndi nkuzi nwere nghota miri emi gbasara omenaala na ukpuru obodo ha, ha nwere ike itinye ha n'ime nkuzi n'uzo ga-eme ka umuakwukwo ghota uru ya. Ma mgbe nka a na akurungwa adighi, nkuzi na-agho ihe e ji achuso akara naani, na-ewepukwa agumakwukwo n'oru ya nke iwulite agwa. Eze na Omeje (2018) kwukwara na uko ihe nkuzi na akurungwa mmuta na-egbochi itinye ukpuru omenaala n'ime nkuzi kwa ubochi. Enweghi akwukwo, ihe oyiyi, na ihe enyemaka na-eme ka o sie ike iji ilu, akpalaokwu, na akuko ifo mee ka mmuo irusi oru ike doo anya n'uche umuakwukwo. Usoro nkuzi di ire gunyere mkparita uka, iko akuko ifo, ide ndeko echiche, na iru oru obodo. Usoro ndi a na-eme ka mmuta buru ihe na-atu utu ma na-akwalite mmuta agwa. Mgbe umu ntorobia na-etinye aka n'ime oru obodo, ha na-amuta uru igba mbu na irusi oru ike n'ebimndu. Nke a na-egosi mkpa o di ime ka agumakwukwo buru nke jikotara amamihe mwube agwa. Mgbe e jikotara nkuzi na ukpuru omenaala, umuakwukwo na-amuta na ihe iga nke oma abughi ihe a na-enweta n'efu, kama o bu ugwo oru idi uchu n'oru, ndidi, na imeputa ihe site n'aka oru.

Ikwalite Mmuta Site n'Ikike Mkparita na Teknuzu

Mmuta nke oge a anaghizi achu ka umuakwukwo noro naani na-ege onye nkuzi nti; kama o na-achu ka ha sonye n'ihe omumu site n'iju ajuju, ikwu echiche, na ime ihe. Mmuta nkwardo mkparita bu usoro nkuzi nke na-enye umuakwukwo ohere ikekorita echiche ha, muta site n'aka ibe ha, ma tnye ihe ha mutara n'ime omume. Eze (2016) kwara na o bu usoro ahụ na-eme ka omu were mmuta ya tnye n'oru site na mkpakorita ha na ndi ozo. Ossai, Eze na Obayi (2020) gosiri na teknuzu na komputa nwere nnukwu uru n'ikwalite udi mmuta a. Ikike mkparita putara ikpalite umu ntorobia ka ha kwuo okwu, tlee ihe a kuziri ha, ma nyochaa ya n'uche nke ha. Mgbe e jikotara teknuzu na usoro a dika onyonyoo, nzuko n'ikuku, mkparita (uka), na ngwa mmuta, o na-eme ka mmuta buru ihe na-atu utu ma di ndu. Umukwukwo na-amuta nke oma mgbe ha nwere ohere ikwu ihe ha chere ma gee nti n'echiche ndi ozo.

Nke a nwere ike ikwalite mmuta agwa na nkwenye omenaala omumaatu, iji onyonyoo ma o bu nguko olu n'ikuku kwaa akuko ifo Igbo gbasara irusi oru ike na ndidi. Ndi nkuzi nwere ike igosi onyonyo gbasara ihe ndi Igbo rputara site na mgba ha, ma kpalie mkparita n'ime klasi. Usoro a na-eme ka umuakwukwo ghota na mmuo irusi oru ike abughi ihe gara aga, kama o ka di mkpa n'uwa nke oge ugbu a. Ozokwa, iji egwuregwu dijitalu na ule nta na-enye aka ime ka mmuta ghara idi aru. Mgbe umuntorobia na-amuta site n'egwuregwu, ha na-enwe mmasi ma na-echeta ihe ha mutara nke oma. E nwere ike itinye ule nta gbasara ilu Igbo ma o bu nkwenye omenaala nke na-akuzi mmuo irusi oru ike. Teknuzu na-akwaliteka mmuta nkekorita. Mgbe umuakwukwo na-aruru oru n'otu site na komputa ma o bu tablet, ha na-amuta ikekorita oru na irusi oru ike. Ihe ndi a niile bu akuku di mkpa nke na-akuzi ihe a na-eme n'eziddu.

Omenaala Igbo, Awamanyana na Ozuzu Ndi Ntorobia n'Agumakwukwo

Ndi odee na ndi nchoputa di iche iche gosiri na omenaala Igbo na nkwenye ya na-aruru oru di oke mkpa n'ime ozuzu na agwa ndi ntorobia, okachasi n'oge uwa awamanyana. Awamanyana emeela ka uwa ghoo otu obodo buru ibu, nke mere ka ozi, omume, na omenaala sitere n'ebe di iche iche na-agafe ngwa ngwa site na teknuzu na intaneti. Maka nke a, otutu umu ntorobia na-amuta omenaala mba ozo nke ukwu, ma na-eleghara omenaala nke ha anya. Eze (2022) kwara na awamanyana nwere ike ime ka nkwenye omenaala Igbo daa mba ma o buru na agbaghi mbu siri ike iji chekwaa ma nyefee ya n'uzo tossiri etosi. Ichefu omenaala na-emetuta njirimara, agwa, na mmuo irusi oru ike. Site n'agumakwukwo a haziri nke oma, o ga-enyere umu ntorobia aka ijikota ihe oma sitere n'uwa niile na ukpuru omenaala ha maka iwulite odinihu ka mma. Otutu ndi odee gosikwara na itinye nkwenye omenaala n'ime usoro nkuzi n'uloakwukwo bu otu n'ime uzo kacha ire iji mee ka



mmụta baa uru. Willy (2016) si kowara na asusu Igbo bu ngwa oru di oke mkpa maka ikuzi na ichekwa omenaala na nkwenye ndi Igbo, ebe Eze na Umo (2021) gosiri na ikuzi asusu Igbo n'uloakwukwo sekondiri na-akwalite mmuta na mwube agwa. E nwere ike itinye nkwenye a n'ime isiokwu di iche iche dika mgbako na mwepu, sayensi, nka, na teknuzu, nakwa site n'itinye oru aka na oru obodo n'ime nkuzi. Nke a na-eme ka agumakwukwo hapu ibu naani uzọ e si enweta asambodo, kama usoro e si akpu agwa ma kwadebe umu ntorobia ka ha baa uru n'ezinaulo na obodo.

Atutu Nnyefe Omenaala (Cultural Transmission Theory) nke Pierre Bourdieu (1977) na Atutu Nkuzi Dabere na Omenaala (Culturally Relevant Pedagogy) nke Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) na-akowa iji ukpuru omenaala na usoro nkuzi kwalite mmuo irusi oru ike na iwube ezi agwa n'etiti umuakwukwo. Atutu Nnyefe Omenaala na-akowa na omenaala, ukpuru ndu, iwu, na ezi omume na-esi n'aka ndi okenye gafee n'aka ndi na-eto eto bido n'ezinaulo, obodo, na uloakwukwo. N'ime obodo ala Igbo, a na-enyefe ukpuru di ka irusi oru ike na ndidi site n'ilu, akuko ifo, ikọ akuko, na mmemme obodo. Ilu "aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu" na-egosi nkwenye ndi Igbo na igba mbọ na irusi oru ike na-ebute ihe iga nke oma. Mgbe e tinyere ukpuru omenaala di otu a n'ime agumakwukwo, o na-enye aka ichekwa omenaala Igbo ma na-akpukwa agwa umuakwukwo n'ihe gbasara irusi oru ike na ozuzu onwe ha. Atutu Nkuzi Dabere na Omenaala, nke Ladson-Billings (1995) na-akwado echiche a site n'ikowa na nkuzi tosiri ibu nke nwere ihe o putara, na-adota uche, ma jikoo na omenaala na ahumahu ndi na-amu ihe. Atutu abuo ndi a na-enye ntala siri ike maka ichekwa njirimara omenaala na ikwalite mmuo irusi oru ike, itinye ukpuru omenaala Igbo n'ime agumakwukwo nke oge ugbo a.

Usoro Nchocha

Ndi nchocha gbasoro usoro kwalitetivu na nchocha nkowa mee ya bu nchocha, nke putara na a ga-elekwasị anya n'ikowa na nyocha ka ikuzi mmuo irusi oru ike na nkwenye omenaala Igbo si metuta umu ntorobia na ulo akwukwo sekondiri. Eze (2022) kowara usoro a dika usoro nchocha na-enye ohere ighota amaihe, echiche, na ahumahu. Usoro a di mma maka nchocha a maka umuakwukwo na ndi nkuzi gbasara isiokwu nchocha a bu aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu maka na o na-akowa agwa, echiche, na ahumahu n'uzo doro anya, nke abughi naani site na onugwu ma o bu ihe atu. Nke a putara na isiokwu ga-eji: Akwukwo e dere na akwukwo akuko omenaala Igbo (Willy, 2016; Eze, 2022; Eze & Umo, 2021), Ihe omuma sitere n'akuko ifo, ilu, akpalaokwu, na abu Igbo, Ihe omumaatu na omume ndi gara aga na ndi ugbo a mee nchoputa gbasara mmuo irusi oru ike n'omenaala Igbo na ka e si akuzi ndi ntorobia. Usoro a na-enye ohere ikowa ka nkwenye omenaala Igbo si eme ka mmuo irusi oru ike too na otu e si e ji agumakwukwo, oru obodo, na nkuzi kwa ubochi mee ka ndi ntorobia too n'uzo tosiri etosi. E ji umuakwukwo no n'ogo sekondiri nta na ntuleghari agumagu mee nchoputa: Akwukwo e dere gbasara omenaala Igbo na agumakwukwo. Willy (2016), Eze & Umo (2019, 2021), Eze (2022) na-akowa ihe gbasara mmuo irusi oru ike na ukpuru Igbo, Akuko ifo, ilu, akpalaokwu na abu omenaala Igbo. E ji ha kowaa ka aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu si buru ihe na-akwalite mmuo irusi oru ike n'ime ndi ntorobia, Ihe atu sitere n'oru obodo na omume ndi gara aga, omumaatu, otu ndi Igbo si eji oru aka, oru ebere, na oru obodo a kuziri umu ntorobia mmuo oru ike.

Nchoputa

Nchoputa gosiri na mmuo irusi oru ike bu akuku di mkpa n'omenaala Igbo. Site n'akwukwo e dere, akpalaokwu, ilu na akuko ifo gosiri na:

1. Aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu bu nkwenye ndi Igbo nke na-akuziri umu ntorobia mkpa irusi oru ike, ndidi, na mgbali. Nke a putara na ndi Igbo kemgbe otutu afo na-eji nkwenye



a eme ka ndi ntorobia nwee mmuo irusi oru ike. Omumaatu, akpalaokwu di ka “onye rusiri oru ike anaghi anwu n’uko,” abu ndi a na-abu n’oge oru ubi iji gbaa ndi oru ume, akuko ifo gbasara ndi dara ogbenye n’ihi irusi oru ike, na ilu di ka “aka di nro adighi eri nri,” na-egosiputa n’uzo doro anya na ndu mmadu na-aga nke oma naani mgbe o gbasiri mbu ike n’oru.

2. Uzo nnyefe nkwenye omenaala di iche iche nke gunyere: Ikuzi ya n’ulo akwukwo: nkuzi asusu Igbo na mmuta ogugu isi nwere ike itinye ilu, akpalaokwu, na akuko ifo nke na-akuzi mmuo irusi oru ike. Oru aka na obodo: mgbe umu ntorobia sonyere n’ime/imu oru aka ma o bu oru obodo, ha na-amuta na mgbalị na ndidi bu uzo e si enweta ihe oma. Abu, egwu, na akuko ifo: Ndi ntorobia na-amuta site n’ime ihe na-akpali mmasi, nke na-eme ka nkwenye omenaala di ndu n’ime ha.
3. Nkwado mmuta na mwube onwe onye: umu ntorobia na-amuta site n’ime omume, akuko ifo, na oru aka na-ewulite ndidi, ezi agwa, na mmuo irusi oru ike, nke na-enyere ha aka ime nke oma n’ulo akwukwo na n’obodo.
4. Ihe nkuzi na teknuzu: O bu ezie na nchoputa a na-elekwasị anya na omenaala odinaala, teknuzu dijitalu (onyoonyoo, nguko olu n’ikuku, akwukwo dijitalu) nwekwara ike ikwalite nnyefe nkwenye. Nke a putara na n’oge dijitalu, a ka nwere ihe mee ka nkwenye Igbo di ndu ma na-enyefe ya n’ime umu ntorobia.

Nchikota

N’uzo di mfe, nchoputa a na-egosi na omenaala Igbo na nkwenye aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu bu uzo di ire iji kuziere ndi ntorobia mmuo irusi oru ike, ndidi, ezi agwa, na mgbalị. Mgbe e jiri nkuzi, akuko ifo, ilu, abu, oru aka, na teknuzu jikota ya, o ga-eme ka nkwenye a ghara ila n’iyi ma buru ihe na-akwalite nwulite mmuo, agumakwukwo, na mmepe onwe onye n’etiti ndi ntorobia Igbo.

Mmechi

Nkwenye aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu bu omumaaatu doro anya nke omenaala Igbo si akwado irusi oru ike, mee ka umu ntorobia too nke oma, ma kwado mmepe onwe ha n’ulo akwukwo, n’obodo, na n’ezinaulo. Nkuzi, akuko ifo, ilu, akpalaokwu, egwu, na oru aka bu uzo bara uru iji nyefee nkwenye omenaala Igbo na mmuo irusi oru ike n’ime ndi ntorobia. Usoro ndi a na-eme ka mmuta ghara ibu naani ihe e ji enweta akara, kamakwa o bu ihe bara uru na ndu, nke na-eme ka umu ntorobia too n’uzo ezi uche di na ya. N’agbanyeghi, na anyi no n’oge awamanya na mgbanwe uwa, nkwenye omenaala Igbo ka nwere ike idi ndu ma buru ihe na-akwalite mmuo irusi oru ike n’ime ndi ntorobia ma o buru na e jiri agumakwukwo, teknuzu, na usoro nkuzi di ire jikota ya. Nke a na-egosi na omenaala Igbo bu ngwa oru nkuzi di oke mkpa nke na-enye ntala siri ike maka mwube mmuo, agumakwukwo, na mmepe onwe onye.

ARO

Site na nchoputa e nwetara, ndi nchocha weputara aro ndi a:

1. Iji omenaala mee ka mmuta buru ihe bara uru: Ndi nkuzi kwesiri itinye ilu, akpalaokwu, abu, na akuko ifo Igbo n’ime nkuzi iji kuziere umu ntorobia mmuo irusi oru ike na ezi agwa.
2. Ikwalite oru aka na omume umu ntorobia: Ulo akwukwo tosi itinye oru aka, oru obodo, na oru ebere n’ime usoro nkuzi iji mee ka nkwenye aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu buru ihe umu ntorobia na-eme kwa ubochi.



3. Ozuwu ndi nkuzi: Ndi goomentị tosiiri inye ndi nkuzi ozuzu iji kwalite nka na amamihe ha gbasara nkwenye omenaala na mmuta nke oma. Nke a ga-eme ka nkuzi buru ihe na-atọ uto ma baa uru n'ime izulite umu ntorobia.
4. Ijikota teknuzu na omenaala: A ga-eji onyonyoo, nguko olu n'ikuku, na akwukwo dijitalu mee ka nkwenye omenaala di ndu, mee ka mmuo irusi oru ike na ezi agwa ghara ila n'iyi, oburagodi n'oge awamanya ugbu a.
5. Inyefe nkwenye site n'ezinaulo n'obodo: Ndi okenye tosiiri ikpakorita amamihe, ilu, akpalaokwu na akuko ifo Igbo n'ime ezinaulo na obodo, iji kuzie usoro odinaala n'etiti ndi ntorobia.

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