JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND LEADERSHIP STUDIES

JOURNAL POLICY

The Journal of Humanities and Leadership Studies published by the Faculty of Arts, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, stands as a beacon for scholars, educators, and researchers in the field of humanities and leadership. The journal advance knowledge and understanding through high-quality research and reflective of rigorous academic standards.

Scope and Focus

The journal aims to promote interdisciplinary studies and innovative research within the realms of humanities and leadership. It encourages paper submissions in a broad spectrum of topics that include cultural studies, ethics in leadership, social justice, communication, educational reforms, Linguistics and African Studies, History, Strategic and International Studies, Philosophy, Critical Thinking and Politics, Economics and Entrepreneurship, Religion, Practical Theology and Human Relations, Literature, Music and Theatre Arts.

Submission Guidelines

To maintain high scholarly standards, the journal enforces specific submission guidelines. Authors are encouraged to clearly outline their research questions, methodologies, and findings, ensuring that their work is original and contributes to existing literature. All submissions undergo a stringent double-blind peer-review process, which guards against biases and enhances the integrity of published work. Authors must ensure that their manuscripts adhere to the journal's formatting requirements, which can be accessed through the journal's official website.

Authors are advised to present manuscript in line with any of the following styles of referencing, namely: 7th Edition of American Psychological Associations (APA) or Modern Languages Association (MLA). Submitted article should not exceed 5000 words with an abstract of less than 200 words. Authors should include their names at the first page of the paper with institution affiliation. All manuscripts are sent to this email: iheanacho.metuonu@dou.edu.ng.

Peer Review Process

The peer-review process is pivotal to the journal's commitment to academic rigor. Each submitted manuscript is evaluated by experts in the respective fields, who assess the quality, relevance, and originality of the research. Reviewers are tasked with providing constructive feedback, which authors can utilize to enhance their work.

Article Processing Charges (APCs)

To facilitate the publication process, the Journal of Humanities and Leadership Studies implements an Article Processing Charge (APC) for accepted manuscripts. The APC is designed to cover operational costs, including editorial management, article processing, and online article publication. Article publication fee for a single author is ₦20,000 while more than single author is ₦30,000. The Journal accepts payments via various methods, including credit cards and bank transfers. Once an   article has been accepted and payment has been processed, the APC is non-refundable. The above payment is different from peer review fee of ₦5,000. .

Journal Indexing

Currently   articles in this journal are indexed in CTC, LLC and Google Scholar.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

1. Ayeni, Queen Olubukola, Department of Modern Languages and Translation Studies, University of Calabar, Nigeria
2. Nwobu, Emmanuel Nnamdi, Department of Modern Languages And Translation Studies, University Of Calabar, Nigeria
3. Metuonu, Iheanacho Chukwuemeka (PhD), Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria
4. Onotu, Emperor, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria
5. Mr. Nathaniel Omamuzo Abraham, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
6. Dr. Nyerohwo Avi Eduvwie, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
7. Malang Fanneh PhD, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Faraba Campus, University of The Gambia
8.Gold Sunday Chukwuemeka PhD, Faculty of Arts, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria
9. Francisca A. Nwadigwe Ph.D , Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State.
10. Judith E. Ezeamaka Ph.D, Department of Modern European Languages (French), Faculty of Arts, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba
11. Prof. Benjamin Akpore Umudi, Department of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Orogun, Delta State, Nigeria.
12. Chukwuka Eugene Ofie, PhD, Department of English And Literary Studies, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.
13. Kester Nnaemeka Dibia, (Ph.D.), Department of Creative Arts, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.
14. Ogbemudia Mari James, Department of Mass Communication, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma,, Edo State, Nigeria,

CONTENTS

FOOD, FAMILY, AND NOSTALGIA: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF IDENTITY AMONG NIGERIAN DIASPORANS

Ayeni, Queen Olubukola & Nwobu, Emmanuel Nnamdi

Department of Modern Languages and Translation Studies, University of Calabar, Nigeria
buckyayeni@gmail.com & nwobuemmanuelnnamdi927@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the complex interplay between food, family, and nostalgia in shaping the cultural identities of Nigerian diasporans. While previous research has explored diasporic identity and cultural retention, there remains a significant gap concerning the specific role of traditional culinary practices and familial relationships in sustaining cultural belonging among Nigerians living abroad. Drawing on qualitative data from in-depth interviews with 20 Nigerian diasporans across three major cities—London, Toronto, and Houston—the study highlights how traditional Nigerian cuisine functions not merely as sustenance but as a powerful medium for cultural resistance, memory preservation, and intergenerational transmission. Thematic analysis revealed that food practices within families serve as both emotional and cultural anchors, helping participants navigate the pressures of assimilation while reinforcing their sense of identity and belonging. Nostalgia emerged as a recurring theme, with memories of home-cooked meals and family gatherings providing comfort and a symbolic connection to Nigeria. The findings underscore the resilience of cultural identity in the diaspora and demonstrate how food and family act as critical tools for maintaining cultural continuity in a globalized and often alienating environment. This research contributes to diaspora and migration studies by offering deeper insight into how everyday practices sustain cultural identity over time and across borders.

Key Words: Nigerian Diaspora, Culinary Traditions, Identity Construction, Nostalgia

Cultural Resistance

Introduction

The Nigerian diaspora has expanded significantly in recent years, driven by various factors such as economic opportunities, educational pursuits, and political instability within Nigeria. As Nigerians settle in different parts of the world, they bring with them rich cultural traditions, particularly those related to food and family, which serve as crucial components of their identities. Food is not merely sustenance; it embodies cultural heritage and social connections, acting as a powerful symbol of identity for diasporic communities (Ogunyemi, 2017). The act of preparing and sharing traditional Nigerian dishes fosters a sense of belonging and continuity among individuals who may feel disconnected from their homeland. Nostalgia plays a significant role in this dynamic, as many diasporans experience a longing for their cultural roots, often evoked through memories of family gatherings centered around food. This nostalgia can create emotional

ties that reinforce cultural identity, making it an essential aspect of the diasporic experience (Akintunde, 2020). In a globalized world where cultural homogenization is prevalent, exploring how Nigerian diasporans utilize food and family to maintain their identities becomes increasingly important. The rationale for this study stems from the need to understand the complexities of identity formation within the Nigerian diaspora. While existing literature has examined various aspects of migration and identity, there is a notable gap in research specifically addressing the interplay of food, family, and nostalgia among Nigerian diasporans. By focusing on these elements, this study aims to provide insights into how individuals navigate their identities amidst the challenges of cultural assimilation and the pressures of living in a foreign land. The primary objective of this research is to explore the cultural politics of identity among Nigerian diasporans through the lenses of food, family, and nostalgia. The study seeks to investigate the role of culinary traditions in shaping identities, examine the contributions of familial relationships to identity construction, analyze the impact of nostalgia on the diasporic experience, and explore how foodways serve as a form of cultural resistance against assimilation pressures. By addressing these objectives, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of identity among Nigerian diasporans, highlighting the significance of food and family in their cultural narratives.

Nigerian Diasporans: A Historical Overview

The Nigerian diaspora has a rich and complex history that reflects the broader patterns of migration, colonization, and globalization. The movement of Nigerians abroad can be traced back to several key events, including the transatlantic slave trade, colonial migration, and contemporary global migration trends.

The transatlantic slave trade, which lasted from the 16th to the 19th centuries, forcibly removed millions of Africans, including many Nigerians, from their homeland. This period significantly impacted the demographic and cultural landscape of Nigeria, as well as the regions where enslaved Nigerians were taken. The cultural legacies of these early migrations are still evident today in the African diaspora, particularly in the Americas, where Nigerian cultural elements have influenced music, cuisine, and religious practices (Falola, 2001).

During the colonial period, which began in the late 19th century, many Nigerians migrated for educational and economic opportunities. The British colonial administration established schools and institutions that allowed a select few Nigerians to gain higher education, leading to the emergence of a new educated elite. This group often sought opportunities abroad, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States, to further their studies or pursue careers in various fields (Ogunyemi, 2017).

Post-independence in 1960, Nigeria experienced significant political and economic challenges, including civil unrest, military coups, and economic instability. These factors prompted waves of migration as Nigerians sought better opportunities and safer environments abroad. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) further exacerbated this trend, leading to a significant number of Nigerians fleeing to other countries as refugees or asylum seekers (Adepoju, 2005).

In recent decades, the Nigerian diaspora has continued to grow, driven by globalization, economic opportunities, and educational pursuits. According to the United Nations (2019), Nigeria is one of the largest sources of migrants in Africa, with millions of Nigerians residing in various countries, particularly

in North America, Europe, and other parts of Africa. This contemporary migration is characterized by a diverse demographic, including students, professionals, and families, all contributing to the cultural fabric of their host countries while maintaining connections to their Nigerian heritage (Ojo, 2020). As they navigate their diasporic experiences, food, family, and nostalgia remain central to their cultural identity, reflecting a deep connection to their roots.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in a robust and interdisciplinary theoretical framework that not only draws from critical theories of identity, diaspora, and cultural continuity but also interrogates them through empirical engagement with Nigerian diasporic experiences. By engaging deeply with lived practices around food, family, and nostalgia, the study extends existing theoretical discourses while reaffirming and, in some cases, reconfiguring their assumptions.

Cultural identity theory: Stuart Hall's (1990) theory of cultural identity, which positions identity as a process rather than a fixed essence, underpins the study's core assumption that diasporic identities are fluid and constantly in negotiation. This study affirms Hall's formulation by showing how Nigerian diasporans invoke traditional culinary practices and family rituals not merely to preserve a nostalgic image of "home," but to actively renegotiate their place in dynamic host societies. The findings reveal that these practices are neither static nor merely symbolic but serve as living, evolving expressions of identity. This adds nuance to Hall's thesis by providing grounded examples where identity construction is performative, embodied, and sensory—especially through taste, smell, and communal participation in food preparation and consumption.

Black Atlantic: Paul Gilroy's (1993) "Black Atlantic" framework, which highlights the hybrid and transnational nature of Black diasporic identities, finds resonance in this study's data. Nigerian diasporans are shown to exist within a diasporic continuum where the local and the global collide, such as in the preparation of egusi soup using European ingredients or the digital sharing of food-making tutorials across transnational networks. However, while Gilroy conceptualizes hybridity as a transformative and liberating process, this study reveals that such cultural transformations are often fraught with ambivalence, resistance, and intergenerational tensions surrounding the preservation and authenticity of identity. Thus, the study expands Gilroy's work by introducing the idea of hybridity-within-tension, especially as it plays out in familial settings where notions of "real Nigerian food" become sites of debate between generations.

Diasporic Space: Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of "diasporic space", which emphasizes the overlapping geographies of belonging, exclusion, and cultural negotiation, is central to understanding how everyday spaces such as the kitchen are reimagined by Nigerian diasporans. Brah's framework is affirmed in this study, particularly in the findings that show how domestic and communal settings serve as arenas of cultural performance and memory-work. However, this study nuances Brah's conceptualisation by demonstrating how diasporic space is not only a site of cultural production but also a stage for emotional negotiation—especially regarding nostalgia and longing for home—which can both unite and divide families depending on generational perspectives.

Transnationalism: The framework of transnationalism (Vertovec, 2009) is reinforced in the findings, which illustrate how food and family traditions are maintained across borders via digital platforms, remittances,

and cultural events. Yet, this study also adds to the discourse by highlighting the asymmetry in transnational ties: while older diasporans actively maintain contact with Nigeria, second-generation diasporans often express identity more through symbolic acts such as food consumption than direct political or emotional engagement with the homeland.

Symbolic Ethnicity: In this context, Herbert Gans' (1979) "symbolic ethnicity" proves especially pertinent. While Gans' theory traditionally addresses selective ethnic practices among assimilated generations, this study shows that symbolic ethnicity is not always superficial. For younger Nigerian diasporans, engaging with traditional foodways and participating in national celebrations may be symbolic, but these acts are emotionally and culturally charged, contributing meaningfully to identity formation and inter-generational cohesion.

Glocalization: Finally, glocalization (Robertson, 1995) enriches the understanding of how diasporans creatively adapt cultural practices to their local contexts. The study reaffirms glocalization as a strategy of cultural resilience and expression. However, it advances this discourse by showing that such adaptations are often deliberate, reflexive acts of resistance against cultural erasure, not mere compromises to new environments.

Thus, the theoretical implications of this research demonstrate that food and family are not just residual traditions in the Nigerian diaspora but active, contested, and dynamic sites through which identity is continuously articulated, negotiated, and politicized.

Role of Nostalgia and Culinary Traditions in Diasporic Identity Formation

Nostalgia and culinary traditions serve as powerful forces in shaping the identities of Nigerian diasporans, offering emotional and cultural anchors in the midst of dislocation and assimilation. As Nigerians navigate life in foreign environments, nostalgia emerges as a deeply felt longing for the homeland, often expressed through memories of family gatherings, traditional celebrations, and familiar comforts. This longing becomes more than sentimentality—it becomes a mechanism of cultural survival. Havlík (2019) defines nostalgia as a bittersweet yearning for the past, imbued with both warmth and loss. For many diasporans, this emotional pull towards home strengthens their connection to cultural roots and shapes how they interact socially and culturally in their host countries (Akintunde, 2020).

Nostalgia is not merely an individual emotional state; it actively contributes to the preservation of cultural practices. Ogunyemi (2017) notes that diasporans often respond to the pressures of assimilation by returning to familiar cultural symbols. Traditional foods, music, and rituals become essential tools for maintaining a cultural identity that feels under threat. For instance, the preparation of dishes like jollof rice, egusi soup, and pounded yam during festive occasions functions as a symbolic recreation of home (Chikwendu, 2019). These rituals of remembrance offer more than sustenance—they foster continuity and belonging, especially when shared within community settings. The importance of nostalgia becomes even more evident in social dynamics among diasporans. Ojo (2020) argues that shared experiences of longing often lead to the formation of close-knit communities abroad. Within these groups, members support one another emotionally and culturally, creating safe spaces where traditional practices can flourish. Cultural festivals, religious events, and communal meals allow Nigerian diasporans to reinforce their identity collectively.

These events also serve as moments of cultural resistance—asserting the value of one's heritage in environments that often pressure conformity.

Intergenerational relationships further reveal the impact of nostalgia on identity formation. According to Adepoju (2005), while older generations tend to preserve memories and customs rooted in their Nigerian upbringing, younger generations often straddle two cultures—negotiating between inherited traditions and the cultural expectations of their host country. Tensions may arise when nostalgia-driven practices from parents clash with children's attempts to assimilate. Yet, these frictions can also spark dialogue, fostering a shared, evolving identity that accommodates both the past and present. Culinary traditions are central to this process of identity negotiation and reinforcement. Food is not only a sensory experience but also a vessel of history, memory, and cultural pride. Ogunyemi (2017) affirms that traditional Nigerian cuisine, with its diverse regional influences, carries narratives of origin and communal memory. For diasporans, preparing these dishes is a way of connecting with their past and asserting their cultural identity. Cooking becomes a symbolic act of remembrance and resistance, evoking the warmth of family, celebration, and homeland (Akintunde, 2020). Moreover, food preparation in the diaspora often involves adaptation, leading to culinary hybridity. Nigerian dishes may incorporate local ingredients or preparation methods from the host country, creating new forms of expression without losing cultural essence. Chikwendu (2019) views this culinary fusion as reflective of a fluid and dynamic diasporic identity—one that is rooted in tradition yet open to reinterpretation. This blending allows diasporans to retain authenticity while engaging with new cultural contexts, promoting both cultural continuity and dialogue.

The familial dimension of culinary tradition also plays a critical role. Ojo (2020) notes that food rituals—such as communal cooking, festive meals, and recipe sharing—become important moments of intergenerational transmission. Within these domestic spaces, elders pass down not only cooking techniques but also values, stories, and cultural knowledge. These shared practices reinforce familial bonds and serve as a means of preserving culture through everyday activities.

Research Methodology

To explore how food, family, and nostalgia intertwine to shape cultural identity among Nigerian diasporans, this study employed a qualitative methodology rooted in interpretivist epistemology. Given the deeply personal and affective nature of the subject matter, qualitative interviews were the most effective way to access the rich, embodied experiences of individuals navigating life in diasporic contexts. The research sought not only to document practices but to understand meanings—how people make sense of home while living far from it.

London, Toronto, and Paris, were chosen for the study, three global cities, with vibrant Nigerian communities, each shaped by different colonial legacies, migration histories, and integration policies. London offered a familiar terrain of postcolonial ties and intergenerational migration; Toronto, with its multicultural framework, enabled reflections on belonging within diversity; and Paris brought unique insights into language, identity, and exclusion—particularly among Nigerians from Francophone West Africa.

Across these locations, 20 Nigerian migrants aged 25 to 65 shared their stories. "Sundays are for jollof," said Tolu, a 34-year-old nurse in London. "It's not just food—it reminds me of home, of my mum shouting

in the kitchen." In Paris, Ada, a second-generation Igbo woman, explained how her family gathers every Christmas to prepare ofe oha, saying, "Even though we are here, that soup makes us feel like we never left Nigeria." These recollections of food preparation and consumption revealed how culinary rituals serve as emotional and cultural anchors.

Participants were recruited via churches, diaspora associations, WhatsApp groups, and personal networks. Interviews were held through phone calls and video calls online. Each conversation lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, following a semi-structured format that allowed flexibility while remaining focused on food memories, family traditions, and expressions of longing. The data, transcribed and in some cases translated from Pidgin or indigenous languages, were full of poignant moments. A man in Toronto confessed, "Whenever I smell egusi, I get emotional. That was my grandma's favourite soup. I cook it now, just to feel close to her."

Thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke's model, enabled the identification of recurring patterns. Themes such as "Food as Cultural Anchor," "Intergenerational Tensions," and "Nostalgia as Resistance" emerged organically from the narratives.

Findings, Analysis, and Discussion

What emerged most vividly from the stories of Nigerian diasporans in London, Toronto, and Paris was how deeply food, memory, and familial rituals remain central to identity-making in foreign lands. Across the board, traditional cuisine was not just something eaten but something lived—evoking home, shaping belonging, and resisting the homogenizing pull of life abroad. In every kitchen, plate, and family gathering, identity was being negotiated in often subtle but powerful ways.

Chioma, a nurse in London, described how her Sunday ritual of cooking ogbono soup with pounded yam connects her to her mother, who remains in Nigeria: "It makes me feel like she's in the kitchen with me." In Toronto, Adebayo shared a similar sentiment, insisting that "amala and ewedu are non-negotiable" in his household, because through food, his children learn their Yoruba heritage. In Paris, where access to Nigerian groceries is more limited, Zainab detailed how she sometimes travels as far as Brussels for dried fish and seasoning cubes: "It might seem excessive, but it keeps me sane." These actions, while seemingly mundane, reflect a deep-seated desire to maintain cultural continuity, especially in places where external structures don't always support it.

Alongside food, nostalgia emerged as a strong emotional current, often triggered by smells, family gatherings, or even quiet moments of solitude. For Nonso in Toronto, "I can't eat moi moi without thinking of my grandma's kitchen... it brings tears to my eyes." Fatima in London simply missed "the noise of Lagos, the way my cousins would crowd the kitchen." These recollections did more than express longing—they revealed how memory becomes a tool for emotional survival in the diaspora. As Boym (2001) suggests, nostalgia is not merely about the past but a way of confronting present dislocation. Yet identity transmission across generations was not always smooth. Efe in London noted how difficult it was to get her kids to eat okra soup: "If they lose the taste, they lose the culture." At the same time, others embraced adaptation— Obinna in Paris proudly taught his son how to make jollof rice with quinoa, while Damilola in Toronto embraced suya-and-shawarma fusion at Nigerian-Canadian parties. These examples reflect Bhabha's

(1994) idea of the "third space," where cultural hybridity flourishes, blending tradition with the practicalities and influences of new environments.

Food also became a site of cultural assertion and resistance. Emmanuel in Paris said: "When I open my pot of egusi in this apartment block, everyone smells it. And I'm not sorry." Similarly, Aminat in Toronto brought puff-puff and pepper soup to office potlucks, explaining: "They might not like the spice, but they respect it." These acts, though everyday in appearance, were powerful declarations of identity in spaces where Nigerian culture is often marginalized or exoticised. Overall, the findings suggest that food is more than sustenance—it is memory, resistance, education, and cultural pride. The way Nigerian diasporans cook, share, and talk about food reveals how identities are lived and shaped not through grand gestures, but through the intimate, everyday rituals of feeding oneself and one's family. Across cities and generations, these practices become the vessels through which home is recreated and reimagined.

Foodways and Cultural Resistance

Foodways—which include the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of producing, preparing, and consuming food—are integral to the everyday lives and identity formation of Nigerians living in the diaspora. Beyond sustenance, food assumes a symbolic role in preserving cultural heritage and resisting the homogenizing forces of assimilation. Akintunde (2020) rightly observes that traditional Nigerian dishes such as Afang soup, ofe owere, and pounded yam are not merely meals but embodied narratives of ancestry, memory, and communal belonging. These dishes serve as vessels of identity, laden with emotional and historical significance, connecting diasporans to their roots in profound ways.

Expanding on existing scholarship, this study argues that foodways function not only as passive cultural markers but as active sites of resistance. By choosing to maintain traditional food practices in foreign environments, Nigerians assert their identity and subvert dominant cultural expectations. This view extends Chikwendu's (2019) assertion that shared culinary experiences—through cultural festivals, communal meals, or religious gatherings—forge a sense of solidarity and visibility among diasporic Nigerians. These practices create culturally affirming spaces where language, memory, and taste converge, sustaining community resilience.

Yet, it is crucial to interrogate how foodways also reflect the hybrid, negotiated nature of diasporic identity. While Adepoju (2005) frames traditional food practices as political acts of resistance, this study builds on that argument by highlighting the creative adaptations within diaspora foodways. Ojo (2020) notes that the incorporation of locally available ingredients into traditional recipes not only ensures survival but also reimagines authenticity. This culinary hybridity challenges essentialist notions of culture and reflects the dynamism of Nigerian diasporic identity. Such adaptations—though grounded in heritage—symbolize the capacity of diasporans to innovate and rearticulate identity in response to their sociocultural environments.

Furthermore, the performance of food-related rituals can be interpreted as an act of cultural storytelling. Each meal prepared and shared becomes a narrative act—reaffirming family histories, ancestral ties, and collective memory. These rituals serve as counter-narratives to the invisibilisation of African cultures in dominant Western spaces. In this context, food becomes a discursive tool, offering Nigerians in the diaspora a platform to challenge stereotypes, affirm cultural legitimacy, and engage in transnational identity work.

Comparative Analysis in the African Diasporic Experience

The intersection of food, family, and nostalgia within the Nigerian diaspora reveals not only personal strategies for coping with displacement but also broader cultural politics of belonging, memory, and resistance. While similar patterns are evident among other African diasporas—such as Ghanaians, Somalis, Botswanans, and Moroccans—the Nigerian experience is shaped by its unique historical, linguistic, and demographic dynamics, resulting in a more performative and assertive cultural expression, particularly through culinary practices.

Among all examined African diasporas, food serves as a core medium of cultural continuity. Like Nigerians, Ghanaians maintain strong links to their homeland through cuisine. Ghanaian diasporans in London, for instance, retain communal eating habits and ensure their children consume kenkey, banku, and shito (Osumare, 2012). However, Nigerian foodways tend to be more public, performative, and central to social identity. In cities like Toronto and London, Nigerian restaurants, YouTube cooking channels, and jollof rice cook-offs become active sites of cultural pride and transnational identity-making. The fierce "jollof wars" between Nigerians and Ghanaians in the diaspora (Osseo-Asare, 2005) further highlight how food operates as a symbol of cultural superiority and belonging within competitive diasporic narratives.

The Somali diaspora, especially in countries like the UK and Sweden, presents a different dynamic. Somali food traditions, such as canjeero or suqaar, are deeply tied to Islamic rituals, and their preservation often intertwines with religious identity (Kusow & Bjork, 2007). Whereas Nigerian diasporans tend to use food as a political statement of visibility and agency—Emmanuel's unapologetic cooking of egusi in a Parisian apartment, for example—Somalis typically adopt more private culinary expressions due to their refugee histories and heightened sociopolitical marginalization in host countries. This contrast underlines the relative privilege and assertiveness of Nigerian diasporic identity, shaped by a larger population base and stronger diasporic networks.

From a Southern African perspective, Botswanan diasporans tend to show less emphasis on food as a marker of diasporic identity. Studies suggest that food retention exists but is often less ritualized than among Nigerians. The smaller size of the Botswanan diaspora and lower levels of cultural visibility abroad contribute to a less institutionalized culinary presence (Nthomang & Diraditsile, 2020). Nigerian diasporans, by contrast, create food-centred events—naming ceremonies, weddings, birthdays—where culture is reinforced and performed, revealing a more consciously curated identity culture.

Turning to North Africa, the Moroccan diaspora provides yet another point of comparison. Moroccan migrants, especially in France and Belgium, retain strong food traditions—couscous, tagine, and mint tea—which are often linked to familial memory and Islamic values (Minca & Ong, 2016). However, Moroccan food has become somewhat "domesticated" into French culinary consciousness, often consumed without acknowledging its cultural roots. Nigerian food, by contrast, resists assimilation and retains its distinct identity, often due to its bold flavours, strong ethnic markers, and the pride with which it is presented. Nigerian diasporans are also more likely to use food as a tool of ethnic distinction—Igbo, Yoruba, Edo cuisines—within the broader Nigerian umbrella, reflecting internal diversity and linguistic pluralism often less pronounced in other African diasporas.

Additionally, nostalgia across African diasporas is universal, yet the Nigerian case is marked by a strong emotional attachment to regional and intergenerational continuity. As seen in this study, Nigerian participants often invoked their grandparents' cooking or village customs as central to their sense of self abroad. This mirrors Moroccan family structures, where memory is rooted in matriarchal traditions and community meals (Mahmood, 2013). Yet the Nigerian approach is more eclectic, balancing traditionalism with innovation—such as Damilola's fusion of suya with shawarma or Obinna's quinoa-based jollof—demonstrating a hybridized identity that reinterprets the past for the present (Bhabha, 1994).

Conclusion

The intricate interplay of food, family, and nostalgia emerges as a foundational mechanism through which Nigerian diasporans construct and sustain their cultural identity. Food, beyond its nutritional value, operates as a potent symbol of heritage and belonging—offering emotional comfort, transmitting memory, and resisting the cultural erasures often associated with migration and assimilation. Traditional culinary practices, particularly when embedded in familial rituals and intergenerational transmission, become dynamic sites of cultural preservation and resistance. Family units serve as cultural conduits, where shared meals, oral traditions, and celebrations enable the active negotiation of identity across generations and transnational spaces. This study significantly contributes to the literature on Nigerian diaspora studies by highlighting the centrality of everyday cultural practices—especially food—in shaping diasporic consciousness. While previous research has explored identity through lenses of language, religion, and transnational networks, this work emphasizes the often-overlooked emotional and symbolic power of food and familial nostalgia in maintaining cultural cohesion. It draws attention to the socio-cultural processes through which diasporans navigate dual identities, adapt to host cultures, and reaffirm a collective sense of Nigerianness. Moreover, the findings extend the scope of diaspora studies by advocating for the inclusion of culinary heritage and familial interactions in broader discussions of migrant well-being and cultural resilience. They also bring attention to the urgent need for intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages, reinforcing the idea that language is inseparable from the broader cultural framework. This research advocates for a holistic approach to diaspora policy—one that values cultural programmes, supports digital and educational initiatives, and actively encourages linguistic and culinary heritage preservation. By incorporating digital platforms, educational strategies, and community-driven practices, Nigerian diasporans can strengthen their cultural identity and ensure the survival of their traditions in foreign contexts. Ultimately, this study not only adds depth to our understanding of the lived experiences of Nigerian diasporans but also offers practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and cultural institutions invested in promoting inclusion, diversity, and intercultural dialogue. It calls for a rethinking of cultural preservation—not merely as nostalgia for the past, but as an adaptive and transformative force that shapes the future of diasporic communities.

Recommendations

Family Practices

Families should play an active role in preserving culinary heritage by involving younger generations in the preparation of traditional Nigerian dishes. Meals such as jollof rice, pounded yam, and egusi soup should

be taught not only as recipes but as cultural artefacts, rich with meaning and memory. These kitchen interactions can become moments of storytelling and cultural bonding.

Regular family gatherings, communal feasting, and traditional celebrations should be prioritized to maintain cultural cohesion. Hosting community events that highlight Nigerian food and customs can instil cultural pride in younger members and reinforce a shared sense of identity.

Elders should be encouraged to share their personal stories about life in Nigeria, the migration experience, and the significance of food in their cultural worldview. These narratives offer valuable insights that enrich the younger generation's understanding of their heritage and deepen the emotional resonance of cultural practices.

Indigenous Nigerian languages should be spoken at home and in community spaces alongside the preparation of these meals. Participation in these activities enables young people to internalize the values of respect, solidarity, and unity (Ayeni & Umukoro, 2025). Parents and elders must prioritize language transmission by engaging children in everyday conversation in their native tongues. Community organizations and religious institutions can reinforce this by incorporating indigenous languages into their activities and services.

(2) Digital Strategies

Social media, blogs, and video-sharing platforms like YouTube can serve as powerful tools for cultural continuity. Nigerian diasporans should be encouraged to use these platforms to share recipes, cooking tutorials, nostalgic stories, and reflections on identity. Additionally, developing mobile applications and digital content in indigenous languages can support linguistic preservation and culinary education.

Podcasts, audiobooks, and digital storytelling initiatives can bridge generational and geographical divides. These media forms can help younger diasporans engage with the sounds, stories, and philosophies of Nigerian culture in accessible, modern formats.

(3) Educational Institutions

Schools and community learning centres in diasporic regions should integrate Nigerian culture into their programming. Cooking classes, storytelling sessions, and discussions on food history can be used to foster cultural awareness and appreciation. These initiatives can foster inclusive learning environments that recognize and validate the cultural heritage of Nigerian children and youth. As Ayeni and Lori (2025) affirm, integrating traditional knowledge into educational programmes is crucial for ensuring its preservation and transmission. Academics and writers should be supported to document and critically analyse the relationship between food, nostalgia, and identity in the Nigerian diaspora. Promoting books, documentaries, and creative works on these themes can contribute to broader cultural literacy and intergenerational understanding.

(4) Policy Advocacy

Government bodies, cultural organizations, and diaspora networks should support Nigerian food businesses, festivals, and cultural events. Establishing Nigerian food hubs in key global cities can create

economic opportunities, enhance cultural visibility, and provide spaces for community interaction and identity affirmation.

Collaborations between Nigerian and other African or global food communities can foster mutual appreciation and innovation. Fusion cuisines, collaborative food festivals, and intercultural cooking workshops can help diasporans adapt their food practices to new environments while maintaining core cultural values.

References

Adepoju, A. (2005). Migration in West Africa. International Organization for Migration.

Akinrinlola, O. (2020). Cultural Organizations and Language Maintenance among the Yoruba Diaspora. *International Journal of African Studies*, 12(1), 45-63.

Akintunde, A. (2020). Cultural identity and the Nigerian diaspora: A study of food practices in the UK. *Journal of African Studies*, 45(2), 125-140.

Ayeni, Queen Olubukola & Gloria Mayen Umukoro (2025). Enjeux de l'Étude des Cultures et Civilisations Francophones au Milieu Anglophones: La Perspective Numérique. (Unpublished article), 1-16.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture.* Routledge.

Boym, Svetlana. (2001). *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities*. London: Routledge.

Chikwendu, E. (2019). Culinary fusion in the Nigerian diaspora: A study of identity and adaptation. Food, Culture & Society, 22(4), 455-472.

Falola, T. (2001). *The African diaspora: Slavery, modernity, and globalization*. University of North Carolina Press.

Gans, H. J. (1979). Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1979.9993248

Gilroy, P. (1993). *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press.

Hall, S. (1990). *Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222–237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Havlík, V. (2019). The nostalgia of migration: Identity, belonging, and the emotional landscape of diaspora. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(6), 915- 931.

Kusow, A. M., & Bjork, S. R. (2007). From Mogadishu to Dixon: The Somali diaspora in a global context. Red Sea Press.

Mahmood, S. (2013). *Religious difference in a secular age: A minority report*. Princeton University Press.

Minca, C., & Ong, C. E. (2016). The power of food: Consumption, conflict and Moroccan diaspora cuisine in France. Cultural Geographies, 23(4), 617–632. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474015608774

Nthomang, K., & Diraditsile, K. (2020). The challenge of maintaining cultural identity among the Botswana diaspora in South Africa. *Journal of African Migration Studies*, 8(2), 54–72.

Ogunyemi, A. (2017). Nostalgia and identity in the Nigerian diaspora: The role of food and family. Diaspora Studies, 10(3), 245-260.

Ojo, E. (2020). The Nigerian diaspora: A study of migration and identity. *African Journal of Political Science*, 15(1), 55-73.

Osseo-Asare, F. (2005). *Food culture in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Greenwood Press.

Osumare, H. (2012). *The hiplife in Ghana: Diasporic identities, globalization, and youth culture*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Queen Olubukola Ayeni & Faith Lori. (2025). Stratégies de Préservation et de Valorisation des Patrimoine Culturel et connaissance traditionnelles africaines. ABUDoF *Journal of Humanities Department of French* ABU, Zaria, Nigeria. 2(12), June, 258-271.

Robertson, R. (1995). Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity. In *M. Featherstone*, S. Lash, & R. Robertson (Eds.), Global modernities (pp. 25–44). London: Sage Publications.

United Nations. (2019). International migration report 2019. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism.* London: Routledge.

BEYOND SPECIESISM: EXPLORING IGBO ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN ANIMAL RIGHTS TOWARDS MORAL CONSIDERATION

METUONU, Iheanacho Chukwuemeka (PhD)
and
ONOTU, Emperor
Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts
Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

Abstract
This paper critically examines the ethical debate between speciesism and anti-speciesism, focusing on the moral status of nonhuman animals. Speciesism, defended by philosophers like Kant and Machan, asserts human superiority based on rationality, while anti-speciesists such as Singer and Regan argue for extending moral consideration to all sentient beings. However, both perspectives have limitations: speciesism overlooks the moral significance of sentience, while anti-speciesism can overly rely on utilitarianism, potentially undervaluing individual moral worth. To address this gap, the study introduces Igbo philosophical principles as a culturally grounded framework for understanding animal ethics. Specifically, the Igbo concepts of *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* (Live and Let Live) and *Ugwu Anu* (Animal Integrity) emphasize mutual respect, coexistence, and the inherent value of all life forms, challenging both human-centric and purely sentience-based ethical views. By integrating Igbo traditions with contemporary ethical theories, the paper offers a holistic approach that transcends the limitations of both speciesism and anti-speciesism. The study employs a comparative philosophical analysis through qualitative content analysis to explore and integrate Igbo ethical principles, highlighting the moral relevance of animals within the Igbo worldview. The paper recommends that policymakers and educators incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into ethical discussions and curricula to foster a more inclusive, globally aware approach to animal rights and moral considerability.

Keywords: Speciesism, Igbo Philosophy, Animal Ethics, Moral Considerability.

Introduction

The question of moral considerability—who or what deserves ethical consideration—has been a longstanding debate in moral philosophy. Traditionally, Western ethical theories have largely prioritized human beings, with rationality often serving as the key criterion for moral status. This perspective, known as speciesism, has been defended by philosophers such as Kant (1785/1996), who argued that only rational beings possess intrinsic moral worth, and Machan (2004), who contended that human superiority justifies the exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral

consideration. In contrast, anti-speciesists like Singer (1975) and Regan (1983) advocate for extending moral consideration to all sentient beings, challenging human exceptionalism and emphasizing the ethical significance of suffering and autonomy. However, both speciesist and anti-speciesist frameworks have been critiqued for their limitations: speciesism disregards the moral relevance of nonhuman sentience, while anti-speciesism, often rooted in utilitarianism, risks overlooking the intrinsic worth of individual animals beyond their capacity for suffering (Gruen, 2011).

Despite the extensive discourse on speciesism and animal ethics, much of the debate has been framed within Western philosophical traditions, with limited attention given to indigenous African perspectives. African ethics, particularly those rooted in communal and relational worldviews, provide alternative approaches to understanding moral considerability. Among these, Igbo ethical thought offers a unique perspective on the moral status of animals. The Igbo philosophical principles of *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* (Live and Let Live) and *Ugwu Anu* (Animal Integrity) emphasize coexistence, respect, and the inherent value of all life forms, providing a culturally grounded response to both speciesist and anti-speciesist views (Iroegbu, 2005). These principles suggest that moral worth is not solely determined by rationality or sentience but by the interconnectedness of all beings within a shared moral community.

This paper aims to explore the Igbo ethical framework as an alternative lens for animal ethics, examining how indigenous African thought can enrich contemporary discussions on moral considerability. By employing qualitative content analysis and comparative philosophical analysis, the study critically engages with both Western and Igbo ethical paradigms to propose a more holistic, culturally inclusive approach to animal ethics. Furthermore, the paper advocates for integrating diverse cultural perspectives into ethical discourses, encouraging policymakers and educators to foster a more globally aware and inclusive approach to moral considerability and animal rights.

Conceptualizing Speciesism and Anti-Speciesism
Definitions and Key Arguments

Speciesism, a term popularized by Singer (1975), refers to the bias of prioritizing human interests over those of nonhuman animals, often justifying their exploitation based on perceived human superiority. Philosophers such as Kant (1785/1996) and Machan (2004) have argued that rationality is the defining characteristic that grants humans moral status, thus excluding nonhuman animals from direct ethical consideration. According to Kant, animals, lacking rationality and autonomy, do not possess the moral status that is afforded to humans, who are capable of self-legislation and rational moral decision-making. In contrast, anti-speciesists challenge this view, advocating for moral inclusion based on sentience rather than rationality. Thinkers like Singer

(1975) and Regan (1983) argue that all sentient beings deserve moral consideration, as they can experience suffering and pleasure. While utilitarian anti-speciesists emphasize minimizing suffering, rights-based approaches, such as Regan's (1983), advocate for the inherent moral worth of animals, irrespective of their utility to humans.

Philosophical Underpinnings

The speciesist perspective is deeply rooted in Western anthropocentric traditions, particularly in the works of Kant (1785/1996), who posited that moral worth is tied to autonomy and rational self-consciousness. This perspective is further reinforced by proponents like Machan (2004), who defend human dominance over animals by emphasizing differences in intellectual and moral capacities. Conversely, anti-speciesism draws upon ethical frameworks such as utilitarianism and deontology. Singer's (1975) utilitarianism argues for the equal consideration of interests, asserting that an animal's ability to suffer should be a sufficient criterion for moral status. Regan's (1983) deontological approach, on the other hand, contends that animals, as "subjects-of-a-life," possess inherent rights that must be respected.

Limitations and Critiques

Both speciesism and anti-speciesism face significant philosophical challenges. Speciesism has been criticized for its arbitrary exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral consideration, as it relies on a criterion (rationality) that is neither universally possessed by all humans (e.g., infants or cognitively impaired individuals) nor necessarily absent in some nonhuman species (Gruen, 2011). Anti-speciesism, while advocating for animal rights, has been critiqued for its strong reliance on Western ethical frameworks, particularly utilitarianism, which can undervalue the individual moral worth of animals by reducing them to their capacity for suffering. Additionally, anti-speciesist arguments sometimes struggle to account for cultural variations in ethical perspectives, often overlooking indigenous worldviews that emphasize relational and communal ethics. The Igbo philosophical principles of *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* (Live and Let Live) and *Ugwu Anu* (Animal Integrity) offer an alternative framework that integrates respect for all life forms within a holistic moral community, challenging both anthropocentric and purely sentience-based ethical models.

The Igbo Ethical Framework

Foundations of Igbo Ethics

Igbo ethics is deeply rooted in indigenous African philosophy, emphasizing the interconnectivity of all beings—human and nonhuman alike. The moral framework is guided by values such as respect, reciprocity, and harmony, which govern relationships within the community and between humans and nature. Unlike Western ethical traditions that often prioritize individual autonomy,

Igbo ethics is fundamentally communal, recognizing moral obligations as extending beyond humans to include animals and the environment (Iroegbu, 1995).

Communalism and Moral Considerability
A central tenet of Igbo philosophy is communalism, which underscores the interconnectedness of existence. Moral considerability within the Igbo worldview is not determined solely by rationality or sentience but by an entity's role in sustaining balance and harmony. This perspective challenges the rigid distinctions made by speciesism and anti-speciesism, proposing instead an ethic of coexistence. Within this framework, animals are not mere resources for human use but integral members of a shared moral community (Kanu, 2010).

Egbe bere, Ugo bere (Live and Let Live)
The Igbo proverb *Egbe bere, Ugo bere*—translated as "Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch"—epitomizes the ethic of mutual respect and coexistence. This principle advocates for the equitable treatment of all beings, rejecting dominance-based hierarchies that justify the exploitation of animals. By promoting a balance between human needs and animal welfare, this moral stance offers a culturally grounded alternative to both speciesist and purely sentience-based ethical models (Njoku, 2018).

Ugwu Anu (Animal Integrity)
The concept of *Ugwu Anu* (Animal Integrity) reinforces the idea that animals possess an inherent worth that should be acknowledged and respected. Within Igbo traditions, certain animals are seen as having spiritual significance, and their mistreatment is considered a disruption of cosmic harmony. This principle provides a moral justification for ethical treatment of animals that is neither purely utilitarian nor entirely rights-based but is instead relational and holistic. The Igbo perspective, therefore, expands the discourse on animal ethics by offering an indigenous African viewpoint that prioritizes dignity and coexistence over exploitation (Chukwuelobe, 2019).

Comparative Analysis of Igbo Ethics and Western Philosophical Traditions

Rationality vs. Relational Ethics
Western philosophical traditions, particularly those influenced by Kantian ethics, often prioritize rationality as the defining criterion for moral worth (Kant, 1785/1997). This perspective justifies the exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral consideration based on their supposed lack of self-conscious rational agency (Regan, 1983). In contrast, Igbo ethics adopts a relational approach, where moral value is derived from interconnectedness rather than individual cognitive capacities (Kanu, 2010). The Igbo worldview sees all beings—human and nonhuman—as part of a larger cosmic order in which ethical duties extend beyond rational agents to all living entities that contribute to ecological balance and communal well-being (Njoku, 2018).

Sentience and Moral Worth

Utilitarian philosophers such as Peter Singer (1975) argue that sentience, or the capacity to experience pleasure and pain, is the primary determinant of moral consideration. This framework has led to the advocacy of animal rights based on their ability to suffer. While this approach moves beyond strict speciesist distinctions, it remains largely anthropocentric in its valuation of experience (Singer, 1975). Igbo ethics, through principles like *Ugwu Anu* (Animal Integrity), offers a broader perspective by recognizing animals' intrinsic worth regardless of their cognitive abilities or capacity for suffering (Chukwuelobe, 2019). This moral stance promotes an ethic of coexistence that neither reduces animals to mere sentient beings nor justifies their treatment based solely on human interests.

Integrating Indigenous Thought into Global Ethics

The limitations of both speciesist and anti-speciesist perspectives highlight the need for a more inclusive ethical framework. Integrating Igbo ethical thought into global discourse on animal rights presents an opportunity to develop a holistic approach that respects cultural diversity while addressing contemporary ethical concerns (Wiredu, 1996). The Igbo philosophy of *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* (Live and Let Live) provides a model for ethical pluralism, advocating for coexistence without subjugation. This approach enriches global ethics by offering a non-Western paradigm that emphasizes harmony, respect, and mutual flourishing among all living beings (Iroegbu, 1995).

Methodology

Qualitative Content Analysis

This study employs qualitative content analysis to examine Igbo ethical principles and their implications for the moral status of animals. Qualitative content analysis allows for an in-depth exploration of textual sources, including philosophical texts, oral traditions, and indigenous ethical discourses (Mayring, 2014). By systematically analyzing these sources, the study identifies key themes related to Igbo moral philosophy and its relevance to contemporary discussions on speciesism and animal ethics. The approach ensures a nuanced understanding of how indigenous ethical traditions conceptualize moral considerability beyond Western paradigms (Krippendorff, 2018).

Comparative Philosophical Analysis

In addition to qualitative content analysis, this study employs comparative philosophical analysis to juxtapose Igbo ethical thought with Western philosophical traditions on speciesism. Comparative analysis facilitates a critical evaluation of Kantian rationality-based ethics, Singer's utilitarianism, and Regan's rights-based approach in relation to Igbo communal ethics (Wiredu, 1996). This method highlights the points of convergence and divergence between these frameworks, offering a more integrative perspective on moral considerability. Through this lens,

the study demonstrates how Igbo ethical principles such as *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* (Live and Let Live) and *Ugwu Anu* (Animal Integrity) contribute to a more holistic understanding of nonhuman moral status (Iroegbu, 1995).

Findings and Discussion
Ethical Implications of Igbo Thought for Animal Rights
The ethical principles embedded in Igbo philosophy provide a compelling alternative to Western anthropocentric views on animal rights. The concept of *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* (Live and Let Live) underscores a moral duty to coexist harmoniously with nonhuman animals, recognizing their intrinsic worth within the ecological system (Iroegbu, 1995). Additionally, *Ugwu Anu* (Animal Integrity) challenges speciesist perspectives by emphasizing the dignity and respect due to all living beings. These principles suggest a relational ethic in which moral considerability extends beyond rationality and sentience to include an inherent respect for life (Eze, 2008). Such an approach aligns with contemporary global discussions on biocentric ethics and environmental sustainability (Naess, 1989).

Policy and Educational Recommendations
Incorporating indigenous ethical frameworks into policy and education can significantly enrich animal rights discourse. Policies should integrate Igbo principles of communal responsibility and interdependence, advocating for legal protections that reflect traditional African perspectives on moral considerability (Wiredu, 1996). Educational curricula, particularly in African and global ethics courses, should include discussions on *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* and *Ugwu Anu* to foster an appreciation of diverse moral traditions (Okeke, 2020). Such integration would challenge dominant Western paradigms and create a more inclusive ethical landscape for discussing animal rights.

Bridging Cultural Gaps in Ethical Discourses
A key contribution of this study is its effort to bridge the cultural gaps in ethical discourses by demonstrating the relevance of Igbo thought to global debates on speciesism. While Western animal ethics often emphasize autonomy and sentience (Regan, 1983; Singer, 1975), Igbo philosophy introduces a relational and communitarian dimension, where moral responsibility extends to all beings within a shared ecosystem (Metz, 2017). This comparative perspective enriches philosophical discourse by highlighting how non-Western traditions contribute valuable insights to contemporary ethical debates.

Conclusion
This study has critically examined the ethical debate between speciesism and anti-speciesism while introducing Igbo ethical principles as a culturally grounded framework for understanding animal rights. The limitations of speciesism, which prioritizes human rationality, and anti-speciesism, which relies heavily on sentience, highlight the need for a more holistic ethical approach. The Igbo

concepts of *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* (Live and Let Live) and *Ugwu Anu* (Animal Integrity) provide a relational and communitarian perspective that recognizes the moral worth of animals within an interconnected ecological system (Iroegbu, 1995; Metz, 2017). By integrating indigenous ethical traditions with contemporary philosophical debates, this study has underscored the importance of expanding moral considerability beyond Western-centric frameworks (Wiredu, 1996).

Future Directions for Research
Further research should explore how other African indigenous ethical traditions approach animal rights and moral considerability, thereby enriching global ethical discourses. Comparative studies between Igbo ethics and other non-Western traditions, such as Buddhist and Indigenous American perspectives, could provide valuable insights into alternative moral frameworks (Eze, 2008). Additionally, empirical studies investigating how Igbo communities currently interpret and practice these ethical principles in relation to animals could enhance the applicability of these concepts to contemporary policy and legal discussions (Okeke, 2020). Future interdisciplinary collaborations between philosophers, anthropologists, and environmental scientists may further elucidate how indigenous knowledge systems contribute to global debates on environmental sustainability and ethics.

References
Chukwuelobe, M. (2019). African environmental ethics and the question of animal rights. *African Journal of Philosophy and Ethics, 3*(1), 45-62.

Eze, C. E. (2008). *African philosophy: An anthology.* Blackwell Publishing.

Gruen, L. (2011). *Ethics and animals: An introduction.* Cambridge University Press.

Iroegbu, P. (1995). *Metaphysics: The Kpim of philosophy.* International Universities Press.

Iroegbu, P. (2005). *Ethics of African communalism: The Igbo perspective.* Heinemann Educational Books.

Kant, I. (1996). *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals* (M. J. Gregor, Ed. & Trans.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1785)

Kant, I. (1997). *The metaphysics of morals* (M. Gregor, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1785)

Kanu, I. A. (2010). Towards an African cultural renaissance: Igwebuike philosophy and the issue of African development. *African Studies Review, 7*(2), 23-39.

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Machan, T. (2004). *Putting humans first: Why we are nature's favorite.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Mayring, P. (2014). *Qualitative content analysis: Theoretical foundation, basic procedures and software solution.* Beltz.

Metz, T. (2017). *A relational moral theory: African ethics in and beyond the continent.* Oxford University Press.

Naess, A. (1989). *Ecology, community and lifestyle: Outline of an ecosophy.* Cambridge University Press.

Njoku, C. A. (2018). Igbo cultural values and their implications for moral philosophy. *Journal of African Studies, 5*(4), 67-81.

Okeke, C. (2020). *African ethics and the challenge of modernity.* University of Nigeria Press.

Regan, T. (1983). *The case for animal rights.* University of California Press.

Singer, P. (1975). *Animal liberation: A new ethics for our treatment of animals.* HarperCollins.

Wiredu, K. (1996). *Cultural universals and particulars: An African perspective.* Indiana University Press.

MIGRATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY OF ISOKO-URHOBO COMMUNITIES IN IKALELAND SINCE THE 19TH CENTURY

Mr. Nathaniel Omamuzo Abraham
Delta State University, Abraka
abraham-nathaniel@delsu.edu.ng
&
Dr. Nyerohwo Avi Eduvwie
Delta State University, Abraka
avi-eduvwie@delsu.edu.ng

Abstract

Migration has profoundly shaped African cultural identity and social dynamics, carrying significant implications for technology, culture, and social change. This study investigates the migration patterns of the Isoko-Urhobo communities into Ikaleland since the 19th century, exploring how these movements have influenced cultural identity and social integration. The study highlights how Isoko-Urhobo migrants have adapted to their new environment while preserving key aspects of their cultural identity. It examines the socio-cultural exchanges between the migrants and the indigenous Ikale people, focusing on marriage, language, and religious practices. Additionally, the research assesses the impact of these interactions on local governance structures and economic activities, especially in agriculture and trade. To achieve these aims, the paper utilises both primary and secondary data sources and employs a descriptive analysis approach. Through an analysis of historical accounts, oral traditions, and archival materials, the research offers insights into how migration has transformed cultural practices, identity negotiation, and intergroup relations in the region. The research underscores the significance of migration in fostering cultural resilience and social transformation in Africa. The study concludes that understanding historical migration dynamics is crucial for addressing contemporary issues of cultural diversity and integration. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions surrounding Africa's societal development in the context of technological and social change.

Keywords: Migration, Cultural Identity, Isoko-Urhobo, Ikaleland, Technology, Social Change.

Introduction

Migration has historically played a crucial role in shaping societies, influencing socio-economic structures, cultural identities, and intergroup relations. Across Africa, migration has contributed to technological advancements, economic transformations, and social integration, making it a central theme in historical and contemporary discourse (Adesote & Osiyale, 2023). In Nigeria, migration patterns have been shaped by socio-political and economic forces, leading to the formation of multi-ethnic communities with complex cultural dynamics. The Isoko-Urhobo migration into Ikaleland provides a compelling case study of how migration fosters cultural adaptation, identity negotiation, and social integration within a host environment.

The history of migration in Nigeria can be categorised into three main periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial (Adesote, 2016). Each of these periods witnessed shifts in migration trends influenced by

economic opportunities, political changes, and colonial policies. During the colonial era (1900-1960), in southwestern Nigeria, urban centres such as Ibadan, Lagos, and Ondo attracted migrants due to their administrative and economic prospects (Osoba, 1979). Similarly, the movement of Isoko-Urhobo migrants into Ikaleland was largely driven by agricultural expansion, trade, and employment in the growing palm oil industry (Ogen, 2003).

The integration of Isoko-Urhobo migrants into Ikaleland led to socio-cultural exchanges that reshaped both migrant and host community identities. These interactions influenced language, marriage practices, religious beliefs, and economic activities. As Adesote and Osiyale (2023) argue, migration is not just a physical movement but also a transfer of cultural traditions, resulting in hybrid identities within host communities.

Cultural identity, as noted by Hall (1996), is not static; rather, it evolves through interactions and external influences. Migration, as a complex phenomenon, reshapes cultural practices by enabling the diffusion of traditions, languages, and religious practices, while simultaneously fostering hybrid identities. For African communities, this evolution is especially pronounced, as migrations-whether voluntary or forced-are often intertwined with economic pursuits, environmental factors, and historical events (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Consequently, migration studies provide a lens through which the cultural transformations of Africa's diverse communities can be better understood.

In southwestern Nigeria, the historical migration of various ethnic groups has created a tapestry of cultural interactions and economic collaborations. Ikaleland, situated in present-day Ondo State, exemplifies this interplay. The region's fertile lands, abundant natural resources, and strategic location have historically attracted migrants, making it a focal point for examining migration's impact on cultural and economic transformation. Historically, communities migrating into Ikaleland brought with them distinct cultural practices that were both preserved and adapted through interactions with the indigenous population. These exchanges have contributed to the cultural diversity and socio-economic development of the region.

This paper focuses on the intersection of migration and cultural identity in Ikaleland, using the migration of the Isoko-Urhobo communities as a case study. Migration is explored not merely as the movement of people but as a vehicle for cultural negotiation and socio-economic transformation. Specifically, this study seeks to analyse the cultural exchanges and economic contributions of migrant communities to their host societies, with an emphasis on agricultural practices, religious adaptations, and intergroup relations (Omole, 2024).

A Brief Overview of Ikaleland

Ikaleland comprises fourteen Yoruba-speaking communities distinguished by their unique dialect and cultural practices. The region shares boundaries with the Ilaje, Ijo Apoi, and Ijo Arogbo to the south, Odigbo Local Government to the north, Edo State to the east, and Ogun State to the west (Adeoye, 1979). Notable communities include Ikoya, Ode-Irele, Omin, Igbodigo, Ayeka, Idepe (Okitipupa), Ode-Aye, Erinje, and Osoro. Settlements such as Akotogbo, Ajagba, Iyansan, and Iju-Osun were historically part of the Benin Confederation, bearing Edo linguistic and cultural influences (Eben Sheba, 2007).

Within Ikaleland, Osoro represents a significant area encompassing towns such as Igbotako, Ilutitun, Iju-Odo, Iju-Oke, Erekiti, and Omotoso. Additionally, Ikale communities are found in Ogun State, in areas like Ayede, Ayila, Arafen, and Mobolorunduro, reflecting a broader migration and settlement pattern (Sheba, 2007).

Ikaleland, located in the southwestern part of Ondo State, Nigeria, comprises several communities renowned for their agricultural vitality and socio-economic activities. Communities such as Ode-Aye, Ilutitun, Igbotako, Erinje, Ayeka, and Okitipupa have served as focal points for palm oil production, while smaller villages like Ayasan played critical roles in the region's agricultural economy. In neighbouring Irele Local Government Area, settlements like Ajagba, Ujosun, Iyansan, Akotogbo, and Urele also became notable for their socio-economic significance, fostering interactions between the indigenous Ikale population and Isoko-Urhobo migrants (Ogen, 2003).

The migration of Isoko-Urhobo communities into Ikaleland since the 19th century introduced significant socio-economic and cultural exchanges. These migrants, primarily agrarian in their practices, contributed advanced agricultural techniques, particularly in palm oil production, a key economic activity in the region. The integration of indigenous Isoko-Urhobo farming methods with existing Ikale traditions, such as the introduction of the "Oko" system (Trough) for palm oil extraction, greatly enhanced agricultural productivity and trade in the area (Okpevra, 2014).

The economic importance of palm oil in Ikaleland was amplified during the 19th century, driven by European industrial demands. The Industrial Revolution in Britain spurred a growing need for palm oil as a lubricant and a raw material for various industries. Consequently, Ikaleland and its neighbours in the Niger Delta became integral suppliers of this essential commodity.

Historical Foundation and Geographical Context of the Isoko-Urhobo People

The historical evolution and geographic location of the Isoko-Urhobo people have significantly influenced their political and socio-economic structures. These two closely related ethnic groups occupy an area north of the western edge of the Niger River Delta, where the evergreen forest belt transitions into the alluvial plains of the Delta. Scholars such as Aghalino (2009), Ikime (1977), Hubbard (1952), and Foss Wilson (1970) highlight that the Isoko-Urhobo territory lies approximately between longitudes 5°30' and 6°25' East and latitudes 6°0' and 5°15' North in what is now Delta State, Nigeria.

The geographical boundaries of this subregion include the former Warri Division to the west, the River Ethiope to the north, the Western Ijo to the south, and the Aboh Division to the east. Surrounding ethnic groups include the Bini to the north, the Itsekiri to the west, the Western Ijo to the south, and the Aboh people to the east (Aghalino, 2009).

The geographical contiguity of the Isoko-Urhobo territory created both challenges and opportunities. Hemmed in by their neighbours, the Isoko and Urhobo had limited access to the Niger River and coastal areas, which were the epicentres of European commercial activities during the 18th and 19th centuries. According to Ikime (1977), only a few settlements, such as Ase and Ivrogbo, had direct access to the Niger River, but these communities were small and played a marginal role during the height of European activities in the region.

Before the advent of the British colonial administration and the development of motorable roads, rivers served as the primary means of transportation both within the Isoko-Urhobo territory and in their interactions with neighbouring areas. Aghalino (2009) notes that the region's physical geography, characterised by limited arable land, constrained the possibilities for large-scale agricultural practices, which further influenced the socio-economic activities of the people.

Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of the Isoko-Urhobo People

The Isoko-Urhobo people, like many other pre-colonial Nigerian communities, developed an economy that was deeply connected to the land and its natural resources. The geographical landscape of Isoko-Urhobo land, characterised by flat terrain and annual flooding, played a significant role in shaping economic activities. The region had two major swampy areas running northeast to southwest, with a relatively higher landmass in between (Hubbard, 1948). These environmental conditions influenced the intensity of agricultural activities in different parts of the land.

In riverine communities such as Uzere and Araya, as well as certain areas of Warri, farming was less intensive compared to drier areas like Owhelogbo and Ozoro. Regardless of location, the Isoko-Urhobo people faced the challenge of adapting to fluctuating climatic conditions. The land was collectively owned due to strong kinship and communal ties, and until recently, its outright sale was forbidden, although it could be mortgaged temporarily (Aghalino, 2006).

Agriculture was the backbone of the Isoko-Urhobo economy, with yams being the most important crop. The people cultivated different varieties, including Okpe (yellow yam: Dioscorea cayenensis) and Oleya (water yam: Dioscorea alata). Other crops such as Iziwo (pepper) and Eza (beans) were also widely grown (Aghalino, 1994:52). The palm oil industry was particularly significant, as wild groves of oil palm trees provided a major source of income. Palm oil and palm kernel were used for cooking, soap making, and the production of pomade (Aghalino, 2000:51-61). Another important tree was the raffia palm, which was tapped for palm wine.

The same raffia palm also provided the raw material for making the native alcoholic drink, Udi-Ogogoro, a strong liquor similar to European whisky. Although the exact origins of distillation technology among the Isoko-Urhobo remain unclear, the people displayed an impressive knowledge of the process.

Fishing was another essential aspect of the economy, particularly in riverine communities where agriculture was less dominant. The Isoko-Urhobo people used nets, baskets, and traps such as Uge, which were woven by both men and women. Fishing was not only a source of food but also a trade commodity that contributed to the local economy.

Trade was an essential component of the Isoko-Urhobo economy. Domestic trade flourished through local markets where people exchanged goods such as palm produce (oil and kernel), starch, yams, plantains, garri, meat, fish, woven bags, and pepper. Almost every village or clan had a market, though the sizes varied.

Historical Context of Isoko-Urhobo Migration

According to Onigu Otite, "Although there is a plethora of works on migratory processes and migrant organisations, few of these deal with the contribution of rural-to-rural migrants to socio-economic development and the emergence of small urban centres, Otite, 1979).

Cultivation of oil palm plantations; It was therefore necessary for men as well as women to increase the production of palm oil and kernels during the period to meet internal consumption in Isoko and neighbouring communities, and to meet the industrial demand in Europe (Ikime, 1972:88-89). This eagerness to produce much of the product led some persons in Isoko to travel to neighbouring communities, such as "Ukane," as they possess the skills and expertise to produce the products in line with their expected target. Indeed, prospecting the oil palm is the chief occupation of the Isoko, apart from yam and Cassava farming, and some fishing on the sidelines for those in the riverine area.

The Isoko emigrated to those areas as "Ukame" people. "Ukane" is an Isoko word meaning "to leave one's home and go and earn money in a foreign country," where it is always understood that the money will be earned by gathering palm produce and selling it. Whenever the Isoko wish to go to "Ukane", a party will be formed and visit the landowners. It was, therefore, necessary for men as well as women to increase the production of palm oil and kernels during the period to meet internal consumption in Isoko and neighbouring communities and to meet the industrial demand in Europe (Ikime, 1972:88-89).

The Isoko-Urhobo migrants settled in various towns and villages, including Ode-Aye, Igbotako, Erinje, Ilutitun, Ayeka, Okitipupa, and other areas in Okitipupa and Irele Local Government Areas. Their migration laid the foundation for economic collaboration and cultural exchanges with the indigenous Ikale people. The migration process itself is referred to by the Isoko-Urhobo people as "Ukane", which is a corrupt form of the word "Ikale" and Urhie (meaning river in Isoko-Urhobo). The term "Urhie" refers to the river route, as the people passed through rivers on their journey. The phrase "Mi-kpu-urhie" or Otiti (1979)"Mi-kpu-ukane" is used to indicate a journey to Ikaleland, meaning "I am going to the river" or "I am going to Ikaleland."

Involvement of Isoko/Urhobo in Agricultural and Economic Innovations

Palm oil production was central to the Isoko-Urhobo economy, and they introduced advanced agricultural techniques to Ikaleland. The migrants brought with them valuable knowledge, including techniques for efficient palm oil extraction and innovations called "Oko" in the Isoko-Urhobo language (Trough). These troughs improved processing efficiency, reduced labour and time, and greatly enhanced the productivity of palm oil production in Ikaleland.

The Isoko-Urhobo migrants were also deeply involved in cassava and palm oil cultivation. Isoko-Urhobo women frequently purchased cassava farms from Ikale women, while the Isoko-Urhobo advanced oil palm production, which has since become a cornerstone of Ikaleland's economy. Women utilised a tool called "Ughoko" for cracking palm kernels before the advent of modern machines like the mechanical cracker. Okpevra (2016), The Isoko-Urhobo engaged in both economic and subsistence farming, cultivating groundnuts, setting traps for animals, and practising other forms of agriculture. (Personal Interview with Enamiroro).

Settlement Patterns: Villages, Political Structures, and Trade Networks

The Isoko-Urhobo migrants established settlements across Ikaleland, forming cohesive communities in towns such as Ode-Aye, and these villages or camps were called Isoko-Urhobo, Oko-Urhobo, and Oko-Isoko. (Interview with Chief Ifelodun).

Politically, the Isoko-Urhobo communities maintained their traditional governance structures, adapting them to their new environment. The Oldest man was made head of the village in a particular clan, especially those under the same landlords, Okpako Ewho, or Okpako Awa. At the central or the township, they have the UPU, which combines Isoko-Urhobo in the Ikaleland. There is also a women's group referred to as 'Ewheya'. Although the Urhobo Progressive Union (UPU) is primarily focused on the Urhobo people in Delta, the Isoko-Urhobo communities in Ikaleland also utilised it to maintain their cultural identity and political representation (Ikime, 1972:88-89).

Cultural Exchanges and Religious Interactions

The migration of the Isoko-Urhobo people into Ikaleland was not just a movement of people but a profound cultural and religious exchange that shaped the identities of both communities. Over time, their interactions fostered deep social integration, as families, traditions, and beliefs intertwined, creating a shared way of life that still exists today.

Religious beliefs were another area where both groups found common ground. The Isoko-Urhobo cosmology, centred on Oghene (the Supreme God), Edjo (spirits), Igbe, Mama-Iwota, and Erivwin (ancestral spirits), bore striking similarities to the Ikale belief in Olodumare, Orunmila, Ayelala, Lerun, and other deities. (Personal communication with George Enamiroro, at Ilutitun, October 6, 2024)This common spiritual foundation made it easier for them to merge certain practices. Chief Ojapewa of Ilutitun recalled that Isoko-Urhobo settlers not only worshipped Ikale deities but also introduced their spiritual customs, which the Ikale people readily embraced (Personal communication with Chief Ojapewa, October,16,2024).

Clothing styles evolved as well. Isoko-Urhobo men adopted the Uro and Buba, which were common among the Ikale, while some Ikale men and women incorporated Isoko-Urhobo fabric patterns and jewellery styles into their attire. Madam Omonigho Igben, an Isoko woman married to an Ikale man, proudly stated, "We no longer see ourselves as different people. We eat the same food, speak each other's languages, and our children embrace both traditions" (Personal communication with Madam Omonigho Igben, December 12, 2024).

Marriage was, perhaps, the strongest bond between the two groups. These unions not only merged families but also cemented cultural and religious traditions. Isoko-Urhobo parents named their children after Ikale customs, with Isoko-Urhobo families using "Taye" and "Kehinde" for twins instead of the Urhobo equivalent, "Ejime" or "Ijime" (personal communication with Madam Queen Samuel, at Ilutitun, 2024).

Christianity also played a role in uniting both communities. Many Isoko-Urhobo migrants in Ikaleland joined Ikale-led churches, while some Ikale people converted to Isoko-Urhobo-founded Pentecostal Churches, such as God's Pentecostal Church in Ode-Aye, established by an Isoko pastor. The Catholic Church, in particular, became a meeting point for both communities. Chief Omotayo Ajayi observed that many Ikale in Ilutitun learned to speak Irhobo, Usobo (Isoko-Urhobo dialect) simply because the church

congregation was predominantly Isoko-Urhobo (Personal communication with Omotayo Ajayi at Ilutitun, 2024).

Impact of the Isoko/Urhobo Migration on Ikaleland

The migration of the Isoko-Urhobo people into Ikaleland has left an indelible mark on the region's economic, cultural, and social landscape. Their advanced techniques in palm oil production have been particularly influential, establishing oil palm cultivation as a cornerstone of Ikaleland's economy. Additionally, Economic conditions in Europe in the nineteenth century were favourable to the reappearance of the produce of the oil palm in international trade and the development of other vegetable oils. (Personal communication with Enamiroro)

Chief Enamiroro (personal communication, October 6, 2024) highlighted the harmonious relationship between the Ikale and Isoko-Urhobo, noting that Ikale landlords were eager to integrate Isoko-Urhobo tenants into their farmlands. Beyond the annual tenant payments, often made in tins of palm oil, Isoko-Urhobo settlers were granted the freedom to cultivate crops such as yam, cocoyam, and groundnuts, as well as to engage in fishing, hunting, and communal agricultural endeavours. This collaboration extended to financial cooperatives, with both groups contributing to annual funds in an event known locally as "Ipade Usobo." (Communication with Enamiroro)

Culinary traditions also experienced a rich exchange due to this migration. The Ikale adopted Isoko-Urhobo dishes like Owho and combinations such as Iribo Oto and Iziwo Oto, collectively referred to as "Obe Gari" (Gari soup). Similarly, Amiedi (Baga soup), another Isoko-Urhobo delicacy, became known among the Ikale as "Obe Egbo." Conversely, the Isoko-Urhobo embraced Pupuru, a fermented cassava meal from Ikaleland, which they termed "Iprupru" or "Ipupuru" (Communication with Samuel, 2024).

The exchange of clothing styles further exemplifies the cultural integration between the two groups. Richer and Sumber (1995) discuss how migration influences clothing by blending traditional attire with new cultural elements. In this context, Isoko-Urhobo men adopted the Uro and Buba attire from the Ikale, while some Ikale individuals incorporated Isoko-Urhobo fashion elements into their styles (interview with Aregbesola, 2024).

Intermarriage played a pivotal role in deepening cultural ties. Kalmijn (1998) posits that intermarriage facilitates cultural assimilation by promoting shared values, language acquisition, and social acceptance within host communities. The influence of the Isoko-Urhobo migration is also evident in the nomenclature of certain locales within Ikaleland, such as Ago Jacob and Ago Okatugba ("Ago" meaning "village" in the local dialect). Aregbesola emphasised the significant role of Isoko-Urhobo settlers in shaping the identity of Ikaleland (personal communication with Aregbesola, 2024).

Economically, the legacy of the Isoko-Urhobo is prominently displayed in Ikale's palm oil industry. Many Ikale individuals have become adept at harvesting tall palm trees and actively engage in the palm oil market, a sector initially influenced by Isoko-Urhobo proficiency. Today, Ikale traders and farmers are leaders in palm oil production, underscoring the enduring economic impact of this migration (communication with Aregbesola, 2024).

Before the arrival of the Isoko-Urhobo, the primary economic activities of the Ikale people centred on subsistence farming, including the cultivation of yam, cocoyam, and kola nut as major cash crops, with cocoa being adopted later from neighbouring Yoruba communities. The Ikale were not skilled in Gari processing activities; their processing efforts were mainly focused on Pupuru, which they supplied to the Ilaje, their riverine neighbours. Today, oil palm production has become the predominant economic activity in Ikaleland, highlighted by the establishment of the Okitipupa Oil Palm Company in the late 1960s. Chief Ifelodun and Urhobo introduced the modern technique of oil palm processing in the 1980s to Osooro in Okitipupa Local government, known as the "digester" (Personal communication with Tuned Aregbesola at Igbotako, 2024), supplementing the traditional trough system previously used (Adepoju, 2005).

The intertwined history of economic, cultural, and social interactions between the Isoko-Urhobo and Ikale peoples illustrates the transformative power of migration. Present-day Ikaleland stands as a testament to the enduring influence of the Isoko-Urhobo migration, serving as a model of cultural integration and economic resilience (Adepoju, 2005).

In a broader West African context, migration has historically played a crucial role in shaping societies. Adepoju (2005) identifies dominant migration patterns in the region, including permanent, seasonal, cross-border, and transit migration. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has recognised the importance of such mobility, adopting the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence, and Establishment in 1979 to promote regional integration. The Isoko-Urhobo migration into Ikaleland exemplifies these broader regional trends, highlighting how the movement of peoples within West Africa contributes to the dynamic and diverse cultural landscapes observed today. (Adepoju, 2005).

Conclusions

The migration of the Isoko-Urhobo people to Ikaleland represents a significant chapter in the history of cultural exchange and economic development in southwestern Nigeria. Their agricultural innovations, particularly in palm oil production, were crucial in shaping the region's economy and enhancing trade networks. The cultural and religious fusion between the Isoko-Urhobo and the Ikale people created a vibrant, hybrid identity that continues to influence the region's social fabric. The Isoko-Urhobo communities, through the establishment of the Urhobo Progressive Union (UPU) in Ikaleland, demonstrated the importance of unity in preserving cultural heritage while integrating into new environments.

Recommendations

1. Cultural Preservation and Promotion: There should be a concerted effort to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the Isoko-Urhobo and Ikale people. This can be achieved through the documentation of traditional practices, festivals, and languages, and promoting their inclusion in local and national cultural events.

2. Economic Collaboration: The historical collaboration between the Isoko-Urhobo and Ikale peoples should be strengthened to foster mutual economic growth, especially in agriculture and trade. This can include joint ventures in palm oil production, agricultural research, and regional trade agreements.

3. Educational and Social Integration: Institutions should be established to promote the educational and social integration of Isoko-Urhobo and Ikale descendants, focusing on fostering social cohesion, collaboration, and cross-cultural understanding.

4. Research and Preservation of Migration Stories: More research should be undertaken to explore the history of the Isoko-Urhobo migration to Ikaleland, preserving the stories and experiences of the migrants for future generations.

REFERENCE

Adepoju, A. (2010). *International migration within, to and from Africa in a globalised world*. Sub-Saharan Publishers.

Adesayo, H. R. M. (2024, March). Ahaba of Ajagba Kingdom [Personal interview]. Okpevra, Uwomano Benjamin (19 August 2020). "A discourse on the history and identity of the Isoko of the Niger Delta of Nigeria". *African Identities*. 19 (4): 536-553. doi:10.1080/14725843.2020.1804828. ISSN 1472-5843. S2CID 225394849.

Adesote, S. A., & Osiyale, B. O. (2020). Colonialism, Migration, and the Emergence of Urban Spaces in Colonial Nigeria. Department of History and International Studies, Osun State University.

Aghalino, S. O. (2000). British colonial policies and the oil palm industry in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, 1900-1960. African Study Monographs, 21(2), 19-31.

Aghalino, S. O. (2009). *Crude Oil Business in the Western Niger Delta, Nigeria, 1956-1995*, Enugu: Rhyme Keres Publisher, pp. 18-25.

Ajibade, L. T. (2003). A methodology for the collection and evaluation of farmers' indigenous environmental knowledge in developing countries. Indilinga: *African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 2, 99-113.

Anozie, C. J. (2016). A socio-economic history of Omoku in Rivers State up to the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970. Unpublished B.A. Long Essay, Department of History and International Studies, Delta State University, Abraka.

Bakewell, O. (2008). In search of the diasporas within Africa. *African Diaspora*, Vol. 1(1-2), 5-27.

Benjo, I. (1983). Traditional pottery in Nigeria. *The Nigeria Magazine*, 47.

C.S.O 26/2.file1/857.Annual Report, Warri Province NAI.

Ekundare, R. O. (1973). *An economic history of Nigeria, 1860-1960*. Africana Publishing Corp.

Enamiroro, S. (Personal Interview, October 9, 2024)

Essi, S. O. (n. d). *A Short History of Aviara - 1468-1985,* Oleh: SSB, p 53.   NAI CSO 20990, Intelligence Report, Usere Clan

Eyiyere, D. O. (1990). *One-man, one-wife doctrine: From God or from man*. Doe-Sun Publishers.

Faduyile, G. B. (2008). Ikale culture and traditions. Ondo State: Olubajowa Press.

Faduyile, G. B. (2024, February 26). Abodi of Ikaleland [Personal interview].

Falola, T., & Heaton, M. M. (2008). *A history of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.

Forster, P. (1960). "Pre-Twentieth Century Isoko: Its Foundation and Later Growth", African Historical Studies 2

Grawert, E. (1998). Making a living in rural Sudan: Production of women, labour migration of men, and policies for peasants' needs. St. Martin's Press.

Hall, S. (1996). Cultural identity and diaspora. In P. Mongia (Ed.), Contemporary postcolonial theory: A reader (pp. 110-121). Arnold.

Hopkins, A. G. (1975), *An Economic History of West Africa*, London: Longman,

Otiti, O. (1973) *Autonomy and Dependency: The Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in Modern Nigeria*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p.11.

Hubbard, I. W. (1948). The Sobo of the Niger Delta. Gaskiya Corporation.

Ikime, O. (1969). *Niger Delta rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo relations and the European presence, 1884-1936*. Longmans, Green and Co Ltd.

Ikime, O. (1972). *The Isoko people: A historical survey.* Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc.

Ikime, O. (1980). The Western Niger Delta and the hinterland in the 19th century. In O. Ikime (Ed.), *Groundwork of Nigeria history* (pp. 191-212). Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Ikime, O. (2000). Sustaining the Niger Delta as a distinct political formation in the Nigerian Federation. Paper presented at the Seminar on the Niger Delta and the Nigerian Federation, TAS and Associates, Warri.

Ikponmwosa, (2015). Impact of colonial Rule on oil palm production in Benin, 1897 - 1960,

Itule, E. A. (2007). Trade between the Isoko and their neighbours in the pre-colonial period. Unpublished B.A. Project Essay, Department of History and International Studies, Delta State University, Abraka.

Kwasi, P. (2002). Small-scale palm oil processing in Africa. FAO Agricultural Services Bulletin 148. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

Mgbakor, M. N., Ugwu, N., & Frank, O. (2013). Problems and prospects of oil palm production in Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. *American-Eurasian Journal of Agronomy,* 6(2), 40-45.

NAI CSO 20990, Intelligence Report, Usere Clan

Adesina, O. and J. I Osasie (eds) *The Nigeria Journal of Economic History* No. 13, 214, 2015.

Ogen, O. (2003). "Urhobo migrants and the Ikale palm oil industry, 1850-1968." The Nigerian Journal of Economic History, 5 & 6, 1.

Ogen, O. (2006). The Ikale of South-eastern Yorubaland, 1500-1800: A Study in Ethnic Identity and Traditional Economy. Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History and Strategic Studies, University of Lagos.

Ojapinwa, A. M. (2024, December 20). Retired school principal, Ilutitun, Okitipupa Local Government [Personal interview].

Okpevra, U. B. (2014). The Isoko and their neighbours, 1800-1970: A study of the diplomacy of conflict resolution in the Western Niger Delta of Nigeria. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

Omereji, G. O. (2005). The oil palm industry in Nigeria: Cultivation, processing, and trade. Mindex Publishers.

Omole, W. (2024). Impact of migration on identity formation: A study of second-generation immigrants. International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences, 2(5), 1-13. http://doi.org/10.4791/ijhss.1883. Accessed July 19, 2025.

Otite, O. (1979). Rural migrants as catalysts in rural development: The Urhobo in Ondo State. Africa, 49(3), 226-234. https://doi.org/10.2307/1159555

Otiti, O. (1873). *Autonomy and Dependency: The Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in Modern Nigeria,* Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p. 11

Richards, P. (1992). "Landscapes of Dissent-Ikale and Ilaje Country, 1870-1950." In Peoples and Empires in African History: Essays in Memory of Michael Crowder. Ajayi, J.F.A., & Peel, J.D.Y. (eds). London: Longman.

Ryder, A. F. C. (1969). *Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897*. Longman.

Taiwo, K. A., Owolarafe, O. K., Sanni, L. A., Jeje, B. O., Adeloye, K., & Ajibola, O. O. (2000). Technological assessment of palm oil production in Osun and Ondo states of Nigeria. Technovation, 20(4), 215-223.

Usoro, E. J. (1974). *The Nigerian oil palm industry*. Ibadan University Press.

MIGRATION, BOUNDARIES AND AFRICAN INTEGRATION: PERSPECTIVES WITH RESPECT TO SENEGAMBIAN GEOGRAPHICAL AND ETHNO-LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES

Malang Fanneh PhD
Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Faraba Campus, University of The Gambia
and
Gold Sunday Chukwuemeka PhD
Department of History, Strategic and International Studies, DOU, Asaba

Abstract
The issue of migration, boundaries and African integration is a complex phenomenon and has attracted a lot of attention from scholars on Africa for a considerable period of time. This paper, seeks to examine the issue of migration and integration in Africa especially in the Senegambia region. It attempts to underscore how the colonial period brought about a functional shift in the issues that are related to the migration patterns of people in the Senegambia region. The paper argues that before colonialism, Senegambians were not restricted by any notion of defined boundaries because groups related with one another on the basis of needs and long-standing relationships were established through trade, intermarriages and other forms of intergroup relations. The study reveals that the concepts of migration and boundaries evolved over time in post-colonial Senegambia. Using the contemporary African context as a prism, this paper offers a new interpretation on African integration with a focus on Senegambian geographical and ethno linguistic identities. The paper argues that in postcolonial Senegambia, boundary issues continue to be a challenge and hindrance to closer political and economic integration in the Senegambia region. A myriad of sources have been utilized using the historical and interpretive methods.

Key words: Borders, African Integration, Senegambian states, Ethnicity, Identity

Introduction
The issue of migration and integration in both the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods are complex issues that need to be addressed if we are to understand the challenges to African integration today within the context of the Senegambian geographical realities. In this paper, Senegambia as a region would be used to refer to Senegal and the Gambia. Even though these two countries experienced different colonial experiences, their peoples were united by linguistic and cultural identities. Therefore, there were unique ethno-linguistic similarities that defined the ties that bound the Senegambian people for several centuries. What European

colonialism did was to divide the people without any regard for their cultural identities. However, despite the colonial manipulations, what has been interesting is the refusal of the Senegambian people to respect the colonially imposed notions of boundaries in their efforts to interact with one another through trade, intermarriages and other modes of intergroup relations on mutual grounds. Despite their different colonial experiences, they continued to see themselves as one people with common historical connections and identity.

Historicising migration

Migrations shaped human societies in Africa and the world at large for several years. It is believed that the human race originated from the Great Lakes Region of Africa and spread to the rest of the world through migration. In pre-colonial Africa, people migrated from one place to another to open up new lands, to escape wars, repression and persecution, for hunting, trade, agriculture, or to spread a religion. Put differently, movements related to trade and conquests significantly led to population movements within and outside Africa. The Bantu and Mande expansions were key examples of migratory movements that transformed several societies in Africa. Bantu speakers moved from West Africa into the area of the continent south of the equator in one of the largest migrations in human history, ca 2000 BC-AD 1000.[1] Mande speakers are dispersed from the "…the margins of the Sahara to the Guinea and Senegambia and the Upper Guinea coast to Nigeria" owing to Mande expansion. This massive population movement took two phases; the traders and smiths pioneered the route. In the second phase, the Mande warriors followed the caravan routes to plunder and conquer.[2] However, for Donald Wright, cultural transferral rather than conquest explains links between most societies in Africa, especially of the Mande civilization of Upper Niger to the indigenous acephalous societies of Senegambia. He argues that cultural assimilation and inter-ethnic transferral are noticeable in Senegambia, and patronyms among today's Senegambian population cannot draw any line between ethnic groups. He believes "...Mandinka population may well be groups of lineages with ancestral roots in a variety of ethnic groups, a number of which were autochthonous in or near their present location." He however, concludes that either by waves or mass migration took place.[3] In addition, Chiekh Anta Diop asserts that most parts of Africa were peopled by migrants from the Nile Valley. He argues that legends of black people from every part of Africa cite the "Great Water" meaning "the Nile" as their origin. Depending on their locations to the Nile, the Dogon and Yoruba cite the east as their provenance, the Fang indicate the northeast, Bakuba lists the north and Batutsi of Rwanda-Urundi point to the south. He argues that the Nubian and the Ethiopian legends never claim their ancestry somewhere because they remained in the Nile Valley.[4] This evidence corroborates the view that migration has been part and parcel of African life for centuries.

Before the nineteenth century, Africans had no interference with their sovereignty, and they were very much in control of their affairs and destinies. Chaloka Beyani contends that pre-colonial migration within and

---

[1] .Bilger and Kraler, African Migrations. Historical Perspectives And Contemporary Dynamics, 2005;8

[2] Barry, B., 1998. *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade.* 1 ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[3]Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348; s

[4] Diop, C. A. The African Origin of Civilization, Myth or Reality. In T. b. Cook. Chicago, Illinois: Lawrence Hill Books 1974;179

outside had positive effects on Africa. He says that this helps to populate most of the continent and more importantly, in resolving protracted conflicts as defeated communities migrated elsewhere in search of peaceful environments. It reduces pressure on livelihoods, water and resources. However, this considerably changed within a short period of time between 1880 and 1900; the entire continent except Liberia and Ethiopia was subdued and occupied by the European imperial powers of Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Italy. This marked the transformation of sovereign and royal citizens of Africa into colonial and dependent subjects. In place of numerous African independent polities, a completely new set of colonies was carved and administered by officials selected by the European powers.[5] The European partition of Africa and the pattern of boundaries are senseless in terms of ethnic groups, politics and economies.[6] The magnitude, duration and process of boundary-making in Africa make it more different from Europe, where the evolution of boundaries was gradual over centuries. The delimitation of boundaries in Africa was completed within a decade.[7] Bascom argues that almost all the colonial boundaries in Africa divide ethnolinguistic groups into two or more parts, administered under different colonial principles, and taught in different European languages.[8] He further contends that some territories carved out could barely support themselves economically.

The balkanization of Africa constrained migration in both time and space by destroying the existing economic, social and political ties, denying communities ownership of resources and access to them. According to Beyani, the structure of the colonial state in Africa was built on a repressive state apparatus to serve colonial economic interests. [9]

Boundaries and the challenges of identity formation in Senegambia

The borders between Senegambian nations have always been porous, and even the efforts of the colonial masters to delineate them had not been that successful in alienating the people of the region from interacting with one another on their own terms and conditions. What became a complex issue was the division and definition of the Senegambian people through the colonial lens. The people started to see each other as British and French Senegambians because of the different colonial experiences that they went through. The different colonial systems of administration played a crucial role in the way the people of the Senegambian states eventually related with one another and created the notion of us and them in the psyche of the leadership that eventually emerged. However, such a divisive sentiment seems to be the inverse of what obtains among ordinary people who are not bothered by any restrictive notions of territorial limitations whatsoever. The notion of 'us' and 'others' developed as divisive notions and

---

[5] Boahen, Boahen, A. A *African Perspective on Colonialism.* Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press 1987;27
[6] Bascom, 1956;64-65
[7] Kehinde, 2010;19

[8] Bascom (1956)
[9] Beyani, C. (n.d). Migration in Africa: An Unending Phenomenon? *The Nansen Lecture.* Oslo: *http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/law/news/Nansen%20Lecture%20Joburg.pdf*.

created a new perception of identity based on what David Newman refers to a 'collective construction of differences.'[10]

A better understanding of the fluidity of identity is enough for us to understand that ethnicity has always been a complex variable in creating stumbling blocks in any integrative attempts on the part of Africans.[11] This paper seeks to argue that migration in the Senegambia region[12] before the European colonialism of the region was not restricted and that those who migrated from one region to another were not restricted by any notion of formal boundaries whatsoever. Linares observes that prior to the advent of colonialism in the latter parts of the 19th Century, the migratory patterns of the indigenous people of the Senegambia region for example, were not hindered by restricted boundaries that were created by the colonial powers.[13] His assertion is evident in the case of Musa Molloh who saw the region of Fulladu as one geographical entity even though the region was divided into the British and French spheres of influence. Despite the colonial imposition of boundaries, people of the region had intergroup relations through marriage and trade. The people had unity in diversity and they related with one another based on their needs and comparative advantage concerning production and consumption capabilities and patterns. Musa's establishment of his administrative centers in Kesserkunda, Ndorna and Hamdallah was symptomatic of the reality that the present-day notion of identity concerning the present-day Senegambian states was fluid.[14] From a historical perspective, pre-colonial Senegambian people related with one another based on needs, and their leaders could have control over lands and peoples through the allegiance they got from them. Even after European penetration into the geopolitics of the region in the early nineteenth century, the people had little or no regard for the colonially imposed boundaries and continued to operate based on their age-old relationships and withheld their own notions of primordial identity formations that they inherited from their forbearers.

The present boundaries in the region are a European-constructed phenomenon that was inherited by the modern states in the region. It is therefore an irony that even after independence was attained, the post-colonial Senegambian states could not dismantle the inherited colonial boundaries that constrained them in their interactions with one another based on their primordial relations. As such, the boundaries act as what David Newman refers to as obstacles through which people see others as different from them and further view them as outsiders.[15]

---

[10] Newman, D. 2003. On borders and power: a theoretical framework. *Journal of Borderline Studies* 18. 1: 13-25

[11] Aboubacarr Tandia: *Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau,* Saint-Louis: Gaston Berger.

[12] Senegambia in this paper is looked at as was viewed by: Boubacarr Barry: *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade.* 1 ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[13] Olga F. Linares, "*Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? For more information, see: Olga Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal*", Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003), pp. 113-132

[14] John M. Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966)

[15] Newman, D. 2003. On borders and power: a theoretical framework. *Journal of Borderline Studies* 18. 1: 13-25

In this paper, it is argued that even after inheriting the colonial boundaries, the present-day leaderships of Senegambian states continue to grapple with ideological differences and which became vital in creating obstacles to economic and political integration in the postcolonial Senegambian states. From a social perspective, integration in pre-colonial Senegambia was not restrictive, but was not easy during the postcolonial period because of the inherent differences among the different linguistic and social units. The colonially imposed languages of French and English further complicated identity formation because Gambians and Senegalese started seeing one another differently through the linguistic lens of the colonial masters. Put differently, the point being made is that the imposition of the colonial languages further made identity fluid because people who were hitherto culturally homogenous became strange bedfellows who were linguistically divided, thereby making any efforts to bring them together an uphill task.

Identity as an obstacle to integration

The present-day African countries continue to grapple with the same trends as they attempt to integrate and form stronger and more viable political and economic blocs for more sustainable relationships. It affirms that the integration of people and communities has never been an easy process in the African context, based on some inherent socio-cultural differences.[16] The different colonial experiences also created obstacles for political unity to be forged at the state level between the Senegambian countries. This is because while the Senegalese see themselves as French, the Gambians view themselves as British, and none of the people of these countries are willing to forgo their colonially induced identities and embrace another identity for the sake of integration. Pride becomes the inhibiting factor for the realization of closer sociopolitical integration between Senegal and the Gambia.

Tandia Aboubakr argues that 'cross-cutting socio-cultural dynamics' play a crucial role in defining the national boundaries and other territorial issues in Western Senegambia, which, according to him, includes Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.[17] His assessment is apt because it brings to light how the dynamics of borders and their regulations make national identities difficult to construct and further create obstacles to integration for the postcolonial Senegambian states. The dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' creates the notion of belonging or not among the masses on the basis of the colonially imposed languages that are used as the official languages of the different countries.

Thus, the French and English languages became identity markers and, to some extent, influenced how people see themselves and define others on linguistic grounds. However, the artificially created colonial borders in the region that this paper considers do not alter the cultural identities of the people to a very large extent. This is because, with the borders as

---

[16] Philip D Curtin, 1975. *Economic chnage in Pre-colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of Atlantic slave Trade.* 1 ed. Madison : University of Winsconsin Press.

[17] Aboubacarr Tandia: *Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau,* Saint-Louis: Gaston Berger.

political territories, the citizens continue to relate with one another without many problems. The homogeneity of the communities along the Senegal and The Gambia borders is a clear indication that Senegambian people could socially and economically integrate at their own levels without any governmental interference.[18]

Both Donald Wright and Philip Curtin [19] have examined the roles played by long-distance trade in the Senegambia region, and they reveal that it plays a crucial role in integrating people from different backgrounds. Both Wright and Curtin are of the view that the roles played by long-distance traders made them a dominant group in the exchange of goods, which included slaves, cloth, iron, salt, European manufactured goods and so on. The fact that Mandinka Julas[20] obtained slaves and other goods from vast areas ranging from the River Gambia's eastern hinterland to its upper reaches and Upper Niger made their spheres of influence very great. This indicates that the pre-colonial African boundaries were porous, and people and goods could be transported over vast areas without much hindrance.[21] Thus, economic integration during the pre-colonial period was not characterized by unnecessarily strict and formal border regulations.[22] Instead, people and goods could be transported over vast areas without many official restriction that serves as impediments to trade and other commercial activities.

The settlement patterns of the Jula traders show that they were able to form economic and social ties with their host societies, whom they met during their trips. Both Wright and Curtin buttressed this point, and to a large extent, one could understand that social and economic integration through trade was an essential element of the pre-colonial geopolitical spectrum. The Mandinka Julas' strategic socioeconomic alliances with ruling dynasties enabled the long-distance traders to have a local influence which they used to effectively carry out their long distance trade. [23]

Donald Wright explicitly outlines the "landlord-stranger" relationship that existed in Senegambian communities. Intergroup relations were established through trade and other social interactions between and among the different people who come together to exchange their goods and services. The "suruga", "samalan", and "jatigi" relationship show that socioeconomic networks were formed between these migrant farmers and their landlords or

---

[18] Aboubacarr Tandia: *Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau,* Saint-Louis: Gaston Berger.

[19]Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348; Philip D Curtin, 1975. *Economic chnage in Pre-colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of Atlantic slave Trade.* 1 ed. Madison : University of Winsconsin Press.

[20]Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348

[21]For more information on long distance trade in pre-colonial Senegambia, see: Donald R Wright D, " *Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia*", African Studies Association, Vol. 12, (2003), pp.335-348

[22] Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348; Philip D Curtin, 1975. *Economic chnage in Pre-colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of Atlantic slave Trade.* 1 ed. Madison : University of Winsconsin Press.

[23]For more information on long distance trade in pre-colonial Senegambia, see: Donald R Wright D, " *Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia*", African Studies Association, Vol. 12, (2003), pp.335-348

hosts.[24] The "samalan" paying a fee for the land he uses means that there were clear-cut rules that governed the land tenure system in the region. It also means that this system was institutionalized in the Senegambian states. It also demonstrates that access to land was necessary to promote peasant commodity production necessary for both consumption and trade.

Another scholar who examines the role played by "culture contact and change" is Philip Curtin. He opines that the trades were well organized as the traders came into contact with people in different communities, and his argument seems to support what Donald Wright suggests concerning the "suruga", "samalan", and "jatigi" relationships. Curtin further clearly coins the term "trade diaspora" who, according to him, deal with political authorities for them to trade well without much hindrance. The role played by Curtin's "trade diaspora" is synonymous with that played by the Jula mentioned by Wright. However, Curtin's view on the relationship that existed between the traders and their host communities is parallel to the one expressed by Wright. This is because while Curtin opines that the host community dominates the people of the diaspora[25] completely and keeps them in dependent positions in order to economically exploit them, Wright on the other hand views that the host community accommodates the visitors as were in the case of the' samalan' and 'suruga'[26] and even help some to settle down. The argument presented here could help one in subjectively understanding the fact that integration at personal and community levels has been going on in Africa without any major problems prior to the European domination of the continent. It therefore seems clear that social and economic integration was not restricted by artificial colonial boundaries that were created after 1884.

William Boscom observes that nationalism and national pride are major obstacles to African integration and unity.[27] This observation, when put into perspective, will help one in understanding the balkanization of Africa by the different colonial powers. Since independence, the African countries could not restructure the colonial boundaries they had inherited from their colonial masters. The colonial artificial boundaries are so complex that they later became major sources of conflict in many parts of the continent.[28] The volatile political situations in some Senegambian African states speak volumes about the division of the people along boundary lines that had no consideration for the tribal and cultural identities of the affected peoples.[29] The net effects of these divisions of the people are the outcome of the orientations of the different linguistic groups along ethnic lines. In the recent past, these divisions have become

---

[24] Donald R Wright D, " *Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia*", African Studies Association, Vol. 12, (2003), pp.335-348

[25] The people of the diaspora refer to those who leave their places and migrate to work or settle in other places. They were normally not restricted in their movements from one place to another by any notion of borders.

[26] Samalan and suruga are migrant farmers who normally come from other places to farm or trade in goods.

[27] William R. Bascom . 1962.Tribalism, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 342: pp. 21-29

[28] William R. Bascom . 1962.Tribalism, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 342: pp. 21-29

[29] The volatile political situation includes the crises in Cassamance and Guinea Bissau

sources of conflict. The fact that colonialism created African nations out of the multiple tribal units has today made integration efforts very difficult, even though the different regional blocs have been in place. Closer collaborations among African states at national and regional levels are desirable, but so far, there are still obstacles to a more sustainable integration among states. Olga F. Linares clearly argues that migration at national and regional levels is crucial because different people migrate within their national boundaries and outside their national boundaries for various reasons.[30] His study focuses on the Jola of lower Cassamance and observes striking disparities in the migration patterns of the region studied. Even though Linares's study is limited in scope, it offers a vital understanding of the demographic factors that serve as the pull and push factors responsible for migration in the Senegambia region and beyond.[31] One of the factors responsible for the migration of people within the Senegambia region is the search for better agricultural lands. However, landlessness or the search for better agricultural lands may not be enough index to understand the factors that push some people to migrate to other areas both within and outside their countries. The search for job opportunities and access to better infrastructural facilities by many, particularly the youth, is a vital factor that should be noted in the migration patterns of many people in Africa. In this regard, Senegambians are no exception since there are huge disparities between rural and urban areas in terms of facilities that enhance the quality of life of the people.

In an attempt to assess the impact of migration on rural communities in Senegal, Linares further notes that 'urban migration … had a significant negative impact on food production.'[32] This observation is apt because it demonstrates that the impact of urban migration on his case study area is a universal trend that all African societies encounter. This is because most regions and communities that are hard hit by the rural-urban drift have their youth more involved in the migration, and thus food production and other agricultural activities are greatly neglected. Put differently, the most productive labour force is required to till the land in rural communities, move to the urban centers and such labour is redirected to other productive sectors of the economy. The net effect is that peasant commodity production became the ultimate opportunity cost. This could explain why food security continues to be a major development challenge in most African countries today, particularly in the Senegambian states.[33]

Within the framework of supranational bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), the protocols that are agreed upon by member states are not usually fully implemented by member countries in reality and their non-implementation continues to hinder the integration of the countries economically and politically

---

[30]Olga F. Linares, "*Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? For more information, see: Olga Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal*", Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003), pp. 113-132

[31]Olga F. Linares, "*Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? For more information, see: Olga Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal*", Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003), pp. 113-132

[32] Olga F. Linares. 2003. "Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? ; Olga F. Linares. 303. Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 73.1: 113-132

[33]Olga F. Linares. 2003. "Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? ; Olga F. Linares. 303. Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 73.1: 113-132

at national level. However, their citizens have no problems integrating at individual and family levels. The people have social and economic interactions at their own levels and are not usually constrained by rigid governmental laws and procedures that are operational at national level. Put differently, the relationships that are forged among the citizenry are not usually premised on political grounds.

The Gambia and Senegal are two countries that were colonized by different colonial masters. Their boundaries were created without any consideration of the ethnic and cultural identities of the peoples of the two states. However, integrating the two states today seems difficult, but their respective citizens have been interacting with one another without many problems. Along the colonial boundaries between the countries, villagers and communities have co-existed without many problems.[34] Linares' observation that some of the Jola youth leave their homes in Jipalon to look for employment in Dakar and Banjul in The Gambia is indicative that migration was a normal trend and those colonially imposed boundaries were no restrictions for individuals who are free to move from one destination to another in search of employment opportunities whenever they feel to do so.[35]

Senegal- Gambia relations in historical context- continuity or change?

The borders between the Gambia and Senegal are porous and therefore, Senegambian people have never been restricted by the colonially created borders from the early nineteenth century to date. Ecological factors have never been a hindrance that constrained interactions of the people since the era of the Kaabu states. Intergroup relations were forged based on common interests, and the function of Senegambian relations had always been characterized by the notion of unity in diversity. Common languages spoken by the different indigenous people in the Senegambian states have always been a catalyst for closer collaborations among the people. For example, the Mandinka, Wollof, Fula, Jola and other linguistic groups see one another as one people who should live in unison across time and space. A unique relationship characterised by mutual respect and interdependency has and continues to bind the Senegambian people despite the changing nature of their existence across space and time.

E.J. Okolo and Abass Bundu cite the African independent states' reluctance to sacrifice their perceived national interest for regional integration and cooperation.[36] Bundu strongly argues that the creation of national identity and the exercise of national sovereignty have been prominent features of the post-independence African political agenda. He argues that the legacy of national sovereignty and the jealousy with which it is guarded have become an impediment to integration, which requires the sharing of sovereignty among members. He further states that this is exacerbated by aspects of the inherited colonial

[34]Donald R. Wright, "Beyond Migration and Conquest: Oral Traditions and Mandinka Ethnicity in Senegambia," *History in Africa*, Vol. 12, (1985), pp. 335-348
[35] Olga F. Linares. 2003. Going to the City . . . and Coming Back? Turnaround Migration among the Jola of Senegal, Africa: *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003), pp. 113-132
[36] Okolo, 1985;122, Bundu, 1997;38.

heritage which continued to influence the educational system, administrative structure or the orientation of the national economies.[37] These issues are true when it comes to integration efforts between the Gambia and Senegal, and they continue to be impediments for more collaborations between the two countries and their peoples.

The cultural identities of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Senegambian people have always been unique and these cultural similarities constitute a strong basis for Senegalo-Gambian relations across generations. The people have always been socialised to see one another as 'brothers' and 'sisters' and even the different colonial experiences they experienced never diluted that feeling of oneness from the collective social psyche of the people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, European colonialism of the Senegambian states has led to the fluidity of identity in these states, thus making both political and social integration an uphill task after independence from their respective colonial masters. The people who saw themselves as 'one people' who are culturally linked now see one another with suspicion and contempt in some extreme cases.[38] It is thus clear from the discourse that there is a functional difference in the understanding of identity and integration in the pre- and post-Senegambian societies and modern nations. The unstable political situations in most Senegambian states, coupled with internal political gimmicks in the states, continue to stifle integrative efforts among the nations and their peoples. This paper therefore, asserts that any effort that could yield any meaningful integration in the Senegambia region must take into consideration the issues of identity and bilateral ties among the states within the context of the geopolitical order and the frameworks of supra-nationalism. In recent years, political and economic conditions and realities in the states have transformed the way and manner in which the states and their citizens view one another and even relate to each other. The interstate relations are dictated by the specific interests of each state, and to some extent, each of the postcolonial states puts its strategic national interests at the core of its dealings.

It is revealed that Senegambian historiography has several accounts of migration and integration. Environmental, economic, cultural and political changes led to enormous population movements over time and space. However, the colonial encounter in the late 19th century, which resulted in the balkanization of Africa, posed new obstacles to this old trend. These are also the major impediments to integration in the Senegambian geographical space today.

---

[37] (Bundu, 1997;38).

[38] AboubacarrTandia, A., n.d. *Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau,* Saint-Louis: Gaston Berger

HYBRIDITY IN CONTEMPORARY IGBO DRESS CULTURE: IMPACTS OF GLOBALISATION ON PERFORMANCE COSTUMES

Francisca A. Nwadigwe Ph.D.
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State.
Email-af.nwadigwe@coou.edu.ng

Phone: 08063619024

Abstract

This study investigates the trend of hybridity in contemporary Igbo dress culture and artistic performances. The incorporation of Western clothing styles, introduced through colonisation and reinforced by globalisation, media, technology, and consumption patterns, has shaped the hybridisation of Igbo fashion and performance costumes. The study examines how hybridity influences Igbo dress culture as expressed in contemporary costumes within Nigeria's creative industries, focusing on textile materials, motifs, patterns, accessories, and design elements that reflect Igbo identity and values. Guided by Homi Bhabha's Hybridity Theory and Judith Butler's Performativity Theory, the research analyses how indigenous Igbo dress blends with Western styles and global fashion trends. Using a qualitative approach, it employs non-participant observation and content analysis to collect and interpret data. Findings reveal that Igbo dress culture has undergone significant transformations, with hybridisation persisting in the contemporary era. This evolution, visible in Igbo popular arts and cultural productions, highlights the pervasive influence of global capital, media, and technology on the Igbo environment, raising concerns about cultural preservation. The study concludes that while hybridity enhances creativity, it poses a threat to the continuity of Igbo dress heritage, as younger generations increasingly adopt and idolise hybridised trends promoted by Nollywood and the Nigerian performing arts industry. It recommends that policymakers, Nollywood producers, and artists in the Igbo creative sector actively promote indigenous dress heritage within their works, ensuring its visibility and relevance in global cultural markets.

Keywords: Hybridity, Igbo culture, Costumes, Performing arts, Globalisation.

Study Background

To the layman, hybrid is a specie of animals that are produced or birthed of different species to give or produce better species. From the perspective of science studies, this idea of referring to hybrids in species grew out of the works of Charles Darwin. In the science of Biology, Darwin is known as the father of hybridity.

Charles Darwin who lived (1809-1882) was the initiator or pioneering personality in the research of hybridity which focused on biological hybridity. In 1859, Darwin's experiment and observation on hybridity of species proved that species could inter-breed and produce better and fertile species of offspring which also led to the development of new species (Darwin 502). Furthermore, from Darwin's concept of hybridity in Biology, scholars like Homi K. Bhabha, Gaytan Chakrovorty Spivack, Edward Said, Paul Gilloy and other scholars adapted the term while advancing the concept of the study of culture.

Homi Bhabha, in his book, *The Location of Culture* states that "hybridity emerges in the spaces between cultures where cultural mixing and encounters take place" (2-3). This definition, referring to spaces in-between cultures, can be translated as the gap where these cultural norms meet to synchronize or "borrow" from each other in order to strike a union or balance depending on two major principles which are: (1) Is there equality in the societies concerned? (2) Among the societies involved, is one oppressing the other which without choice is forced to imbibe the culture and nuances of the higher society? This is not far from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept and idea of subaltern studies. According to Ameh Akoh:

> In its general sense, the subaltern refers to the class of people who are oppressed and placed socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and which in Gramsci's cultural hegemony, are denied a voice within the power structure of society. (10-11).

In such condition, the flow of communication is straightlined/vertical, orders flow from the upper/higher plain to the down/lower plain. Thus, hybridity may definitely be destructive to the less privileged society because it could lose all its identity or cultural originality. Hybridity could facilitate cultural extinction through its impact on the visible aspects of culture, like the dress culture, arts, performance and designs.

This study also applied Judith Pamela Butler's theory of performativity which posits that, "identity is performative", since performance is an essential part of a person, society, group or gender that is repeated and reinforced as time goes on. Furthermore, Butler's performativity theory highlights the essence of identity and power dynamics as they affects the everyday practices in performance, such as dress culture and individual rights and also negotiates identity of a people (34). Hence, in this study, hybridity will refer to those aspects of the Igbo dress culture that are not originally a part of Igbo dress forms or patterns but adopted or borrowed as part of the dress culture. Similarly, globalisation in this study refers to those factors or elements that affect the Igbo dress culture because of the new world order which reduced the world to a small entity called the global village.

Igbo Dress Culture

The Igbo are concentrated in eastern Nigeria where they are dominant, though there are Igbos in surrounding sub-regions. The Igbo are known for their traditional dress culture or attire which comprises of colourful clothes, caps, beads and accessories that uniquely identify them. On the Igbo dress culture and performance, the study focuses on those dress practices used or adopted by

the costumiers or artistic directors of the various performances in the contemporary Igbo society as it affects the dress culture of the Igbo ethnic nationality.

The Igbo dress culture dated back to the earliest times in human society. Igbo dress culture obviously started with leaves and animal skins as covering for the body as obtained in the early man's civilisation. This is proved by the admiration the Igbo people ascribe to skins of animals in the nicknames and titles they answer such as *Ogbu Agu* (Tiger killer), *Ogbu Ehi* (cow killer), *Ogbu Odum* (lion killer), *Ogbu enyi* (elephant killer), *Ogbu Inyinya* (horse killer), and so on as symbols of valour and pride. The Igbo dress culture and patterns continued to evolve and with time they started using plants and tree resources to weave clothes. Indeed, Eve de Negri in her study of Igbo clothing asserted that:

> … the Igbo clothes were weaved out of the fresh leaves of bamboo palm. The silky strands were pulled from under the leaves and spun and woven into different wears and artistic costume. "Ufa" tree, the silky threads obtained from the tree was spun and woven into cotton fabric of fine texture. (36-37)

In this technology, many plants were used. Some plants like the "Ogbo" plant is used to form clothing materials. These clothes which were jute-like and strong is called "Ikpachi". These jute-like clothing were tied by the people including men, women and children. The men wore theirs as loin clothes (iwa-ogodo), the women tied theirs around their chest region down to the length of their knees, at times, they tie the cloth from the waist down to their knee and use a separate piece to cover the chest while exposing the belly. The children, when they were not naked, tied it around the waist while the girls also tied it up to the chest region to cover their reproductive organs if they were approaching puberty.

The early trade with the Whitemen (foreigners), slavery and colonisation also affected the traditional clothing of the time, thus, it influenced the style and quality of clothing giving way to hybridised Igbo dress culture. This dress practice further tried to set up a structural stratification model of the upper and lower class. Those who had access, contact and communication link with the colonialists were adorned with the Whiteman's clothing, mixing it with the traditional mode of dressing to make a difference. As the years go by, technology has improved and more designs of clothes and production of clothing fabrics and materials of different types have been made in line with current and emerging trends.

The Research Problem in Context

The Igbo nation, like any other ethnic nationality, has continued to undergo remarkable changes in their patterns or way of life. They are ostensibly tending towards cultural hybridity without noticing or consciously analysing its overwhelming impacts on their way of life and, most importantly, the long-term effect on the Igbo dress culture and identity.

These changing trends of hybridisation are heightened by the rate of globalisation engendered through technology, communication media, and economic trends. The Igbo scholarship is not left out, because the scholars have not given sufficient research attention to the trend of hybridity in Igbo lifestyle and dress culture precisely. This trend of hybridity consequently threatens the Igbo cultural life and indigenous dress culture. Hence, globalisation is being misinterpreted and misapplied to mean throwing away or neglecting one's cultural life, which makes a people who and what they are.

Media Communication Patterns: Globalisation has actually affected the African dress culture through the media communication patterns. The straight line, top-down communication pattern flowing from the advanced countries has left the developing and underdeveloped nations at the mercy of the Global North nations that control the technologies and infrastructure of the international media space. This tends to flood the Igbo, Nigeria and the less developed countries with their own perceptions, culture, food and most importantly their dress culture. The youth are directly and indirectly influenced by this media hype and the cultivation effects leading to frequent change in their dress culture to tally or imitate what they see in the Western media through cable TV networks, YouTube, social media platforms, entertainment magazines, films and music videos. These youths hardly watch the local channels such as Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Channels Television, African Independent Television (AIT) and others that show more of Nigerian cultural content.

Technology: The unprecedented pace in technological advancement has helped the trend of hybridity thereby making it possible for different designs of even indigenous Nigerian clothing materials to be recreated in all manner of shades, quality and combinations. Technology has helped in the production of many types of cloth designs with different patterns or motifs, which facilitate the hybridisation trend. These new designs and hybridised materials are often cheaper and affordable but most importantly, they lose the cultural significance and prestige attached to the fabrics. The local weavers are discouraged from weaving because the production costs are making their products more expensive, and this leads to lack of patronage. The lack of adequate patronage leads to lack of interest in the learning of the skills by the youths.

Economy: The poor economic status of the developing and underdeveloped countries also affects their patronage of local fabrics and encourages hybridisation. This is due to the high cost of local production which makes the indigenous products even more expensive. The average citizens are continually struggling with poverty and tends to make do with what they can afford. In recent times, imported second hand (used and re-used) clothes have flooded the local markets and they enjoy high patronage because they are cheap. The patronage of these imported clothes encourages hybridisation of local dress culture, resulting in loss of value and non-patronage of indigenous fabrics.

Consumer Culture: The foreign consumer culture and love for imported goods and clothing is another factor that encourages hybridisation in Igbo dress culture. Based on colonial psychology, many people often prefer to buy foreign materials than the traditional ones. There is also a presumption that these products are trendy and possess higher quality than the locally produced versions. The idea of class stratification motivates the wealthy to prefer the expensive and imported goods because it is seen as status symbol. For instance, the Igbo chieftaincy red cap made in Czech Republic is brandished by the rich class as opposed to the one made in Nigeria. This forces local manufacturers to close down or resort to importation and imitation to the detriment of the uniqueness of Igbo traditional dress culture which is progressively going into oblivion.

As the wealthy patronises the imported dress materials giving rise to commercialisation of attire, dress and accessories, shrewd Igbo businessmen increasingly go abroad especially to China and other Asian countries to clone, design and import their own versions of Igbo attire thereby encouraging hybridity. Since these hybridised dress cultures have become trendy, cheaper and lucrative within the value chain, Igbo filmmakers now adopt them for their costumes, thus popularising the trend among their audiences who copy them as the vogue.

Methodology

This research study used the Content Analysis and Non-Participant Observation methods, which are qualitative approaches to data collection. The Content Analysis method involved the extraction of information from films/videos, advertisements, and online or internet sources. The sampling technique was purposive based on visual content and thematic relevance to the research problem. The random Non-Participant Observation method was further used to gather information from costumes used in performances and cultural productions as they pertain to dress culture and their hybridity impacts. The data were analysed using the descriptive and interpretative approach.

Hybridity in Igbo Performance Costumes

Globalisation with its driving components of communication, technology, consumer culture, economic and cultural imperialism encourages hybridisation in Igbo traditional dress culture. This is carried over to artistic performances especially in Nollywood films, arts and cultural production in the creative industry. These are also reflected in contents disseminated through the social media, television, photography, advertisement, festivals, stage production, musical videos and fashion shows. In many Nollywood productions, it is common to see the Igbo dress culture being distorted in the films.

Fig.1: Reflections of hybridity in Igbo dress culture. Photo by Michael Okpala.

Nollywood Films

The use of the hybrid costumes in Nollywood productions is quite common because of the hybrid fashion influence on the costumes. The trend of commercialisation and the taste of the wealthy in the Igbo dress culture have impacted so much on the films produced in Nollywood. The trendy fashion is what the directors and costume designers adopt to costume the characters in their productions. This is obvious in the film, *Anyalewe*, a Nollywood Igbo production directed by Nkem Alu and released to the public in December 2024. The production shows Mama Anyalewe in a market scene, wearing a blue George wrapper on an English styled blouse, while selling in the market. The George rapper she is wearing to sell in the market is not only improper but a violation of the essence of the George wrapper in the traditional Igbo culture. The George wrapper is not worn by everybody but women of a particular class and used for special occasions rather than the daily buying and selling in the market.

In some sub-cultures, she could be sanctioned by the class of women concerned. The adornment of the wrapper with ordinary English blouse is hybridisation. The accepted norm is that the George is worn with a lace blouse material/blouse and a big headgear to show wealth and class. But hybridisation has caused it to lose its worth. Anyalewe's wife Olebara is also wearing the George wrapper as a casual wrapper to perform her household chores with a T-shirt blouse too. At times,

there are arguments that fashion sense, taste and style change with time but not when a people's culture is involved. Dress and fashion are strong elements of a society's visual culture. Indeed, as argued by Roland Barthes, every image is a "cultural message" and meanings are constructed or negotiated, hence denoted meanings and their connoted interpretations are defined by culture and contexts of the viewer (37). The cultural use of the George wrapper in the Igbo context has not changed because it is celebrated and not worn by everybody in some communities. In the film, *Anyalewe*, the cultural context of the functionality of the George wrapper should have been reflected as it relates to Igbo culture.

Plate 2A: Misuse of the reverred George wrapper as casual wear as depicted in the film, *Anyalewe* directed by Nkem Alu. Photo by Francisca Nwadigwe.

Fig. 2B: George material being used for domestic chores in the film, *Anyalewe* directed by Nkem Alu. Photo by Francisca Nwadigwe.

Another film, *Mpu ndi Uka*, directed by Prince Amaechi Anachebe in 2022 also shows a hybridised trend in the costume of the priestess, Ezenwanyi Mmiri who ties a horizontal lined blue and tint of white wrapper from her chest down to her knee, but also adorns the English necklace, pendant and earrings as she performs her roles in her shrine. The Igbo priestess is known to wear white or red wrapper sometimes with cowry or beads depending on the occasion. This traditional finesse and symbolism is totally lacking in the costumes of Ezenwanyi Mmiri as depicted in the film.

Advertisement

The Igbo dress culture and the influence of hybridity is impacting significantly on contemporary local advertisements, as opposed to what obtained in the 1990s as exemplified in the advertisement of Eco bank. It is important to note that hybridity was not very obvious then. The adverts reflected Igbo traditional Igbo costumes. The Igbo woman in the advert wears a white lace blouse, big scarf, and a double wrapper tied around her waist to show the bank is for all including the Igbo which her dressing represented. The Yoruba man in the advert is adorned with the *Aso-oke* and cap.

Furthermore, in the recent Indomie TV commercial Part 7, *Mama Do Good*, the woman in the advertisement is wearing a hybridised costume of Abada material sewed into a skirt, blouse, and its scarf to fit. Another Indomie advert on a billboard in Aba, Abia State also depicts the same costuming trend. This does not depict an Igbo woman if compared to the Eco Bank advert.

Furthermore, in the advertisement of DSTV celebration of "20 years of Magic-African Magic exclusive", the costume of the popular actor, Chinedu Ikedieze (Aki) was a hybridised costume consisting of a traditional Igbo red cap, a neck bead on a Senator suit. This is a caricature of the Igbo dress culture.

Musical Video Films

The musical video production is also not left out in the trend of hybridization in dress culture as reflected in The *Ogene Season I* (Episode 13) starring popular musicians, Flavour and Phyno, in the musical video. The Igbo costume in this video production is hybridised. The Isi-Agu style is combined with a plain, shiny Indian material as the long sleeve shirt of the Isi-Agu attire and worn on a woollen striped red, black, and white hat of the Igbo and a bead necklace. The ladies wear a strapless ball gown, traditional Igbo beads, well beaded hair and extra beads tied around the packed hair. This shows a hybridisation of their costumes and the adoption or mixture of more than two different cultures in the production's costumes.

Indigenous Festivals

There are many festivals of the Igbos but the New Yam festival is arguably the most universally celebrated. The contemporary New Yam festival costumes are so hybridised that the attire of the Chiefs, Cabinet Members, and Ozo titled men are prominently affected. In addition, the Igbo masquerade performances in the New Yam festivals are not left out. For instance, the Ijele masquerade of the Igbo has also undergone hybridisation in its costumes. The Ijele masks of the 1930s were costumed with a thicker material and a wooden carved form as the mask headpiece. The current Ijele mask is purely made of light materials and the carved piece are currently made with light materials of different colours of clothes showing a visible trend of hybridisation.

In the contemporary New Yam festivals, the Chiefs' traditional regalia represented with all sorts of attire to show affluence and reflect the fashion trend. For example, some wear the American baggy styled shorts and tops designed with different textile materials, shoes, with beads on the ankles, wrists, neck, and beaded headgears, sometimes resembling the Oba of Benin headgear. The Igbo chieftaincy red cap for titled men is usually adorned with the priceless feather of the eagle (Ugbene Ugo) unlike the hybridised red caps that are adorned with shiny materials typical of the traditional Asian fabrics and textile materials. It is worthy to note that the red cap and number of feathers attached to it symbolises the achievements and order of ranking of the titled man, similar to the pips in the ranking of the military and other armed forces.

Fig. 3A: The contemporary Ijele masquerade with hybridised features in the costumes.
Photo by Francisca Nwadigwe.

Fig. 3B: A hybridised version of Igbo Chieftaincy attire common in many festival events in contemporary times. Photo by Francisca Nwadigwe showing a Hausa style *Baban Riga* with an Igbo feathered Chieftaincy cap.

Social Media Skits and Content

The social media skits produced by Igbo content creators feature some of the most hybridised costumes and dress culture. It appears they seek to present a comic appearance and make people laugh, hence they tent to hybridise their characters' costumes. Some costume their actors in Western trousers and shirts with a traditional Igbo red or striped woolen cap.
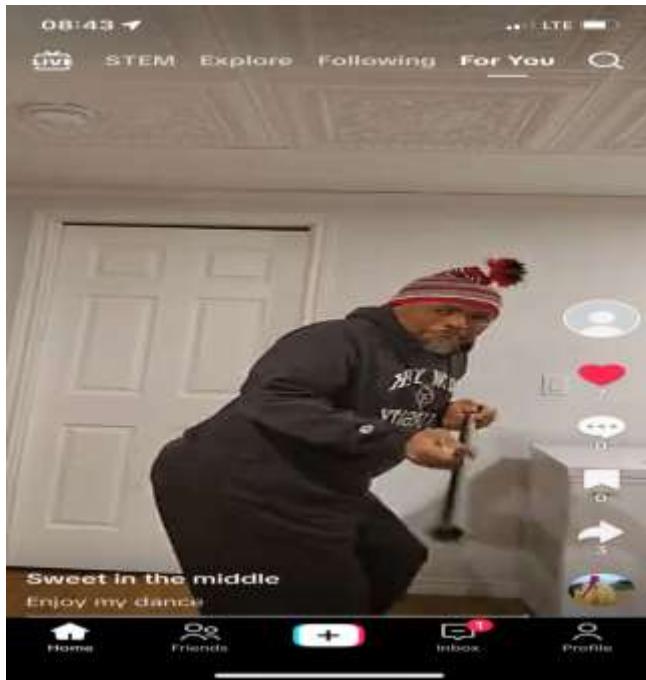
Fig. 4: A skit on Tik Tok featuring costumes comprising Western trousers and a shirt with an Igbo red cap. Performance and photo by Nicholas Akas.

Sometimes, the costumes are combined with Isi Agu (Tiger Head) material to give impression of an Igbo man or woman.

Stage Productions

Many contemporary stage production depicting Igbo cultural backgrounds are also reflective of the hybridisation trend through their costumes. In one of the stage productions observed by the researcher, an actor playing the role of Igwe (King) wore a costume made from an Indian lace material, styled like the Hausa-Fulani caftan with red cap and neck beads and the Igwe was referred to as Igwe Nnewi (Traditional Ruler of Nnewi). This is a good example of how the wealthy and royalty with their taste and sophistication encourage hybridisation of the Igbo dress culture. This tag must have been influenced by their observation of the Igwe's regalia which are mostly made from the exotic, shiny, stoned, beaded Indian materials.

Plate 5: Hybridisation of Igbo royalty costumes with exotic Asian materials. Photo by Michael Okpala.

Fashion Shows

The fashion exhibition shows mounted by both international and local designers to promote their designs and fashion to global markets, embrace hybridisation as a fashion trend. The driving force is to make their design trendy, accepted, and attract increased patronage. Similarly, Governor Soludo of Anambra State has been advocating for the patronage of traditional materials like the Akwa Ocha of the Akwete people. The Governor has continuously used it as a material for all his clothes. This is encouraging but it can also be observed that the Governor's design styles in the use of the Akwa Ocha attire are also hybridised. Furthermore, the fashion design of Chief Theresa Onuorah of Unubi, a contemporary Igbo musician, is also relevant in this study. Theresa Onuorah of the Ijele song fame is a female Chief, which is a 20th century introduction title now bestowed on a woman in the Igbo culture. She has also made a hybridised fashion statement through her dress culture to reflect her titled identity.

In her theory earlier cited in this study, Butler recognises that "individuals have urgency in performing and negotiating their identities" (140). Theresa Onuora has been able to make a fashion statement in her chieftaincy attire as a woman, designing for her gender a resemblance

of the chieftaincy attire with caps, feathers and beads but in an exotic style fashioned to match the outfit of the male chiefs and still reflect her status as a Chief in Unubi kingdom. The costume is clearly a hybridised attire.
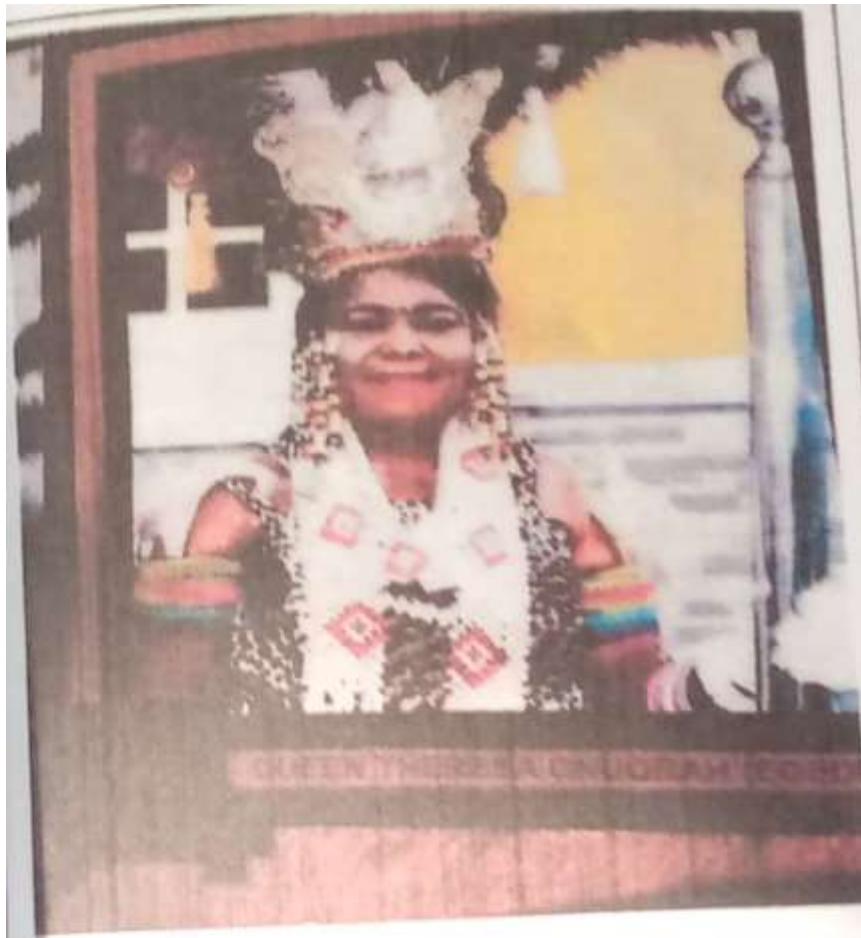
Fig. 6: Theresa Onuora in her hybridised fashion style, carving out a unique visual identity for herself. Photo by Chioma Onuoha.

Conclusion

From the diverse samples presented, analysed and interpreted so far, the study concludes that the trend of hybridisation constitutes a threat to the preservation of the Igbo dress heritage, as the younger generation continues to imbibe and idolise the hybridised trend popularised by the Nollywood and Nigeria's performing arts industry. Similarly, the consumer taste of the contemporary Igbo should reflect their traditional goods and resources. Hence, more research studies should be conducted to help reinforce the Igbo cultural identity as depicted in dress culture. The Igbo should be seen and recognised as a major culture and not a sub-culture in the global space

since technology has made the world a global village. The Igbo scholars and researchers should help in projecting their culture through their writings and other technological inventions to sustain the dress culture in the 21st century global society. The commercialisation drive of Igbo businessmen should focus towards marketing their local resources and dress culture, after all, they manufacture and supply these goods and supply influences demand and consumer choice.

Furthermore, policy makers in the cultural sector, Nollywood film producers and artists in the Igbo creative industries should promote the Igbo dress culture and heritage through their works as marketed in the global space. Naturally, when individuals and groups connect with their cultural heritage, tradition and history their identity becomes closely tied to that culture.

Globalisatiom is not totally bad but the Igbo should turn it to advantage towards the cause of preserving their own cultural heritage as China and the Asians are doing with their clothes and technology in the global space. Similarly, the governments in the Igbo-speaking States should make policies to promote the local craftsmen and women to sustain and advance their arts and crafts. The Akwa Ocha and the Akwete communities should be brought to the limelight through making documentaries about their crafts of textile weaving. There should be a sustained synergy between these Akwete weavers and the Aba textile and garment industry in order to develop a global product with local cultural resources. The governments and organised private sector should improve the economy so that people will have a better and fulfilled life and be proud of their heritage. The local communities should be developed to encourage young people to stay in their villages and learn the different crafts of the Igbo people, earn a decent living from there, and discourage the *Japa* (emigration) syndrome. When individuals share their values and norms and even their beliefs in their cultural affiliation, their identity becomes more deeply appreciated and rooted in that culture.

The museums should be used to preserve some of the dress culture of the people as a reference point to the younger generation in upholding the Igbo heritage. The Nigeria Censors Board should not limit their work to political and sexual content but should also ensure that costumes and accessories reflect the proper dress culture in their films. For example, a Yoruba costume of Aso-oke being used to depict an Ijaw man as his traditional clothes is misleading to the audience and improper. Culture should be taught and reinforced in school curricula to help the young know and appreciate their heritage and dress culture as a means of socialisation. The cherished identity of the Igbo should not be allowed to slide to extinction and the performing arts and creative industries have a vital role to play in that regard. Policies to maintain indigenous cultural heritage should be encouraged from the kindred and community level. This is because when people feel a strong affinity and belonging to their cultural community, their identity becomes more intertwined with their cultural norms and values. The Nigerian Cultural Policy should be reviewed and updated frequently to keep abreast with current trends and challenges in the cultural sector.

WORKS CITED

Akoh, Ameh. *The Subaltern can Write: Theory, Criticism and Power in African Dramatic Literature.* (Inaugural Lecture), Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, 2023.

Anachebe, Amaedu (dir.) *Mpu Ndi Uka* (2022). M.Startimestv.com. Accessed Feb. 10. 2025.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Barthes, Roland. "Rhetoric of the Image", *Image, Music, Text*, transl. by Stephen Heath, London: Fontana Press, 1977, pp.32-51.

Butler, Judith P. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

De Negri, Eve. *Nigerian Body Adornment*. Lagos: Academy Press, 1976.

Ecobank (Early 1990s TV Commercials). https://www.youtube.com/watch/ecobank. Accessed Dec. 5, 2022.

Flavour & Phyno. *Ogene Season I, Episode 13*. Africa Magic (DSTV), Multi Choice Nigeria, Accessed Jan. 30, 2025.

Indomie Advertisement *(Igbo Language Version)*. https://pcm.wikipedia.org. Accessed Feb. 2. 2025.

Magic-African Magic Exclusive. *Celebrating 20 Years of Africa Magic* (DSTV Africa Magic), Multi Choice Nigeria, Accessed Feb. 14, 2025.

Mama Do Good, Abia JPG (Part 7) Indomie Advertisement, https://pcm.wikipedia.org. Accessed Feb. 13. 2025.

Nkem, Alu (dir.) *Anyalewe* (2024). *Africa Magic Igbo* (DSTV Channel 159). Multi Choice Nigeria, Accessed Feb. 8, 2025.

Show Some Love With Indomie (April 2022). https://www.youtube.com/watch/indomie. Accessed Feb. 10, 2025.

LOSS OF INNOCENCE AND UNCERTAIN DESTINIES IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA: A REAPPRAISAL OF AHMADOU KOUROUMA'S *QU AND ON REFUSE ON DIT NON*

Judith E. Ezeamaka Ph.D

Department of Modern European Languages (French), Faculty of Arts, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba

ezeamakajudith@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines the themes of lost innocence and an uncertain future as portrayed in Ahmadou Kourouma's *Quand on refuse on dit non*, a poignant exploration of the socio-political turmoil in postcolonial Africa. The novel vividly depicts the devastating impact of war, corruption, and systemic failures on the continent's youth, symbolizing a generation robbed of its potential and burdened with an uncertain destiny. The past forms the foundation for the future; this is why it is said that 'a man who does not know where the rain started beating him will not know where it stopped'. Through the experience of the child soldiers, Kourouma critiques the erosion of traditional values, the disintegration of familial and societal structures, and the manipulation of the vulnerable ones in the face of political instability. The narrative's evocative style captures its characters' psychological trauma and moral vagueness, offering a microcosmic view of Africa's challenges. By exploring these interconnected themes, this paper underscores the urgent need for systemic restructurings and the reclaiming of agency to envision a more hopeful and sustainable future for Africa.

Keywords: Innocence, Uncertain destinies, Postcolonial and Future.

Introduction

Africans welcomed the dawn of independence with immense hope, feeling a collective relief after years of colonial rule. The sounds of freedom resonated throughout the continent, filled with aspirations for self-determination, economic growth, and a cultural revival. Prominent leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, and Léopold Sédar Senghor envisioned a new era, one where Africans could shape their futures, liberated from imperial oppression. Yet, as the initial celebrations of independence subsided, the challenges of postcolonial governance began to emerge.

Instead of bringing about stability and progress, independence often led to political turmoil, economic mismanagement, and widespread disillusionment. While the structures of colonial rule were dismantled, they were frequently replaced by authoritarian regimes emerging from military coups and one-party states, perpetuating the same oppression and exploitation that Africans had fought against. This situation fueled ethnic and regional tensions that eventually erupted into civil wars, with corruption becoming rampant.

Leaders who once advocated for independence morphed into dictators, desperately clinging to power and turning against their people.

> Quand j'ai su que la guerre tribal avait atterri en Côte-d'Ivoire…(La République de Côte-d'Ivoire est un Etat de la côte occidentale de l'Afrique. Elle est comme toutes les républiques foutues de cette zone, démocratique dans quelques domaines mais pourrie jusqu'aux os par la corruption dans tous les autres.) pg 11

English translation

> When I found out that the tribal war had reached Côte d'Ivoire... (The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire is a state on the western coast of Africa. Like all the doomed republics in this region, it is democratic in some areas but rotten to the core with corruption in all others.)

The economic promises of independence are yet to be actualized as many African economies remain structurally dependent on former colonial powers, exporting raw materials while importing finished goods in a cycle of economic dependency, thereby deepening poverty and leading to prevalent unemployment, dwindling infrastructure, and a growing sense of hopelessness among the youths.

This disillusionment in the postcolonial context is a prominent theme in African literature, with writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Ahmadou Kourouma using their works as powerful instruments for critique and self-reflection. Kourouma, in particular, highlights the grim realities that postcolonial African nations face, where the youth are often trapped in cycles of conflict, exploitation, and uncertainty. In his novel Quand on refuse on dit non, Kourouma presents a poignant depiction of this disillusionment, telling the story of a child soldier to symbolize the shattered dreams of a continent still striving for stability. This perspective allows us to explore how the themes of lost innocence and uncertain futures in postcolonial Africa are intricately woven into the narrative fabric created by Kourouma.

Definition of keywords

Innocence

Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines innocence as "freedom from legal guilt of a particular crime or offense; freedom from guilt or sin through being unacquainted with evil: blamelessness.".Innocence is therefore the state of being untouched by corruption, deceit, or the harsh realities of the world. It is the unpolluted purity of a child's laughter, the unwavering trust in human goodness, and the blissful ignorance of life's cruel complexities.

Banville, in his work Shroud, portrays innocence as a delicate and often deceptive state, shaped by one's personal history and self-view. He suggests that innocence transcends simple notions of purity or naivety; it can also signify a kind of ignorance, either enforced by society or consciously upheld by individuals to evade confronting uncomfortable realities. Innocence is stripped away in the face of war, suffering, or

disillusionment, yielding to the weight of knowledge, pain, and survival. Once it is lost, it can never be fully regained.

In the African literary tradition, especially in Ahmadou Kourouma's *Quand on refuse on dit non*, innocence takes on a richer significance beyond its usual ties to purity and naivety; it emerges as a fragile and often transient state, molded by the brutal truths of war, politics, and societal upheaval. In Kourouma's story, innocence is not simply the lack of guilt or corruption but a vulnerable condition that is inevitably broken by the harshness of lived experience, whether that involves war, dictatorship, or disillusionment with independence and governance.

The novel centers on Birahima, a child soldier, whose journey reflects the profound loss of innocence. Initially, he embodies the classic idea of innocence, marked by youthful naivety and fragility. However, as he is plunged into the chaos of war, his innocence is sacrificed in the name of survival. The story highlights that innocence is not merely lost but is forcibly stripped away, replaced by a toughened realism necessary for endurance. Morrison, in her writing, reinterprets innocence as a multifaceted idea that is often influenced by race and gender. She demonstrates that certain groups can be denied innocence due to existing social hierarchies, especially in the realms of slavery and oppression. Her work suggests that innocence transcends a simple moral condition and serves as a political tool used to either justify or condemn individuals.

From the viewpoint of many African literary writers, such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Kourouma, innocence is frequently depicted as a state of being that is unsuspecting.

Uncertain destinies

An important concept discussed in this paper is uncertain destinies. This term describes futures that are unpredictable, unstable, or influenced by external factors beyond an individual's control. It conveys a sense of ambiguity, where one's fate is in constant flux due to circumstances like war, political upheaval, economic challenges, or personal struggles.

In African literature, especially in works such as Ahmadou Kourouma's *Quand on refuse on dit non,* uncertain destinies capture the unpredictable paths of individuals facing postcolonial instability, civil conflict, and the erosion of traditional structures. Characters like child soldiers or displaced persons often find themselves vulnerable to political chaos and social unrest, leaving their futures uncertain.

Uncertain destinies illustrate the existential challenges faced by characters in many African literary works, where the legacies of colonialism, systemic corruption, and personal hardships render the future unpredictable and often perilous. This concept emphasizes the tension between hope and despair, action and powerlessness, underscoring the notion that destiny is not solely a matter of choice but is often shaped by external circumstances.

Postcolonial

The term postcolonial refers to the historical, political, cultural, and literary conditions of societies that have undergone colonization and are now dealing with its consequences. It includes both the time after a nation gains independence from colonial rule and the ongoing effects of colonialism on identity, governance,

economics, and cultural expression. Edward Said connects postcolonialism to Orientalism and discourse, suggesting that it involves breaking down colonial structures and examining the ideological and cultural legacies of empires. Leela Gandhi describes postcolonialism as an intellectual movement that critically engages with the cultural, political, and historical impacts of colonialism and imperialism. In African literature, postcolonialism serves not just as a time marker but as a perspective through which writers and scholars assess the lasting effects of colonization. Postcolonial literature frequently critiques the ongoing influence of colonial ideologies, the difficulties of nation-building, and the tensions between indigenous traditions and Western modernity. Authors like Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Ahmadou Kourouma, and Wole Soyinka delve into the complexities of postcolonial societies, addressing issues such as political corruption, identity crises, and the quest to reclaim indigenous heritage while contending with the remnants of colonial rule.

Postcolonialism serves as both a historical fact and an intellectual lens, allowing us to comprehend how nations that were once colonized continue to evolve and redefine their identities in a world still marked by the legacies of colonialism.

Future

The future refers to the time that lies ahead, filled with events, possibilities, and outcomes that are yet to occur. It represents both an abstract concept of time and a realm of potential, influenced by individual choices, societal changes, and unpredictable external factors. Often contrasted with the past and present, the future embodies hope, uncertainty, and the unknown. In literature, the future is explored in various ways:

In postcolonial African literature, it often reflects the uncertainties faced by newly independent nations, the lingering effects of colonialism, and the ongoing struggle for self-determination.

In everyday life, the future is seen as a realm of aspirations, planning, and anticipation, where individuals and societies project their hopes and fears. Whether perceived as predetermined or flexible, it remains a crucial aspect of human existence, influencing our decisions and dreams.

Theoretical framework

To establish a strong theoretical foundation for this article, we will integrate postcolonial theory and Bildungsroman theory, as they resonate with the themes of innocence, uncertain futures, and the postcolonial experience in Kourouma's novel.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is crucial for grasping the socio-political context of *Quand on refuse on dit non,* as the novel depicts Africa's challenges after independence, including dictatorship, civil wars, and the disillusionment faced by the youth.

Postcolonial Theory and the Loss of Innocence in Postcolonial Africa

Postcolonial theory offers a valuable perspective for exploring the themes of lost innocence and uncertain futures in *Quand on refuse on dit non* by Ahmadou Kourouma. Pioneered by thinkers like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, this theory examines the lasting impacts of colonialism and the intricate realities faced by societies after gaining independence. In Kourouma's novel, this lens allows for a deeper understanding of how historical and political turmoil influences both personal and collective feelings of disillusionment. The protagonist's loss of innocence reflects the widespread sense of betrayal experienced by many African nations that, despite their independence, find themselves trapped in neocolonial systems and internal strife. Kwame Nkrumah, in his work The Last Stage of Imperialism, posits that:

 "Africa is a paradox which illustrates and highlights neo-colonialism. Her earth is rich, yet the products that come from above the earth are poor."

Kourouma's story delves into the shift from youthful dreams to stark disillusionment, reflecting the journey of Africa after gaining independence. The main character, Birahima, embodies the experience of many young people in postcolonial Africa, as he navigates a reality filled with political corruption, violence, and betrayal. Birahima remarks:

> Pour survivre, les planteurs africaines décidèrent de créer un syndicat agricole dès que l'autorisation en fut donnée aux colonises. Ils mirent à la tête de ce syndicat Houphouët-Boigny.
>
> A partir de cette date, l'histoire de la Côte-d'Ivoire se confond avec l'histoire personnelle de Houphouët-Boigny
>
> Moi, petit Birahima, j'ai cherché dans mes dictionnaires, j'ai trouvé le sens de discrimination. Mais j'avais déjà compris que l'histoire de la Côte-d'Ivoire se confondait avec celle de Houphouët-Boigny. Ce qui ce signifie que s'ouvraient en Côte-d'Ivoire « les soleils de Houphouët-Boigny » les soleils, d'après l'Inventaire des particularités lexicales du français en Afrique notre, signifient ères. Pp 66-67

English translation:

> To survive, the African planters decided to create an agricultural union as soon as they were granted permission to do so. They placed Houphouët-Boigny at the head of this union.
>
> From that moment on, the history of Côte d'Ivoire became intertwined with the personal history of Houphouët-Boigny.
>
> I, little Birahima, searched in my dictionaries and found the meaning of discrimination. But I had already understood that the history of Côte d'Ivoire was intertwined with that of Houphouët-Boigny. This means that in Côte d'Ivoire, "the suns of Houphouët-Boigny" were rising. According to the Inventory of Lexical Particularities of French in Africa, suns mean eras.

Postcolonial theory highlights how these challenges stem from a colonial history in which Western-style governance structures were imposed, failing to resonate with indigenous socio-political systems. Consequently, newly independent nations faced instability, creating an uncertain future for their citizens. The protagonist's journey serves as a metaphor for the shattered hopes and unfulfilled promises that accompanied decolonization. Additionally, the postcolonial idea of resistance is crucial for understanding the novel's critique of governance after independence. Frantz Fanon's insights into the dangers of national consciousness are particularly pertinent, as Kourouma portrays African leaders who maintain colonial hierarchies instead of dismantling them. The young protagonist, once brimming with hope, continually faces the disillusionment of his ideals at the hands of those in power and expresses uncertainty "Je me sentais comme un étranger dans mon propre pays." P. 12

English translation: "I felt like a stranger in my own country."

> Bédié pensa au retour à la terre. Mais la terre était occupée par ceux qui la travaillaient, comme l'avait voulu Houphouët-Boigny. Voilà l'Ivoirien sans emploi et sans terre dans son propre pays. Pour faire face à cette situation catastrophique, Bédié fit sienne l'idéologie de « l'Ivoirité » p. 106 - 107

English translation:

> "Bédié thought about returning to the land. But the land was occupied by those who worked it, just as Houphouët-Boigny had intended. Thus, the Ivorian was left without a job and without land in his own country. To address this catastrophic situation, Bédié embraced the ideology of 'Ivoirité.'"

The novel underscores the repetitive cycle of oppression, showing how those who were once colonized can become enablers of new forms of subjugation. The theme of lost innocence reaches beyond the individual, capturing the disillusionment of an entire generation disheartened by the failures of postcolonial leadership. In their article "Aporia and Ambivalence in Armah and Kourouma's Novels: A Deconstructive Study," Njoku A. and Ezeamaka J. examine the experiences of two characters, Juma and Abena, in *Two Thousand Seasons* who share their sorrowful stories as returnee slaves and criticize the kings and leaders forced upon them by their enslavers, who drastically altered their fates from being free-born to becoming victims of circumstance.

> Our chiefs, our leaders, they have bellies and they have tongues. Mind, they do not have. That is the white destroyers' happiness; that is why the white destroyers will exhaust their long knowledge of murder to keep our rotten chiefs, our bloated leaders on top of us. No one sold us but our chiefs and their hangers-on (p.146).

Postcolonial theory highlights the importance of marginalized voices, allowing us to see the resilience woven into Kourouma's narrative. Although the protagonist encounters uncertainty, he retains a sense of

agency. His journey acts as a form of resistance to prevailing historical narratives, offering a different viewpoint on African identity and destiny. Birahima embodies hope:

> Moi, petit Birahima, j'ai tout retenu sans tout comprendre. Ce que je n'ai pas compris pour le moment sera bien compris avec mes dictionnaires quand je serai fortiche pour le brevet élémentaire et pour le bac. Pp 87

English translation:

> I, little Birahima, have remembered everything without fully understanding it. What I don't understand for now, I will figure out later with my dictionaries when I become skilled enough for the elementary certificate and the baccalaureate

Through storytelling, oral traditions, and linguistic creativity, Kourouma reclaims African identity, pushing back against both colonial and neocolonial narratives. Thus, *Quand on refuse on dit non* transcends being merely a novel about loss and uncertainty; it also embodies the continuous fight for meaning, identity, and self-determination in postcolonial Africa. Their experiences are similar to those of other returnees, hence "Their talk, like ours, was always of the terrible treachery of chiefs and leaders, of greed of parasites that pushed us so far into the whiteness of death" (TTS 145).

The Effects of Loss of Innocence and Uncertain Destinies in Postcolonial Africa

Postcolonial Africa has experienced significant social, political, and economic transformations that have deeply influenced the lives of its people and communities. A notable outcome of this era is the loss of innocence, affecting both individuals and society as a whole, alongside the uncertainty of futures in a swiftly evolving landscape.

The theme of lost innocence in postcolonial Africa is prevalent in African literature and reflects contemporary realities. It manifests in several ways:

a) The Betrayal of Ideals

Numerous African countries achieved independence with the hope that liberation from colonial rule would lead to a new chapter of prosperity, unity, and self-governance. Yet, the years following independence were frequently marred by corruption, authoritarian regimes, and economic struggles. This reality shattered the optimistic belief that independence would automatically resolve Africa's challenges. In Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, the protagonist, Odili, initially believes in political change but later realizes that post-independence leaders are as corrupt as their colonial predecessors. Birahima remarks:

> Depuis, cela continue. La corruption est devenue une constate de la société ivoirienne. Houphouët-Boigny l'a

> laissée s'établir. Parce qu'il était lui-même corrompu, corrupteur et dilapidateur.

> Houphouët-Boigny fut un corrompu. Dès le pouvoir, tous ses proches et amis devinrent des milliardaires. Il se mit à faire des investissements dans la propriété familiale. P 92

English translation:

> Since then, it has continued. Corruption has become a constant in Ivorian society. Houphouët-Boigny allowed it to take root because he was corrupt, a corrupter, and a squanderer.

> Houphouët-Boigny was a corrupt leader. As soon as he came to power, all his close associates and friends became billionaires. He began making investments in family-owned properties.

b) Child Soldiers and the Brutality of War

Civil wars and ethnic conflicts in postcolonial Africa have stolen the childhoods of countless young people. In countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte-d'Ivoire, children who are recruited as soldiers are stripped of their innocence and are compelled to engage in acts of violence. Ishmael Beah's memoir "A Long Way Gone" narrates how young boys, once innocent, became killers due to war and manipulation, and the same is the story of Birahima.

> Voilà Birahima, un ancien enfant-soldat qui a fait la guerre du Liberia. Il buvait, fumait, se droguait. Maintenant la grâce d'Allah est descendue sur lui. Il a tout cesse" disait-il en souriant. P.32

English translation :

> Here is Birahima, a former child soldier who fought in the Liberian war. He drank, smoked, and did drugs. 'Now, by the grace of Allah, he has stopped everything,' he said with a smile.

2. Uncertain Destinies in Postcolonial Africa

The unpredictability of life in postcolonial Africa arises from political instability, economic challenges, and the lasting impacts of colonialism. After gaining independence, many African nations encountered coups, military rule, and civil conflicts, which complicated individuals' ability to plan for their futures. Citizens frequently find themselves under governments that change policies without warning, leaving them unsure about their paths ahead. In Ahmadou Kourouma's *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages,* the character Koyaga embodies the rise and fall that mirrors the instability of numerous African political systems. Furthermore, the anticipated economic growth following independence has often fallen short for many African countries due to mismanagement, corruption, and neocolonial pressures. Consequently, many Africans seek better opportunities abroad, often facing uncertain prospects in foreign lands. Chimamanda

Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* delves into the experiences of Africans who leave their home countries, unsure of what the diaspora holds for them.

Conclusion

The themes of loss of innocence and uncertain destinies are central to many historical and literary narratives in postcolonial Africa. Although independence brought hopes for new beginnings, the harsh realities of political corruption, violence, economic hardship, and cultural conflicts have resulted in widespread disillusionment and instability. African writers use their works to shed light on these challenges, providing critical insights into the continent's history, current situation, and prospects. Despite these difficulties, African societies are continually evolving and redefining themselves, carving out new paths in a rapidly changing world. The resilience of African people, their innovative spirit, and their rich cultural heritage offer a glimmer of hope in times of uncertainty. *Quand on refuse on dit non* stands as a poignant reminder of the ongoing struggles faced by postcolonial Africa, capturing the dual tragedies of lost childhood and uncertain futures. Kourouma's novel is not only a literary gem but also a historical document that encourages readers to reflect on the past while imagining a more stable and equitable future for Africa's youth. As the field of postcolonial studies progresses, his work remains a vital resource for understanding the intricate issues of decolonization, power, and identity within the African context. Ultimately, Kourouma's novel does more than recount a sorrowful history—it compels its audience to envision a different future, one where the innocence of youth is safeguarded and where Africa's destiny is shaped not by past failures but by the strength of its people.

Recommendations

After a thorough examination of the theme "loss of innocence and uncertain destinies in postcolonial Africa: a reappraisal of Ahmadou Kourouma's *Quand on refuse on dit non*," this paper suggests the following approaches to address pressing issues and restore hope:

1. Strengthening Education and Historical Awareness

There is need to implement strong educational systems that cover both colonial and postcolonial African history and literature. This will help younger generations grasp the past and its influence on their present. Encouraging critical thinking about colonial legacies and leadership failures will empower youth with essential knowledge.

2. Promoting Stable Governance and Political Accountability

Africans must build stronger democratic institutions to prevent political instability, corruption, and exploitation, all of which contribute to uncertain futures. Young people should be motivated to engage in governance to foster a sense of ownership over Africa's future.

3. Protecting Children from the Effects of War and Conflict

Both government and non-governmental organizations must enforce international and local laws to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers and ensure that rehabilitation programs are available for those affected. It is essential to provide psychological and social support to children exposed to violence, helping them regain hope and stability in their lives.

4. Creating Economic Opportunities for Youth

Governments should focus on creating jobs, offering vocational training, and supporting entrepreneurship programs to help young people avoid despair and criminal activities. When youth and young adults have stable employment, the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior decreases.

5. Using Literature as Tools for Healing and Resistance

African writers should be encouraged to continue exploring postcolonial issues through their creative works. Literature works, such as Kourouma's, should be included in both academic and public discussions to raise awareness of historical injustices and motivate change.

References

Achebe, Chinua. *A Man of the People*. Heinemann, 1966.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. Americanah. Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

Armah, Ayi Kwei. *Two Thousand Seasons*. London: Heinemann, 1973.

Beah, Ishmael. A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

Banville, John. *Shroud.* New York: Knopf, 2002.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Gandhi, Leela. Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction. Columbia UP, 1998.

Kourouma, Ahmadou. Quand on refuse on dit non Edition du Seuile, 2004

Mbembe, Achille. On the Postcolony. University of California Press, 2001.

Moretti, Franco. The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture. Verso, 1987.

Morrison, Tony. *A Mercy*. New York: Knopf, 2008.

*Njoku, A. Ezeamaka J. "Aporia and Ambivalence in Armah and Kourouma's Novels: A Deconstructive Study" Kiabara, *University of Port Harcourt Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. 25. No 1 & 2, Rainfall, 2019.

Nkrumah, Kwame. Neo-Colonialism: *The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.

NIGERIA –A MOTHER WITHOUT CHILDREN: IMPLICATIONS FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Prof. Benjamin Akpore UMUDI
Department of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Orogun
Delta State, Nigeria.
umudialive@gmail.com

Abstract
Nigeria is ironically described as "a mother without children" to capture the weak bond between the state and its citizens. Unlike developed economies such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom, where patriotism is a strong national value, Nigerian citizens exhibit a low level of patriotism towards the state. This deficiency is linked to decades of neglect by successive governments in providing healthcare, quality education, affordable food, fuel subsidy, poverty alleviation, and a guaranteed future. National development requires active citizen participation, yet such participation is limited in Nigeria due to alienation and disillusionment. This study investigates the rationale behind the description of Nigeria as a mother without children, using Need Theory as its framework. The research adopts a descriptive survey design, employing self-administered interview questionnaires via phone calls, emails, and physical contact with 200 respondents across age brackets of 18–39 years and 40–75 years. Data were analyzed using simple percentage calculations. Findings reveal that patriotism among Nigerian citizens is alarmingly low, negatively affecting their role in national development. The paper concludes that effective implementation of citizenship education across all levels of education is critical for cultivating patriotism and national consciousness. It recommends that government should initiate policies and programmes capable of rebuilding trust, promoting civic responsibility, and encouraging citizens to contribute to sustainable national development.

Key Words: Nigeria, Mother, Children, Citizenship, Patriotism, National Development

Introduction
Mothers are never without children, yet Nigeria is ironically described as a mother without children. This reflects the neglect that citizens experience, much like children who grew up without the care of their mother. Many Nigerians have struggled to survive harsh conditions, facing neglect from the state in terms of access to healthcare, education, food security, fuel subsidy, poverty alleviation, and a guaranteed future. In contrast, developed economies such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom enjoy strong patriotism from their citizens. In Nigeria, however, patriotism is low, weakening citizens' participation in national development. Unless government demonstrates genuine concern for citizens' well-being, trust and loyalty to the state will continue to decline. Policies that alienate citizens further hinder their willingness to support and contribute meaningfully to nation building.

Citizenship education is designed to bridge this gap by training young people to understand the processes of citizenship and patriotism. As a subject, it prepares learners to appreciate their civic roles, cultivate love and commitment to their country, and contribute to national progress. By linking patriotism with development, citizenship education emphasizes that a nation advances through the collective efforts of its people. It teaches that the highest service one can render is to be a patriotic citizen.

Conceptually, patriotism denotes love, attachment, and commitment to one's nation. Jideofor Adibe (2016) underscores that patriotism entails special affection for Nigeria, a sense of personal identification with the nation, and a willingness to sacrifice for its good. Yet, evidence shows that patriotism in Nigeria is in decline. For instance, voter apathy has increased steadily, with the 2024 electoral report by Ben Ezeamalu confirming a historically low turnout, continuing a two-decade trend of disengagement. Such apathy reflects disinterest in national affairs and undermines collective development.

This negative attitude stems largely from neglect of citizens' basic needs. Like a mother abandoning her children, Nigeria has failed to provide for many of its people, who live without significant government support. While the state's primary duty is security of lives and property, insecurity has reached alarming levels. Similarly, quality of life remains poor, with most citizens living below the poverty line. Doris Dokua Sasu (2024) reports that Nigeria scored only 0.38 points in the 2023 Digital Quality of Life Index, ranking 88th globally—a marginal improvement from 0.34 in 2022—showing limited government impact on citizens' welfare.

Patriotism is critical to national development, yet it is difficult to mobilize a dissatisfied and disillusioned populace. The Nigerian Constitution (Section 24c) requires citizens to enhance the prestige of the nation, defend it, and render national service. It also emphasizes national unity, obedience to law, and responsible co-existence. However, many citizens are reluctant to fulfill these duties because they feel excluded from the benefits of governance. As a result, Nigeria appears abandoned—like a mother without children—with citizens showing little concern for the welfare of the state.

It is against this backdrop that this paper discusses *Nigeria: A Mother without Children: Implications for Citizenship Education and National Development in Nigeria*.

Statement of the Problem

A mother without children is the ironical description of Nigeria and her citizens. Other developed economy, such as United States of America and the United Kingdom enjoy patriotism from their citizen. Citizens in Nigeria have low rate of patriotism towards the Nigeria State. Attention given to citizens by their government in terms of healthcare service delivery, education, fuel subsidy, cheap food items, poverty alleviation and a guaranteed future can prompt patriotism. It takes the participation of citizens to achieve national development. Studies have not been sufficiently directed towards the investigation on the rationale why Nigeria is described as a mother without children. The paper has answered the following question that:

What is the rate of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria. This question sought the opinion of a cross section of citizens in Nigeria to provide the needed answer in the following section of the paper.

Objective of the Paper
It is the main objective of the paper to establish the rate at which there is patriotism among citizens and national development in Nigerian. Specific objective includes the following:
i. Examine the rate of Patriotism of Citizens in Nigeria
2. Determine the rate of participation of the Nigerian citizens in national development
3. Assess the rate at which participants' gender, age bracket, level of education, and employment, would influence their patriotism and participation in national development as citizens in Nigeria.

The Need Theory
The study is hinged on the Need Theory for its theoretical framework. The theory was developed by Harvard psychologist David McClelland in the 1960s. Need theory is a motivational model that explains how a person's actions are influenced by their needs for achievement, affiliation, and power. This theory aligned with the theory of response stimulus. Stimulus-response theory, presents the idea that learning and behaviour can be explained by interactions between stimuli and the responses they evoke. Both theories are used to explain how we can understand the correlation between Nigeria like a mother and patriotic citizens in national development. The implication of the theory to this study indicates that there is a point of motivation from the country, Nigeria in terms of satisfying the basic need for quality life for their citizen to prompt their response for patriotism and meaningfully contribute to national development. Thus, the above theory is appropriate for use in this type of study. Hence, it is adopted to provide a theoretical framework for the paper.

Methodology
. The design is based on a descriptive survey involving the use of a self-response interview questionnaire through phone calls, email and physical contacts on a cross-section of the Nigeria society among age bracket of 18-39years and 40-75years 200 adults respondents. Generated data were analyzed using simple percentage calculation. Data presentation utilized Table of percentage with a rating on responses where: 100% =4; 80% =3; 60% =2; and 30% =1, respectively.

Literature Review on Basic Variables of the Study
This section of the paper presents a review of related empirical literature where attention is given to discussing the following variables, including: citizenship education, patriotism of citizens in Nigeria, participation of the Nigerian citizens in national development, respectively.
1. Citizenship Education and Curriculum Implementation

Citizenship education is a school subject that teaches students how to be active and responsible citizens in a democracy. It helps students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make decisions and take responsibility for their communities. By teaching citizenship education, teachers support the building of their students' skills and aptitudes in critical thinking, analyzing information, expressing ideas, taking part in discussions, negotiating, conflict resolution, and participating in community action. Citizenship education is an important school subject because it has a linear correlation with national development since students learn acceptable behaviors needed for nation-building. Responsibilities of citizens to their country are emphasized during the implementation of this curriculum. Citizenship education is important because it helps people become informed, responsible, and active citizens who can contribute to their communities and society. The study by Edinyang, Ele and Odey (2023) stated that, "the idea of citizenship education is centered on educating people about their rights, obligations, and roles as citizens of a given nation". Training for role-play by individual and collective individuals to meaningfully contribute to national development make the course one of the outstanding educational programmes of the Nigeria Federal government with the intention to develop in every young adult, the need to become patriotic to the country and where there is opportunity they can meaningfully support the country .

The implementation of Citizenship Education in Nigeria involves integrating civic knowledge, values, and skills into the curriculum and daily life of students. This includes direct teaching of citizenship as a subject, integration of civic concepts into other subjects, and cross-curricular activities that connect with the community. Effective implementation also relies on strong political commitment, democratic teaching methodologies, and inclusive education practices. The study by Cklaimz, Ita and Uba. (2025) linked the successful implementation of the citizenship education curriculum to the realization of nation-building goals and objectives in Nigeria. This is because the authors found that Citizenship Education plays a critical role in fostering national identity, civic responsibility, and active participation among citizens, which are essential to achieving broader nation-building objectives.

Thus, effective implementation of the citizenship education curriculum is important to drive home the objective of the programme. Implementation implies to the teaching and learning of the subject in classroom situation where teacher, students and the subject-matter interact. It is at the implementation stage that the objective of the programme is being inculcated into the minds of the students. In this way, students are able to imbibe the doctrine inherent in citizenship education. Nigeria is in dared need of the knowledge and understanding of citizenship education in order to prepare the young adults to become patriotic to their country. Therefore, school teachers with the knowledge of the subject matter are encouraged to effectively implement the curriculum for the purpose of realizing the goals of the programme.

2. Patriotism in Nigeria

Patriotism is a concept that details how citizens of a country would demonstrate their affections and supports for their country. National development requires that citizens participate actively by showing commitment to government programme and policies. It thus demands that citizens should be patriotic to the country's good. This is because, patriotism is a virtue without which any attempt at nation-building will be futile. In other words, a majority of the citizens of Nigeria must show concerns for the development of the country by being responsible and by showing a strong desire to contribute their quota to the development of their motherland and make her outstanding in the comity of nations. Joseph Ononaye (2017) suggested that "if we want to instill patriotism into Nigerians, we must teach it first in our schools. We must make a big deal of it by engaging young Nigerians on the subject from an early age." According to the above author, patriotism teaching "should be included as an area of study in the national education curriculum and amply discussed". The above observation points to the fact that there is low rate of patriotism in Nigeria. May be through teaching and other mediums, we would be able to encourage patriotism among Nigerian citizens.

Echezonam Williams (2022) stated that "people see Nigerians as unpatriotic people and there's no doubt that Nigerians are among the world most unpatriotic people." The above researcher blamed lack of patriotism among Nigerian citizens to leadership failure. The implication is that citizens are discouraged by their government inaction in term of basic provision of the quality of life that would prompt patriotism from the citizens in Nigeria. Timothy Oyegoke (2023) reports in the issue of Business Day of January 4, 2023 that, "It is disheartening to see the rate at which brilliant and resourceful Nigerians are eager to leave the country." The report adds in the following that, "this has raised a concern on whether many Nigerians are leaving as a result of their lack of patriotism or their desire to live in a place where they can avoid gambling on their life and well-being." Thus, the deduction from the reports above supports the view that there is reduced patriotism among citizens of Nigeria when compared to other countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively, where citizens demonstrate uncompromising support for these countries. Lack of patriotism will mean that a very great number of citizens will be docile in their contribution to nation-building.

3. Correlation between Patriotism and National Development in Nigeria

There is a significant relationship between patriotism and national development. This is because, whatever development that is experienced in a country it is determined by the reaction of citizens who participate in ensuring that the nation attains its objectives. Iheakanwah Felix Arinzeh (2023) stated that patriotism has a connection with national development. According to the researcher, "many countries view patriotism as an integral part of their nation-building and promotion of socio-economic development". The author also added that "patriotism is essential to effectively grow and sustain a country's economy". Against this backdrop, patriotism promotes national identity and pride. Patriotism increases the likelihood of citizens'

willingness to sacrifice personal interests for the common good of the nation. Patriotism brings people together and encourages them to work collaboratively towards national development. Nigeria needs patriotic citizens to drive her goal of the national development plan since finding points to the fact that patriotism affects economic development. Patriotism in Nigeria, like in other nations, is a complex mix of love, loyalty, and a sense of belonging to one's country, often intertwined with national pride, cultural identity, and historical experiences. However, Nigeria's experience with patriotism is often described as fragile and fluctuating, influenced by economic conditions, political stability, and social cohesion.

Patriotism is considered as one the vital factors for nation building. Taiye (2024) posited in the following that:

> In the grand tapestry of nation-building, two important ingredients are often overlooked: patriotism and loyalty. These ingredients, once the bedrock of society seem to be fading into irrelevance, as modernity and globalization take center stage. Meanwhile, their absence threatens the very foundation upon which nations are built (p. 1.).

The description above appears to correspond with the Nigerian experience where citizens are not very concerned about their country. It has made Nigeria to be like a mother without children.

Ben (2008) found that, "most of the developed countries of the world today attained greatness, partly as a result of the patriotism shown by their citizens. Unfortunately the level of patriotism of Nigeria citizens is low. Without mincing words, this has contributed to the development of the country negatively". It was the aim of the researcher to encourage patriotism in Nigeria. This is vital because there is a correlate between the patriotism of citizens and the development in Nigeria as it is elsewhere in the committee of nations.

National development in Nigeria according to Adama (2006) is the comprehensive progress and improvement of the nation across various sectors, with the aim to enhancing the totality of the citizen's well-being at all times. Thus, the above researcher is of the view that the process of achieving development in Nigeria would necessarily encompasses economic, social, political, and cultural advancements and it has to be achieved through strategic planning, policy implementation, and citizen engagement. The above idea aligned with the Nigerian 2021-2025 plans, which aims to lift millions out of poverty and establish a national social protection system. The author also stated that the purpose of education in most countries including Nigeria is the development of individuals who would participate effectively in national development processes. The study by Tolu Lawal1 and Abe Oluwatoyin (2017) found that "development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation". This idea is based on the fact that a country is classified as developed when is able to provide a quality of life for its citizenry.

John Vaisey (2025) defines national development as "the overall influence of all human forces and the increase to the inventory of physical, human capital, knowledge, and skill" When we view national development from the above, it means that it encompasses all facets of an individual's life as well as the life of a nation. Hence, to achieve the goals of national

development, governments at all levels must be willing to mobilize her citizens and promote the ideals of patriotism and encourage citizenship education in order to foster participation of citizens so as to pursue the plans of national development in Nigeria. In addition to this, the term "national development" refers to the improvement of an entire nation. The term "national development" refers to the improvement of a country in all areas, including the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and material spheres. The capacity of a nation to enhance its citizens' standard of living is an indicator of the nation's level of development. It is possible to accomplish this by offering a majority of citizens the essential components of a means of subsistence, such as employment opportunities, equal status, increase in purchasing power, access to cheap price of food, effective and efficient power supply, poverty reduction, and most importantly the security of lives and properties of citizens which is the highest responsibility of government that is capable of prompting patriotism of citizens. The following section of this paper tested the rate of patriotism of citizen in relation to the rate of their commitment to the Nigerian National Development Plan.

Presentation of Data and Discussion
Research Question One: What are the factors affecting the rate of patriotism of citizens of Nigeria in Nigeria?
This question is answered using the responses of the participants who were administered the self-respondents interview questionnaire consisting of six (6) items, which measured the rate of patriotism of citizens of Nigeria. The simple percentage calculation was employed to rate their responses. Data are presented on Table 1.1 as follows:

Table 1.1: Analysis of Percentage Calculation on Factors Affecting the Rate of Patriotism of Citizens of Nigeria in Nigeria.

S/N	Question Items	N	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	%	Remark
1.	I am enjoying free healthcare services with my family	200	44	39	54	149	286	57.2%	Accepted

2.	I enjoyed free education	200	16	24	48	164	252	50.4%	Accepted
3.	I am enjoying fuel subsidy	200	16	15	40	171	242	48.4%	Rejected
4.	I purchase a cheap food item	200	28	18	48	163	257	51.4%	Accepted
5.	My future is guarantee in Nigeria	200	308	72	64	67	511	102.2%	Accepted
6.	I am aware that a majority of Nigerian are suffering	200	456	51	28	55	590	118.0%	Accepted

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher, 2024

Table 1.1 presents data that assessed the opinion of 200 interviewed participants. Item one with the highest responses of SD = 149 showing that a majority of citizens in Nigeria are not enjoying free healthcare services with their family. Item two obtained the highest responses, where: SD= 164, meaning many citizens are not enjoyed free education. Item three responses of SD= 171 indicates that there is no fuel subsidy enjoyed by citizens. Item four with the highest responses in SD= 163 imply that food items are not cheap in Nigeria. Responses on item five

received a favorable response where: SA= 308, meaning that many citizens believed that there is a bright future with Nigeria. Finally, the last item with responses where SA =456 as highest in the response revealed that there is growing awareness among citizens that a majority of Nigerians are suffering. Based on the above results, it is safe to state that most of the items in the interview are capable of affecting the rate of patriotism of citizens of Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the rate at which Nigerian citizens are willing to participate in national development in Nigeria? Responses to the twelve (12) items of the interview questionnaire were analyzed to provide the answer to this question. The simple percentage calculation was employed to rate their responses. Data are presented in Table 1.2 as follows:

Table 1.2: Analysis of Percentage Calculation at the Rate at which Nigerian Citizens Participate in National Development in Nigeria

S/N	Question Items	N	SA (4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD (1)	Total	%	Remark
1.	If I have the opportunity I would prefer to work in abroad	200	584	69	38	12	703	70%	Accepted
2.	I am willing to go to any length to defend Nigeria	200	116	90	144	69	419	83.8%	Accepted
3.	Nigeria is the best country in the world	200	120	84	100	92	396	79.2%	Accepted
4.	I owe my loyalty to my country	200	232	102	104	56	494	98.8%	Accepted
5.	It is good to help pay the debt owe by Nigeria	200	100	48	94	112	354	70.8%	Accepted
6.	It is my duty to support the policies/progra	200	184	159	124	39	506	101.2%	Accepted

	mme of government								
7.	I am willing to uphold the honour of my country	200	252	171	92	34	549	109%	Accepted
8.	I have respect for the Nigerian flag	200	348	147	74	27	596	119.2%	Accepted
9.	I have respect for the Nigerian currency	200	300	165	80	30	575	115.0%	Accepted
10.	I will use my resources, gift as well as my talents to contribute meaningfully to the glory of Nigeria	200	312	174	50	39	575	115.0%	Accepted
11.	I proudly identify myself anywhere I am as a Nigerian citizen	200	432	156	52	14	654	130.8%	Accepted
12.	I am ready to provide voluntary services to promote development in Nigeria	200	268	195	80	28	571	114.2%	Accepted

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher, 2024

Table 1.2 received results with high rating as seen in the performance percentage calculation based on the responses of participants that were interviewed. All the 12 items point to the fact that Nigerian citizens are indifferent towards participating in National Development in Nigeria. 584 responses show that if they have the opportunity, they would prefer to work abroad,

supporting the JAKPA syndrome causing brain drain in the country. This is despite the fact that there were 432 responses that agree that they would be proud to identify themselves as a Nigerian citizen. Therefore, the question is answered that there is a low rate at which Nigerian citizens are willing to participate in national development in Nigeria.

Discussion of Finding

Finding in the study shows that there are factors affecting the rate of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria. The six items in Table 1.1 are some of the major factors affecting the low rate of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria. Majorities of citizens are not enjoying free education; the fuel subsidy removal brought about increase in cost of transportation; the purchase of food items is out of reach of the masses; many doubt if they have their future guarantee in Nigeria; there is a growing awareness by a majority of Nigerian there is suffering in among citizens in the country. These factors dampened the sense of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria.

There is the finding in this study that revealed a low rate at which Nigerian Citizens are willing to participate in National Development given the fact that Nigerian citizens are indifferent considering the harsh environment they find themselves. There is a growing feeling of government neglect to the welfare of the citizens by the Nigerian government. Many of our citizens prefer to work abroad if they have the opportunity. The sense of belonging is an important feature if citizens are to be mobilized to participate in national development. Creating an enabling environment could be an incentive that would promote patriotism against the disenchantment that has enveloped the country.

Conclusion

There is no need to deny the fact that a majority of Nigerians lack patriotism when compared to other countries, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The citizens of these two countries enjoy significant benefits from the national governments in terms of healthcare delivery services, free education and other entitlements that promote quality of life in civilized societies. Such a situation enhances the patriotism of citizens. Therefore, the paper concludes that there would be increased participation of citizens to national development when the basic needs of citizens are met. This could also promote a high rate of patriotism from among citizens.

Recommendations

The paper recommended that:

i. Nigerian government should cater for the wellbeing of its citizens, like what obtains in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. This will raise the rate of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria.

ii. Nigerian citizens should show more love for their country by contributing towards the development of the country. Citizens should appreciate the fact that east or west, home is the best.

iii. Leaders should lead us well by showing positive examples that citizens can emulate. Charity, they say begins at home.

iv. Teachers should effectively implement the citizenship education curriculum to enable students to acquire the doctrine of patriotism.

Reference

Adama, E. M. A. (2006). An examination of the role of women in national development. Journal of the National Association of Science, Humanities and Education Research. 4(2), 250-255.

Ben, U.A. (2008). Encouraging Patriotism in Nigeria. Journal of Research in National Development 3(2), 21-25. Available Online at: https://www.researchgate.net/ Retrieved July
18, 2025

Ben Ezeamalu (2024). Nigeria: Why is the voter apathy problem difficult to solve? Available Online at: https://www.theafricareport.com/ Retrieved December, 2024.

. Jideofor Adibe (2016). Who is a 'Patriotic Nigerian'? Available Online at: https://www.linkedin.com/ Retrieved December, 2024.

Cklaimz, E, D; Ita, O. V & Uba, U.J. (2025). Implementation of Citizenship Education in Nigeria for Maximum Realization of Nation Building Goals & Objectives. Education For Today Vol. 21 (1), 76- 84
.
Edinyang, S.D; Ele, B.G & Odey, J.D (2023). Citizenship Education as a Concept & its Implementation in different Countries, British Journal of Contemporary Education, 3, 2: 78-
102. Available Online at: www.abjournals.org. Retrieved January 3, 2025

Echezonam Williams (2022). Are Nigerians patriotic? If not, why do you think so? Available Online at: https://www.quora.com/ Retrieved January 3, 2025

. Joseph Ononaye (2017). Patriotism in Nigeria, Available Online at: https://www.academia.edu/ Retrieved January 3, 2025

Iheakanwah Felix Arinzeh (2023). Patriotism As A Tool For Socio-Economic Development. Available Online at: https://www.linkedin.com/ Retrieved January 4, 2025

.
. Timothy Oyegoke (2023). The desertion of Nigeria by Nigerians:
Lack of patriotism or a need for better life, Available Online at: https://businessday.ng/ Retrieved January 3, 2025

. John Vaisey (2025). What is National Development?
Available Online at: https://unacademy.com/ Retrieved January 4, 2025.

. . Tolu Lawal1and Abe Oluwatoyin (2017). National development in Nigeria: Issues, challenges and prospects. Available Online at https://www.internationalscholarsjournals.com/ Retrieved July 18, 2025

Taiye, T. J. (2024). Patriotism and loyalty: The missing ingredients in nation-building. https://www.thecable.ng/ Retrieved July 18, 2025

APPENDIX 1
Nigeria- a mother without children: implication for citizenship education and national development in Nigeria.

Research Instrument
A Self-Respondent Interview Questionnaire on Nigerian Citizenship, Patriotism and National Development (SRIQNCPND)

Section A: Data of Respondent (BDR)
1. Citizen of Nigeria: Yes ( ) No ( )

2. Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )

3. Age Bracket: 18-39 years ( ) 40-75 years ( )

4. Level of Education: Non Graduate ( ) Graduate ( )

5. Employment: Self Employed ( ) Government Employed ( )

6. State of Origin. Specify: --

7. LGA of Origin. Specify: --

8. Senatorial District: Specify: --

Section B. **Measure of Patriotism of Citizen of Nigeria Questionnaire Scale (MPCNQS)**
Nigerians live in a homeland called Nigeria. It is presumably stated that Nigeria does not give attention the basic needs of her citizens. Assess the above assumption where your response is rated on the following percentage of 100% (4), 80% (3), 60% (2) and 30% (1).

		Rating Scale			
S/N	**Question Items**	**SA (4)**	**A (3)**	**D (2)**	**SD (1)**
1.	I am enjoying free healthcare services with my family				
2.	I enjoyed free education				
3.	I am enjoying fuel subsidy				
4.	I purchase cheap food item				
5.	My future is guarantee				
6.	I am aware that a majority of Nigerian are suffering				

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher, 2024

Section C: Measures of National Development Questionnaire Scale (MNDQS)
National development depends on the participation of the citizens of a country. Based on your observation, rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements where your response would be rated on the following percentage: 100% (4) 80% (3) 60% (2) 30% (1) respectively.

		Rating Scale			
S/N	**Question Items**	**100% (4)**	**80% (3)**	**60% (2)**	**30% (1)**
1.	If I have the opportunity I would prefer to work in abroad				
2.	I am willing to go to any length to defend Nigeria				
3.	Nigeria is the best country in the world				

4.	I owe my loyalty to my country				
5.	It is good to help pay the debt owe by Nigeria				
6.	It is my duty to support the policies/programme of government				
7.	I am willing to uphold the honour of my country				
8.	I have respect for the Nigerian flag				
9.	I have respect for the Nigerian currency				
10.	I will use my resources, gift, talents to contribute meaningfully to the glory of Nigeria				
11.	I proudly identify myself anywhere I am as a Nigerian citizen				
12.	I am ready to provide voluntary services to promote development in Nigeria				

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher, 2024

RESISTANCE IN THE TIME OF TYRANNY: THE EXAMPLE OF HELON HABILA'S *WAITING FOR AN ANGEL*

Chukwuka Eugene Ofie, PhD
Department of English and Literary Studies,
Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.
ofie.chukwuka@dou.edu.ng and ofiechukwuka@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the theme of resistance in Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, a novel set against the backdrop of Nigeria's military dictatorships of the 1990s. Through its fragmented structure and layered narratives, the text depicts the struggles of individuals who confront authoritarian rule not only through overt political activism but also through subtle acts of defiance, intellectual engagement, and the pursuit of truth. The protagonist, Lomba, embodies the conflicted yet persistent spirit of resistance, employing writing and journalism as tools to challenge oppression. By analysing key characters, narrative techniques, and the historical context, the study highlights how Habila transforms personal suffering and silence into a forceful critique of tyranny. *Waiting for an Angel* emerges as both a literary and political act of resistance, demonstrating how fiction can document injustice, affirm human dignity, and inspire social transformation. In doing so, the novel aligns with broader postcolonial literary traditions that critique despotism and underscore the resilience of the human spirit under repressive regimes. The study concludes that Habila's novel not only reflects Nigeria's socio-political realities during military rule but also underscores literature's enduring role as a form of defiance against authoritarian power.

Keywords: Dictatorship, Resistance, Defiance, Suffering, Oppression.

Introduction

Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* stands as a powerful literary intervention into the harsh realities of Nigeria's repressive military regimes of the 1990s. Through the perspective of Lomba, a journalist imprisoned without trial, the novel exposes systemic oppression and widespread human rights abuses under the governments of General Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha, both notorious for suppressing free speech and political opposition (Solomon Edebor, 2013: 24–34; Ikechukwu Asika, 2011: 275–298). The text is widely acclaimed for its social commitment, demonstrating how fiction functions as a tool of resistance while illuminating the resilience of oppressed people struggling to reclaim their humanity.

While some scholars link tyranny primarily to economic upheavals, Habila emphasizes political consciousness and storytelling as essential instruments of resistance (Ali Erritouni, 2010: 144–161). His vision resonates with Niyi Osundare's idea of the African writer as a "righter," with *Waiting for an Angel* exemplifying the moral duty of socially conscious writers to document injustice and instigate transformation (Gabriel Olugbemi Olumide, 2013: 18).

Building on this context, the present study investigates resistance in Habila's novel as both a literary and political construct. It analyses acts of defiance ranging from Lomba's subversive writing under incarceration to the everyday resilience of ordinary people. Resistance against authoritarianism, often depicted in literature as a "weapon of the weak" (James C. Scott, 1985: 29), is vividly illustrated in the novel's critique of surveillance, censorship, and brutality. As Tejumola Olaniyan (1995: 45) notes, Nigerian writers of this era employ narrative strategies that "challenge hegemonic discourses and affirm alternative histories of resistance."

By situating *Waiting for an Angel* within this postcolonial framework, this study demonstrates how Habila's narrative transforms individual suffering into collective defiance, presenting literature as both an act of endurance and a rallying cry for change.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs Sociological Literary Theory to analyze Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel*, focusing on how literature reflects, critiques and resists social and political oppression. Sociological literary criticism as explicated by scholars like Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, views literature not as an isolated aesthetic objet but as a cultural artifact embedded within social, political and historical contexts (Raymond Williams 1977: 12 and terry eagleton 1976: 16). This theory examines how literary texts both shape and are shaped by societal structures, ideologies and power relations.

According to Raymond Williams, literature serves as a, "form fo social practice", embodying the conflicts, contradictions and aspiartions of its time (Raymond Williams 1997: 15). Applying this framework to *Waiting For An Angel*, the novel is interpreted as a response to the authoritarian regimes that dominated in the late 20th century.

Sociological literary criticism also draws from Marxist and postcolonial perspectives, emphasizing issues of power, class struggle and resistance. (Terry Eagleton 1976: 23; Edward Said W. 1993: 45). Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel* by depicting the socio-political realities of military dictatorship and the suppression of dissent, align with this tradition, showing how systemic injustice impacts both collective and personal identities.

Thus, the theoretical lens of Sociological Literary Theory facilitates a critical examination of *Waiting For An Angel* as a literary manifestation of resistance, revealing how the author uses narrative strategies to contest oppression and articulate the yearning for political freedom.

Literature Review

Several scholars have explored the intersection of literature, resistance and authoritarianism in African contexts, providing a valuable critical foundation for this study.in his examination of Nigerian literature during periods of military dictatorship, Emeka Okonkwo (2013: 102) maintains that authors such as Helon Habila, "igwe voice to the silenced and document the human cost of political repression". He asserts that

Helon Habila play a crucial role in preserving the collective memory of authoritarianism, using literature as a form of resistance that subverts dominant historical narratives.

Ernest Emenyonu (2010: 56) identifies literature a a mode of political expression, using *Waiting For An Angel* to demonstrate how fiction engages with themes of resistance, "illustrates the tension between individual agency and oppressive state power". Ernest Emeyonu draws attention to the ways in which Helon Habila's characters illustrate various expressions of resistance, from subdued endurance to bold confrontation, thereby deepening the exploration of resilience in African storytelling.

Jennifer Smith (2015: 79) expands the crucial context by aligning Helon Habila's novel with the larger heritage of postcolonial African protest writing, "the literary depiction of tyranny and resistance is a crucial site for understanding the socio-political dynamics of postcolonial states. This analysis foregrounds the importance of understanding *Waiting For An Angel* within its political context, beyond its fictional dimensions.

Chinua Achebe (1975: 43) foundational analysis of literature in its social context asserts that African writers have customarily, "functioned as custodians of cultural conscience, particularly in times of political crisis". Through its focus on incarceration, the stifling of expression and acts of rebellion, Helon Habila's perpetuates this tradition, making it a relevant text for examining how literature resists oppression.

The use of a sociological approach to literary criticism creates a strong analytical basis for investigating how *Waiting For An Angel* confronts themes of despotism and defiance, revealing the broader socio-political impact of literature amid oppression.

Literary Resistance Under Oppression: An Examination of Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel*

Helon Habila's criticism of Nigerian society is relentless in his novel *Waiting For An Angel* (2002). The novel creates a gallery of tortured souls and the depressing reality of the polarities of privation and opulence in Nigeria. Despite the trouble experienced by the people in this novel and in Nigeria, Helon Habila offers encompassed creed for change. The main characters in this novel reflect the political chaos and social disintegration prevailing in Nigeria.

Waiting For An Angel is the first published novel written by Helon Habila. The novel describes the inequality, hypocrisy, betrayal of the people. Many of the events depicted in the novel have their basis in historical and social conditions. The novel is a damning indictment of the oppressive military and civilian rulers who took over the reins of leadership of Nigeria after the struggle for freedom from British rule. Tension is rife in the novel. In addition to denouncing these oppressive features, the writer shows the revolutionary ideas of the people.

Helon Habila captures the characters assuming real names, places and events to give the reader proper understanding of the novel. Helon Habila stylishly weaves his plot that makes the reader move back and forth in time.

This deeply political novel, shifting perspectives and timeline of the novel, reinforces the sense of dislocation and disorientation of Nigerians who are now at the mercy of irresponsible rulers.

Waiting For An Angel is Helon Habila's portrayal of a decaying country dominated by political power and bad governance. Helon Habila describes a country tortured by oppression, corruption, exploitation and negative politics. Helon Habila's characters are subject to exploitation: the strong and the weak are identified.

The military regime in the novel is a metaphor for the Nigerian people. Nigeria is reminiscent of a barren and bloody enclave. Helon Habila offers a range of solutions to Nigerians plight that are advancing resistance as a means of ending the cycle of bad governance in the country. Helon Habila believe Nigerians should build a new, prosperous country free of oppression.

This research shows the power of literature and the effects of writing under repression as characters like Lomba, Joshua, and James assume roles of activists charging for a better society. The novel is divided into seven interconnected narratives that show atrocious features of the military incursion into the rulership of Nigeria.

Moreso, this study captures the tyrannical regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha (27th August 1985 to 8th June 1998) described by Adeola Oguntimi (2002:60) as "the darkest periods of military misgovernance in post-independent Nigeria". The title *Waiting For An Angel* is ironic. An Angel is a spiritual being sent by God but in the context of this novel, we notice that the Angel is an evil personified sent to destroy its prey. Therefore, the oppressed people are all waiting for an angel that will soothe the pains experienced by the people. According to Uchenna Okafor (2021:8), "…. The angel is actually a savior to a people suffering the pangs of bad rulership".

Using resistance literature as a template to show Lomba is a victim of the dictatorial regime, his dreams of becoming a graduate and novelist is shattered by a protest march, leaving high percentage of protesters dead. Lomba takes solace in writing showing the effects of literature. Lomba's imprisonment can be likened to the countless activists jailed during the military rulership of Nigeria.

The dreams of Lomba were cut short after the protest in school and the death of Bola's (his friend) family members. Lomba did not complete his university education. He was later employed by The Dial Magazine as a journalist, where his writing revolves around politics. Through his job as a journalist, he presents his views about the political situation of Nigeria:

> This is just one instance. If you care to look, you'll find more: ethnicity, religion, poverty. One General goes, another comes, but the people remain stuck in the same vicious groove. Nothing ever changes for them except the particular details of their wretchedness. They've lost all faith in the government's unending transition programmes. (108)

By arresting Lomba, Lomba becomes a symbol of the suffering and hope under military regime.

This study shows the depth of inequality in Nigeria. This novel is a testimony that literature has an abiding concern for social and political commitment, reflecting and recreating social and political events in African societies with Nigeria as a reference point. Therefore, African literature is tied to the experiences of the people, as stated earlier, that African literature is dominated by slavery and colonialism. Indeed literature reflects the society. Therefore, the general aspect is that literature is a reflection of contemporary issues of the society like leadership problems, exploitation, class struggle, environmental exploration and exploitation, infrastructural decay. Thus, there is a relationship between art and life as literature deals with people and their experiences in a given society. Therefore, the African writer with resistance ideology in words of Chinua Achebe (1970: 37):

> …. committed to the revolutionary struggle of their people for justice and true independence. They are committed to a new society which will affirm their validity and accord them identity as Africans as people …. they are all working actively in this cause for Christopher Okigbo died. I believed our cause is right and just. And this is what literature in Africa should be about today – right and just causes.

The dark period of military rule in Nigerian history had a great impact on the population. It has drawn the attention of many writers who immortalize this painful chapter through literature. Helon Habila keeps a close eye on these events. These horrible events play out frequently in cities and towns across Nigeria.

Postcolonial Nigeria in the eyes of Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel* is a failed state. Despite the above mentioned challenges, the characters build and develop their friendship. The author's message here is to encourage people to form bonds within society to enable them to defeat their enemies:

> No. 20, Poverty Street (or Morgan Street - this story in a way is about how the street came to be called Poverty Street and about the people I met in my one-year stay there, people like Joshua, Brother, Nancy, Auntie Rachael, Lomba, Hagar, and all the others who through their words and deeds touched my life and changed it irreversibly) (120)

The friendship between the oppressed characters proves to be a learning experience for them and leads them not only to discover and experiment their challenges but also to understand the danger that exists as acclaimed by Abubakar *et al* (2020: 2789), "People on Poverty Street live poverty, talk poverty, eat poverty and sleep poverty. For this people, like Lomba's experience of prison, there is no solution except hope".

This novel depicts graphic details of leadership problems in Nigeria under military rule, the setting of the novel shows crisis ridden, oppressive state march with uncontrollable violence resulting to staggering human rights abuse leading to severe sanctions against Nigeria including expulsion from the Commonwealth of Nations. As the author says in the "Afterword": "It was a terrible time to be alive, especially if you were young, talented and ambitious – and patriotic …. We lived with guns to our heads" (233 and 226).

Lomba's heroism is noteworthy despite the tragic events around him: Alice dumps him for another man due to his poverty stricken life, Bola suffering insanity following the death of his parents, Lomba therefore opts

for a job with *The Dial Magazine.* Lomba is not cowed by the terrible situation. Rather, he is hopeful of a better future. According to Lucky Negedu (2014:41):

> Habila has not only reflected the struggles of the African masses but also provided the way forward, affirming that not even death should stop people from rejecting oppression. The author shows that it is only when people do this that freedom can be guaranteed.

This researcher clearly places Helon Habila on the pedestal of a committed writer. Like other committed writers, he paints Nigeria's hopeless situation in his literary engagement. Alas, it should be stated that he also advances resistance as a means of ending the subjugation of the people. E.O. Apronti's (1978:84) admonition to writers is insightful:

> But the writer cannot escape from the responsibility of serving his people. Literature must find a place in the revolution that must sweep our part of the world. This calls for a re-examination of the *themes* that people write about, of their *outlook* on society, of the language they choose to write in, and of the *manner* in which they put their works across.

Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel* is a moving story of revolutionary young individuals refusing to give up amidst the travails of military rule. All these pains, sufferings and disappointments in the novel, in the words of Sylvanus Onyeachulam (2022:8) portray, "Habila's powerful defence of the freedom of the press and a celebration of the life of those courageous writers who have refused to be silenced, even when faced with death".

Bola is the second important character in *Waiting For An Angel.* He is a young undergraduate and a friend to Lomba who lost his parents and brother in a road accident caused by a bad road and a military truck parked in the middle of the road. After the death of his parents and his sister, Bola became a revolutionary activist. He was arrested and severely beaten, leading to his mental derailment and subsequent admission into a psychiatric hospital. Certainly, the death of his parents and sister influenced his resistance ideology. He rightly believes that their death were a result of decadence in the society. Note that before the death of his parents, Bola was shown as an innocent, naïve character incapable of joining the protest march against the military junta, but he became aware of his predicament after his tragic loss:

> The military has failed us. I say down with khakistocracy! Down with militocracy! Down with kleptocracy! His right hand, clenched in a fist, pumped up and down with each declamation. According to Wole Soyinka "The man dies in him who stands silent in the face of tyranny". (68).

Through the character of Bola, we see the evil features of military tyranny. Joshua is another important character in the novel. He is a teacher specializing in English Language and Literature. He initially taught Kela in a private lesson. He is a lover of books and an embodiment of knowledge acclaimed by residents of Poverty Streets. Joshua was part of the leaders of the protest march. He believes that resistance to unjust government is a noble engagement. His lover (Hagar) died during the protest while escaping from the rampaging military officers:

> In the past month, the gathering in Joshua's room had become more vocal … The gathering became more vocal as they became more political. They become more political with the

> coming of Mao …. Then one day, in November, after my exams, we heard about Ken Saro Wiwa's hanging….
> This country is in dire need of a revolution. (156 – 157).

Note Joshua's lamentation:

> Yesterday we quarreled. She didn't want me to lead the demonstration. She even agreed to go away with me if I stayed away. I guess she knew ….
> But I had to do it. I know some of the people there today didn't even know what it was all about. They thought it was fun to march and carry placards and sing …. but some really understood. And I couldn't let them down. (177 and 178).

The character of Brother is also important. Through Brother, we feel and understand the oppressive military regime. Brother was initially a bus driver before he lost his leg to a soldier's bullet during June 12 1993 post-election riot.

Mao, like Joshua is a lover of books but radical in his thinking. He is an admirer of Chairman Mao, the Chinese philosopher. Mao is shown as confrontational in his ideas of resistance. He stated, "According to Frantz Fanon, violence can only be overcome by greater violence". (158). Mao is fond of Ken Saro Wiwa, leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), who was hanged together with his fellow activists on November 10, 1995. Ken Saro Wiwa's death infuriated Mao, he concludes:

> Let me tell you why they hanged Saro Wiwa. He was the only one who understood the economic aspect of the struggle. It is the money. He told Abacha, I know how much you and the foreigners are making – the billions you are drilling out of our soil. Give us some of it. They killed him because he threatened their monopoly, got it?... They'll continue subjugating us, killing all dissenters, one by one, sending them into exile, till there is no competitor left to oppose them. (158).

Alice is a student and Lomba's love interest. Alice could not accept Lomba's love interest because of the circumstances. As Alice's mother suffers from acute breast cancer, his father abandons her and her sick mother, Alice married Mr Ngai, who provided money for the upkeep of herself and her mother. Through Alice, Helon Habila is of the view that economic subjugation is also used to pauperise the people:

> Don't be. It is true. It is the money. Are you shocked? Do you know how much it costs to keep my mother here for a day? Twenty thousand naira. This is the best cancer hospital in the country. Twenty thousand, and she has been here over a month now. Where do you think the money came from – my father? My father has left us. Over one year now. He is in Abuja with his new wife. Ngai pays for everything – everything, including this dress I am wearing. Now do you understand? (100).

The character of Kela is important in *Waiting For An Angel*. Through him, Helon Habila is of the opinion that despite our negative past, we can reinvent our lives. At the introduction of Kela in the novel, Kela is a young boy who came to live with his aunt in Lagos. Kela was sent to Lagos because he failed his Senior School Certificate Examination and was caught by his father smoking marijuana. To his father, sending him to Lagos is a sort of punishment.

In Lagos, Kela became a better person shaped by the people in Poverty Street as well as the environment. Kela was highly influenced by Joshua, his teacher:

> My exam result came out a week after the curfew had been lifted. I passed all eight papers. I had A1 in Literature …. – but I'd have been happier if Joshua had been there to see it. My father sent for me a week before Christmas. He wanted me home for Christmas. (184).

So, the earlier naïve, dull Kela become a changed person due to the love, care and support of the residents of poverty. Kela is a testimony to the fact something good can come out of Poverty Street.

James is the editor of *The Dial* magazine, he is instrumental to the resistance and revolution in *Waiting For An Angel*. Through his magazine, he exposes the evil of the military regime. James is vocal and virulent in his attack against the military rulers. Note James advise to Lomba, "The time has come when a few bruises, even deaths, don't matter anymore. That's why I think you should go. To encourage him and show him he is not alone". (193).

As a patriotic activist, James is not afraid of his write-up against the military junta. He is rebellious, revolutionary and committed to the struggle of emancipating the people from the shackles of bad governance. To James, we all must stop, "gewgaws of slavery" (195) because, …, "every oppressor knows that wherever one word is joined to another word to form a sentence, there'll be revolt. That is our work, the media: to refuse to be silenced, to encourage legitimate criticism wherever we find it" (195 – 196).

Due to the poor state of the educational sector, the students organize a protest march against the military government. Note the roles of the student leaders including Sankara. Sankara is forceful with his resistance ideology, "We are tired of phantom transition programmes that are nothing but grand designs to embezzle our money! Down with the junta …. According to Martin Luther King, "it is the duty of every citizen to oppose unjust authority". (49).

The protest inside the university campus was bloody; many students were raped, killed by the rampaging rapacious military officers:

> We were going there to stage a peaceful demonstration, that was all. They appeared from nowhere in their trucks, shooting tear gas and rubber bullets at us. At first, we scattered, but we rallied ourselves and returned. They were not much, just a truckful of them. – about thirty persons. We broke their windscreen with stones, and we also seized their truck, but reinforcement came for them, this time with real bullets. One student was shot in the leg. When we saw the leg shattered and bloody, we decided to call it a day. But the bastards followed us to the hostels, chased us to our rooms …. They went from room to room, breaking down doors and looting. When we heard the girls screaming 'rape'!.... One student died. He was shot in the head, a chemistry student. The Area Boys captured a policeman and doused him in petrol and set him ablaze. (71 and 73).

The protest in Poverty Street is an example of the resistance of the people against a repressive military regime. Visiting the Sole Administrator, the residents of Poverty (Morgan) Street express their disgust to the bad state of their street and bad governance affecting them:

> We, the honest, peace-loving and taxpaying citizens of Morgan Street, are tired of waiting for the government to come to us. That's why we came. We came to tell you, Sir, that our clinic is run-down and abandoned; we came to tell you that we don't have a single borehole on Morgan Street and we have to go to other streets to fetch water, our schools are overcrowded, and our children have to buy their own seats and tables because the ones there have not been replaced since the schools were built ten years ago! (170).

Rather than solve the problems of the residents in Poverty Street, security operatives were unleashed on he people, resulting in injuries and death of the people:

> For the one week that the curfew lasted, Poverty Street became a ghost town – the shops remained closed, even the schools and the Women's Centre did not open. But a lot of people had reasons for remaining indoors: almost every house had one or more persons nursing a wound or a fracture sustained at the demonstration. Two people, apart from Hagar, died: Michael, my friend, who was also knocked down by a car, and Eniola, a pregnant asthmatic who was asphyxiated by tear gas. (179).

The Dial magazine is useful to the resistance of the people. The magazine stands between the people and the government. Management and staff members of *The Dial* magazine was harassed, arrested and detained unjustly. *The Dial* magazine office was set ablaze:

> They see the fire from about two blocks away. The smoke rises thickly in a stiff, steady scream, like an Obelisk as if conveying the essence of a burnt offering to the heavens …. Both floors of the duplex are on fire …. The office is gone. (199 and 200).

Helon Habila aptly captures the dark days of military rulership of Nigeria. The days of terror, oppression, fear, exploitation, dehumanization, death, imprisonment, kidnapping of perceived critics of the regime. According to Ngozi Chuma-Udeh (2015:210):

> Death perpetually lurks by the corner as a totem of authoritarianism. That was the reason for the friend asking to know when he would die. Another friend of Lomba's whose parents were killed in an avoidable car crash, was so grief-stricken that he made impetuous and unreasonable vocalizations, this earned him an arrest and a thorough bashing by the security. He was taken into custody and was so ruthlessly trampled that he lost his sanity. He was then released to roam the streets – a raving, stark mad man.

Through Lomba, Joshua, Sankara, Mao, Bola, and Brother we see resistance at its best, masses resisting and revolting for a better Nigeria.

Conclusion

The novel's characters embodying diverse forms of resistance from silent endurance to open rebellion showcase literature's vital role as a vehicle for social criticism and political consciousness.

Eventually, this research reaffirms the necessity of analyzing literary texts not only as artistic creations, but as dynamic social documents that challenge dominant narratives and inspire resistance. By anchoring *Waiting For An Angel* within a more comprehensive tradition of protest literature, this study contributes to

a deeper understanding of how African writers navigate and contest political repression through their literary texts. It is through such critical engagements that literature continues to serve as a beacon of hope, encouraging future generations to confront tyranny with courage and creativity.

References

Abubakar, Habibu Awais; Lawan Mubarak Ibraham; Hassan Isyku and Azmi Mohd Nazri Latiff. (2020). A Critical Analysis of Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel*. A Post Colonial Perspective. *Journal of Critical Reviews,* Vol. 7, Issue 13, PP. 2787 – 2790.

Achebe, Chinua. (1970). The Duty and Involvement of the African Writer. *In* Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson (Eds), *The African Reader: Independent Africa.* New York: Vintage Books, PP. 162 – 169.
_____. (1975). *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays.* London: Heinemann

Amuta, Chidi. (1986). *Towards a Sociology of African Literature.* Oguta: Zim Pan.

Asika, Ikechukwu. (2011). Military Dictatorship in Nigeria: A Study of Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel* and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah. African Research Review,* Vol. 5, No. 3, PP. 275 – 298.

Chuma-Udeh, Ngozi. (2015). Authoritarism in Nigeria Literature: An Analysis of Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel. ANSU Journal of Language and Literary Studies (AJLLS)*, No. 2. PP. 1-10.

Eagleton, Terry. (1976). *Marxism and Literary Criticism:* Oxfordshire: Routledge

Edebor, Solomon. 92013). Waiting For An Angel: portrait of Helon Habila as a Righter. *Agidigbo: ABUAD Journal of the Humanities,* Vol. 1, No. 1, PP. 24 – 34.

Emenyonu, Earnest N. (2010). Protest and Resistance in African Literature. *Journal of African Literature Studies,* Vol. 12, No. 1, PP. 45 – 60.

Erritouni, Ali. (2010). Postcolonial Despotism from a Postmodern Standpoint: Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel. Research in African Literature,* Vol. 41, No. 4, PP. 144 – 161.

Habila, Helon. (2002). *Waiting For An Angel.* London: Penguin Books.

Negedu, Lucky. (2014, October 9). *Critical Approach to Helon Habila's Waiting For An Angel. Retrieved from http://www.viewpointnigerialiterature.org,* on July 18, 2021.

Oguntimi, Adeola. (2022, May 14). M*ilitary Rule in Nigeria.* Retrieved from http://www.viewpointnigerialiterature.org, on July 2, 2023.

Okafor, Uchenna. (2021, March 6). *Resistance in Selected Nigerian Novels.* Retrieved from http://www.viewpointnigerialiterature.org, on 26 May 2023.

Okonkwo, Emeka. (2012),. *Literature under Nigerian Military Rule.* Ikeja: Parresia Publishers Ltd.

Okunoye, Oyeniyi. (2008). Alternity, Marginality and the National Question in the Poetry of the Niger Delta. *Cahiers d'etudes africaines,* PP. 413 – 436.

Olaniyan, Tejumola. (1995). *Scars of Conquest/masks of Resistance: The Invention of Cultural Identities in African, American and Caribbean Drama.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Olumide, Olugbemi_Gabriel. (2013, June 14). Social Commitment in African Writings: A Postcolonial Analysis of Helon Habila's *Waiting For An Angel.* Retrieved from http://www.viewpointliterature.org on May 26, 2024.

Onyeachulam, Sylvanus. (2018, April 9). Politics and Leadership Challenges in Helon Habila's *waiting For An Angel* Retrieved from http://www.viewpointnigeria literature.org, on July 2, 2023.

Said, Edward Wadie. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Vintage Books.

Scott, James C. (1995). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Heaven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Smith, Jennifer. (2015). Postcolonial Resistance in African Protest Literature. *African Literary Review,* Vol. 8, No. 2, PP. 70 - 90.

Williams, Raymon. (1977). *Marxist and Literature.* Oxford; Oxford University Press.

SITUATIONS OF ANOMIE AND THE CHALLENGE OF GOD-FATHERISM IN NIGERIAN POLITICS: INSIGHTS FROM NWADIGWE'S *THE INSTALLATION*

Kester Nnaemeka Dibia, (Ph.D.)
Department of Creative Arts, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba,
Delta State.
Kester.dibia@dou.edu.ng

Abstract
This study critically examines Charles Nwadigwe's *The Installation* to explore how Nigerian politicians and their stooges perpetuate conditions of anomie in the polity. The analysis reveals a disturbing nexus of corruption, declining patriotism, and manipulative practices that result from the installation of loyalists in political offices. These practices, the study argues, are central to Nigeria's crises of poor governance and leadership. Anchored on Emile Durkheim's Theory of Anomie—which focuses on social phenomena (or "social facts") that regulate human conduct—the study highlights how corruption, electoral malpractice, and the imposition of loyalists weaken social integration and solidarity, thereby fostering conditions of anomie. Durkheim's framework suggests that the higher the incidence of corruption and manipulation, the weaker the collective consciousness and social cohesion. Methodologically, the research employs case study and content analysis within a qualitative design. The primary source is *The Installation*, while secondary data are drawn from books, journals, newspapers, and online sources. Findings indicate that godfatherism—where powerful individuals manipulate politics through patronage and control—contributes significantly to Nigeria's social disintegration by undermining democratic institutions, entrenching mediocrity, and fostering corruption. The study concludes that Nigeria urgently requires systemic reforms and a reorientation of political values. It argues that meaningful progress lies in embracing meritocracy, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting culture, modern technology, and social change to reverse the tide of anomie threatening the nation's future.

Keywords: Anomie, God-fatherism, Politics, Corruption, Patriotism, Social Integration

Introduction
Nigeria, one of Africa's largest economies with a rich cultural heritage and indigenous technology, has for decades grappled with persistent socio-economic and political crises. At the core of these challenges lies the pervasive culture of god-fatherism. This phenomenon, marked by the installation of stooges who often lack the requisite qualifications for leadership, has far-reaching consequences. It undermines democratic institutions, entrenches a culture of patronage, and rewards loyalty over merit. Those who secure positions of power often do so through sycophancy and allegiance to powerful patrons rather than competence. As a result, resources are misallocated, development is stifled, and corruption thrives. Chinua Achebe rightly observes that "to hold any useful discussion of corruption, we must first locate it where it properly belongs—in the ranks of the powerful" (38). Echoing this, Wole Soyinka warns in *Season of Anomie* that "the season of anomie is upon us and it is a time of great danger" (56).

Although Nigeria has transitioned from military rule to democracy, the dominance of god-fatherism persists. In this system, wealthy and influential patrons—the so-called "godfathers"—sponsor and control politicians in exchange for loyalty, financial rewards, or other benefits. Outgoing leaders also handpick and install loyalists as successors, consolidating power at the expense of the populace. This practice entrenches mediocrity over merit, sidelines competent individuals, and concentrates political authority in the hands of a few. Achebe notes that "the greatest sufferer is the nation itself which has to … accommodate the incompetence of a favored citizen and … endure a general decline of morale and subversion of efficiency … until we put merit back on the national agenda" (20). The consequences of this trend are evident in the rise of social vices including prostitution (now rebranded as hookup), advanced fee fraud (419), internet scams (*yahoo* and *yahoo plus*), robbery, banditry, kidnappings, assassinations, and ritual killings.

This study therefore investigates the disturbing web of corruption, declining patriotism, and manipulative practices dramatized in Nwadigwe's *The Installation*. These interrelated ills, it contends, are symptomatic of Nigeria's broader crisis of poor governance and weak leadership. The analysis is anchored on Emile Durkheim's Theory of Anomie, which emphasizes social phenomena—what he terms "social facts"—that regulate human conduct. Durkheim conceptualizes anomie as a breakdown of social norms and values, producing disconnection, confusion, and disorientation among individuals (*The Division of Labour in Society*, Book III, Ch. 1, 1893). In this context, corruption, rigged elections, and the imposition of unqualified leaders weaken social integration, breed instability, and foster widespread apathy.

Reversing the tide of anomie in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the root causes of social disintegration. Modern technology can foster community engagement and rebuild cohesion, while culture remains a powerful tool for resisting anti-social practices. Nwadigwe's depiction of the Umuato community illustrates this: by invoking their cultural heritage, the people successfully resisted Chief Ikenga's attempt to install Nwaora, his non-biological son, as Crown Prince. Their collective defiance underscores the role of cultural values in countering god-fatherism. Ultimately, Nigeria must embrace systemic reforms, cultural renewal, and merit-driven governance to overcome the crisis of anomie and chart a sustainable path toward national development. He states that:

> … I know how you feel. You may not know how much it pains me to make that decision. But honestly, I have no moral justification to install you as the Crown Prince… Nwaora, I know that one day you will find out the truth. But I wanted you to be matured enough to bear the impact. Please don't blame us. We wanted the best for you… I had to reveal the truth about your paternity to save you, our people and our land from further bloodshed and destruction. (69)

This example illustrates how cultural identity and value can serve as a bulwark against undue influence, thereby promoting accountability, highlighting the potential for culture to be a transformative force in challenging god-fatherism.

Conceptual Clarifications
   i.   Social Solidarity: Social Solidarity, according to Durkheim's concept, refers to the shared values, norms and institutions that bind individuals together, providing a strong sense of community and social order.

ii. Regulatory Functions: Durkheim contends that social institutions, such as family, education and government play crucial roles in regulating human conduct in order to maintain social order.

iii. Disconnection: Disconnection refers to the gap between human desires and the means to achieve them, leading to anomie. This definition has its bearing in Robert Merton's Strain Theory and Durkheim's concept of anomie. Research on social disconnection shows that pursuing goals that are consistent with society's values leads to greater well-being. Conversely, striving for goals that are driven by personal gain often leads to decreased well-being among members of the society, leading to anomie. (183)

iv. God-fatherism refers to a patronage system where influential figures wield enormous power and control through personal connections, favouritism and loyalty. The system allows such individuals to circumvent formal structures and meritocracy, often resulting in unequal access to resources and opportunities.

Portrayal of God-fatherism and Situations of Anomie in Nigeria

The concept of god-fatherism is synonymous with Nigeria's political landscape, with some scholars tracing its emergence to the country's tumultuous political history, including the era of the First Republic (1960-1966). The January 1966 coup which overthrew the First Republic, highlighted governance issues and corruption, thus laying the groundwork for the rise of patronage systems and god-fatherism in Nigerian politics. Simply defined, god-fatherism refers to a system of patronage and control where rich, powerful and influential individuals exert enormous influence over others. Associated with god-fatherism are networks of loyalty, favouritism and sometimes, coercion in exchange for loyalty, support and benefits, including installation of loyalists in positions of authority.

The play that has been selected for this study along with additional consulted works, suggest that Nigeria's persistent anomic situations stem from the rise of ill-prepared leaders who assume power through flawed electoral processes, often exemplified by rigging. This illegitimate seizure of power is the root cause of the country's long standing instability. The resultant crisis of legitimacy has rendered the country the butt of international jokes. No leader in other climes who came to power legitimately wants to reckon with Nigerian leaders and this is a national embarrassment.

The dust kicked up by the Nyesom Wike and Sim Fubara imbroglio in Rivers State, for example, is still raging. It is widely alleged that Wike handpicked, anointed and installed Fubara in office as the Executive Governor of Rivers State to be his successor. As a result, Wike reportedly sought to maintain control over Rivers State's resources. However, Fubara appears to have resisted Wike's influence, seeking to establish himself as an independent leader. And since then, it has been Wike's faction led by Martin Amaewhule versus Fubara's faction led by Oko-Jumbo, whom Governor Fubara has transacted business of State with at the Rivers State House of Assembly since the widely publicised and alleged defection of the 27 law makers led by Martin Amaewhule from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressive Congress (APC). This power struggle in the State is clearly reminiscent of past conflicts in the same Rivers State and indeed in many other States in Nigeria where former Governors tried to exert control over their successors.

The phenomenon of god-fatherism is a pervasive issue in Nigeria, from State to National levels. This phenomenon where rich and influential individuals hijack the political process and exert significant control over politicians, has been a major obstacle to the full maturity of Nigeria's democracy.

The far-reaching consequences of god-fatherism include undermining the democratic process and thwarting the will of the people, thus perpetuating corrupt practices exemplified by bribery and embezzlement of public funds with attendant severe economic and social implications. Nigeria's oil refineries, for instance, have consistently underperformed and therefore, failed to meet local fuel demands due mainly to the pervasive influence of god-fatherism and its socio-economic implications, especially corruption. This is because unqualified and handpicked individuals are appointed to key positions in the oil industry, even as petroleum ministers, thereby prioritising personal aggrandizement, corrupt enrichment and loyalty to their patrons over merit, competence and public interest. The result is that Nigerians are made to bear the burden of perpetual and arbitrary fuel price hikes and scarcity while these failed appointees and their benefactors reap the benefits of the rotten system.

The consequences of anomic situations, being the direct outcomes of a breakdown in social norms, include increased crime rates and violence, social unrest and protests, economic instability, a surge in inequality, increased human rights abuses, weak institutions and citizens' loss of confidence in their leaders and the system. This poses a major threat to the fabric of the Nigerian society, thereby jeopardizing its stability, development and the general wellbeing of citizens.

God-fatherism and corruption are interconnected in ways that include god-fathers exerting influence to secure benefits, appointments or favours for their stooges, thus leading to corrupt practices like nepotism, cronyism and favouritism. God-fatherism is capable of distorting the functioning of institutions, leading to corruption and ineptitude. When appointments are based on loyalty rather than merit, it can compromise the effectiveness and integrity of institutions. According to Transparency International, "Corruption in Nigeria is a major obstacle to development with widespread bribery, embezzlement and cronyism, undermining trust in institutions and hindering economic growth"

Breakdown of Social Order: Nigeria's Anomic Reality
On a daily basis, Nigeria records a surge in anomic situations, characterised by a breakdown in social norms, law, order and institutions. There is therefore, a complete disregard for or even an absence of the rule of law which in turn, leads to a disturbing rise in insecurity, violence and lawlessness thereby creating a climate of fear nurtured by uncertainty. The incessant attacks by *Boko Haram* and other faceless bandits in the North-East and North-West regions and the phenomenon of *Unknown Gunmen* in the Eastern part of the country have resulted in widespread displacement, stunted economic development, destruction of property and loss of lives in the affected regions. The herder-farmer conflicts being witnessed particularly in the Middle-Belt region of the country have also worsened the anomic reality. Benue and Niger States, said to be the largest producers of food in the country have been taken over by bandits. According to *This Day*, as reported online by Deji Elumoye:

> A member of the House of Representatives, representing Kwande/Ushongo Federal Constituency in Benue State, Hon. Terseer Ugbor, has sent a Save Our Soul message to President Bola Tinubu and the nations's security agencies over the nefarious activities of suspected Fulani herdsmen terrorizing his home state… Fulani herdsmen have taken over 40 percent of the entire land in Benue State with thousands of people displaced. (*np)*

The growing trend of kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery and cultism has substantially contributed to the erosion of social order. Recently, a law maker representing the Onitsha North Constituency at the Anambra House of Assembly, Honourable Justice Azuka, was allegedly kidnapped, a whopping sum of one hundred million naira withdrawn from his account by the kidnappers before they shot him and dumped his lifeless body somewhere around the new Onitsha bridge. This unfortunate incident took place on the 26th of December, 2024. In the 11th February, 2025 edition of the *Punch* newspaper, Ikenna Obianeri wrote that: "Azuka was reportedly abducted on December 24, 2024, along Ugwunaobankpa Road in Onitsha while returning home for Christmas. His decomposing body was discovered near the second Niger bridge in the early hours of February 6, 2025." (*np*) Recently, it has been one story after another about the killings of young girls for money rituals by their boyfriends. Reuben Abati, Nigeria's frontline Journalist, on January 13, 2025, reported that "a middle-aged man suspected to be a 'Yahoo boy' (Internet fraudster) and identified simply as Adaju, has been arrested for allegedly killing his girlfriend for ritual purposes… the suspect was apprehended in Agwan Sarki, Orozo, a boundary area between Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Teritory (FCT)." (*np*) With all the disturbing stories and reports of security challenges, it can be inferred that Nigeria has become the Hobbesian jungle where life is short, nasty and brutish because there is no more order or law but a society in a state of anomie, chaos and conflict, with human life being wasted like a worthless commodity. On a daily basis, Nigerians are confronted with bizarre statistics of persons who have lost their lives under questionable circumstances and the Nigerian government seems helpless or incapable of arresting the situation.

The October 2020 #EndSARS protests, which were initially peaceful, degenerated into chaos and violence, thus highlighting the deep-seated frustrations and disillusionment among Nigerian youths. In the same year, (2020), Amnesty International in its report demanded "a thorough and independent investigation into the killings of ENDSARS protesters, documenting cases of excessive force used by security forces against peaceful protesters, resulting in at least 56 deaths across Nigeria…" (AFR44/3254/2020) In 1995, the Ogoni crisis attained its peak with the callous execution of the Ogoni 9, including a foremost writer and environmental activist, Ken Saro Wiwa. Their execution carried out on November 10, 1995 by the dictatorial regime of General Abacha, highlighted the failure of State institutions to protect citizens' rights. According to Amnesty International report, the Ogoni 9 were executed after a sham trial. The Amnesty's report captioned: *Nigeria: Time for Justice and Accountability for the Ogoni Nine (2024)* calls for "full exoneration, compensation and clean-up of the environmental damage caused by oil companies". The execution of the Ogoni 9 and the killing of unarmed protesters by security forces highlight the Nigerian Government's disregard for human rights.

The phenomena of god-fatherism and election rigging have contributed to anomie in the Nigerian State, eroding trust in the institutions of State and aiding a culture of impunity. This situation is so because the

wrong individuals continue to occupy positions of power and authority. Fela Anikulakpo Ransom-Kuti in his satiric songs, referred to them as "vagabonds in power," (VIP), just to illustrate the lack of moral direction and normlessness of the corrupt elite. The phrase is suggestive of the reprehensible reality that those in power are not genuine leaders who have the interest of the people at heart but rather, shameless opportunists who exploit the positions they occupy for personal gains. In the process, they perpetuate a system of oppression and corruption and exacerbate the already existing situations of anomie.

A stark illustration of this shameful state of affairs in the country is the 2023 presidential election, where Peter Obi was declared to have lost to Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Many believed that Obi's loss was a direct consequence of god-fatherism, which obviously influenced the electoral process and its outcome. The contentious nature of the election led to a court battle, with Obi's legal team presenting a plethora of evidence of irregularities and allegations of electoral malpractice. But these were discountenances, reflecting the deep-seated issues within Nigeria's political system, where god-fatherism and other forms of undue influence can compromise the integrity of the democratic process and rule of law.

These anomalous situations have far-reaching consequences, including the displacement of communities, disruption of economic activities and a growing sense of insecurity and hopelessness among Nigerians. In an online report in the Premium Times, Ogundapo Abdulgudus reported that "the Senate Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly, presided over by the Vice Chairman of the Committee, Senator Onyekachi Nwobonyi on behalf of the Committee's Chairman, Senator Aliyu Wadada, met to seek clarifications from the Nigerian Police Force over the missing 3,907 rifles and pistols, including AK-47 assault rifles". It is this kind of disturbing development that made Achebe describe Nigeria as "one of the most disorderly nations in the world. It is one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun… it is dirty, callous, noisy… dishonest and vulgar. In fact, it is among the most unpleasant places on earth!" (10)

Theoretical Underpinning: The Theory of Anomie
According to Durkheim, anomie simply refers to "a state of normlessness, a breakdown of social norms and values, leading to a sense of disorientation, confusion and lack of direction. (888) Durkheim's sociological perspective emphasises the primacy of society over the individual, focusing on social phenomena which he terms social facts. These external, societal-level constructs encompass beliefs, practices and rules that shape human behavior, effectively guiding individuals' actions through moral obligations. Notably, Durkheim's analysis of suicide highlights the correlation between social facts, collective consciousness and social solidarity. In the context of Nigeria's socio-political and economic challenges, this study draws on Durkheim's insights to explore how social facts might influence individual behaviour and societal outcomes.

Durkheim's conclusion is that there is an inverse relationship between the social ills such as banditry, killings, kidnapping, all obviously aided by the phenomenon of god-fatherism and social disintegration.

The Portrayal of God-fatherism in Nwadigwe's *The Installation*

The play reveals Ikenga's determination to install Nwaora as the heir to the throne of Umuato community, despite widespread doubts and controversy surrounding Nwaora's paternity and legitimacy to the throne. To achieve his aim, Ikenga resorts to manipulation, framing his half-brother, Chika, on fabricated charges of treason and alleging that he is plotting to thwart Nwaora's installation. Ikenga states: "Chika, I have been monitoring your movements. I am now sure that you are the one instigating the people against the installation of Nwaora… Don't deny. You want the throne to be transferred to your lineage. Isn't it?" (30) Ikenga, immediately calls on the palace guards to arrest Chika and orders that "He shall remain in detention until the installation is over…" (31)

Despite Chika's arrest and detention, some elders remain defiant. Egbeonu, a respected and outspoken elder, boldly challenges the plan, asking, "who said he is going to be installed… Nwaora's coronation is against our custom and as elders we will not allow it to happen". (33) This comes in response to Ifeka's assertion that the meeting aims to discuss Nwaora's installation as crown prince.

Typical of the prevailing political climate in our country, some elders, notably Ifeka and Ojemba, have been swayed to support Nwaora's installation. In contrast, Maduka and Egbeonu remain steadfast in their opposition, adamant and insisting that installing an illegitimate heir would profane the community's traditions and customs. Nigeria's electoral system has been embroiled in controversies stirred up by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announcing winners with questionable credentials. The issue of certificate scandals is very worrisome, especially as it undermines the integrity of the electoral process. There have been instances where leaders have been accused of lacking proper documentation and even the basic academic qualifications as defined by Nigeria's constitution, yet they have gone ahead to hold public offices. The case of a past president who allegedly could not provide information about his academic background is a striking example. Despite this, he was allowed to serve for eight years, raising serious questions about the vetting process and accountability of those in power. Most recently, the Chicago school scandal of 2023 has further eroded public trust in the system. It is essential for Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure that candidates meet the necessary and minimum academic qualifications and are transparent about their backgrounds to maintain public trust.

To address these issues, INEC needs to strengthen its vetting processes, ensure transparency in the verification processes of candidates presenting themselves for elections and hold accountable those who attempt to circumvent the system. That is the only way to restore Nigerians' confidence in the system and the leaders who emerge from it.

Meanwhile different individuals and groups, including women groups, appeal to Ikenga to apply "wisdom" and "restraint" in order not to aggravate the problems in the land as a result of "disagreements, conflicts and threats to peace in the past few weeks… connected with the forth-coming installation" (48) but Ikenga's response to the women's pleas is that "I wish to inform you that Chika was detained, not by me, but the State… the elders are still investigating the allegations against him. Until they conclude their task, we cannot say anything further on the issue". (49)

Ikenga's refusal to listen to pleas for wisdom and restraint is a sad reminder of the challenges Nigeria faces in its electoral process. Despite efforts by individuals and groups, including women's groups, to promote peace and stability, Ikenga's obstinacy and actions seem to be aggravating the problems. The situation is further complicated by Ikenga's unexpected response to Nwamaka's passionate appeal to Ikenga to release her son, Chika, from detention. Instead of showing compassion and understanding, Ikenga imposes stiffer sanctions on Nwamaka, by placing her under house arrest. This action raises concerns about lack of regard for human rights in Nigeria. This scenario is not unique to the society of the play known as Umunato. Nigeria's electoral history has been marred by controversies, including electoral irregularities, violence and disputes over election results. The country's electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has faced criticism for its poor conduct of elections in 2007, 2019 and even 2023 presidential elections. In the face of these challenges, it is essential for leaders like Ikenga to prioritise wisdom, restraint, accountability and transparency. By doing so, they can promote peace, stability and democratic values and governance in Nigeria.

The story of Ikenga aptly portrays events that took place in the days of military rule in Nigeria, when the opposition was ruthlessly dealt with. When Abacha imprisoned Chief M.K.O. Abiola over his agitation for the de-annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential election and declare him the winner of that election, respected world leaders like Nelson Mandela and Pope John Paul II, pleaded with General Abacha to release Abiola but their pleas were not heeded by the recalcitrant Abacha junta. Abiola later died in detention on July 7, 1998. Other members of the opposition, including the popular NADECO, academics and other professionals, including Wole Soyinka were either arrested and imprisoned or forced into exile.

Ikenga symbolises the archetype of Nigerian leaders who notoriously employ ruthless tactics, including suppressing the opposition, offering bribes to student and youth leaders and changing the rules, including attempting to alter the constitution in order to perpetuate themselves or their cronies in power. Like Nigeria's former civilian president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was alleged to have almost succeeded in changing the constitution of Nigeria in order to achieve his third term agenda, Chief Ikenga attempts to change the tradition of his community to facilitate the installation of Nwaora. He states that:

> … Traditions change, don't they? By the way, who made the tradition, was it not my fore-fathers? Today, due to the exigency of the times, I Ikenga, their son, have decided to alter some traditions. They did it during their time and today, it has become our own cherished tradition. No more delay. Let's do it now. (61)

Ikenga's obstinacy persists until the youth leader whom he had previously bribed to silence the youths about his sinister plans, returns the money and announces that "I am here to return your money… Your Highness, in time you will know that the collective will of the people is stronger than bullets and currency notes." (63) At this point Ikenga is forced to inform Nwaora that he cannot proceed with the scheduled coronation, stating that his hands are tied. Explaining to Nwaora on why the installation ceremonies cannot hold, Ikenga states "… I know how you feel. You may not know how much it pains me to make that decision. But honestly, I have no moral justification to install you as the Crown Prince." (68) *The Installation* raises pertinent questions about the dubious character of Nigerian leaders who relentlessly pursue power, often at the expense of others, and install loyalists to perpetuate their selfish interests. These leaders often resort to

the use of different tactics to maintain power, including giving bribes to silence those opposing the entrenchment of their loyalists, who are usually either their friends or relatives.

Conclusion

To address the challenges posed by situations of anomie and god-fatherism to the Nigerian people using technology, this researcher recommends that the following strategies can be adopted. The country's priority should be to promote transparency and accountability through the use of modern technology which has proved useful and effective in countries where it has been tested in promoting transparency and accountability in governance. In Nigeria's political processes, especially with regards to conduct of elections if technology is effectively deployed, the culture of god-fatherism and the attendant anomic situations can be curbed. If for instance, the card reader that was procured by Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was used in the 2023 elections, the electoral fraud that allegedly characterised that election would not have happened. This means that those who emerged from that electoral process would not have had legitimacy issues; thus bringing to an end the phenomenon of god-fatherism and by extension, the pervasive situations of anomie that it represents.

The use of online voting and engagement platforms especially social media and other online platforms can be integrated and legalised to facilitate citizens' participation, feedback and oversight and bridging the gap between citizens and policymakers. Online or E-voting has been very effective in curbing electoral malpractices in countries where it is in use. Using these tools and adopting reforms that promote transparency and citizen engagement would help to strengthen democratic institutions and improve the efficiency of the system. With E-voting, vote buying and ballot box snatching, two evil practices that have roundly defined Nigeria's elections over time, will no longer thrive and that means reducing or even bringing to an end the unwholesome influence of god-fathers and the anomic situations that their activities foist on the country. Other areas that technology can help Nigeria to overcome the challenge of god-fatherism include:

i.   Data-driven decision making: The use of data analytics and visualisation tools can help to provide insights into societal trends, needs and outcomes. This can inform evidence-based policymaking and reduce the influence of loyalists and their godfathers on the political process in Nigeria.

ii.   Eradicating poverty and inequality: Poverty is a factor in the phenomenon of godfatherism. To deal with this factor, policies that promote economic development, reduce inequality and provide equal opportunities for citizens to participate in the democratic process must be adopted and promoted.

iii.   Citizen Education and Awareness: With the aid of digital platforms and tools, citizens can be better and more effectively educated about their rights, responsibilities and the political process. This can empower citizens mentally to help them make informed decisions and demand accountability.

In summary, with modern technology, Nigeria can mitigate and arrest the effects of anomie and the phenomenon of god-fatherism in order to promote a more transparent, accountable and less chaotic political system.

WORKS CITED

Abati, Reuben. *Suspended Yahoo Boy Arrested For Allegedly Killing Girlfriend For Ritual In FCT.* www. Reubenabati.com.ng.np. Accessed 13-02-2025.

Abdulqudus, Ogundapo. *Senate Panel Queries Police Over 3, 907 Missing Arms.* Premium Times www.premiumtimesng.com. np. Accessed 11-02-2025.

Achebe, Chinua. *The Trouble With Nigeria.* Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd, 1983.
Aduwo, Ayodele. *Ogoni Nine:Tinubu pardoning Saro-Wiwa, eight otherstravesty of justice* Lagos: Accessed 1-08-2025.

Amnesty International Report**.** *No Justice For Killings of #ENDSARS Protestors.* UA:157/ 20(AFR44/3850/2021. Lagos: Accessed 1-08-2025.

Deji, Elumoye. *Ugbor: Fulani Herdsmen Have Taken Over 40% of Benue Land.* www.thisdaylive.com. Accessed 21-02-2025.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labor in Society.*Paris: Felix Alcan, 1893.

Ikenna, Obianeri. *Slain Anambra Lawmaker, Justice Azuka For Burial February 15.* https://punchng.com. np. Accessed 11-02-2025.

Gollwitzer, Peter. *Implementation Intentions and Effective Goal Pursuit.* Journal of Personality And Social Psychology Vol. 65 (2). American Psychological Association, 1993.

Nwabueze, Emeka. *Studies in Dramatic Literature.* Enugu: ABIC Books & Equip. LTD, 2011.

Nwadigwe, Charles. *The Installation.* Enugu: Academic Publishing Company, 2007.

Soyinka, Wole. *Season of Anomy.* London: Rex Collings, 1973.

CULTURAL NARRATIVES AND CYBERCRIME: EXPLORING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING NIGERIAN YOUTH'S INVOLVEMENT IN CYBERCRIME

Ogbemudia Mari JAMES
Department of Mass Communication, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma,
Edo State, Nigeria,
marijames2020@aauekpoma.edu.ng

Abstract
Cybercrime, defined as criminal activity conducted through the internet, computers, or other digital platforms, has become a pressing concern in Nigeria. Manifesting in diverse forms such as hacking, fraud, identity theft, phishing, and malicious communication, it poses severe threats to national security, economic growth, and social cohesion. The involvement of Nigerian youths in cybercrime has drawn the attention of policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders. Yet, empirical studies examining the socio-cultural drivers of this menace remain limited. This study explores how cultural norms, values, and beliefs intersect with technological advancements to influence youths' involvement in cybercrime. Guided by Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Cultural Criminology Theory (CCT), the research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining survey data from Nigerian youths with interviews involving parents and cybercrime experts. The study ultimately aims to generate context-sensitive strategies for preventing and mitigating cybercrime, offering valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders committed to advancing cybersecurity and digital safety in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigerian youths, cybercrime, socio-cultural factors, cybersecurity, digital safety.

Introduction
The advent of the internet and digital technologies has reshaped global interaction, communication, and commerce. While this digital revolution has yielded numerous benefits, it has also fostered the rise of cybercrime, a phenomenon now recognized as a major global security and social challenge. Cybercrime, broadly defined as any criminal activity involving the use of the internet, computers, or digital platforms, is increasingly pervasive in Nigeria, with far-reaching consequences for national security, economic progress, and social stability (UNODC, 2021).

In recent years, Nigeria has experienced a troubling surge in cybercrime, ranging from fraud and phishing to identity theft, hacking, and other malicious online practices. Nigerian youths have emerged as the primary perpetrators of these crimes (Ojedokun & Eraye, 2012). Factors such as anonymity, ease of access, and the seeming low risk of detection have made cybercrime an appealing avenue for many young people. The persistence of weak cybersecurity legislation, limited law enforcement capacity, and widespread digital illiteracy further exacerbates the problem.

Despite the growing attention cybercrime attracts in policy and media discourse, scholarly work has largely centered on its technical and economic dimensions, with comparatively little emphasis on the socio-cultural dynamics shaping its prevalence. Research that interrogates the cultural, moral, and social contexts of cybercrime in Nigeria remains scarce. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating how socio-cultural narratives—including norms, values, and beliefs—interact with technological opportunities to influence Nigerian youths' engagement in cybercrime. By situating the analysis within Social Learning Theory and Cultural Criminology Theory, the research offers a culturally informed perspective that goes beyond technical explanations. Ultimately, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of cybercrime in Nigeria and develops culturally responsive strategies for prevention and mitigation. Its findings will be useful to policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and stakeholders committed to strengthening digital safety and fostering social integrity in Nigeria.

Cybercrime Conceptualized

Cybercrime refers to any criminal activity that involves the use of computers, computer networks, or other digital technologies to commit or facilitate a crime (Brenner, 2008). This broad definition encompasses a wide range of activities, including hacking, phishing, identity theft, online fraud, and cyberstalking, among other forms of cybercrimes.

According to Ibikunle and Eweniyi (2013), as cited in Edoghogho & Obiakor (2024), various internet platforms facilitate the commission of cybercrimes, which occur daily in diverse forms. These forms include fraudulent emails, pornography, identity theft, hacking, cyber harassment, ATM spoofing, piracy, phishing, and romantic scams, among other illicit activities.

The concept of cybercrime is multi-faceted and complex. It has been defined and understood in various ways by scholars, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies. One of the earliest and most influential definitions of cybercrime is the one provided by the United States Department of Justice, which defined it as "any illegal activity that involves the use of computers or other digital technologies" (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999). This definition highlights the key role that technology plays in the commission of cybercrimes, emphasizing the importance of considering the technical aspects of cybercrime to prevent or combat it.

The perpetration of cybercrime is a nefarious activity undertaken by individuals or organizations with malicious intent. Cybercrime, according to Ebeleogu, Ojo, Adeh, and Agu (2019), can be conceptualized as a criminal offense that leverages digital technologies to facilitate the commission of a crime, with a primary focus on computing and communication technologies. This phenomenon is perpetrated mainly by youths who seek to exploit the ease and anonymity of digital platforms to defraud individuals and organizations, thereby facilitating a more convenient means of earning a living.

Explicating cybercrime, Ibikunle and Eweniyi (2013) posit that it constitutes a series of organized crimes that target both cyberspace and cybersecurity, highlighting the complex and multi-faceted nature of this issue. The proliferation of cybercrime has become a pressing concern in Nigeria and worldwide, as many cybercriminal activities are perpetrated from remote locations, making it challenging for security agencies to track and apprehend the perpetrators. The absence of contemporary laws and regulations

governing cybercrime in Nigeria further worsened the situation, creating a void in the legal framework that hinders the effective prosecution of these crimes.

Cybercrime, according to Bosser, Adam, Berenblum, and Tamer (2019). It is a computer-oriented crime that involves the use of a computer and a network, where the computer may be utilized as a tool to commit a crime or as a target of the crime itself. This perspective underscores the integral role of technology in the perpetration of cybercrime. Aghatise (2006) provides a more nuanced definition, characterizing cybercrime as a crime committed on the internet using a computer as either a tool or a target victim. He identifies four distinct categories of cybercrime victims, namely the gullible, the desperados, the inexperienced, and the unlucky individuals.

Furthermore, cybercrime can be conceptualized as a type of criminal activity that either targets or utilizes a computer, a computer network, or a networked device. This definition highlights the adaptability and evolution of cybercrime, as perpetrators continually exploit emerging technologies and vulnerabilities to commit crimes. The dynamic nature of cybercrime necessitates a proactive and multi-faceted approach to mitigation, incorporating legislative, technological, and societal measures to combat this menace effectively.

From a criminological perspective, cybercrime can be seen as a type of white-collar crime, characterized by its non-violent and financially motivated nature (Friedrichs, 2009). Cybercrimes often involve the use of sophisticated technologies and techniques to commit crimes such as identity theft, online fraud, and embezzlement. Individuals or groups can commit these crimes, and they can have significant financial and emotional consequences for victims.

The concept of cybercrime has also been influenced by the idea of "cyberspace" as a distinct social and cultural space (Wall, 2007). This perspective highlights the significance of considering the social and cultural contexts in which cybercrimes occur. It also highlights the need to understand how technology is shaping and being shaped by social and cultural forces. From this perspective, cybercrime is not just a technical issue; it is also a social and cultural one, and requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complex interplay between technology, society, and culture.

In recent years, the concept of cybercrime has expanded to include a range of new and emerging threats, including cyberterrorism, cyberwarfare, and cyberespionage (Andress & Winterfeld, 2011). These threats involve the use of digital technologies to commit acts of terrorism, warfare, or espionage, posing significant challenges to national security and global stability.

Cybercrime, according to Oumarou (2017), has become so prevalent in Africa that it has been labeled colloquially in different countries. For instance, in Nigeria, it is referred to as "Yahoo Yahoo," with perpetrators being called "Yahoo Boys". Similarly, in Ghana, cybercrime is known as "Sakawa" or "Yahoo Yahoo." At the same time, in Cameroon, it is referred to as "Faymania. Most cybercriminals in Nigeria are youth who are university undergraduates. The term Yahoo Boys" specifically denotes youths engaged in cybercrime through the use of deceptive electronic emails, typically via platforms such as Hotmail, Gmail, and Yahoo Mail. This colloquialism originated from the modus operandi employed by these individuals in perpetrating online fraud.

Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Nigerian Youth's Involvement in Cybercrime

Efforts to combat cybercrime in Nigeria may be compromised by the country's prevailing socio-cultural norms, prioritizing wealth accumulation and material possessions over integrity and dignity. A pervasive emphasis on materialism has supplanted the cultural values of honesty, morality, and ethics. Consequently, the sources of individuals' wealth are no longer subject to scrutiny, and those who have acquired wealth through illicit means, including cybercrime, are often celebrated and legitimized within society. This phenomenon is evident even within religious institutions, where these individuals are frequently accorded privileged status and treatment. This cultural landscape presents a significant challenge to efforts to curb cybercrime in Nigeria.

The proliferation of cybercrime is encouraged by a convergence of various societal factors, including the erosion of moral standards, the decline of traditional values, and a diminished emphasis on the importance of hard work and formal education. Furthermore, the prevalence of ritual killings and other forms of illicit activities has contributed to a cultural landscape that fosters and enables cybercriminal behaviour. These societal shifts have created an environment in which cybercrime can thrive, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses these underlying factors to mitigate the threat of cybercrime effectively.

Nigeria's cultural milieu plays a significant role in the propagation of cybercrime. The country's cultural values and norms profoundly influence individual behaviour, encouraging engagement in cybercrime. Specifically, the cultural emphasis on material prosperity and social standing can motivate some individuals to pursue cybercrime in an attempt to attain these aspirations (Awoyemi, Omotayo, & Mpapalik, 2021). Furthermore, the pervasive "get rich quick" mentality can also contribute to the appeal of cybercrime, as some individuals may perceive it as a quick means to acquire wealth and status.

The ostentatious display of wealth during social ceremonies in Nigeria can have a profound impact on the youth, potentially driving them to engage in cybercrime. The spectacle of extravagant spending can foster a sense of financial insecurity and inadequacy among young individuals, who may feel pressured to acquire wealth and status through illicit means.

Furthermore, peer influence plays a significant role in perpetuating this phenomenon. The visibility of peers driving luxury vehicles can create a sense of competition and aspiration, leading some individuals to feel compelled to acquire similar status symbols. This unnecessary rivalry can result in a sense of relative deprivation, where individuals feel motivated to engage in cybercrime as a means to bridge the perceived economic gap between themselves and their peers.

Additionally, the decline in moral values in society has led to the rising incidence of cybercrime in Nigeria (Okpako, 2020). In this context, the pressure to belong to a specific social class or group can lead to a decline in moral values among young people, as they strive to emulate their peers and achieve a higher socio-economic status. This phenomenon is often characterized by a desire to achieve financial success, regardless of the means, with the notion that "the ends justify the means." The influence of negative role models, coupled with poor parental guidance, can further exacerbate this trend.

Some parents, driven by a desire for financial security, may encourage their children to prioritize wealth accumulation over moral integrity, thereby inadvertently promoting a culture of corruption and cybercrime. The pervasive nature of corruption in Nigerian society has created an environment in which

cybercriminals can operate with relative impunity, with some security personnel even serving as accomplices or bodyguards for these individuals.

Also, the intersection of cultural dynamics and globalization has been identified as a contributing factor to the proliferation of cybercrime in Nigeria (Abokwara, 2021). As the country has become increasingly integrated into the global economy, novel forms of criminal activity have emerged, while traditional forms of crime have evolved and adapted to new modalities. Furthermore, the cultural exchange facilitated by globalization can introduce new values and norms that influence an individual's propensity to engage in cybercrime, underscoring the complex interplay between cultural, economic, and technological factors in shaping the trajectory of cybercrime in Nigeria.

As the country's social fabric continues to evolve, it is essential to understand how cultural factors are influencing the rise of cybercrime. These include examining the role of social influence, particularly among young people, in the prevention and perpetuation of cybercrime (Alabi, Bamidele, Abdulrasheed & Bashir: 2023). By recognizing the complex relationship between culture and cybercrime, we can develop more effective strategies to prevent and combat cybercrime in Nigeria.

The socio-cultural life of a country is very important, and once it is eroded, it will have a spill-over effect on other areas. This is why cybercrime is likely to continue thriving in Nigeria, despite the government's efforts to curb it.

It is pertinent to note that many scholars have mainly focused on the economic aspects of the impact of cybercrime, with little emphasis on the socio-cultural factors that promote cybercrime. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the socio-cultural factors that influence youth involvement in cybercrime.

Cybercrime Categorized

The proliferation of cybercrime has led to a concomitant expansion of its scope and complexity, resulting in a multi-faceted menace that continues to evolve and adapt. A taxonomy of cybercrime reveals three primary categories, each with distinct characteristics and motivations. These categories, according to the National Institute of Justice (2020), are:

1. **Individual-based cybercrime:** This type of cybercrime is mainly perpetrated by solitary hackers or cybercriminals who engage in illicit activities for personal gain or to garner notoriety. This category encompasses a wide range of cybercrimes, including identity theft, phishing, and malware distribution, which are often committed by individuals seeking financial rewards or to satisfy their ego.

2. **Organization-based cybercrime**: This category involves organized groups of cybercriminals who collaborate to commit crimes for financial gain or to further their organization's objectives. These groups often employ sophisticated tactics and techniques to compromise computer systems, steal sensitive information, or disrupt critical infrastructure. Organization-based cybercrime can include activities such as corporate espionage, ransomware attacks, and online fraud.

3. **Nation-state-based cybercrime:** This type of cybercrime is perpetrated by nation-states or governments that engage in cybercrimes for political, economic, or strategic gain. Nation-state-based cybercrime can include activities such as cyber espionage, cyber warfare, and cyberterrorism, which are often designed to compromise national security, disrupt critical infrastructure, or influence political outcomes.

The above categorization of cybercrime can further be subdivided into several distinct categories, including:

i. **Financial Criminals or Fraudsters:** This type of cybercrime encompasses a range of activities, including phishing, scams, and social engineering, which are designed to deceive and defraud victims, often for financial gain. Phishing, in particular, involves the use of malicious emails, attachments, or URLs to gain unauthorized access to a victim's account or computer. This may include links to fake online banking or other websites, which are used to steal private account information. Scams, on the other hand, typically take the form of ads or spam emails that promise rewards or money but are ultimately designed to deceive and exploit victims.

ii. **Internet Scams:** These scams often involve enticing offers that appear "too good to be true" and, when clicked on, can cause malware to interfere with and compromise sensitive information. Internet scams can take many forms, including fake online auctions, phishing emails, and social engineering tactics.

iii. **Social Engineering:** This method is used by cybercriminals to trick people into revealing their personal information through lies and manipulation. Social engineering tactics often involve convincing fake stories or scenarios that are designed to lure victims into a trap. This can include pretexting, baiting, quid pro quo, and other tactics that are designed to exploit human psychology and manipulate individuals into divulging sensitive information.

These categories are not mutually exclusive, and cybercrimes can often involve elements of multiple categories. For instance, an individual hacker may be recruited by an organized group or a nation-state to commit a cybercrime. Moreover, a phishing email may use social engineering tactics to trick a victim into revealing their login credentials, which can then be used to commit financial fraud.

Understanding these categories and the tactics used by cybercriminals to commit these crimes is essential to develop effective strategies to prevent, detect, and respond to cybercrimes, as well as to promote international cooperation and information sharing to combat this global menace.

Theoretical Framework

The theories adopted for this study are Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Cultural Criminology Theory (CCT). These theories are discussed below in the context of cybercrime.

The Social Learning Theory (SLT)

The Social Learning Theory (SLT), officially propounded in 1977 by Albert Bandura, posits that individuals learn new behaviors by observing and imitating others, emphasizing the role of social context and cognitive processes in acquiring new behaviours and knowledge. In the context of cybercrime, SLT suggests that Nigerian youths may learn cybercriminal behaviours by observing and imitating their peers or others in their social environment.

This theory posits that social learning occurs through interactions with others within a social context. People develop behaviours by observing and imitating others, particularly when their observations

are positively reinforced or rewarded. Through this process of observation, assimilation, and imitation, people acquire new behaviours, which can ultimately become integrated into their own behavioral repertoire.

Within the realm of cybercrime, social learning theory suggests that individuals acquire deviant behaviours through direct or indirect observation of others who perpetrate such crimes. In the Nigerian context, youths may engage in cybercrime as a result of learning from the behaviours and lifestyles of others, potentially perpetuating a cycle of deviance. This phenomenon underscores the significance of social influence and observational learning in shaping the cybercriminal behaviours of Nigerian youth.

Cultural Criminology Theory (CCT)

Cultural Criminology Theory (CCT), propounded by Jeff Ferrell and Clinton Sanders in 1995, posits that cultural dynamics and meanings play a pivotal role in shaping criminal behaviour. Situated at the nexus of cultural studies and criminology, CCT contends that culture encompasses a collective way of life, replete with symbolism and meaning-making practices that influence individual and collective behaviour.

The theory investigates the intersections of culture, crime, and justice, with a particular focus on the stylized frameworks and experiential dynamics of illicit subcultures. Additionally, CCT examines the symbolic criminalization of popular culture forms, the mediated construction of crime and crime control issues, and the development of situated media and audiences for crime.

Recent expansions of CCT have explored the links between crime, crime control, and cultural space, as well as the collectively embodied emotions that shape the meaning of crime. In the context of cybercrime, cultural Criminology Theory offers a nuanced framework for understanding how Nigerian youths' cultural values, norms, and practices influence their involvement in cybercrime, highlighting the complex interplay between cultural dynamics and criminal behaviour.

Strategies for Curbing Cybercrime

To check the prevalence of cybercrime in Nigeria, one must first tackle the issues of corrupt practices, quick money syndrome, and high unemployment rates in Nigeria. In order to succeed in the fight against cybercrime, the government should embark on proper enlightenment campaigns by organizing regular seminars and workshops to teach citizens how to survive with or without a job, as well as how to use internet security codes to protect themselves from cybercriminals.

Enacting cyber security laws with steady follow-up is also crucial to monitor and prevent cybercrimes. Additionally, job creation is vital, and the government should create more job opportunities and encourage small-scale industries to operate by reducing tax rates and providing grants and loans.

Using firewalls can protect computer systems from unauthorized access, and an address verification system (AVS) can help prevent defrauding individuals by ensuring that the address entered on an order form matches the address where the cardholder's billing statement is mailed from.

Creating more skill acquisition centers in every local government development center can provide youth with the opportunity to learn a skill, which can go a long way in reducing cybercrime in Nigeria.

Finally, proper implementation of cyber security laws requires employing experts in the field of cyber security to avoid poor internet working.

To effectively address the cultural factors contributing to cybercrime, it is essential to provide cultural sensitivity training for law enforcement and other stakeholders. This training should aim to educate them on the cultural nuances and values that may discourage individuals from engaging in cybercrime. It is also imperative to shift the cultural discourse and emphasize the importance of education, hard work, and legitimate means of achieving success. This can be achieved through various channels, including community outreach programmes, social media campaigns, and educational initiatives.

Conclusion

The concept of cybercrime is complex and multi-faceted, and it has been defined and understood in various ways by scholars, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies. As digital technology continues to evolve, the concept of cybercrime will likely continue to expand and adapt, and it will require a comprehensive approach that takes into account the technical, social, and cultural aspects of cybercrime.

The ranking of Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world until 1999, when the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) were established, highlights the depth of corruption in the country. The fact that some security personnel are complicit in protecting cybercriminals rather than arresting and prosecuting them underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of cybercrime in Nigeria.

The interplay between poverty, corruption, and poor governance has created a fertile ground for cybercrime to thrive in Nigeria. Addressing these underlying factors is crucial to mitigating the incidences of cybercrime and promoting a culture of integrity and moral responsibility among young people. By providing access to quality education, economic opportunities, and social support, Nigeria can reduce the allure of cybercrime and promote a more secure and prosperous future for its citizens.

Recommendations

To effectively combat cybercrime in Nigeria, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. Firstly, the proper execution of cybersecurity laws by various levels of government is crucial in checking the activities of fraudsters and their agents. This can be achieved through the establishment of a robust legal framework that provides for the prosecution of cybercrimes, as well as the creation of specialized law enforcement units to handle cybercrime cases.

Furthermore, the government should establish seminars and skill acquisition centers to reduce the unemployment rate, which is a major driver of cybercrime. By providing individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to secure legitimate employment, the government can reduce the incentive for individuals to engage in cybercrime. Additionally, the government can provide grants and loans to individuals and small-scale industries to support their economic activities and direct their interests toward legitimate means of earning a living.

Individuals also have a critical role to play in preventing cybercrime. They should be cautious when interacting with suspected fraudsters and avoid responding to fake bank alerts or other suspicious messages. Moreover, individuals should maintain the privacy of their passwords and other sensitive information when using the internet. By taking these precautions, individuals can reduce their risk of falling victim to cybercrime.

Finally, religious leaders, including Christian clergy, Muslim scholars, and practitioners of African Traditional Religion, should consistently discourage their followers from engaging in unlawful means of acquiring wealth. By promoting a culture of honesty and integrity, religious leaders can help to discourage individuals from engaging in cybercrime and other forms of illicit activity. By working together, the government, individuals, and religious leaders can create a society that is less conducive to cybercrime and more supportive of legitimate economic activity.

References:

Abokwara, Edith. (2021). Changing Societal Culture and the Conundrum of Cybercrime in Nigeria. Asian Review of Social Sciences. 10. 10.51983/arss-2021.10.2.2827.

Aghatise, E. (2006). Cybercrime in Nigeria: Causes, effects, and remedies. Journal of Financial Crime, 13(2), 147-155.

Alabi, Abdullahi & Bamidele Ph.D., Abdulrasheed & Abdulrazaq, Bashir. (2023). Cybercrime in Nigeria: Social Influence Affecting the Prevention and Control. Vol 8. 2023.

Andress, J., & Winterfeld, S. (2011). Cyber warfare: Techniques, tactics and tools for security practitioners. Syngress.

Awoyemi, Bosede & Omotayo, Olufunmilola & Mpapalika, Jane. (2021). Forms and Effects of Cyber Crime in Nigeria. 7. 2454 - 6119.

Brenner, S. W. (2008). Cybercrime: Criminal threats in the information age. Praeger.

Bosser, A., Adam, M., Berenblum, T., & Tamer, S. (2019). Cybercrime: A review of the literature. *Journal of Cybersecurity*, 5(1), 1-15.

Ebeleogu, O., Ojo, A., Adeh, E., & Agu, C. (2019). Cybercrime in Nigeria: An examination of the causes and consequences. *Journal of Crime and Justice,* 42(1), 34-47.

Friedrichs, D. O. (2009) Trusted Criminals, 4th Edition. Belmont, CA: Cenage Learning.

Nmeme, E., & Obiakor, N. (2024). Unpacking the Impact of Cybercrimes and Socio-Cultural Dimensional Developments in Nigeria. *Journal of International Economic Relations and Development Economics*, *4*(1), 1-8. Retrieved from *https://www.theinterscholar.org/journals/index.php/jierade/article/view/236*

Ibikunle, F., & Eweniyi, O. (2013). Cybercrime and cybersecurity in Nigeria: An overview. *Journal of Cybersecurity*, 1(1), 1-10.

Oumarou, M. (2007). Brainstorming Advanced Fee Fraud: 'Faymania'—the Cameroonian Experience. In N. Ribadu, I. Lamorde and D. W. Tukura (Eds.). *Current Trends in Advance Fee Fraud in West Africa*, pp. 33–34. Nigeria: EFCC.

Wall, D. (2007). *Cybercrime: The Transformation of Crime in the Information Age.* Cambridge: Polity Press