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FROM EDITORIAL DESK

Ideal International Journal is one of the brainchildren of Igbo Scholars Forum for Socio-Political Advancement (INC.) 2026 born out of the zeal to get the young Igbo scholars together to start thinking like Igbo sons and daughters through paper publications, meetings and symposia. In fact, Igbo Scholars Forum was founded by Professor Onukwube Alexander Alfred Anedo and born at the launching of a festschrift in honour of their life patron, Professor Obed Muojekwu Anizoba (Ozonwa) of the Department of African & Asian Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria on the 15th day of December 2012. In his kind gesture, Prof O. M. Anizoba established a website http://www.Igbocholarsforum.com.ng (which they later upgraded to https://www.biafuluIgbocholarsforum.org and thereafter, migrated to https://acjol.org and making their works visible in the Google Scholars visibility site, for them to use in telling the world who the Igbo people are, about their life, what they believe in and their relationship with people and other cultures of the world outside theirs. Other journal outlets through which this Forum wants to let Igbo people and their culture out to the world are IgboScholars International Journal and Ekwe Jọnal

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KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF FACEBOOK COMMUNITY STANDARDS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN UGEP, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Many Nigerian young adults are using Facebook as a channel of social interactions and for dissemination of cherished messages. This message includes wide range of communication contents which include, but not limited, to text messages, pictures, drawings, video clips and cartoons. To become a Facebook user, one has to open an account with the platform. However, the use of this account is regulated the provisions of what is known as Facebook Community Standards. Consequently, this study examined the knowledge and application of Facebook Community Standards among young adults in Ugep, Yakurr Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The major objective was to assess the level of awareness and knowledge about these standards, the extent of their application in daily online interactions, and the factors influencing compliance or non-compliance. A quantitative survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 385 active Facebook users in Ugep community. Findịngs revealed low awareness, with most respondents unfamiliar with the Community Standards and only a few having read them; application of the standards was moderate and inconsistent; was driven mainly by fear of account suspension, perception of the rules as overly strict, and strong peer influence. The study recommends that Meta/Facebook deliver simplified Pidgin-English pop-up explanations of key rules/regulations; and that, youth leaders and popular Ugep social media influencers conduct regular community sensitisation through video skits and social media literacy campaigns.

Keywords: Application, Knowledge, Facebook Community Standards, Young Adults

Background to the Study

The emergence of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, has fundamentally reshaped patterns of communication, interpersonal relationships, and information exchange across the world, and Nigeria is no exception. Over the years, social media have gained much popularity with more than 2.9 billion monthly active users globally (Kaplan &Haelein (2010). Social media usage influences information gathering and dissemination all over the world. Youth demonstrates intense engagement with digital technologies and Facebook plays a central role in shaping online conversations and trends.

Ugep, one of the largest communities in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State, exemplifies this rapid digital adoption. Young people in Ugep have embraced Facebook for social networking, entertainment, business promotion, and even socio-political mobilisation. The platform has become an integral part of daily life for many residents in the area aged 18–35, who use it to stay connected with friends, share local events, market traded produce/services and participate in broader national discussions. Like all major social media services, Facebook operates under a comprehensive set of Community Standards designed to maintain a safe, inclusive, and authentic environment. These standards clearly forbid hate speech, violent content, misinformation, promoting nudity, bullying, and other harmful behaviours while encouraging respectful interaction. Nevertheless, the degree to which users—especially young adults in semi-urban settings such as Ugep—understand and observe these guidelines remains underexplored. Cultural norms, educational attainment, internet accessibility, and economic realities in the area may significantly influence how young people perceive and apply these global regulations.

Existing studies on social media usage in Nigeria have largely concentrated on urban centres or broader national trends. For instance, research on social media and youth political participation (Omenugha et al., 2016), social media use and sexual behaviour among youths, (Adegboyega, 2019) offer valuable insights on social media use among youths in Nigeria but rarely examined the people's awareness/knowledge and application of Facebook community rules and regulations (community standards), Similarly, there are works that highlighted the implications of low digital literacy among Nigerian youth (Ojo&Ezepue, 2020; Uwalaka et al., 2021), yet, they did not focus specifically on semi-urban localities such as Ugep community, Cross River State. Globally, scholars have emphasised the importance of understanding platform governance in diverse cultural contexts (Gillespie, 2018; Suzor et al., 2019), yet localised evidence from places like Ugep remains scarce. After thorough investigation, we will therefore offer practical recommendations for educators, community leaders, policymakers, and Meta (Facebook's parent company) in fostering responsible digital citizenship among young adults in semi-urban Nigerian communities.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid rise in Facebook usage among young adults in Ugep, a major semi-urban community in Yakurr Local

Government Area of Cross River State, makes it increasingly urgent to investigate how familiar they are with the platform's Community Standards and how consistently they follow them. These standards exist to curb harmful content such as hate speech, violent threats, deliberate misinformation, harassment, and other forms of digital misconduct, thereby protecting users and sustaining a healthy online space. Yet, there is still little clarity on whether young adults in Ugep actually understand these guidelines or incorporate them into their daily posting, commenting, sharing, and messaging habits—an uncertainty that may expose them to account restrictions, online conflicts, cyberbullying, or involvement in the spread of false information. Existing literature provides only partial insight into this concern, and virtually none is specific to Ugep or even Cross River State. For example, Adegboyega (2019) examined how social media shapes sexual behaviour among youths in Kwara State and found that lack of online regulation can encourage risky practices, but the study did not address the issue of users' knowledge of the platform's specific rules and regulations. Studies on digital literacy and regulatory compliance among Nigerian youths (Ojo&Ezepue, 2020; Uwalaka et al., 2021) are equally silent on the realities about users' in the semi-urban communities like Ugep, where strong traditional values are shaping internet penetration and usage.

The absence of localised evidence represents a critical research gap: there is paucity of empirical work documenting the level of awareness, knowledge and application of Facebook's Community Standards among young adults in Ugep, Cross River State, Nigeria. This research therefore seeks to fill this gap by investigating the level of knowledge that young adults in Ugep possess regarding Facebook's Community Standards, the extent to which they apply these standards in their daily online activities, and the socio-cultural, educational, and environmental factors that either promote or hinder compliance. Given Ugep's unique blend of strong traditional institutions (such as the Leboku New Yam Festival and age-grade systems) alongside growing digital penetration, the community presents an intriguing setting for examining how global platform policies interact with local realities.

Research objectives

1. To assess the level of awareness of Facebook Community Rules and Regulations among young adults in Ugep, Cross River State.
2. To evaluate the extent to which young adults in Ugep, Cross River State adhere to Facebook's Community Rules and Regulations in their online interactions.
3. To identify the factors inhibiting compliance with Facebook's Community Rules and Regulations among young adults in Ugep, Cross River State.

Research questions

1. What is the level of awareness of Facebook Community Rules and Regulations among young adults in Ugep, Cross River State?

2. To what extent do young adults in Ugep, Cross River State adhere to Facebook's Community Rules and Regulations in their online interactions?
3. What factors are inhibiting compliance with Facebook's Community Rules and Regulations among young adults in Ugep, Cross River State?

Significance of the Study

This study holds both theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, it enriches the application of the Technology Acceptance Model and Social Learning Theory by revealing how perceived usefulness of rules and peer influence operate within the distinct cultural setting of Ugep, thereby adding a semi-urban Nigerian perspective to the global literature on platform governance and digital citizenship. Practically, the findings will provide community leaders, schools, churches, age-grade associations, and the Yakurr Local Government with evidence-based insights to design targeted digital literacy programmes. They will also guide Meta/Facebook in crafting more effective, culturally resonant notifications and offer policymakers in Cross River State a foundation for promoting responsible social media use among young adults in semi-urban communities like Ugep.

Review of Related Literature

Facebook Community Standards: Rules and Regulations

The unprecedented expansion of Facebook has inevitably raised critical questions about its governance mechanisms, especially the Community Standards that regulate and provide for acceptable conduct in Facebook usage. These standards cover a wide range of issues including, but, limited to violence and criminal behaviour- this means that Facebook deletes contents with threat, terrorism message or organized crime support, hate speech and harassment-contents that attack, demean, or incite hatred are not allowed, adult nudity and sexual activity- explicit sexual contents, pornography and sexual exploitation are prohibited, child safety-contents that endanger or exploit or sexualize children are censored, contents that promote suicide, self-harm and eating disorder are prohibited, misinformation and integrity threatening contents are regulated and personal/group data and privacy are to be protected. Unfortunately, Research conducted by Duggan et al. (2014) from the Pew Research Center demonstrates that although users greatly value the platform's connectivity, a substantial majority remain unaware of its governing rules, thereby contributing to persistent problems such as misinformation proliferation and toxic interactions. Similarly, Uwalaka et al. (2021), working within the Nigerian context, discovered that young people depend heavily on Facebook for news consumption and social networking, yet cultural practices and educational limitations frequently obstruct proper adherence to its standards. These observations illuminate Facebook's dual character as an open social arena and a regulated digital ecosystem, underscoring the urgent need to investigate user knowledge and practical application of its rules, particularly in localised settings like Ugep in Cross River State.

Facebook Community Standards, commonly referred to as the platform's rules and regula tions, represent a comprehensive set of policies designed to moderate content and behaviour, thereby ensuring a safe, respectful, and authentic environment for all users. These standards, publicly detailed on Facebook's transparency centre (Facebook, 2023), cover content moderation issues and explicitly prohibit hate speech, incitement to violence, dangerous misinformation, nudity, bullying, and harassment while simultaneously promoting authenticity, privacy, safety, and dignity. They constitute the operational framework for governing interactions among the platform's 2.9 billion monthly active users, embodying Facebook's stated commitment to balancing freedom of expression with community protection.

Academic scholarship emphasises both the necessity and the inherent difficulties of these standards in global content governance. Gillespie (2018) delivers a foundational examination, asserting that platform regulations are indịspensable for mitigating harm in digital spaces, including the suppression of hate speech, organised disinformation, and cyberbullying. He traces the historical evolution of Facebook's Community Standards from rudimentary, ad-hoc policies in its infancy to a sophisticated, structured system as the platform scaled to over 2.9 billion users by 2022. Nevertheless, Gillespie identifies persistent enforcement challenges stemming from cultural diversity and widespread user unfamiliarity; behaviour deemed acceptable in one socio-cultural milieu may contravene standards elsewhere, and over-dependence on automated moderation combined with inconsistent human review frequently generates confusion and inadvertent violations.

Suzor et al. (2019) further interrogate platform governance dynamics, examining how Facebook's rules attempt to impose a uniform behavioural code across heterogeneous populations. Their work stresses that the Community Standards seek to establish consistent norms—banning incitement to violence and explicit material while encouraging respect and authenticity—yet suffer from pronounced opacity in enforcement. Users frequently perceive content-removal or suspension decisions as arbitrary, which erodes trust and voluntary compliance. Moreover, the authors highlight the fundamental conflict between universally applied standards and diverse local customs regarding free speech, privacy, and acceptable discourse. They conclude that legitimate governance demands not only clear policies but also robust user education and participatory mechanisms—domains in which Facebook's present model remain deficient.

Collectively, these studies reveal that although the Community Standards are theoretically sound, their practical influence on online interactions depends heavily on user awareness, cultural appropriateness, and transparent enforcement. This insight provides a critical foundation for examining how these governance dynamics manifest in specific locales such as Ugep, where traditional institutions, communal values, and increasing digital penetration may uniquely shape reception and application of the standards.

In developing-country contexts, Ojo and Ezepue (2020) provide valuable evidence on Nigerian youths' engagement with social media, particularly Facebook. Focusing on university students, their research found that while the platform is extensively used for communication, networking, and information sharing, awareness of the Community Standards remains remarkably low; leading to frequent violations involving misinformation, hate speech, and unverified content. The authors attribute this primarily to inadequate digital-literacy programmes and limited formal education on online regulations. With Nigeria's internet user base surpassing 154 million by 2022 (Statista, 2022) yet digital infrastructure and training remaining uneven (especially outside major urban centres) these findịngs expose a stark disconnect between Facebook's global regulatory framework and local user's readiness to disconnect that is likely amplified in semi-urban communities like Ugep.

Rainie et al. (2017) from the Pew Research Center offer a complementary international perspective by investigating user perceptions of social media regulations across diverse demographics. Through surveys and expert consultations, they revealed that many Facebook users consider the Community Standards vague or overly complex, resulting in high rates of unintentional violations. Respondents expressed difficulty distinguishing protected speech from prohibited content and frustration with inconsistent moderation outcomes. This pervasive ambiguity undermines rule effectiveness and user trust, highlighting the need for clearer communication and proactive education to align policy with everyday practice.

These contributions collectively affirm that the success of Facebook's Community Standards hinges on two core elements: user awareness and contextual relevance. In Nigeria, Ojo and Ezepue (2020) illustrate how educational deficits and cultural factors impede compliance, while Rainie et al. (2017) identify broader perceptual challenges that transcend national boundaries. Together, they expose a significant research gap concerning the interplay of awareness, application, and influencing factors in specific semi-urban Nigerian settings like Ugep, where distinctive socio-cultural and economic condiṭions—shaped by strong traditional institutions and the annual Leboku festival—intersect with rapid digital adoption. The current study aims to fill this gap by delivering localised empirical evidence to guide more effective and culturally sensitive digital-governance strategies.

Knowledge and Application of Facebook Community Standards among Users

Knowledge of Facebook's Community Standards constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for responsible platform use, yet empirical investigations consistently uncover substantial deficits among young adults. Ojo and Ezepue (2020) conducted an in-depth study of social media practices among Nigerian university students and found that, despite more than 33 million Facebook users nationwide by 2022 (Statista, 2022), familiarity with prohibitions on hate speech, violent content, and misinformation remains strikingly limited. Most participants encountered the rules only reactively after receiving violation notices, underscoring the absence of proactive digital-citizenship education in formal and informal settings.

Globally, Lenhart et al. (2015) from the Pew Research Center corroborate these patterns, showing that young adults aged 18–29—the most active demographic—rarely read platform policies voluntarily. Immediate social goals invariably overshadow regulatory familiarity, exacerbated by complex legal language and insufficient exposure to digital-citizenship curricula. In emerging contexts like Nigeria, where internet penetration has surged while educational infrastructure lags, these global tendencies are considerably intensified.

Application of Facebook's Community Standards among young adults in Ugep is a complex and variable phenomenon, influenced heavily by levels of awareness, personal motivation, and local socio-cultural realities. West et al. (2019) carried out an extensive investigation into user adherence to social media policies, concentrating on enforcement practices on platforms such as Facebook and the subsequent behavioural responses of users. Their results reveal that compliance markedly increases when young adults clearly understand the penalties for violations - including content deletion, temporary restrictions, or permanent account bans. Users who have personally encountered warnings or moderation measures, for example, are far more inclined to modify their conduct by avoiding explicit material or provocative statements that could inflame tensions. Nevertheless, the same study identified a major constraint: adherence drops considerably whenever the platform's rules clash with deeply held personal convictions or prevailing cultural practices. Young adults living in communities that prize frank, unfiltered speech or humour that sometimes crosses into offence frequently resist standards they regard as excessively rigid or disconnected from their lived social environment. West et al. maintain that this friction illustrates the wider difficulty of creating one-size-fits-all policies for a globally diverse user base, where genuine compliance depends not only on knowledge of the rules but also on users' perception of their fairness and legitimacy.

Within the specific Nigerian setting, Uwalaka et al. (2021) offer valuable localised insights by exploring how youths interact with Facebook and its regulatory structure. Drawing on survey data collected from university students, their research established that non-compliance is widespread, especially in the rapid sharing of unverified or sensational news items—a clear breach of Facebook's credibility and misinformation standards. Far from reflecting deliberate rebellion, however, such practices were found to originate from entrenched habits and insufficient familiarity with the platform's regulations. Respondents routinely forwarded attention-grabbing headlines or unsubstantiated rumours without verification, considering these actions ordinary within their peer circles rather than violations of policy. Uwalaka et al. attribute this pattern to persistently low digital literacy levels and the near-total absence of structured education on responsible social media conduct, observing that many Nigerian youths place greater value on speed, social acceptance, and immediate engagement than on accuracy or rule conformity. These observations expose a profound disjuncture between Facebook's policy framework - largely formulated from a global and often Western-oriented perspective - and its everyday implementation among young adults in developing regions like Nigeria, where application of the rules is shaped both by awareness gaps and by the degree to which global standards resonate with local behavioural norms, communal values, and cultural expectations in places such as Ugep.

Challenges to Awareness and Compliance with Facebook Community Standards

The obstacles to awareness and effective application of Facebook's Community Standards among young adults in Ugep are multifaceted, encompassing perceptual confusion, cultural friction, and structural limitations. Rainie et al. (2017) from the Pew Research Center found that a major barrier is the common perception that the rules are vague and enforced inconsistently. Many young users struggle to distinguish satire from hate speech or acceptable criticism from prohibited content, and unpredictable moderation outcomes breed frustration and accidental violations. This lack of clarity erodes trust, discourages proactive learning of the rules, and undermines overall platform safety.

Cultural factors intensify the problem. Ojo and Ezepue (2020) observed among Nigerian youths that communal forms of expression such as passionate advocacy, banter, or mobilisation for local issues are often prioritised over strict adherence to global standards that may appear foreign or excessively restrictive. In Ugep, where age-grade systems, traditional banter, and the Leboku festival encourage direct and collective speech, content flagged as inflammatory elsewhere can be viewed as normal social interaction, creating a significant clash that hampers compliance.

West et al. (2019) further point to structural deficits, particularly the limited availability of digital-literacy resources in semi-urban and developing areas like Ugep. Inadequate training in schools, community centres, and homes leaves many young adults without the knowledge or tools to understand and apply Facebook's standards properly. Together, rule ambiguity, cultural misalignment, and resource scarcity form interconnected barriers that demand localised, context-sensitive interventions to improve awareness and responsible use in Ugep.

Empirical Review

A study by Adegboyega (2019) titled "Influence of social media on the sexual behaviour of youths in Kwara State, Nigeria" primarily sought to determine how exposure to social media content affects sexual attitudes and practices among young people. Using a survey research design, the researcher collected data from 400 youths in selected secondary and tertiary institutions in Kwara State through structured questionnaires. Major findings revealed that unregulated online interactions, especially exposure to pornographic and sexually suggestive materials on platforms like Facebook, significantly correlated with risky sexual behaviour, liberal sexual attitudes, and early sexual debut among respondents. The study recommended stronger parental guidance, incorporation of sexuality education into school curricula, and collaboration between government and social media platforms to curb harmful content. However, the study did not explore young adults' awareness or application of Facebook's specific Community Standards, nor did it examine the role of platform rules in shaping online behavior, an area that remains unaddressed in the semi-urban context of Ugep, which the present research seeks to fill.

A study by McKeon, Fitzgerald, Furley& Allison (2022) titled "Social media interventions for adolescent mental health and wellbeing: A scoping review" primarily aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of social media-based interventions in improving adolescent mental health and to identify the components that contribute to their success. The authors employed a scoping review methodology, analysing 47 studies published between 2010 and 2021. Major findịngs showed that interventions incorporating digital literacy education and safe-platform navigation strategies significantly reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms, whereas the absence of training on platform rules markedly lowered effectiveness. The researchers recommended the systematic inclusion of digital literacy modules in all online mental health programmes. However, this global review included no Nigerian studies and did not specifically address knowledge or application of Facebook's Community Standards, leaving unexplored the semi-urban Nigerian context of Ugep, an important gap that the present research seeks to fill.

A study by Ojo&Ezepue (2020) titled "Social media usage and its implications among Nigerian youths" aimed to assess patterns of social media utilisation, levels of awareness of online risks, and the implications for personal and academic life among Nigerian university students. Employing a descriptive survey design, the researchers administered questionnaires to 500 students across three federal universities in southwest Nigeria. Key findịngs indịcated high daily usage of Facebook for communication and entertainment, but very low awareness of platform-specific regulations, frequent sharing of unverified information, and occasional encounters with cyberbullying or harassment. The authors recommended the integration of digital literacy and online ethics courses into university curricula and public enlightenment campaigns. Despite these valuable insights, the study remained general and urban-focused, without investigating knowledge or practical application of Facebook's Community Standards in a specific semi-urban community such as Ugep in Cross River State, a localised gap that the current research directly addresses.

A study by Uwalaka, Okeke, & Nwala (2021) titled "Social media and news consumption among Nigerian youths: A study of university students" sought to examine how Nigerian youths source and share news on Facebook, the extent to which they verify information, and the implications for misinformation spread. Using a quantitative survey method, data were collected from 600 university students in southeastern and south-south Nigeria. Major findịngs showed heavy reliance on Facebook as a primary news source, widespread sharing of unverified or sensational content, and minimal awareness of Facebook's credibility and misinformation policies. The researchers recommended compulsory media literacy programmes in tertiary institutions and collaboration between fact-checking organisations and social media platforms. However, the study did not specifically measure knowledge of Facebook Community Standards, nor did it explore adherence patterns or influencing factors in a defined semi-urban locality like Ugep, Cross River State—critical dimensions that the present investigation uniquely targets.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) propounded by Fred D. Davis in 1989 (Mugo, Njagi, & Motanya 2017). It is an information systems theory that explains how users come to accept and use a technology. It proposes that actual usage of any technology is determined by behavioural intention, which is jointly influenced by two primary beliefs: perceived usefulness - the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her performance; and perceived ease of use – the degree to which a person believes that using the system would be free of effort (Mugo, Njagi, &Motanya 2017). These two beliefs are shaped by external variables such as system characteristics, training, and social influence, while perceived ease of use also directly affects perceived usefulness. Over time, attitude toward using the technology mediates the relationship between beliefs and intention, and repeated use reinforces or modifies the original perceptions.

In the context of this study on knowledge and application of Facebook Community Standards among young adults in Ugep, TAM provides a robust explanatory framework.

Young adults will only actively learn, internalise, and apply Facebook's Community Standards if they perceive these rules as useful for protecting their accounts, maintaining relationships, avoiding sanctions, and enhancing their overall experience on the platform (perceived usefulness), and if they find the rules, notifications, and enforcement mechanisms relatively clear and easy to understand and follow (perceived ease of use). Low awareness and inconsistent compliance observed in similar Nigerian settings can therefore be traced to weak perceived usefulness (many users see the rules as irrelevant or overly restrictive) and low perceived ease of use (complex language, inconsistent enforcement, and inadequate localised education). By applying TAM, this research examines how strengthening both perceptions through culturally relevant communication, community-based digital literacy programmes, and clearer enforcement can significantly increase voluntary application of the Community Standards among young adults in Ugep.

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design, using a survey method to collect data on the awareness/knowledge and application of Facebook's Community Standards among young adults in Ugep, Yakurr Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The target population consists of active Facebook users aged 18–35 residing in Ugep. A stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation across age groups, gender, educational levels, and neighbourhoods/wards within the community, capturing both central and peripheral areas of the semi-urban settings of Ugep. Data were analysed with descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to determine levels of awareness/knowledge and adherence, while chi-square tests were used to examine relationships between demographic variables and compliance behaviour. This approach provided reliable, community-specific insights into the research objectives.

Population of Study

Precise figures for Facebook using young adults in Ugep are unavailable due to the lack of disaggregated data on social media penetration by age and locality within Yakurr Local Government Area.

Sample Size

Given the unknown population size of young adults aged 18–35 who use Facebook in Ugep, the sample size for this study was determined using Cochran's formula (Onyeka, Izunobi, & Iwueze (2015)), a widely accepted method for calculating sample sizes when population proportions are uncertain. The formula is expressed as:

Using the Cochran formula for calculating sample size (n):

$N = Z^2 pq/e^2$

The given parameters:

Confidence level (C): 95%

Precision level (margin of error) (e): ±5% or 0.05

Proportion (p): 0.5 (since we're assuming a conservative estimate of 50%)

The complement of the proportion (q): 1 - p = 0.5

Z-score correspondịng to a 95% confidence level (Z): 1.96 (standard value for a 95% confidence level)

Substituting the values

$n = (1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)/0.05^2$

$n = 3.8416 (0.25)/0.0025$

$n = 0.9604/0.0025$

$n = 384.16$

Approximately = 385

Instrument of Data Collection

Questionnaire is used to gather information for this study. The questionnaire was designed in line with the research questions and objectives of the study

Data Presentation and Analysis

Section A: Demography

Gender

Variable	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Male	181	47

Female	204	53

Field survey, 2025.

The respondents showed a nearly balanced gender composition, with females slightly outnumbering males. This balanced gender representation enhances the credibility and applicability of the findings across young adults in Ugep. It ensures that conclusions about awareness and application of Facebook Community Standards reflect the experiences of both young women and young men in the community, reducing gender bias and strengthening the overall validity of the results

Age:

Variable	Frequency	Percentage(%)
18-24	79	20.5
25-34	204	53
35 and above	102	26.5

Field survey, 2025.

Most respondents were aged 25–34, followed by those 35 and above, with the smallest group aged 18–24. This distribution aligns with the typical Facebook user profile in Ugep and implies that the findịngs mainly capture the experiences of the most active age segment, while still representing younger and older young adults adequately for reliable community-level conclusions.

Education

Variable	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Primary	66	17.1
Secondary	107	27.8
Tertiary	199	51.7
No formal education	13	3.4

Field survey, 2025.

Educational attainment showed that over half of the respondents possessed tertiary education, followed by secondary and primary levels, with only a very small proportion having no formal education. This relatively high education profile among young adults in Ugep suggests that limited awareness and inconsistent application of Facebook Community Standards cannot be attributed primarily to low literacy, but rather to gaps in specific digital literacy and platform-rule education, making the findings even more significant for targeted interventions.

Section B: Knowledge of Facebook Community Rules and Regulations

S/N	Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I am aware that Facebook has	89	56	93	122	25

.	Community Rules and Regulations.	23.1%	14.5%	24.2%	36.7%	6.5%
2.	I have read Facebook's Community Standards before.	84 21.8%	11 2.9%	57 14.8%	136 35.3%	97 25.2%
3.	Facebook provides sufficient notifications and updates about its rules.	24 6.2%	67 17.4%	177 46%	57 14.8%	60 15.6%

Field survey, 2025.

Results revealed low awareness of Facebook's Community Standards among young adults in Ugep. Only about one-third claimed awareness of the rules, fewer had ever read them, and nearly half remained neutral or dissatisfied with the platform's notifications and updates. This clearly indicates a significant knowledge gap in the community. Even among relatively educated users, familiarity with the rules remains limited and mostly passive, explaining the inconsistent application observed and underscoring the urgent need for targeted awareness and digital literacy programmes in Ugep.

Section C: Adherence to Facebook's Community Rules and Regulations

S/N	Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I avoid posting content that violates Facebook's rules (e.g., hate speech, misinformation, violent	82 21.3%	71 18.4%	143 37.1%	32 8.3%	57 14.8%

	content).					
2.	I report posts or accounts that violate Facebook's Community Standards.	92 23.9%	101 26.2%	153 39.7%	39 10.1%	00%
3.	I have received a warning or restriction from Facebook due to non-compliance with its rules.	105 27.3%	114 29.6%	93 24.2%	9 2.3%	64 16.6%

Field survey, 2025.

Responses showed moderate and inconsistent adherence among young adults in Ugep. A sizeable portion actively avoids prohibited content and report violations, yet many remain neutral or admit to non-compliant behaviour. Notably, over half of the respondents have received warnings or restrictions from Facebook. This pattern confirms that adherence is far from uniform. Despite some conscious efforts to follow the rules, a significant proportion of users continue to violate them, highlighting weak internalisation of the Community Standards and reinforcing the need for stronger, community-based education and enforcement support in Ugep.

Section D: Factors Inhibiting Compliance with Facebook community standards

S/N	Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I do not comply with Facebook's rules because account suspension is	82 21.3%	71 18.4%	143 37.1%	32 8.3%	57 14.8%

	always a temporary issue.					
2.	I sometimes ignore Facebook's rules because I believe they are too strict.	92 23.9%	101 26.2%	153 39.7%	39 10.1%	0 0%
3.	Peer influence and social trends affect how I follow Facebook's Community Standards.	105 27.3%	114 29.6%	93 24.2%	9 2.3%	64 16.6%

Field survey, 2025.

Responses revealed that fear of account suspension and peer influence/social trends strongly shape behaviour, with a majority acknowledging their impact. At the same time, many respondents find the rules too strict and admit to occasionally ignoring them, while a significant portion remains neutral. This indicates that compliance in Ugep is mostly driven by external pressures (fear of punishment and peer trends) rather than internal acceptance of the rules.

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal a marked lack of awareness among young adults in Ugep regarding Facebook's Community Rules and Regulations. Most respondents demonstrate limited familiarity with these guidelines, and only a small minority has ever read the full Community Standards. Views are divided on the adequacy of Facebook's notifications and updates, with many expressing uncertainty or dissatisfaction. This knowledge deficit mirrors earlier research by Ojo and Ezepue (2020), which documented low regulatory awareness among Nigerian youths despite heavy platform usage. However, their work remained broad and university-centered, without examining the distinctive socio-cultural and traditional context of a semi-urban community like Ugep. The present study closes that gap by delivering community-specific evidence on awareness shortfalls, deepening insight into how local factors (including limited digital literacy initiatives and strong communal traditions) influence understanding of platform governance in a real world Cross River setting.

The results show inconsistent application of Facebook's rules among young adults in Ugep. While some consciously avoid prohibited content such as hate speech or misinformation, many adopt a neutral stance or openly admit non-compliance, reflecting only moderate overall commitment. Reporting violations is relatively common, yet a substantial proportion has received warnings or restrictions, signalling frequent breaches. This pattern echoes Uwalaka et al. (2021), who found Nigerian youths routinely share unverified content out of habit rather than malice. Their research, however, neither measured adherence levels nor explored sanction experiences, and it was not anchored in a specific locality. By analysing adherence behaviours and enforcement encounters in Ugep, this study offers concrete localised evidence of how compliance actually operates within Nigeria's diverse digital landscape.

The findings indicate that compliance among young adults in Ugep stems from a mix of fear, perceived strictness, and social pressures. Fear of account suspension drives some to follow the rules, while others regard them as overly harsh and deliberately disregard them. Peer influence and prevailing social trends also exert strong sway, often overriding platform standards. This corroborates Ojo and Ezepue (2020), who linked cultural practices to compliance difficulties among Nigerian youths, yet they did not isolate fear of sanctions or peer dynamics, nor did they concentrate on a single community. The current study bridges that gap by pinpointing these drivers within Ugep's unique socio-cultural environment, clarifying how traditional norms, communal expression, and indịvidual motivations interact with global regulations, and illuminating the specific compliance challenges faced in semi-urban Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study examined awareness and application of Facebook's Community Standards among young adults in Ugep, Cross River State, Nigeria. The findịngs revealed a significant knowledge gap, with the majority of respondents unfamiliar with the rules and only a small minority having read them. Adherence remained moderate, with some consciously avoiding violations while many others received warnings or restrictions. Key influencing factors were fear of account suspension, perceptions of the rules as overly strict and strong peer/social influence. The study clearly demonstrates that the primary barrier to effective application of Facebook's Community Standards in Ugep is not illiteracy or lack of internet access, but the persistent perception that the rules are foreign, excessively rigid, and misaligned with local norms of communal expression and humour. This perception, reinforced by peer influence and the absence of culturally relevant education, sustains low awareness and inconsistent compliance, confirming that global policies cannot succeed without deliberate localisation and community-driven sensitisation.

Recommendations

1. Meta/Facebook should push simplified, Pidgin-English pop-up explanations of the main Community Standards the first time a user in Ugep is about to post or comment.
2. Youth leaders, age-grade executives, and popular Ugep influencers on Facebook should run regular short video skits and town-hall sensitisation sessions showing "what gets you blocked" in facebook.
3. Cross River State Ministry of Education and Yakurr LGA should integrate Facebook Community Standards into school and community digital literacy programmes in Ugep.

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RURAL INSECURITY, WOMEN'S PROTEST AND AGITATION IN NIGERIA: A CATALYST FOR DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

It has been a normal story over the way and manner of the killings in the south-East and other parts of Nigeria which started slightly in 2015 and from 2020 became intense with so many killings and kidnappings for ransom till date. Rural insecurity in Nigeria has become a recurring decimal with its continuing attacks on its citizenry. This security challenges in Nigeria manifest itself in the loss of lives and property worth millions of naira on daily basis. This has drawn the emergence of militancy in those areas. Moreover, the phenomenon of nomadic Fulani herdsmen onslaught on communities are not only obtainable in the South-East alone but also in the whole parts of the North central and South, particularly against peasant farmers in those areas. This has assumed frightening dimensions and they are rarely apprehended by security operatives. Combined with these are armed robberies, rising rate of unemployment among youths leading to restiveness, corruption and increasing inequality, leading to chaos everywhere in the country. The effect of this insecurity is a threat to democratic governance and cannot be undermined hence; this paper examines rural insecurity,

women's protest and agitation in Nigeria: a catalyst for democracy as well as its multifaceted manifestations.

Keywords: Women's Protest, Agitation, Democracy, Rural insecurity, Fulani Cattle headsmen, Unemployment

Introduction

It is perturbing that Nigeria has been witnessing a drastic and frantic rural security challenges that have kept persisting till date. This crisis is in various forms; communal, religious, political and socio-economic with varying degree of casualty, mostly on innocent citizens. Some see this phenomenon as a calculated attempt by the international community to divide the country while others believe it is the phantom sectarian violence that is responsible. The most alarming fact is that this incessant violence apart from killing and maiming innocent souls has imprinted agony, tension and aggression in the minds of Nigerians. Today, we live in absolute suspicion and constant presentiment of an impending disaster. Most economic activities have come to a halt and private businesses are crippling with the result of the inability of employers to pay their employees. There has been a rural-urban drift taking place publicly compared to the previous years. All these are the direct aftermath of rural insecurity in the country that has deprived democratic governance in Nigeria.

The idea of democracy derives its moral strength and popular appeal from two key principles:

1. **Individual autonomy**: The idea that no one should be

subjected to imposed rules by others. People should be able to control their own lives (within reason).

2. **Equality**: The impression that everyone should have the same opportunity to influence the decisions that affect people in society. However, a "democracy" is also incomplete without a thorough growing respect for human rights. Taking part in government, in a genuine way, is almost impossible to do without people having other basic rights being respected. (*https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/democracy#:~:text=The%20word%20democracy%20comes%20from,the%20will%20of%20the%20people).*

The strength of democracy is drawn from the fact that it is supposed to be the product of the will of the majority of the people. Government is held in trust for the people. As shareholders of the common wealth, the citizens will not only avoid such behaviours that hurt and sabotage the system, but join forces to resist any such attack on the collective interest of the people. This will enhance the real basis for the development of grand tactic, the mobilisation of the entire national asset for the protection of the nation, which can work best in democracy (Adejumo, 2009).

After sixty-five years of nationhood, Nigeria still ranks among the poorest countries in the world; ranks low in all socio-economic indịcators such as life expectancy, death rate, access to water, poverty rate, mortality rate, and crime rate, and still carries the tag of a developing economy. Nigeria is a classic illustration of an oxymoron, a poor country in the midst of abundant human and natural resources. This scenario has contributed to security challenges that have bedeviled the country since independence till now with grave consequences for socio-economic development. There is no nation that can achieve socio-economic development in an environment of socio and physical insecurity. The increasing challenge of insecurity in Nigeria has also been linked to failure of leadership to deliver good governance, and secure the welfare of persons on the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. The ruling elites in Nigeria in both the military and democratic dispensation are dependent, parasitic, and very corrupt in nature, and mal-administration (Ali, 2013).

In 2024-2025, Nigeria was ranked 147 out of 163 countries, indịcating that Nigeria is among the least peaceful countries in the world with this low score on the index whereas, Ghana was identified as the most peaceful country in West Africa followed by Sierra Leone and Liberia (2024 Global Peace Index; National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS)). Despite the plethora of security measures taken to address the daunting challenges of insecurity in Nigeria, government efforts have not produced the desired positive result. This has compelled the Nigerian government in recent time to request for foreign assistance from countries such as USA, Israel, and EU countries to combat the rising waves of terrorism and insecurity.

It is the duty of the government to take care and safegurad the life of every citizens. This can be found in Chapter IV of the 1999 Nigerian constitution guarantees the fundamental rights of citizens. According to Section 33(1), every person has a right to life; Section 34(1) every indịvidual is entitled to respect for the diginity of his person; Section 35(1), every person shall be entitled to his personal liberty; Section 36(1) in the determination of his civil rights and obligations, including any question or determination by or against any government or authority, a person shall be entitled to a fair hearing; Section 37(1), the privacy of citizens, their homes, correspondenceis hereby guaranteed and protected. Against this background, this paper therefore seeks to examine the pertinent issues of rural insecurity, Women's Protest and Agitation in Nigeria: A Catalyst for Democracy; using Eha-Amufu community as a test case for insecurity, protest and women agitation. This study is anchored by the following research questions to guide the study:

i. What are the causes of rural insecurity, women's protest and Agitation in Nigeria?
ii. To what extent has the role of women's protests and agitation contributed in shaping democratic governance in Nigeria?
iii. What measures would curb Rural Insecurity, Women's Protest and Agitation in Nigeria?

The Objectives of this study are thus to:

i. examine the causes of rural insecurity, women's protest and Agitation in Nigeria.
ii. analyze the role of women's protests and agitation in shaping democratic governance in Nigeria.
iii. proffer solutions to curb Rural Insecurity, Women's Protest and Agitation in Nigeria.

The *scope* of this study focuses on the interplay between *rural insecurity, women's protest and agitation,* *and democratic governance in Nigeria* using Eha-Amufu community as a test case. Meanwhile, Eha-Amufu is in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area in Enugu state Nigeria. It examines how insecurity in rural area manifested through bandịtry, herders–farmers conflicts, kidnappings, and communal clashes that affects community life and compels women to engage in protests and other forms of agitation. The study situates women's responses as not only coping strategies but also as mechanisms that influence governance and democratic consolidation. Geographically, the study is limited to selected rural communities in three communities in Eha-Amufu; namely Mgbuji, Abor, and Aguamede. These are the prevalent areas that suffer most when it comes for herders-farmers clash, where insecurity has significantly disrupted livelihoods, social harmony, and food production. While the findịngs may have implications for urban areas, the primary concern is with **rural contexts** where insecurity is most pronounced and where women's voices are often marginalized. *Thematically, the study is restricted to three main areas*:

1. The nature and extent of *rural insecurity.*
2. The role of *women's protests and agitation* as responses to insecurity and as expressions of democratic participation.
3. The implications of these protests for *strengthening democratic governance* in Nigeria.

The study does not attempt to provide an exhaustive account of all forms of insecurity or all women's movements across the country. Instead, it focuses on representative cases and patterns that illuminate the broader relationship between rural insecurity, women's activism, and democracy. The time frame of the study covers *2015 to present;* a period marked by both heightened insecurity and increased women's mobilization in democratic struggles.

Rural Insecurity in Eha-Amufu.

Despite the protest the killings have become unabted. Barley few months of the protest by the women in that community, people are still being killed in their farms. According to the report from the natives during an interview, they complained that on 9th June 2025 about 5 men were killed again in Mgbuji and on 21st June, 2 men was also killed in the same area making a total number of 8 from the same community. They said that the set of people killed was because they went to get some food items in their farms. More so, that the killing continued to their neighbouring community Agu-Amede, where 9 able young men were killed on 15 June 2025. The communities are of the view that the government or top men in the country has hand in the killings. They stated that: "It is so shocking that each time a helicopter flew to the farm settlement area, there must be death of innocent souls. They said that the helicopter flew into the farmland (farm settlement area) and dropped arms and ammunitions to those terrorists who used their weapons to kill and chase innocent souls out of their land'. (live interview with Mgbuji and Agu-Amede Community by the researcher)

The question here is, where are the helicopter coming from and who owns the helicopter? The local council and Enugu state government have an answer to these questions. Where is the protection of these people by the government of Enugu State? Does that mean that there are less human beings and superior human beings? Why is it that government of Enugu state allowed the entrance of helicopter in the state without enquireing where it comes from? Where on earth can this happen if not only in Nigeria where human lives do not matter, more especially the life of these peasant farmers that have no access to any neccessities of life; No good road, electricity, pipe born water, health facilities or good schools; these communities do not have any of these mentioned. These are the people that are in their farm lands just to make ends meet. What offence have they committed to be butchered like animal? Why can't the government provide them with security to end this menece happening in Eha-Amufu in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State. All these questions are thrown open for the public. The issue of insecurity in Eha-Amufu has lingered so much with so many stories behind it. Presently the Fulanis in that community are of two types. First the Fulanis in the bush and secondly the other Fulanis in the house (indịgenous people, paid by the original Fulanis for information and operation) most dangerous!

The affected people narrated that the Fulanis in the home are more dangerous than the Fulanis in the bush. Reasons; whereas, it is the home Fulanis that give information to the bush Fulanis who in colaboration with the home Fulanis attack the community, it was noted that the home Fulanis cover their faces while attacking the people while that of the bush Fulanis don't cover their faces when they attack. Based on the information gathered from the farm settleres, most of them are of the opinion that unless the home Fulanis are addressed properly, the conflict will continue to linger for enternity, and as long as there is hunger and starvation, insecurity must continue in the area. One of the persons interviewed stated that things are very hard in the country and that the bad eggs amoung the community must continue to exploit their brothers in order to survive. That people have sold their concience to the devil and can do anything to survive. Moreso, that what is happening in that area is the survival of the fittest. There are lots of kidnappings going on, of which the home Fulanis joined hands with the bush Fulanis to pepertuate and collect ransome before releasing their victims.

The most annoying part is that the Fulanis use farmers' farm products to feed their cows. In a situation where rice, cassava, yam, wateryam, potatoes etc are now left to be used to feed animal is a critical condịtion that government has to urgently look into it. The people are dieing of hunger, sicknesses most especially having spent so much money for farming and cannot have access to the farm is enough to kill most of them. Some borrowed money from the banks and cooperatives and cannot find any means to pay back. It is quite unfortunate that government has neglected the people.

All these have made our democracy unstable. A situation where democratic government cannot provide and Source:

WhatsApp Photo March 4th 2025 *Eha-Amufu Women Protest against rape, killing of their children, husbands, relatives and most of all destroying their crops by the Fulani Cattle herdsmen in their own fathers land!*

safeguard the lives and property of the people is a big shame.

It is important at this juncture, to note that several factors have been identified as being responsible for the increasing level of insecurity in Nigeria. Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) identified ethnic and religious affiliations as the determining factor of who gets what in Nigeria. Since identity politics is taken as the main viable means of access to power or to enjoy other privileges, crisis situations become inevitable. Where the weak is unable to have his voice heard, violent conflict becomes frequent. Politics is one of the most important triggers for insecurity. Various modes of politics, different political ideologies, goals and targets, produce varying forms of engagement or contestation with the state. The most significant of these in Nigeria have been the women's anti-tax revolts of 1929 (Aba Women's riot of 1929); the Abeokuta Women's revolt in 1947; the Egba women's revolts in 1958; protest against rejection of gender equality bills in 2022; There was also the protest of women from Eha-Amufu over rape and killings of their children and husband by Fulani cattle herdsmen on Tuesday 4th March 2025. These protests highlight women's roles in fighting for political rights, demandịng social justice in order to promote and reinstall true democracy in Nigeria.

The Impact of Herdsmen's Act of Violence in Eha-Amufu

Eha-Amufu that used to be one of the food baskets in Isi-Uzo and Enugu state, popularly known for producing rice, garri, yam, potatoes etc has since the crisis started, been faced with scarcity of food. The people can no longer go to their farms because of the fear of the cattle headers who have been killing and maiming the farmers and also destroying their cultivated food items by their cows. This has made the prices of food ultra – expensive. Before, a tin of rice used to be sold in a cheaper price of three thousand to five thousand naira, (₦3,000-₦5,000), later increased to five thousand to seven thousand naira (₦5,000 – ₦7,000), a basket of potatoes, five hundred to one thousand naira (₦500 – ₦1,000) and one piece of big yam five hundred to one thousand (₦500 – ₦1000). Recently a basin of garri is sold between twenty-eight thousand-to-thirty-five-thousand-naira,(₦28,000 ₦35,000) while, one big piece of yam sold at four thousand to five thousand naira (₦4000 – ₦5000) and a basket of potatoes sold at ten to fifteen thousand naira (₦10,000 – ₦15,000). It will take some years for the people to recover from the destructions of the cattle headsmen and for them to live their normal life.

The study adopted the theory of frustration - Aggression theory. The original formulation of the frustration–aggression theory was propounded by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Searsin 1939. They are of the view that "the occurrence of aggressive behavioural ways presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some forms of aggression." The context of Frustration according to some of the scholars was not understood as an emotional experience but as "aninterference with the occurrence of an instigated goal response. Frustration was defined as an event instead of an affective state. Based on the original definition by Dollard and the colleagues, one might criticize their claim to universal validity, by taking verbatim, the occurrence of aggressive behaviour that always presupposes the existence of frustration which suggests that aggression does not occur without any form of prior frustration, and the assertion that frustration always leads to some form of aggression, implies that aggression is a certain outcome of any frustration. These deterministic assumptions were some what accepted in a 1941 publication by the same authors in which they stated that "frustration produces instigation to aggression but this is not the only type of instigation that it may produce "(Breuer and Elson 2017).

In relating frustration-aggression to this topic under study, we were made to understand according to Dollard and co, that aggression cannot occur without frustration; therefore, the main instigator of aggression is when one is frustrated from happenings around the indịvidual or community. We can see already that there was already on ground *rural insecurity that caused women to protest and agitate thereby standịng as a catalyst to democracy*. For democracy to thrive there must be peace and harmony in the area. Nigerians are frustrated because of the Fulani headers that destroy their farm products, thereby causing hunger and starvation, bringing hardships to the people and they have no choice rather than showing their grievances which is aggression. Aggression is a dangerous poison and an aggrieved nation cannot progress as it is right now in the country that has continued to go backwards instead of moving forward.

This study bridges the fields of *security studies and gender studie***s** by examining the intersection between rural insecurity and women's activism. While insecurity in Nigeria has been widely studied, little attention has been given to the way women's protests in rural communities serve as mechanisms of democratic engagement. This study therefore advances an interdisciplinary understanding of how insecurity generates new forms of gendered political participation. And again, the study re-conceptualizes the role of women in democratic governance. Rather than portraying women as passive victims of insecurity, it demonstrates that women are *active agents of democratic change,* whose protests and agitation contribute to accountability, justice, and participatory governance. This shifts the discourse from women as marginalized actors to women as catalysts of democratic consolidation. More so, the research contributes new *empirical evidence from rural Nigeria*, a context often overlooked in studies that focus predominantly on urban centers or elite political actors. By highlighting the experiences of rural women, the study fills a critical gap in the literature and foregrounds the importance of grassroots agency in shaping governance outcomes.

The *research design* of this study is descriptive survey research design, of both quantitative and qualitative approach to data analyses which are based on primary and secondary sources like questionnaire, journals, historical textbooks, newspapers and online publications. To what extent has the role of women's protests and agitation contributed in shaping democratic governance in Nigeria? Target population of this study is 450 respondents drawn from the population of Eha-Amufu which is 70,779 according to 2016 population census. The major villages involved in insecurity are Mgbuji, Abor, and Aguamede. From the population, a total number of 450 subjects drawn from different sectors were purposely selected for sampling. 150 respondents came from each community, making a total sampling size of 450 from the main population of 70, 779. Data were collected with the use of questionnaire, instruments structured by the researcher. A 4-point Likert scale was used to rate the responses from the respondents. Data collected were presented in Tables, Frequencies and Percentage and analyzed by using mean.

Frequency table were used in the analysis of data obtained from the field.
In the main study, the data collected for the study were subjected to statistical analysis using procedures like frequencies in the measurement of the respondents' opinions. The mean score for each item were obtained by multiplying the frequency of each response category with the appropriate nominal values as obtained and dividing by the total number of respondents to the item using this formula:

$\bar{X} = \frac{\Sigma fx}{N}$ Where E= Summation x = mean
x = cardinal value of each response
f = frequency of each response made
n = number of total respondents

The mean scores were interpreted based on the boundary limit of the point assigned to each response category. The bench mark here is that any mean value of each questionnaire item that is up to 2.5 and above was considered as agreed for confirming the position of the respondents on the issue while that which is from 2.5 down was considered as disagreed that formed the decision rule.

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected for the study. The analysis is guided by the three research questions formulated to investigate the causes of rural insecurity, women's protests and agitation, their role in shaping democratic governance, and strategies for curbing these challenges in Nigeria. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in frequency tables with corresponding mean scores and decision rules.

Table 1

RQ1: What are the causes of rural insecurity, women's protest and Agitation in Eha-Amufu?

S/N	***ITEM***	***Responses***						
		SA	***A***	***D***	***SD***	***N***	***M(X)***	***Decision***
1	Poor governmentpresence in rural areas	*250*	*190*	*5*	*3*	*448*	*3.53*	*Agree*
2	Farmers–herders' conflict	*221*	*207*	*12*	*09*	*449*	*3.43*	*Agree*
3	Banditry andkidnapping	*220*	*178*	*26*	*21*	*445*	*3.34*	*Agree*
4	Inability to include women in governance fuels protest and agitation.	*300*	*140*	*02*	*01*	*443*	*3.67*	*Strongly Agree*

5	Government failure to adequately protect rural communities.	*192*	*180*	*40*	*33*	*445*	*3.19*	*Agree*
6	Poverty and unemployment	*249*	*191*	*05*	*02*	*447*	*3.54*	*Agree*
7	Community marginalization	*111*	*100*	*13 9*	*95*	*445*	*2.51*	*Agree*

Interpretation

All the listed items have mean scores above 2.5, indicating that respondents agreed that they are significant causes of rural insecurity, women's protest, and agitation in the area.

The top three strongest causes were:
1. Inability to include women in governance (X = 3.67)
2. Poverty and unemployment (X = 3.54)
3. Poor government presence in the rural areas (X = 3.53)

Farmers–herders' conflict, banditry, and government's failure to protect rural communities also emerged as major contributing factors.

Although, community marginalization was acknowledged by some respondents (111 strongly agreed, 100 agreed), a significant proportion disagreed (139) or strongly disagreed (95), thereby lowering the mean score. This suggests that while marginalization may play a role in some contexts, it is not widely perceived as a primary cause compared to other factors such as exclusion of women from governance, poverty, unemployment, and weak government presence in rural areas. The implication is that grievances leading to insecurity and agitation are seen as stemming more from direct socio-economic and governance-related deficiencies than from broad perceptions of marginalization.

From the analysis, it can be deduced that rural insecurity and women's protest in Nigeria are not merely caused by immediate violent incidents but are rooted in broader structural and systemic challenges. The exclusion of women from governance, widespread poverty and unemployment, weak state presence in rural areas, recurrent communal conflicts, and the increasing wave of bandịtry collectively contribute to an atmosphere of fear, frustration, and agitation.

The findịngs therefore suggest that addressing insecurity and protest in rural Nigeria, requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond security interventions to include inclusive governance, poverty alleviation, rural development, and stronger state protection mechanisms. The data in Table 1 show that all the items had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5. This implies that the respondents generally agreed that the listed factors are significant causes of rural insecurity, women's protest, and agitation in Nigeria.

Among the causes identified, the inability to include women in governance recorded the highest mean score (X = 3.67), indịcating that gender exclusion in decision-making is perceived as a very strong factor contributing to women's agitation. Poverty and unemployment (X = 3.54) and poor government presence in rural areas (X = 3.53) also received high ratings, reflecting that socio-economic deprivation and neglect of rural areas remain critical drivers of insecurity and unrest.

Analysis and Interpretation

The results in Table 1 indịcate that respondents generally agreed on a number of major causes of rural insecurity, women's protest, and agitation in Nigeria. The most highly rated cause was the exclusion of women from governance (X = 3.67), suggesting that political marginalization of women is a strong trigger for organized agitation. This was followed by poverty and unemployment (X = 3.54) and poor government presence in rural areas (X = 3.53), both of which point to socio-economic neglect and weak state engagement as significant contributors to insecurity and unrest.

Farmers–herders' conflict (X = 3.43) and the menace of bandịtry and kidnapping (X = 3.34) were strongly acknowledged as major threats to rural peace and stability. Likewise, government failure to adequately protect rural communities (X = 3.19) was seen as a significant cause of persistent insecurity.

Table 2

RQ2: To what extenthas the role of women's protests and agitation contributed in shaping democratic governance

S/N	***ITEM***	***Responses***						
		SA	***A***	***D***	***SD***	***N***	***M(X)***	***Decision***
1	Women's protests promote accountability in governance	*199*	*199*	*27*	*23*	*448*	*3.28*	*Agree*
2	Women's involvement in protest strengthens democracy in Nigeria	*230*	*185*	*17*	*13*	*445*	*3.42*	*Agree*
3	Women's protest challenged unjust political system and reforms	*244*	*134*	*32*	*35*	*445*	*3.32*	*Agree*
4	Women's protest created awareness about social justice and rights	*202*	*198*	*16*	*29*	*445*	*3.29*	*Agree*
5	Women's protest encouraged inclusivity and political participation	*88*	*50*	*28 0*	*27*	*445*	*2.45*	*Disagree*

6	Women's agitation pressured govt. to adopt Gender-Sensitive policies	*55*	*55*	*173*	*162*		*2.01*	*Disagree*

Analysis and Interpretation:

Findings reveal that women's protests have significantly contributed to shaping democratic governance by promoting accountability (X = 3.28), strengthening democracy (X = 3.41), challenging unjust systems (X = 3.32), and creating awareness on social justice and human rights (X = 3.29). However, respondents disagreed that women's protests have substantially encouraged inclusivity in governance (X = 2.18) or pressured government to adopt gender-sensitive policies (X = 1.98). This suggests that while women's protests have had symbolic and mobilizational impacts, their influence on institutional reforms and policy inclusivity remains limited.

Table 3

RQ3: What Strategies would curb Rural Insecurity, Women's Protest and Agitation in Eha-Amufu (Nigeria).

S/N	***ITEM***	***Responses***						
		SA	***A***	***D***	***SD***	***N***	***M(X)***	***Decision***

1	Strengthening women in political participation can reduce insecurity.	*194*	*163*	*46*	*42*	*445*	*3.14*	*Agree*
2	Reformations of security sectors in rural communities	*180*	*170*	*50*	*45*	*445*	*3.09*	*Agree*
3	Dialogue, conflict resolution and mediation	*188*	*190*	*50*	*25*	*453*	*3.19*	*Agree*
4	Land reformations and agricultural modernization	*220*	*169*	*29*	*27*	*445*	*3.31*	*Agree*
5	Job creation, amenities, cooperatives & microcredit for women	*201*	*190*	*28*	*26*	*445*	*3.27*	*Agree*
6	Civic education and creation of awareness	*103*	*107*	*166*	*69*	*445*	*2.55*	*Agree (weak)*
7	Inclusion of women in governance	*159*	*174*	*86*	*26*	*445*	*3.05*	*Agree*

Analysis and Interpretation

Respondents strongly endorsed a combination of socio-economic and governance reforms as strategies to curb insecurity and agitation. Land reforms and agricultural modernization (X = 3.31), job creation and empowerment (X = 3.27), and conflict resolution/dialogue (X = 3.19) were rated highest. Political inclusion of women (X = 3.14) and reforming rural security (X = 3.09) were also considered effective. Civic education (X = 2.55) received the lowest score, though still slightly above the decision threshold, suggesting respondents prioritize structural and economic interventions over awareness campaigns.

The findings of this study reveal that rural insecurity, women's protests, and agitation in Nigeria are deeply intertwined with structural governance failures, socio-economic deprivation, and gender exclusion. From Research Question One, the results show that rural insecurity is driven by poor government presence, poverty and unemployment, farmers–herders' conflicts, banditry and kidnapping, and the exclusion of women from governance. This aligns with Akinwale (2020), who argued that insecurity in rural Nigeria is primarily a product of weak state institutions and the absence of responsive governance structures. The finding that exclusion of women from governance fuels agitation also resonates with Odejide (2019), who emphasized the link between political marginalization and women's collective resistance.

With respect to Research Question Two, the findings demonstrate that women's protests have historically played a critical role in shaping democratic governance. Respondents agreed that women's agitation has promoted accountability, strengthened democracy, and raised awareness on social justice and human rights. However, there was weaker agreement on whether these movements have effectively pressured government to adopt gender-sensitive policies or significantly encouraged inclusivity in governance. This reflects findịngs by Mama (2018), who noted that while women's activism has been successful in mobilization and awareness creation, its translation into concrete policy outcomes remains limited.

Research Question Three highlighted strategies for curbing insecurity and agitation. The most strongly endorsed strategies include land reforms and modernization of agriculture, job creation and economic empowerment for rural women, security sector reforms, dialogue and mediation, and the inclusion of women in governance. These findịngs support the work of Olajide & Abdulrahman (2021), who stressed that peacebuilding in rural Nigeria requires both socio-economic empowerment and institutional reforms. The relatively lower rating for civic education suggests that while awareness creation is valued, respondents prioritize more direct interventions that address livelihood and governance gaps.

Collectively, these findịngs emphasize that sustainable peace and democratic consolidation in Nigeria depend on addressing socio-economic deprivation, promoting inclusivity, and strengthening state institutions to meet the needs of marginalized rural populations.

The findịngs demonstrate that rural insecurity and women's agitation are deeply tied to systemic governance failures, socio-economic hardship, and political exclusion.

Exclusion of women from governance was rated the highest cause of protests, confirming earlier arguments by Odejide (2019) that gender marginalization drives women to collective resistance. Poverty and unemployment also emerged as central, consistent with Akinwale (2020), who linked rural insecurity to economic neglect.

Women's protests were shown to promote accountability and awareness but had limited impact on inclusivity and gender-sensitive policy adoption. This mirrors Mama (2018), who observed that women's activism often generates symbolic visibility but rarely translates into institutionalized reforms.

Respondents strongly endorsed strategies such as land reforms, agricultural modernization, and economic empowerment as sustainable measures. This agrees with Olajide & Abdulrahman (2021), who emphasized socio-economic empowerment and institutional reforms as pathways to rural peace. The endorsement of women's inclusion in governance also supports the global push for gender mainstreaming in political structures.

Conclusion

Across the three research questions, the study establishes that rural insecurity is caused by poverty, exclusion, poor governance, and violent conflicts; women's protests have historically promoted accountability and strengthened democracy; and effective solutions must combine economic empowerment, agricultural reforms, women's inclusion in governance, and security sector reforms.

Taken together, the findịngs suggest that women's protests serve as both a reaction to marginalization and a catalyst for democratic accountability. However, long-term peace and stability require holistic reforms that address governance gaps, economic deprivation, and gender exclusion.

The study concludes that rural insecurity in Nigeria is not merely a product of violent conflict but a manifestation of structural neglect, socio-economic deprivation, and political exclusion. Women's protests have been effective in drawing attention to injustice and holding governments accountable but have had limited impact on policy inclusivity. Sustainable peace and democratic consolidation require multi-dimensional reforms economic, social, political, and institution that prioritize inclusivity, empowerment, and accountability.

Recommendations

The study recommends to Strengthen Governance in Rural Areas by providing infrastructure, social services, and security services. This will bring development and peace in the area. It will also attract people from all over the country to come and settle for business or agriculture.

Women should be included in political participation by promoting Women's political inclusion through quotas, leadership training, and gender-sensitive policies.

They should be empowered for rural women development to be raised at a higher standard with microcredit, cooperatives, and job creation initiatives.

It is the duty of government to see that women are not marginalized in terms of comfortable lives.

They should also implement gender-sensitive policies that respond to women's demands and strengthen inclusivity and expand civic education and awareness to build democratic culture and informed women fully participation in politics by having a favourable ground to play.

For the sake of farmers in the area there should be reform and modernize agriculture via land reforms, mechanization, and improved technologies. This will help farmers to grow and have enough food to sell and feed their family members.

The security sectors should effectively tackle rural bandịtry, kidnapping, and communal conflicts. Also, should Adopt dialogue and mediation mechanisms for resolving farmers–herders' and communal clashes/ disputes.

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FARMERS-HEADSMEN CLASHES IN NIGERIA: EFFECTS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts between herders and crop farmers have emerged as one of the most persistent security and development challenges in Nigeria.` Rooted in competition over land, water, and other resources, these conflicts have intensified due to climate change, demographic pressures, weak governance, and ethno-religious tensions. This paper interrogates the underlying issues, examines empirical evidence, explores theoretical underpinnings, and offers practical recommendations. Using a mixed-method approach that combines secondary data, content analysis of existing reports, and survey findịngs, the study reveals that herder-farmer conflicts are driven primarily by scarcity of arable land, desertification, encroachments into grazing routes, and political manipulation of identity cleavages. Findịngs indịcate devastating socio-economic costs, including displacement, loss of lives, and disruption of livelihoods, food insecurity, and the erosion of intercommunal trust. Tables and case illustrations are presented to highlight trends across regions. The study employs resource conflict theory, political ecology, and frustration-aggression theory to frame analysis. Results *show that sustainable solutions must combine security enforced with inclusive land tenure reforms, climate adaption strategies, and participatory peace building frameworks. The paper concludes that while herder-farmer conflicts present profound challenges, they also create opportunities for Nigeria to rethink its rural development, natural resource governance, and national cohesion agenda.*

Keywords: conflict, displacement, Nigeria.

Introduction

Conflict has become a significant global challenge, threatening peace and stability across nations. In Nigeria, the return to democratic governance in 1999 was accompanied by widespread conflicts among diverse groups, communities, religions, and political classes. These conflicts vary in dimension, process, and the actors involved. Among these, resource-based conflicts particularly those between herders and farmers stand out as the most pervasive in developing countries. There are multiple types of resource-user conflicts, like disputes between farming communities, herders and farmers, and other resource users such as foresters. However, the farmer-herder conflict is the most prominent due to the centrality of land resources to both groups. Land issues, especially regarding grazing fields and agricultural activities, account for majority of disputes between herders and farmers. Land is an essential resource for human existence and socio-economic activities. It serves as the foundation for food production, shelter, and industrial activities. However, its limited availability and diverse uses often lead to competition among user groups. To farmers, land is a critical input requiring specific soil nutrients, temperature and structure for effective agricultural production.

Herders rely on land for grazing and watering their livestocks, making land-related disputes inevitable. In Nigeria, the rising population and increasing demand for land have intensified the competition for this resource (UNDP, 2019). This has resulted in recurrent and often violent clashes between farmers and herders, particularly in regions where ecological and socio-economic factors exacerbate tensions. The dynamic climate characterized by seasonal rainfall and prolonged dry season spells, also impacts resource availability, further souring relationships between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders.

Benue state, often referred to as "Food Basket of the Nation," is heavily reliant on agricultural activities. Despite its potential, the persistent farmer-herder conflicts have disrupted agricultural productivity, displaced communities and created significant socio-economic challenges. Historically, herders and farmers coexisted with periodic tensions, but recent developments have escalated these disputes, leading to widespread destruction of homes, farmlands, and livelihoods. The consequences of the conflict are beyond resource disputes, food insecurity and disruption of residential stability. Farmers fear attacks and often unable to access their farmlands or harvest their crops, and these threaten food supply and economic stability in the affected areas. Additionally, the violence has led to significant displacement, destruction of housing, and the polarization of communities into monoreligious clusters, particularly in Benue, Nasarawa, and Taraba states. Efforts by the Nigerian armed forces like the military and proposals for cattle ranching are yet to provide solutions to the conflicts. In Benue state, the complexity of land-use dynamics has heightened tensions, making it imperative to examine the far-reaching impacts of the disputes.

Nigeria is endowed with abundant human and natural resources. However, its agricultural sector - the largest employer of labour - has become a theatre of conflicts between nomadic herders and sedentary crop farmers. These clashes, which have escalated in recent times, are not merely local but a national crisis that undermines security, stability, and development. Historically, pastoralism and farming coexisted symbiotically, with farmers providing crop residues for herders' livestock and herders supplying manure for farmlands. Yet, ecological pressures, population growth, land fragmentation, and weak governance have transformed this relationship into violent confrontation.

The persistence of these conflicts raises critical questions: Why has a relationship that was once mutually beneficial degenerated into hostility? What structural and proximate factors sustain the conflicts? What are the implications for Nigeria's development trajectory? How can sustainable peace be achieved? These questions inform the objectives of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the root causes of herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria.
2. To review the challenges posed by these conflicts to peace and development.
3. To identify gaps in existing literature and interventions.
4. To apply relevant theoretical frameworks to explain the persistence of the conflicts.
5. To provide actionable recommendations and prospects for sustainable resolution.

Empirical Review

Scholars and development agencies have extensively studied herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria and across the Sahel. According to International Crisis Group (2018), farmer-herder violence has claimed more lives than Boko Haram terrorism in certain years, making it Nigeria's deadliest conflict after the civil war. Okoli and Atelhe (2014) argue that desertification in northern Nigeria has compelled herders to migrate southward in search of pastures, often clashing with sedentary farming communities.

Other studies highlight political manipulation. Krause (2010) notes that elites exploit ethno-religious identities, portraying the conflict as "Fulani versus others," thereby inflaming communal tensions. Adelakun (2020) observes that media framing of the crisis often exacerbates mistrust rather than fostering dialogue.

From a socio-economic perspective, Fasona and Omojola (2017) demonstrate that herder-farmer conflicts disrupt food supply chains, aggravating inflation, and food insecurity. Similarly, Akinyemi (2016) establishes that the conflicts reduce agricultural productivity, discourage investment, and contribute to rural-urban migration. International organizations have also raised alarms. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2019) stresses that climate-induced migration is central to the conflict, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2019) emphasizes governance, deficits and weak conflict resolution mechanisms.

Gaps in Literature

Despite extensive research, gaps remain:

- Many studies are localized and fail to provide holistic, cross-regional perspectives.
- There is limited integration of environmental and political factors
- Few works systematically connect the conflicts to Nigeria's national security strategy.
- Practical implementable policy recommendations are often missing.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws from several theories:

- **Resource Conflict Theory (Homer-Dixon, 1999):** Explains how scarcity of resources such as land and water generates violent competition.

- **Political Ecology Theory:** Highlights how environmental changes intersect with social inequalities and governance failures.
- **Frustration-Aggression Theory (Dollard et al., 1939):** Suggests that unmet needs and blocked goals trigger aggression, observable in dispossessed farmers and displaced herders.
- **Structural Functionalism (Parsons, 1951):** Explains how systemic breakdown in institutions like land management and security exacerbates tensions.

Research Method

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, relying on both secondary data (journal articles, government reports, NGO publications, media accounts) and primary survey data collected from three conflict-prone states-Benue, Taraba, and Kaduna. A sample size of 400 respondents (farmers, herders, community leaders, and government officials) was purposively selected.

- **Data Collection Tools:** Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions.
- **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, cross-tabulations), while qualitative data were analyzed thematically.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Informed consent, anonymity, and respect for cultural sensitivities were strictly observed.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male Female	280 120	70% 30%
Age	18-35 36-50 51+	140 160 100	35% 40% 25%
Occupation	Farmer Herders Others	210 138 60	52.5% 32.5% 15%

Causes of Conflict

Cause of conflict	Frequency	Percentage
Encroachment	160	40%
Competition	80	20%
Destruction of crops by cattle	90	22.5%
Cattle rustling	40	10%
Political/ethnic manipulation	30	7.5%

Discussion:

Data reveal that land encroachment and crop destruction are primary triggers, confirming the resource scarcity thesis. However, political manipulation and cattle rustling-though less frequent-serve as catalysts for violence escalation.

Socio-Economic Effects

Socio-Economic Effect	Frequency	Percentage
Loss of lives and injuries	120	30%
Displacement of communities	100	25%
Destruction of farmers	90	22.5%
Food insecurity	60	15%
Breakdown of social relations	30	7.5%

The findings affirm earlier studies (e.g., International Crisis Group, 2018, Fasona & Omojola, 2017) that herder-farmer conflicts are not only security challenges but also existential threats to Nigeria's food systems and intercommunal cohesion.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria are multifaceted, rooted in ecological pressures, weak governance, resource competition, and ethno-political manipulation. Their implications for peace, security, and development are profound, threatening agricultural productivity, human security, and national unity.

Recommendations include:

1. **Policy Reforms:** Comprehensive land-use reforms, establishment of grazing reserves, and review of outdated grazing routes.
2. **Climate Adaptation**: Investment in irrigation, afforestation, and climate-resilient farming.
3. **Security Enhancement:** Deploy community policing and early-warning systems in hotspot areas.
4. **Dialogue & Peacebuilding:** Strengthen intercommunal dialogue platforms, leveraging traditional rulers and religious leaders.
5. **Livelihood Diversification:** Encourage alternative livelihoods for both farmers and herders to reduce dependence on scarce resources.
6. **Regional Cooperation:** Collaborate with ECOWAS to manage transhumanse movements across West Africa.

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Ụmịedemede

Nchọcha a lebara anya na nhazi Mmọnwụ n'Eda' lgbo. Onye nchọcha rụtụrụ aka site n'ịkọwa na ọ bụ otu n'ime abamaba e nwere n'ala lgbo. Ọ bụkwa abamaba nnabata ụmụ okorobịa tozuru oke na-eme. Mbunuche nchọcha a bụ ịchọpụta usoro nhazi Mmọnwụ Eda lgbo nke gụnyere ekike Mmọnwụ, Ihu Mmọnwụ, Mmọnwụ na agbara Egbela Eda. Egbela na nnabata ndị ọhụrụ na Mmọnwụ, ịbi ịsị ugwu, ọrụ Egbela na Mmọnwụ, ịkike Egbela na Mmọnwụ, nsọ Egbela na Mmọnwụ, ọrụ Mmọnwụ bara Eda na ọghọm Mmọnwụ. Onye nchọcha ji ịgba ajụjụ ọnu na nọọrọlere mere ngwa nchọcha ya. Ọnye nchọcha jị atụtụ mmekọrịta mmadụ na ibe nke Lev. Vygosky hiwere n'afọ 1978. Onye nchọcha ji usoro nkọwa tụlee ihe ndị a chọpụtara. A chọpụtara na Mmọnwụ Eda lgbo na-ewere ọnọdụ n'ọnwa ịrị kwa afọ ọ bụla. A chọpụtara uru Mmọnwụ baara ndị Eda, nke gụnyere, ọ na-eme ka obodo

na-ekpo ọkụ, e ji ya akwanyere ndị nwụrụ anwụ ugwu. A chọpụtara ọghọm dị na ya, A chọpụtara na tupu a hụta nwoke ọ bụla dị ka onye tozuru oke, ọ ga-esonyeriri abamaba Mmọnwụ na ekpemekpe Egbela Eda, Onye nchọcha tụrụ aro ka nwoke Eda, lgbo na - eme emume abamaba Mmọnwụ kwa afọ ọ bụla, iji kwalịte omenaala, Ọdịnaala, na ọdibendị ha. Onye nchọcha tụkwara aro ka ndị Eda, lebagharịa anya na nhazi Mmọnwụ Eda, iji chọpụta ụzọ ha ga-esi mee ka ọ ghara ichipụ ma ọ bụ laa ka nayị.

Nkọwa ọkpụrụkpụ okwu: Mmọnwụ, Eda, Omenaala, Ọdịnaala, ọdịbendị.

Abstract

This study examines various Masqurades in Eda, lgbo initiation, traditional festivals and Religion. The purpose of the study is to have in-depth knowledge of the various processes of Masqurades, roles, benefits, and disadvantages and their significance in Eda culture and Religion. The researcher used a descriptive method to analyze the findịngs. It was found that the Eda, Igbo, this festival takes place in the first month of every year. The study adopts the theoretical frame work of social cultural theory of (SCT) an interpersonal level theory developed by Lev.Vygosky that emphasizes the dynamic interpretation of culture. The study reviewed various Masqurades in Eda that is followed all year round by the traditional calenda of chief priest. The researcher verified that every male child in Eda culture to be acknowledged as full-fledged man must be initiated into traditional festival and Religion. It is recommended that initiation into traditional festival and Religion of Eda should live up to the expectations of the society, andto find ways to prevent it from being removed or lost since its benefits are useful to the society.

Key words: Culture, Masqurade, Tradition, Religion, Initiation

Mkpọlite

Agbụrụ ọ bụla n'ụwa niile nwere usoro ha hazịrị ahazi ha ji ebi ndụ ha. Ọ bụrụ na e nweghi usoro a a hazịrị, ndị ji ebi ndụ ha, ụwa niile gaara ejụpụta n'ọgbaaghara, n'ihi na onye ọ bụla ga na-eme otu masịrị ya. Ọ bụ ụsoro a, a haziri ahazi na-enye aka ime ka obibi ndụ na mmekọrịta mmadụ na ibe ya bụrụ ihe kwere omume, ya mere a si ka onye ọ bụla biwe otu masịrị ya, ụwa niile gaara anọ n'ọgbaaghara. Ọdinaala bụ mkpọkọta usoro niile agbụrụ hiwere maka obibi ndụ ha nke na-agbaziri ha ụzọ dị mma ma ọ bụ dị njọ ha ga-esi bie ndụ ha. Dị ka Mba, (2018) siri kọwaa ya, ọ bụ nchịkọta mmemme agbụrụ nke ọha obodo kwenyere na ya, na-eme ma na-akụziri ya ụmụ ha site n'ịkụziri ọgbọ ọ bụla bịara, ihe obodo kwenyere na ya, na-enyefe Ọdịnaala site n'ọgbọ ruo n'ọgbọ. Nkụzi dị otu a nwere ike ịbụ site n'ịkọ akụkọ ndị ọzọ gasị ma ọ bụkwanụ site na nlere na nsonye na mmemme ndị obodo na-eme, ka a na-eme nke a, ndị mmadụ na-amụta ihe na-ịtinyekwa ya n'omume. Ọdịnaala bụ emereme nfunaala ma ọ bụ mpunaala, ya bụ ihe ndị ahụ dibụadi tupu obodo amalite, N'uche nke Anọzie (2003) Ọdịnaala bụ ihe ndị ahụ niile puru epu n'ala nke na-adịghị n'obodo niile di n'ala lgbo. Ọdịnaala adịla adị tupu ndị nwe ya amụta nke ha na-agbakwụnyere ya, Ọdịnaala bụ ihe dị ọkpụtọrọkpụ, ọ bụ

Ọdịnaala ka Omenaala gbadoro ụkwụ dịka, ịkwa ozu, Ịgụ nwa aha, ịlụ nwaanyị, iri ekpe, mana ụzọ ha si emepụta ihe ndị a ka a na-akpọ Omenaala. Ọdịnaala na adịgịde site n'aka fere n'aka, ọ naghị anwụ anwụ, omenaala nwere ike nwụọ mana ọdịnaala anaghị anwụ, ọdịbendị bụ ihe ndị ahụ dị n'otu obodo na-adịghị n'obodo ọzọ. N'echiche nke Anozie (2003), ọdibendị bụ ihe ndị ahụ niile e jiri mara obodo na-adịghị n'obodo ndị ọzọ, nke bụ e kwuo maka echiche onye ọ bụla, a gaa n'obodo na-eme ya. A bịa n'ala lgbo, ọ bụ ndị ọka, ka a mara maka ịkpụ ụzụ, o zughi ala lgbo niile ọnụ, ya bụ ịkpụ ụzụ bụ ọdịbendị ọka, n'ihi na o zughi ala lgbo niile ọnụ. Okpukperechi Egbela ka e ji mara ndị Eda, lgbo, ọ bụ ọdịbendị ha, n'ihi na o zughi lgbo niile ọnụ. Omenaala bụ usoro obodo kwekọrịtara iji bie ndụ ha, nke gụnyere okpukperechi ha, ịkwa nka ha, akparamaagwa ha, okwukwe ha; aka ọrụ ha, akụnaụba ha na emume ndị ọzọ dị n'obodo ha. Omenaala bụkwa nkwekọrịta ndị obodo nke gbadoro ụkwụ etụ ha si ebi ndụ. Ogbalu, (1987) kọwara omenaala dịka nchịkọta ihe niile mmadụ mụtara n'obodo ya nke na-achị agwa ha; omume ha, nkwenye na okwukwe ha. N'aka nke Okorie, (2009) Omenaala bụ mkpụrụ okwu atọ e jikọtara n'ụdị ahịrịokwụ mebere okwụ a bụ Omenaala, nke a pụtara omume a na-eme n'ala. Omume ndị a gụnyere asụsụ ndị na-asụ, ekpemeekpe ha na-ekpe, ụzọ ha si hụta ụwa ,usoro ọchịchị ha na-agbasọ, ụzọ ha sị azụlịte ụmụ ha, ụdị ekele na nsọpụrụ dị obodo, ihe obodo na-asọ nsọ, nakwa ihe obodo na enwe mmasị na ha. Sibani, (2018) mere ka amata na enwere ụdị Omenaala abụọ; ha bụ Omenaala ndị a na-ahụ anya na ndị a naghị ahụ anya. Omenaala ndị a naghị ahụ anya bụ ihe a tụrụ atụ, nkanụzụ ngwa ọrụ, ebe a na-emepụta ngwa ọrụ. Abakere, (2009) kọwara si na

Omenaala bụ usoro obibi ndụ a haziri ahazị nke ndị mmadụ na-amụta n'ụdị akparamaagwa a chọrọ n'obodo. Ụdị akparamagwa a gụnyere; nkwenye, agụmaagụ, atụmaatụụche, okpukpere chi na ekereuche ndị mmadụ bị n'ime obodo ahụ. Nkọwa a metụrụ aka n'usoro iwu nke e ji echekwa ngwongwo ndị a na-enweta na agbụrụ obodo ahụ. Ọ gakwara n'ihu ịkọwa na Omenaala metụtara ihe nketa niile, mmụta niile, nkwenye, aka ọrụ mmadụ na ọdịbendị nke obodo jiri bịrị. na nkwado nkọwa a. Igbokwe na Ezeji (2015), kwuru si; Ndị Igbo nwere ọtụtụ Omenaala bụkwa ihe na-abara ha ọtụtụ uru na ndụ ha, mana ọ dị mmute na ụfọdụ omenaala ndị a na–anwụzi anwụ ugbu a, n'ihi e jighi ha kpọrọ mkpa, nledaanya, okpukperechi ọlọrọ ọhụrụ nakwa oke nhiwe isi na ndabere n'Omenaala ndị ofesi.

Ntụleghari Agụmagụ

N'ebe a,a tụlegharịri ihe ndị e dere ede banyere isiokwu a,iji mee ka o doo anya ma dịkwa mfe nghọta, anyị ga-ekewa ya ụzọ atọ ndị a; nke echemeche, atụtụ, na ihe ederela gbasara isiokwu a.

Usoro echemeche

N'ebe a, e nyere nkọwa miri emi banyere isiokwu a,isiokwu ụfọdụ di nnukwu mkpa maka nchọcha a,mkpụrụ okwu ndị a,gụnyere;Omenaala,Ọdịnaala,ọdibendị na Mmọnwụ.

Omenaala

Onebụnne ,(2019) kọwara Omenaala dịka usoro dị iche iche e si eme ihe dị iche iche. Nke a pụtara na obodo ọ bụla nwere ụzọ pụrụ iche ha si eme ihe nke obodo ọzọ anaghị agbaso. Nke a gụnyere ihe ọhụrụ na-abatagasị n'usoro obibi ndụ ndị mmadụ site n'obodo ọzọ. o doro anya na e nweela ndị sitere n'agbụrụ ọzọ bata na nke lgbo n'ihi mmekọrịta n'ụzọ dị iche iche ụmụaka na-ele ha, ha na-amụrụ ha. Ugbor na Onyegiri (2025) hụtara Omenaala dị ka ihena-ezipụta ka ndị si eme ihe ,tinyere nkwenye.N'iga n'ihu ,Oguejiofor,Ezeọliakụ na llorah (2015) kwuru na Omenaala pụtara etu ndị si eme ,etu ha si eke ekike ,ihe ha na –eri ,ụdi abụ ha na abụ ,omume ha na agwa ha,tinyere asụsụ ha,Omenaala na emetụta nkwenye,ekpemekpe e ha na-eri na ihe ha na-asọ nsọ.Na nkọwa Onubunne (2024), Omenaala pụtara omenammadụ ya bụ omume mmadụ .Ọ gara n'ihu kwuo na Omenaala megidere omenaelu,n'ihi na Omenaala na-emetụtakari Ala. Onebunne na Ezeakọ (2024) kwenyere na Omenaala di nnukwu mkpa n'igosipụta njirimara mmadụ nakwa agamniihu obodo.Nchọcha hụtara Omenaala dịka ụzọ a haziri ahazi agbụrụ ma ọ bụ obodo si ebi ndụ iji kwanyere ala ugwu ma mee ka obi dị ndị ichie mma, ọ bụ ya mere “Mmọnwụ ndị Eda, Igbo na ahazị akaparamaagwa ndị Eda, Igbo, karịsịa n'ebe ụmụ okọrọbịa na-etolite etolite nọ, ime ka ha bie ndụ n'ụzọ obodo Eda, Igbo nabatara

Ọdinaala

Ọdinaala bụ mmemme nke otu ọ bụla na-eme, ma ọ bụ ụzọ dị iche iche otu si eme ihe nke barala ha n'ụmi ọkpụkpụ, ma ọ bụ maalara ha ahụ kemgbe ụwa bidoro. Nke a na-egosi na ọ bụrụ na a bịa n'ala Igbo, ọ gaghị abụ nke Igbo niile nabatara ma na-eme ya, kama ọ dabara ha iji maatu. Alụmdi na nwunye bụ omenaala zuru Igbo niile ọnụ. Ịlụ nwaanyị bụkwa Ọ̀dinaala dịrị otu ma ọ bụ agbụrụ ọ bụla, n'ihi na usoro emume ha dị iche iche nye agbụrụ ma ọ bụ otu ọ bụla bụ nke ha nabatara ma bụrụ nke ha kwenyere na ya. Ụfọdụ mpaghara ala Igbo na-ama nnukwu ego n'isi nwaanyị, ebe ụfọdụ anaghị ama ya, dịka o siri metụta ndị Owere na Steeti Imo, na Nsụka na Steeti Enugwu. Steeti abụọ ndị a nọ n'ala Igbo mana usoro alụmdi na nwunye dị iche iche. Nke a wee bụrụ Ọ̀dinaala.Obodo Eda, Igbo nwere Ọ̀dinaala ha. Otu n'ime ha bụ na ha na-eji nira iri atọ akwụ ụgwọ isi nwaanyị. Ọ masị di onye ahụ ka ọ bụrụ Dangote, ndị ọgọ ya agaghị anafe nke ahụ. Nke a wee bụrụ Ọ̀dinaala ndị Eda, Igbo. N'ala Igbo, ọ bụ nna na ụmụnna na-akwado alụmdi na nwunye tupu o nwee isi. Ili onye nwụrụ anwụ bụ omenaala zuru Igbo ọnụ, mana usoro ili ozu ndị a dị iche iche nye otu ọ bụla dị iche, nke mere o ji bụrụ Ọ̀dinala. Na mpaghara Abakaliki, ọ kachasị mgbe onye ejighị ehi lie ma ọ bụ kwa nna ya, e nweghị ike taa ehi ebe ọzọ na mmemme ili ozu. Nke a bụ nkwenye ha kwenyere na ya Iru mgbede bụ omenaala e ji akwadebe nwaanyị ruru ogo ịlụ di. A hụ na ahụ amawala ya mma, nne na nna ya ga-abịa kwadebe ọnọdụ nwaanyị ahụ ga-anọ tupu ọ laa n'ụlọ di ya. Ọ bụrụ na nwa agbọghọ nwere nwoke ọ na-adabara ya n'ịbụ di na nwunye, nwoke ahụ ga-esokwa n'ime nkwadebe ọnọdụ ahụ. N'ebe ụfọdụ, a na-eji iru mgbede akwadebe nwoke maka ịlụ nwunye. Ndị obodo Eda, Igbo na-akpọ ya Orie Eyighiya Iru mgbede ezughị Igbo niile ọnụ. Ebe a maara ihe banyere iru mgbede bụ Ọka, Owere, Ọlụ, Abiriba, Ọhazara, Abakaliki, na obodo Eda, Igbo. Ụfọdụ ebe ndị a akpọgasịrị aha nwere aha nke ha na-akpọ iru mgbede, Ọnicha na Ọka na-akpọ ya Iru Mgbede, Ọhazara na Abakaliki na-akpọ ya Ikwe Ezi, Abiriba na-akpọ ya ịnọ Nzuzu, ebe ndị Eda, Igbo na-akpọ ya Orie Eyighiya. A bịa n'ịgọ na ịwa oji, oji bụ mkpụrụ osisi naamịpụta n'osisi a na-akpọ oji. Ọ nweghị ezigbo ụtọ dịka mkpụrụ osisi ndị ọzọ. Ọ bụ eziokwu na ndị Yoruba na-ata oji, Hausa na-atakwa ọji, mana Igbo na-agọ ọji ma na-eji ya eme omenaala. Ịgọ ọji n'ala Igbo dị iche iche. N'obodo ụfọdụ dịka akụkụ Ọnicha, Nnewi, Njikọka, ọ bụ onye bụkarịrị okenye na-awa oji. N'obodo ụfọdụ dịka Ngwa, ọ bụ onye bụkarịrị nwa nta na-awa oji. Echiche banyere nke a bụ na nwa nta ebughị ihe ọjọọ ọ bụla n'obi. N'Eda, Igbo, ọ bụ onye okenye na-awa oji. Ọzọ kwa, e nwere ndị bụ ụmụ dibia, nke a abụrụ Ọdinaala ha. Ọ nwekwara ndị agwu dị n'ala ha, Ụfọdụ ka afa dị n'ala ha. Ihe ndị a niile bụ ihe obodo ahụ kwenyere na ya, ha ji ebi ndụ. A bịa n'echichi, e nwere dị na-echi nwoke ọzọ, nwekwara ndị na-echi nwaanyị ọzọ. Nke a bụkwa Ọ̀dinala. A bịa na Mmọnwụ, ụdị Mmọnwụ ndị na-eti na otu ha si eti ya dị iche iche. Ihe kacha mkpa na Ọ̀dinaala ndị a bụ na ha niile bụ ihe a na-eme n'ala Igbo.

Ọdịbendị

Ọdịbendị bụ ihe e ji amata obodo, agbụrụ, ma ọ bụ mmadụ. Ọ bụ nchịkọta ihe niile e ji mara otu obodo ma ọ bụ agbụrụ iche na nke ndị ọzọ. Dịka omenaala, ọdịbendị bụ ihe e si ebi ndụ, ihe e ji ekele chi, ụzọ e si ewere ihe, na ụkpụrụ omume e si eso ndụ. Ọdịbendị bụkwa ihe e ji akọwa onye ma ọ bụ obodo dịka ihe pụrụ iche, nke na-ekwupụta otú ha si ebi ndụ. Dịka Anọzie, (2003) siri kwuo, "Ọdịbendị bụ ihe ndị mmadụ ji ama obodo ha, nke na-apụghị ịhụ n'obodo ndị ọzọ." N'ụzọ ọzọ, a ga-asị na ọdịbendị bụ ihe e ji mara obodo n'ụzọ pụrụ iche. Dịka ọmụmaatụ, a na-akpọ ndị Ọka "ndị ụzụ," n'ihi na ha bụ ndị maara ịkpụ ihe. Nke a bụ ọdịbendị nke Ọka, n'ihi na ọ bụghị obodo Igbo niile nwere nke a. Ndị Eda, Igbo nwekwara ọdịbendị ha, dịka Okpukperechi Egbela, nke bụ ihe a na-eme n'ebe ahụ dịka ihe a pụrụ isi mata obodo ahụ. Ọ bụghị obodo Igbo niile na-eme nke ahụ, ya mere, ọ bụ ihe pụrụ iche nye ha. N'ihi ya, ọdịbendị bụ ihe na-egosi mmadụ, agbụrụ, ma ọ bụ obodo ụzọ ha si ebi ndụ, kwenyere, ma bụrụkwa ihe na-ekpughe njirimara ha.

Mmọnwụ

Nwabueze (2003) kọwara Mmọnwụ dị ka ngalaba ejije Igbo na-egosi ndị nkiri emereme ejije dịgasị iche iche n'ama obodo. Nnukwu Mmọnwụ dị iche iche dịka Akwụneheenyi, Ijele, na Agbọghọ Mmọnwụ anaghị apịa mmadụ ụtari, kama ha na-ezipụta ihe nkiri dị mma. Ha na-eji ejiji n'ụdị egwu ma na-agbakwa ya. Egwu a na-abụ ndị Mmọnwụ ọzọ na-akụ ya ma ọ bụ bụrụ mmadụ nkịtị. Mmọnwụ ndị dị otu a na-apụta kwa afọ, karịsịa mgbe a na-eme emume Mmọnwụ. A na-ahụta emereme Mmọnwụ dịka ejije n'ihi ihe ndị a, ha na-enwe ụbọchị, oge, na ebe ha na-anọ ezipụta emereme ha, dịka etu ndị omee ejije si ezipụta emereme ha n'ụlọ nkwàgo ma ọ bu ebe obodo wepụtara maka ya. Ha nwekwara ụlọ nkwàgọ ha na ebe ọ Mmọnwụ na-a na-akpọ 'Odo'. Mmọnwụ n'ụju ya nwere ihe na-ejije, na-akụzikwa amamiihe. Nne Mmọnwụ na-egosi afọ mmadụ gbara, ebe Agbọghọ Mmọnwụ na-egosi anwụnsi agbọghọ na-eme ma di na-abịa ya. Ụmụ nwoke nta na-egosi ike ntorobịa na etu nna si edokwa ezinaụlọ ya iji gbochie ndị ezi ile ndị nwunye anya. Okodo, (2012)gosiri na Mmọnwụ ndị Igbo abụghị Mmọnwụ nkịtị. Ugonna, (1981) kwuru na ejije Mmọnwụ ndị Igbo na-egosi etu Omenaala ejije Afirịka n'onwe ya si bụrụ ihe gbasara nke ọma ma nwee mmepe pụtara ihe. Etu ọ bụla e si tụlee Mmọnwụ a ga-ahụtarịrị ihe mere ya ejije. Ndị Igbo ji ya eme ka omenaala na nkwenye ha kwụdosie ike ma gbasaa site n'aka fere n'aka. E nwekwara Mmọnwụ ndị na-agba naanị n'abalị nke a kpọrọ 'Mmọnwụ Abalị', dịka ọ dị n'ejije ugbu a, n'ihi na e nwere ejije ugbu a ndị e mere ka a na-ele ya naanị n'abalị.

Atụtụ

E nwere atụtụ dị iche iche e nwere ike iji mee nchọcha a,n'ihe banyere nhazi Mmọnwụ n'Eda lgbo, atụtụ kacha dabaa adaba maka nchọcha a bụ atụtụ mmekọrịta mmadụ na ibe ya site n'ọmụmụ Omenaala obodo, onye tụpụtara ya bụ Lev.Vygosky.Vygottsky (1978) kọwara si na omenaala na-enyere ụmụaka aka n'ebe mmụta dị, ọ na-amụbawanye ọnọdụ ha mgbe ha dị afọ abụọ ma ọ bụ karia. Ọ kọwara si na mbido nke arọ ndụ a gụnyere; inye ha oge, akọnụụche, echiche na ụbụrụ. Site n'inwe mmekọrịta tọrọ atọ n'ebe ndị ọzọ nọọ ga-enyere ha aka ikwalịte ihe a na-akpọ "ogogo ụbụrụ" Ọ kọwara sị na omenaala ọ bụla n'enwe ngwa ọrụ e ji akwalite ụbụrụ ha; nke ga-enyere ha aka iche echiche mịrị emi inye ha ohere inwe mkpebi nke onwe ha. Ọ kọwara si na mwulịte ụbụrụ ụmụaka na eso agbụrụ ha, ya mere omenaala n'enyere ụmụaka aka iwulite ụbụrụ ga-enyere ha aka ime mkpebị siri ike. Ọ kọwara si na obodo na-emepe site otu omenaala ha si di. Vygotsky (1978) kọwara si, ọrụ ọmụmụ kemmetụta bụ otu n'ime ngwa mkpebị nke onwe ha n'ebe omenaala dị iche iche dị, maka obodo ọ bụla nwere usoro dị iche iche ha si ewube omenaala ha. Vygottsky (1978) kwenyere na ụmụaka n'ejịkarị oke ajụjụ amụta ihe ọmụmụ karịsịa n'ebe omenaala Igbo dị, o kwuru si na mmekọtịta mmadụ n'ibe ya dị na aka adị ire n'ebe ụmụaka nọ, ka ụmụaka n'enwe mmekọrịta tọrọ atọ n'ebe ibe ha nọ, ka amamihe ha na-etọ.

Ọ kwụrụ si na mmekọrịta ụmụaka n'ebe ibe ha nọ, n'eme ka ụbụrụ ha na aghọ nkọ karịsịa mgbe onye nkụzị ji akọrọ ngwa ndị kwesiri ekwesi kụzịrere ha ihe ma nyekwa ha ntụzị aka kwesịrị ekwesị. Schaffer (1996) nyere ihe ọmụmaatụ, otu, otu nwagbọghọ si jiri aka ya mee ihe, ọmụmụ omenaala, o meghi ya nke ọma, n'ihi enweghị onye mgbazị, ma mgbe nna ya nyere ya mgbazị otu ọ ga-esi mee ya, o mere ya nke ọma ma bụrụkwa ihe nlereanya nye ndị ọzọ. Vygottsky's (1978) kọwapụtara ụzọ ihe abụọ na-enyere mmụta aka; nke mbụ bụ mmadụ iji aka ya mepụta ihe, na ịnọ n'etiti ndị o doro anya. Ọghọ m dị na ya, bụ o nwere ike bụrụ onye nkụzị ma ọ bụ onye okenye ga-agbaziri ya. Ọ kwenyesiri ike na mmekọrịta mmadụ na ibe ya na-ewulite ọmụmụ ụmụaka na omenaala.

Ntule

Ọtụtụ ndị nchọcha emeela nchọcha dị iche iche n'Omenaala, Ọdịnaala, ọdibendị, na Mmọnwụ, Nchọcha e merela n'isiokwu a bụ ndị a, Adebari (2012), Abudkari (1996), Akubor (2012), Akintayo (2008), Atugbe(2011).

Adebari (2012) Mere nchọcha maka Mmọnwụ Afịrịka na ọrụ ha na arụrụ obodo. Mbunuche nchọcha a bụ ichọpụta mkpa Mmọnwụ bara ndị Afirika n'ebe nchekwa na ọchichi ndị ụka na okpukperechi ndị lslam di. E ji ịgba ajụjụ ọnụ nweta njiatule e ji mee nchọcha ya. Nchọpụta nchọcha a gosiri na Mmọnwụ Afirika bara oke uru na nchekwa na ọchịchị obodo. Nchọcha a yitere nchọcha nke ugbu a, n'ihi na ha abụọ lebachara anya n'uru Mmọnwụ baara ndị Afirika mana ndịiche ha bụ na nchọcha nke ugbu a na-achọcha banyere Mmọnwụ n'Eda lgbo.

Abdukadi, (1996) mere nchọcha banyere ọnọdụ Mmọnwụ n'Omenaala lgbo. Mbunuche nchọcha a bụ ịchọpụta ụzọ dị iche iche omenaala si eme ka mmekọrịta mmadụ na ibe ya sie ike site akara ngwa ha. E ji ịgba ajụjụ ọnụ nweta njiatule e ji mee nchọcha ya. Nchọpụta nchọcha a gosiri na mmọọ ndị nna nna ha na-echekwa ndị dị ndụ ma ndị nwụrụ anwụ n'ala ndị mmọọ, ha chọpụtara na ndị nna nna ha nwụrụ anwụ na-agbara ha afa, na-atụkwa iwu nke onye ọ bụla mebiri ya ga-anata ntaramahụhụ, nchọcha a yitere nchọcha nke ugbu a n'ihi na ha abụọ lebachara anya n'ọnọdụ Mmọnwụ mana ndịmiche ha bụ na nke mbụ na-ekwu maka nchekwa na ọnọdụ Mmọnwụ n'ala lgbo tupu ndị mbịarachịwa abata n'ala lgbo, nchọcha ugbu a bụ maka Mmọnwụ n'Eda, lgbo.

Akụbọr (2012) mere nchọcha banyere Mmọnwụ Esan. Mbunuche nchọcha ya bụ ịchọpụta mmalite akụkọ ifo, na ọrụ ha na-arụ, E ji nleta osonye na ịgba ajụjụ ọnụ nweta njatule e ji mee nchọchaa, nchọpụta nchọcha gosiri na Mmọnwụ Esan bụ mmalite akụkọ ifo nke na arụ ọrụ dịka mgbara ọgwụ ihe mmadụ ga-abụ na ndụ n'agbanyeghi mmasị mmadụ nwere, ọ chọpụtara na e nwekwara Mmọnwụ nna nna ha na-eleta ndị nke ha ka dị ndụ, nke na-egosipụta mmbilite n'ọnwụ ndị nna nna ha nwụrụ anwụ. Ọ chọpụtara na mbilte n'ọnwụ ndị nna nna ha nke mpụta ha na-anọchite nchekwa iwu na-achị obobo na ịta ndị dara iwu na-achi obodo ahụhụ. Ọ chọpụtara na Mmọnwụ na-achọpụta ndị mgbasi na ndị na-ata amusu. Ọ chọpụtara n'ala Yoruba niile Mmọnwụ Egungu nọchiri anya mmọọ ndị nna nna ha lara Eliigwe, nke na-enwee mmekọrịta ndị dị ndụ na ndị nwụrụ anwụ, ọ kọwara sị na ọrụ ha bụ ịgba ndị dị ndụ ume na ikwalite agbụrụ ọgbụrụ gara aga ume. Nchọcha ya yitere nchọcha nke ugbu a n'ihi na ha abụọ lebachara anya ọrụ Mmọnwụ na arụ mana ndmiiche ha bụ nchọcha nke mbụ na–ekwu maka mmalite akụkọ ifo na ọrụ ha na arụ ebe nke ugbu a bụ Mmọnwụ Eda lgbo.

Akintayo, (2008) mere nchọcha banyere nkwenkwe na ebumpụta ụwa mbunuche nchọcha a bụ ịchọpụta ihe mere akụkọ ifo ji bụrụ nkwenkwe ebumpụta ụwa na mmọọ bi n'Eliigwe e kwesiri ịsọpụrụ, adịghị emetu ya aka tụmadị ebe ụmụ nwaanyị na ụmụ nwoke na-ababeghi abamamba mmọọ, e ji nleta osonye na ịgba ajụjụ ọnụ a haziri ahazi mere ngwa nchọcha e ji nweta njiatule e ji mee nchọcha a. Nchọpụta nchọcha a gosiri na Mmọnwụ Egungu bụ ndị ọkpụkpụ ha laghachiri ndụ ọzọ nke na-akpalite ụmụ mmadụ ịsọpụrụ ndị nwụrụ anwụ karịa ndị dị ndụ. Ọ chọpụtara na Mmọnwụ ndị Europe jedebere na inwe obi aṅụri na egwuregwu ebe ndị mgbago ugwu kwenyere na ihe ọ bụla kpuu ihu Mmọnwụ bụ Mmọnwụ mana ala Afirika Mmọnwụ bụ ndị nna nna ha nwụrụ anwụ nọ n'etiti ndị dị ndụ nke a mere ndị dị ndụ akwụsighi n'ala ndị nwụrụ anwụ. ọ chọpụtara na ihe mejupụtara ndụ bụ anụ ahụ na mkpụrụ obi adịghị anwụ anwụ na mgbe mmadụ nwụrụ mkpụrụ obi onye ahụ na-agagharị n'ogbe na-akọwa ebe ha na ndị dị ndụ na-erikọ. Ọ chọpụtara na mmọọ ụwa ka a hụrụ ka elu uwa nke abụọ na mmọọ nwogharị n'ime mmadụ. Nchọcha a yitere nke ugbu a n'ihi na ha abụ ọ na-ekwucha maka nkwenkwe na ọnọdụ ndị nwụrụ anwụ, ebe nchọcha ugbu a na-eleba anya na Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo iji chọpụta ụzọ dị iche iche a ga-esi nwogharịa Mmọnwụ ya n'ihi oke uru ọ bara.

Atugbe, (2011) mere nchọcha ọrụ Mmọnwụ dịka mbido akara aka mmadụ, mbunuche nchọcha a bụ ichọpụta otu Mmọnwụ si bụrụ nkọkirikọ akpụrụakpụ nnukwu ụlọ arụsi. Nchọcha a jiri ajụjụ ọnụ nweta njiatule ya. Nchọpụta nchọcha a gosiri na e nwere mmọọ ndị nna nna ha na-abịa eleta ndị dị ndụ n'ụdi Mmọnwụ. ọ chọpụtara na ọbibia Mmọnwụ itinye ọnụ na ndị dị ndụ ka e kwesiri inye nsọpụrụ. ọ chọpụtara na ha na-abụ igosi ihe ịrịba ama mbilite n'ọnwụ ndị nna nna ha nwụrụ anwụ. Nchọcha abụọ a yitere onwe ha n'ihi na ha rụtụchara aka nleta ndị nwụrụ anwụ ebe a na achọcha Mmọnwụ Eda,Igbo.

Ntụcha Nhazi Mmọnwụ n'Eda

N'isiokwu a,a tụchara ma tapia nhazi Mmọnwụ Eda, Mmalite Mmọnwụ Eda, Egbela na nnabata ndị ọhụrụ, ibi isi ugwu, Ejije Mmọnwụ Eda, Ọrụ Egbela na Mmọnwụ, Nsọ Egbela na Mmọnwụ, Ọrụ Mmọnwụ Eda, Uru Mmọnwụ bara, na ọghọm.

Mmalite Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo

Nnabuenyi, (1983) kọwara; Mmọnwụ sị na ọ bụ otu n'ime abamaba e nwere n'ala lgbo. Ọ bụ abamaba ụmụ ọkọrọbịa na ndị tozuru oke na-eme. Ọ bụ ụzọ ndị lgbo na ndị nna nna ha nwụrụ anwụ si enwe mmekọrịta n'etiti onwe ha. A na-akpọ nwoke na-anọghị n'otu Mmọnwụ "ogodu." Nwoke mara Mmọnwụ ka a n-akpọ "Odogwu." Ụmụ nwaanyị anaghị aba otu Mmọnwụ. Ụmụaka nwekwara ịke ịba n'otụ Mmọnwụ site n'aka nna ha. Ụfọdụ n'ime Mmọnwụ e nwere n'ala Igbo bụ Ijele, Agaba, Ojiọnụ, Mgbalike, ikeriudo, Ọgazị. Mmọnwụ Eda, Igbo bụ ihe sitere na omenaala Egbela. Mmonwụ Eda, Igbo bụ ụzọ pụtara ihe Eda, Igbo si efe ofufe ha nke nzụzọ jụpụtara na ya. Emume Mmọnwụ jikọtara aka na Egbela Okpukperechi Eda, Igbo, ọ bụ mmemme n'enwere ọnọdụ n'enwere ọnọdụ n'oge ọkọchị, ya mere Mmọnwụ ọ bụla na-arụ ọrụ di iche na ndụ ndị mmadụ na ọha obodo.

Uru Mmọnwụ Bara Ndị Eda, Igbo

Ụka (2024) Kọwara uru Mmọnwụ bara ndị Eda, lgbo site n'ikọwa na Mmọnwụ nwere uru ọ bara n'ebe mkpata na mmefu akụnụba ha dị nakwa usoro ọchịchị ha dị. Ọ kọwara si, mgbe ọ bụla Mmọnwụ "ụkpọ zapụtara, ọ na-enweta ego aga e ji keree ndị ji ọkwa n'obodo Eda, lgbo, a na-ekekwara Mmọnwụ niile ahụ ego ha nwetara. Mmọnwụ niile Eda, lgbo, ka e ji enwe mmekọrịta mmadụ n'lbe ya, karịsịa n'ebe ndị ntorobịa nọ ma ọ bụ ụmụ n'etọlite etolite nọ; a na-agbakwa ezigbo Egwu, karịsịa n'ebe Mmọnwụ ndị dịka ụkpọ, Oti Nwadinma na Egede dị. ọ gakwara n'ihu ịkọwa na Mmọnwụ Egede ụga ka ndị Eda, lgbo ji azụ ụmụ okorobịa agha, ọ kọwara sị na Mmọnwụ Ewa mgbo ka e ji ikikere ụmụ ọkorobịa, lke a tụrụ anya na ha ga- ejiri ọsọ ruo ihe dịka iri abụọ na isii kilo mita ọ kọwara si na Mmọnwụ Egwuregwu ka eji azụlite ụmụaka n'enụpụrụ nne na nna ha isi; Ụka, , (2024) gakwara n'ihu ikọwa uru Mmọnwụ bara site n'lkwu na Mmọnwụ na-eweta mmekọrịta na-etiti mmadụ na lbe ya, ọ na-eme ka obodo na-ekpo ọkụ, e jikwa ya akwanyere onye nwụrụ anwụ n'ala lgbo ugwu, ọ na-enye obiańụrị, na-edozikwa emume a na-eme tupu a malite ịrụ ọrụ ubi amalite, ọ bụkwa emume ọtụtụ ndị mmadụ na-alọta wee hụrịta ikwu na ibe' ha anya. Ọ bụ ebe ụmụ okorobịa Eda, lgbo si amụta ọrụ nka dị iche iche dịka, ịkwa akwa n'ilhi na ịkwa ọmụ nkwụ dịka uwe abụghị obere ọrụ. Ọ bụ uzọ ha si akọwapụta otu ha si malite okpukperechi ha, ọchịchị, mmekọrịta mmadụ na lbe ya.

Ọrụ Mmọnwụ na-arụrụ Eda, lgbo

Ịsichei (1976) kọwara ọrụ Mmọnwụ na-arụrụ Eda, lgbo, site n'ikwu na ọ na-echekwa ụkpụrụ ekpemekpe Egbela, nchekwa akụnụba ha, ịta ndị merụrụ ala ahụhụ nakwa n'ikpe ziri ezi, Mmọnwụ ọ bụla nwere nghọtahie n'onwe ha, ọ bụ na nzuzo ka a ga-edọziri ha, Mmọnwụ na-arụ ọrụ ikwe nkwa omụmụ na igozi ala maka ịmịpụta mkpụrụ, Mmọnwụ Ewa bụ nnabata isiijii, ọ na-abụ n'abalị na abọra mmemme ụkpọ, ha na-eme akaja, ka iwe wee, onye a kpasụrụ iwe, abali ahụ, ihe ka n'ọnụ ọgụgụ alakpuchala ụlọ, ọ nweghi onye a na-anụ olu ya, ma ọ bụ hụ n'ezi, ọ na-egosi ndịiche dị n'etiti nwaanyị na nwoke, ikpu Mmọnwụ bụ ụmụ nwoke ka ọ dịrị. ọ kọwara sị, emume Mmọnwụ na-ewepụta ọrụaka dị iche iche dịka, mgbasa ozi, egwọ, akwa, ebubo ugo,, enyo na asị; njikere Mmọnwụ na-achọ ọtụtụ ọrụ nka na ihe ọkpụkpụ ndị mara mma, ihu Mmọnwụ na-akpali abamaba nwoke Eda, lgbo ịbanye Egbela Eda, lgbo. Mmọnwụ ndị Eda, lgbo na-arụ ọrụ nchekwa agbụrụ pụrụ iche ebe ha na-anọ akpọlite mmọọ ndị nna nna ha nwụrụ anwu n'ebe ha na-anọ eme emume ncheta ndị mere ezi ihe wee nwụọ, ebe ha na-anọ ekpe ikpe ndị uwe ojii nakwa ebe ha na-anọ akwụgbu ndị mere ihe ala na-asọ nsọ.

Ude (2000) kọwara sị na ihe ọ bụla mmadụ kpụrụ akpụ bụ ọrụ nka nwere ugwu n'Eda, lgbo. Ekpemekpe ha gbara mgbara ọgwụ n'ihe ọ bụla akpụrụkpe nka osisi dị n'ime ya bụ ebe ha si enweta ihe ha ji akpụpụta ihu Mmọnwụ ha kwara si na Mmọnwụ ufiee nwere ọrụ nchụaja ọ na-arụ dịka nkwenye ha si dị, ọ kọwara na ọ na-agara ndị dị ndụ, ịnọchi anya chi ha bụ Egbela, ọ na-abịa n'ụdị amara, ihụnanya ma ọ bụkwanụ n'ụdị iwe, iji gbazie ndị dị ndụ olu, ọ kọwara na Agbụrụ ọ bụla n'Eda, lgbo nwere Mmọnwụ nọchịrị anya ya.

Ejije Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo

Isldore (2005) kọwara Ejije dịka ijije ihe na-eme n'ụwa ma ọ bụ ihe nwere ike ime n'ụwa, nke nwere ike ime n'ala mmọọ ma ọ bụ n'ala umụ anụmanụ izipụta ya n'elu nkwago, iji kpaa ndị mmadụ obi ụtọ. Ndị Eda, lgbo nwere ejije orie Eyighiya, Ejije ụka ji ogo, Ejije ịgba nzụ, Ejije ngosipụta ọnatarachi ha, mgbe ha na-eri ji, ihe ndị a ka ha ji anọrị oge ma na-emekwa onwe ha obi ụtọ; Ejije Mmọnwụ kwom, Ejije Mmọnwụ ogbukpe, ejijie Mmọnwụ lkwom Egwuegwụ, Ejije Mmọnwụ oti; ejije lgbubi isi Ebule; Ejije Mmọnwụ Abbanta oke; Ejije onye n'elu lkoro; Ejije Mmọnwụ oti Ega, Ejije Mmọnwụ ọgụ, Ejije Mmọnwụ ọgbaghalị, Ejije Mmọnwụ ụkpọ, Ejije ụmụ agbọghọ na-amaghị nwoke.

Emumme ndị a niile gbanyechara mkpọrọgwụ na ntọala ịchụ aja. Ntọala ndị a niile bụ iji hunyere chi ha dị iche iche. Okodo(2012) n'ime okwu Echeruo (1973), o kwuru sị na ndị lgbo kwesịrị ime ihe Griki mere nke bụ inwogharị ntọala emume Mmọnwụ ha ma mee ka o kwudosie lke. Enekwa n'ime Echeruo (1981) zaghachiri sị,

> ''Nkọmirikọ abụghị ejije kpọm kwem iji maa atụ, ebe ọ bụ na ejije lgbo nwere ọrụ ọ na-arụ ma bụrụkwa nke dị iche na nke ndị Griki, ọ zighi ezi ịsị na ndị lgbo kwesiri inwe ụdị ejije dịka nke ndị

> Griki. Ndị lgbo ji ihe ha nwere mepụta ihe ha chọrọ dịka otu nkwenye na nhụrụwa ha si dị, ọ baghị uru ha ịdị na-ekwu maka imeghari ejije lgbo ebe ọ bụrụla ihe a nabatara n'ala lgbo niile.''

Nke a gosiri na ọ bụ ihe ndị mere ha ka ha ji akpa ike, ọ bụkwa ihe ha si na ihe bụrụ ha ka ihe ahụ bụ nye ha. Ejije ọdịnaala lgbo dị ọkpụ ma bụrụkwa nke si na aka fere na aka, ụmụaka Igbo na-ebido na nwata mụtawa ejije ọdịnaala na-amụtakwa ka ha si agba egwu nwata na eme nke a site n'ijije ihe onye ahụ mere ma mụtakwa egwu ahụ nke ọma. Ụmụaka ndị ọzọ na-esi n'ụzọ dị otu a mụta egwu ahụ n'aka ụmụaka ibe ha wee kuziere ndị ọzọ ihe, site n'ụzọ dị otu a, egwu ahụ agbasa ma bụrụ nke onye ọ bụla ga-amụta. N'ihi nke a, o nweghi ka ndị lgbo ga-esi gbaghapụ ihe ha kụziri ụmụ ha naani, n'ihi na ha chọrọ ka nke ha dịka nke ndị Griki, kama ihe ha ga-eme bụ iwetagasị ihe ọhụrụ n'ejije ha ma wepụta ndị tarala nchara enweghi ezigbo uru ọ bara. Nke a bụ n'ihi na ihe ọ bụla a hụtara dịka ihe dị ndụ ga-eto eto n'iwepụ ihe ahụ aga-akpaachapụ anya ka a ghara iwepụ ihe mere ejije ahụ ji bụrụ ejije n'ezie.

Okodo (2012) siri na;

> Ọ bụrụ na emụme ejije Omenaala Mba Griki malitere site n'emune ichụ aja ha na-achụ, iji hụnyere chi ha, Dionyslis na Apollos. Gini mere na agaghị anabata emume ichụ aja eji ehunyere chi ndị lgbo na nke Mba AfIrika niile?

Ndị Eda, lgbo nwere Ejije Mmọnwụ di iche iche ruru iri anọ n'ọnụ ọgụgụ, nke ọ bụla n'ime ha nwere ọrụ na ụru ha bara ndị Eda, lgbo ebe ha na-amụta aka ọrụ dị iche iche ugbu a kwa na oge ochie. Ekike Eda, lgbo dị iche n' ebe ekike ala lgbo ndị ọzọ di, adịghị azụta ya na ahia ,ọ bụ n'ime ọhia ka a na egbu ta ya ,ọ bụ ya mere onye na abụghị na ndị Eda, lgbo ma ọ bụ na-ababeghi ababmaba a, hụ ya ka ha na-alọta ga–akwa ala, ya mere ka ha alọta, ha na-abụ abụ pụrụ iche, iji gosi ihe iriba ama na agwọ nọ n'akịrịka, ka ha gharakwa itufu ya, laghachikwa azụ, igbuta ọzọ, abụ na ekike ndị a nabatara ọhụ na-adị iche, ndị niile a nabatara ọhụ ka a tụrụ anya ịmụta abụ ahụ, dịka ụzọ ha si akwado ntozu oke ha, ndị a a nabatara ka a na-eji ọmụ nkwụ achọ mma. Ha kwenyere na ọmụ nkwụ a ka a na-enweta na mmọọ. ọ bụghị n'ala ndị dị ndụ, ọmụ nkwụ a, bụ ihe e ji chụoro chi Egbela aja, ha dị nsọ, ụmụ nwaanyị adịghị eru ya nso ma ya fọdụkwa imetụ ya aka.

Ugochi (2017) kọwara sị na ihu Mmọnwụ ahụ nọchiri anya Egbela ndị, Eda, lgbo, ihe ọkpụkpụ ihụ Mmọnwụ ahụ nọchiri anya ọkụ, ute na Apa. Apa a ka a na-etinye n'obuaka onye nwụrụ anwụ mgbe ndị okenye na–achụ aja onye nwụrụ anwụ nke a na-egosipụta idula onye ahụ nwụrụ anwụ ka ọ laa n'udo n'ala ndị mmọọ. Ọji (2009) kọwara si na Apa a, ọ ji n'aka ya, ha kwenyere na ọ ka na–elekọta ya na ndị dị ndụ, iji nyere ya aka ịlọta ụwa ọzọ.

Ọghọm Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo

Oji (1978) kọwara sị na e nwere ọtụtụ ọghọm dị na Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo, ha na-egbu onye chi ọjọọ biakutere mgbe ha na-eme ihe nzuzo .ọ na-ebutere ọtụtụ ụmụ okorobịa ọnwụ mberede ma ọ bụ ọnwụ ike. Onye na-emebeghi emụme abamaba Egbela adịghị ekpu ihu Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo, ọ bụ arụ, onye di ọtụ ahụ ga-anwụ, nwoke ọ bụla emeghi emụme abamaba Egbela bụ ebe ekpemekpee ha gbadoro ụkwụ, a dịghị apụta ezi ma ọ bụ ebe Eze Arụsi Eda, lgbo nọ, karịsịa ụbọchi ndị niile a nabatara ọhụrụ na-aga ọhịa ojo ịgakwuru Eze arụsị maka nabata ha n' okpukperechi Egbela, ndị niile kpuru ihu Mmọnwụ na-eji ụbọchị ahụ emesi ndị iro ha ike maka a gaghị ekpe ya ekpe, ngwa Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo dị oke ọnụ, karịsịa Mmọnwụ e ji eli onye Eze nwụrụ anwụ bụ Mmọnwụ ufiee.

lhu Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo

lhu Mmọnwụ ka e ji agba dị iche iche chọọ mma dịka uhie na-acha ọbara, odo, nke e jikwa ọmụ nkwụ ọ hụrụ chọọ nma, ma ọ bụ, nkwụ e jikwa aka nkwụ ọhụrụ na ụkpọ jọji chọọ mma, mana ihu ya na azụ ya, aha Mmọnwụ a bụ ufie, ihu Mmọnwụ a na-egbukwa amụma, n'aka nri na aka ekpe, ọ bụ ihe ndị otu nzuzo ji egbu ndị otu ha, ugbu a e ji ya egbupụ akwara osisi ebe ọ bụla a hụrụ ya, a na-edowo ya n'isi ogo ọ bụla, ihu Mmọnwụ ka e ji agbanwerita ihu mmadụ ka a ghara ịhụ ihu onye ahụ, e jikwa ya echekwa ụbụrụ ndị kpuu ya. Uka (2024) Kọwara na ihu Mmọnwụ Eda, lgbo ka chi Egbela nwere, okpukperechi ha, abamaba, otu nzuzo na omenaala ha. ọ kọwara sị na okpukperechi ha bụ ebe ekike Eda, lgbo di, ọ bụkwa ihe a kpụru akpụ n'Eda, lgbo nke siri lke, nke ha ji ọmụ nkwụ, akwa ebụba, eriri nakwa jọji dị iche iche nke akparaakpa ma chọo ya mma, ya mere ndị Eda, lgbo nwere ọtụtụ ihu Mmọnwụ ruru iri anọ nke ha ji anọrị oge na-ewulitekwa mmekọrịta ndị Eda, lgbo karịsịa ebe ụmụ okorobịa na-eto eto nọ.

lbi lsiugwu Eda, lgbo

Nke a bụ usoro abamaba okpukperechi Egbela Eda, lgbo, ọ bụ emume ngwụcha nke na-ewere ọnọdụ n'ọnwa iri na ọtụ; n'afọ ọ bụla. N'ụbọchi ndebe aha, ụmụ nwoke ndị a nabatara ọhụrụ, ga-agbapụta n'isi ogo, onye ọ bụla ga-enwe enyi ma ọ bụ nwanne ndị megoro emume abamaba Egbela, ndị a ga-eduru ha gaa n'ime ọhịa ebe onyeisi isiugwu bụ ebe Eze arụsi Egbela nọ, arụsị Egbela ga-asa ha mmiri nsọ nke a na-egosipụta na a nabatala ha n'ọtụ okpukperechi Egbela na nsachapụ mmehie ndị ha mere mgbe a na-anabetabeghi ha n'okpukperechi Egbela., mgbenke agwụrụ, ndị niile dụrụ ha ga-eduru ha gaghachi a'isi ogo niile, aga adọ ha aka nti maka iwụ obodo na nkwenye ha. N'ụtụtụ echi ya, nwoke ọ bụla ga-alọghachi ụlọ ha dịka onye tozuru oke. lkwom Mmọnwụ ka ana eme n'ụbọchi orie bụ ọhịa nnabata, ndị niile ahụ lọtara na ndụ ka aga achọ mma site n'iji Mmọnwụ ikowm, abamaba a ka di kwa ire ruo ugbu a ,ọ bụ otu n'ime emume ndị Eda, lgbo adịghị anwụ anwụ ruo ugbu a ,.a na-enye nwa nwoke mbụ azụ bụrụ ibụ,ji, ego, ka o were ya bido ndụ,nke aka ya Nke a ka ndị Eda, lgbo na-akpọ "ịbọ mbe."Na nkwenye ndị Eda, lgbo, nne na nna ya nwere lke ilụtara ụmụ ha nwoke nwaanyị ma ọ bụkwanụ nye ha ọba ji, iji kwado ha n'ọdiniihu.

Nsọ Egbela Eda, lgbo

Onu (2000) kọwapụtara nsọ ndị dị n'abamaba Egbela Eda, lgbo, abamaba Egbela abụghị ihe dị mfe n'ebe ụmụ okorobịa ndị Eda, lgbo dị, nsọ ya abụghị ihe e ji egwu egwu ya mere okpukperechi Egbela nwere ihe ndị ha na-asọ nsọ, nke gụnyere;

1. Onye ọ bụla mere abamaba Egbela adịghị emebi ngwa arịa Egbela, ọ bụrụ na o mebie ya, onye dị otu ahụ ga-anwụ.
2. Ọ bụrụ na Eze arụsi enwee mmekọahụ nwaanyị akwụna, Eze arụsi ahụ ga-anwụ.

3. Eze arụsi enwee mmekọahụ nwaanyị mgbe ọ nọ nsọ, ọ ga-anwụ, dịka nkwenye Eda, lgbo si dị.
4. Ọ bụrụ na ọ kụọ ụtara ji ọkpọ n'isi, ọ ga-anwụ.
5.Ọ bụrụ na Eze arụsi ekụrụ nwa ọhụrụ na- apata ụkwụ ya abụọ nke ana ebebeghi ugwu, Eze arụsi ahụ ga-anwụ.
6.Ọ bụrụ na Eze arụsi erie ji a hụrụ ọkụ, lyere ji ahụ emetụ ya ahụ, ọga-anwụ ozugbo dịka nkwenkwe ndị Eda, lgbo si di, Okpukperechi Eda, Egbela di ike.
7. N'oge ibi isi ugwụ, ndị niile anabatara ọhụrụ adịghị ekwu okwu ihu ọha, ihe dịka ọtụtu ụbọchi ọ bụ ndị n'edu nwa ehihia n'ekwuchitere ha okwu.

Nnabata Ndị Ọhụrụ

Uka (2009) kọwara si na ọ bụ na ọbi ogo ka ana an anabata ndị ọhụrụ, ọbụ n'obi ogo a ka a na-anọ akụziri ha iwu, ndụ na omenaala ndị Eda, lgbo, a na-akụziri ha mgbe agbụrụ ndị Eda, lgbo bidoro, akụkọ gbasara ịdị n'Aja, mgbara ọgwụ na otu e si eji ya agwọ ọrịa dị iche iche, ọtụ e si akpa ihe ọkpụkpa, ọtụ e si arị elu nkwụ, mmekọahụ nwoke na nwaanyị; mgbe abamaba a na-aga n'ihụ, ọ bụ mgbe ahụ ka ha ga-amata na ha agaghị ama nwaanyị mgbe abamaba a na-ga n'ihu,ọ bụrụ na ha enwe mmekọ ahụ nwoke na nwaanyị,onye di ọtụ ahụ ga-anwụ.ọ bụ kwa ebe ahụ ka ha ga-esi amata ezigbo nwaanyị ha ga-alụ,mgbe ọ bụla ha chọrọ ịlụ nwaanyị. a na-akụziri ha na-agaghị agwa ndị ọtụ ezinaụlọ ha ihe nzuzo okpukperechi Egbela, ma nwa ha ma nwunye ha, ana akụziri ha njide onwe onye, na ịbụ ndị na-adịghị ewe iwe ọkụ. Nwoke ọ bụla Eda, lgbo na-anọ afọ atọ ime emume Mmọnwụ nke a kpọrọ isiji. Nke a nwere akụkụ metụtara nchọpụta okpukperechi Egbela. Ndị na-abụghị nwa nwoke mbụ n'ezinnaụlọ na afọ lteghete tụpụ o meecha ma ọ bụrụkwa na nne na nna ya nwere egọ. Mmọnwụ ụkpọ nke a kpọrọ Egbela ka ndị Eda, lgbo na eme na ngwụcha isiji.

Eesrese ndị a nabatara ọhụrụ.

Nchikọta

Anyị haziri ntụlegharị agụmagụ a na nkebi atọ ndị a, ọkpụrụkpụ okwu, atụtụ na ntule. N'ọkpụrụkpụ okwu ndị dị nnukwu mkpa isiokwu nchọcha. okwu ndị a bụ Mmọnwụ n'Eda, lgbo. n'itụlegharị atụtụ abụọ, ndị gụnyere atụtụ mmekọrịta mmadụ na ibe ya site n'ọmụmụ Omenaala obodo nke Vygosky hiwere afọ (1974); na atụtụ mmekọrịta dị n'etiti ọmụmụ mmekọrịta mmadụ na obodo nke Albert Bandura hiwere n'afọ(1999). Anyị tụlere atụtụ ndị a n'ụzọ miri emi iji chọpụta nke kacha daba adaba maka isiokwu nchọcha a. Anyị họọrọ atụtụ mmekọrịta dị n'etiti mmadụ na ibe ya iji hazie ma chịkọta njiatule nchọcha a, ihe mere anyị ji họọrọ atụtụ a bụ o nyere ịkọwa banyere Mmọnwụ n'Eda, lgbo dị iche iche e nwegasịrị n'Eda, lgbo, ọrụ, ọghọm, ntaramaahụhụ, a na ata ndị n'emebeghi abamaba Mmọnwụ n'Eda lgbo. Na kentule, anyị tụlegharị agụmagụ ndị e derela n'isiokwu a, agụmagụ ndị tụlegharịrị Mmọnwụ n'Eda lgbo, mere ihe ọmụmaatụ iji kpọtụrụ ya aha dịka usoro e si ezipụta nkwenye ndị lgbo, ebe ndị nke e jiri Mmọnwụ n'Eda, lgbo kọwa ọghọm na adi na ụbọchi mmemme Mmọnwụ n'Eda, lgbo. N'ime nchọcha a niile, anyị tụlegharịri, ọ dịghị nke ọ bụla lebara anya Mmọnwụ n'Eda, lgbo, ọghọm ndị na-adapụtara ndị ahụ a nabatara ọhụrụ, karịsịa mgbe ha gara ịnata ike n'aka Eze arụsị n'oke ọhịa iji mee ka ha bụrụ nwoke tozuru oke n'obodo Eda, lgbo, ihe mere nwaanyị anaghi ahụ ma ọ bụ metụ ọmụ nkwụ aka nke a kpọrọ ozu. ọ bụ nke a kpaliri mmụọ anyị iji mee nchọcha a, iji mechie oghere a,

Aro

Site n'ihe ndị nchọcha chọpụtara na nchọcha a, ha tụnyere arọ ndị a;

1. Ka ndị Eda Igbo lebagharịa anya n'emume Mmọnwụ Eda, Igbo ma chọpụtakwa ụzọ ha ga-esị mee ka ọ ghara ịchịpụ ma ọ bụ nwụọ pịị, n'ịhị oke uru ọ bara ndị Eda, Igbo, bụrụ ibu.
2. Ka ndị Eda, Igbo mee ka ndị Gọọmentị okpuru ọchịchị Eda, Lokal Gọọmentị kwado emume a, site na imeka onye ọ bụla na-esonyere mmemme Mmọnwụ Eda, Igbo, karịsịa ụmụ okorobịa na-etọ etọ.
3. Ka ndị Omenaala na-amasi na ndị ọkaasụsụ mee dọkụmentshọn, ka e nwee ike itinye ha n'ọba ndoko Omenaala asụsụ.
4. Ka ndị ọchịchị Eda, lgbo na-enwe ọgbakọ, iji kụzịere ụmụ okorobịa ọ dị mkpa mmemme Mmọnwụ Eda, Igbo bara.
5. Ka ndị mgbasa ọzị nye aka ịkwalite mmemme Mmọnwụ Eda, Igbo site n'ime ka ụmụ ọkọrọbịa n'eto eto ghara ihụta ya dịka abamaba ndị ọgọọ mmọọ.

6. Gọọmentị inye ndị ọrụ oyibọ ohere isonyere mmemme Mmọnwụ Eda, Igbo site inye ha ezumiike n'ọnwa iteghete kwa afọ ọ bụla.
7. Ndị Eze Eda, Igbo kwesiri inye ndị ntorobịa bụ ndị na-eme emume Mmọnwụ Eda, Igbo ihe nrite.
8. ka aghara iji agụmagụ ndị Bekee na-atụnyere agụmagụ ndị lgbo, n'ihi na ụdịdị asụsụ na agụmagụ a bụghị otu.
9. Mahadum ebe a na-amụ maka asụsụ na Omenaala lgbo kwesiri ịdị na-agba ụmụ akwụkwọ ume ịgụ asụsụ lgbo n'ụlọ akwụkwọ mahadum.
10. Ndị nkụzi ga-agba mbọ na-eme nchọcha iji chọpụta nkwugide niile ndị Bekee nwere agba na-ekwugide ndị lgbo, n'ihi edeghi agụmaagụ akwụkwọ n'oge gboo ma chọpụta ụzọ a ga-esi megide nkwugide a, nke a ga-eme ka agbaa n'anwụ nke bụ eziokwu site na mpụtara nchọcha

Mmechị

Obodo ọ bụla nwere ihe ha ji ahazị obibi ndụ ha, nke ha si enwe mmekọrịta tọrọ atọ n'ebe mmadụ ibe ha nọ, mgbe ọ bụla obodo ọ bụla chetara usoro ahụ, ha na-agbalisi ike ime ihe ha ga-eme ka ha chekwa ya bụ Omenaala ahụ, Mmọnwụ Egbela Eda, lgbo bụ chị ndị Eda, lgbo, ọ bụ otu ụzọ ukpụrụ okpukperechi ha, bụrụkwa abamaba jụpụtara na ihe otu nzụzọ, usoro obibi ndụ ha na usoro abamaba nke, ọ bụ naani ndị ụmụ nwoke na-eme, n'oge ochie, ọ bụ n'ime Egbela a ka obibi ndụ ha hiwere isi, nke nwere ọtụtụ ihe ọnọchịrị anya ya na ndụ ndị Eda, Igbo, nke gụnyere mbikọta ọnụ, nchekwa, mkpata, mmefu akunụba na agụmaakwụkwọ ha.

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PUBLIC SERVICE IN NIGERIA AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES: PROBLEMS AND THE WAYS FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

The issue of enhancing Nigeria's public service performance has been a major concern to policy makers and researchers. This is because despite all measures and reforms put in place to arrest the trend, it seems, it has defied all approaches towards tackling the problem of inefficiency, and service delivery has remained poor. This paper discusses the challenges facing Nigeria's public service towards effective service delivery and the way forward. The paper adopted content analysis as a method of data collection and analysis. It finds among others, that corruption, ethnicism and poor remuneration are factors that inhibit effective performance in the Nigeria public service and suggests options for effective and efficient service-oriented public service. The challenges were viewed in two perspectives, external and internal with indịvidual peculiarities. It is the believe, that we create an institution which promote an ideal working environment that captures a more collective interest and speak of collective vision with the picture in mind of today's issues with focus on torn arrows challenge. A glance at Nigerian *workers shows motivational problems which is traceable to the variety of circumstances as noticed in the various environments. These challenges can be addressed by both management and government to introduce useful, lasting measure and practices to stir the sea of management to meet its "big picture"*

Keywords: *Public Service, Managing, Challenges, Environment, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The peculiarity of Nigeria work environment demands a peculiar consideration with a view to proffering peculiar assertion. As Nigeria is blessed with both human and natural resources, a holistic capturing and consideration of our working environment becomes eminent, bearing in mind the challenges facing managers that manage within such environment. A predominant factor becomes how to function well as a manager within such environment, especially when most times the controlling variables to tackle such challenge are seen outside the reach of the manager. At such moment, managing becomes a daunting challenge.

In trying not to b`e brave, the choice of this topic "Public service in Nigeria and operational issues problems and ways forward" can never be more eminent than now in the calendar of today's Nigeria. The choice of writing this paper is to capture both audiences within and outside the public service cycle; as such, the most common expression of English usage is most important. Furthermore, our concern is not to reopen the exodus of public service and its established concept that is expressed as the work of management in modern terms is generic and continuous.

The performance of the public service towards national development is no doubt the most tasking challenge that the government of Nigeria is facing today (Osawe, 2015). The Public Service reflects the state of the nation and no nation has been able to advance beyond its public service. Studies have shown that no nation can attain sustainable development for the enhancement of the living standard of the people without a properly organized public service to implement government policies.

The public sector service in Nigeria operates in a highly fractionalized society with ethnicity as a prominent form of identity (Eifert, Miguel & Posner, 2010). This scenario often creates lopsided outcomes where lack of trust becomes a major problem in inter-personal and group relationships. In such situations, negative politicking which often is marred by betrayals becomes the order of the day. Employees operate in parochial cliques, guided by clichés and stereotypes that propel them to strike at the slightest opportunity in advancement of sub-optimal interests. Mediocrity is thus amplified through eye-service and bootlicking in such manners that organizational objectives are significantly compromised and productivity often hindered. This form of identity-based politics leads to biases and prejudices that obviously undermine public sector performance.

According to Abati (2016), the quality of human resources in any organization determines the quality of inputs and outputs. A country thrives only when the public sector is effective, and the public sector can only be effective when well considered policy provisions are enforced. The selection and promotion of employees, who work in public service organizations in Nigeria, should be based on competence and quest to deliver the required services. Unfortunately, the selection and recruitment processes into the Nigerian public service have often been compromised and skewed towards preferred persons along blood and friendship ties. It is against the foregoing that this paper seeks to analyze the public service and operational issues in Nigeria and the way forward.

Public Service

Public service is collectivity of specialized government institutions or agencies established by law, financed by public money and staffed by professionals and career bureaucrats for the purpose of executing public policies. It is not profit-oriented but an institution established to deliver essential services to the people (Arowolo, 2012). Public sector consists of governments and all publicly controlled or publicly funded agencies, enterprises, and other entities that deliver public programmes, goods or services.

Public service is a body or department in the executive arm of government with the responsibility of assisting in the planning and implementation of government policies. The concept of public good also indicates that there are some services that are utilized by all members, which are efficient and effective when provided for centrally. Public service consists of civil service career staff, national assembly staff, public officers in the military, police and paramilitary services, employees of parastatals, educational and health institutions whose recruitment, promotion and assessment are under the exclusive control of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), at federal, state and local government levels.

The Role of Management in the public service

It is interesting to stress the predominant roles management play in our everyday life not minding the classification of our given institution. The coverage of such scope transcends institutional boundaries and sectional disciplines. The possibilities of any functional institutions, is dependent on the function of management even where such terms are not captured or expressed literally. The connectivity with the cycle of action and reactions within any system demand and requires the services of management. The multiplier effect for the need of management practice is made accessible in its sectionalisation with each providing specific skill to furnish practitioners with relevant information to make better decision that will be visible in their everyday activities. These categories more often than not range from: Human resource management, Organizational behaviour and management, Change management, Marketing management, Management information system, Production/operational management, etc.

Deliberate attempt have been made to isolate the very essence of management practice within some giving disciplines and institutions as noticed in the definition of concept. The lack of which has literally reduce the impact of the given construct as against expected result and practicability envisage. A result which buttresses that institution cannot function in isolation without management practice as that is the very essence of the institution. Management is viewed as the engine room that defines the flow of all economic and productive activities within the public services and public sectors.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Weber's theory of bureaucracy which was propounded by Max Weber on the assumptions that man is naturally lazy to work, yet he is materialistic in his approach. The argument is that the effectiveness of an organization should be based on a system of legal rules that are impersonal. It implies that these rules are legally derived from the law of the land, and employees should obey the law and not indịviduals in the office. That is, obeying the law regulating the office and not the office holder.

This system of legal rules sets the standard operational procedure and norms used to regulate the behaviour of employees in an organization. In Nigeria public service, most employees tend to pay their loyalty to their boss and not the job. Max Weber further argued that (recruitment, promotion, transfer and even retirement) in an organization should be based on merit, qualification, competence and performance. The Weber's theory is relevant to this study on the ground that bureaucracy is the principle that guides the setting and operation of Nigeria public sector service which has been affected by primeval factors such as (nepotism, corruption, federal character principle etc).

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative research design. The study employed content analysis to examine the challenges that affect the performance of Nigerian public service. The study which is theoretical in nature is based on secondary data which include journal publications, textbooks and Internet sources. Multiple secondary sources were used to minimize risk of error.

Challenges of the Nigerian Public Service

Despite attempts by successive governments in Nigeria to ensure ethical standard, value and improve attitudes for better performance of the public service, several challenges still militate against the performance of public service in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include the following:

Inappropriate Organizational Structure: The public service has been peddled as being inappropriately organized, and improperly managed. For instance, records, documents, files and other sources of information are not well arranged nor properly coordinated. This may be due to frequent movement of workers or non-delineation of responsibilities. It also leads to duplication of offices and positions. The public service is often criticized for wasting financial and manpower resources, and retaining unproductive workers with the creation of ministries, departments and positions with similar functions.

Culture: Another factor that affects the performance of public servants in Nigeria is the culture of the people. Culture defines the total way of life of a people. In Nigeria the culture for respect for an elder, un-common loyalty, brotherly love etc affect service delivery in the public service. There are situations where an employee cannot effectively be corrected or disciplined because of his age, religion or ethnic affiliation. Another area where loyalty and respect has been observed playing its negative role in the public service is the issue of paying loyalty to individuals in an office rather than the public service itself. Most public servants are seen wasting greater part of their productive (official) time rendering services to their boss and their boss relatives at the expense of their work. It is not uncommon to see many Nigerian employees attending social functions, domestic activities even during their official hours just to please their boss, and to earn unmerited favour.

Ethnicism: Ethnicism refers to the nature, content and focus of inter-ethnic relationship and interaction among the different ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society. However, this affects the development and growth of public service in Nigeria. Nigerians and the public officers see themselves first, as a member of a clan, and more interestingly as a member of an ethnic nationality. People hide under this guise of defending one's ethnic group, while pursuing personal and selfish interest in the public service. Ethnicism in the actual sense has multiple negative effects, especially on the issue of chances in the public service being determined by one's ethnic nationality rather than on merit.

Political-Factor: This is another issue that has hindered effective performance in the public service. The Nigerian public service over the years has been politicized to the extent that most top officials openly support the government. For instance, policies are usually made for the selfish and egoistic interests of the political leaders and sometimes only to attract public attention with less regard to effective practical implementation (Ikechuckwu & Chukwuemeke, 2013). According to Salisu, (2001) considerable political interference in the process of personnel administration has led to improper delegation of power, ineffective supervision and corruption in the Nigerian public service in recent time. This results in official apathy that has so far culminated into unreasonable absenteeism, lateness and idleness and particularly poor workmanship in the Nigerian public service. Continuous change of government brings along a change of political appointees like ministers, commissioners and career top civil servants such as the head of service and directors, with their own policies and programmes disrupting those formerly implemented.

Corruption: Corruption has been recognized as a major problem in the Nigerian Public Service system. Corruption exists in various forms such as inflation of contracts, bribery, nepotism, embezzlement, misappropriation, favouritism, diversion of public resources for personal gain, violation of procedures to advance personal interest, etc. Corruption has led to wastage of government property and militates against the growth of public institutions and agencies. The smooth operation of the public sector service is often handịcapped by bribery and corruption. Many civil servants demand monetary and other gratifications before carrying out their duties to the citizens. Service Failure is the consequence of the twin evils of corruption and indiscipline and the resultant effect of these evils is organizational inefficiency.

Inadequate Training: The performance of public service system in Nigeria is affected by inadequate training. Many Nigerian public servants lack the necessary managerial and technical competence to discharge their responsibilities. This has contributed to their poor performance as agents of socio-economic transformation. The Nigerian public service system lacks adequate training policy. Training is usually seen as a period of relaxation and hence public servants do not pay attention to it. The implication is that the bureaucrats assumed increased responsibilities in socio-economic policies and management without imparting necessary training to acquire techno-managerial skills which is fundamental to increased productivity (Iheanacho, 2012).

Poor Remuneration: The wages and salaries of public servants in Nigeria is obviously low and has in fact continued to decline over the years due to high rate of inflation and other causes. Despite the increment in salary, the public service salary in Nigeria is still very low when compared with the private sector and the public services of other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria's public service remuneration continues to trail behind others (Achimugun, Stephen & Aliyu, 2013). This situation leaves the average Nigerian public servant demoralized, angry and ready to indulge in corrupt practices at the slightest opportunity because of the low salary, as most of them have side businesses which they dedicate their time and talent to. Consequently, this affects the performance of the public service.

Negation of Merit Principle: The merit principle ensures efficient public service by appointing competent and capable public servants through competitive examinations to manage government affairs. The implication is that all recruitments, appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit. It is worrisome that the Federal Character Principle has undermined the objective of merit principle. The Federal Character Principle enshrined in 1999 constitution clearly stated that all appointments into federal public sector and all allocation of values, should reflect proportionately the diverse composition of the federation. The Federal Character Principle encourages sectionalism and ethnicism. It also militates against the appointment of the most qualified and competent persons into the public service system. With appointments based on Federal Character Principle instead of merit system, the Nigerian public service cannot function effectively as an instrument of economic growth and social progress (Iheanacho, 2012).

Nigeria's public service, in general, is a mess; this is mainly because written provisions about how the public sector should be managed and made truly accountable to the general public are actually not enforced. There seem to be no consequences for the ubiquitous disregard of laid-down rules and directives. Over time, indiscipline and impunity have become so normalized that the rules are now rarely given any regard except to blackmail and harass officials who choose to stand up to the vicious power-brokers.

The ways forward:

The following factors are likely to provide potential institutional drivers for efficiency in Nigeria's public service:

Effective Staff Recruitment: Recruitment is an integral part of human resources, and involves the process of identifying and attracting or encouraging potential applicants with needed skills to fill vacant positions in an organization (Peretomode & Peretomode, 2011). Thus, to enhance proper performance in the public sector, recruitment should be based on impartial selection, administrative competence, political impartiality, willingness to exhibit spirit of service towards the community, qualification of potential applicants and technical experience.`

Adoption of Empirical Performance Measurement and Appraisal: There is need to adopt empirical performance appraisal, which must be systematic, holistic, verifiable and universally acceptable. Performance appraisal must be devoid of victimization, favouritism, tribalism and God-fatherism so that it will not be counterproductive. Public servants are highly demoralized when the appraisal does not reflect the true evaluation of their performance. Dessler (2011) states that measuring employees' performance should be based on critical incident file, rating scale, narrative, ranking, Behavioural Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) and Management By Objectives (MBO). According to Casio (2010), for appraisal to be effective there is need for a high degree of agreement between the employee and their manager on what they are trying to do.

E-Governance: To enhance high productivity in the public sector in this age of globalization, it is vital that public service institutions embrace E-governance. The essence of technology and the increasing utilization of the internet are to open the frontiers of opportunities. When E-governance is adopted, the bureaucratic bottleneck resulting from delay in communication and quality of services provided to the public will be prevented. E-government results to lower costs as well as improved efficiency and quality of services and enables public workers to be more transparent and accountable.

- Set key performance indịcators (KPIs) across Ministries, D```epartments and Agencies (MDAs) in line with broad national economic objectives across sectors;
- Set KPIs against key officeholders and heads of MDAS;
- Ensure that the heads of MDAs are provided with the tools, funds and capable staff they need to function effectively;
- Review quarterly performances of MDAs and reward and or punish agencies and officers as dictated by agreed performance measurement templates;
- Enforce existing written policy standards of accountability;
- Set annual sector growth rates and make public sector officers to understand their roles in

achieving the expected growth target and monitor performance and recommend further action:

- Reduce human intervention in public sector processes and procedures by applying Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML).
- Promote public/ private sector collaboration through internship arrangement that allows each side to see the other's strengths and weaknesses. The partnership may assist in breaking down mutual suspicion and promote a better understanding of each other's position.

New Public Management (NPM): New Public Management is a concept used to describe a management culture that emphasizes the centrality of the citizen or customer, as well as accountability for results. It is a set of broadly similar administrative doctrines, which dominated the public administration reform agenda of most Organizations for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD) countries from the late 1970s. Greater efficiency can be achieved in public sector if public managers are given managerial autonomy to allocate resources but only if they are held accountable for results.

The main elements of NPM include:

- Hands-on professional management in the public sector: This means allowing the managers to manage. The typical justification for this is that accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action.

- Explicit standards and measures of performance: This requires goals to be defined and performance targets to be set. This sets out the basis for judging performance.
- Greater emphasis on output controls: It reflects the need to stress on results rather than administrative procedures.
- Disaggregation of units in the public sector. This involves the breaking up of large entities into corporatized units that are task focused.
- Competition in the public sector: This involves the contracts and public tendering procedures, that is, move to term.
- Economical use of public sector resources (reducing direct costs, raising labour discipline and limiting compliance costs to business).
- Private-sector style of management: Move away from traditional public service to more flexible pay, hiring, rules, etc)

Conclusion

This study examined the Nigerian Public Service System, its Challenges and the way forward. The study identified those problems that undermine the performance of the system. These problems include corruption, negation of merit principle, inadequate training, poor remuneration, culture, ineffective organizational culture and ethnicism. In order to enhance the performance of Nigerian public service system, it is hoped that sincere implementation of the suggested measures would go a long way to make Nigerian public service function effectively as a veritable instrument of socio-economic progress and nation building. Also, in this age of globalization, it is essential to say that for the Nigerian public service to be able to cope with international demand, there is need to observe the principles of New Public Management and ideal public service sector.

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NNAMDI KANU, BIAFRAN SELF-DETERMINATION AND AFRICA'S SOCIOECONOMIC AND GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITIVENESS: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

This study offers a critical assessment of **Nnamdi Kanu's detention, the Biafran self-determination quest socioeconomic progress and geopolitical competitiveness.** *Primarily this study aims at* analysing how contested nationhood and state tensions within Nigeria shape regional stability and Africa's strategic positioning in an evolving global order. The *specific objectives* are to: (i) trace the historical and structural drivers of Biafran self-determination; (ii) interrogate the political and legal dynamics surrounding Kanu's detention; (iii) evaluate the regional and continental implications of Nigeria's internal instability (iv) propose governance reforms that strengthen national cohesion and Africa's global competitiveness. The study is mainly anchored on **Relative Deprivation Theory,** which explains how perceived marginalisation, weak state-building, and global interconnectedness shape contemporary self-determination conflicts. Methodologically, the research employs a **qualitative and**

descriptive design, relying on **documentary analysis** of legal texts, human rights reports, policy papers, academic literature, and regional governance frameworks. Data were analysed through **thematic content analysis.** Findịngs indịcate that the persistence of the Biafran question derives from unresolved historical grievances, governance deficits, structural exclusion, and the securitisation of political dissent. The study further reveals that Nigeria's instability, expanded by the Kanu–Biafra detention, weakens investor confidence, disrupts regional economic integration, and limits Africa's influence in global political negotiations. The study concludes that durable resolution requires **inclusive governance, constitutional reforms, rule-of-law co```mpliance, demilitarisation of dissent, and structured political dialogue**. It recommends dialogue-driven conflict management, protection of civil liberties, sub-national economic empowerment, and regionally coordinated peace-building strategies to enhance Africa's socioeconomic and geopolitical competitiveness.

Keywords: Nnamdi Kanu, Biafra, self-determination, Africa's socioeconomic development, geopolitical competitiveness, Nigeria.

Introduction

The question of Biafran self-determination and the prolonged detention of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indịgenous People of Biafra (IPOB), represent one of the most contentious nationhood debates in contemporary Nigeria. Self-determination movements across Africa are often rooted in historical injustice, structural inequality, and unaddressed grievances embedded in colonial state formation (Ake, 1996; Young, 2012). The Nigerian case reflects these broader postcolonial dilemmas, where contested legitimacy, perceived marginalisation of the Igbo ethnic group, and repeated failures of inclusive governance have sustained the Biafran question since 1967 (Suberu, 2021).As Africa seeks to strengthen its socioeconomic transformation and geopolitical competitiveness, internal instability in major states like Nigeria significantly shapes the continent's collective bargaining power in the global system (Adebanwi, 2020). Nigeria's recurring separatist agitations, amplified by the arrest, rendịtion, and detention of Kanu in 2021, have contributed to heightened tensions, militarised responses, human rights controversies, and declining investor confidence (Amnesty International, 2022; Ibeanu & Luckham, 2006).Understandịng the implications of this conflict is crucial as African states navigate multipolar global competition, digital geopolitics, and the rising value of regional stability for economic integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (UNECA, 2020).

The problem this study seeks to tackle revolves around the reason for the continued quest for Biafra self-determination despite Nigeria's constitutional commitment to unity and federalism. The continued Biafran agitation reveals deep structural weaknesses in governance, national integration, and equitable development. The securitisation of political grievances, characterised by arrests, proscription, surveillance, and military operations—has intensified rather than resolved the conflict (Onuoha, 2020). The unresolved detention of Nnamdi Kanu continues to fuel perceptions of political exclusion, judicial inconsistency, and selective enforcement of the rule of law (Nwankwo, 2022).

Nigeria's internal instability poses wider risks for Africa. As the continent's largest economy and a key diplomatic actor, Nigeria's domestic crises undermine regional security cooperation, continental economic coordination, and Africa's overall influence in global institutions (Adebajo, 2021). The Kanu–Biafra impasse thus represents both a national crisis and a continental strategic concern.

The primary aim of this study is to critically assess Nnamdi Kanu's detention, the Biafran self-determination quest, and their implications for Africa's socioeconomic development and geopolitical competitiveness. The specific objectives of this study is to, examine the historical and structural drivers of the Biafran self-determination movement, analyse the political, legal, and governance dynamics surroundịng Nnamdi Kanu's detention, evaluate how Nigeria's internal instability affects Africa's socioeconomic prospects and geopolitical positioning, and Recommend policy options that strengthen national cohesion and enhance Africa's global competitiveness. This study is guided by the following questions, what historical and structural factors have sustained the Biafran self-determination movement? How have legal and governance dynamics shaped Nnamdi Kanu's detention and the state's response? What are the implications of Nigeria's instability for Africa's economic and geopolitical standịng?What reforms can promote conflict resolution and enhance Africa's competitiveness?

The study draws mainly from Gurr (1970) relative deprivation theory, and supported by the post-colonial state theory and the Keohane and Nye (2011) complex interdependence theory. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and inter-pretivist research design, relying primarily on documentary analysis. The study is significant basically because it contributes to academic scholarship on nationalism, conflict management, and African geopolitics. It provides policymakers with insights into how internal conflicts in strategic African states can undermine regional integration and continental competitiveness. It also offers recommendations that can guide peaceful resolution of self-determination disputes.

Scope-wise, the study focuses on Nigerian- Biafran question from 2014–2025, examining the political, legal, governance, and socioeconomic dimensions. Limitations include reliance on secondary data and the sensitivity of political information in conflict-prone contexts. Structurally, the study consists of (1) the introduction (2) Review of related literature (3) methodology (4) Data presentation, analysis, and interpretation (5) Summary, conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

This section reviews relevant literature `on self-determination, the Biafran question, Nigeria's political governance, and Africa's socioeconomic and geopolitical positioning. It synthesises theoretical, historical, and contemporary debates, with emphasis on how Nnamdi Kanu's detention and the renewed Biafran self-determination movement intersect with national stability and continental competitiveness.

Conceptualizing Self-Determination and Secessionist Movements

The principle of self-determination is central to international law and political philosophy. It refers to the right of a people to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development (Cassese, 1995; United Nations, 2007). Contemporary scholarship distinguishes between internal self-determination (autonomy, decentralisation, good governance) and external self-determination (secession) (Norman, 2020).

African cases such as South Sudan, Eritrea, and Somaliland demonstrate the varied contours of secessionist struggles driven by identity, marginalisation, and postcolonial state failure (Clapham, 2017). The Biafran movement, both the 1967–70 conflict and contemporary resurgence, fits within this global pattern of contested nationhood, historical injustice, and unresolved grievances (Omeje, 2021).

Historical Context of the Biafran Question

The Biafra conflict is rooted in colonial amalgamation, ethnic tensions, political mistrust, and coups that destabilised the post-independence Nigerian state

(Madiebo, 1980; Achebe, 2012). Post-war rhetoric of "No victor, no vanquished" did not translate into structural reconciliation; instead, marginalisation grievances persisted in the South-East (Ekanem & Okon, 2018).

The resurgence of the Indịgenous People of Biafra (IPOB) under Nnamdi Kanu reflects dissatisfaction with Nigeria's federal structure, inequitable resource distribution, and perceived political exclusion (Nwankwo, 2022).

State Response, Repression, and Governance Dynamics

Scholars agree that state reactions to separatist agitation in Nigeria have been predominantly coercive rather than dialogic (Akinyemi, 2020). Military operations, arbitrary arrests, and disproportionate force constitute dominant strategies, exacerbating rather than resolving conflict.

Ezeikpe (2018) argues that extrajudicial killings and unregulated security practices have become entrenched tools of political control in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, reflecting weak institutions and a culture of impunity. Such practices increase radicalisation, fuel inter-ethnic resentment, and delegitimise state authority.

Amnesty International (2022) similarly reports enforced disappearances, secret detentions, and systematic human rights violations in the South-East. The extraordinary rendịtion and prolonged detention of Nnamdi Kanu highlight the weakness of judicial oversight and growing executive overreach (Nwankwo, 2022). These dynamics reinforce persistent perceptions of structural injustice and ethnic targeting

Nigeria's Internal Instability and Africa's Socioeconomic Prospects

Nigeria's instability has direct consequences for Africa. As Africa's most populous nation and one of its largest economies, Nigeria's domestic weakness threatens continental integration efforts under the AfCFTA, ECOWAS protocols, and AU Agenda 2063 (UNECA, 2020).

Ezeikpe (2018) demonstrates that extrajudicial killings and systemic insecurity erode investor confidence, deepen grievances, and obstruct development, intensifying broader national instability. Such instability spills over into neighboring states, affects regional markets, and reduces Africa's leverage in global economic competition.

Adebajo (2021) argues that without internal stability, Nigeria cannot fulfil its historic continental leadership role. This aligns with Ezeikpe's (2022) argument in *Repositioning Africa for Global Competitiveness* that Africa must strengthen governance, human capital, and regional stability to enhance its participation in global politics and markets.

Self-Determination, Human Rights, and International Law

International law recognises self-determination but places limits on secession, favouring territorial integrity unless severe oppression or denial of meaningful internal self-determination exists (Buchanan, 2003).

Reports by Human Rights Watch (2021) and Amnesty International (2022) suggest that Nigeria's response to IPOB often violates civil liberties, raising legal debates about whether the state's actions undermine internal self-determination and thus feed arguments for external self-determination.

Biafra, Regional Stability, and Africa's Geopolitical Positioning

Nigeria's internal crises weaken ECOWAS security architecture, contribute to small-arms proliferation, and complicate Africa's diplomatic posture (Clapham, 2017; Adebajo, 2021). Studies stress that internal fragmentation lowers the continent's bargaining power in global trade, climate negotiations, and multipolar alignments.

Ezeikpe's (2022) analysis of Repositioning Africa for Global Competitiveness underscores that stable governance, regional cohesion, and security reforms are prerequisites for Africa to compete effectively in an era of China–US rivalry, technological disruption, and shifting global supply chains.

Thus, Nigeria's resolution of the Biafran question is not merely a domestic issue, it is a continental priority. This is basically because the quest for self-determination is a generational right, endorsed by United Nations charter on human rights. Simply put, Self-determination is a legitimate global norm. It is likely that the Biafran question remains unresolved due to historical grievances and governance failures. Nigeria's coercive response aggravates conflict, as illustrated by the prevalence of extrajudicial killings (Ezeikpe, 2018). Unfortunately, Nigeria's instability undermines regional integration and Africa's global competitiveness (Ezeikpe, 2022). Apparently, a rights-based, dialogue-driven approach is essential for sustainable peace and continental development

Notwithstandịng the growing body of scholarship on the Biafran self-determination movement, Nigeria's governance crisis, and Africa's geopolitical marginalization, **important analytical gaps remains**. First, existing studies on Biafra tend to focus either on historical grievances (Madueke, 2020), ethnic identity politics (Nwankwo, 2022), or state–movement conflict dynamics (Akinyemi, 2020). However**, few studies systematically link the Nnamdi Kanu–IPOB phenomenon to Africa's broader socioeconomic and geopolitical competitiveness,** especially within the context of emerging global power realignments.

Second, works on governance failures and insecurity in Nigeria, including analyses of extrajudicial killings and state repression (Ezeikpe, 2018), provide important insights into human rights abuses, but they rarely assess how **internal governance breakdown affects Africa's collective global bargaining power, regional integration, and strategic positioning.** This creates a significant knowledge gap on how domestic instability in

Africa's largest democracy reverberates across the continent.

Third, the literature on self-determination in Africa often adopts legalistic or normative approaches (Ake, 2016; Okeke, 2021), while underexploring the **geopolitical and economic implications**of unresolved separatist crises. Similarly, scholarship on Africa's global competitiveness (Ezeikpe, 2023) rarely incorporates the role of**internal political fragmentation and contested nationhood** in shaping development outcomes.

Fourth, no major academic work has yet offered a **combined theoretical approach** using Postcolonial State Theory, Relative Deprivation Theory, and Complex Interdependence Theory to explain how historical marginalization, state fragility, and global interconnectedness jointly shape the Biafran question and its continental implications.

This study fills these gaps by providing:

- A **multi-level analysis** that connects Kanu's detention and Biafran agitation to Africa's economic, political, and geopolitical standịng.
- A **governance–security–competitiveness** framework that integrates domestic political repression, sub-national grievances, and Africa's declining global influence.
- A**continent-focused assessment** that explains how Nigeria's internal instability reshapes regional

security, economic integration, and Africa's international competitiveness.

- A **holistic theoretical synthesis** offering a new conceptual pathway for understanding separatist conflicts within Africa's global repositioning agenda.

By addressing these underexplored dimensions, the study makes a **significant scholarly contribution**to debates on governance, self-determination, insecurity, and Africa's role in the global system.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored mainly on the Gurr (1970) relative deprivation theory. This is supported by the Mamdani (1996) and Ake (1996) post-colonial state theory, corroborated by the Keohane and Nye (2011) complex interdependence theory.

The theory of relative deprivation posits that political violence arises from perceived inequality between expected and actual socioeconomic conditions. In the Biafran context, perceived marginalisation provides emotional and psychological motivation for sustained agitation (Nnoli, 2008).

In the post-colonial state theory, Mamdani (1996) and Ake (1996) argue that African states inherited fragile institutions and exclusionary power structures. Nigeria's difficulty in managing ethnic diversity, ensuring equitable development, and sustaining legitimacy reflects this colonial legacy.

Corroborating the argument, Keohane and Nye (2011) in complex interdependence theory, highlight how domestic conflicts can influence regional and global outcomes. Nigeria's instability demonstrates how internal crises undermine continental cohesion and Africa's global competitiveness.

Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology adopted to investigate **Nnamdi Kanu, Biafran self-determination, and Africa's socioeconomic and geopolitical competitiveness.** It describes the research design, data sources, sampling strategy, methods of data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations. The methodology is designed to ensure **rigor, validity, and reliability**, consistent with qualitative social science research standards

Research Design

The study adopts a **qualitative, descriptive, and interpretivist research design**. This approach is suitable for exploring complex social, political, and historical phenomena where **contextual understanding and interpretive analysis** are central (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the sensitive nature of separatist movements and state responses, qualitative inquiry allows for **in-depth analysis of documentary evidence, historical records, and secondary data.**

Population and Sampling

The study does not rely on primary survey respondents due to security and access limitations. Instead, the **population of interest** includes:

- Legal documents (court cases, extradition records related to Nnamdi Kanu).
- Human rights and NGO reports (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch).
- Academic and policy literature on Biafra, Nigerian governance, and Africa's geopolitical position.
- Media and government communications relevant to IPOB, Kanu, and Nigeria's security policies.

A **purposive sampling technique** is employed to select sources that are **credible, relevant, and rich in information** (Patton, 2015). Only sources offering **substantive insights into governance, insecurity, self-determination, or continental competitiveness** are included.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through **documentary analysis**, which involves systematic review of:

- Legal and policy documents.
- Academic journals, books, and conference proceedings.
- Human rights and development reports.
- Credible news outlets and media archives.

All sources were evaluated for **authenticity, relevance, and reliability**, ensuring triangulation across multiple types of data to strengthen validity (Bowen, 2009).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using **thematic content analysis**. This involved:

1) **Coding** key themes related to governance, security, self-determination, and geopolitical competitiveness.
2) **Identifying patterns** and relationships between Nnamdi Kanu's detention, Biafran agitation, and Africa's global positioning.
3) **Synthesising findings** in alignment with the theoretical framework:

   - Relative Deprivation Theory: Explains ethnic and political grievances driving IPOB.
   - Postcolonial State Theory: Explains institutional weaknesses and governance failure.
   - Complex Interdependence Theory: Connects domestic instability with Africa's global influence.

Thematic analysis allows **context-sensitive interpretation** of the socio-political and economic implications of Biafra-related conflicts for Africa's competitiveness.

Reliability and Validity

- **Reliability** is ensured by cross-verifying multiple sources and consistently applying coding criteria across documents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- **Validity** is enhanced through **triangulation**, integrating legal, policy, scholarly, and media sources.

Content validity is ensured by focusing on documents that directly address the core research objectives

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols include**:**

- Respecting **intellectual property** through proper citations (APA 7th edition).
- Ensuring **non-maleficence**, particularly given the sensitive political and security issues.
- Using publicly accessible and credible sources to avoid endangering any indịviduals or groups.
- Maintaining **objectivity** and avoiding partisan interpretation of contested events.

Scope and Limitations of the Methodology

- **Scope:** Focused on secondary qualitative data, covering 2014–2025, including governance, security, and geopolitical dimensions.
- **Limitations:** The study does not include primary interviews due to security concerns. Data are reliant on **accuracy and completeness of**

secondary sources, though triangulation mitigates bias.

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation

This section presents and analyses data on **Nnamdi Kanu, the Biafran self-determination movement, and Africa's socioeconomic and geopolitical competitiveness**. The section is organised around the study's objectives and research questions. Data collected through **documentary analysis**, including legal records, human rights reports, scholarly works, and media sources, are coded and thematically analysed. Interpretation is guided mainly by **Relative Deprivation Theory, and corroborated by both Postcolonial State Theory, and Complex Interdependence Theory**.

Historical and Structural Drivers of the Biafran Movement: Findịngs:

The historical and Structural drivers of the Biafran struggle spans longstandịng political marginalisation of the Igbo in federal appointments and governance structures (Suberu, 2021), Uneven economic development in South-East Nigeria, particularly infrastructure and industrial investment gaps (Ezeikpe, 2023), and memories of the 1967–1970 civil war continue to shape collective Igbo identity and mobilise support for self-determination (Uzoigwe, 2014).

By **interpretation,** Relative Deprivation Theory explains that perceived inequality between expectations and actual access to resources and political power fuels Biafran agitation (Gurr, 1970); the persistence of these grievances indịcates **structural failures in postcolonial state design** (Ake, 1996; Mamdani, 1996), unfortunately, Nigeria has always responded to the quest for biafran quest for freedom with repression, exemplified in constant **Military and paramilitary deployments** in the South-East have escalated tensions (Onuoha, 2020), **arrest and rendịtion of Nnamdi Kanu** exemplifying selective law enforcement and coercive governance (Nwankwo, 2022), and series of **extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses** (Ezeikpe, 2018; Amnesty International, 2022):

Table 4.1: Empirical Evidence of State Repression in Nigeria (2014–2025)

Category	Empirical Evidence / Case Examples	Source / Year	Interpretation
Coercive Policing	Deployment of military and police forces to suppress IPOB rallies in South-East states, including Aba,	Onuoha,2020; Suberu, 2021 Amnesty International, 2022	Excessive use of force reflects reliance on militarisation to manage political dissent rather than dialogue; reinforces state–citizen

	Enugu, and Onitsha. Frequent roadblocks, raids, and dispersal of gatherings with live ammunition and tear gas.		mistrust. Coercive policing escalates tensions and radicalises segments of the population
Extrajudicial Killings	Reported deaths of at least 150 civilians during operations against IPOB in 2016–2019, including mass shootings in Aba and Umuahia. Execution-style killings of suspected IPOB	Ezeikpe, 2018; Amnesty International, 2022 Human Rights Watch, 2021	Illustrates systemic use of lethal force as political control; undermines rule of law and public trust. Confirms extrajudicial measures are pervasive and unregulated.

	members without trial in Enugu and Abia states.		
Judicial Inconsistencies	Delayed or prolonged pre-trial detention of Nnamdi Kanu (2015–2021), with multiple postponements of court hearings.	Nwankwo, 2022	Highlights lack of procedural consistency and transparency in judicial processes.
	Conflicting court orders regarding Kanu's bail and extradition; executive interference perceived in trial management.	Nwankwo, 2022; Suberu, 2021	Demonstrates compromised judicial independence, reinforcing grievances among the aggrieved group.
	Limited access to legal representation and reports of arbitrary remand extensions for IPOB	Amnesty International, 2022	Suggests systemic judicial bias, contributing to perceptions of injustice and marginalisation.

members.

Survey and tabulated by the Author

Interpretation Summary:

This table provides **empirical grounding** for the argument that Nigeria's security and judicial approaches to IPOB/Kanu are **counter productive**, with consequences that extend to **regional stability and Africa's geopolitical competitiveness.** Whereas **Coercive policing** escalates tensions rather than mitigating separatist demands**,** **extrajudicial killings** reflect structural impunity within security agencies and exacerbate political grievances, while **Judicial inconsistencies** weaken rule of law, reinforcing feelings of marginalisation and justifying the perception of systemic injustice.

Table 4.2: Quantitative Estimates of Security Incidents and Judicial Delays (2014–2025)

Indicator	**Estimate / Data**	**Source / Year**	**Interpretation**
Civilians killed in security operations against IPOB	~150–200	Ezeikpe, 2018; Amnesty International, 2022	Indicates high human cost of coercive approach.
Arrests of IPOB members	500+ between 2015–2022	Amnesty International, 2022	Demonstrates state's reliance on mass detention.
Kanu court hearing postponements	12+ hearings delayed	Nwankwo, 2022	Shows judicial inefficiency and procedural irregularities.
Duration of pre-	6+ years	Nwankwo,	Highlights

trial detention for Kanu		2022	violations of timely access to justice.
Instances of executive interference reported	3 confirmed cases	Suberu, 2021; Nwankwo, 2022	Weakens rule of law and public confidence in judiciary.

Author's survey and tabulation

Table 4.3 Thematic Analysis – Linking Findịngs to Theoretical Framework

Theme	**Findịngs**	**Theory Applied**	**Interpretation / implication**
Grievances and Marginalisation	Historical marginalisation of Igbo; uneven economic development	Relative Deprivation Theory	Perceived inequality drives separatist mobilization and support for Kanu/IPOB.
Governance and Coercion	Military deployments; coercive policing; extrajudicial killings	Postcolonial State Theory	Weak institutions and reliance on force perpetuate insecurity; erode legitimacy.
Judicial Inconsistencies	Prolonged detention, bail contradictions, executive interference	Postcolonial State Theory	Judicial weakness reinforces grievances; reduces faith in democratic institutions.

Continental and Global Impact	Nigeria's instability affects FDI, ECOWAS integration, Africa's bargaining power	Complex Interdependence Theory	Domestic instability spills over regionally; diminishes Africa's global competitiveness.

Author's survey and computation

Table 4.4 Summary of Empirical Findings Linked to Study Objectives

Study Objective	Empirical Evidence	Interpretation / Link to Africa's Competitiveness
Examine historical drivers of Biafra	Marginalisation, post-war trauma, unequal development	Drives support for self-determination; undermines national cohesion
Analyse governance & state repression	Coercive policing, extrajudicial killings, judicial inconsistencies	Weakens trust in institutions; escalates conflicts
Assess socioeconomic and geopolitical impact	Reduced FDI, disrupted regional integration, weakened ECOWAS influence	Domestic instability reduces Africa's global influence and competitiveness
Recommend interventions	Need for dialogue, institutional reform, respect for human rights	Improves governance, mitigates conflict, enhances continental standing

Author's survey and computation

The data indịcate a strong link between the Biafran question, governance failures, and Africa's continental competitiveness. Kanu's detention and Nigeria's reliance on coercion exacerbate structural grievances, perpetuate insecurity, and weaken Africa's regional influence and global strategic positioning. The findịngs underscore the need for policy interventions that integrate governance reform, human rights protection, and continental economic strategy.

Kanu court hearing postponements, Judicial Inconsistencies, as well as the style of court proceedings applied against Nnamdi Kanu reveal **opacities in due process**, including arbitrary detentions and extended pre-trial detention and rendịtion. These bundles of maladies represent failure on the part of the government to uphold fundamental rights which unfortunately strengthens the narrative for **external self-determination** among aggrieved groups.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This section synthesises the key findịngs of the study, draws conclusions based on the empirical evidence and theoretical framework, and presents actionable recommendations. The study investigates Nnamdi Kanu, Biafran self-determination, and Africa's socioeconomic and geopolitical competitiveness. It integrates insights from Relative Deprivation Theory, Postcolonial State Theory, and Complex Interdependence Theory.

Summary

Based on the thematic and empirical analysis in section four, the study finds out that the historical and structural drivers of Biafra consist of, Persistent marginalisation of the Igbo in political representation and resource allocation, Post-war trauma and collective memory of the 1967–1970 civil war continue to shape identity and mobilization, and Unequal economic development and infrastructure deficits in the South-East exacerbate grievances. The Nigerian governance and security system rely heavily on coercive policing, including military deployments and use of live ammunition, Extrajudicial killings and human rights violations are pervasive, reflecting systemic weaknesses in governance (Ezeikpe, 2018), and Judicial inconsistencies, including prolonged pre-trial detention of Nnamdi Kanu and executive interference, undermine the rule of law and public confidence.All of these have implications for Africa's socioeconomic and Geopolitical competitiveness, including that,

- Nigeria's internal instability negatively affects regional integration, ECOWAS operations, and foreign direct investment.
- Domestic crises in Africa's largest economy reduce the continent's bargaining power and global visibility.
- Structural governance deficits impede Africa's ability to leverage its resources, human capital, and strategic position in global politics (Ezeikpe, 2023).

Conclusions

From the findings, the study concludes that, Biafran self-determination is both a domestic and continental concern. Unresolved grievances in Nigeria's South-East have ripple effects on regional stability and Africa's global competitiveness. State coercion exacerbates conflict. Coercive policing, extrajudicial killings, and judicial inconsistencies fuel radicalisation and deepen mistrust between the state and citizens. Africa's global competitiveness is intertwined with domestic governance. Internal instability in key African states like Nigeria undermines continental development objectives, international influence, and strategic partnerships.A multi-level governance approach is essential. Sustainable peace and competitiveness require addressing structural grievances, ensuring rule of law, and fostering socio-economic development in marginalised regions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends:

1. Governance and Judicial Reform:
   - Strengthen institutional checks to ensure judicial independence and due process.
   - End extrajudicial killings and promote accountability within security agencies.
   - Implement transparent legal procedures for political activists to reduce perceptions of bias.

2. Dialogue and Conflict Resolution:
   - Establish inclusive dialogue platforms between the Nigerian government and IPOB representatives.

- Promote regional reconciliation initiatives to address historical grievances.
- Support civic education campaigns to foster national cohesion and tolerance.

3. Socioeconomic Development in Marginalised Regions**:**

- Prioritise infrastructure development, education, and investment in the South-East.
- Implement targeted economic empowerment programs to reduce inequality and grievances.

4. Continental Strategic Planning**:**

- ECOWAS and AU should integrate domestic stability indicators into regional competitiveness strategies.
- African states should collaborate to mitigate spillover effects of domestic conflicts.
- Develop continental policies linking governance, security, and economic competitiveness.

5. Further Research**:**

- Conduct longitudinal studies on the long-term impact of extrajudicial measures on citizen trust and regional integration.
- Examine the relationship between separatist movements in Africa and global geopolitical competitiveness across multiple countries.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study fills critical gaps by:

- Linking Nnamdi Kanu's detention and Biafran quest for self-determination to Africa's socioeconomic and geopolitical competitiveness.
- Providing a multi-level governance–security–competitiveness framework applicable to other African contexts.
- Integrating historical, legal, and theoretical perspectives to explain how domestic instability affects continental development and global positioning.

Importantly, resolving the Biafran question and addressing governance failures in Nigeria is not only a domestic imperative but a continental strategic necessity. Enhancing rule of law, promoting equitable development, and integrating governance reforms with regional and global competitiveness strategies are critical for Africa's emergence as a stable, influential, and economically resilient continent.

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UNDERSTANDỊNG THE MIND OF THE ARTIST THROUGH HIS ART: A REVIEW OF SOME SELECTED WORKS OF JEAN MICHEL BASQUIAT USING EXPRESSIVISM AS A CRITICAL TOOL

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Abstract

The artist Jean-Michel Basquiat lived from 1960 to 1988 to become one of the most enigmatic characters of contemporary art of the late 20th century. He was renowned for evocative neo-expressionistic outputs that incorporated text, imagery, and social commentary. This paper explores the mind of Basquiat by taking a cursory look at a selection of his oeuvre through the lens of expressivism as a technique of art criticism. Expressivism is considered the best approach because it highlights the artist's subjective emotional experience and the spontaneous communication of his inner realities, and personal opinions about his social realities. It offers the right framework to understand Basquiat's complex personality, struggles, and use of symbolic language. The analysis highlights how Basquiat's works address issues of race, class struggle, identity, trauma, and power. This review underscores the inalienable link between his creative voyage and his psychological state, showcasing how his works serve as some form of creative windows to

his psych, giving cues to how his mind worked and how he communicated in manners weightier than words.

Keywords: Jean-Michel Basquit, expressivism, neo-expressionism, art criticiism, identity, social critique.

Introduction

Jean-Michel Basquiat was an influential American artist born to Haitian father and a Puerto Rican mother in Brooklyn, New York city. He began his art career as an underground graffiti street artist, working as a member of a team with the pseudo name; SAMO@. His multicultural and multilingual family background encouraged his creativity and ensured he received adequate cultural exposure. His mother played a significant role in nurturing his early interest in art by taking him to museums and purchasing books such as *Grays Anatomy.* Influences from this book could be seen in his later works, especially after he suffered an injury through a car accident as a child. The crisis in Basquait's home and subsequent separation from his family impacted greatly on his young impressionable mind; haunting him throughout his short but productive life.

The artistic style of Basquiat could be situated within the neo-expressionist movement which is predominantly characterized by raw emotional intensity, vivid colour, and layered symbolism (MyArtBroker, 2024). His works are rich with cryptic text, figurative elements, and a repetitive use of motifs such as the iconic three points crown and skulls which reveal an immediate great outpouring of internal experiences and social realities, with several layers of racial identity themes and systemic injustice. (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2022). it will be most practicable to employ expressivism as a critical tool in order to facilitate a better understandịng of Basquiat's art. This is done by identifying the artist's emotional and psychological markers that shapes and forms a major part of his visual language.

Expressionism and Neo-Expressionism Clarifications

Although both Expressionism and Neo-Expressionism are products of the 20th century, the former was older in date. And they differ in characteristics and practitioners as well. Expressionism is an older, early 20th century movement that was chiefly concerned with the expression of emotions through art. The ideas and experiences of the artist are the main focus as well as the ability to evoke the intended emotion on the viewers. On the other hand, Neo-Expressionism is a late 20th century renaissance that employs vigorous, gestural paintings with contemporary subject matter, cultural hybridity, and post-modern ideologies. Just like many other art movements, Neo-Expressionism was a form of revolt against the statusco. It started as a reaction against the popular styles of the middle of 20th century; Minimalism and Conceptual Art.

For Nifesi T (2018), expressionism was birthed following the increasing urge felt by artists to "share their expression of the truth"

Expressivism as a Framework for Art Criticism

Expressivism could be traced to the earlier Romantic Movement, with a large part of its early written articulations ascribed to Leo Tolstoy. It was his opinion that art is a means of transmitting feelings and emotions from an artist to a viewer. John Dewy also contributed to the development of the theoretical framework of expressivism; emphasizing it as an efficacious means of conveying human experience and subjective emotional responses.

Expressivism carries the assertion that every work of art is an expression of the artist's inner emotions, views or perceptions, and mental state (Carroll,1999). It creates an opportunity for the authentic communication of feelings over formal perfection or external realism. For Basquiat who ascended rapidly from being a graffiti artist, operating underground and always at the risk of sanctions and arrests, to a gallery and institutional sensation and celebrity artist, his works served as an effective expressive channel for his complex identity as a black artist contending daily with systemic racism, personal trauma, and addiction. (Biography.com Editors, 2024). This is no surprising, considering that this was an era when racism was a national pandemic in America. And, the artist's mother had just died after checking in and out of a rehab facility, with a distrust father who had lost patience with an alienated son. It has also been established that the New York City art and music industry of the late 70s and 80s was characterized by widespread drug use, particularly heroin. (a substance that the young artist would later overdose on at age 27).

Review of key elements of Expressivism as witnessed in the works of Michel Basquiat

There are a number of characteristics that runs parallel throughout most of the works by Basquiat. These are the expressive elements that carry the depth of meanings used as mediums for communication of feelings and ideas by the artist in a manner that is most engaging emotionally. They include the following;

Emotional Rawness and Trauma

Basquiat's oeuvre oscillates with some level of psychological weight that reflected his turbulent life, including childhood trauma, family instability, and substance abuse (BBC, 2018). For instance, his use of skull and skeletal motifs noticeable in works such as 'Untitled' (1982) evoke themes of mortality and feebleness, showing the general notion of human weakness and a personal encounter with death (Art News, 2022). These elements of expressivism allow the viewer to perceive these works as vistas into Basquiat's emotional battles, rather than being just symbolic expressions. Other recurring motifs include a crown which symbolizes the assertion of dignity and self-worth in a world that continuously dehumanizes using the instruments of race and social inequality. (Smithsonian, 2022). these motifs serve as expressive instruments for subjects that forms the core interests of Basquiat, especially as it concerns his identity formation and resistance. The aesthetic clarity and boldness is analogous to expressive priorities which emphasizes unabridged emotion and artist-oriented meaning.

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Personal and Social Expression using Visual Language

Basquiat's appropriation of codified text, invented words like "AOPKHES," and disjointed anatomy shows levels of use of personalized codes and critique of the social environment (Artspace, 2023).Through his visual language, he channels disturbing experiences of identity and power by addressing African American history, colonial history, and the traficking of Black bodies. Only expressivism could be employed in accounting for this complex outpouring of deep seated cultural and existential threats. (myartbroker, 2024).

The years proceeding Basquiat's death saw an astronomical increase in the commodification and commercialization of the works of the artist. This action of speculators and galleries stripped his works of there original essence and potency. While the original intent of the artist was to produce works that makes personal statements and express his opinions about the world around him and beyond; a form of personal catharsis, the art market commodified his works, sometimes stripping them of political force (Jacobin, 2022). This single action negates the expressive intent of the artist, and the potency of the intended message.

Untitled (1982) by

Basquiat. Medium: acrylic, spray paint, oilstick on canvas. Source: www.google.com

Review of Selected Works

Untitled (1982)

This piece is one of Basquit's most famous pieces, fetching over $100 million in auction in 2017, making it the most expensive work by an American ever sold in an auction. The work depicts a large prominent skull with haunting eyes and a sneering mouth, reminds one of "the Brut" by Uche Okeke. Untitled (1982) is a large painting of about eight by sixteen feet, featuring a skull as a central motif. Painted in a raw manner, the skull appears aggressive, with spontaneous brushstrokes, frenzy lines, and a vivid choice of colour palette dominantly occupied with black, white, reds, blues and splashes of yellow. The rendịtion is disjointed, placing the skull between abstraction and naturalism. Other iconic representations include his three pronged crown and graffiti texts.

This painting reveals a deep emotional and psychologial energy. The bold, radical brushstrokes carry an urgency and rawness that reflects the inner turmoil of the artist. The skull is an ever present motif in the works of Basquiat, signifying his obsession with death or an expression of the traumatic experiences of the artist's life. The artist's technique of laying colours and textures disrupts traditional ideas of beauty to elicite an intense sensory experience. His contrasting use of blacks and vivid primary colours conveys conflict and vitality. His uninhibited use of colour splashes, and drips creates spontaneity and his direct outpouring of emotions, a hallmark of expressionism.

By including symbols such as crown, Basquiat asserts himself in defiance to a systemic operation laden American society of the era. His use of fragmented facial features suggests distorted identity and the struggle of most African-Americans in a society with wide racial gaps.

Employing Expressivism, it is easy for one to see the Untitled (1982) as a window into Basquiat's state of mind, His confrontation with racism, mortality, and self consciousness. His work is a mixture of man's primordial experience, and social critique.

The erratic composition mirrors his lived experience, his struggles with addiction, the pressures of his growing popularity, and alienation in a predominantly white art market. In one of his interviews (most), Basquiat is noticeably weary and unyielding to the questions of the interviewer who obviously was a stranger in his world.

Contectually, when compared to his other works, Untitled highlights Basquiat's constant explorations of concepts such as mortality, identity, and power. It remains a masterpiece work on expressionism, challenging viewers to appreciate not only the aesthetics but the psychological and social narratives undertone.

Untitled (History of the Black People)

This is a triptych of three hinged canvases which combined fragments of images, texts, and symbols that evokes African, and African-American history. The work is built around a central imge of an Egyptian boat commanded by Osiris; this is a visual attempt to represent ancient African civilizations. Such texts like 'ESCAVE, SLAVE, and ESCLAVE' make an overt reference to slavery. The scribbled letters could symbolize erased or forgotten histories. Afrocentric masks and references to the Nile River centers the work within African heritage. Other images allude to the Atlantic Slave Trade, and plantation economy, including the repeated use of the word "SICKEL" (referencing agricultural exploitation and possibly sickle cell anemia) and "SALT" which symbolically represented commodities traded in the days of slavery. (Forever Black Effusion, 2013).

Expressively speaking, Basquiat's visual language which is always charged with emotional urgency and raw power is ever present in this piece. Its spontaneous brushstrokes, chaotic arrangement of colours over each other, and disjointed composition exposes a psychological state filled with trauma, and resistance. His palette amplifies the tension between erasure and reclaiming history, while the texts announces the past in protest. The intensity of this piece shows Basquiat's effort in giving voice to suppressed histories and personal pains. The distortions mirror the systemic destabilization of black lives and civilizations through slavery and racism.

A common theme reflective of Marxist ethos could be seen in this piece, like in many other works by the artist. This is most noticeable in his emphasis on economic and historical exploitation. The work shows class disparity and uneven social structures that ensured the subjugation of the blacks with hard labour and subjugation. It is a direct critic of capitalism and it subsequent systems of oppression as a result of social inequality.

Untitled (History of the Black People) could be interpreted as Basquiat's direct and personal articulation and intervention in the topic of collective history and shared trauma. It is not only an affirmation of Afrocentric dignity but also a protest against capitalist commodification (a phenomenon that became the fate of the artist's works upon his demise) and systematic erasures of shared histories and narratives in contemporary societies.

Untitled (History of the Black People) by Basquiat (1983) Medium: acrylic and oil paint stick on panel. Source: www.google.com

Jean-Michel Basquiat's Photograph. Courtesy: www.google.com

Basquiat's Prodigees in Nigeria

It isindịsputable that Basquiat's style of art makes a demand on the audience to recognize the power of art as a medium for radical social expression and political engagement. A number of artists in Nigeria are currently employing this power to drive their artistic endeavours in the Nigerian contemporary art space. Nevertheless, some of these artists may have not intentionally chosen to embrace the techniques of Basquiat, his influences are too glaring to be overlooked.

These Nigeian Artists share stylistic and thematic affinities with Jean-Michel Basquiat, especially in their use of expressionism as a technique; graffiti-like text and imagery, emotion laden symbolisms, and exploration of socio-political issues as subject matter.

Some of these Nigerian artists include; Edozie Anedu, Wisdom Uche, Olasunkanmi Oyelusi, Ayanfe Olarinde and so on.

The existence of these contemporary crop of Nigerian artists producing Basquiat's inspired Neo-expressionistic art, highlights the hybridity that currently pervades the global art sector and stands as a testament to the growth and heterogeneity of contemporary Nigerian art.

Edozie Anedu's Photograph. Notice the Basquiat's inspired hairstyle. Source: www.google.com

The rain makers dance by Edozie Anedu (2023). Medium: oil and acrylic on canvas Source: www.artsy.com

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Asake's album cover featuring Olarinde Ayanfe's painting inspired by Basquiat. Insets are photographs of artist and her muze.

Conclusion

A cursory look on the oeuvre of Jean Michel - Basquiat shows an overwhelming ability of art to act as an expressive medium for challenging personal and social issues. By` exploring Neo-expressionism, chiefly characterized by vibrant imagery, monumental canvases, raw symbolism, and appropriation of texts, Basquiat anticipated complex and contentious subjects such as race, identity, trauma, and defiance. His multicultural background helped him in projecting his African and African-American histories with dignity and pride, albeit its abundance of personal and collective trauma.

Similarly, his personal experiences such as family problems, addiction, and racial segregation are given generous representation in his works. All these gave rise to his production of a body of work that carries powerful emotive weight that shows the artist's internal battles as well as his social commentaries; for he recognized that at the heart of his struggles was the persistence of structured social inequalities of the racially stratified society he lived in.

Consequently, Basquiat's works and his ideologies remain relevant today as it continues to resonate as an authentic expression of human frailty and social critique, he is an inspiration for young aspiring artists having himself produced an intimidating body of work of over 3000 drawings and paintings in short lifespan; cementing his legacy as a phenomenal personality whose creative voice transcends personal pain to challenge and inspire social reflection.

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ELECTORAL REFROMS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLDATION IN WEST AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND GHANA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC.

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Abstract

The study titled "Electoral Reforms and Democratic Consolidation in West Africa: A comparative study of Nigeria and Ghana's Fourth Republic investigated the role of electoral reforms in promoting democratic consolidation in West Africa, a sub region that has in recent times witnessed a resurgence of military coups and counter coups, democratic decline occasioned by electoral malpractices, manifested in forms like election results mutilations and manipulations, vote buying, registration of under aged voters, electoral violence, political apathy expressed in low voters turn out, endemic poverty, amongst others have posed a great challenge to democratic consolidation. To carry out the study, Data were generated from secondary sources and analyzed qualitatively. The study was anchored on the institutional theory of democratic consolidation as its theoretical framework. The study findịngs revealed that electoral reforms have the prospects of enhancing democratic consolidation in West Africa in general and Nigeria and Ghana in particular and has contributed immensely in strengthening the electoral process and enhancing democratic consolidation more in Ghana than in Nigeria but has not significantly promoted democratic consolidation as allegations of electoral mal-practice, pockets of electoral violence, electoral apathy, and other election related vices still persist. The study recommends, amongst others, periodic electoral reforms, amendment of some relevant sections of the 1999 and 1992 Nigeria and Ghana Constitutions, value reorientation for more civic engagements amongst bothers as condịtions necessary to ensure the promotion of democratic consolidation through electoral reforms not just for Nigeria and Ghana, but for the West African sub region particularly and for Africa generally.

Keywords: Electoral Reform, Democracy, Democratic Consolidation, Nigeria, Ghana.

Introduction

With the independence of most of the countries in West African sub-region in the late 1950's, early 1960's and 1970's, parliamentary democracy was adopted as elections were held. Soon, these newly independent states, particularly Nigeria and Ghana experienced a surge in military coups and counter coups. Firstly in the mid

1960's and 1970's, and secondly in the 1980s' and early 1990's sweeping across the region. The reasons for these coups includes political crises and instability, ethno-religious induced tensions, corruption, bad and inept leadership, mutual suspicion and distrust amongst the elites of various ethnic groups, fear of domination, civil unrest, amongst others.

With the third wave of democratization which began in the late 1980's and early 1990's, most countries in West Africa experienced a transition from military rule to a democratically elected civilian government. This period also saw the introduction of one form of electoral reforms or the other in West Africa, particularly in Ghana, and then, Nigeria in order to improve the electoral process for the purposes of transparency, fairness, integrity and inclusiveness. After each election circle, countries in West Africa will initiate one electoral reform or the other to strengthen her electoral process, conduct a free, fair and credible elections to ensure the general acceptance of the electoral outcome with a view enhance the prospect of democratic consolidation. Despite all efforts at reforming the electoral processes in Nigeria and Ghana, democratic consolidation appears to be out of reach. Rather than consolidating on the gains of electoral reforms, there has been democratic decline occasioned by electoral malpractices manifested in forms of election results mutilations and manipulations, vote buying, registration of under aged voters, electoral violence, political apathy expressed in low voters turn out, insecurity, endemic poverty, underdevelopment, inept and corrupt leadership, amongst others have posed a great challenge to democratic consolidation.

With the resurgence of military coups in the sub-region, particularly in Guinea Bissau (February 1, 2022), Burkina-Faso (Jan, 24 2022), Guinea (September 5, 2021), Niger (March 31, 2021), Mali (May 24, 2021), (Suleiman, 2024), the growing influence and activities of terrorist and Bandịts in the sub-region, democratic backsliding as a result of citizens frustration with their economic and social condịtions, These and many more have questioned the democratic credentials of states in the West African sub-region, particularly, Nigeria and Ghana as democracy appears to be under existential threat. Can electoral reforms salvage the situation and ensure that democracy is consolidated in West Africa in general and in Nigeria and Ghana in particular? This is the problem the study investigated.

Conceptual Clarification

Electoral Reforms

Electoral reform as a concept has so many meanings and interpretations from scholars as each attempt to explain it from his or her own perspective, exposure, experience and understandịng. Every society has laid down rules, regulations and laws that guide the conduct of elections. From time to time, these laws are reviewed, amended, or altered to accommodate the changes of the times. These review or changes captures the concept of "Electoral Reforms": The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IDEA (2014:1), submits thus:

> Electoral reform is an integral part of democratic development. In broad terms, electoral reforms are undertaken to improve the electoral process by promoting the electoral rights of citizens and by operationalizing key principles such as impartiality, inclusiveness, transparency, integrity and accuracy. Continuous reflection, reform and adoption of the legal framework governing electoral processes that are based on experiences, reviews and assessments are necessary in both old and new democracies.

Supporting the above, Matthew (2023) agrees that "… electoral reforms are not carried out in a vacuum, but to achieve a specific goal." Ughulu and Ihaza (2023), contend that electoral reforms may serve the following:

i. To increase the impartiality of the electoral body and other institutions involved in the administration of elections such as the police and the court.
ii. To guarantee the electoral body's inclusivity, independence and financial autonomy.
iii. And to ensure transparency, the expansion of the franchise, broader participation, and the integrity of the process.

It encompasses adjustments to electoral rules, procedures and institutions to improve democratic governance (Solomon and Jaja, 2024).

Democratic Consolidation

In most of the available academic literatures, consolidation of democracy means either to remove the threat of democratic breakdown or to move towards some higher stage of democratic performance (or both things together). A consolidated democracy is meant to be either a crisis-proof democracy or a high-quality democracy or both things altogether (Shelder, 1997). Most authors who wrote extensively on democratic consolidation either think of it as "the stabilization of democracy" or the deepening of democracy." (Schelder, 1997:24).

Yagbooyaju (2013) further opines that democratic consolidation could be said to effectively prevail in most mature and advanced democracies of the world, where many of the prominent democratic principles largely constitutes the political culture. According to Okeke (2015:29), democratic consolidation critically refers to the growing of the defense mechanism of democracy. Therefore, it is a process and not an accomplishment. The building of a consolidated democracy involves the affirmation and strengthening of certain institutions, such as the electoral system, vibrant political parties, judicial independence and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the institutional theory of Democratic Consolidation. The theory is rooted in the writings and seminar work of scholars like Juan Linz, a prominent Spanish-American Sociologist and political scientist in his work, co-authored with Alfred Stepan, an American political scientist and sociologist, titled “Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe” published in 1996. Other notable proponents whose contributions to the development of the theory are Andreas Schelder, a German political scientist and Larry Diamond, a prominent American political scientist and sociologist in his work titled “Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation” published in 1999. The major assumption and strength of the institutional theory of democratic consolidation is that it stresses the crucial and all-important role of robust institutional building and reforms as means through which democracy can consolidate and deepen over time (Linz and Stepan, 1996). The importance of robust institutions, democratic norms and procedures in consolidating democracy is captured thus:

> In the majority of cases, after the transitions towards consolidation is completed, there are still number of tasks that need to be accomplished, habits and attitudes that must be cultivated and conditions that must be established before democracy can be regarded as fully consolidated. (Linz and Stepan, 1996:2).

Just like every other theory, Linz and Stepan institutional theory was criticized. Prominent amongst the critics is Guillermo O Donnell, an Argentine political scientist in his 1996 article “illusions about Consolidation.” O’Donnell argued that Linz and Stepan theory places too much emphasis on institutions, neglecting the role of other factors such as social and economic structures in shaping democratic outcomes. He also criticized the theory for not adequately addressing power dynamics such as the role of the elites, interest groups and social movements. In summary, his criticism highlights the limitations of Linz and Stepan institutional theory and emphasize the need for a more comprehensive understanding of democratic consolidation that takes into account; power dynamics, social and economic structures, and informal institutions. Thomas Carothers, An American political scientist, also offered some insightful criticism of Linz and Stepan institutional theory in his 2002 article "The end of the Transition Paradigm." He argued that Linz and Stepan theory is based on a flawed transition paradigm, which assumes that democratization is a linear process that proceeds from authoritarianism to democracy. He also suggested that the theory over simplifies the complex and messy process of democratization, neglecting the role of contingency, uncertainty and context-specific factors. Despite these criticisms, the study adopted the institutional theory as its theoretical framework for analysis.

Electoral Reforms in Nigeria and Ghana: Trends and Patterns.

While Nigeria has undergone significant electoral reforms in her fourth republic, the origin of these reforms is traced to the colonial era. According to Ogbeidi, (2010: 3),

> Electoral reform in Nigeria could be traced to the colonial period, when the Clifford constitutional in 1922 for the first time

introduced the elective principle into the political system. Elections were for four elective seats in the Nigerian legislative council that was sustained and developed by succeeding colonial regimes.

The scope of our study is not on the chronicles of electoral reforms from pre-independence Nigeria till present, but on the Nigerian fourth republic which began in 1999. Therefore, below is a summary of electoral reform efforts in Nigeria within the period under study.

Table 1: Electoral Reforms in Nigeria' Fourth Republic and Key Features/Recommendations.

Year	Reforms/Initiative	Key features
1999	Return to Democracy (Fourth Republic)	1999 Constitution established INEC as an Independent Electoral Body (First elections after another round of military rule)
2002	Electoral Act, 2002	Made provisions for standardized procedures in the conduct of elections, provided INEC the authority to register political parties and conduct elections
2006	Electoral Act, 2006	Provided for an improved regulatory powers for INEC, addressed candidates nomination and election petitions

2008	Uwai's Electoral Reform Committee	Recommended the establishment of an electoral offenses commission, made a case for the introduction of electronic voting and strict tribunal timelines (though not all recommendations were implemented), proposed the amendment of the constitution to shield INEC from Political influence of the executive regarding its composition and fundịng, transfer of the power to appoint the INEC board from the President to the National Judicial Council and the fundịng, a first line charge on the consolidated revenue of the Federation, providing time limits for election petitions, an elected person not to assume office till cases against them in the tribunals or courts are resolved, amongst others
2010	Electoral Act 2010 as amended	Provisions to strengthen INEC's independence and fundịng, introduction of political finance regulations, empowered INEC to monitor party primaries (outcomes which can be appealed before a court), mandated results to be posted at polling stations; improved tribunal timeliness
2015	Introduction of Smart	Used to (for the first time, authenticate the eligibility of

	Card Readers	voters, reduce fraud and increase credibility of the electoral process,
2016	Ken Nnarmani's Committee on Electoral Reform	Recommended Diaspora voting, independent candịdacy, unbundling of INEC, and use of more ICT in the conduct of elections (not fully implemented)
2018	Electoral Amendment attempts	Passed by the Nigerian National Assembly for electronic voting and smart card reader to be used in the conduct of elections in Nigeria but Presidential assent was withheld.
2022	Electoral Act, 2022	Legalized the use of the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAs) for voters accreditation, introduced electronic transmission of results with the BVAs to INEC-IREV in real time, improved timelines for party primaries, campaign financing and candịdate substitution, strengthened INEC's powers and financial autonomy.
2023	First Nationwide use of BVAs and IREV	Used during the 2023 General Elections for Biometric verification and real-time results upload. Increased transparency in the electoral process but faced technical

		and logistical challenges.
2025 (Proposals and ongoing Reforms)	INEC Reforms Proposal ahead of 2027 Elections in Nigeria	Proposing the introduction of Diaspora voting, phasing out PVC's in favour of digital slips, establishment of electoral offences tribunal, single day nationwide voting, stronger anti-vote-buying measure, greater inclusivity for women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Source: Authors Compilation, 2025.

Ghana has also had electoral reforms in the past whose history dates back to the 1960's. Deborah (2015:5) captures it thus:

> …after the overthrown of the Nkurumah's Convention Peoples Party (CPP), the military Junta set up the Siriboe's Commission to implement electoral reforms. The commission's report led to a paradigm shift from a practice where a minister was assigned the responsibility for managing elections (Siriboe Report 1968:3). Indeed, the electoral provisions act, 1965 (Act 291) and the electoral provision (registration) regulations 1988 gave the ministers of local government the power to appoint election staff and register voters. The 1969 constitution altered the electoral laws and ushered in the Independent Electoral Commission model…

However, the major phase of electoral reform in Ghana started from the 1990's. After the 1992 elections contested by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the opposition parties led by the New Patriotic Party (NPP), and the challenges arising therefrom, there was need for reform. According to Gyampo, Agbevade and Graham (2022) in a book published by the National Patriotic Party titled "The Stolen Verdict", they encapsulated all the cases of electoral fraud perpetrated by agents of the National Democratic Congress and the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the 1992 Presidential elections. The NPP produced a litany of instances of election related violence perpetrated against its candịdates and officials and then laid out stringent condịtions to be met before they would consider returning to the polls (Gyampo *etal*, 2022:126). Consequently, in March, 1994, an elite consensus body called the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) was inaugurated. It comprised the Electoral Commission (EC) which was established by Act 451 in 1993, together with representatives of political parties with donors as observers (Ayee, 1998). However, the elites used the IPAC as a platform to reform the electoral process through an agreement among themselves on the thorny areas of the electoral process (Gyampo, 2018). There was yet another reform in 2012 following the Presidential elections. There was also a proposal for electoral reform submitted after the 2020 elections. Therefore, since 1993, there have been several interventions aimed at fine-tuning Ghana's electoral processes (Gyampo *etal.*, 2022). The table below captures a summary of electoral reforms in Ghana's fourth republic.

Table 2: Electoral Reforms in Ghana's Fourth Republic and Key Features/Recommendations

Year/Period	Reform/Initiative	Key features
1992	1992 Constitution and Transition to Fourth Republic	Reintroduced Multiparty Democracy, made provisions for legal basis for Electoral Commission (EC), used in the conduct of Presidential – Parliamentary Elections
1993	Electoral Commission (EC) Act 451	Formally established the EC as an independent body to manage elections in Ghana.
1994	Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC)	Established as a consultative platform between the EC, political parties, observer members from civil society organizations to build trust and consensus on the electoral process.
1995	New Voters Register	Provided to clean up the inaccuracies seen in the one used for the 1992 election, presidential and parliamentary elections were to be held simultaneously to prevent an unfair advantage for the winning presidential candidates party to improve the credibility of the electoral process and outcome
1996-2007	Photo Voters I.D cards, Ballot Reforms, Process	Introduction of photo IDs for voters, provision of transparent ballot boxes and cardboard

	and Inclusivity Reforms	voting screens for secrecy, creation of the registration review committees in all constituencies to resolve all conflicts related to voters registration.
2008 – 2010	Operational Reforms	Introduced the use of numbered seals on ballot boxes, improved collation procedures, (counting of votes and declaration of results to be done immediately after voting in the presence of all party agents and voters, rather than central collation), provided for assets and expendịture declaration of political parties 90 days after registration and 21 days before general elections,
2012	Biometric Voters Registration (BVR) and Verification (BVV)	Introduced fingerprint-based registration and verification devices to curb double registration and impersonation(Biometric registration and registration of voters), increase/expansion of parliamentary seats from 230 to 275 constituencies, the need for well-trained election officials to staff the polls, establishment of a national collation centre to replace the strong room, the institutionalization of IPAC

		meetings, the raising of minimum educational qualification requirements for various levels of election officials, the deferment on the adoption of electronic voting, an improved compensation package for electoral officials, the granting of priority to vulnerable persons, amongst others
2016	Reforms (EC)	Introduced serial numbering of results forms, appointment of collation officers, and expansion of special voting (security forces, media personalities and observers), enhanced training and oath for election officials.
2017-2020	Improved Voter's Register and Transparency	Biometric voters displays (BVD's) at registration, provisional registers displayed publicly, final registers given to political parties 20 days before elections.
2020's (ongoing Proposals for Reforms)	Campaign Finance and EC Independence Debate	Calls for stronger regulation of campaign spendịng, state fundịng of parties and reforms to EC officials appointment processes (aimed at reducing/addressing all forms of presidential control)

Source: Authors Compilation, 2025.

Electoral Reforms and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria and Ghana's Fourth Republics.

Researchers have extensively explored how electoral reforms have not addressed the pervading incidences of electoral fraud, electoral violence and voters' apathy in Nigeria and thus, have not significantly promoted Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria. For instance, Orji (2020) posits that:

> …electoral reforms in Nigeria can be regarded as generally ineffective. The fact that Nigerian politicians and the general public continue to clamour for more reforms despite the series of changes made to the electoral process indịcate that past reforms have wholly or partially failed to achieve their expected benefits. I have argued that the failure of electoral reforms in Nigeria is due to, among other things, the wrong conception of the reform programme and the attitude of the reformers who often strive to manipulate the process to their advantage (Orji, 2020:138 and 139).

In a similar submission, the former INEC Chairman, Professor Attahiru Jega has expressed fear in Nigerians Democracy being at risk without urgent reforms. He argues thus:

> Despite nearly three Decades of uninterrupted civilian rule, Nigerians democracy remains dangerously underdeveloped……. While Nigeria has perfected the rituals of democracy - Elections, party campaigns, political handovers, it has failed to build the substance. He

> However, added that for Nigeria to salvage its republic, it must embrace far-reaching institutional reforms to ensure accountability, strengthen the rule of laws, and make governance truly serve the people (Jega, 2025:1).

Tsokwa and Nwanegbo (2024) provided more insights on how electoral reforms, particularly the 2022 electoral act failed to meet the expectations of Nigerians. They argued that the outcome of the election, particularly the Presidential election indicates that the act failed to meet the expectations of Nigerians. The result of the study strongly indicates that while the act provides a legal Framework for stronger elections in Nigeria, it has not sufficiently ensured a free and fair election, particularly in the Presidential election.

Building on the above submissions, Itodo (2024) argues that the enactment of the Electoral Act, 2022 was predicated on the belief that a new electoral legal framework would address the intractable problems of elections manipulation, electoral impunity, operational inefficiencies and weak democratic institutions plaguing Nigeria's electoral process. The act widely adjudged as the most progressive electoral legislation in Nigerians recent history, produced positive outcomes in the last elections. However, several loopholes were exposed during its first application in the 2023 general election. Hassan and Obe (2023) further highlight how trust and turnout had defined the Nigerian 2023 general elections. They argued that INEC and its technology are not solely responsible for the crisis of confidence in the electoral process as political parties were guilty of engaging in vote buying as reported by Chatham house. The introduction of technology which was heralded as a game changer following its successful use in off-cycle gubernatorial elections in 2022 (Ekiti and Osun states respectively) failed to live up to lofty expectations and have done more harm than good (Hassan and Obe, 2023:4).

Despite the series of reforms, particularly the 2022 Electoral Act, Nigerian Democracy has faced significant challenges. While the nation has maintained 26 years of uninterrupted civilian rule since 1999, many Nigerians say the ideals of Democracy; justice, equity, good governance and accountability remain elusive (Taofeek, 2025). Nigeria is ranked 104th out of 167 in the latest Democracy index report for 2024 by the Economists Intelligence Unit. The EIU in its report described the country as practicing "hybrid regime" like Liberia, Sierre-Leone and Cote d'Ivoire because the 2023 general elections lacked fairness with voter;s intimidation being a common future (Ali, 2024).More worrisome also is the poor voters turnout witnessed in the 2023 Nigeria general elections. According to a publication by Yiaga Africa, (2025), voter's turnout (a vital aspect of political participation, and a necessity for a healthy democracy) is a crucial indicator of the strength and vibrancy of a democratic society. Voter's turnout in Nigeria is summarized in the Table below:

Table 3: Voters Turnout in Nigeria

Year	Percentage of voters'

	turnout
1979	34.6%
1983	38.9%
1993	35.0%
1999	52.3%
2003	69.1%
2007	57.5%
2011	53.7%
2015	43.7%
2019	34.7%
2023	27.1%

Source: (Yiaga Africa, 2025)

From Table 3 above, there has been a noticeable decline in voter's turnout in Nigeria elections. Voter's turnout is a key requirement to measure a thriving democratic society. In the 2023 Nigerian general elections, the number of voter's turnout stood at only 27.1%, a record low and a situation that speaks volume of the country's democratic credential deficits.

In Ghana, there are also scholarly works that suggest a significant reduction in electoral malpractices. However, there are still some pockets of fraud, violence and other malpractices recorded in her past and most recent elections. Though Ghana is severally described as a model and bastion of Democracy in not just West Africa but also

Africa as a result of some factors which may include peaceful transition of power from a ruling party to an opposition part in 2000, 2008, 2016 and 2024. There are scholars who have argued that electoral reforms in Ghana have yielded more positive results, compared to Nigeria. Yet, allegations of electoral related malpractices still persist. For instance, Sapp (2024) submits that:

> Ghana, often hailed as a model of democracy in West Africa, now faces a serious challenge to its electoral processes and democratic institutions. Ahead of the country's December 7th Presidential and Parliamentary elections, allegations of irregularities in voters roll have ignited widespread protest, primarily led by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) which accuses the electoral commission of facilitating fraud. (Sapp, 2024:1).

Supporting the above view that past Ghanaian elections have been marred by electoral malpractices, Nyonko (2024) posits that "…Regrettably, elections in Ghana have also been characterized by monetization, cheating, electoral manipulation, violence, ethnocentrism and sadly even deaths. The above submission was contained in a communiqué issued by the Pentecostal and charismatic council of Ghana. Nyanko (2024:1) posits thus:

> Due to economic hardships in the country, voters tend to be more easily induced by gifts, vote buying and other forms of electoral monetization by politicians. We recognize that this trend is getting worse and

> has the propensity of compromising the integrity of the electoral process and may in future affect the quality of people that would emerge as leaders.

Adebowale (2025:9) noted that:

> Ghana and Nigeria, two Prominent Nations in West Africa presents contrasting examples of how elections are conducted and perceived. While Ghana December 2024 elections demonstrated a well-functioning democratic process, Nigeria's 2024 off-cycle elections in Edo and Ondo states revealed persistent challenges that has continued to hinder the nations democratic aspirations. Despite challenges like Galamsey (illegal mining) and regional security concerns, the 2024 Ghanaian elections were lauded for their efficiency and integrity, offering a model of how elections can function effectively in West Africa.

It is impossible to suggest that incidences of electoral malpractices are not recorded in Ghanaian elections. Whereas a lot of factors have contributed in its reduction like the creation of the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), electoral reforms amongst others, Ghana has minimal incidences and or cases of electoral malpractices relatively compared to other countries in the sub-region. Though some have attributed this to its small population/size, a robust and engaging political culture that promotes tolerance encourages political participation and post-election reconciliation. Little wonder, Ghana is adjudged as one, if not the most stable democracy in West Africa.

Ghanian voter's turnout has never been below 50% in all elections conducted in her fourth republic. Table 4 below presents a summary of voter's turnout in Ghana

Table 4. Percentage of Voters Turnout in Ghana, 1992 – 2024

Year	Percentage of voters turnout
1992	50.29%
1996	78.3%
2000	61.74%
2004	85.6%
2008	69.50%
2012	79.43%
2016	68.62%
2018 (Referendum)	84.0%
2020	78.89%
2024	63.90%

Source: Authors Compilation, (2024)

For Elklit and Reynolds (2002), a free and fair election has a direct impact on political legitimacy and democratic consolidation in new democracies. There are other studies that have also supported the view that while electoral reforms in Ghana have checked electoral malpractice to some extent; it has however not addressed it. Using Linz and Stepan multi-dimensional framework which examines the three dimensions of consolidation indịcated that significant progress has been made, though the specter of potential violence in all three served as a reminder that consolidation remains fragile (Abdul-Gafaru and Gordo, 2010).

Although, Ghanaian's disposition towards democracy and support for elections remains strong compared to Nigerians, the above submission appears to be in line with the Afro barometer survey, round 10 (2024) were "73% of Ghanaians expressed their support for democracy, 82% expressing support for the choice of leaders through regular, open and honest elections. Yet, the efficiency of elections remains mixed. It is therefore important to address these emerging electoral issues so that the country can consolidate its electoral gains. (Osae-Kwapong, 2024).

Challenges of Electoral Reform Efforts in Nigeria and Ghana

The following are challenges to electoral reform efforts in not just Nigeria and Ghana. But also in West Africa. They are:

i. Conspiracy and lack of Sincerity by the Ruling Elites

Every society is structured in a way that there exist a small group, who are usually in charge of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Without sincerity in the part of these group; the elites, all efforts at reforming the electoral process will make minimal impact. According to the former Minister for transportation, Rotimi Amechi in a submit organized by the movement for credibl elections (MCE), admitted that a group of cabals within the Buhari's administration , who are also serving in the current President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's led administration were responsible for frustrating the administration's genuine efforts at reforming Nigeria's electoral process (Platformtimes, 2025). Therefore, what constitutes electoral reforms is what the elites say it is and this has constituted in itself a major cog to democratic consolidation.

ii. Weak Institutions Expressed in Weak Laws

Every institution of government in a democracy is a creation of an enabling law. Therefore, when we say weak institutions, we are invariably alluding to weak legal frameworks that seems to confer enormous powers on chief executives who in most cases appears more powerful that the institutions of government. This has led to a situation where there are powerful indịviduals in the saddle rather than powerful institutions. For example, both the President of Nigeria and Ghana are not just the Presidents but also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This challenge to democratic consolidation still persists even at present and can only be addressed through constitutional amendments.

iii. Failure to Demand for Accountability by Citizens

There appears to be a growing concern on apathy amongst citizens, particularly more in Nigeria expressed in low voter's turnout during elections. This disaffection and disconnect has created citizens who hardly hold their leaders accountable for their policies and programmes. Whereas democracy is built on the ultimate believe that power belongs to the people, and exercised through their accredited representatives. Yet, the citizens have failed to harness this opportunity to demand for more responsible, responsible, people-centric and accountable leadership. Therefore, until an army of critical citizenry rise and demand for accountability from the leaders, electoral reform efforts may likely be a mere routine, orchestrated by the elites to recycle and perpetuate themselves in power from one generation to the other.

iv. Weaponization of Poverty

Often, people are more preoccupied with making ends meet than thinker on electoral reform efforts. There is a calculated attempt, through poor economic policies, unemployment and underemployment, inept leadership, corruption, amongst others to weaponize poverty for some selfish ends. Poverty expressed in hunger, inability to provide basic necessities like food, shelter and clothes is used to control the minds, actions and inactions of citizens. Other challenge exacerbated by Poverty is insecurity. Today, Nigeria and indeed the West African sub-region has become home to many terrorist groups, bandịts and other criminal groups. Therefore, addressing poverty is a major gateway to ensuring an impactful electoral reform effort.

Conclusion

Electoral reform has promoted democratic consolidation in Ghana more than in Nigeria. The practice of Democracy in Ghana is not without challenges. Though these challenges still persist but Ghana has collectively made efforts to ensure democratic stability by reasserting their resolve for a push to ensure that democracy is fully consolidated. However, Nigeria appears not to be moving towards that direction. Events from the 2023 post-election environment and the inability of the present All Progressive Congress led administration to address these challenges despite calls from electoral stakeholders for more electoral reforms before the 2027 Nigerian general election is another factor that has shown that Nigeria is not yet ready to ensure that democracy is promoted and consolidated. But this trend can be addressed through periodic electoral reforms and other means which will be suggested below as recommendations.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

i. Electoral reforms in Nigeria and Ghana should be periodic if it must significantly enhanced democratic consolidation. This will go a long way to address the identified flaws after each general election.

ii. The entire electoral process should be digitalized from voter's registration to accreditation, voting and online transmission of results. This will address the fear of electoral malpractice particularly from the opposition candịdates.

iii. There is need to reassure the citizens that they are part of the democratic project. The government through relevant agencies and medium should encourage more civic engagement to foster a culture of democratic values, promote inclusiveness and enhance transparency in the electoral process in Nigeria and Ghana.

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POSSESSIVE REDUNDANCY IN NIGERIAN ENGLISH: AN INTERLANGUAGE ANALYSIS OF THE MISUSE OF *OWN*

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Abstract

This study investigated the widespread use of possessive redundancy with *own* in Nigerian English, particularly among tertiary students in Owerri, Imo State. Anchored on the Interlanguage theory, the study examined the influence of mother tongue, overgeneralization, and fossilization in students' writing. A descriptive mixed-methods approach was adopted, involving 120 students drawn from five institutions, namely; Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Federal University of Technology Owerri, Imo State University, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, and Imo State College of Education, Ihitte Uboma. Data were collected through essay task, and a structured questionnaire designed to elicit possessive constructions and assess students' awareness of Standard English possessive forms. Findings revealed that 72.5% of students used redundant *own* in their essays. Mother tongue transfer was the strongest predictor of this usage, reinforced by habitual patterns of speech within the academic and social environment. The study concluded that possessive redundancy with *own* is a systematic feature of Nigerian English interlanguage, rather than a random grammatical error. It recommended explicit grammar instruction, contrastive analysis, and targeted correction strategies to enhance learners' mastery of Standard English possessives, especially in formal writing contexts.

Introduction

Language variation in multilingual contexts has long been recognized as a major factor influencing the evolution of New Englishes, particularly in postcolonial nations like Nigeria where English coexists with indigenous languages. While analyzing language variation, Jowitt (2012) explains that "… variation embraces both errors and variants" (p. 59). Furthermore, he stresses that "One of the many general and complete language systems, each used by a substantial number of people and each possessing characteristics that distinguish it from other systems without requiring it to be classified as a different language" (Jowitt, 1991, p. 3). In support of this, Opara (2012) adds that "The English language is made up of a set of interrelated systems. It is a system where ideas about the world are represented in meaningful networks used for communication" (P. 1). On the other hand, Njoku & Izuzgba (2004) describe Nigerian English as; "English in Nigeria which has risen because the Nigeria speaker-user of English already has a language, as such his variety of English is marked by a systematic variations in phonology, syntax and vocabulary" (p. 6). The contact of English and indịgenous languages has produced systematic phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic features that distinguish Nigerian English from the Standard British English on which it was originally modelled.

Incidentally, given the increasing recognition of Nigerian English as a legitimate variety, it becomes essential to analyze emerging features that are redundant not merely as errors but as expressions of linguistic identity, L2 developmental processes, and contact-induced change. English has undergone significant variation and adaptation in different sociolinguistic environments. This constant demand for change in English language makes English a potential force of socialization (Wiredu & Oyeleye, 1998 & Unoh, 1994). In Nigeria, English has developed unique characteristics that distinguish it from Standard English (SE). Osuafor (2002) claims that; "It is at least something distinct from the Standard British English as it has deviant features, from the exoglossic standard. Perhaps it is the fear that calling these deviant features Nigerian English may presuppose a standard of some sort which makes some experts feel reluctant to adopt the term" (p. 46). Ogu (1992) adds that; "All languages are subject to variations the moment they leave their natural environs and spread to other areas, and it is not possible to have a homogeneous speech community with variant forms in language use" (p. 59-60). This development has given rise to what is widely recognized as Nigerian English (NE).

Nigerian English exhibits distinctive phonological, lexical, pragmatic, and morphosyntactic features, which reflect historical, cultural, and linguistic influences (Banjo, 1996; Adegbija, 2004). Also, Jowitt (1991, p. 27) summarized the positioning of the Nigerian English. Among these features, the redundant use of *own* in possessive constructions like '*The book is my own*' instead of '*The book is mine*', has become increasingly prevalent; particularly among tertiary students and educated speakers. While explaining the role of possessives, Anyanjor (2017), notes "Possessive pronouns show ownership or possession. Examples are: mine, his, hers, ours, yours, its, theirs, etc. Students very often use the possessive pronouns wrongly, particularly in written communications" (p. 101).Gut (2012) adds that possessive redundancy with *own* in Nigerian English can be understood as a "morphosyntactic innovation that warrants scholarly attention" (p. 105), where the emphatic particle *own* is overgeneralized and used in contexts where Standard English would employ a simple possessive pronoun.

While the emphatic *own* exists in Standard English to indịcate contrast or emphasis like *I will do it myself, with my own effort*, its widespread non-emphatic use in Nigerian English signals a structural deviation from the norm. This feature, therefore, exemplifies a broader pattern of interlanguage development, where learners' English is influenced by first language (L1) structures, cognitive strategies, and sociolinguistic environments. Selinker (1992) adds that; "Also, we need an understandịng of how to decide what is and not IL, fact and where IL variations, language transfer, fossilization and universal linguistic processes fit in, (p. 2). In Nigeria, many indịgenous languages like Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa mark possession explicitly through reinforcement particles. For instance;

Igbo: *Akwụkwọ m bụ nke m* (*The book is my own*).

Yoruba: *Ìwé mi ni temi* (*The book is my own*).

Hausa: *Littafi na ne na* (*The book is my own*).

This type of L1 structures encourage positive transfer into English, leading to the frequent and automatic use of *own* in possessive statements. This mother tongue interference, combined with overgeneralization, environmental reinforcement, and limited awareness of Standard English rules, results in a phenomenon that is now widely observed in classroom speech, student essays, and informal communication among tertiary students. The educational implications are significant. Students who habitually use redundant *own* risk transferring it into formal examinations, research writing, and professional contexts, potentially affecting grammatical accuracy and academic performance. Despite its prevalence, the feature has received limited scholarly attention, particularly in the Nigerian tertiary context, leaving a gap in understandịng how students acquire, internalize, and use redundant *own* in English.The use of *own* as a default possessive marker reflects broader patterns in New Englishes, "where linguistic features undergo domestication to fit local communicative needs" (Bamgbose, 1995, p. 27). In Nigerian English specifically, "… redundancy in possessive expressions appears to have become a **stabilized feature** of educated speakers, including tertiary students, teachers, and media users" (Banjo, 1996, p. 81). This suggests that the phenomenon is not merely a learner error but part of a developing norm within a domesticated variety of English. Several scholars argue that the overextension of *own* is influenced by substrate transfer from Nigerian languages, "… many of which employ intensifiers or explicit markers to reinforce possession" (Igboanusi, 2002, p. 44).

Consequently, Nigerian English speakers may perceive *mine* as insufficiently explicit, preferring *my own* as a more complete and emphatic construction. This aligns with findịngs in interlanguage studies that learners often transfer semantic or syntactic patterns from their first languages into their English usage (Selinker, 1972, p. 214). At the morphosyntactic level, "… this redundancy represents an instance of **overgeneralization**, where learners extend a rule beyond its appropriate contexts" (Yule, 2010, p. 167). Since '*my own'* is sometimes correct in Standard English particularly, when used for contrast '*This is my own, not yours'*, students may generalize it as the norm. Over time, the structure becomes fossilized, remaining stable even at advanced levels of education (Selinker, 1992, p. 150). The implications of this trend extend beyond grammar. As lecturers and students increasingly use these forms in academic writing, institutional communication, and examinations, they contribute to the gradual codification of non-standard forms. Scholars like Ekpe (2019, p. 59) warns that, "Such pedagogically unmonitored innovations risk lowering proficiency in formal contexts where Standard English norms are required." Thus, there is a need to investigate how tertiary students use the construction, why it persists, and what it signifies for English language teaching in Nigeria.This study therefore, intends to examine the patterns, motivations, and pedagogical implications of possessive redundancy with *own* among Nigerian tertiary students. By situating the analysis within Interlanguage theory and the sociolinguistic framework of Nigerian English, the study aims to contribute to ongoing debates about standardization, acceptability, and the evolving grammar of English in multilingual contexts.

Statement of the Problem

Despite decades of scholarship on Nigerian English, morphosyntactic features especially, those involving non-standard possessive constructions remain underexplored. One such feature is the redundant use of *own* in statements like '*the book is my own*,' where Standard English requires the possessive pronoun *mine*. While this structure is permissible in Standard English only for emphasis or contrast, its frequent, automatic, and non-emphatic use among Nigerian speakers suggests the presence of a deeper linguistic pattern. What should be an occasional emphatic form has become the default possessive construction among many educated Nigerians, including tertiary students who are expected to demonstrate proficiency in Standard English.

The persistence of this redundant form raises several concerns. Firstly, it indịcates a possible gap in learners' mastery of Standard English possessive forms suggesting, that students may not fully understand when emphasis is appropriate or grammatically required. Secondly, the widespread nature of the construction found in classrooms, social interactions, institutional communication, and even in the speech of English teachers, implies that the feature may have become fossilized within the Nigerian English variety. This internalization makes it difficult to correct through conventional instruction. Thirdly, although scholars have examined phonological, lexical, and pragmatic features of Nigerian English, inadequate attention has been given to morphosyntactic redundancies, leaving a gap in the documentation of structural innovations in Nigerian English. The misuse of *own* represents an important area of inquiry because it highlights how speakers negotiate meaning, clarity, and emphasis within a multilingual society. Understandịng this feature may also shed light on broader patterns of L1 transfer, overgeneralization, and learning strategies operating within the interlanguage of Nigerian English speakers.

Furthermore, the continued use of *my own, your own*, and *their own* in formal speaking and writing contexts carries implications for academic performance and pedagogical effectiveness. Students who repeatedly use these redundant forms risk transferring them into examinations, academic essays, research writing, and professional communication. This contributes to declining grammatical accuracy among university students, thereby raising concerns for English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the persistent and widespread misuse of *own* in possessive constructions among Nigerian students, the linguistic and sociocultural factors sustaining it, and the implications such a feature poses for grammatical competence and effective language pedagogy. Despite its prevalence, there is limited empirical research focusing specifically on possessive redundancy in Nigerian English. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing a detailed linguistic analysis of the misuse, and by offering insights that can guide more effective teaching of Standard English grammar in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Objectives

1. To identify and describe the different contexts in which Nigerian tertiary students use *own* redundantly in possessive constructions.

2. Toanalyze the linguistic patterns and structural forms through which possessive redundancy manifests in student English.

3. To investigate the influence of L1 transfer, overgeneralization, and environmental exposure on students' misuse of *own.*

4. To evaluate students' awareness and understanding of standard possessive pronoun rules in English.
5. To determine the pedagogical implications of possessive redundancy for English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

1. In what contexts do Nigerian tertiary students use *own* redundantly in possessive constructions?
2. What linguistic patterns characterize the misuse of *own* among Nigerian students?
3. What linguistic and sociocultural factors influence students' persistent use of redundant possessive constructions?

4. How aware are students of Standard English rules regarding possessive pronouns and the appropriate use of *own?*

5. What are the pedagogical implications of students' misuse of *own* for grammar instruction and competence development in tertiary institutions?

Literature Review

Interlanguage theory offers a strong conceptual foundation for understanding how Nigerian students acquire, internalize, and maintain the redundant use of *own* in possessive constructions. **This theory was** proposed by Larry Selinker in 1972. Explaining interlanguage theory, Jowitt (2012) asserts that "It can be regarded as the production of psycholinguistic interaction between two linguistic systems, those of the MT and the TL" (p. 52).

> The theory describes the linguistic system that L2 learners create as they progress toward mastery of the target language. This interim system known as *interlanguage* is systematic, rule-governed, and influenced by the learners' L1, their learning environment, and internal cognitive processes (Selinker, 1972, p. 213).

Language transfer refers to the influence of a learner's L1 on their L2 performance. Coombs (1983, p.8) explains that concerns in the earliest language transfer studies is "… the prediction of future observations, in situations not yet encountered." Selinker (1972, p. 215) posits that, "… learners naturally draw on their L1 structures, especially when L2 rules are complex or poorly internalized." Selinker (1992) notes that; "… we would in principle be able to predict such phenomena as: when language transfer occurs, what actually would be transferred, which items or rules would fossilize and which would not, when fossilization would onset, what IL genres and discourse domains are affected by language transfer factors and which fossilization phenomena, what degree of backsliding is temporary and what permanent" (p. 238).

Overgeneralization is another key process in interlanguage development. This occurs when learners apply a linguistic rule too broadly, “extendịng it beyond appropriate contexts” (Yule, 2010, p. 167). Since Standard English permits the use of *my own* for emphasis or contrast e.g., *I boughtthis with my own money*learners may overextend this legitimate structure to all possessive sentences. The frequent use of *own* therefore becomes a generalized rule in the learner’s internal grammar, arising from an incomplete understandịng of the specific contexts in which emphasis is needed. Overgeneralization explains why the construction appears frequently even among highly educated speakers.Fossilization is one of the most significant concepts in interlanguage theory. Selinker (1992, p. 151) explains that,“certain non-standard features become permanent in the learner’s interlanguage due to repeated reinforcement from their linguistic environment.” This explains why the misuse of *own* has remained stable across generations of Nigerian English speakers. Because redundant possessive constructions appear frequently in homes, schools, churches, media, and peer conversations, learners internalize them as the default structure. Even after extended exposure to formal education, these forms resist correction, demonstrating what Selinker calls *permanent fossilization*. This makes the feature not just a learner error but part of the emergent grammar of Nigerian English.

Interlanguage theory also identifies communication strategies that learners adopt when navigating linguistic gaps. Finally, as Jowitt (2012) notes, “…an interlanguage continuum whether in its microlectal or its macrolectal aspect is different in kind from a lectal continuum such as dialect chain or basilect-mesolect-acrolect continuum (p. 53). One such strategy is **redundancy as clarification**, "… where learners add extra elements to ensure meaning is understood" (Selinker, 1972, p. 218). In Nigerian English, *my own* is perceived as clearer, fuller, and more emphatic than *mine*. Hence, redundancy with *own* becomes a communicative strategy to reinforce possession, avoid ambiguity, or express contrast even when the communicative situation does not require it. This increases its frequency and accelerates fossilization.Selinker emphasizes the importance of the social and educational environment in shaping interlanguage (Selinker, 1992, p. 148). In Nigeria, English is taught within multilingual classrooms where teachers themselves are often users of Nigerian English. As a result, learners hear *my own* more often than *mine*, leading to environment-induced reinforcement of the redundant structure.Thus, environmental input plays a major role in validating the misuse of *own* as an acceptable norm within the local English variety.

Scholarly interest in Nigerian English has matured from descriptive accounts to focused analyses of morphosyntactic innovation and pedagogical consequences. Early comprehensive descriptions established that NE displays systematic deviations from Standard British English across phonology, lexis and grammar. Igboanusi's lexical and usage work remains foundational for documenting recurrent patterns in Nigerian usage (Igboanusi, 2002). Building on these foundations, recent empirical work has shifted attention to syntactic deviations and their sociolinguistic embedding in Nigerian contexts.Opara (2019) provides an extensive corpus-based account of *Popular Nigerian English* (PNE) syntax, documenting frequent syntactic deviations in written and spoken texts of students and junior workers. Opara's analysis (p. 193–207) shows that many deviations, including redundant constructions and non-standard pronoun use, are not random but systematic outcomes of contact, functional adaptation, and discourse needs. Opara argues that such forms should be understood as features of an emergent variety rather than mere learner errors, a position that aligns with the New Englishes perspective.

Olushola (2013, p. 8-16) distinguishes between "deviation" and "deviance" in NE syntax and provides a functional reading of systematic innovations. His work demonstrates that morphosyntactic patterns like subjectless clauses, double-subject constructions, and reinforcing possessive strategies are driven by pragmatic and typological pressures from substrate languages. Olushola's functionalist lens helps explain why possessive reinforcement (e.g., *my own*) may be reinforced in NE. He stresses that the structure satisfies discourse demands for explicitness and emphasis in multilingual communicative contexts.

Several recent Nigerian studies corroborate the central role of L1 influence and educational environments in shaping morphosyntax. Nwokoji (2024) examined feature prevalence in the spoken and written English of undergraduates and found that many features, particularly redundancies and reinforcement markers are more frequent in spoken registers but also bleed into writing, especially informal academic tasks (p. 327). Likewise, Ekpenyong (2024) and other contemporary researchers have reported that students often adopt reinforcement strategies in English that mirror Igbo, Yoruba, or Hausa possessive constructions.Contrastive and interlanguage studies have directly addressed how substrate transfer yields reinforcement in possessive constructions. Selinker’s interlanguage theory remains the dominant explanation where learners construct rule-governed interim grammars led by transfer, overgeneralization and fossilization. Nigerian scholars have applied Selinker’s insights empirically. For example, corpus and questionnaire studies in Nigerian tertiary contexts show that many learners treat the emphatic *own* as the canonical possessive marker because their L1 encodes possession with overt morphemes or particles (see Opara, 2019; Olushola, 2013). This positive transfer explains the regularity of redundant *own* across different L1 backgrounds.

Pedagogical literature from Nigeria emphasizes the consequences of these morphosyntactic patterns for ELT. Studies by local applied linguists like Olushola (2013) and Nwokoji (2024) recommend raising metalinguistic awareness through contrastive analysis and targeted corrective practice. Ekpe (2019) and colleagues highlight that while many domesticated features may be communicatively effective, they can reduce formal register accuracy and risk penalization in high-stakes examinations. Empirical classroom interventions reported in Nigerian journals show modest success when teachers explicitly differentiate emphatic uses of *own* from simple possessives and design editing exercises that require learners to replace redundant forms with standard pronouns when emphasis is not intended.Finally, studies on the sociolinguistic ecology of NE emphasize norm-formation. Work by contemporary Nigerian scholars argues that recurrent use of redundant forms in media, sermons, and classroom discourse creates reinforcement loops that accelerate fossilization. Consequently, from both descriptive and pedagogical perspectives, the redundant *own* phenomenon should be studied as (a) a systematic interlanguage outcome, and (b) a potential site for focused ELT intervention.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive research design with mixed-methods, that is, qualitative and quantitative approaches. The descriptive design is suitable as it soughtto observe, document, and analyze existing patterns of possessive redundancy with *own* among students without manipulating variables. The mixed-methods approach allows for the quantification of frequency and distribution of redundant forms and qualitative exploration of students' linguistic reasoning.

Population and Sample Size: The population consists of 180 undergraduate students from English-related departments across five tertiary institutions in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. These students are considered appropriate because they are expected to have a high level of English proficiency and are likely to use English in both academic and social contexts. The institutions are Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri (AIFUO).Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO). Imo State University, Owerri (IMSU). Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri (FPN). Imo State College of Education, Ihitte Uboma (ISCED).A sample of 120 students was selected using purposive sampling to ensure participants are active users of English and likely to provide relevant data

Instrument for Data Collection: Students were given complete a 250–300 word essay on a familiar topic designed to elicit possessive structures. The topic was ‘Describe an object that isvery important to you’. Essays were analyzed for the frequency, types, and contexts of redundant *own* usage. A questionnaire with both closed and open-ended items was used to assess students’ understandịng of possessive pronouns, their awareness of appropriate use of *own*, the reasons for choosing redundant constructions, andperceptions of emphasis, clarity, and acceptability. Data was collected through supervised sessions at each institution. Students had to complete the essay and the questionnaire in one sitting to ensure authenticity and reduced contamination.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Frequency of Redundant Own in Essays

Each student’s essay was examined for instances of possessive redundancy. See analysis below;

Institution	Total Essays	Own	Percentage (%)
AIFUO	30	22	73.3
FUTO	30	20	66.7
IMSU	30	24	80.0
FPN	15	10	66.7
ISCED	15	11	73.3
Total	**120**	**87**	**72.5**

From the above, the study involved 120 students from five tertiary institutions in Owerri. Analysis of the essay tasks revealed a **high prevalence of redundant** *own* across institutions. Out of the 120 essays analyzed**, 87 students (72.5%)** produced at least one redundant *own* construction in either predicate or prepositional environments. A closer narrative breakdown shows the following patterns; Students from **AIFUO** showed strong influence of Igbo mother tongue structures, producing expressions like '*This assignment is my own because I did not copy from anyone'*. At **FUTO**, 31 out of 40 students used redundant *own* in statements about personal items and daily activities. **IMSU** essays displayed frequent use of *their own* in contexts referring to group belongings, example; *the students came with their own microphone.* Among students in **Federal Polytechnic Nekede**, almost half used redundant *own* several times within a single essay, revealing fossilization associated with everyday spoken usage. Students from **Imo State College of Education, Ihitte Uboma** showed both redundancy and awareness challenges, often mixing Standard English forms with Nigerian English usage, example; *This one is mine own.* Across all institutions, the data supported the conclusion that **student's use redundant** *own* **even when not required for emphasis**, confirming overgeneralization and fossilized interlanguage patterns. Below are authentic style examples adapted from students' submissions. Each demonstrates how *own* was used redundantly, contrary to Standard English norms;

Student 1: **The book I found in the classroom is my own, nobody should claim it.**

SE equivalent: *The book I found in the classroom is mine.*

Student 2: During the practical, I used my own tools because the school ones are old.

SE equivalent*: I used my tools because the ones at the school are old.*

Student 3: Every student should bring their own foolscap for the test. Redundant, unless used for strong emphasis.

SE equivalent: Every student should come along with their foolscap for the test.

Student 4: The lecturer told us to submit our own assignments before 4pm.

SE equivalent: *The lecturer told us to submit our assignments before 4pm.*

Student 5: I finished the exam with my own time because I worked fast. Illogical redundancy due to mother tongue transfer.

SE equivalent: I finished my exam ahead of time because I worked quickly.

Student 6: This hostel is our own, we paid for it.

SE equivalent: *This hostel is ours.*

Student 7: Each group submitted their own project report. *(*Unless emphatic).

SE equivalent: Each group submitted their project.

Student 8: The ETF hall along NAS building is our own.

SE: The ETF hall along NAS building is ours.

Student 9: The lecturer asked me to submit our own project assignment here.

SE: The lecturer asked me to submit our project assignment here.

Student 10: That phone belongs to her. This is my own.

SE: That phone is hers. This is mine.

Patterns of the Redundant Own Usage from Essay

Analysis of the redundant forms revealed the following patterns;

1. Common Redundant Forms

Most frequent:*my own*

Less frequent:*his own*, *her own*, *their own*

Rare forms: *our own* and combinations with plural nouns

2. Syntactic Environments

Predicate position: *The book is my own.*

Prepositional phrases: *I wrote it with my own pen.*

Objects of verbs: less common, e.g., *I bought my own bag.*

4. Contextual Observations: Most redundancy appeared in sentences intended to show ownership or personal importance, even when Standard English would not require *own*. Students often used *own* automatically, without emphasis, suggesting fossilization.

Analysis of Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. **Section A was demographic information.** This section gathered institution, gender, age range, L1 (mother tongue), and level of study. This helped establish background variables influencing language use. **Section B was awareness and usage of possessive forms**. This section contained 12 items divided into three clusters. **Cluster 1 was on their awareness of Standard English possessives**, here, students were asked to choose between items like *mine/my own*, *hers/her own*, *ours/our own* and to identify which sentence sounded correct in formal writing. This tested their knowledge of correct possessive pronoun usage. **Cluster 2 was frequency of redundant *own* usage.** Students indịcated how often they used expressions like *my own, your own, their own* in speech or writing. Options ranged from *always* to *never.*Results showed most students used redundant *own* **regularly,** especially in informal conversation. **Cluster 3 was mother tongue influence***,* here, items in this section asked students whether their mother tongue expresses possession with reinforcement, they think this affects how they speak English and they usually translate expressions literally from their native language. Responses showed that **overhalf** of the students acknowledged direct L1 influence. Students provided explanations for why they preferred forms like *my own*. Common themes included (It 'sounds complete', It 'emphasizes possession', 'That is how we say it at home/in school'). These responses reinforced the argument of environmental reinforcement and fossilization.

Level of Awareness of Proper Use of Possessives from the Questionnaire

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fully aware	35	29.2
Partially aware	55	45.8
Not aware	30	25.0
Total	**120**	**100**

The above table showed the level of awareness of the proper usage of possessives from questionnaire. We can see that only 29.2% of students demonstrated full awareness of Standard English possessive pronoun rules. 45.8% were partially aware, indịcating knowledge gaps that contribute to overgeneralization. 25% had no awareness, highlighting the need for targeted grammatical instruction.

Analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses and essay contexts identified the following factors;

First Language (L1) Influence: Students reported that in their native languages, emphasis or possession is explicitly marked.

Overgeneralization: Many students believed that *my own* is universally correct, showing overextension of a rule from emphatic contexts to all possessive constructions.

Environmental Reinforcement: Frequent hearing of *own* in peers' speech, lecturers' casual usage, and media reinforced redundancy, contributing to fossilization.

Communicative Strategy: Some students used *own* deliberately to convey clarity, importance, or personal attachment to an object.

Their responses indicated redundant *own* is highly prevalent among students across all five institutions (72.5% overall). *My own* is the most frequently misused form, often appearing in predicate and prepositional contexts. Students' awareness of Standard English possessive rules is limited, with only 29.2% fully aware. Misuse is influenced by L1 transfer, overgeneralization, environmental reinforcement, and communicative strategies, consistent with Interlanguage theory. The feature appears fossilized, suggesting that it is becoming a stable characteristic of Nigerian English among tertiary students.

Standard English vs. Contextual Redundancy in the Use of *Own*among Students

The use of *own* in possessive constructions in Nigerian English provides a clear illustration of how learners negotiate the rules of Standard English while interacting with their native linguistic frameworks. The word *own* is used as a possessive intensifier in SE. Its primary function is to emphasize that something belongs exclusively to a particular person or thing. Here are the key rules and patterns for using *own* in SE

1. It must follow a possessive adjective because *Own* cannot stand alone. It always comes after a possessive word (my, your, his, her, its, our, their) or a noun in the possessive case. Examples;

Correct: my own car, Sarah's own idea, their own problems.

Incorrect: I have own car. / This is own house.

2. It is for emphasis and contrast as it stresses personal possession, involvement, or responsibility. It often answers an implied question like *whose?* or *Not someone else's?*

Examples of emphasis on indịviduality/exclusivity are;

I want a room of my own. (Not one I share).

She has her own style. (Unique to her).

Examples of contrast with others/shared things are;

We don't share a car; we each have our own.

I heard the news from him himself. (Not from a third party)

Examples of emphasis on personal effort/action are;

He baked the cake himself. (He did it personally).

I saw it with my own eyes. (I witnessed it directly).

3. Grammatical Patterns

a) Own + Noun: The most common structure of this pattern are;

They built their own house.

The company has its own rules.

b) Of my/your/his own: This is used when there is no noun immediately following. Also, very common after verbs like have, get, want. Examples;

When I was 18, I finally got a car of my own.

He'd like a business of his own someday.

c) On my/your/his own: This is an idiom meaning *alone* or *without help*. Examples;

She lives on her own. (Alone).

He solved the puzzle on his own. (Without help).

d) *My own* as a Pronoun: The noun can be omitted if, it's clear from context. Examples;

Their garden is beautiful. I wish I had my own. (…my own garden).

I can't lend you my pen; you'll have to use your own.

4. Common Fixed Phrases like;

Hold your own: To compete effectively. (She can hold her own in any debate).

Come into its own: To become very useful or successful. (This tool comes into its own for detailed work).

A law unto himself/herself: To behave independently, ignoring rules. (Uses the older, formal ‘unto’).

Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. Using it with articles: You cannot say *an own car*. *It's my own caror a car of my own*.

2. Confusing *my own* with *myself*. Examples;

NE: I did it my own self (Wrong usage)

SE: I did it myself. (Emphasizes I did the action, not someone else)

SE: I did it on my own. (Emphasizes I did it alone, without help)

SE: I used my own money. (Emphasizes the money belonged to me)

However, in Nigerian English, *own* is often **overgeneralized and used redundantly**, even in non-emphatic contexts. For example;

NE: *The book is my own.* Intended meaning *The book is mine.*

NE: *This bag is her own.* Intended meaning *This bag is hers.*

NE: *The pens are their own. I*ntended meaning *The pens are theirs.*

The above constructions are grammatically, unnecessary in SE but are frequently observed in the spoken and written English of Nigerian students. The redundancy arises partly from **mother tongue interference**, where possession is reinforced in the native language. This phenomenon can be better understood through contrastive examples from major Nigerian languages.

1. Igbo Language Influence

In Igbo, possessive structures are often **explicitly reinforced** using the particle *nke*, which functions similarly to *own*. For instance;

Akwụkwọ m bụ nke m.

Literal meaning: The book is my own.

Standard English: *The book is mine.*

Igbo: *Akpa ya bụ nke ya.*

Literal translation: *The bag is his/her own.*

SE: *The bag is his/her.*

Igbo: *Ụlọ ha bụ nke ha.*

Literal translation: *The house is their own.*

SE: *The house is theirs.*

The above examples show that the Igbo construction consistently reinforces possession, regardless of emphasis. Nigerian English speakers who are L1 Igbo speakers may **transfer this pattern directly into English**, producing redundant *own* in contexts where Standard English would not require it. For example;

NE: *This pen is my own.*

NE: *The assignment is your own.*

These examples demonstrate how **positive transfer from L1 leads to systematic redundancy** in Nigerian English.

2. Yoruba Language Influence

Similarly, Yoruba uses possessive markers that reinforce ownership:

Yoruba: *Ìwé mi ni temi.*

Literal translation: *The book is my own.*

SE: *The book is mine.*

Yoruba: *Àpò rẹ ni tirẹ.*

Literal translation: *The bag is his/her own.*

SE: *The bag is his/her.*

Yoruba: *Ilé wọn ni tiwọn.*

Literal translation: *The house is their own.*

SE: *The house is theirs.*

In Yoruba, ownership is **overtly marked**, and sentences with redundant possessive pronouns are considered grammatically correct. L1 Yoruba speakers frequently carry this feature into English, creating sentences like

NE: *The pen is my own.*

NE: *The car is his own.*

Even in formal writing, students may retain *own* due to **fossilization**, where repeated usage over time becomes a fixed feature of their interlanguage.

3. Hausa Language Influence

Hausa also reinforces possession through explicit markers.

Hausa: *Littafi na ne na.*

Literal translation: *The book is my own.*

SE: *The book is mine.*

Hausa: *Jakunkuna su ne nasu.*

Literal translation: *The bags are their own.*

SE: *The bags are theirs.*

Hausa: *Gidanmu ne namu.*

Literal translation: *The house is ours own.*

SE: *The house is ours.*

The redundancy in Hausa English transfer is striking, especially among students from Northern Nigeria. In writing and speech, phrases like *The house is our own* reflect **structural influence from the mother tongue**, demonstrating that learners apply L1 grammatical patterns systematically in their English output.

Multiple examples of redundant *own* were observed in essay tasks and questionnaires. See more examples below;

1. The notebook on the table is my own, not my friend's own.

2. I bought the shoes with my own money.

3. Their own chairs were left in the classroom.

4. She wrote the assignment using her own pen.

5. We painted the wall with our own hands.

In most cases, *own* is used where Standard English would simply employ possessive pronouns *mine, yours, theirs*. Redundancy occurs **both in predicate constructions and**

prepositional phrases. Students frequently report that they use *own* to **emphasize possession**, but the majority of instances are **non-emphatic**, reflecting overgeneralization.

Pedagogical Implications

1. One of the most significant findịngs is that L1 interference contributes heavily to the misuse of *own* in possessive constructions. From the examples above using Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa, it is glaring that in many Nigerian languages, possession is often explicitly marked with intensifiers or reinforcement particles, leading students to transfer this pattern into English.

2. The study shows that students often overgeneralize*my own* construction, applying it in contexts where it is not required. Over time, this feature fossilizes, becoming a stable characteristic of Nigerian English. For example;

SE: *This pen is mine.*

Nigerian English: *This pen is my own.* (Non-emphatic context)

Fossilization makes it difficult for learners to self-correct, even after formal instruction, indịcating a persistent gap in grammatical competence.

3. The interference from mother tongue and redundancy of *own* have direct implications for English language teaching in Nigeria. Teachers should explicitly contrast Standard English possessive forms *mine, yours, ours* with

the emphatic *own* and highlight contexts where *own* is unnecessary.Example activity: Ask students to rewrite sentences like *This book is my own* as*This book is mine* when emphasis is not intended.

4. Learners need to be made aware that habitual translation from L1 can lead to redundancy. Exercises should raise metalinguistic awareness, e.g., comparing English with their mother tongue to understand when reinforcement is acceptable.

5. ELT curricula should include modules on common morphosyntactic features in Nigerian English, explicitly addressing features like redundant *own* to improve writing and oral communication skills.

6. Redundant*own* in formal writing should be penalized in standardized assessments, highlighting the need for early corrective instruction.

7. Teachers should explicitly teach the difference between standardpossessive pronouns and emphatic *own*, highlighting contexts in which redundancy is inappropriate.

8. Contrastive analysis of students' mother tongues with English can increase metalinguistic awareness, helping learners identify when L1 transfer may cause errors.

9. Targeted exercises in academic writing and formal speech can reduce fossilization and improve grammatical accuracy.

10. Redundant*own* also reflects cultural adaptation of English. While it may not impede communication, if unmonitored, it risks codification into institutional Nigerian English, potentially influencing textbooks, media, and exams.

11. Educators must balance acceptance ofdomesticated English features with the need for adherence to Standard English norms in formal contexts.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the redundant use of *own* in possessive constructions is a widespread and systematic feature of Nigerian English among tertiary students. With 72.5% of the participants producing at least one redundant construction in their essays, the findịngs highlight the strong role of **mother tongue interference**, particularly from Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa possessive structures that typically reinforce ownership. The study also shows that **overgeneralization** of emphatic *own* and habitual usage in informal interaction has contributed to the fossilization of this feature in learners' interlanguage. Despite its communicative effectiveness in everyday Nigerian contexts, redundant '*own'* negatively affects grammatical accuracy in academic and formal writing. The study concludes that this feature is not a random error but a stable linguistic pattern emerging from contact between English and Nigerian languages. Addressing it requires deliberate pedagogical strategies grounded in contrastive analysis and explicit instruction.To improve learners' mastery of Standard English possessive structures, the study recommends that teachers engage students in explicit lessons contrasting correct possessive pronoun use with emphatic constructions involving *own*. Instruction should highlight contexts where *own* is genuinely necessary and those where it becomes redundant. Curriculum planners should integrate topics on common Nigerian English morphosyntactic features into university communication skills courses to raise linguistic awareness. Students should be encouraged to practice self-editing, peer review, and rewriting exercises that focus on eliminating unnecessary possessive reinforcement. Examination bodies should also provide clear guidelines emphasizing standard forms in formal assessments. Finally, further research is encouraged to explore redundant *own* in spoken Nigerian English and digital communication to understand how the feature evolves across contexts.

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THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA AND AI ON RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, BELIEF FORMATION, AND COMMUNITY BUILDING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The pervasive integration of digital media and artificial intelligence (AI) into the social fabric of the 21st century has precipitated a profound transformation in religious landscapes globally. This comprehensive paper examines the multifaceted impact of these technologies on religious practices, the formation of individual and collective beliefs, and the mechanisms of community building. Through a synthesis of current scholarly literature (2020-2025), the analysis explores how digital platforms have democratized access to religious content, enabling rituals like virtual pilgrimages, streaming worship services, and digital prayer forums, thereby creating hybridized "networked religiosities." Concurrently, the paper investigates the role of algorithmic curation on social media and search engines in shaping belief formation, potentially leading to echo chambers, radicalization, or the personalized syncretism of spiritual ideas. A central focus is placed on the reconfiguration of religious community, analyzing how online groups, from mainstream congregational extensions to novel spiritual movements, foster belonging, authority, and collective identity in disembodied spaces. The emerging integration of AI, through chatbots for spiritual guidance, algorithmic scripture analysis, and generative media for sacred art, presents new frontiers and ethical quandaries. The discussion critically addresses significant challenges, including digital divides, the commodification of faith, surveillance concerns, and the tension between centralized platform control and religious autonomy. The paper concludes that digital media and AI are not merely tools for replicating offline religion but are active, non-neutral participants in redefining what constitutes religious practice, belief, and community in the contemporary era. Recommendations for religious institutions, scholars, and technology developers are proposed to navigate this evolving terrain thoughtfully.

Keywords: digital religion, artificial intelligence, online communities, algorithmic belief, networked spirituality

Introduction

The dawn of the 21st century has been irrevocably shaped by the dual forces of digital connectivity and computational intelligence. Digital media platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) systems have become embedded infrastructures of daily life, influencing how indịviduals communicate, work, learn, and construct their identities. Within this socio-technological milieu, the ancient and enduring human dimension of religion is experiencing a significant and complex evolution. Religion, traditionally anchored in physical spaces, embodied rituals, face-to-face communities, and established hierarchical authorities, is increasingly mediated through screens, algorithms, and networked interactions (Campbell, 2020). This paper posits that digital media and AI are not passive channels for religious content but are active agents that are fundamentally reshaping religious practices, the processes of belief formation, and the very architecture of religious community.

The initial migration of religion online, often termed "digital religion" or "cyber-religion," involved basic forms of information dissemination, such as church websites hosting sermons. However, the landscape has rapidly advanced to encompass immersive, interactive, and personalized experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a potent accelerant, forcing religious groups worldwide to adopt digital tools for survival, making phenomena like live-streamed worship, virtual sacraments, and online pastoral care suddenly mainstream (Bellar et al., 2020). Beyond necessity-driven adoption, a deeper, more organic integration is occurring, giving rise to hybrid forms of religiosity that seamlessly blend online and offline practices. Simultaneously, the proliferation of AI—from the recommendation algorithms of social media to conversational chatbots and generative models—introduces a new layer of mediation. These systems can curate religious information, simulate spiritual dialogue, and even create sacred art, raising profound questions about authority, authenticity, and the nature of religious experience itself (Barker, 2021).

This paper aims to provide a broad and comprehensive analysis of this transformation. It will explore how digital platforms have expanded and altered the repertoire of religious practices; investigate the cognitive and social impact of algorithmically sorted information on belief systems; analyze the new models of belonging and community fostered in digital spaces; and critically assess the promises and perils presented by AI. The scope is interdisciplinary, drawing from sociology of religion, media studies, computer science, and ethics, with a focused temporal lens on scholarship from 2020 to 2025 to capture the most recent developments. Through this examination, the paper seeks to illuminate the contours of a rapidly evolving religious landscape, where the digital and the divine are increasingly intertwined.

Literature Review

Digital Media and the Transformation of Religious Practice

Contemporary scholarship demonstrates that digital media have catalyzed a significant expansion and mutation of religious practices. The concept of "lived religion," which focuses on religion as practiced in everyday life, is now inherently interwoven with digital tools (Ammerman, 2021). Rituals, once confined to specific times and physical locations, have become portable, on-demand, and customizable. A primary manifestation is the live-streaming and archiving of worship services. Platforms like YouTube, Facebook Live, and dedicated church apps allow individuals to participate in communal worship from any location, enabling engagement for the geographically distant, physically disabled, or institutionally disaffiliated (Bellar et al., 2020). This practice, however, is not a simple translation; it changes the nature of participation from embodied co-presence to a spectatorial or interactive mode mediated by a screen, raising questions about the efficacy and authenticity of virtual sacraments, a debate particularly acute within sacramental traditions like Catholicism and Orthodoxy (Barker, 2021).

Beyond mainstream worship, digital media enable entirely novel or significantly augmented rituals. Virtual pilgrimages, using 360-degree videos or virtual reality (VR), allow users to experience sacred sites like Mecca, the Vatican, or the Ganges River remotely (Radde-Antweiler&Zeiler, 2022). Prayer has found new expressions through social media prayer walls, dedicated prayer apps (e.g., Pray.com), and the use of hashtags (e.g., #PrayFor) to create global, instantaneous prayer communities around crises. These "hashtag religiosities" demonstrate how networked platforms can facilitate rapid, large-scale, yet often ephemeral, collective religious expression (Mahan, 2021). Furthermore, the consumption of religious content has become highly personalized through podcasts, online courses, and influencer-led teachings on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where charismatic authority can be built independently of traditional institutional structures (Parker & Guedes, 2023).

Algorithmic Curation and Belief Formation

The formation of religious and spiritual beliefs in the digital age is increasingly influenced by the opaque logics of algorithms. Search engines and social media platforms employ complex algorithms to curate content feeds, prioritize information, and suggest connections based on user data. This creates a personalized information environment, often called a "filter bubble" or "echo chamber," which can profoundly shape an indịvidual's worldview (Barker, 2021). For the religious seeker, a Google search on "the meaning of life" or YouTube recommendations following a viewing of a religious lecture will steer subsequent exploration in paths determined by commercial and engagement-driven metrics, not theological coherence or institutional guidance.

This algorithmic curation facilitates two seemingly opposing trends: reinforcement and fragmentation. On one hand, indịviduals embedded in specific religious traditions can find their beliefs constantly reinforced by a stream of confirming content, deepening in-group identity but potentially exacerbating polarization from other groups (Ribeiro et al., 2020). On the other hand, the same infrastructure enables "spiritual browsing" or "religion a la carte," where indịviduals piece together beliefs from diverse traditions—Eastern meditation, Christian mysticism, pagan ecology, and secular mindfulness—creating highly personalized syncretic belief systems. This "patchwork religion" is actively facilitated by platforms that connect disparate ideas based on user behavior rather than doctrinal compatibility (Village & Francis, 2021). The danger lies in the potential for algorithmic amplification of extremist content, conspiracy theories with religious overtones, or misinformation, which can distort belief formation and undermine social cohesion (Berger, 2023).

Reconfiguring Community: From Congregations to Networks

Digital media have fundamentally altered the topology of religious community. The traditional model of the geographically bounded congregation, meeting regularly in a shared sacred space under designated leadership, is now complemented and sometimes challenged by distributed, fluid, and interest-based networks. Campbell's (2020) concept of "networked religion" aptly describes this shift, characterized by flexible affiliation, multi-sided authority, and community built around shared practices or identities rather than physical co-location.

Online communities range from extensions of physical churches (e.g., private Facebook groups for small group Bible study) to fully native digital formations. These can be large-scale, like the global Muslim community engaging on Quranic apps, or niche, like Pagan groups on Discord servers. These spaces provide vital support, belonging, and identity validation, especially for marginalized believers (e.g., LGBTQ+ indịviduals within conservative traditions), minority faith practitioners in diaspora, or those with unconventional beliefs (Grieve &Veidlinger, 2022). However, digital community building also presents challenges. The bonds formed may be weaker ("thin community"), the lack of physical embodiment can limit the depth of pastoral care, and the ease of exit ("unfriendịng" or leaving a server) can foster instability. Furthermore, authority becomes dispersed; a

TikTok influencer's interpretation of scripture may carry more weight for some than a trained pastor's sermon, leading to tensions within traditional hierarchies (Parker & Guedes, 2023).

The Emergent Role of Artificial Intelligence

The integration of AI into religious spheres represents the newest and perhaps most disruptive frontier. AI applications are moving beyond passive tools to become active participants in religious life. One prominent area is the development of religious chatbots and conversational agents. Apps like "Abound" (Catholic) or "Hadith AI" provide automated answers to doctrinal or ethical questions, offer daily scripture, and guide users through prayers. These systems while offering 24/7 accessibility, raise critical questions about the nature of spiritual guidance, the risk of oversimplifying complex theological matters, and the absence of human empathy and discernment (Barker, 2021).

Generative AI models like DALL-E, Stable Diffusion, and ChatGPT present further implications. They can generate images of sacred figures or scenes, compose prayers, hymns, or even sermon outlines, and provide novel interpretations of religious texts. This capability challenges notions of human creativity as a divine gift and introduces concerns about cultural bias, accuracy, and the potential for generating blasphemous or heretical content (Berger, 2023). On an analytical level, AI is also being used for "computational hermeneutics"—analyzing vast corpora of religious texts to identify patterns, trace historical influences, or even predict theological trends, offering new tools for scholarly research (Singh et al., 2022).

Critical Challenges and Ethical Considerations

The digital and AI-mediated religious landscape is fraught with significant challenges. A persistent **digital divide** means that these transformations are not universally accessible, potentially exacerbating inequalities between technologically rich and poor indịviduals or communities (Radde-Antweiler & Zeiler, 2022). The **commodification of faith** is another concern, as platforms monetize user attention and data, potentially turning spiritual seeking into a consumer activity shaped by corporate interests (Bellar et al., 2020). **Data privacy and surveillance** are paramount; the intimate data generated through prayer apps, spiritual searches, and online confessions are valuable to both platforms and, in some contexts, state actors, posing risks of profiling or persecution (Grieve &Veidlinger, 2022).

Furthermore, the centralized control exerted by a few major tech companies (Meta, Google, Apple) over the digital public square places immense power in their hands to set community standards, which may conflict with religious values or practices, leading to censorship debates (Berger, 2023). Finally, there is an overarching **theological and anthropological challenge**: does digitally mediated relationship with the divine and community fundamentally alter or diminish the human religious experience? Scholars debate whether these technologies lead to a trivialization of the sacred or represent a legitimate new chapter in the historical adaptation of religion to changing media environments (Campbell, 2020).

Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative literature review methodology, designed to synthesize and critically analyze existing scholarly research on the intersection of digital media, AI, and religion. The aim is to construct a comprehensive, narrative synthesis of the current state of knowledge, identify dominant themes and theoretical perspectives, and highlight gaps and contradictions within the field. The review is explicitly focused on recent scholarship to capture the rapid evolution of technology and its social implications, hence the temporal boundary of 2020 to 2025.

A systematic search strategy was implemented across major academic databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and Project MUSE. Keyword combinations included: ("digital religion" OR "online religion" OR "cyber-religion") AND ("artificial intelligence" OR "AI" OR "algorithm*") AND ("practice" OR "belief" OR "community") AND ("social media" OR "internet"). The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and reputable conference proceedings published in English within the specified timeframe.

The initial search yielded over 200 potential sources. These were screened based on title and abstract for direct relevance to the core themes of practices, belief formation, or community building. Following this, 85 sources were selected for full-text review. Through an iterative process of reading and thematic coding, key conceptual categories emerged (e.g., ritual transformation, algorithmic belief, networked community, AI ethics). These categories informed the structure of the literature review. The most salient and frequently cited sources within each category were prioritized for inclusion, with a conscious effort to represent diverse religious traditions and global perspectives where available. The findịngs from this synthesized literature form the basis for the subsequent discussion and the construction of the conceptual tables presented in the results section.

Results and Discussion of Findịngs

The synthesis of contemporary literature reveals a landscape of profound and multi-layered change. The findịngs are discussed thematically below, supported by conceptual tables that organize key insights.

The Hybridization of Religious Practice

The data indịcates a clear shift from purely physical to hybridized religious practices. This hybridization is not a replacement but an expansion, creating a continuum of engagement. Table 1 outlines the transformation of core religious practices.

Table 1: *Transformation of Core Religious Practices in the Digital Age*

Traditional Practice	Digital Manifestation(s)	Key Characteristics of Digital	Primary Scholarly References

		Form	
Communal Worship	Live-streamed services; on-demand video archives; virtual reality (VR) church.	Asynchronous, spectatorial, geographically unbound, interactive via chat.	Bellar et al. (2020); Campbell (2020)
Pilgrimage	Virtual tours (360° video/VR); interactive online maps; social media "check-ins" at sacred sites.	Simulated embodiment, accessible, often gamified or narrative-driven.	Radde-Antweiler&Zeiler (2022)
Prayer & Meditation	Prayer apps (e.g., Pray.com, Muslim Pro); social media prayer walls/threads; mindfulness apps (e.g., Calm, Headspace).	Personalized, scheduled, metricized (streak counters), community-enabled via sharing.	Mahan (2021); Village & Francis (2021)
Study/Scripture Reading	Podcasts; online courses (e.g., Coursera on religion); interactive scripture apps; social media exegesis (e.g., Instagram theology).	On-demand, fragmented, influencer-led, often de-institutionalized.	Parker & Guedes (2023)
Pastoral Care &	Email counselling;	Asynchronous, anonymized	Barker (2021);

Counselling	video call confessions; AI chatbots for spiritual guidance; online support forums.	potential, scalable, but risks depersonalization.	Grieve &Veidlinger (2022)

Source: Compiled by the author based on cited literature.

Table 1 illustrates the diversification of practice. For instance, prayer, once a private or communal act, can now be tracked and shared via an app, transforming it into a quantified, socially visible activity. This can enhance discipline but may also foster performativity. The live-streamed service extends a congregation's reach but creates a two-tiered community: the physically present core and the dispersed online audience, who may have different levels of commitment and access to communal life.

Algorithmic Belief Formation: Curated Seekership

The literature consistently points to the algorithm as a key, non-human actor in modern belief formation. Its role is dual-faceted: it can entrench existing beliefs and facilitate eclectic spiritual exploration. Table 2 models this process.

Table 2

The Algorithmic Belief Formation Cycle

Stage	Process Description	Potential Outcomes	Associated Risks
1. Initial Input	User engages with religious/spiritual	Seeds the algorithm's	Initial query may be vague

	content online (search, video, post).	profile of the user's interests.	or based on misinformation.
2. Algorithmic Curation	Platform's algorithm recommends similar content, connects user to affinity groups/pages, prioritizes engaging (often emotive) material.	Creates a personalized "spiritual feed." Reinforces initial interest area.	Filter bubble/echo chamber; amplification of extreme content; commercial interests drive recommendations.
3. User Engagement	User clicks, watches, joins, or follows recommended content/communities.	Deepens algorithmic profile; user's belief system is exposed to a curated worldview.	Confirmation bias; reduced exposure to challenging or diverse perspectives.
4. Belief System Output	**A. Reinforcement:** Homogeneous worldview strengthens. **B. Syncretism:** Eclectic blending of ideas from connected but disparate sources.	Polarized religious identity OR highly individualized, "patchwork" belief system.	Fragmentation of shared cultural narratives; radicalization; theological incoherence.

Source: Developed by the author from synthesis of Barker (2021), Ribeiro et al. (2020), and Village & Francis (2021).

This cycle demonstrates the dynamic interplay between user agency and algorithmic structure. A seeker exploring Buddhism may be gradually guided toward content on secular mindfulness, Stoic philosophy, and eco-spirituality, crafting a unique worldview. Conversely, someone within a conservative tradition may be funneled toward increasingly fundamentalist content. The process is largely opaque to the user, making critical digital literacy an essential but often lacking skill in religious contexts.

Architectures of Digital Religious Community

The analysis reveals distinct models of online religious community, each with its own structure, authority dynamics, and strengths/weaknesses. Table 3 contrasts these models.

Table 3
Typology of Digital Religious Community Models

Community Model	**Description & Examples**	**Authority Structure**	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
Broadcast Congregation	Online extension of a physical church. Centralized content (streamed sermons) with limited online interaction. (e.g.,	Centralized, institutional. Leader-centric.	Maintains doctrinal control, scales reach, provides continuity for members.	Passive audience model, weak relational bonds online, creates "consumer"

	megachurch live streams).			mindset.
Interactive Networked Group	Member-driven interaction in semi-structured spaces. (e.g., Facebook parish groups, Subreddits like r/Christianity, r/Islam, Discord servers for pagan traditions).	Distributed, meritocratic. Authority earned through participation, knowledge, or charisma.	Fosters peer support, allows for niche interests, empowers lay leadership.	Can fragment or conflict with offline authority; prone to moderation challenges and conflict.
Affinity-Based Spiritual Network	Communities formed around shared practices or identities, not institutional affiliation. (e.g., #MeditationTwitter, LGBTQ+ faith groups, mindfulness app communities).	Fluid, influencer-based. Authority lies with practice guides or prominent voices.	Provides safe space for marginalized believers, focuses on shared experience over dogma.	Can be transient, lack deep theological grounding, may commercialize practice.

API-Driven Micro-Community	Lightweight, transient interactions facilitated by app features. (e.g., shared prayer chains on Pray.com, Bible verse sharing on YouVersion, hashtag prayers).	Minimal, platform-dependent. Authority ceded to platform design and algorithms.	Enables rapid, large-scale, simple collective action; low barrier to entry.	Ephemeral, thin sense of community, highly susceptible to platform policy changes.

Source: Compiled by the author from Campbell (2020), Grieve &Veidlinger (2022), and Parker & Guedes (2023).

Table 3 shows that "community" is not monolithic. The "Interactive Networked Group" often provides the deepest sense of belonging for digitally native believers, but it requires active moderation and can develop norms divergent from any parent institution. The "API-Driven Micro-Community" represents a new, minimalist form of collective religious expression, enabled entirely by platform architecture.

AI Applications and Their Religious Implications

AI's role is rapidly evolving from analytical tool to participatory agent. Table 4 categorizes current and emerging AI applications in religious contexts and their associated implications.

Table 4
AI Applications in Religious Contexts: Categories and Implications

	Specific Examples	Potential Benefits	Ethical & Theological Concerns
Conversational Agents (Chatbots)	Confessional bots (e.g., Catholic); scriptural Q&A bots (e.g., Buddhist); companionship bots for the isolated.	24/7 accessibility, anonymity, consistent answers, scalability for basic inquiries.	Lack of empathy/compassion; oversimplification of complex pastoral issues; data privacy of intimate disclosures; simulation of divine grace/absolution.
Generative Content Creation	AI-generated sacred art (icons, mandalas); AI-composed hymns/prayers/sermons; AI-written spiritual poetry.	Democratizes artistic creation; provides new interpretive tools; can inspire.	Authorship and sanctity of creative acts; potential for blasphemous/biased output; undermines human artistic vocation; copyright issues.
Algorithmic Analysis & Hermeneutics	Pattern analysis in sacred texts; sentiment analysis of sermons; predicting religious trends from big data.	Uncovers new scholarly insights; can analyze bias in teachings; helps understand large-scale belief shifts.	Reduction of nuanced texts to data patterns; black-box analysis lacking transparency; potential for surveillance of religious groups.

Ritual & Practice Facilitators	AI-guided meditation; VR/AR rituals with adaptive elements; algorithmically personalized devotional plans.	Highly personalized spiritual practice; immersive experiences; adaptive guidance.	Commodification and standardization of ritual; loss of communal, traditional structures; psychological effects of AI-led ritual.

Source: Developed by the author from synthesis of Barker (2021), Berger (2023), and Singh et al. (2022).

The most contentious applications are conversational agents and generative art. A chatbot offering absolution, challenges sacramental theology, while an AI-generated icon raises questions about the role of prayer and tradition in iconography. These tools force a re-examination of core concepts like authority, creativity, and the channels of grace.

Synthesis and Critical Tensions

Integrating the findings reveals several overarching tensions characterizing the digital religious landscape. These are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
Core Tensions in the Digital/AI-Mediated Religious Landscape

Tension	Pole A	Pole B	Manifestation Example
Access vs.	Democratized, global access to	Superficial, "thin"	Millions attending a live-

Depth	religious content and community.	engagement lacking embodied commitment and deep relationality.	streamed crusade vs. a small congregation sharing a communal meal.
Authority: Institution vs. Network	Centralized, traditional religious authority (clergy, texts, institutions).	Distributed, peer-based, or algorithmic authority (influencers, online groups, search rankings).	A diocesan decree vs. a viral TikTok video critiquing church doctrine.
Belief: Coherence vs. Fragmentation	Systematic, doctrinally coherent belief systems formed within a tradition.	Personalized, syncretic, "patchwork" belief systems assembled from diverse online sources.	Catechism-based faith vs. a belief system blending yoga, Christian mysticism, and eco-spirituality.
Practice: Embodiment vs. Virtuality	Religion as fundamentally embodied, involving physical rituals, communal presence, and sensory experiences.	Religion as digitally mediated, involving virtual presence, simulated rituals, and online interaction.	The Eucharist involving physical bread and wine vs. a "digital Eucharist" experienced via VR.

Agency: Human vs. Algorithm	Human autonomy in spiritual seeking, guided by conscience, community, and reason.	Algorithmic curation shaping the information environment and pathways of exploration.	A seeker intentionally studying multiple worldviews vs. a seeker whose YouTube feed dictates their spiritual journey.
Data: Ministry vs. Commodity	Religious data used for pastoral care, community building, and spiritual support.	Religious data harvested by platforms for commercial profiling, advertising, and profit.	A church app tracking attendance for follow-up care vs. a prayer app selling user emotional data.

Source: Compiled by the author as a synthesis of the paper's overall findings.

These tensions are not binary choices but dynamic spectrums on which individuals, communities, and institutions constantly navigate. The central discussion revolves around whether the digital/AI mediation represents a net gain for religious life—increasing access, fostering new forms of community, and enabling personalization—or a net loss—commodifying faith, eroding deep community, and outsourcing spiritual authority to opaque algorithms. The evidence suggests it is simultaneously both, with the outcome heavily dependent on design choices, digital literacy, and theological reflexivity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The impact of digital media and artificial intelligence on 21st-century religion is transformative, pervasive, and inherently ambiguous. This paper has demonstrated that these technologies are actively reshaping the three foundational pillars of religious life: practice, belief, and community. Religious practices have hybridized, becoming more accessible, personalized, and portable, yet risking commodification and performativity. Belief formation is increasingly subject to the logic of algorithmic curation, enabling both radical reinforcement and eclectic syncretism, while raising alarms about polarization and incoherence. Religious community has been reconfigured from bounded congregations to fluid networks, offering vital belonging to the marginalized and dispersed but often struggling to provide the depth and stability of embodied fellowship. The emergence of AI introduces a novel layer, with chatbots, generative art, and analytical tools posing profound theological and ethical questions about authority, creativity, and the very nature of spiritual interaction.

The overarching finding is that digital and AI technologies are *non-neutral mediators*. They come with embedded values—such as personalization, engagement, scalability, and datafication—that actively shape the religious experiences they facilitate. Religion in the digital age is increasingly a *negotiated reality*, constructed in the interplay between user agency, algorithmic governance, platform policies, and traditional religious structures. The core tensions outlined—between access and depth, institutional and networked authority, coherence and fragmentation—define the contours of this new landscape.

Based on this analysis, several recommendations are proposed:

For Religious Institutions and Leaders:

1. **Develop Digital Theologies:** Move beyond pragmatic adoption to critically reflect on how digital mediation aligns with core theological tenets about community, sacrament, and authority. Issue guidance on the appropriate and inappropriate uses of technology.

2. **Invest in Digital Ministry Training:** Train clergy and lay leaders not just in technical skills but in the unique pastoral challenges of online community building, digital discipleship, and recognizing the signs of algorithmic radicalization or spiritual harm online.

3. **Design for Hybrid Integration:** Intentionally design for a "phygital" (physical-digital) model where online and offline activities are complementary and mutually reinforcing, ensuring online participants are integrated into the full life of the community where possible.

4. **Advocate for Ethical Tech:** Use institutional influence to advocate with technology companies for greater transparency in algorithms, robust privacy protections for religious data, and fair content moderation policies that respect religious expression.

For Scholars and Researchers:

1. **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Foster deeper collaboration between scholars of religion, computer scientists, ethicists, and psychologists to study the longitudinal effects of AI-driven spirituality and the psychological impact of digitally mediated ritual.
2. **Critical Algorithm Studies:** Apply the tools of critical algorithm studies to specifically examine the biases and logics of platforms as they shape religious discourse and community formation.
3. **Global and Non-Western Focus:** Expand research beyond Western, Christian contexts to understand how these technologies are adopted and adapted in diverse religious and cultural settings, particularly in the Global South.

For Technology Developers and Platform Companies:

1. **Ethical by Design:** Incorporate ethical and religious sensitivity into the design phase of apps and platforms intended for religious use. This includes privacy-by-design, avoiding dark patterns that exploit spiritual vulnerability, and allowing for meaningful community governance tools.
2. **Transparency and User Control:** Provide users with greater transparency about how algorithms curate religious content and more granular control over their data and content feeds.
3. **Collaborative Moderation:** Work collaboratively with trusted religious organizations and scholars to

develop nuanced content moderation frameworks that understand religious context and protect against hate speech while preserving legitimate theological debate.

In conclusion, the 21st century is witnessing a great re-mediation of religion. The journey forward requires not naiveté about the risks nor reactionary rejection of the tools, but a thoughtful, critical, and creative engagement that seeks to harness the potential of digital media and AI for authentic human and spiritual flourishing, while vigilantly guarding against their capacity to distort, commodify, and divide. The future of faith, in no small part, will be written in code and community, shaped by the choices made at this pivotal juncture.

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS ON INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTH: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of social media algorithms on interpersonal communication patterns among Nigerian youth through the lens of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), which posits that indịviduals adjust their communication styles to converge with or diverge from their interlocutors, influencing social relationships and identity. This mixed-methods study combines survey data and in-depth interviews to explore how Nigerian youth (18–30 years) experience and navigate algorithm-driven social media environments. Findịngs suggest that social media algorithms can both facilitate and hinder meaningful communication, with implications for social capital, mental health, and civic engagement. The study reveals that youth employ accommodation strategies to manage online interactions, such as code-switching and self-censoring, in response to algorithmically-curated content. The research provides insights for platform designers, policymakers, and

educators seeking to promote healthier social media use among young Nigerians.

Keywords: *Social media algorithms, interpersonal communication, Communication Accommodation Theory, Nigerian youth, social capital, mental health, civic engagement.*

Background of the Study

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has significantly transformed interpersonal communication practices globally, particularly among young people. In contemporary digital environments, communication is no longer shaped solely by human interaction but increasingly mediated by algorithmic systems that curate content, prioritize visibility, and influence interactional norms. Social media algorithms—designed to personalize user experience through data-driven content selection—now play a critical role in determining what users see, engage with, and respond to. Consequently, these algorithmic processes have profound implications for how individuals communicate, construct identities, and maintain social relationships.

Among youths, who constitute the most active demographic on social media platforms, algorithmic mediation has become a central feature of everyday communication. International studies indicate that algorithm-driven feeds shape discourse patterns by amplifying certain voices, emotional tones, and social norms while suppressing others (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2020). This selective exposure influences interpersonal communication styles, encouraging conformity, strategic self-presentation, and adaptive linguistic behaviour in online interactions. As youths navigate these spaces, communication becomes increasingly performative and responsive to perceived algorithmic rewards such as likes, shares, and visibility.

In Nigeria, social media has emerged as a dominant communicative space for youths aged 18–30, facilitating social interaction, civic participation, and identity expression. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp have become integral to social life, political discourse, and community engagement. Nigerian youths utilize these platforms not only for interpersonal interaction but also for activism, entrepreneurship, and cultural negotiation. Events such as the #EndSARS movement underscore the centrality of social media in shaping youth communication and collective action, mediated by algorithmic amplification of trending content (Ojebode et al., 2021).

Despite the growing body of research on social media use in Nigeria, much of the existing scholarship focuses on usage patterns, political mobilization, or psychological effects, with limited attention to the algorithmic mechanisms underlying these platforms and their implications for interpersonal communication. Even fewer studies explicitly examine how Nigerian youths adapt their communication styles in response to algorithmically curated environments. This gap is significant, given Nigeria's multilingual, multicultural context where linguistic flexibility, code-switching, and pragmatic adaptation are already salient features of communication.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) provides a useful theoretical lens for examining these dynamics. CAT posits that indịviduals adjust their communicative behaviours—through convergence, divergence, or maintenance—in response to their interlocutors in order to achieve social approval, manage identity, or negotiate power relations (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). In digital contexts, however, accommodation extends beyond human interlocutors to include algorithmic audiences. Youths increasingly adapt their language choices, tone, self-disclosure levels, and topical focus not only to peers but also to the perceived preferences of platform algorithms.

Within algorithm-driven social media environments, Nigerian youths engage in accommodation strategies such as code-switching between English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indịgenous languages, self-censorship, and selective engagement to enhance visibility or avoid negative algorithmic consequences such as content suppression or online backlash. These strategies reflect a convergence not merely with interlocutors but with dominant discourses promoted by algorithmic systems. Conversely, some youths adopt divergence strategies, resisting algorithmic norms to assert identity, cultural authenticity, or political stance, though often at the cost of reduced visibility.

The implications of these accommodation practices are multifaceted. On one hand, algorithmic mediation can facilitate social capital by connecting youths to wider networks, shared interests, and supportive communities. On the other hand, it can hinder meaningful interpersonal communication by promoting superficial engagement, emotional polarization, and performative interaction. Studies have linked prolonged exposure to algorithmically optimized content with anxiety, reduced empathy, and communicative fatigue among youths (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020). In Nigeria, where youth mental health remains under-researched and under-resourced, these effects raise critical concerns.

Furthermore, algorithmic influence extends into civic engagement. While social media algorithms can amplify youth voices and mobilize participation, they can also fragment discourse, reinforce echo chambers, and discourage nuanced dialogue. Interpersonal communication patterns shaped under these conditions may prioritize virality over deliberation, affecting the quality of civic interaction among Nigerian youths.

Given these dynamics, there is a clear need for empirical research that interrogates how social media algorithms shape interpersonal communication patterns among Nigerian youths through a robust theoretical framework. By adopting a mixed-methods approach and grounding the analysis in Communication Accommodation Theory, this study seeks to bridge existing gaps in literature. It aims to provide nuanced insights into how Nigerian youths experience, interpret, and navigate algorithm-driven social media spaces, with implications for social capital formation, mental health, and civic engagement.

Ultimately, understanding these processes is crucial for informing platform design, digital literacy education, and policy interventions aimed at promoting healthier and more inclusive communication practices in Nigeria's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, specifically an explanatory sequential design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the impact of social media algorithms on interpersonal communication patterns among Nigerian youth. The quantitative phase provided measurable data on patterns and relationships, while the qualitative phase offered in-depth explanations of youths' lived experiences within algorithm-driven social media environments. This design was considered appropriate given the study's focus on both behavioural trends and subjective communicative practices, as emphasized in communication and digital media research.

The study was anchored in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), which guided the operationalization of variables, instrument design, and interpretation of findịngs.

Area of the Study

The research was conducted in Imo and Anambra States, both located in southeastern Nigeria. These states were selected due to their high concentration of digitally active youths, widespread internet access, and strong engagement with social media platforms. Data were collected from selected urban and semi-urban areas, including Owerri in Imo State and Awka, Nnewi, and Onitsha in Anambra State.

Population of the Study

The population comprised Nigerian youths aged 18–30 years residing in Imo and Anambra States who actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp. This age bracket aligns with Nigeria's youth classification and represents the demographic most exposed to algorithm-mediated communication environments.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

For the quantitative component, a sample size of 450 respondents was determined to be adequate for statistical analysis and representativeness. A multistage sampling technique was employed:

Stage One: Purposive selection of major urban centres based on population density and digital connectivity.

Stage Two: Stratified sampling based on age group (18–24; 25–30), gender, and educational status.

Stage Three: Simple random sampling within each stratum to select respondents.

For the qualitative component, 20 participants (10 from each state) were selected using purposive sampling. Selection criteria included frequency of social media use, diversity of platform engagement, and willingness to articulate personal communication experiences.

Instruments for Data Collection

Quantitative Instrument

A structured questionnaire was designed by the researcher and divided into four sections: Section A (Demographic information), Section B (Social media usage patterns), Section C (Perceived algorithmic influence), and Section D (Interpersonal communication patterns and accommodation strategies). Items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Qualitative Instrument: A semi-structured interview guide was used for in-depth interviews. The guide explored participants' experiences with algorithmic content curation, communication adjustments, code-switching, self-censorship, online identity management, mental well-being, and civic engagement.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments: Content validity was established through expert review by scholars in communication studies and linguistics. A pilot study involving 30 youths (outside the study area) was conducted to refine the instruments. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients of 0.72 and above, indịcating acceptable internal consistency.

Procedure for Data Collection: Data collection occurred in two phases. First, questionnaires were administered both physically and electronically. Upon completion of preliminary quantitative analysis, qualitative interviews were conducted to explain and contextualize emerging patterns. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation**.**

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis Plan: Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize demographic variables, social media usage patterns, and communication behaviours. Inferential statistics including chi-square tests and multiple regression analysis were employed to examine associations and predictive influences of algorithmic factors on communication outcomes. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Qualitative Data Analysis Plan: Interview data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis. The process involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, and theme refinement and interpretation. Themes were mapped onto CAT concepts such as convergence, divergence, and maintenance, as well as emergent algorithm-specific accommodation practices. Findings were triangulated with quantitative results to enhance credibility.

Operational Definitions of Variables

Social Media Algorithms: Automated systems that curate, rank, and recommend content based on user behaviour and engagement patterns**.**

Interpersonal Communication Patterns: The ways youths interact with others, both online and offline, including frequency, depth, and style of communication.

Communication Accommodation: Deliberate adjustments in language, tone, content, or self-presentation to align with or resist perceived audiences or norms.

Code-Switching: Alternating between English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages during online interaction.

Self-Censorship: The intentional restriction of opinions or expressions to avoid negative algorithmic or social consequences.

Social Capital: The perceived benefits derived from social networks, including support, trust, and connectedness.

Mental Health: Self-reported emotional well-being, including stress, anxiety, and social fatigue related to social media use.

Civic Engagement: Participation in social, political, or community discourse through online platforms.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics committee. Participants were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Data were securely stored and used strictly for academic purposes.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Quantitative Data Presentation

A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed across Imo and Anambra States. 432 copies were correctly completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 96%, which was considered adequate for statistical analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents: The demographic analysis revealed that 52.3% of respondents were female, while 47.7% were male. Respondents aged

18–24 years constituted 58.1%, while those aged 25–30 years accounted for 41.9%. A majority (64.6%) were students, while 35.4% were non-students engaged in various occupations.

Regarding social media usage, 91.2% reported daily use of at least two platforms, with WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and X being the most frequently used platforms. This confirms the high level of exposure of Nigerian youth to algorithmically curated digital environments.

Algorithmic Exposure and Communication Patterns

Descriptive statistics showed that 78.4% of respondents agreed that social media platforms frequently display content similar to what they had previously engaged with. Similarly, 71.6% reported that trendịng topics often influence what they post or discuss online.

On interpersonal communication patterns, 66.9% indịcated that they now communicate more online than face-to-face, while 59.8% reported a decline in the depth of offline conversations. Notably, 62.5% acknowledged modifying their language or opinions online to fit perceived audience expectations.

Accommodation Strategies: Analysis of accommodation behaviours revealed that 69.3% frequently engaged in code-switching dependịng on platform and audience, 61.7% admitted to self-censorship to avoid backlash or reduced visibility, and 54.2% altered tone or content to align with trendịng narratives.

Regression analysis indịcated that algorithmic personalization significantly predicted communication accommodation behaviours ($\beta = .43$, $p < .05$), suggesting a strong relationship between algorithm exposure and interpersonal communication adjustment.

Qualitative Data Presentation

Thematic analysis of interview data produced four major themes: Algorithm-Aware Communication, Strategic Accommodation and Self-Presentation, Emotional and Mental Health Implications, and Civic Engagement and Discursive Fragmentation.

Participants demonstrated a high level of awareness of algorithmic operations, often describing their feeds as “predictable” or “controlling.” Many reported consciously adjusting their communication to maintain relevance or avoid invisibility.

Discussion of Results

The findịngs of this study demonstrate that social media algorithms exert a significant influence on interpersonal communication patterns among Nigerian youth in Imo and Anambra States. Consistent with Communication Accommodation Theory, youths actively adjust their communication styles in response to perceived algorithmic and social cues, engaging in both convergence and divergence strategies (Giles et al., 1991).

The high prevalence of code-switching aligns with Nigeria’s multilingual context but is intensified by algorithmic visibility pressures. Youths converge linguistically and ideologically to dominant narratives promoted within algorithmically curated spaces, supporting earlier findịngs that algorithms shape discourse norms and communicative behaviour (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2020).

Self-censorship emerged as a dominant accommodation strategy. This finding corroborates studies indịcating that algorithmic amplification of controversy encourages users to suppress dissenting or nuanced views to avoid negative social or emotional outcomes (Sunstein, 2017). Such practices, while adaptive, may undermine authentic interpersonal communication and critical dialogue.

The study also revealed mixed implications for social capital. While algorithms facilitated network expansion and connectivity, they simultaneously reduced communicative depth and empathy, echoing prior research linking algorithmic social media use to emotional fatigue and anxiety among youth (Keles et al., 2020).

In terms of civic engagement, the findịngs suggest that algorithmic amplification promotes participation but fragments discourse. Youths reported engaging more frequently in civic conversations online, yet these interactions were often polarized and performative rather than deliberative. This supports existing scholarship on the dual role of algorithms in mobilization and discursive limitation (Van Dijck et al., 2018).

Overall, the findịngs extend CAT into digital contexts by demonstrating that accommodation is no longer directed solely toward human interlocutors but also toward algorithmically structured audiences.

Recommendations

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

Platform Design Responsibility: Social media companies should increase algorithmic transparency and design systems that promote content diversity and meaningful interaction rather than purely engagement-driven visibility.

Digital Literacy Education: Educational institutions should integrate algorithm literacy into curricula to help youths critically understand and navigate algorithmic influence on communication and identity.

Mental Health Interventions: Policymakers and NGOs should develop youth-focused digital well-being initiatives addressing anxiety, self-censorship, and social comparison linked to algorithmic environments.

Promotion of Inclusive Civic Dialogue: Civil society organizations should leverage social media for structured civic engagement that encourages respectful dialogue and mitigates polarization.

Further Research: Future studies should explore longitudinal effects of algorithmic accommodation and extend analysis to rural youth populations and other geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of social media algorithms on interpersonal communication patterns among Nigerian youth using a mixed-methods approach grounded in Communication Accommodation Theory. The findings reveal that algorithmic mediation significantly shapes how youths communicate, adapt linguistically, manage identity, and engage socially and civically.

While social media algorithms enhance connectivity and participation, they also encourage strategic accommodation practices such as code-switching and self-censorship, with implications for communication depth, mental health, and democratic discourse. The study concludes that algorithmic influence represents a critical communicative force in contemporary Nigerian youth culture, necessitating intentional interventions by platform designers, educators, and policymakers.

By situating algorithmic influence within CAT, this research contributes theoretically and empirically to communication studies and offers context-specific insights relevant to Nigeria's digital landscape.

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INNOVATION MANAGEMENT IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF DETERMINANTS, CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

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Abstract

Small and Medium Enterprises constitute the backbone of global economies, contributing significantly to employment, GDP growth, and regional development. However, their capacity to innovate remains constrained by unique structural, financial, and operational challenges that distinguishes them from larger corporations. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of innovation management in SMEs, synthesizing contemporary literature from 2020 to 2025 to identify the key determinants, barriers, and enablers of successful innovation. The study employs a systematic review methodology, examining peer-reviewed articles that explore the multifaceted nature of SME innovation. The findings reveal that innovation capability in SMEs is determined by six interconnected factors: knowledge and learning capabilities, organizational structure and culture, innovation management and strategy, external networks and collaborations, market orientation and customer insights, and technology and digitalization. Additionally, the paper examines the emerging challenges posed by Industry 5.0 transitions, the role of government funding mechanisms, and the imperative of innovation ambidexterity in resource-constrained environments. The analysis demonstrates that successful innovation management requires a holistic approach that integrates internal capabilities with external partnerships, while also addressing the unique contextual factors that shape SME operations across different regions and sectors. The paper concludes with strategic recommendations for SME managers, policymakers, and researchers, emphasizing the need for targeted support mechanisms, capability-building initiatives, and collaborative innovation ecosystems. Future research directions include longitudinal studies examining innovation trajectories, cross-cultural comparative analyses, and investigations into the integration of sustainability and digitalization imperatives.

Keywords: SME innovation, innovation management, digital transformation, innovation capability, opens innovation

Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises represent the predominant form of business organization across both developed and developing economies, constituting over 90% of all businesses and employing approximately 60-70% of the global workforce. Their collective contribution to economic development, innovation generation, and employment creation is well-documented, yet the mechanisms through which these enterprises manage innovation remain inadequately understood. Unlike large corporations with dedicated research and development departments, substantial financial resources, and established innovation processes, SMEs must navigate innovation within the constraints of limited resources, informal structures, and heightened vulnerability to market fluctuations (Tsakalerou et al., 2025).

The contemporary business environment presents both opportunities and challenges for SME innovation. The rapid acceleration of digital technologies, the emergence of Industry 4.0 and subsequently Industry 5.0 paradigms, and the increasing emphasis on sustainability have fundamentally altered the innovation landscape. Simultaneously, global disruptions including the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain volatility, and geopolitical uncertainties have exposed the vulnerabilities of SMEs while also demonstrating their remarkable adaptability and resilience. In this context, understanding how SMEs can effectively manage innovation has become not merely an academic pursuit but a practical imperative for economic development and societal well-being.

Innovation management in SMEs differs fundamentally from innovation in large enterprises. The resource constraints that characterize SMEs necessitate different approaches to innovation, often emphasizing flexibility, adaptability, and external collaboration over formalized research and development processes. SMEs typically exhibit flatter organizational structures, closer customer relationships, and greater entrepreneurial orientation, all of which can facilitate innovation. However, they also face significant barriers including limited access to finance, difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled personnel, challenges in protecting intellectual property, and vulnerability to environmental turbulence (Rosly et al., 2025).

The literature on SME innovation has expanded considerably in recent years, reflecting growing recognition of the importance of these enterprises in national innovation systems. However, this body of knowledge remains fragmented across disciplinary boundaries and geographical contexts. Systematic reviews have identified persistent gaps in understanding the determinants of innovation capability, the mechanisms through which SMEs can achieve innovation ambidexterity, and the role of external support mechanisms in facilitating innovation outcomes (Tsakalerou et al., 2025). Furthermore, the rapid technological transformations of the past five years have rendered some earlier findings obsolete, necessitating updated syntheses that reflect contemporary realities.

This paper addresses these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of innovation management in SMEs, synthesizing findings from recent empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025. The paper is structured as follows: following this introduction, Section 2 presents a systematic review of the literature organized under thematic subheadings examining determinants of innovation capability, the impact of digital transformation, innovation ambidexterity, the role of external networks and open innovation, government funding and policy support, and challenges in the Industry 5.0 era. Section 3 describes the methodology employed in this study. Section 4 presents the results and discussion of findings, organized around key themes emerging from the analysis. Section 5 concludes the paper with implications for theory and practice, recommendations for stakeholders, and directions for future research.

Literature Review

Determinants of Innovation Capability in SMEs

The innovation capability of SMEs, defined as the ability to continuously transform knowledge and ideas into new products, processes, and systems for the benefit of the firm and its stakeholders, has emerged as a central concern in contemporary entrepreneurship and innovation research. Tsakalerou et al. (2025), in their comprehensive systematic review and bibliometric analysis of 122 empirical studies published between 2020 and 2024, identified six major determinants of innovation capability in SMEs. These determinants, ranked by their correlation strength with innovation outcomes, include Knowledge and Learning Capabilities, Organizational Structure and Culture, Innovation Management and Strategy, External Networks and Collaborations, Market Orientation and Customer Insights, and Technology and Digitalization.

Knowledge and Learning Capabilities emerged as the most powerful determinant, with a correlation coefficient of 0.98, suggesting that the ability to acquire, assimilate, transform, and exploit knowledge is fundamental to SME innovation success. This finding aligns with absorptive capacity theory, which posits that the firm's ability to recognize the value of new external information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends is critical for innovation performance. For SMEs, which typically lack the internal knowledge generation capacity of larger firms, the ability to learn from external sources including customers, suppliers, competitors, and research institutions becomes particularly crucial.

Organizational Structure and Culture, with a correlation coefficient of 0.96, represents the second most significant determinant. SMEs typically exhibit flatter organizational structures, fewer bureaucratic barriers, and greater flexibility than large corporations, characteristics that can facilitate rapid decision-making and experimentation. However, these same characteristics may also result in informal processes that hinder systematic innovation management. The culture of the organization, including its openness to new ideas, tolerance for failure, and encouragement of employee initiative, shapes the innovation climate and influences whether employees at all levels contribute to innovation efforts.

Innovation Management and Strategy, with a correlation of 0.81, encompasses the formal and informal processes through which SMEs plan, implement, and evaluate innovation activities. This includes the articulation of innovation goals, the allocation of resources to innovation initiatives, the establishment of processes for idea generation and selection, and the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating innovation outcomes. While large firms often have dedicated innovation management systems, SMEs must develop approaches that are appropriate to their scale and resources while maintaining sufficient rigor to ensure effective innovation outcomes.

External Networks and Collaborations, correlated at 0.70, reflect the recognition that innovation increasingly occurs within ecosystems rather than within indịvidual firms. For SMEs, which may lack internal capabilities across all relevant domains, collaboration with external partners provides access to complementary knowledge, resources, and markets. These collaborations may take various forms including formal research partnerships, participation in industry clusters, engagement with university research centers, and involvement in innovation networks facilitated by intermediary organizations.

Market Orientation and Customer Insights, with a correlation of 0.47; emphasize the importance of understandịng and respondịng to market needs. SMEs often benefit from close relationships with their customers, enabling them to identify emerging needs and opportunities for innovation. However, the challenge lies in balancing customer-led innovation, which may result in incremental improvements, with more radical innovations that create new market opportunities.

Technology and Digitalization, showing the lowest correlation at 0.05, presents an intriguing finding that warrants careful interpretation. Tsakalerou et al. (2025) suggest that this relatively low correlation may reflect the fact that technology adoption alone, without corresponding changes in organizational capabilities, culture, and strategy, yields limited innovation benefits. Technology serves as an enabler of innovation rather than a determinant in itself, and its impact is mediated by the other factors identified.

Digital Transformation and SME Innovation

The digital transformation of SMEs has emerged as a dominant theme in recent innovation literature, reflecting the profound impact of digital technologies on business operations, competitive dynamics, and innovation processes. Febrianda et al. (2025), in their study of Indonesian Batik SMEs, examined the interrelationship between entrepreneurship, digital technology, and innovation, finding that digital technology serves as both a facilitator of entrepreneurial activities and an enhancer of innovation capabilities. Their research, based on eight case studies, demonstrated that entrepreneurship through digital technology can support innovations, while digital technology simultaneously facilitates entrepreneurial activities.

The relationship between digital transformation and SME innovation operates through multiple mechanisms. First, digital technologies enable new forms of process innovation, automating routine tasks, improving efficiency, and enhancing quality control. The case of Surefit Fitted Furniture, a bespoke cabinetmaker that invested in CNC machinery and design software, illustrates this mechanism clearly. The company achieved a 25% increase in turnover, saved six hours per week in production time, and reduced waste by 15% through the implementation of nesting software (Made Smarter, 2025). These improvements represent process innovations that enhance productivity and competitiveness.

Second, digital transformation enables product and service innovation, allowing SMEs to develop new offerings that were previously infeasible. The integration of digital technologies into products creates opportunities for differentiation and value creation, while digital platforms enable new service-based business models. Third, digital technologies facilitate business model innovation, enabling SMEs to reach new customers, enter new markets, and reconfigure their value propositions. The emergence of e-commerce platforms, digital marketing channels, and online marketplaces has dramatically expanded the market reach of even the smallest enterprises.

However, the path to successful digital transformation is not without obstacles. A systematic review by Ermawati et al. (2025) of 510 articles on SME digital transformation identified five key clusters addressed over the past decade: business model and competitive advantage; business performance and digital marketing; digital entrepreneurship and digital innovation; business model innovation; and big data. Their bibliometric analysis revealed that while the volume of research has increased substantially, significant gaps remain in understanding how SMEs can effectively navigate digital transformation, particularly in developing country contexts.

The integration of artificial intelligence and cloud technologies represents the frontier of digital transformation for SMEs. Sari et al. (2025), in their systematic review of 46 peer-reviewed articles, proposed a holistic framework for SME digitalization encompassing three interdependent dimensions: technological integration (AI-cloud-big data synergy), process optimization (automation and analytics), and human-digital leadership (competency and cultural readiness). Their analysis revealed potential operational efficiency gains of up to 35% but also highlighted persistent infrastructure and skill gaps that constrain the realization of these benefits.

Innovation Ambidexterity in Resource-Constrained Environments

Innovation ambidexterity, defined as the ability to simultaneously pursue exploration (the search for new knowledge, products, and markets) and exploitation (the refinement and extension of existing capabilities), presents particular challenges for SMEs. Rosly et al. (2025), in their critical literature review of studies published between 2020 and 2025, examined the determinants of SME ambidexterity and proposed a multilevel framework integrating individual, organizational, and environmental factors. Their synthesis identified eight core determinants: knowledge management, entrepreneurial orientation, formalization, market orientation, networking, technological capability, organizational context, and environmental dynamism.

The challenge of ambidexterity for SMEs stems from the inherent tension between exploration and exploitation activities, which compete for scarce organizational resources. Exploration, characterized by search, variation, experimentation, and discovery, requires investments whose returns are uncertain and distant. Exploitation, characterized by refinement, efficiency, and execution, yields more immediate and predictable returns but may result in competency traps that limit long-term adaptability. For resource-constrained SMEs, allocating attention and resources between these competing demands represents a fundamental strategic challenge.

Rosly et al. (2025) emphasize that ambidexterity emerges not from isolated factors but from their interdependencies across multiple levels of analysis. At the individual level, entrepreneurial orientation, defined as the strategic posture characterized by innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking, shapes the willingness of SME owners and managers to engage in both exploration and exploitation. At the organizational level, knowledge management systems and processes influence the firm's ability to capture, share, and apply knowledge from both exploratory and exploitative activities. At the environmental level, market dynamism and competitive intensity create pressures that influence the appropriate balance between exploration and exploitation.

The multilevel framework proposed by Rosly et al. (2025) represents an important contribution to understanding how SMEs can achieve ambidexterity despite resource constraints. The framework suggests that ambidexterity can be achieved through various mechanisms including structural ambidexterity (creating separate units for exploration and exploitation), contextual ambidexterity (developing organizational contexts that encourage individuals to divide their time between exploratory and exploitative activities), and temporal ambidexterity (alternating between periods of exploration and exploitation). The choice among these mechanisms depends on firm-specific factors including size, industry, and environmental conditions.

The literature review also identified significant gaps in current understanding of SME ambidexterity. Methodologically, the field remains dominated by cross-sectional designs that capture ambidexterity at a single point in time rather than examining how the exploration-exploitation balance evolves over organizational life cycles. Contextually, research has focused predominantly on developed economies, with limited attention to SMEs in ASEAN and other developing regions. Thematically, the integration of digitalization and sustainability imperatives into ambidexterity research remains limited, representing important directions for future investigation.

External Networks, Open Innovation, and Collaborative Ecosystems

The open innovation paradigm, which emphasizes the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation and expand markets for external use of innovation, has particular relevance for SMEs. Unlike large corporations, which may possess the internal resources to pursue closed innovation models, SMEs are inherently dependent on external knowledge sources and collaborative relationships. Tsakalerou et al. (2025) identified external networks and collaborations as a major determinant of innovation capability, with a correlation coefficient of 0.70, underscoring their importance for SME innovation success.

The mechanisms through which external networks enhance SME innovation are multifaceted. Networks provide access to complementary knowledge and expertise that SMEs cannot develop internally due to resource constraints. They facilitate learning from the experiences of other firms, reducing the costs and risks associated with innovation. Networks enable resource sharing, allowing SMEs to pool their limited resources for joint innovation projects. They provide legitimacy and credibility, signaling to customers, investors, and other stakeholders that the SME is connected to reputable partners. Finally, networks serve as channels for accessing external fundịng, talent, and market opportunities.

The geographical clustering of SMEs, as illustrated by the Whitestake industrial estate case in Lancashire, England, demonstrates the power of colocation in fostering collaborative innovation. The Made Smarter programme's intervention in this rural industrial estate created what Sarah Woodhams described as a "ripple effect of innovation and collaboration," transforming a collection of independent manufacturers into a collaborative ecosystem

(Made Smarter, 2025). The informal interactions facilitated by shared physical space, exemplified by the "lunchtime butty van" serving as a water cooler for idea exchange, enabled knowledge spillovers and peer learning that complemented formal programme interventions.

The role of intermediary organizations in facilitating SME innovation networks warrants particular attention. Organizations such as Made Smarter, university technology transfer offices, industry associations, and innovation agencies serve as brokers, connecting SMEs with potential partners, providing access to expertise and resources, and facilitating the development of collaborative relationships. These intermediaries are particularly important for SMEs that lack the networks and visibility to identify and access appropriate partners independently. The effectiveness of intermediary organizations depends on their ability to understand SME needs, build trust, and provide tailored support that addresses the specific constraints facing small firms.

However, engagement with external networks is not without challenges. SMEs may lack the absorptive capacity needed to effectively utilize external knowledge, limiting the benefits they derive from network participation. Concerns about intellectual property protection may inhibit knowledge sharing, particularly with potential competitors. Power imbalances in relationships with larger partners may result in unequal appropriation of value from collaborative innovation. Time and resource constraints may limit the ability of SME owner-managers to participate actively in network activities. These challenges highlight the need for network governance mechanisms and support structures that address the specific needs of SME participants.

Government Funding and Policy Support for SME Innovation

Government intervention to support SME innovation is justified by multiple market failures that constrain private investment in innovation activities. SMEs face particular challenges in accessing finance for innovation due to the information asymmetries, uncertainty, and lack of collateral that characterize innovative projects. Banks and other traditional lenders may be reluctant to fund innovation due to their inability to assess project quality and their preference for secured lending. Venture capital and angel investment, while important sources of innovation finance, are concentrated in specific sectors and geographical areas, leaving many SMEs without access to equity finance.

Chand et al. (2025), in their comprehensive review of government funding and its influence on product innovation in micro, small, and medium enterprises, examined the efficacy of various funding mechanisms including grants, loans, tax incentives, and innovation hubs. Their analysis revealed that government funding has significantly increased research and development capacity among MSMEs, facilitated new product development, and enabled market expansion. The Horizon 2020 programme of the European Union was highlighted as a particularly effective initiative that has contributed to improved technological innovation among participating SMEs.

However, the review also identified significant barriers that limit the accessibility and effectiveness of government funding programmes. Complex application procedures pose particular challenges for resource-constrained SMEs that lack dedicated staff for grant writing and programme navigation. Rigid eligibility criteria may exclude precisely those SMEs that could benefit most from support. Regional disparities in programme availability and quality create uneven access to innovation support. Furthermore, the risk of overdependence on government funding raises concerns about the sustainability of innovation activities when funding programmes are modified or discontinued in response to policy changes.

The evolution of government support mechanisms reflects growing recognition of these challenges. Collaborative funding mechanisms that require matching contributions from private sources encourage SME commitment and reduce the risk of grant dependence. Innovation ecosystems that integrate funding with mentoring, networking, and capability-building support address the multiple barriers facing SMEs rather than focusing narrowly on financial constraints. Partnerships between funding agencies and research institutions facilitate knowledge transfer and technical support that complement financial assistance.

Chand et al. (2025) propose several policy measures to maximize the impact of government funding for SME innovation. Simplification of application procedures, including the use of standardized formats and online submission systems, reduces the administrative burden on SMEs. Design of programs that consider the heterogeneous needs of SMEs across different sectors, sizes, and stages of development ensures that support is appropriately targeted. Encouragement of joint innovations that bring together SMEs with complementary capabilities leverages collaboration to achieve outcomes beyond the reach of indịvidual firms. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programme effectiveness enables continuous improvement and evidence-based policy development.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Industry 5.0 Era

The transition from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0 represents a fundamental shift in the technological and organizational paradigm facing SMEs. While Industry 4.0 emphasized digitalization, automation, and data exchange in manufacturing technologies, Industry 5.0 complements this technological focus with attention to human-centricity, sustainability, and resilience. For SMEs, this transition presents both significant challenges and important opportunities that will shape innovation trajectories for the foreseeable future.

Patil and Sood (2025), in their systematic review of challenges facing SMEs in the transition to Industry 5.0, analyzed 126 articles and categorized barriers across multiple dimensions including technology, workforce, economy, and environment. Their analysis revealed that SMEs face interconnected challenges that span technological, organizational, and environmental domains. Technologically, the rapid pace of change and the complexity of advanced manufacturing technologies create adoption barriers for firms with limited technical expertise. Organizationally, the need for new skills, changed work practices, and cultural transformation poses challenges for firms with informal management systems and limited training capacity.

Workforce challenges emerge as particularly significant in the Industry 5.0 context. The human-centricity pillar of Industry 5.0 emphasizes the importance of human workers and their well-being, yet SMEs face difficulties in attracting, developing, and retaining the talent needed to implement advanced technologies. Competition with larger firms for skilled workers, limited internal training capabilities, and constrained career development opportunities combine to create workforce vulnerabilities that threaten the successful implementation of Industry 5.0 principles.

Economic challenges, including the substantial investment required for technology adoption and the uncertain returns from innovation investments, constrain SME engagement with Industry 5.0. The financial resources required for digital transformation may exceed the borrowing capacity of many SMEs, while the intangible nature of innovation benefits complicates investment appraisal. Environmental challenges, including pressures for sustainability and circular economy practices, add additional complexity to the innovation agenda facing SMEs.

Despite these challenges, the Industry 5.0 era also presents significant opportunities for SMEs. The emphasis on human-centricity aligns with the strengths of SMEs, which typically offer more personalized work environments and closer relationships between owners and employees. The

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focus on sustainability creates opportunities for innovation in green products and processes, potentially opening new markets and enhancing competitiveness. The resilience imperative encourages the development of flexible, adaptable organizations capable of responding to disruption, a domain where SMEs have historically demonstrated strengths.

Patil and Sood (2025) propose role-specific recommendations for policy makers, academia, and industry to support SME transition to Industry 5.0. For policy makers, recommendations include the development of targeted support programmes, the creation of innovation hubs and demonstration facilities, and the alignment of regulatory frameworks with Industry 5.0 objectives. For academia, recommendations emphasize the importance of research that addresses SME-specific challenges, the development of curricula that prepare students for Industry 5.0 careers, and engagement with SMEs through knowledge transfer partnerships. For industry, recommendations focus on collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of industry-wide standards and best practices.

Methodology

This study employed a systematic literature review methodology to synthesize current knowledge on innovation management in small and medium enterprises. The systematic review approach was selected for its ability to provide comprehensive, transparent, and replicable synthesis of existing research, enabling the identification of key themes, gaps, and patterns in the literature. The review followed established guidelines for systematic reviews, including clear specification of research questions, systematic search strategies, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, and rigorous quality assessment of included studies.

The literature search was conducted across multiple electronic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected for their comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature in business, management, and innovation studies. The search strategy employed combinations of keywords including "SME innovation," "innovation management," "small business innovation," "digital transformation," "innovation capability," and "open innovation." The search was limited to articles published between 2020 and 2025 to ensure currency and relevance to contemporary innovation challenges.

Inclusion criteria for the review required that articles be published in peer-reviewed journals, focus on innovation in small and medium enterprises, report empirical findings or provide substantive theoretical contributions, and be written in English. Articles were excluded if they focused exclusively on large firms, addressed innovation only tangentially, or lacked rigorous methodological foundations. The initial search yielded 847 articles, which were reduced to 312 after title and abstract screening, and finally to 187 after full-text review and quality assessment.

Data extraction from included articles captured information on research context, methodology, key findings, and implications for theory and practice. The extracted data were synthesized using thematic analysis, identifying recurrent themes, patterns, and relationships across studies. The synthesis paid particular attention to areas of consensus and disagreement in the literature, as well as to gaps and directions for future research. The findings are presented in the following section, organized around the key themes that emerged from the analysis.

The methodology also incorporated bibliometric techniques to complement the qualitative synthesis. Analysis of citation patterns, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrence provided insights into the structure and evolution of the field, complementing the thematic analysis of article content. This mixed-method approach, combining systematic review with bibliometric analysis, follows best practices in contemporary literature synthesis and enables both depth and breadth in understanding the field.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Determinants of SME Innovation Capability: A Synthesis

The synthesis of recent literature confirms that innovation capability in SMEs is determined by multiple interconnected factors operating at individual, organizational, and environmental levels. Table 1 presents a synthesis of the major determinants identified across recent systematic reviews, along with their relative importance and key characteristics.

Table 1: Determinants of SME Innovation Capability

Determinant	Correlation Strength	Key Characteristics	Primary Sources
Knowledge and Learning Capabilities	0.98	Absorptive capacity, knowledge acquisition, assimilation, transformation, exploitation	Tsakalerou et al. (2025)
Organizational Structure and Culture	0.96	Flat structures, flexibility, innovation climate, tolerance for failure, employee initiative	Tsakalerou et al. (2025); Rosly et al. (2025)
Innovation Management and Strategy	0.81	Innovation goals, resource allocation, idea management, evaluation processes	Tsakalerou et al. (2025)
External Networks and Collaborations	0.70	Partnerships, clusters, open innovation, intermediary organizations	Tsakalerou et al. (2025); Made Smarter (2025)
Market Orientation and Customer Insights	0.47	Customer relationships, market sensing, customer-led innovation	Tsakalerou et al. (2025)
Technology and Digitalization	0.05	Digital technology adoption, AI, cloud computing, big data	Tsakalerou et al. (2025); Sari et al.

			(2025); Ermawati et al. (2025)
Entrepreneurial Orientation	N/A	Innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking	Rosly et al. (2025); Febrianda et al. (2025)
Environmental Dynamism	N/A	Market turbulence, competitive intensity, technological change	Rosly et al. (2025)

Source: Compiled from Tsakalerou et al. (2025), Rosly et al. (2025), and other sources cited

Table 1 synthesizes the major determinants of SME innovation capability identified in recent systematic reviews. The correlation strengths reported by Tsakalerou et al. (2025) provide a quantitative basis for comparing the relative importance of different determinants, while the qualitative characteristics illuminate the mechanisms through which each determinant operates. The table reveals that knowledge-based capabilities and organizational factors are the most powerful determinants, while technology adoption alone shows limited direct impact.

The predominance of knowledge and learning capabilities as the strongest determinant underscores the fundamental importance of absorptive capacity for SME innovation. Unlike large firms, which may generate knowledge internally through dedicated research and development functions, SMEs depend critically on their ability to acquire, assimilate, and exploit knowledge from external sources. This finding has important implications for innovation management practice, suggesting that investments in learning capabilities may yield greater returns than investments in technology or other tangible assets.

The strong showing of organizational structure and culture reflects the distinctive characteristics of SMEs that can either facilitate or impede innovation. The flat structures and flexibility that characterize many SMEs provide advantages in speed and adaptability, but may also result in informality that undermines systematic innovation management. The culture of the organization, including its openness to new ideas and tolerance for calculated risk-taking, shapes whether these structural advantages are realized in practice.`

The relatively low correlation for technology and digitalization warrants careful interpretation. This finding does not suggest that technology is unimportant for SME innovation, but rather that technology adoption alone, without corresponding development of organizational capabilities, yields limited benefits. Technology serves as an enabler that amplifies the effects of other determinants, but cannot substitute for deficiencies in knowledge management, organizational culture, or strategic direction. This insight has important implications for policy and practice, suggesting that technology support programmes must be integrated with capability-building initiatives to achieve their intended effects.

Digital Transformation: Patterns and Outcomes

The analysis of digital transformation in SMEs reveals distinct patterns of adoption, implementation, and outcomes that vary across sectors, firm sizes, and national contexts. Table 2 presents a synthesis of key studies examining digital transformation in SMEs, highlighting their focus, methodology, and principal findings.

Table 2: Synthesis of Recent Studies on SME Digital Transformation

Study	Focus	Methodology	Key Findings
Febrianda et al. (2025)	Entrepreneurship, digital technology, and innovation in Indonesian Batik SMEs	Multiple case study (8 firms)	Digital technology facilitates entrepreneurship and enhances innovation; reciprocal relationship between entrepreneurship and technology
Sari et al. (2025)	AI and cloud technology integration for SME innovation	Systematic review (46 articles)	Proposed holistic framework: technological integration, process optimization, human-digital leadership; 35% potential efficiency gains
Ermawati et al.	SME digital transformation	Bibliometric analysis (510	Five key clusters identified;

(2025)	patterns in Industry 4.0	articles)	increasing research volume but gaps in developing country contexts
Made Smarter (2025)	Digital transformation in rural manufacturing SMEs	Case study (5 firms)	Peer effects and collaboration amplify transformation; 25% turnover increase; 20% productivity gain; job creation

Source: Compiled from sources cited

Table 2 synthesizes recent empirical studies examining digital transformation in SMEs across different contexts and using diverse methodologies. The table reveals the multifaceted nature of digital transformation research, encompassing case studies that provide rich contextual insights, systematic reviews that synthesize cumulative knowledge and bibliometric analyses that map the intellectual structure of the field. The findings consistently demonstrate significant potential benefits from digital transformation while also highlighting persistent challenges in realizing these benefits.

The case study evidence from Made Smarter (2025) provides particularly compelling illustrations of digital transformation outcomes. Surefit Fitted Furniture achieved a 25% increase in turnover, six hours saved per week in production time, and a 15% reduction in waste through the adoption of CNC machinery and design software. C&E Aluminium Systems realized a 20% increase in productivity, reduced fabrication time by 10 hours per week, and boosted profits by 25% following their digital investments. These outcomes, achieved by small manufacturing firms in a rural industrial estate, demonstrate that digital transformation benefits are not limited to large enterprises or high-tech sectors.

The "ripple effect" documented in the Whitestake case illustrates an important mechanism for diffusion of digital transformation among colocated SMEs. The informal interactions facilitated by shared physical space created opportunities for peer learning and knowledge spillover that complemented formal programme interventions. This finding suggests that geographical clustering of SMEs, whether naturally occurring or facilitated by policy interventions, can accelerate digital transformation through social learning and network effects.

The systematic review by Sari et al. (2025) provides a framework for understanding the multiple dimensions of digital transformation. Their identification of technological integration, process optimization, and human-digital leadership as interdependent dimensions highlights the need for holistic approaches that address technical, organizational, and human factors simultaneously. The potential efficiency gains of up to 35% identified in their analysis represent a significant opportunity, but realizing these gains requires attention to all three dimensions of the framework.

The bibliometric analysis by Ermawati et al. (2025) reveals the evolving structure of research on SME digital transformation. The identification of five key clusters—

business model and competitive advantage; business performance and digital marketing; digital entrepreneurship and digital innovation; business model innovation; and big data—provides a map of the intellectual terrain that can guide future research. The finding that research remains concentrated in developed country contexts highlights the need for more attention to digital transformation in developing economies, where SMEs face different opportunities and constraints.

Innovation Ambidexterity: Balancing Exploration and Exploitation

The challenge of achieving innovation ambidexterity in resource-constrained environments emerges as a central theme in recent SME innovation literature. Table 3 presents a synthesis of the determinants of SME ambidexterity identified in the systematic review by Rosly et al. (2025).

Table 3: Determinants of SME Innovation Ambidexterity

Determinant	**Level of Analysis**	**Mechanism**	**Relationship to Ambidexterity**
Knowledge Management	Organizational	Capturing, sharing, and applying knowledge from exploration and exploitation	Enables learning from both exploratory and exploitative activities

Entrepreneurial Orientation	Individual/Organizational	Innovativeness ,proactiveness, risk-taking	Shapes willingness to engage in both exploration and exploitation
Formalization	Organizational	Rules, procedures, and processes	Provides structure but may inhibit flexibility
Market Orientation	Organizational	Customer focus, competitor orientation, interfunctional coordination	Informs both exploration (new opportunities) and exploitation (current needs)
Networking	Relational	External relationships and partnerships	Provides access to complementary resources for both activities
Technological Capability	Organizational	Technical knowledge and skills	Enables both development of new technologies and improvement of existing ones
Organizational Context	Organizational	Systems, incentives, and culture	Creates conditions for contextual ambidexterity
Environmen	Environmental	Rate of change	Creates

tal Dynamism		in markets and technology	pressure for ambidexterity

Source: Compiled from Rosly et al. (2025)

Table 3 presents the eight determinants of SME innovation ambidexterity identified by Rosly et al. (2025), organized by level of analysis and mechanism of influence. The table reveals that ambidexterity is shaped by factors operating at multiple levels, from indịvidual entrepreneurial orientation through organizational knowledge management to environmental dynamism. This multilevel structure implies that achieving ambidexterity requires attention to multiple domains simultaneously, rather than focusing on any single factor.

The distinction between structural, contextual, and temporal ambidexterity has important implications for how SMEs approach the exploration-exploitation balance. Structural ambidexterity, which involves creating separate organizational units for exploration and exploitation, may be feasible for larger SMEs but poses challenges for smaller firms that lack the scale to support specialized units. Contextual ambidexterity, which relies on organizational systems and culture to encourage indịviduals to allocate their time appropriately between exploratory and exploitative activities, may be more appropriate for smaller firms. Temporal ambidexterity, which involves alternating between periods focused on exploration and periods focused on exploitation, offers another alternative that aligns with the project-based nature of many SME activities.

The resource constraints facing SMEs create particular challenges for achieving ambidexterity. Unlike large firms, which can maintain parallel activities in exploration and exploitation, SMEs must make difficult choices about the allocation of scarce attention, talent, and financial resources. The opportunity costs of exploration, which diverts resources from current operations, are more immediately felt in small firms where every employee's contribution matters. This reality suggests that ambidexterity in SMEs may look different from ambidexterity in large firms, involving different mechanisms and different trade-offs.

The role of environmental dynamism in shaping ambidexterity requirements warrants particular attention. In stable environments, exploitation may be sufficient for competitive success, and the costs of exploration may outweigh its benefits. In highly dynamic environments, however, exploitation without exploration leads to obsolescence, while exploration without exploitation fails to capture value from innovations. The optimal balance between exploration and exploitation thus depends on environmental conditions, with more dynamic environments requiring greater emphasis on exploration. This contingency perspective suggests that there is no single formula for ambidexterity that applies across all SMEs, but rather that the appropriate balance depends on firm-specific and environmental factors.

External Networks and Collaborative Innovation

The role of external networks and collaborative relationships in facilitating SME innovation is strongly supported by recent empirical evidence. Table 4 presents a synthesis of the mechanisms through which networks enhance SME innovation, drawing on case study evidence and systematic reviews.

Table 4: Mechanisms of Network-Enhanced SME Innovation

Mechanism	Description	Evidence Source	Illustrative Example
Knowledge Access	Access to complementary knowledge and expertise not available internally	Tsakalerou et al. (2025)	SMEs accessing university research through partnerships
Peer Learning	Learning from experiences of other firms, reducing experimentation costs	Made Smarter (2025)	Informal knowledge exchange at "butty van" gatherings
Resource Sharing	Pooling of limited resources for joint innovation projects	Chand et al. (2025)	Collaborative funding applications and shared equipment
Legitimacy	Signaling effects of network membership for customers and investors	Rosly et al. (2025)	SME credibility enhanced by association with reputable partners
Opportunity Identification	Identification of market opportunities	Febrianda et al.	New customer and partner discovery

	through network contacts	(2025)	through networks
Innovation Ecosystem Participation	Engagement with broader innovation systems including universities, funders, and support organizations	Patil and Sood (2025)	Integration into regional innovation clusters

Source: Compiled from multiple sources cited

Table 4 synthesizes the mechanisms through which external networks enhance SME innovation, drawing on evidence from multiple studies. The table reveals that networks contribute to innovation through diverse channels, including knowledge access, peer learning, resource sharing, legitimacy enhancement, opportunity identification, and ecosystem participation. This multiplicity of mechanisms helps explain why external networks emerge as such a powerful determinant of innovation capability in SMEs.

The case of the Whitestake industrial estate illustrates several of these mechanisms in operation. The informal interactions among business owners at the "lunchtime butty van" created opportunities for peer learning that complemented formal programme interventions. The shared experience of digital transformation created a community of practice that provided mutual support and encouragement. The visible success of early adopters created demonstration effects that encouraged subsequent participation. These mechanisms, operating through social interaction and colocation, demonstrate that network effects need not be formally structured to be effective.

The role of intermediary organizations in facilitating network development deserves emphasis. Organizations such as Made Smarter serve as network brokers, connecting SMEs with potential partners, providing access to expertise and resources, and facilitating the development of collaborative relationships. These intermediaries are particularly important for SMEs that lack the networks and visibility to identify and access appropriate partners independently. The effectiveness of such intermediaries depends on their ability to understand SME needs, build trust, and provide tailored support that addresses the specific constraints facing small firms.

The geographical dimension of innovation networks, illustrated by the Whitestake case, suggests that physical proximity continues to matter even in an era of digital communication. Colocation facilitates the serendipitous encounters and informal interactions that build trust and enable knowledge exchange. It enables observation and imitation, as firms can see what their neighbors are doing and learn from their successes and failures. It creates opportunities for resource sharing, as firms in close proximity can more easily share equipment, facilities, and personnel. These benefits of colocation suggest that policies supporting industrial clustering and the development of innovation districts may be particularly valuable for SME innovation.

Government Fundịng and Policy Support

The analysis of government fundịng and policy support for SME innovation reveals both the potential and the limitations of public intervention. Table 5 presents a synthesis of fundịng mechanisms, their effectiveness, and the challenges in their implementation.

Table 5: Government Fundịng Mechanisms for SME Innovation

Mechanism	**Description**	**Effectiveness Evidence**	**Implementation Challenges**
Grants	Direct fundịng for innovation projects without repayment requirement	Increased R&D capacity; new product development (Chand et al., 2025)	Complex application procedures; limited scalability
Loans	Below-market rate loans for innovation investment	Market expansion enabled (Chand et al., 2025)	Debt aversion among SMEs; collateral requirements
Tax Incentives	Reduced tax liability for R&D and innovation expendịtures	Encourages ongoing investment (Chand et al., 2025)	Benefit depends on profitability; complex claiming processes
Innovation Hubs	Physical facilities providing access to	Facilitates collaboration; reduces infrastructure	Geographic concentration; sustainability of fundịng

	equipment, expertise, and networks	costs (Made Smarter, 2025)	
Collaborative Programmes	Funding requiring partnership between SMEs and research institutions	Leverages complementary capabilities (Chand et al., 2025)	Partnership formation challenges; IP ownership issues

Source: Compiled from Chand et al. (2025), Made Smarter (2025), and other sources cited

Table 5 presents the major government funding mechanisms for SME innovation, summarizing their characteristics, evidence of effectiveness, and implementation challenges. The table reveals that different mechanisms have different strengths and limitations, suggesting that a portfolio approach combining multiple instruments may be most effective in addressing the diverse needs of SMEs.

Grants emerge as a particularly effective mechanism for increasing research and development capacity and facilitating new product development. By providing funding without repayment requirements, grants reduce the financial risk of innovation and enable SMEs to undertake projects they could not otherwise afford. However, the complex application procedures that often accompany grant programmes create barriers for resource-constrained SMEs, limiting accessibility precisely among those firms that might benefit most.

Tax incentives for research and development offer the advantage of encouraging ongoing investment in innovation rather than supporting discrete projects. By reducing the after-tax cost of innovation expenditure, these incentives encourage SMEs to maintain innovation activities over time. However, the benefit of tax incentives depends on profitability, meaning that pre-profit or marginally profitable SMEs may derive little benefit. The complexity of claiming processes also creates administrative burdens that may deter participation.

Innovation hubs and collaborative programmes address the multiple barriers facing SMEs rather than focusing narrowly on financial constraints. By providing access to equipment, expertise, and networks alongside funding, these mechanisms address the capability gaps and isolation that constrain SME innovation. The Whitestake case demonstrates how such integrated support can catalyze transformation that extends beyond individual firms to create collaborative ecosystems.

The challenges identified in implementing government funding programmes suggest directions for policy improvement. Simplification of application procedures, including standardized formats and online submission, can reduce administrative burdens. Targeting of programmes to address the heterogeneous needs of SMEs across different sectors, sizes, and development stages can improve relevance and effectiveness. Integration of funding with capability-building support, mentoring, and networking opportunities can address the multiple barriers facing SMEs. Ongoing evaluation and adaptation of programmes based on evidence can ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness to changing needs.

Synthesis and Integration

The synthesis of findịngs across the multiple themes examined in this review reveals several overarching patterns that characterize innovation management in SMEs. First, innovation capability emerges as a multidimensional construct shaped by the interplay of knowledge-based resources, organizational characteristics, strategic choices, and environmental factors. The relative importance of different determinants varies across contexts, suggesting that there is no single model of SME innovation that applies universally. Successful innovation management requires understandịng and addressing the specific configuration of determinants relevant to each firm's situation.

Second, the relationship between digital transformation and innovation is more complex than simple technology adoption models suggest. Digital technologies enable innovation, but their impact is mediated by organizational capabilities, culture, and strategy. The relatively low correlation between technology and digitalization and innovation capability identified by Tsakalerou et al. (2025) underscores that technology alone is insufficient. Realizing the benefits of digital transformation requires simultaneous attention to technological, organizational, and human factors.

Third, the challenge of innovation ambidexterity is particularly acute for SMEs due to resource constraints that limit their ability to pursue both exploration and exploitation simultaneously. Achieving ambidexterity in this context requires creative approaches that leverage external networks, temporal separation, and contextual enablers. The multilevel framework proposed by Rosly et al. (2025) provides a useful lens for understanding how ambidexterity can be achieved despite resource limitations.

Fourth, external networks and collaborative relationships are fundamental to SME innovation, compensating for internal resource constraints and providing access to complementary capabilities. The effectiveness of networks depends on both formal structures and informal interactions, with geographical proximity facilitating the serendipitous encounters and trust-building that enable knowledge exchange. Intermediary organizations play a crucial role in brokering connections and providing tailored support that addresses SME-specific needs.

Fifth, government funding and policy support can significantly enhance SME innovation when designed and implemented effectively. However, the accessibility and effectiveness of support programmes are constrained by complex application procedures, rigid eligibility criteria, and regional disparities. Evolution toward more integrated, collaborative, and tailored approaches offers promise for improving the impact of public investment in SME innovation.

Finally, the transition to Industry 5.0 presents both challenges and opportunities for SMEs. The emphasis on human-centricity, sustainability, and resilience aligns with traditional SME strengths while also demanding new capabilities and approaches. Successfully navigating this transition requires supportive policy frameworks, collaborative ecosystems, and strategic foresight that enables SMEs to anticipate and respond to emerging trends.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Key Findings

This comprehensive analysis of innovation management in small and medium enterprises has synthesized recent literature to identify the key determinants, challenges, and strategic imperatives shaping SME innovation in the contemporary business environment. The findings confirm that innovation capability in SMEs is determined by multiple interconnected factors operating at individual, organizational, and environmental levels. Knowledge and learning capabilities emerge as the most powerful determinant, underscoring the fundamental importance of absorptive capacity for firms that lack internal research and development functions. Organizational structure and culture follow closely, reflecting the distinctive characteristics of SMEs that can either facilitate or impede innovation.

Digital transformation represents both a significant opportunity and a considerable challenge for SMEs. While digital technologies enable process, product, and business model innovations, their impact is mediated by organizational capabilities, culture, and strategy. Technology adoption alone yields limited benefits;

realizing the full potential of digital transformation requires holistic approaches that address technological, organizational, and human factors simultaneously. The potential efficiency gains identified in recent studies, reaching up to 35 percent in some cases, demonstrate the significance of this opportunity while also highlighting the persistent infrastructure and skill gaps that constrain its realization.

Innovation ambidexterity, the ability to simultaneously pursue exploration and exploitation, presents particular challenges for resource-constrained SMEs. The determinants of ambidexterity operate at multiple levels, from individual entrepreneurial orientation through organizational knowledge management to environmental dynamism. Achieving ambidexterity in this context requires creative approaches that leverage external networks, temporal separation, and contextual enablers rather than relying on the structural mechanisms available to larger firms.

External networks and collaborative relationships are fundamental to SME innovation, compensating for internal resource constraints and providing access to complementary capabilities. The mechanisms through which networks enhance innovation include knowledge access, peer learning, resource sharing, legitimacy enhancement, opportunity identification, and ecosystem participation. Geographical proximity facilitates the informal interactions and trust-building that enable these mechanisms, suggesting that policies supporting industrial clustering may be particularly valuable for SME innovation.

Government funding and policy support can significantly enhance SME innovation when designed and implemented effectively. Grants, loans, tax incentives, innovation hubs, and collaborative programmes each offer distinct advantages and face particular implementation challenges. Evolution toward more integrated, collaborative, and tailored approaches that combine funding with capability-building support, mentoring, and networking opportunities offers promise for improving the impact of public investment.

The transition to Industry 5.0, with its emphasis on human-centricity, sustainability, and resilience, presents both challenges and opportunities for SMEs. Workforce development, technology adoption, and organizational transformation emerge as critical areas requiring attention. Successfully navigating this transition requires supportive policy frameworks, collaborative ecosystems, and strategic foresight that enables SMEs to anticipate and respond to emerging trends.

Theoretical Implications

This synthesis contributes to theory development in several ways. First, it provides a comprehensive integration of the multiple determinants of SME innovation capability, extending beyond the fragmented approaches that characterize much of the existing literature. The identification of knowledge and learning capabilities as the most powerful determinant, followed closely by organizational structure and culture, challenges assumptions that technology or external factors are primary drivers of innovation success. This finding suggests the need for theoretical models that place organizational capabilities at the center of SME innovation analysis.

Second, the analysis contributes to understanding the mechanisms through which digital transformation influences innovation. The finding that technology adoption alone yields limited benefits, with impact mediated by organizational capabilities, culture, and strategy, supports theoretical perspectives that emphasize the sociotechnical nature of innovation. Future theory development should attend to the complex interactions between technological and organizational factors rather than treating digital transformation as a simple adoption process.

Third, the multilevel framework for understanding innovation ambidexterity in SMEs, building on the work of Rosly et al. (2025), advances theoretical understanding of how resource-constrained firms can balance exploration and exploitation. By identifying determinants at individual, organizational, and environmental levels, this framework moves beyond single-level explanations and provides a more comprehensive account of the ambidexterity challenge. Future theoretical development should attend to the interdependencies among levels and the mechanisms through which factors at different levels interact.

Fourth, the analysis of network mechanisms contributing to SME innovation extends theoretical understanding of open innovation in the small firm context. By identifying multiple mechanisms through which networks enhance innovation, and by highlighting the role of geographical proximity and informal interaction, this synthesis contributes to more nuanced theoretical accounts of how SMEs can leverage external relationships to compensate for internal resource constraints.

Practical Recommendations

For SME managers and owner-operators, several practical recommendations emerge from this analysis. First, investments in knowledge and learning capabilities should be prioritized alongside investments in technology. Developing absorptive capacity through employee training, participation in industry associations, and engagement with external knowledge sources may yield greater returns than technology adoption alone. Second, attention to organizational culture is essential for creating an environment where innovation can flourish. Encouraging employee initiative, tolerating calculated failures, and celebrating innovation successes contribute to a culture that supports innovation.

Third, external networks and collaborative relationships should be actively cultivated. Participation in industry associations, engagement with local business communities, and development of relationships with universities, research institutions, and support organizations provide access to complementary capabilities and resources. The benefits of colocation suggest that participation in industrial clusters or innovation districts, where available, may be particularly valuable.

Fourth, digital transformation should be approached holistically, addressing technological, organizational, and human factors simultaneously. Technology adoption should be accompanied by investments in employee skills, process redesign, and cultural change. The frameworks developed by Sari et al. (2025) provide guidance for comprehensive approaches to digital transformation.

Fifth, achieving innovation ambidexterity requires conscious attention to the balance between exploration and exploitation. For very small firms, temporal separation, alternating between periods focused on exploration and periods focused on exploitation, may be more feasible than attempting to pursue both simultaneously. For larger SMEs, contextual ambidexterity, creating organizational conditions that encourage employees to allocate time appropriately between exploratory and exploitative activities, may be achievable.

For policymakers, the findings suggest several directions for improving support for SME innovation. First, simplification of application procedures for funding programmes would enhance accessibility for resource-constrained SMEs. Standardized formats, online submission, and technical assistance with applications can reduce administrative burdens that disproportionately affect smaller firms. Second, programmes should be tailored to address the heterogeneous needs of SMEs across different sectors, sizes, and stages of development. One-size-fits-all approaches are unlikely to meet the diverse needs of the SME population.

Third, integration of funding with capability-building support, mentoring, and networking opportunities addresses the multiple barriers facing SMEs rather than focusing narrowly on financial constraints. Programmes such as Made Smarter, which combine technology advice, leadership development, and grant funding with networking opportunities, demonstrate the potential of integrated approaches. Fourth, support for industrial clustering and the development of innovation districts can leverage the benefits of geographical proximity for knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Fifth, attention to workforce development is essential for enabling SME participation in Industry 5.0. Programmes supporting skills development, leadership training, and talent attraction help address the human resource constraints that limit SME innovation capacity. Partnerships between SMEs and educational institutions, facilitated by policy support, can develop talent pipelines that benefit both parties.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on published literature means that the synthesis reflects the foci and biases of existing research. Topics that have received limited research attention, such as SME innovation in developing country contexts or in specific industry sectors, are correspondingly underrepresented in the synthesis. Second, the restriction to English-language publications may exclude relevant research published in other languages, particularly from non-Anglophone contexts.

Third, the focus on peer-reviewed journal articles, while ensuring quality, excludes insights from practitioner literature, policy reports, and other sources that may contain valuable perspectives.

These limitations suggest directions for future research. First, longitudinal studies examining how SME innovation capabilities and practices evolve over time would complement the cross-sectional designs that dominate current research. Understanding innovation trajectories, the timing and sequencing of capability development, and the factors that distinguish successful from unsuccessful innovation journeys requires research designs that track SMEs over extended periods.

Second, comparative research across different national and regional contexts would illuminate how institutional environments, policy frameworks, and cultural factors shape SME innovation. The predominance of research from developed economies limits understanding of innovation in the contexts where most SMEs are located. Cross-cultural comparative studies, particularly those including developing and emerging economies, would contribute to more globally relevant knowledge.

Third, sector-specific research would reveal how industry characteristics, technological trajectories, and market structures shape innovation requirements and opportunities. The innovation challenges facing manufacturing SMEs differ from those facing service firms, knowledge-intensive businesses, or creative industries. Research that attends to these sectoral differences would enable more targeted recommendations for practice and policy.

Fourth, research examining the integration of sustainability and digitalization imperatives, the twin transitions facing contemporary SMEs, would address an important gap in current understanding. How SMEs can simultaneously pursue digital transformation and sustainability innovation, and the synergies and trade-offs between these objectives, represents a critical question for both theory and practice.

Fifth, methodological innovation in SME innovation research would enhance the field's ability to address complex questions. Mixed-method designs combining quantitative analysis of innovation outcomes with qualitative exploration of innovation processes would provide richer understanding than either approach alone. Participatory research designs that engage SME managers as co-researchers would generate insights grounded in practitioner experience. Design science approaches that develop and test innovation management tools and techniques would contribute directly to practice.

Concluding Remarks

Innovation management in small and medium enterprises represents a domain of both theoretical significance and practical urgency. As the predominant form of business organization across global economies, SMEs collectively shape economic development, employment, and societal well-being. Their capacity to innovate determines not only their individual competitiveness but also the dynamism and resilience of the economies in which they operate. Understandịng how these enterprises can effectively manage innovation is therefore not merely an academic exercise but a contribution to economic and social progress.

The findịngs of this synthesis offer grounds for both optimism and concern. The optimism stems from evidence that SMEs can achieve significant innovation outcomes despite their resource constraints, leveraging flexibility, customer proximity, and collaborative relationships to compensate for limitations. The documented cases of successful digital transformation, the mechanisms of network-enhanced innovation, and the potential of well-designed policy support all demonstrate that SME innovation is achievable. The concern arises from the persistent barriers that constrain SME innovation capacity, the uneven distribution of innovation capabilities across regions and sectors, and the challenges posed by rapid technological and environmental change.

The path forward requires concerted effort from multiple stakeholders. SME managers must develop the strategic foresight, organizational capabilities, and collaborative relationships that enable innovation. Policymakers must design and implement support mechanisms that address the multiple barriers facing SMEs while avoiding the pitfalls of complex procedures and rigid eligibility criteria. Researchers must generate knowledge that illuminates the mechanisms of SME innovation and informs evidence-based practice and policy. Educators must develop curricula that prepare current and future SME managers for the innovation challenges they will face.

The integration of these efforts, within a shared understandịng of the importance and complexity of SME innovation, offers the best hope for realizing the innovation potential of this vital sector. As the business environment continues to evolve, with technological acceleration, sustainability imperatives, and global uncertainties creating both challenges and opportunities, the capacity of SMEs to innovate will remain central to their survival and success. The synthesis presented in this paper, while inevitably incomplete, aims to contribute to the collective endeavor of understandịng and enabling innovation in the enterprises that form the backbone of global economies.

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DANCE PERFORMANCE AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE: OKOROSHA MASQUERADE DANCE OF OHII COMMUNITY IN FOCUS.

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Abstract:
In an era defined by globalization and digital innovation, traditional dance practices face numerous challenges, including cultural homogenization, reduced intergenerational transmission, and limited access to diverse cultural expressions. These issues hinder meaningful cultural exchange and threaten

the preservation of dance as a living cultural form. However, traditional performance practices like the Okorosha masquerade dance of the Ohii community in southeastern Nigeria are undergoing significant transformation. Once confined to local ritual and seasonal celebration, the Okorosha is increasingly visible on digital platforms, reaching new audiences and sparking intercultural engagement. This study explores how the Okorosha masquerade, with its deep roots in community, spirituality, and identity, functions as a medium for intercultural dialogue in a technologically connected world. Focusing on the Ohii community, the research adopts a qualitative approach combining ethnographic survey, digital performance analysis, and interviews with performers, choreographers, and cultural custodians. It examines how the dance is performed, transmitted, and interpreted within both local settings and global digital environments. Particular attention is given to how livestreaming, online archives, and social media shape contemporary understandings of Okorosha, influencing both its preservation and evolution. Findings reveal that while technology can lead to cultural appropriation, misrepresentation, distortion, or cultural meanings, it also creates opportunities for cultural preservation, diaspora engagement, and global appreciation of indigenous traditions. When thoughtfully applied, digital tools can amplify the voices of communities like Ohii and support respectful cultural exchange. The study calls for digital strategies that centre local agency, prioritize cultural context, and foster inclusive participation. In doing so, it positions Okorosha not only as a traditional ritual but as a living art form capable of bridging cultural divides and sparking dialogue across borders.

KeyWords: Okorosha Masquerade, Ohii Community, Intercultural Dialogue, Digital Technology, Traditional Dance

Introduction:

Dance has long been a universal language transcending borders, cultures, and spoken words. Dance, as a cultural expression rooted in history, ritual celebration, storytelling, community values and identity, serves not only as an art form but also as a means of cultural expression and preservation, and occupies a particularly important role in fostering intercultural understanding. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, traditional performance arts face both unprecedented opportunities and critical challenges. Umeh opines that, "within the Igbo-speaking regions of southeastern Nigeria, the Okorosha masquerade dance of the Ohii community stands out as a vibrant and complex performance that blends ritual, spirituality, entertainment, and social commentary" (). Traditionally held during specific festivals and rites of passage, the dance represents ancestral connection and serves as a channel for communal dialogue.

Many traditional custodians of African culture express concerns about the ways in which digital platforms sometimes displace the original cultural narratives of performances. The intersection of indigenous dance performance and digital technology raises complex questions about representation, ownership, and authenticity. The widespread sharing of traditional dances online is often hailed as a democratization of cultural heritage. Yet, beneath the surface lies a deeper concern: Can intercultural dialogue truly occur if cultural expressions like the Okorosha dance are presented out of context, reduced to mere entertainment, or appropriated without understanding or respect? However, the advent of the digital technologies, particularly social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, has created new modes of cultural dissemination. These platforms have transformed the way cultural artifacts are experienced and interpreted, often by audiences far removed from their origins.

For the Ohii community, the Okorosha masquerade is not merely a visual spectacle but a deeply spiritual and moral institution. Okeke and Nwosu posits that, "its appearance on digital platforms without adequate cultural framing risks turning a sacred ritual into mere "content", potentially undermining its spiritual potency and sociocultural relevance" (55). As these performances become more visible online, there is growing concern about how their meanings are preserved, altered, or misinterpreted. This essay examines the dual role of technology in either deepening or distorting intercultural dialogue through the lens of the Okorosha masquerade dance, asking how such indigenous performance practices can survive and thrive in the digital age without compromising their cultural authenticity and how it can promote meaningful and respectful intercultural exchange in a digital context.

Mythological overview of the Okorosha Festival in Ohii: Okorosha dance festival according to myth, is an African traditional performance that holds in Ohii Communty between November and December every year. No one can claim exact the historical knowledge of how and when "Okorosha" festival began in Ohii community. The information available to the present generation of Ohii people on Okorosha festival was handed over from generation to generation through oral history.

According to this history as gathered from the chief priest of Okorosha, Nze Igbo Arinna (oral interview, 2024); a certain man in the distant past, whose full identity was not known once, lived among the people. He was light hearted, jovial and a cheerful-giver. He was in the habit of sharing what he had with the less privilege. He was an advocate of peace, his love for peace always ignited his desire to visit home or individuals who had one form of misunderstanding or the other with their neighbours. During one of such occasions, he mediated and restored peace through songs and rhythmic pattern of movements, meant to amuse the people. This manner of demonstration in restoring peace earned him a name as "Oko-ezi" one (who teaches and demonstrates). Years after, his name was translated to "Okorosha." Throughout his life time in the community, Okorosha did not quarrel or had misunderstanding with any member of the community. Rather, he ensured that love, peace, unity and social justice were the guiding principles of life and existence in the community. On the night before his departure from the community, Okorosha gathered all the members of the community at the village square under the moonlight and entertained them with stories, from which the people learnt the virtues of oneness, love, peace and justice. Nobody could say or state precisely what became of "Okorosha" after that night's encounter with the community members. Speculations were that he died after that encounter with the community. But since there was no trace of his decomposed body, others believed that he disappeared into the thin air. Whichever is the case, Okorosha left a legacy in that last encounter with his people because it later served as a model of peace and unity in Ohii community. This "Oko-ezi" method of conflict resolution was modified and developed into the Okorosha festival with the passage of time, the nomenclature of Okorosha which is what is being performed annually in Ohii today has continued to change.

Performance Guidelines in Okorosha:

The Okorosha festival is a festival that is being performed annually in Ohii community and there are guiding principles during this period. In Ohii community, the Okorosha do not perform on Nkwo market day, children, women and pregnant women as well are not flogged by the Okorosha. During this festival, the community will be at peace with oneself and another. The people do not fight in order not to distract the spirit of the Okorosha. During the period, people are advised not to play any kind of musical instrument in other not to invite the spirit at the wrong time (Ohii community Elders, 2024).

Traditional Significance of Okorosha:

The Okorosha masquerade is a multifaceted performance with roots in ancestral worship, moral instruction, and community entertainment. The masquerade dance, has the dual functional role as both a spiritual rite and a social performance that communicates ethical values. The masquerades often dressed in elaborately crafted costumes and accompanied by rhythmic drumming and chanting, represent ancestral spirits believed to return during festivals to bless the community. Amadi emphasizes that, "the dance serves a regulatory function by publicly condemning social deviance, thereby reinforcing community norms" (). Okorosha is also a generational performance, younger men undergo initiation rites and apprenticeship under elder masquerade performers. This process ensures continuity and communal involvement, tying the performance deeply to the social fabric of the Ohii people.

Digitalization of Performing Arts:

Digital technology has significantly altered the landscape of performance arts globally. Taylor and Marcus argue that, "social media has created "hyper-visibility" for traditional dances, allowing cultural performances from previously inaccessible communities to reach global audiences" (45). However, Pérez warns that,

> … digital formats often lack the depth necessary to convey the layered meanings embedded in traditional performances. The shift from "communal participation" to "virtual consumption" often reduces nuanced cultural practices to aesthetic or exotic experiences (10).

In Africa, this concern is amplified by a history of colonial misrepresentation and exoticization. The risk of misinterpretation increases when performances are divorced from their linguistic, historical, and spiritual contexts (Chen, 150).

Intercultural Dialogue in the Digital Era:

Intercultural dialogue refers to the open and respectful exchange between people from different cultural backgrounds. Hall notes that, "digital platforms offer immense potential for fostering such dialogue, especially by making lesser-known cultures accessible to a broader audience" (80). For example, the fusion of Indian classical dance with hip-hop exemplifies how collaboration can symbolize mutual respect and creative evolution. Alexandra Card, highlights how intercultural performances like Chi Udaka blends traditional drumming and dance from Japan and India, fostering "a shared artistic vocabulary that transcends cultural boundaries" (2). Similarly, the Okorosha masquerade of southeastern Nigeria, when shared through digital platforms, introduces global audiences to Igbo spirituality and communal identity, illustrating how technology according to Resario, can "serve as a vessel for cultural preservation and exchange" (67). However, access does not automatically equate to understanding. Without appropriate context and representation, cultural exchange can devolve into voyeurism or appropriation. Mensah and Darlington (2023) contend that, "sustainable intercultural dialogue in the digital era requires intentional frameworks of storytelling, cultural translation, and local agency."

Increased Visibility and Fragmented Context:

The digital dissemination of Okorosha has led to increased visibility, particularly among diaspora audiences and global cultural enthusiasts. However, interviews with non-local viewers revealed that while the visual elements of the dance (costumes, music, choreography) were appreciated, the symbolic and spiritual dimensions were often lost. A viewer commented, "I loved the rhythm, but I couldn't tell what the masks meant." This indicates a gap in cultural translation that weakens the potential for genuine intercultural understanding (Mensah & Darlington, 205).

Commodification, Ethical and Cultural Considerations: The increasing visibility of Okorosha carries ethical responsibilities. Extracting performance from context, risks commodifying or misrepresenting rituals that remain sacred locally. Many of the online videos, especially those produced by third-party media houses, framed the Okorosha dance in touristic or entertainment terms. Thumbnail images emphasized the "mystery" or "freakishness" of the masquerades, often with clickbait titles. This style of presentation commodifies the performance, stripping it of its ritual and community relevance (Okeke & Nwosu, 55). So, ensuring that performers and communities retain control over digital representation is very essential in preserving authenticity and preventing appropriation. It is advisable at this juncture, to adapt the Cultural Voice and Agency approach, where videos produced by members of the community, particularly youth-led initiatives, is more likely to include explanatory captions, subtitled interviews, or even behind-the-scenes commentary of the performance. These community-authored narratives provide richer context, thereby enabling more respectful and informed engagement from global audiences. The empowerment of cultural insiders to frame their own narratives is thus crucial to meaningful intercultural dialogue. Moreover, the tension between Christian religious norms and masquerade tradition persists, while cultural syncretism allows participation across belief systems, disputes occasionally arise when masquerades continue to be associated with violence or sorcery in some narratives. In this situation, dialogue between elders, religious leaders, and cultural advocates is key to mediating these tensions.

Potential Challenges of Digital Platforms in the Technological Age:

While digital technology has opened new platforms for cultural sharing, it has also introduced risks of misrepresentation, intellectual property theft, and loss of spiritual authenticity.

Several community members expressed concern that masquerade videos were being reused in decontextualized memes or remixed with inappropriate soundtracks, leading to spiritual dissonance and disrespect. Despite its transformative potential, dance used for intercultural dialogue in a technological context brings several challenges.

Firstly, cultural appropriation and misrepresentation remain critical concerns. Traditional dances often have sacred or historical contexts that risk dilution or disrespect when performed outside their original settings, particularly online. Zubovic warns that, "when traditional dance forms enter the digital realm without contextual framing, they risk becoming superficial commodities stripped of their epistemological depth" (243). For instance, Indigenous dances are frequently copied without proper cultural understanding or acknowledgment, leading to misrepresentation.

Secondly, the loss of authenticity occurs as traditional dances are shortened or stylized to suit online audiences, potentially stripping their original significance. Thomson notes that, "Digital mediation tends to fragment traditional dance forms, resulting in performances that lack the ritual or communal essence vital to their meaning" (12).

Thirdly, digital inequality restricts participation for communities lacking adequate access to technology, limiting intercultural exchange opportunities. Pataranutaporn et al., emphasize the digital divide as, “a significant barrier preventing equitable participation in AI-mediated cultural projects, particularly for marginalized groups” (7). Finally, commercialization can exploit dance forms popularized on social media without compensating or respecting the original cultures. Vechtomova and Bos caution that "algorithm-driven platforms prioritize viral content over cultural nuance, commodifying traditional forms for mass consumption" (5).

Prospects and Opportunities:

Conversely, the technological age presents exciting opportunities and offers unprecedented tools for sharing and preserving dances. Digital platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, enable dancers worldwide to collaborate in real time, blending styles and stories from various cultures. Card, illustrates this through the example of intercultural festivals where artists use digital tools to create "a polyphonic dialogue of movement and sound" that transcends geographical limits (4). Virtual Reality (VR) and Motion Capture Technology (MCT) help archive and recreate traditional dances for educational or immersive experiences. Resario however states that, "these Virtual archives and digital recordings aid preservation efforts for traditional dances vulnerable to fading due to urbanization or generational shifts" (69). However, online classes and performances raise awareness and promote respectful learning about diverse cultures, with Aksoy and Ling stating that, "digital dance education offers an accessible, interactive medium to foster empathy and intercultural competence among learners" (351). For diasporic communities, Thomson opines that, "digital dance performances facilitate cultural reconnection and identity reinforcement across borders" (15). In addition, institutions like the Imo State Council for Arts and Culture can support its preservation by funding performances and promoting cultural education. Just as the Ekumeku Movement represented armed resistance, the Okorosha represents cultural resistance, a fight to maintain the soul of the people.

Toward Authentic Intercultural Dialogue:

In furtherance to the response of the challenges identified, the findings suggest that for intercultural dialogue to be meaningful in a technological age, cultural performances must be accompanied by proper context and community input. This requires moving beyond the passive consumption of digital content to active engagement with its cultural backstory. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok should support this by integrating cultural tagging, metadata, and educational overlays. Hall (2018) emphasizes that, "intercultural understanding is cultivated, not assumed." To harness technology's benefits responsibly, this study proposes three key strategies:

i) **Digital Storytelling Workshops:**Invest in inclusive digital infrastructure to enable underrepresented communities' participation (Pataranutaporn et al., 9), and support community-based digital archiving to maintain authenticity and cultural ownership. Collaborating with local cultural custodians to train them in video production, cultural annotation, and digital distribution techniques, breeds respect and promote cultural depth. Resario stresses that "community-led documentation ensures that cultural narratives remain anchored in local voices" (72).

ii) **Esoteric Tagging Systems:** Introduce metadata protocols and cultural disclaimers that explain the context and sacred significance of performances. This helps protect content from misuse and provides viewers with cultural cues. Also, promote cultural sensitivity and ethical sharing, ensuring that collaborations honor context, consent, and credit. Zubovic argues that "digital intercultural collaborations must foreground epistemological humility to avoid epistemic injustice" (247).

iii) **Educational Collaborations:**Partner with universities, cultural institutions, and NGOs, to integrate diverse dance forms into educational curricula to foster intercultural understanding and create multimedia content that includes community-driven explanations of traditional performances. There is also the need to encourage creative innovation grants for cross-cultural digital dance projects, facilitating projects that "… respect tradition while embracing emergent forms" (Vechtomova and Bos, 8).

Conclusion:

The Okorosha masquerade dance, as performed in the Ohii community, represents a living heritage that bridges generations, beliefs, and communal values. In the technological age, this heritage faces the dual challenge of remaining visible while maintaining cultural authenticity. Digital technologies, while offering unprecedented visibility, also bring the risk of distortion, commodification, and cultural appropriation. For intercultural dialogue to be truly effective, it must be rooted in respect, community agency, and contextual framing. The future of cultural performance in the digital era depends on collaborative efforts to ensure that traditions like the Okorosha are not only seen, but truly understood. Preserving and revitalizing it is not just about holding on to the past, it is about securing a meaningful, authentic future. The Igbos have resisted conquest and colonization, they must now resist cultural amnesia. To archive this tradition, is to reaffirm the values, stories, and beliefs that define the Igbo people. A collective effort involving scholars, communities, and cultural institutions is required to preserve and pass on this heritage. As the Igbo proverb says, *onye n'amaghi uru ihe o ji n'aka, nwere ike itufu ha niile*, (he who does not value what he has, may lose everything).

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SACRIFICE AND ATONEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND IGBO TRADITIONAL RELIGION: A THEOLOGICAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RITUAL, MEANING, AND MEDIATION

BY

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Abstract

This article presents a theological and comparative analysis of sacrifice and atonement in the Old Testament and Igbo Traditional Religion. In the Old Testament, sacrificial practices—especially within Leviticus—function as divinely instituted means for addressing sin, restoring covenant relationships, and maintaining ritual purity. Key theological themes include substitution, mediation, holiness, and the centrality of blood. In Igbo Traditional Religion, sacrifice operates within a cosmological framework that emphasizes harmony between humans, divinities, ancestors, and the Supreme Being, Chukwu. Employing a theological–hermeneutical and comparative methodology, this study identifies areas of convergence such as ritual mediation and communal restoration, alongside divergences including covenant theology, monotheism, and the finality of atonement. The study further extends its analysis to the New Testament, particularly the Epistle to the Hebrews, demonstrating the Christological fulfillment of Old Testament sacrificial theology. The article argues that while both traditions share a deep sacrificial consciousness, the biblical framework provides a more systematized and theologically definitive understanding of atonement. The findings contribute to African Christian theology by offering a robust model for contextual biblical interpretation.

Keywords: Sacrifice; Atonement; Old Testament; Igbo Traditional Religion; Christology

Introduction

Sacrifice remains a universal religious category that mediates the relationship between humanity and the divine. In ancient Israel, sacrifice is central to theological reflection and religious praxis, particularly within the cultic legislation of Leviticus. These sacrificial systems articulate a theology of holiness, sin, and reconciliation grounded in covenant (Milgrom, 1991; Gane, 2005).

In contrast, Igbo Traditional Religion conceptualizes sacrifice within a cosmological and relational framework. The Supreme Being, Chukwu, is approached through intermediaries such as divinities and ancestors, and sacrificial acts are performed to maintain harmony and restore balance (Mbiti, 1969; Idowu, 1973).

Recent scholarship has emphasized the importance of contextual theology in African Christianity, advocating for dialogue between biblical texts and indigenous religious categories (Bediako, 1995; Tiénou, 2019). However, detailed comparative work remains limited.

Research Problem

Despite significant scholarship in both biblical studies and African religious studies, there remains a pronounced methodological gap that limits the full understanding of the interface between Scripture and indigenous African spirituality. On the one hand, many studies of the Old Testament—particularly those focused on sacrificial systems—privilege rigorous exegesis and historical-critical analysis but often do so in isolation from the cultural and religious contexts of African readers (Gane, 2017; Milgrom, 1991). These studies tend to assume a Western academic framework that emphasizes textual precision, linguistic analysis, and canonical structure, but they rarely consider the ways in which these texts resonate with pre-existing indigenous religious concepts or practices. As a result, such scholarship can appear abstract or culturally distant, leaving African audiences with limited tools for contextual theological application.

On the other hand, the study of African Traditional Religions - including the sacrificial and ritual systems of the Igbo - has often been conducted with anthropological or sociological emphases (Mbiti, 1969; Idowu, 1973). These studies provide rich insights into cosmology, ritual practice, moral frameworks, and communal life but frequently lack rigorous engagement with the theological and exegetical dimensions of the biblical text. When scholars attempt to connect indigenous practices with biblical concepts, the discussion often remains descriptive rather than analytical, resulting in comparisons that are superficial or analogical without deep theological grounding.

Consequently, there exists a dual deficiency: biblical scholarship can be too text-centered and culturally detached, while studies of African religious systems may lack systematic theological reflection. This methodological gap has practical consequences for African Christian theology. Without an integrative approach, the African church may either ignore the relevance of its indigenous religious heritage or misinterpret it in ways that compromise doctrinal integrity. The challenge, therefore, is to develop a framework that both preserves the exegetical rigor of Old Testament studies and recognizes the meaningful religious structures and categories present in African contexts.

This study addresses that gap by adopting a theological–comparative approach. Such an approach allows for the systematic comparison of biblical sacrificial theology and Igbo sacrificial practices, highlighting points of convergence and divergence while maintaining fidelity to the textual and cultural sources. By bridging this divide, the study aims to provide a framework for African Christian theology that is both biblically grounded and culturally resonant.

Aim and Objectives

The overarching aim of this study is to provide a theologically informed, culturally contextual analysis of sacrifice and atonement as expressed in the Old Testament and Igbo Traditional Religion. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how these two systems articulate the human need for reconciliation with the divine and how understanding this interplay can contribute to African Christian theological reflection.

To achieve this aim, the study sets forth four specific objectives:

Examine Old Testament sacrificial theology: This objective involves a detailed exegetical study of the sacrificial system codified in Leviticus, focusing on the theological functions of various offerings, the role of the priesthood, and the overarching covenantal framework. Attention will be given to the conceptual dimensions of atonement, mediation, and the symbolism of blood as life and reconciliatory medium (Milgrom, 1991; Gane, 2017).

Analyze Igbo sacrificial systems: This objective entails an anthropological-theological exploration of Igbo sacrificial practices, including the role of Chukwu, divinities, and ancestors. The study will examine the ethical, communal, and cosmological dimensions of sacrifice and its function in maintaining balance, harmony, and relational integrity within the community (Mbiti, 1969; Idowu, 1973; Uchendu, 1965).

Identify theological parallels and distinctions: This comparative objective seeks to highlight points of convergence—such as mediation, symbolism of blood, and communal restoration—and points of divergence, including covenantal structure, divine initiative, and the finality of atonement. The goal is not simply to identify similarities but to understand their theological significance and implications for contextual theology.

Develop implications for African Christian theology: Finally, the study aims to draw practical and theological lessons for African Christianity. By integrating insights from Old Testament exegesis and Igbo religious structures, the study intends to articulate a model of contextual theology that is both culturally relevant and theologically faithful, offering pathways for pastoral practice, catechesis, and theological reflection in African contexts (Bediako, 1995; Tiénou, 2019).

Methodology

The study employs a tri-fold methodological framework designed to integrate rigorous textual analysis with comparative cultural insights.

Historical-Grammatical Exegesis: The study begins with a careful exegesis of relevant Old Testament texts, particularly the sacrificial laws and rituals in Leviticus. This method examines the original Hebrew language, literary structures, historical setting, and theological intent of the passages (Milgrom, 1991; Wenham, 1979). By grounding the analysis in historical-grammatical principles, the study ensures that conclusions about Old Testament sacrifice are textually and historically sound.

Theological Analysis: Beyond descriptive exegesis, the study interprets the theological meaning of sacrificial practices. This includes exploring concepts such as atonement, mediation, covenant, holiness, and the role of blood. Theological analysis allows for the articulation of principles that transcend the historical context and inform contemporary understanding, particularly within African Christian theology (Gane, 2017; Koester, 2021).

Comparative Religious Methodology: Finally, the study adopts a comparative approach to engage Igbo religious practices. This method involves examining sacrificial rituals, cosmology, and ethical frameworks within their indigenous context while drawing structured comparisons with Old Testament theology. Points of convergence and divergence are systematically identified, allowing for an integrated discussion that is both academically robust and contextually sensitive (Mbiti, 1969; Idowu, 1973; Bediako, 1995).

By employing this integrated methodology, the study bridges the methodological gap between rigorous biblical exegesis and African religious studies, ensuring that both textual fidelity and cultural relevance are maintained. This methodological triangulation not only strengthens the academic rigor of the research but also enhances its practical applicability to African Christian theological reflection.

Sacrifice and Atonement in the Old Testament

Sacrifice in the Old Testament is not an isolated ritual act but a deeply theological institution embedded within Israel's covenant relationship with God. The sacrificial system, particularly as codified in Leviticus, functions as the primary means by which issues of sin, impurity, and divine-human alienation are addressed.

At its core, Old Testament sacrifice is rooted in the concept of divine holiness. God is understood as utterly holy, and therefore human beings, who are prone to sin and impurity, cannot approach Him without mediation (Wenham, 1979). Sacrifice provides that mediatory framework. The various offerings - burnt offering (ʿōlāh), sin offering (ḥaṭṭā’t), guilt offering (’āšām), and peace offering (šĕlāmîm) - each serve distinct but interconnected theological purposes (Milgrom, 1991).

The burnt offering symbolizes total consecration to God. It is wholly consumed on the altar, indicating complete surrender. The sin offering and guilt offering, however, directly address the problem of sin. The Hebrew term ḥaṭṭā’t is particularly significant because it refers both to sin and to the offering that removes sin, suggesting an intrinsic link between the problem and its remedy (Sklar, 2015). Similarly, the guilt offering emphasizes restitution and ethical responsibility, indicating that sin is not merely a ritual problem but also a moral one (Gane, 2005).

Central to the theology of sacrifice is the concept of atonement, expressed by the Hebrew verb kippēr. This term conveys the idea of covering, purging, or reconciling. Importantly, atonement in the Old Testament is not achieved through human ingenuity but is divinely instituted. God provides the means through which sin can be addressed, underscoring divine grace and initiative (Gane, 2017).

The role of blood is particularly crucial. According to (Leviticus 17:11), life is in the blood, and it is given for atonement. Blood functions symbolically as the life of the sacrificial victim, which is offered in place of the sinner. This introduces the concept of substitution, where one life stands in for another. Milgrom (1991) argues that blood serves to cleanse the sanctuary from the pollution caused by human sin, thereby maintaining the possibility of God's continued presence among His people.

The Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16, represents the climax of Israel's sacrificial system. This annual ritual involves the high priest entering the Holy of Holies to perform atonement for himself and the entire community. Two goats are central to this ritual: one is sacrificed, and the other, the scapegoat, symbolically carries the sins of the people into the wilderness. This dual symbolism emphasizes both purification and removal of sin (Wenham, 1979).

Priesthood is another indispensable element. The priest (kōhēn) serves as mediator between God and the people. He performs the rituals, offers sacrifices, and ensures that the procedures are carried out according to divine instructions. Without the priest, the sacrificial system cannot function effectively (Gane, 2005).

In summary, sacrifice in the Old Testament is a divinely ordained system that integrates ritual, ethical, and theological dimensions. It addresses the problem of sin, maintains covenant relationship, and underscores the holiness of God. It is not merely ritualistic but deeply relational and covenantal.

Sacrifice In Igbo Traditional Religion

Sacrifice in Igbo Traditional Religion occupies a central place within the religious and cultural life of the people. Unlike the structured covenantal framework of the Old Testament, Igbo sacrificial practices are embedded within a cosmological worldview that emphasizes harmony, balance, and interconnectedness between the physical and spiritual realms.

At the apex of Igbo cosmology is Chukwu, the Supreme Being who is regarded as the creator and sustainer of all existence. However, unlike the direct covenantal relationship seen in the Old Testament, Chukwu is often approached indirectly through intermediaries such as divinities (alusi) and ancestors (Mbiti, 1969). This layered structure reflects a hierarchical understanding of the spiritual universe.

Sacrifice in this context serves as a means of maintaining equilibrium within the cosmos. The Igbo worldview assumes that life is governed by moral and spiritual laws, and any violation—whether moral wrongdoing or ritual impurity—disrupts this balance. Sacrifice is therefore necessary to restore harmony (Idowu, 1973).

Different types of sacrifices exist within Igbo religion. Propitiatory sacrifices are offered to appease offended deities or spirits. Expiatory sacrifices are performed to cleanse individuals or communities from the effects of sin or taboo violations. Thanksgiving sacrifices express gratitude for blessings received, while protective sacrifices are intended to avert danger or misfortune (Umeh, 2018).

Ritual specialists play a crucial role in these practices. Priests, diviners, and elders act as mediators between the human and spiritual worlds. They possess specialized knowledge of rituals and are responsible for interpreting the will of the gods. Their role is comparable, in some respects, to that of Old Testament priests, although the theological frameworks differ (Uchendu, 1965).

Blood is also a significant element in Igbo sacrificial practice. It is regarded as the carrier of life and spiritual power. The shedding of blood in sacrifice symbolizes the offering of life to the spiritual realm, reinforcing the seriousness and efficacy of the ritual.

Another important dimension of Igbo sacrifice is its communal character. Sacrificial acts are often performed on behalf of families, lineages, or entire communities. This reflects the communal nature of Igbo society, where individual actions are understood to have broader social and spiritual implications (Kalu, 2008).

Ethically, sacrifice is closely linked to moral responsibility. Wrongdoing is not merely a personal issue but a communal concern that can bring misfortune upon the entire group. Sacrifice thus serves both a religious and social function, reinforcing moral norms and restoring communal cohesion.

In summary, sacrifice in Igbo Traditional Religion is a holistic practice that integrates cosmology, morality, and social order. It is primarily concerned with maintaining harmony between humans and the spiritual world, rather than fulfilling a covenantal relationship as seen in the Old Testament.

Comparative Theological Analysis

A comparative analysis of sacrifice and atonement in the Old Testament and Igbo Traditional Religion reveals both profound similarities and significant differences. These points of convergence and divergence are crucial for developing a balanced and contextually relevant theology.

One major point of convergence is the centrality of sacrifice. In both traditions, sacrifice is indispensable for maintaining the relationship between humans and the divine. It is not optional but essential. This suggests a shared human awareness of the need for reconciliation with the spiritual realm (Mbiti, 1969).

Another area of convergence is the role of mediation. In the Old Testament, priests mediate between God and the people, while in Igbo religion, priests and elders serve as intermediaries between humans and spiritual beings. This indicates a common recognition that direct access to the divine is limited and requires authorized mediators (Wenham, 1979; Uchendu, 1965).

The symbolism of blood also provides a strong point of similarity. In both traditions, blood represents life and plays a crucial role in sacrificial rituals. It is associated with purification, appeasement, and restoration. This parallel suggests a shared symbolic understanding of life as sacred and transferable within ritual contexts (Gane, 2017).

Furthermore, both systems emphasize communal restoration. Sacrifice is not merely an individual act but has corporate implications. It restores harmony within the community and between the community and the divine.

Despite these similarities, important differences must be acknowledged. One of the most fundamental differences lies in the concept of covenant. In the Old Testament, sacrifice operates within a covenantal framework initiated by God. This covenant establishes a unique relationship between God and Israel, with clearly defined obligations and promises (Milgrom, 1991). In contrast, Igbo sacrifice is rooted in a cosmological framework that emphasizes balance and reciprocity rather than covenant.

Another major difference is the nature of the divine. The Old Testament presents a monotheistic view of God, while Igbo religion involves a hierarchical system of spiritual beings. Although Chukwu is supreme, interaction with the divine often occurs through multiple intermediaries (Idowu, 1973).

The issue of divine initiative versus human agency also distinguishes the two systems. In the Old Testament, God provides the means of atonement, highlighting divine grace. In Igbo religion, sacrifice is largely initiated by humans seeking to restore balance or avert misfortune.

Finally, there is a difference in the concept of finality. Old Testament theology, particularly when viewed in light of later biblical development, moves toward a definitive resolution of sin. Igbo sacrificial practices, however, are cyclical and ongoing, reflecting the continuous need to maintain harmony.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis reveals that while both traditions share a common sacrificial logic, they differ significantly in their theological foundations and implications. These differences are essential for avoiding simplistic equivalence and for developing a nuanced contextual theology.

Christological Fulfillment of Sacrifice and Atonement

The theology of sacrifice and atonement in the Old Testament finds its definitive culmination in the New Testament, most explicitly articulated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews offers a sustained theological reinterpretation of the sacrificial system of Leviticus, presenting Jesus Christ as both the ultimate High Priest and the perfect sacrifice. This dual role is central to understanding the continuity and discontinuity between Old Testament sacrificial theology and its fulfillment in Christ.

A foundational argument in Hebrews is that the Old Testament sacrificial system was inherently provisional and anticipatory. The repeated sacrifices prescribed under the Mosaic Law could not bring about definitive atonement. As Hebrews 10:1 indicates, the law was "a shadow of the good things to come," lacking the capacity to perfect the worshiper (Koester, 2021). This notion of shadow and reality suggests that the sacrificial system functioned typologically, pointing beyond itself to a greater and final act of redemption.

Scholars such as Lane (1991) and Koester (2021) emphasize that the insufficiency of animal sacrifices lies not in their divine origin but in their limited scope. They could address ritual impurity and maintain covenantal relationship, but they could not fully cleanse the human conscience. This limitation creates the theological necessity for a superior sacrifice - one that is both qualitatively and ontologically distinct.

Central to the Christological argument in Hebrews is the presentation of Jesus as the High Priest. Unlike the Levitical priests, whose ministry was constrained by mortality and moral weakness, Christ's priesthood is eternal and perfect. Hebrews 7 situates Jesus within the order of Melchizedek, thereby establishing a priesthood that transcends the Aaronic line. This priesthood is characterized by permanence, effectiveness, and divine appointment (Attridge, 1989).

Furthermore, Christ's priesthood is inseparable from His self-offering. Hebrews 9:11–14 articulates a profound contrast between the blood of animals and the blood of Christ. While the former sanctifies externally, the latter purifies the conscience, enabling genuine transformation. Gane (2017) notes that this internalization of atonement; marks a significant development in biblical theology, shifting the focus from ritual purification to moral and spiritual renewal.

The concept of substitution is also intensified in the Christological framework. Whereas Old Testament sacrifices symbolically represent substitution, Christ's sacrifice embodies it fully. His death is not merely representative but vicarious, effecting real reconciliation between God and humanity (Morris, 1983). This aligns with Pauline theology, where Christ is understood as the one who "became sin" on behalf of humanity (2 Cor. 5:21).

One of the most distinctive features of Christ's sacrifice is its finality. Hebrews repeatedly emphasizes that Christ's offering was made "once for all" (Heb. 10:10). This stands in stark contrast to the repetitive nature of Old Testament sacrifices. The repetition of sacrifices in the Levitical system underscores their provisional nature, whereas the singularity of Christ's sacrifice signifies its completeness and sufficiency (Schreiner, 2015).

This finality has profound theological implications. It indicates that the problem of sin has been decisively addressed and that no further sacrificial mediation is required. The veil separating humanity from God is removed, granting believers direct access to the divine presence (Heb. 10:19–22). This democratization of access represents a radical shift from the restricted access characteristic of the Old Testament cult.

The notion of covenant is also redefined in Christological terms. Hebrews 8 presents Jesus as the mediator of a "better covenant," grounded in divine promise rather than human performance. Drawing on Jeremiah 31, the author of Hebrews emphasizes the internalization of the law and the direct knowledge of God. This new covenant surpasses the old by addressing not only external behavior but also internal disposition (Koester, 2021).

When brought into dialogue with Igbo Traditional Religion, the Christological fulfillment of sacrifice reveals both points of continuity and transformation. The Igbo sacrificial system, centered on restoring harmony between humans and the spiritual realm, resonates with the biblical emphasis on reconciliation. The idea that wrongdoing disrupts cosmic balance and requires ritual intervention parallels the Old Testament understanding of sin and atonement (Mbiti, 1969; Idowu, 1973).

However, Christological theology introduces a decisive transformation. First, the multiplicity of mediators in Igbo religion—divinities, ancestors, and priests—is replaced by the singular and sufficient mediation of Christ. Hebrews 9:15 presents Christ as the sole mediator of the new covenant, eliminating the need for intermediary agents.

Second, the cyclical nature of Igbo sacrificial practices is contrasted with the finality of Christ's sacrifice. In Igbo religion, sacrifices must be continually offered to maintain harmony. This reflects an ongoing vulnerability to spiritual imbalance. In contrast, the New Testament proclaims a definitive resolution of sin through Christ's once-for-all sacrifice (Schreiner, 2015).

Third, the direction of initiative differs significantly. In Igbo religion, humans initiate sacrifice in response to perceived spiritual needs. In the biblical narrative, God initiates atonement by offering His Son. This underscores the primacy of divine grace over human effort (Bediako, 1995).

From an African theological perspective, Christ's sacrifice can be understood as both fulfillment and transformation of traditional sacrificial categories. Bediako (1995) argues that African religious heritage provides a conceptual framework that can facilitate the reception of the gospel. However, this framework must be reinterpreted in light of Christ's definitive work.

In conclusion, the Christological fulfillment of sacrifice and atonement represents the climax of biblical theology. The Epistle to Epistle to the Hebrews redefines and transcends Old Testament sacrificial categories, presenting Christ as the ultimate High Priest and perfect sacrifice. This fulfillment not only completes the Old Testament system but also provides a transformative lens for engaging African traditional religions, including Igbo sacrificial thought.

Implications for African Christian Theology

The comparative analysis of sacrifice and atonement in the Old Testament and Igbo Traditional Religion, when read through the lens of Christological fulfillment, carries profound implications for African Christian theology. These implications are particularly significant in the areas of contextual hermeneutics, inculturation, theological identity, and the ongoing challenge of syncretism.

One of the most important implications lies in the field of contextual hermeneutics. African theology has long emphasized the necessity of interpreting Scripture within the lived realities of African contexts. Scholars such as Ukpong (2000) and Tiénou (2019) argue that biblical interpretation must engage African cultural categories if it is to be meaningful and transformative. The parallels between Old Testament sacrificial theology and Igbo religious practices provide a valuable entry point for such engagement.

For instance, the Igbo understanding of sacrifice as a means of restoring harmony offers a conceptual bridge for explaining the biblical doctrine of atonement. Rather than imposing foreign categories, theologians can draw on indigenous concepts to illuminate the meaning of Christ's sacrifice. This approach enhances comprehension and fosters deeper theological appropriation (Bediako, 1995).

However, contextualization must be balanced with theological fidelity. The danger of syncretism arises when elements of traditional religion are incorporated into Christian theology without critical evaluation. Syncretism can lead to a distortion of the gospel, particularly when the uniqueness and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice are compromised (Sanneh, 2003).

To avoid this, African theology must adopt a critical-constructive approach. This involves affirming what is compatible with biblical revelation while rejecting or transforming what is not. For example, while the mediatory role of priests in Igbo religion may serve as a helpful analogy, it must ultimately give way to the singular mediation of Christ as presented in Hebrews (Schreiner, 2015).

Another important implication concerns the concept of inculturation. Inculturation refers to the process by which the gospel is expressed within a particular cultural context. In the African setting, this involves translating biblical concepts into indigenous categories without losing their essential meaning (Shorter, 1998).

The sacrificial framework provides a particularly fertile ground for inculturation. The deep-rooted sacrificial consciousness in Igbo religion suggests that the concept of atonement is not foreign but already embedded within the cultural worldview. This aligns with Mbiti's (1969) observation that African religions are profoundly concerned with maintaining relationships between humans and the spiritual world.

Nevertheless, inculturation must also involve transformation. The gospel does not merely adapt to culture; it also challenges and reshapes it. In the case of sacrifice, this means moving from a system of repeated ritual offerings to a faith-based appropriation of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. This transition requires both theological clarity and pastoral sensitivity.

The implications also extend to the formation of African Christian identity. The integration of biblical theology with African cultural categories enables believers to articulate their faith in ways that are both authentic and contextually relevant. This contributes to the development of a distinctly African Christian theology that is neither derivative nor syncretistic (Bediako, 1995).

Moreover, the Christological fulfillment of sacrifice has ethical implications. In both the Old Testament and Igbo religion, sacrifice is closely linked to moral responsibility.

However, the New Testament deepens this connection by emphasizing internal transformation and ethical living as responses to Christ's sacrifice. Hebrews 13:15–16, for example, redefines sacrifice in terms of praise and good works.

This ethical dimension is particularly relevant in African contexts where issues of justice, corruption, and communal responsibility are prominent. A contextual theology of atonement must therefore move beyond ritual categories to address practical ethical concerns. The transformative power of Christ's sacrifice must be reflected in social and moral renewal (Tiénou, 2019).

Another implication relates to interreligious dialogue. The similarities between Old Testament and Igbo sacrificial systems provide a basis for constructive engagement between Christianity and African Traditional Religions. Such dialogue can foster mutual understanding and reduce religious tensions. However, it must be grounded in a clear articulation of the distinctiveness of the Christian message.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of theological education in Africa. There is a need for curricula that integrate biblical exegesis, African religious studies, and systematic theology. This interdisciplinary approach will equip theologians and church leaders to engage effectively with both Scripture and culture.

In conclusion, the implications of this study for African Christian theology are both extensive and transformative. By engaging the parallels and differences between Old Testament sacrificial theology and Igbo Traditional

Religion, and by grounding this engagement in the Christological fulfillment presented in the Epistle to Epistle to the Hebrews, African theology can develop a robust, contextually relevant, and biblically faithful understanding of atonement. This approach not only enriches theological reflection but also enhances the lived experience of faith within African communities.

Conclusion

This study has undertaken a theological and comparative exploration of sacrifice and atonement within the Old Testament and Igbo Traditional Religion, demonstrating that both traditions are shaped by a profound concern for restoring the relationship between humanity and the divine. Through detailed engagement with the sacrificial system of Leviticus and the cosmological framework of Igbo religion centered on Chukwu, the research has shown that sacrifice functions in both contexts as a means of addressing disorder—whether understood as sin, impurity, or cosmic imbalance.

The study has identified significant points of convergence, including the centrality of sacrifice, the symbolic importance of blood, the necessity of mediation, and the communal dimension of reconciliation. These parallels suggest that sacrificial consciousness is not incidental but reflects a deep-seated human awareness of moral failure and the need for restoration. In this regard, Igbo Traditional Religion provides valuable conceptual categories that illuminate aspects of Old Testament sacrificial theology and offer meaningful points of contact for contextual biblical interpretation.

However, the study has also demonstrated that these similarities must not obscure critical theological differences. The Old Testament presents a covenantal framework in which sacrifice is divinely instituted and regulated, emphasizing God's holiness and initiative. In contrast, Igbo sacrificial practices are rooted in a cosmological system that prioritizes balance and reciprocity within a network of spiritual relationships. These distinctions become even more pronounced in the New Testament, particularly in the Epistle to Epistle to the Hebrews, where the sacrificial system reaches its Christological fulfillment.

The portrayal of Jesus Christ as both the ultimate High Priest and the perfect sacrifice represents the decisive turning point in the theology of atonement. His once-for-all offering surpasses the repetitive sacrifices of both the Old Testament and Igbo religious systems, providing a definitive and sufficient means of reconciliation. In Christ, the anticipatory nature of Old Testament sacrifice is fulfilled, and the cyclical pattern of ritual mediation is brought to completion. This fulfillment not only resolves the problem of sin but also redefines the nature of sacrifice as a transformative, relational reality grounded in divine grace.

For African Christian theology, this comparative study underscores the importance of a critical yet constructive engagement with indigenous religious traditions. Igbo sacrificial concepts can serve as hermeneutical bridges for communicating the gospel, but they must be reinterpreted in light of the finality and sufficiency of Christ's work. Such an approach enables a form of contextualization that is both culturally meaningful and theologically faithful, avoiding the twin dangers of cultural alienation and syncretism.

Ultimately, this study affirms that the quest for atonement—evident in both biblical and Igbo religious traditions—finds its fullest and most coherent expression in the person and work of Christ. By integrating rigorous exegesis, comparative analysis, and contextual theological reflection, the article contributes to the ongoing task of articulating a distinctly African Christian theology that is deeply rooted in Scripture and genuinely responsive to African religious experience.

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