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**SACRED NARRATIVES AND CULTURAL
RESILIENCE: RELIGIOUS HUMANITIES IN A
FRAGMENTED WORLD**

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Abstract

This study examines the role of sacred narratives in fostering cultural resilience within contemporary Nigeria, a society fragmented by ethno-religious conflict, violent extremism, and digital polarisation. While existing scholarship has largely prioritised political economy and security concerns, insufficient attention has been given to the religious humanities as a resource for sustaining moral order and communal identity amid persistent instability. This study addresses this gap by advancing a narrative-based account of cultural resilience, drawing on Paul Ricoeur's narrative hermeneutics to analyse sacred texts, oral traditions, folktales, liturgies, and prophetic discourses across

historical and contemporary contexts. Adopting Igbo cultural and religious narratives as an illustrative case, the study employs a qualitative methodology based on personal communication (informal qualitative interviews) with selected religious actors and the critical engagement of extant literature, including theological writings, sermons, hymns, and archival materials. Thematic and interpretive analysis indicates that sacred and cultural narratives function as moral frameworks that reinforce communal solidarity, shape ethical subjectivity, and sustain adaptive hope under conditions of social fragmentation. These narratives also facilitate the internalisation of shared norms that regulate behaviour and orient individuals towards collective responsibility. However, the findings further indicate that when politicised, such narratives may intensify exclusionary identities and deepen social divisions. The study therefore contributes to religious studies and conflict scholarship by reframing cultural resilience as a narratively mediated process. It recommends strengthening interreligious literacy, integrating narrative approaches into peace education, and promoting responsible theological engagement in the public sphere, and concludes that the religious humanities remain a critical resource for cultural renewal and national cohesion in fragile and pluralistic societies.

Key words: Igbo Cultural and Religious Narratives, Sacred, Indigenous, Fragmented World, Religious Intolerance, Ethno-Religious Crisis

Introduction

Across Western societies, the academic study of sacred narratives has emerged as a critical tool for understanding social cohesion (Williams, 2023). Scholarly discourse increasingly recognises that religious stories can counter social fragmentation by providing shared moral foundations and visions of human wholeness (Nwashili, 2025). This hermeneutical approach, influenced by thinkers such as Paul Ricoeur, focuses on how narrative shapes identity and ethical commitment within communities (Williams, 2023). Similarly, in African contexts, indigenous sacred traditions demonstrate profound resilience. Osinem et al. (2024) document how the Api-Opi deity in Igbo land persists despite colonial and modern pressures, relying on the transmission of ritual narratives and cultural memory. Furthermore, Asika (2025) illustrates how the traumatic memory of the Nigerian Civil War is explored in post-war poetry, framing memory itself as a sacred duty and a witness-bearing process that holds potential for healing. These examples establish that sacred narratives, whether emerging from institutionalised religion or indigenous spiritual systems, constitute foundational resources for sustaining moral order and collective identity during periods of instability (Osondu & Chukwu, 2023).

Contemporary Nigeria presents a paradoxical reality in which these sacred narratives are simultaneously a source of resilience and a mechanism of division (Bala, 2025; A. Ogu, P. Okoro and Z. Kaodiechi, personal communication, March 26, 2026). The country faces

escalating ethno-religious discord, which is amplified by digital platforms where identity-based rhetoric often overrides reasoned discourse (Shuaib, 2026). Scholars note that religion in Nigeria, interwoven with ethnic and political factors, has become a site of violent contestation, making interfaith dialogue increasingly crucial (Williams, 2023; I. Arinze, O. Okoye and J. Afunugo, personal communication, March 26, 2026). Amidst this fragmentation, institutions such as the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) work to foster dialogue, yet their efforts are challenged by the politicisation of religious identity (Williams, 2023). Shared cultural practices, including the Igbo kola nut ritual, function as symbols of unity, hospitality, and mediators for connecting with the divine (Osondu & Chukwu, 2023). However, manipulation of religious narratives by political actors can intensify exclusionary identities, transforming what should be a unifying force into a driver of social division (Bala, 2025; Shuaib, 2026). This duality underscores the urgent need to understand how sacred narratives operate both as resources for resilience and as potential catalysts for deeper social fragmentation (Williams, 2023).

This study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by advancing a narrative-based account of cultural resilience that centres the religious humanities as an analytical framework. While much of the scholarship on Nigeria's conflicts has focused on political economy and security responses, there has been insufficient attention to how sacred stories, oral traditions, and liturgies sustain moral order and communal identity. To

address this gap, this research draws on Paul Ricoeur's narrative hermeneutics to examine how communities configure and refigure stories to shape ethical subjectivity. Adopting Igbo cultural and religious narratives as an illustrative case, the study employs a qualitative methodology based on personal communication with selected religious actors and a critical engagement with extant literature, including theological writings and archival materials. The study has three objectives: to analyse how sacred narratives function as moral blueprints reinforcing solidarity; to examine their role in shaping ethical subjectivity and adaptive hope; and to assess the conditions under which such narratives either strengthen or undermine social cohesion. Through framing cultural resilience as a narratively mediated process, this study contributes to religious studies and conflict scholarship, offering practical insights for interreligious literacy and peace education in fragile, pluralistic societies.

Literature Review

Scholarly work on sacred narratives has established their central role in shaping moral order, identity, and social cohesion. Ricoeur's narrative hermeneutics remains foundational, as it explains how communities interpret stories to configure meaning and guide ethical action (Ricoeur, 1984). Narratives construct systems through which individuals understand themselves and their obligations to others. Studies in religious humanities extend this insight, showing that liturgies, myths, and oral traditions sustain shared values across generations (Ganzevoort, 2012). Within African contexts, religion

operates as a lived system embedded in everyday life. Indigenous traditions and symbolic practices preserve collective memory and reinforce communal bonds despite historical disruption (Mbiti, 1990). Recent studies further show that religious meaning-making now extends into digital spaces, where narratives are reconfigured and circulated across transnational networks, thereby reshaping belonging and identity (Kazira & Pasura, 2026).

Research on Nigeria complicates this account by highlighting the ambivalent role of religion in contexts of conflict. Religious identity intersects with ethnicity and politics, producing both solidarity and division. Kukah (1993) and Marshall (2009) demonstrate that religion is deeply embedded in power relations and public life. Empirical studies confirm that ethno-religious tensions continue to undermine social stability and development (Ngwoke & Ituma, 2020). More recent analyses emphasise that religion is not inherently violent but becomes problematic when instrumentalised within historical and political struggles (Falola, 1998). At the same time, interreligious dialogue remains a viable pathway for fostering solidarity and mutual recognition in pluralistic settings (Okpaleke, 2022). This body of work reveals a persistent tension between religion as a resource for peace and as a mechanism for exclusion.

Limited attention has been given to how these dynamics operate at the level of narrative interpretation. Existing scholarship often prioritises structural or institutional explanations, leaving the narrative processes that shape

ethical subjectivity underexplored. This study addresses that gap by advancing a narrative-centred account of cultural resilience grounded in Ricoeur's framework. It examines how sacred and cultural narratives sustain moral order, shape communal identity, and generate adaptive hope within fragmented contexts. Igbo religious and cultural materials serve as an illustrative case. The study contributes to scholarship by reframing resilience as a narratively mediated process rather than a purely material condition. It also clarifies the conditions under which narratives reinforce cohesion or deepen division. The objectives are to analyse the moral function of sacred narratives, assess their role in ethical formation, and identify pathways for their responsible use in peace building and interreligious engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative hermeneutics. Ricoeur (1984) explains that narratives shape human understanding through interpretation and re-interpretation. Narratives organise experience into meaningful structures. Such structures guide moral judgement and inform action. Identity emerges within this interpretive process as individuals locate themselves within shared stories. This construct aligns with the study's concern for cultural resilience, since moral order and communal identity depend on how narratives are received and sustained within society.

Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity provides a basis for analysing how sacred narratives form ethical subjectivity. Identity is not fixed but develops through

engagement with stories that convey values and norms (Ricoeur, 1984). Religious texts, oral traditions, and liturgies function as moral resources that shape conduct and responsibility. This position addresses the study's problem of social fragmentation in Nigeria. Cultural breakdown reflects not only material conditions but also weakened shared meanings. A narrative lens therefore clarifies how communities maintain coherence through interpretive continuity.

The framework also draws insight from African religious thought which situates meaning within communal life. Mbiti (1990) argues that religion permeates social existence and sustains collective memory. Narratives within this context preserve moral codes and reinforce belonging. Such an understanding supports the study's justification, as it shows that cultural resilience cannot be reduced to political or economic explanations. Religious humanities offer resources for continuity, especially where formal institutions remain fragile.

Attention is given to the ambivalent nature of religious narratives within plural societies. J. D. Y. Peel and Ruth Marshall demonstrate that religion operates within power relations and public contestation (Marshall, 2009). Narratives can unify but can also legitimise exclusion. This insight strengthens the analytical focus of the study. It explains why sacred narratives in Nigeria function both as sources of resilience and as instruments of division. The framework therefore supports the objective of identifying conditions under which narratives sustain cohesion or intensify conflict.

This theory further engages narrative approaches within practical theology which emphasise lived experience and meaning making. Ganzevoort (2012) maintains that narratives interpret human experience and guide ethical reflection. This perspective fills the identified gap in knowledge. Existing studies privilege structural explanations of conflict, yet they overlook how narrative processes shape ethical consciousness. A narrative centred framework addresses this limitation and provides a tool for analysing moral formation within fragmented contexts.

This theoretical position establishes cultural resilience as a narratively mediated process. Sacred narratives sustain hope, regulate behaviour, and reinforce shared identity when they are interpreted within inclusive moral structures. Distortion occurs when such narratives are politicised and stripped of ethical depth. The theory therefore aligns with the study's objectives. It enables a critical analysis of how narratives function as moral constructs, how they shape ethical subjectivity, and how they influence social cohesion in contemporary Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative design suited to the interpretation of meaning, identity, and moral formation within religious contexts. Focus rests on depth of understanding rather than measurement. A narrative hermeneutical approach, informed by Paul Ricoeur (1984), guides the analysis and enables critical engagement with texts and lived experience.

Igbo cultural and religious narratives serve as the illustrative case due to their rich and enduring traditions. Data derive from two sources. Personal communication (Informal qualitative interviews) were conducted with selected religious actors, including clergy, traditional practitioners, and lay participants. Selection followed purposive criteria based on knowledge and experience. Documentary materials were also examined, including sacred texts, sermons, hymns, folktales, and archival records, to capture both continuity and reinterpretation of narratives.

Data collection relied on personal communication and relevant textual sources. Interviews followed a flexible guide that allowed participants to express their understanding of sacred narratives and communal life. Documentary materials were selected based on relevance to moral instruction, identity formation, and responses to social instability.

Analysis employed thematic and interpretive procedures. Data were organised into themes related to moral foundations, ethical subjectivity, and cultural resilience. Interpretation followed Ricoeur's theory of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration (Ricoeur, 1984). Patterns across sources were compared to identify convergence and divergence, with emphasis on the function of narratives.

Rigour was ensured through triangulation of interviews and texts and through repeated engagement with the data. Reflexivity guided the process to account for

interpretive bias. Ethical standards were observed throughout. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained in all representations.

Igbo Cultural and Religious Narratives

In a society fragmented by ethno-religious conflict, violent extremism, and digital polarisation, the question of how communities sustain moral order and collective identity becomes urgent. For the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria, cultural and religious narratives embody truth and sincerity. These narratives are ethical structures that shape subjectivity, regulate behaviour, and anchor communal solidarity in conditions of instability. Examining them through the lens of the religious humanities highlights their capacity to counter fragmentation and cultivate integrity in social life.

In Igbo land, it is a grave taboo and abomination to shed innocent blood, sow discord, or steal another's land (Afunugo, 2025). Acts such as terrorism, vandalism, armed robbery, kidnapping, and related vices are strongly condemned, as they bring pain, chaos, and catastrophe upon the community (E. Amakaeze, U. Udedibia and O. Egeoma, personal communication, March 27, 2026). Religion serves as a vital tool for promoting moral conduct, unity, peace, and social concord (Afunugo&Nnatuanya, 2025).

Sacred narratives among the Igbo operate as moral infrastructures. Afunugo (2024b) shows that Igbo cosmology frames social roles within brotherhood and

reciprocity rather than imported stereotypes. This ethical grounding resists reductionist categories and affirms dignity and communal obligation. Nwuba (2021) demonstrates that the synthesis between Igbo traditional religion and Christianity fosters a moral vocabulary that values coexistence, rejecting fanaticism and enabling communities to navigate pluralism without sacrificing cultural continuity.

The resilience function of these narratives extends to economic life. Afunugo and Molokwu (2024) re-evaluate the Igbo apprenticeship system, *igbaboi*, as an expression of industriousness and mutual accountability. In a context where materialism and the pursuit of quick wealth threaten social cohesion, this narrative sustains work ethics rooted in intergenerational responsibility. Afunugo et al. (2023a) identify youth engagement in money making rituals as a rupture from these principles. Restoring cultural ethos requires narrative reconstruction alongside economic intervention.

Religious institutions serve as sites of ethical formation and social repair. Afunugo et al. (2023) propose Christian religious entrepreneurship as a means to restore the dignity of labour and integrate youth into meaningful social participation. Afunugo (2023b) addresses drug abuse among Igbo youth through communal and spiritual frameworks. These interventions reframe individual conduct within coherent moral narratives, emphasising coexistence and respect for life, and rejecting bloodshed as a solution to social disintegration.

Gender identity and social belonging illustrate another domain of narrative influence. Afunugo (2024a) integrates biblical interpretation and indigenous traditions to examine contemporary gender discourse. Sacred narratives, when engaged responsibly, provide ethical coherence and inclusivity. When politicised, they risk exclusion, underscoring the importance of deploying them to promote live and let live, “*biri ka mu biri*,” and shared human dignity.

Collectively, these scholarships from 2021 to 2026 demonstrate that Igbo cultural and religious narratives offer a foundational ethical vocabulary. They interpret crisis and seek commensurate solutions, regulate conduct, and sustain adaptive hope. Scholars such as Afunugo, Molokwu, Nganwuchu, and Nwuba reveal these narratives as dynamic, contested, and capable of both inclusion and exclusion. Religious humanities offer a critical resource to retrieve and redeploy these narratives with theological responsibility, interreligious literacy, and commitment to the common good.

Ethno-Religious Conflict, Extremism, and Moral Fragmentation in Nigeria

Nigeria’s fourth republic has witnessed a persistent rise in ethno-religious conflicts; hostile engagements driven by intertwined ethnic and religious interests (Adenuga et al., 2023). These conflicts stem from colonial legacies, unequal power distribution, and state failure to foster unity (Adenuga et al., 2023). Between 1999 and 2021, over 2,800 ethnic conflicts and 3,700 religious conflicts resulted in tens of thousands of fatalities, destabilising

political life and national cohesion (Adenuga et al., 2023).

A central driver of this instability is religious extremism, particularly in the northeast. Groups like BokoHaram and ISWAP have imposed extremist interpretations of Sharia, unleashing mass abductions, killings, and displacement (Atoi, 2022). This violence represents a form of moral evil, an erosion of shared human values, and has created a humanitarian crisis with over one million displaced (Atoi, 2022). Extremism thrives on poverty, illiteracy, and weak governance, making vulnerable populations easy targets for radicalization (Ikpe et al., 2023).

The introduction of Sharia law in northern states further deepened identity-based fractures. In places like Kaduna and Kebbi, Sharia policy hardened ethno-religious boundaries, leaving little room for negotiation between Muslim proponents and non-Muslim minorities (Okpanachi, 2012). Such polarisation reveals how state institutions can inadvertently shape exclusionary identities, fueling conflict rather than managing diversity (Okpanachi, 2012).

Widespread immoral acts persist in Nigeria, including ritual killings, kidnappings, forced prostitution, child labour, slavery, and the violent destruction of lives and property (Okafor, 2018; Nwosu et al., 2023). Incidents such as the activities of BokoHaram in the North-East, the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls, and recurrent bandit attacks in the North-West reflect this trend

(Orjinmo, 2021; Enemuwe et al., 2026). Cases of ritual killings in parts of Anambra State and Ogun State also show moral decline (Obadare, 2022; Mbonu-Amadi, 2025). These acts are often linked to religious extremism and distorted religious practices, and have led to fear, instability, and deep social division (Ebeke, 2024; Nwabuatu, 2025; A. Eze, K. Samson, N. Obika & Q. Iliyah, personal communication, March 27, 2026).

Beyond physical violence, religious extremism retards national development. It destroys infrastructure, deters investment, and strains social trust (Ugwu, 2023). The resulting hostile environment turns Nigeria into a security risk, undermining economic growth and political stability (Ugwu, 2023). When violence becomes routine, the fabric of everyday life, like family structures and community ties, begins to fragment (Ikpe et al., 2023).

Efforts to address these crises include counter-violent extremism programs, rehabilitation of former insurgents, and calls for ethical reorientation (Adenuga et al., 2023; Ikpe et al., 2023). Yet these interventions have not resolved the underlying problems. A missing layer is the sincere re-engagement with indigenous cultural, traditional, and religious narratives, resources that hold ethical frameworks for coexistence but remain sidelined in state-led responses.

Indigenous Cultural and Religious Narratives as Foundations for Social Repair in Contemporary Nigeria

Indigenous cultural and religious narratives among the Igbo offer substantive ethical resources for addressing the deepening ethno-religious tensions, economic dislocation, and moral fragmentation that afflict contemporary Nigeria. These narratives shape shared meaning, regulate conduct, and sustain communal identities. They provide moral vocabularies that counter exclusion, reaffirm collective responsibility, and support adaptive hope in contexts of conflict and instability (Ricoeur, 1984; Mbiti, 1990).

Nigeria's current crises reflect not only material disjunctions but also weakened frameworks for ethical orientation. Ethno-religious tensions emerge where shared narratives have been displaced by competitive identity claims rooted in politics and exclusionary rhetoric (Adenuga et al., 2023). In such contexts, indigenous narratives can counter divisive framings by reclaiming moral codes that emphasise human dignity, mutual respect, and reciprocal obligation. Among the Igbo, cosmological narratives foreground interconnectedness, communal solidarity, and moral accountability. These ethical norms guide behaviour toward the common good rather than narrow group interests (Mbiti, 1990).

Cultural rituals such as the kola nut ceremony embody principles of hospitality, unity, and shared belonging. When enacted in inter-communal spaces, these rituals

affirm mutual recognition between strangers and neighbours. They thus function as practical mediations of respect and solidarity. Such embodied narratives provide channels for reinforcing common identity across religious boundaries. They establish moral expectations that transcend sectarian divides and anchor civic interaction in shared cultural meanings (Osondu & Chukwu, 2023).

Economic crises in Nigeria are often attributed to structural factors, yet they also reflect moral disorientation. Narratives associated with the traditional Igbo apprenticeship system affirm industriousness, mentorship, and communal investment in human development. When these narratives are foregrounded in economic policy and practice, they can nurture work ethics anchored in collective responsibility rather than individual gain. The moral emphasis on hard work, reciprocity, and generational continuity indigenises economic participation. This reorientation can diminish the appeal of extractive behaviours that fuel corruption and social breakdown (Afunugo & Molokwu, 2024).

Moral crises in Nigeria manifest in erosion of social trust and rising antisocial behaviour. Indigenous religious narratives underscore the inseparability of moral conduct and communal wellbeing. In Igbo thought, ethical subjectivity is not a private matter but a communal imperative. Narratives that integrate cosmological order with social norms shape identities that recognise obligations to others. Such moral formation resists patterns of moral relativism and supports ethical

engagement grounded in reciprocal respect and accountability (Mbiti, 1990; Ricoeur, 1984).

Narratives therefore function at multiple levels. First, they articulate moral frameworks that counter polarising identities. Second, they shape ethical subjectivity that values collective flourishing. Third, they sustain cultural memory and adaptive hope amid adversity. Through rituals, oral traditions, proverbs, and liturgies, communities engage in ongoing narrative work that reaffirms shared norms and meanings. When these narrative practices are integrated into formal peace education and interreligious literacy programmes, they extend beyond cultural heritage into active resources for social repair and national cohesion (Ganzevoort, 2012).

For remedial engagements to succeed, indigenous narratives must be engaged responsibly. This requires inclusive hermeneutics that honours the plurality of Nigeria's cultural and religious landscape. Interreligious dialogue enriched by indigenous ethical vocabularies can expand moral imagination and reduce exclusion. Such dialogue situates shared narratives not as relics of tradition but as living resources for ethical reasoning and mutual recognition. The integration of these narratives into education, public discourse, and community practice builds bridges across fractured identities. It fosters moral architectures that sustain social trust, reduce conflict, and promote collective wellbeing (Okpaleke, 2022).

In summary, Nigerian indigenous cultural and religious narratives, particularly those within Igbo traditions, offer potent resources for addressing ethno-religious tensions,

economic instability, and moral crisis. They shape shared moral frameworks, guide ethical subjectivity, and sustain communal identities. Through reclaiming and responsibly mobilising these narratives, Nigerian society can strengthen cultural resilience and advance pathways toward peaceful coexistence and social renewal.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Nigerian indigenous cultural and religious narratives, particularly within Igbo traditions, serve as vital resources for sustaining moral order, communal identity, and cultural resilience amidst ethno-religious tensions, economic instability, and moral fragmentation. Through foregrounding narrative hermeneutics, the research shows how rituals, oral traditions, and sacred texts shape ethical subjectivity, regulate conduct, and promote adaptive hope. The findings underscore the relevance of the religious humanities in providing practical frameworks for interreligious dialogue, social cohesion, and ethical engagement in fragile and pluralistic societies.

The study is limited by its qualitative focus on Igbo cultural and religious narratives, which may not fully capture the diversity of indigenous practices across Nigeria. Data collection relied on personal communications and textual materials, which may reflect specific interpretations and localised perspectives. Furthermore, the analysis centred on contemporary contexts, leaving historical transformations and comparative cross-ethnic dynamics less explored. These

constraints highlight the need for caution in generalising findings to all Nigerian communities.

Future research could expand on this study by examining other ethnic groups and integrating longitudinal approaches to trace the evolving role of indigenous narratives in conflict resolution and moral formation. Comparative studies across Nigerian regions could illuminate the interaction between cultural narratives and state policies in mitigating ethno-religious tensions. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches combining anthropology, theology, and peace studies may enhance understanding of how sacred narratives can be systematically mobilised to foster sustainable social cohesion and national development.

Recommendations

- 1.** This study recommends that religious and community leaders should intentionally reclaim indigenous narratives, such as the Igbo kola nut ritual, brotherhood alongside live and let live mindset, and apprenticeship system, as moral frameworks. This reclamation would counter the divisive rhetoric fuelling ethno-religious conflict, directly addressing the problem of social fragmentation.
- 2.** To fill the gap in scholarship that prioritises structural explanations over narrative processes, this study recommends that peace education programmes must integrate narrative hermeneutics. Educators should use sacred texts and oral traditions to shape ethical subjectivity and communal solidarity among young people.

- 3.** The justification for this study rests on the need to move beyond political economy approaches. Therefore, policy makers should incorporate narrative based strategies into national cohesion frameworks, ensuring that cultural and religious stories are used to rebuild trust in unstable regions.
- 4.** As a contribution to knowledge, this study reframes cultural resilience as a narratively mediated process. Consequently, scholars in religious studies and conflict resolution should adopt Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework to analyse how sacred stories either strengthen or undermine social cohesion.
- 5.** The significance of this study lies in its demonstration of how religious humanities offer practical resources for renewal. This study recommends that interfaith bodies, such as the Nigeria Inter Religious Council, should draw on indigenous ethical vocabularies to foster mutual recognition across religious boundaries.
- 6.** Grounded in Ricoeur's theoretical framework, this study recommends that theological training institutions must teach narrative approaches to interpretation. Such training would equip religious actors to deploy sacred narratives responsibly, preventing their politicisation and misuse.
- 7.** To achieve the objective of identifying how narratives shape moral order, this study recommends the establishment of community forums where elders and youth jointly interpret folktales and proverbs. Such forums would reinforce shared norms and collective responsibility in fragmented societies.
- 8.** Addressing the objective of examining ethical

subjectivity, this study recommends that religious organisations should design liturgies and sermons that foreground communal accountability over individual gain. This would help internalise values of reciprocity and hard work among adherents.

9. In line with the objective of assessing conditions that lead to cohesion or division, this study recommends that media regulators must develop guidelines for digital platforms. These guidelines should discourage the politicisation of religious narratives that intensify exclusionary identities.

10. Federal and state ministries of education should integrate indigenous cultural and religious narratives, including Igbo folktales, proverbs, and ritual practices, into the national curriculum for primary and secondary schools. This integration would provide students with moral frameworks rooted in communal ethics, directly countering the ethno-religious polarisation identified in the problem statement.

11. This study adopts Igbo religious and cultural narratives as an illustrative case rather than a universal template. Its recommendations should therefore be applied in ways that reflect the specific realities, values, and internal logics of diverse indigenous traditions across Nigeria. Each context requires careful engagement with its own narrative resources, ethical frameworks, and cultural virtues. Such an approach ensures that the application of narrative based strategies remains context sensitive, analytically grounded, and resistant to homogenisation. It also affirms that cultural resilience emerges from the responsible interpretation of locally embedded narratives that sustain moral order and

communal identity within distinct social settings, thereby reinforcing national peace, deepening mutual understanding, and advancing social progress devoid of anarchy and crisis.

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TRANSFORMATION OF IGBO CULTURAL IDENTITY FROM THE PRE-COLONIAL TO POST-COLONIAL ERA

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Abstract

This paper examines the transformation of Igbo cultural identity from the pre-colonial period through colonial disruption to the post-colonial and contemporary era. It argues that Igbo identity has not been erased but fundamentally reconfigured through processes of cultural negotiation, adaptation, and resistance. Drawing on postcolonial theory and African cultural scholarship, the study explores how colonialism, Christianity, and Western education reshaped indigenous institutions, belief systems, and social structures. The paper demonstrates that contemporary Igbo identity reflects a hybrid formation, where traditional values coexist with modern influences. Ultimately, the study positions Igbo culture as dynamic and resilient rather than static or declining. Through emphasis in relation to loss, this paper contributes to a broader interrogation within African historiography and cultural studies offering more different understanding of how indigenous societies while maintaining core elements of their cultural heritage.

Introduction

Culture is not a static phenomenon but a dynamic and evolving system of meanings, practices, and identities shaped by historical experiences and social interactions. The Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria possess one of the most complex and adaptive cultural systems in Africa, characterized by decentralized political organization, rich cosmology, and vibrant social institutions. However, the advent of colonialism in the late nineteenth century marked a significant turning point in the trajectory of Igbo cultural identity.

Much scholarly discourse has framed colonialism as a force of cultural destruction, often suggesting that indigenous African identities were eroded or lost. While colonial encounters undoubtedly, disrupted existing systems, such narratives risk oversimplifying the processes of cultural change. This paper challenges the notion of cultural loss by arguing that Igbo cultural identity has undergone transformation through adaptive reconstruction rather than disappearance.

The central objective of this study is to trace the evolution of Igbo cultural identity across three major historical phases: the pre-colonial period, the colonial era, and the post-colonial/contemporary period. By examining these phases, the paper seeks to demonstrate that Igbo identity is best understood as a hybrid and negotiated construct shaped by both internal resilience and external influences.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification of Key Terms

A rigorous understanding of this study requires clarifying its core concepts: culture, Igbo culture, cultural identity, pre-colonial era, and post-colonial era. Conceptual clarification is essential for situating this study within existing scholarly discourse. This section critically examines the concepts of culture, Igbo culture, cultural identity, pre-colonial era, and post-colonial era as they relate to the transformation of Igbo society.

Culture

The concept of culture has evolved significantly within the social sciences, reflecting shifts from static to dynamic interpretations. One of the earliest and most influential definitions is provided by Edward B. Tylor (1871), who conceptualizes culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society.” This classical definition presents culture as a comprehensive system of learned behavior.

However, this early view has been critiqued for its static and overly inclusive nature, which fails to account for internal contradictions and change. Modern scholars argue that culture is not merely a repository of traditions but a dynamic and contested process. For instance, Clifford Geertz (1973) views culture as a system of meanings expressed through symbols, emphasizing interpretation rather than mere description. Similarly,

Raymond Williams (1983) identifies culture as both a “whole way of life” and a site of ideological struggle.

Building on this, Stuart Hall (1990) views culture as historically produced and constantly transformed, shaped by power relations, social interactions, and global forces. This perspective is particularly relevant to African societies, where colonialism and globalization have significantly redefined cultural structures.

In the context of this study, culture is understood as a dynamic, historically contingent system of meanings, practices, and institutions that evolves through interaction with internal and external forces.

Igbo Culture

Igbo culture refers to the indigenous system of beliefs, values, and practices of the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. It encompasses political organization, religion, language, economic practices, and social institutions. Scholars such as Elizabeth Isichei (1976) describe Igbo culture as highly adaptive, with a strong emphasis on individual achievement within a communal framework. Similarly, Victor Uchendu (1965) highlights the centrality of kinship systems, lineage organization, and social norms in structuring Igbo life.

A defining feature of Igbo culture is its decentralized political system, which distinguishes it from more centralized African societies. According to Adiele Afigbo (1981), governance in pre-colonial Igbo society

was based on consensus, age grades, and lineage authority rather than centralized kingship.

Igbo culture is also deeply spiritual, integrating religion into all aspects of life. The belief in Chukwu (supreme deity), Ala (earth goddess), and ancestral spirits underscores a worldview in which the physical and spiritual realms are interconnected. For this study, Igbo culture is conceptualized as a complex, adaptive system characterized by communal values, decentralized governance, and a spiritually grounded worldview, which has undergone transformation through historical processes.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a multifaceted concept that has attracted significant scholarly attention, particularly within postcolonial and cultural studies. According to Stuart Hall (1990), cultural identity can be understood in two ways: As a shared collective identity rooted in common history and ancestry (“being”) As a fluid and evolving construct shaped by historical change (“becoming”) This dual perspective highlights the tension between continuity and transformation, which is central to this study.

Similarly, Paul Gilroy (1993) emphasizes that cultural identity is shaped by historical experiences such as migration, slavery, and colonialism, making it inherently dynamic and hybrid. From a sociological standpoint, cultural identity involves:

- A sense of belonging

- Shared symbols and meanings
- Social practices that reinforce group membership

In the Igbo context, cultural identity is expressed through language, kinship ties, rituals, and communal values. However, colonialism introduced new cultural elements that challenged and reshaped this identity. Thus, cultural identity in this study is viewed as a dynamic process of self-definition and group belonging, continuously reconstructed through historical and social interactions.

Pre-Colonial Era

The pre-colonial era refers to the period before the imposition of European colonial rule in Africa, particularly prior to the late 19th century. For the Igbo, this era represents a time of indigenous autonomy and cultural coherence.

During this period, Igbo society was characterized by:

- Decentralized political structures
- Indigenous religious systems
- Localized economic practices
- Strong kinship and communal networks

Adiele Afigbo (1981) argues that pre-colonial Igbo society was not “stateless” in the sense of lacking order, but rather operated a diffused system of governance based on social institutions and customary laws.

Importantly, the pre-colonial era should not be romanticized as static or homogeneous. As scholars note, African societies were already experiencing internal changes and external interactions before colonialism.

In this study, the pre-colonial era is conceptualized as a historical phase of indigenous cultural formation and relative autonomy, which provides the baseline for analyzing subsequent transformations.

Post-Colonial Era

The post-colonial era refers to the period following the end of formal colonial rule, particularly after Nigeria's independence in 1960. However, scholars emphasize that "post-colonial" does not imply the complete disappearance of colonial influence.

Frantz Fanon (1961) argues that colonialism leaves lasting psychological, cultural, and institutional legacies that persist beyond political independence. Similarly, Kwame Nkrumah (1965) introduces the concept of neo-colonialism, where former colonies remain economically and culturally dependent on former colonial powers.

In cultural terms, the post-colonial era is marked by:

- Cultural hybridization
- Identity negotiation
- Persistence of colonial structures
- Influence of globalization

Homi K. Bhabha (1994) describes this condition as one of hybridity, where new cultural forms emerge from the interaction between indigenous and colonial influences.

In the Igbo context, the post-colonial era reflects:

- The coexistence of traditional and Western practices
- The transformation of institutions such as family, religion, and governance

- The role of migration and globalization in reshaping identity

Thus, the post-colonial era in this study is understood as a continuing process of cultural negotiation and reconstruction shaped by both colonial legacies and contemporary global forces.

Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Theory

This study is anchored on Postcolonial theory is an interdisciplinary framework that examines the cultural, political, and psychological effects of colonialism on formerly colonized societies. It seeks to understand how colonial power reshaped indigenous institutions, identities, and knowledge systems, as well as how these societies respond to and negotiate the legacies of colonial domination.

The foundations of postcolonial theory are associated with scholars such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi K. Bhabha. These scholars, though differing in emphasis, collectively highlight the enduring impact of colonialism beyond political independence.

According to Frantz Fanon (1961), colonialism is not merely a system of political control but a totalizing structure that transforms the cultural and psychological foundations of colonized societies. Similarly, Edward Said (1978) demonstrates how colonial discourse constructs and marginalizes indigenous identities, while Homi K. Bhabha (1994) emphasizes the emergence of hybrid cultural forms through colonial encounters.

Thus, postcolonial theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how colonialism produces disruption, domination, and cultural reconfiguration. Postcolonial theory is particularly suitable for this study because it provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the transformation of Igbo cultural identity across pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The theory explains how colonialism functioned as a disruptive force that restructured indigenous institutions, belief systems, and social relations, as emphasized by Frantz Fanon.

At the same time, it accounts for the persistence of colonial legacies in the post-colonial era and the emergence of new cultural forms through interaction and adaptation, as highlighted by Homi K. Bhabha. By foregrounding issues of power, cultural negotiation, and identity reconstruction, postcolonial theory enables a nuanced understanding of Igbo cultural identity not as a static or eroded entity, but as a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by historical processes.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Here, the researcher presents the analysis and discussion of findings on the transformation of Igbo cultural identity from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era. The analysis is structured thematically to reflect key dimensions of cultural identity, including political organization, religion, social institutions, and value systems. The discussion integrates theoretical insights with empirical realities to demonstrate patterns of continuity, disruption, and reconstruction.

Transformation of Political and Governance Structures

Findings indicate that pre-colonial Igbo society operated a decentralized political system characterized by consensus-building, lineage authority, and age-grade institutions. As noted by Adiele Afigbo, governance was participatory and diffused, reflecting a form of indigenous democracy.

However, colonial intervention fundamentally altered this structure through the introduction of indirect rule and the warrant chief system. This imposed hierarchy disrupted traditional authority and weakened communal decision-making processes. In the post-colonial era, this transformation persists in modified forms:

- Traditional institutions still exist but are subordinated to modern state structures
- Political authority has become more centralized and bureaucratic

This shift reflects what Frantz Fanon describes as the structural legacy of colonialism, where indigenous systems are not completely erased but reconfigured within imposed frameworks.

Transformation of Religious Beliefs and Practices

The findings reveal a profound transformation in Igbo religious life. Pre-colonial religion was holistic, integrating spirituality into governance, morality, and daily life. Deities such as Ala and ancestral spirits played central roles in maintaining social order.

With the advent of colonialism, Christianity emerged as a dominant religious force, leading to:

- Decline in traditional religious practices
- Reinterpretation of indigenous beliefs
- Conflict between converts and traditionalists

In the post-colonial period, however, the findings show religious syncretism:

- Many individuals identify as Christians while still engaging in traditional practices
- Indigenous beliefs persist in cultural festivals, rites of passage, and moral systems

This supports Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, where cultural elements are not simply replaced but recombined into new forms.

Transformation of Social Institutions and Kinship Systems

Pre-colonial Igbo society was organized around kinship, lineage, and communal living. Social institutions such as age grades, title systems, and extended family networks played critical roles in identity formation.

The findings indicate that colonialism and modernization introduced significant changes:

- Urbanization weakened extended family structures
- Western education promoted individualism
- Migration disrupted traditional community ties
- Despite these changes, key elements persist:
- Kinship obligations remain strong, especially in rural areas
- Age-grade systems continue in modified forms

- Communal support systems still influence social life

This reflects a pattern of selective continuity, where certain institutions adapt rather than disappear; reinforcing the argument that cultural transformation is not synonymous with cultural loss.

Transformation of Economic Practices and Value Systems

Economic life in pre-colonial Igbo society was based on agriculture, trade, and craftsmanship, with a strong emphasis on individual achievement and communal responsibility.

The findings show that:

- Colonialism integrated the Igbo into a global capitalist economy
- Wage labor and formal education replaced traditional economic systems
- Entrepreneurship evolved into modern business practices

However, a key continuity is the persistence of entrepreneurial values, which remain central to Igbo identity. This continuity suggests that certain cultural traits are deeply embedded and resilient; supporting the idea that transformation involves reconfiguration rather than replacement.

Identity Reconstruction in the Post-Colonial Era

One of the most significant findings is that Igbo cultural identity in the post-colonial era is neither wholly traditional nor entirely Western. Instead, it is characterized by:

- Cultural hybridity
- Identity negotiation
- Selective adaptation of external influences

The influence of globalization, migration, and diaspora networks has further complicated identity formation, creating multiple layers of belonging. Drawing on Stuart Hall, identity is best understood as a process of “becoming,” continuously shaped by historical and social forces.

In conclusion, rather than supporting a narrative of cultural erosion, the findings suggest that Igbo cultural identity has undergone adaptive transformation, maintaining continuity while incorporating new influences.

Summary of Findings

This study examined the transformation of Igbo cultural identity from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era through a conceptual and literature-driven analysis. The findings reveal that the trajectory of Igbo cultural identity is best understood as a complex interplay of disruption, continuity, and adaptive reconstruction.

First, the study found that pre-colonial Igbo society possessed a coherent and functional cultural system, characterized by decentralized political organization, indigenous religious practices, strong kinship networks, and a value system rooted in communalism and individual achievement. As documented by Adiele Afigbo, these institutions provided social cohesion and legitimacy within the society.

Second, the study established that colonialism constituted a major disruptive force, fundamentally altering the structural foundations of Igbo cultural life. The imposition of colonial administrative systems, Western education, and Christianity led to:

- The restructuring of indigenous governance
- The decline of traditional religious authority
- The introduction of new social and cultural values
- Consistent with the arguments of Frantz Fanon, these transformations extended beyond political control to reshape cultural and psychological orientations.

Third, the findings demonstrate that post-colonial Igbo cultural identity is neither a continuation of pre-colonial traditions nor a complete adoption of Western culture. Instead, it reflects a process of cultural hybridization, in which elements of indigenous and external influences coexist and interact. This aligns with Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity.

Fourth, the study reveals significant continuity in core cultural values, particularly in areas such as kinship, communal obligations, and entrepreneurial ethos. Despite structural changes, these elements have persisted and adapted to new socio-economic contexts.

Finally, the study found that Igbo cultural identity is dynamic and continuously negotiated, shaped by historical experiences, colonial legacies, and contemporary global influences. Drawing on Stuart Hall,

identity is understood not as a fixed entity but as an ongoing process of “becoming.”

Conclusion

This study concludes that the transformation of Igbo cultural identity from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era cannot be adequately explained through simplistic narratives of cultural loss or preservation. Rather, it is a multidimensional process of adaptive reconstruction, in which cultural elements are selectively retained, modified, and integrated into new historical contexts.

Colonialism undoubtedly disrupted key aspects of Igbo society, particularly in governance and religion. However, it did not result in the total erosion of indigenous culture. Instead, Igbo society has demonstrated remarkable resilience, maintaining core values and institutions while simultaneously engaging with external influences.

The post-colonial condition, therefore, reflects a hybrid and negotiated identity, shaped by the interaction between tradition and modernity, local practices and global forces. This challenges binary frameworks that position African cultures as either static or wholly transformed by colonialism.

Ultimately, the study contributes to broader scholarly debates by emphasizing that cultural identity is not merely inherited but actively constructed, and that

indigenous cultures possess the capacity to adapt without losing their foundational essence.

Recommendations

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

Cultural Preservation through Institutional Support

There is a need for deliberate efforts by governments, cultural organizations, and educational institutions to preserve and promote Igbo cultural heritage. This includes:

- Documentation of indigenous knowledge systems
- Promotion of Igbo language and traditions
- Integration of cultural studies into educational curricula

Strengthening Indigenous Institutions

Traditional institutions such as kinship systems, age grades, and community associations should be strengthened and integrated into modern governance structures where appropriate. These institutions continue to play important roles in social cohesion and conflict resolution.

Critical Engagement with Western Influence

Rather than uncritical adoption of Western cultural models, there should be a more reflective approach that allows for:

- Selective adaptation
- Preservation of indigenous values
- Contextual application of global practices

Promotion of Cultural Identity in the Diaspora

Given the role of migration and globalization, efforts should be made to sustain Igbo cultural identity among diaspora communities through:

- Cultural associations
- Festivals and heritage programs
- Digital platforms for cultural transmission

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**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION: A SOCIO-
POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDY OF
NIGERIA AND CHINA**

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Abstract

The study is a comparative analysis of the workings of local government administration in Nigeria and China. The study argued that globalisation, urbanisation,

regionalisation, technological innovation, and participatory planning are the major challenges of local government works. Since local government world over is designed to serve as an instrument for grass-root development and bringing government nearer to the people for the purpose of their maximum participation in the development of local communities; this major challenge to the workings of local government should be handled with utmost care to ensure that local areas are developed to avoid unmitigated migration to the urban cities. To ensure proper participation of the local people, local government are built with the act of decentralizing power either through devolution of power or delegation of power to the lowest level of government. With this in mind, the socio-political and administrative structures of local government in Nigeria and China were examined to provide the basis of how these instruments operate to differentiate single and multi-tier structures and how the administrative structure relate to the political system that are important to the mitigation of the challenges of local government. The study was anchored on Expo Facto Research Design. The theoretical underpinning of the study was a combination of Institutional Theory and Decentralisation Theory. The method of data collection employed by the study was Secondary Data Collection while the instrument of data analysis deployed by the study was Relational Content Analysis.

Keywords: Administration, Comparative Study, Decentralisation, Institutionalisation, Inter-Governmental Relations.

Introduction

Recent developments put phenomena, such as globalisation, urbanisation, regionalisation, technology innovation, democracy and participatory planning as major challenges for local government works (Dentres and Rose, 2005). In this regard, globalization relates to openness in various aspects including labour, commodities and capital exchanges that pressure local governments to improve their capacity, capability and knowledge, especially in delivering services on such exchange activities (Ocampo, 2010). Urbanisation, is linked with urban sprawling (Itall and Jones, 2010), and high concentration of urban population, in which local governments need to improve their performance to manage more comprehensive and dynamic economic and social urban issues (Denters and Rose, 2005).

The other three challenges, regionalisation refers to the recent growth of cross-boundary initiatives and commitments that lead local governments to deal with wider cross-boundary issues (Kidokoro *et al*, 2008). Meanwhile, technological innovation can be seen, at least, from the presence of technology such as internet and computer as being crucial for local government administration. As for democracy and participatory planning, they have strong emphasis on how local government can implement such community involvements on their programmes (Turner, 2014).

Administration aims at educating, enlightening and exposing the practitioners and students of local governments to the evolution, developments, principles,

practices, and theories used in studying local government, it's place in government, it's relationship with other governments, source of revenue for its operation, the practices and changes it witnessed across the globe. In this work, we are using Nigeria and China, as a case study of analysis. It is established that local government world over is designed to serve as an instrument for grassroots development and bringing government nearer to the people for the purpose of their maximum participation for the development of local communities.

In practical terms, local government is the closet tier of government to the people in any system of government. In the unitary system, power is devolved from the central government to the local government. In a federal system, power is shared among federal, state and local government. Local government, therefore, is a form of decentralisation of power either through devolution or delegation of power to the lowest level of government. On this note, the political and administrative structures of local government in Nigeria and China will be examined to provide the basis on how these instruments operate to differentiate single and multi-tier structures and how the administrative structure relates to the political system.

Theoretical Framework

This study will be anchored on two theories – Institutional Theory and Decentralisation Theory.

Institutional Theory: According to Science Direct, Com (2026), Institutional Theory examines the structures,

norms and practices that influence organisations and societies. It zeroes in and explains why organisations and institutions in similar fields often become isomorphic, that is, that they adopt similar structures to gain approval and survive within their environment. In line with this, Nur (2025) states that Institutional theory plays a vital and central role in local government administration by explaining how formal rules, informal norms, and cultural cognitive frames shape organisational behaviour, structure, and decision-making. Institutional theory posits that local governments do not operate merely to achieve technical efficiency but to attain legitimacy within their environment by adopting “taken-for-granted” structures and processes, a process known as institutionalisation. To Vandeboncoeur and Jennifer (2025), Institutional theory explores how social and institutional contexts shape the behaviour of organisations, professions, and other entities and establishments within society. It emphasises the importance of external and internal influences on institutions such as local government, considering how social norms and structures guide individuals and collective actions. It went further to state that institutional theory posits two main frameworks: the “environment as an institution” which focuses on conformity to external pressures, and the “organisation as an institution” which examines internal routines and practices. The theory maintains that institutionalisation occurs when individual actions become formalized into established routines that significantly influence interactions and operations within institutions.

Decentralisation Theory: Decentralisation theory on the other hand, according to Faguet (2021) is the devolution of power, authority, responsibility and resources by the central government to lower-level, local or peripheral entities of government. Decentralisation theory, according to Dick-Sagoe (2020), states that transferring authority, responsibility, and resources from central government to sub-national or local levels enhances efficiency, accountability, and citizen participation. It seeks to solve the problems of overloaded central systems by bringing decision-making to the people. So, in effect, decentralisation aims to improve administrative efficiency, enhance local participation, and tailor public services to local needs.

The two theories, Institutional Theory and Decentralisation Theory, are suitable as the theoretical framework for this study as both of them posit ways and manners by which local government can be institutionalised and very effective and efficient in ensuring the development of the local levels and entities of a country.

Calls for Local Government Reforms

Local government reforms are what academics, politicians, or even communities expect from the national government. It is believed that contemporary approach that relies on top-down system, in which local government only works as administrative hands of national governments, is no longer relevant. Denters and Rose (2005) highlight strong perspectives about the importance of more sophisticated local governments as

active local decision makers dealing with complex local and cross boundaries in this era. It is all about shifting from traditional government to modern government. Obviously, local governments are expected to deliver more effective and efficient management system, and service provision. Such improvements are the principle objectives of local government.

Local Government in Nigeria

Nigerian local government structure is made up of 774 local government areas, each with its own council. The local governments are the third tier of government in Nigeria, below the federal and the state governments. Local government is constitutionally entrenched as an order of government alongside the federal and state governments. The Constitution requires all states to enact legislation providing for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of local government councils. The legitimacy of the local government councils as a tier of government is derived from the 1999 Constitution which states that:

The system of Local Government by democratically elected Local Government Councils is under this Constitution guaranteed, and accordingly, the government of every state shall, subject to section 8 of this Constitution, ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.

Local governments are thus creatures of statute. The Constitution provides for the procedure for the creation of new local governments. The rationale for the constitutional recognition arose out of the need to make it obligatory on the state government to ensure the existence of democratically elected local government councils, to guarantee their functions and to direct the effective utilisation of funds allocated to them from federal revenue.

Composition, powers and functions of local government

Local governments in Nigeria operate a presidential system of government with two political institutions: the legislature and the executive. The legislature is composed of councilors, who are elected to make laws. The legislature makes all the laws for the proper administration and good governance of the local government area. The executive consists of the Chairman, Secretary and Supervisory Councilors. The Chairman is elected by the people. The Chairman appoints the Secretary and Supervisory Councilors, who are not members of the legislatures. In other words, separation of powers is practiced at the local government level. Each local government in the country operates on the basis of separation of powers between the executive and the legislature.

As an institution of development, local government power could be inferred from section 7(3) of the 1999 Constitution as an organ of government to "participate in economic planning and development" in its area of

jurisdiction. Local governments can exercise their powers to enact by-laws for:

- The economic development of the local government areas;
- Rates, levies, and other statutory charges;
- Employing and disciplining junior staff of the council; and
- The good governance of the local government.

While core functions of local government are defined in the Constitution, individual states may augment their responsibilities through legislation. The functions of local government are provided for in Schedule 4 of the 1999 Constitution. There are functions that local government share with other tiers of government, especially the state governments. These include the provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education; agricultural and natural resource development (this does not include exploitation of mineral resources); and the provision and maintenance of health services and such other functions as may be assigned to local governments by the State House of Assembly (Dullah Omar Institute, 2026).

Some functions are made mandatory for local governments and for these they have sole responsibility. The consideration and making of recommendations to the state commission on Economic Planning or any similar body on the economic development of the state, particularly insofar as the area of authority of the council and the state are affected, as well as proposals made by the said commission or body, is one such function. The

collection of rates on radio and television licenses is another. There are numerous others.

In practice, however, local governments are mere agents of the state governments. State governments regard the shared functions as a list of permissive functions, which they allow local governments to perform under supervision if they have the resources to perform them. State governments lay down policy and exercise administrative control over the quality and quantity of services to be delivered but leave the responsibility for funding to local governments which lack the resources to do so adequately. The constitution does not give local governments clear mandates on key local functions such as local development planning, primary education, health services. Their role in economic development planning is to make recommendations to states' agency for economic planning. With such unclear mandates, local governments have had an uphill task resisting state interference in local functions (Dullah Omar Institute, 2026).

Financing the governance role of local government

Local governments' expenditure responsibilities are financed largely through statutory allocations from the federal government, with local governments regularly receiving about 20% of total revenues in the divisible pool called the Federation Account. Since oil revenues are part of the Federation Account, local governments receive substantial revenues on account of this statutory allocation. Local governments are also entitled to a share of federally collected VAT revenues (outside of the

Federal Account). The share is determined by the National Assembly upon advice by the National Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission. In addition, states are mandated to allocate 10% of their internally generated revenue to local governments within their jurisdiction.

It is required that each state government and local governments in the state should maintain a special account called the Local Government' Account, into which is paid such funds to be applied for joint purposes as may be prescribed by the State or the National Assembly. Each state is expected to pay the local governments in its area of jurisdiction a proportion of its own revenue (that is, excluding the sums received from the Federal Account) (Obodo, 2017).

Local governments have original taxing powers. Four tax sources fall within their legal and administrative jurisdiction:

- Licenses and fees on television and wireless radio;
- Market and trading licenses and fees;
- Car park duties;
- Advertising fees.

In practice, only one tax source (markets) is exploited by local government. Interestingly, even the tax source universally considered a local tax, namely property taxes and rating, is in reality under the legal jurisdiction of the state. It is quite obvious that in Nigeria, the local governments depend largely on the Federation Account to finance their activities. The reason for the heavy

dependence on fiscal transfers from external sources is the nature of the taxes assigned to local governments. The revenue sources that fall under the jurisdiction of local government are non-buoyant and inelastic. They cannot yield sufficient revenue to make significant impact on the structure of local finance. In Nigeria, therefore, local government expenditure constantly surpasses the potentials for revenue sources owing to the great gulf between their needs and their fiscal capacity (Sanni, 2020; Ezeani, 2025).

Intergovernmental relations

The federal government still exercises both constitutional and statutory responsibility over local government administration through the creation of new local government through the normal processes of constitutional amendment, making provisions for statutory allocation of public reserve to the governments of the federation; establishing a National Electoral Commission or the purposed organising democratic election at all levels, including local government elections, establishing the code of conduct bureaus for all public offices, including local government functionaries, to declare their asserts, and exercising unfettered powers through the National Assembly to make laws at the federation or any part thereof including any local government area. The federal-local government relations have so far been very cordial.

However, in state-local government relations, there has been cold war. Local governments complain about undue interference from state governments. In addition, local

government chairmen have argued that state governors; (especially where a chairman comes from a party different from a Governor's) plot to remove them by using the audit powers of the state. State governors have also been accused of conspiring/colluding with the State Houses of Assembly to shorten the tenure of elected local government officials from three years in order to put their supporters in office. However, many governors claim that a majority of chairmen and councilors of local governments only sit down to share money drawn from the Federation Account and hardly embark on development projects. In addition, the governors are angry that the Federal Government relates directly with local government councils that operate under them (Iheonu and Alozie, 2021).

The three common problem areas in the relations between state and local governments are finance, functions and staffing. On finance, state governments routinely hijack varying proportions of the allocations to local governments from the Federation Account. Furthermore, many state governments usurp local government avenues of generating internal revenues and fail to contribute the required proportion of their internally generated revenues into the State - Local Government Joint Account for sharing among local governments, contrary to the provisions in the 1999 Constitution. In addition, there is a degree of overlap of functions among the tiers of government, especially in the implementation of such national policies as primary health care, primary education, water and sanitation. This has, in some cases, resulted in duplicated efforts

and acrimony amongst government functionaries on authority over certain functions and attendant waste of public funds.

Local Government in China

Local governments in China operate with a hierarchical system of bureaucratic control in which each level of government has to be accountable to the next higher level, and provincial governments must accept the unified leadership of the state council. The system is buttressed by the party's nomenclatural system tightly controlling the appointments of officials at all levels; local government officials do not have to be answerable to voters, but they have to undergo detailed performance assessments annually by their superiors within the party systems. Local governments in China assume a significant role in economic development. They own enterprises and also compete against each other. For example, they all try to attract more foreign investment. Chinese people are increasingly concerned with environmental pollution, food, security, health care reforms, education reforms etc.

Local government in China refers to the local parties and government systems in a broad sense. The main subjects include - the party committees, local governments, and their subordinate administrative functional departments, and various groups and organisations under the leadership of the party committees. Local government in China shows that Chinese political system is more than a mere copy or extension of structures and mechanisms found at higher levels of the governmental hierarchy.

Although Chinese local bureaucracies have to obey the upper levels-prefectures, provinces and the center; they still have substantial maneuvering space to shape the implementation of policies and to determine the political system's capacity to deliver meaningful outcomes (Ahlers, 2014).

Local governments in China also increasingly rely on development of the private sector and public-private partnerships-a distinct shift in local governance modes over those in the recent past. Since the early Hu-Wen administration, the fostering of private entrepreneurship has become an important component in the overall approach to the rural-urban integration of local governments. It shapes the local economy by setting priorities in the conversion of scarce land to commercial use, encouraging the development of new product brands and trademarks, providing access to market information, and pushing forward the implementation of environmental standards. Consequently, government interaction and cooperation with private entrepreneurs has also become a crucial feature of local government and effective policy implementation in contemporary China.

In China, the private sector is a pivotal component of local economic policies, even more so today, as only a few sectors are the exclusive domain of state-owned enterprises (such as energy, tobacco, crude oil, etc.) and private investment is urgently needed to develop a locality. Recently, the central leadership emphasised that without developing the private sector, the "Chinese

Dream" could not be realised, and that this sector is the most crucial force of innovation (State Council, 2017). Moreover, quantitative economic development is still the most important indicator for assessing the performance of leading cadres and deciding on their individual career trajectories. Particularly in the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2008/09, with its negative impact on the Chinese export economy, local governments have tightened their private sector policies to bring about structural change in the local economy, a precondition for more taxes and better public goods provision. Local governments invest continuously in the development of the local infrastructure, communications, and the public goods crucial for private enterprise, such as local development zones, special service centers for small and medium-sized enterprises, and schemes calculated to attract skilled labour and professionals. They also organise vocational training for enterprise personnel, provide information on marketing strategies and new models of business administration, grant money for 'product innovation', and set up communication channels between private enterprises and government bureaus to help them resolve all sorts of technical and financial problems. Moreover, local governments provide financial support for firms with economic difficulties, most notably by adjusting their tax burden.

The entire range of measures undertaken by local governments strongly impacts on private entrepreneurship in their respective jurisdictions: they grant subsidies and earmarked funding, allocate land and land use rights, act as intermediaries in negotiating bank

loans for private enterprises, provide the infrastructure for a sound business environment (e.g., access to major transportation routes, well-equipped development zones, etc.) and attract skilled labour and private investment (chaoshang yinzi) to expand existing local businesses or set up new enterprises. At the same time, local governments can, and do force, private entrepreneurs to voluntarily support specific policies or projects with money. It is of great importance to note here that local governments expect them to 'donate' money to important local initiatives, often in the fields of poverty alleviation and public goods provision such as the building of new schools or health-care facilities. Local governments even make contacts with private entrepreneurs, who have moved their companies and now operate in other localities, to persuade them to invest in their native places. For their part, entrepreneurs (whether party members or not) cannot but bind themselves closely to the Party State, from which they expect political protection and support. Of course, regional differences and development trajectories produce different state-business relations, and the more important the private sector economy has become for a given locality, the greater the bargaining power of private entrepreneurs vis-à-vis local governments, possibly even culminating in government capture (Schubert and Heberer, 2017).

In addition to steering the political agency of private entrepreneurs by controlling their much-needed economic resources, local governments also dominate local trade and industrial branch associations (shanghui, hangye xichui). None of these are autonomous interest

organisations that represent private enterprises or entrepreneurs. On the one hand, they function as transmission belts to help the Party State so as to maintain its political supremacy over the private sector, and on the other hand they act as mediators between private entrepreneurs and local governments, for example, when labor issues are at stake. Their principal task is to provide for a steady flow of communication between local governments and private entrepreneurs in order to ensure continuous economic development and market expansion to the benefit of the local economy. At the same time, however, entrepreneurs often prefer to communicate informally with the relevant government bureaus and local officials, whom they know personally, to solve their problems and rarely rely on business associations to assist them. Associational autonomy, it seems, is not possible in an authoritarian system where the factors of production - labour, capital and land are closely monitored by the state, and private entrepreneurship is perpetually co-opted by governments at each and every administrative tier. Yet, private entrepreneurs pursue strategies of their own for influencing policies, mostly by means of lobbying, networking through chat groups, joining entrepreneurial clubs, setting up informal chambers of commerce, or working as delegates of formal organisations (e.g. Local People's Congresses and Political Consultative Conferences) (Schubert and Heberer 2017).

But Party State control also becomes increasingly organised within the private sector itself. In most of the larger private enterprises, we came across party

organisations which were often headed by the founder and boss of the company or a leading manager. The success of this policy is ambivalent at best. Party cells may arguably facilitate the communication of local development policies at the company level, although it is difficult to discern precisely how these processes work out, because they are highly informal and lack transparency. But it is a reasonable assumption that party organisations within private enterprises are useful tools for controlling leading company staff and implementing official policies related to private sector development.

No matter how local private entrepreneurship initially emerged, local governments in all the places that we studied provided effective leadership and guidance for the private sector, resulting in a rather hierarchic mode of governance. This contributes positively to effective policy implementation within the existing context in contemporary China. The local state enjoys sufficient autonomy from the private sector, which exclusively controls the access to land, funding public projects, information and although more circumspectly, credit, and therefore can and does bring entrepreneurial interests most notably, profit increase and company expansion, into line with its specific goals to develop the local economy. At the same time, local state supremacy helps to mobilise private capital, making up for insufficient financial resources (due to the discriminatory tax system), helping local governments to provide public goods, and funding poverty alleviation programmes, which has now once again become a priority national policy area (Schubert and Heberer, 2017).

Conclusion

Local governments in Nigeria are still in the process of evolution. Nigeria has gone through the pre-colonial and colonial era through to military rule and democracy and each of these phases has had significant impacts on local government. The manner in which Local Government Areas were created and distributed by past military administrations has been a source of great acrimony and disharmony. There are now strong agitations for reform of the local government system.

Chinese local governments operate with an authoritarian one party state with a high degree of top-down political control and initiative noting that the local tiers of the Chinese party and government bureaucracy have plenty of opportunities to shape, steer as well as implementation of policies.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that Nigeria and China share a hierarchical structure with both local governments accountable to higher levels, and both are responsible for delivery services and implementing policies at the local level. However, the local governments in both countries operate differently in terms of resources management within their jurisdictions, including land, infrastructure and local revenue.

Furthermore, both local government structures also operate differently in terms of political system as China is a unitary communist state, with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) playing a dominant role, while

that of Nigerian is a federal republic with a democratic system. Administratively, the structures and organisational models of local governments differ, with China having a unique system of people's congress and local governments. In the area of economic development Chinese local governments play a more active role in economic planning than that of Nigeria. Lastly, both local governments enjoy a degree of autonomy but decision making power of local governments varies significantly.

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**SYMBOLISM IN IGBO ART AND CRAFT:
MEANING, IDENTITY AND CULTURAL
EXPRESSION**

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Abstract

This study interrogates the intricate system of symbolism embedded in Igbo art and craft, positioning it as a vital medium for cultural communication, cosmology, identity construction, and philosophical expression. Far from being merely aesthetic objects, traditional Igbo artistic forms ranging from sculpture and pottery to body adornment and masquerade regalia function as semiotic frameworks through which social values, cosmological beliefs, and historical consciousness are encoded and transmitted across generations. The paper adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach, drawing on indigenous knowledge systems and existing scholarship to examine how symbols operate within specific artistic contexts to convey layered meanings about power, gender, spirituality, morality, and communal belonging. Furthermore, the study explores the role of art as a repository of collective memory and a tool for reinforcing both individual and group identity within Igbo society. It argues that symbolic expressions in Igbo art are deeply rooted in the people's worldview, particularly their notions of dualism, the interplay between the visible and invisible realms, and the

centrality of chi (personal destiny). In engaging with the tensions between tradition and modernity, the paper also highlights the challenges posed by globalization, commodification, and cultural erosion, while acknowledging ongoing efforts toward cultural preservation and artistic revival. Ultimately, the study establishes that symbolism in Igbo art and craft is indispensable to understanding the broader dynamics of cultural expression and identity formation in Igbo society.

Introduction

Art, in many African societies, transcends the boundaries of mere decoration or aesthetic pleasure; it is fundamentally a language of meaning, a system of signs through which societies articulate their values, beliefs, and existential realities. In Igbo culture, art and craft occupy a central position within this symbolic universe, serving as powerful media through which individuals and communities interpret and negotiate their world. Every line, motif, texture, and form in traditional Igbo artistic production carries a depth of meaning that extends beyond its physical appearance, reflecting a complex interplay between the material and the metaphysical.

The Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria possess a rich artistic heritage that is deeply intertwined with their social structure, religious beliefs, and philosophical outlook. Their art forms—such as wood carvings, uli body and wall paintings, pottery, textiles, and masquerade costumes—are not created in isolation but

are embedded within specific cultural contexts that give them significance. These artistic expressions function as repositories of indigenous knowledge, encoding moral principles, social hierarchies, gender roles, and cosmological ideas in symbolic forms that are both accessible and enduring.

Central to understanding Igbo art is the concept of symbolism. Symbolism in this context refers to the use of visual and material forms to represent abstract ideas, emotions, and cultural values. In Igbo society, symbols are not arbitrary; they are culturally constructed and collectively understood, often drawing from nature, spirituality, and everyday life. For instance, motifs derived from animals, plants, and geometric patterns are imbued with meanings that resonate with the Igbo worldview, emphasizing harmony, balance, and interconnectedness. Through these symbols, art becomes a communicative tool that bridges the gap between the seen and the unseen, the individual and the community, as well as the past and the present.

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the role of symbolism in Igbo art and craft as a means of cultural expression and identity formation. By interrogating the meanings encoded in various artistic forms, the paper aims to illuminate how art functions not only as a reflection of Igbo culture but also as an active agent in its preservation and transformation. In doing so, it contributes to broader scholarly conversations on African aesthetics, indigenous knowledge systems, and

the enduring relevance of traditional art in contemporary society.

Conceptual Framework (Scholar-Based Definitions and Analysis)

This study is anchored on the concepts of symbolism, semiotics, and African aesthetics, which provide a theoretical basis for interpreting meaning in Igbo art and craft. These concepts are examined through scholarly definitions and adapted to the Igbo cultural context to establish how art functions as a system of communication and identity formation.

Symbolism: Scholarly Perspectives and Cultural Application

The concept of symbolism has been widely explored across disciplines, particularly in literature, anthropology, and art studies. According to Ernst Cassirer (1944), human beings are “symbolic animals” who understand and construct reality through symbols rather than direct interaction with the physical world. This implies that meaning is not inherent in objects but is culturally assigned through symbolic systems.

Similarly, Susanne Langer (1953) defines symbolism as the process through which ideas and emotions are expressed using representational forms that stand for something beyond themselves. For Langer, symbols are fundamental to human communication because they allow abstract concepts to be conveyed in concrete forms.

In the African context, scholars such as Herbert M. Cole (1988) argue that symbols in Igbo art are deeply embedded in cultural experience and are used to communicate social values, religious beliefs, and communal identity. These symbols are not arbitrary but are collectively understood within the society.

Semiotics: The Study of Signs and Meaning-Making

Semiotics provides a more structured approach to understanding how symbols function. Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) conceptualizes the sign as consisting of two components: the signifier (the form of the sign) and the signified (the concept it represents). He emphasizes that the relationship between these two elements is arbitrary but socially agreed upon.

Expanding on this, Charles Sanders Peirce (1931–1958) introduces a triadic model of the sign, comprising the representamen (form the sign takes), the object (what is referred to), and the interpretant (the meaning derived). Peirce further categorizes signs into icons, indices, and symbols, depending on how they relate to what they represent.

In relation to African art, scholars such as Sylvester Ottenberg (1988) demonstrate that meaning in Igbo artistic forms is context-dependent and emerges through cultural practices, rituals, and performances. For instance, a masquerade mask does not merely represent a face but signifies ancestral presence, authority, or social commentary depending on its usage.

Thus, semiotics in this study serves as a methodological tool for decoding the layers of meaning embedded in Igbo art, emphasizing that interpretation is shaped by cultural knowledge and social context.

African Aesthetics: A Culturally Grounded Framework

African aesthetics provides an indigenous lens for understanding the principles underlying artistic production in African societies. According to Suzanne Preston Blier (1993), African art prioritizes meaning, function, and cultural relevance over mere visual appeal. Art is judged not only by how it looks but by what it does within the community.

Similarly, Sidney Littlefield Kasfir (1999) emphasizes that African art is deeply integrated into social life, serving religious, political, and moral functions. It is often collective rather than individualistic, reflecting communal values and shared beliefs.

In the specific context of Igbo society, F. A. O. Ugiomoh (2004) notes that artistic expressions are closely tied to indigenous knowledge systems, including cosmological beliefs, dualism, and the concept of chi. These elements shape both the form and meaning of artistic works.

Therefore, African aesthetics in this study underscores the idea that Igbo art cannot be fully understood outside its cultural, spiritual, and functional context. It ensures that interpretation remains rooted in indigenous perspectives rather than external aesthetic standards.

Synthesis of the Concepts

The integration of symbolism, semiotics, and African aesthetics provides a comprehensive framework for this study:

Symbolism explains how meaning is embedded in artistic forms.

Semiotics provides the analytical tools for interpreting those meanings.

African aesthetics situates the interpretation within its cultural and philosophical context.

Together, these concepts enable a holistic understanding of Igbo art as a system of communication, a marker of identity, and a reflection of worldview.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Symbolic Interactionism and Semiotic Theory, which together provide a robust theoretical basis for understanding how meaning is created, interpreted, and sustained within Igbo art and craft. These theories are particularly relevant because they emphasize the role of symbols, interpretation, and social context in the construction of reality.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism is a sociological theory that explains how individuals create and interpret meanings through social interaction. The theory is strongly associated with George Herbert Mead and later

developed by Herbert Blumer (1969). According to Blumer (1969), Symbolic Interactionism is based on three key premises:

Human beings act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them. These meanings arise out of social interaction. Meanings are modified through interpretive processes. Applied to Igbo art, this theory suggests that artistic objects such as masks, carvings, and body designs do not possess inherent meaning. Instead, their meanings are created and sustained through communal understanding and cultural practices. For example, a masquerade mask is not merely an artistic object; it acquires meaning as an ancestral presence through shared beliefs and ritual performances.

Furthermore, Symbolic Interactionism highlights the role of the community in meaning-making. In Igbo society, the interpretation of artistic symbols depends on collective knowledge, cultural participation, and socialization. This explains why certain symbols may lose their meaning when removed from their cultural context.

Thus, this theory is relevant to the study as it explains how Igbo art functions as a socially constructed system of symbols through which identity, values, and beliefs are communicated.

Semiotic Theory

Semiotic Theory, rooted in the works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, provides a

framework for analyzing how signs and symbols generate meaning.

Saussure (1916) conceptualizes the sign as consisting of: The signifier (the physical form of the sign) The signified (the concept it represents) He argues that the relationship between the two is arbitrary but established through cultural convention. Peirce (1931–1958), on the other hand, expands this into a triadic model:

Representamen (the form of the sign)
Object (what the sign refers to)
Interpretant (the meaning derived by the observer)
Peirce further categorizes signs into:
Icons (resemblance-based)
Indices (causal or direct connection)
Symbols (conventional and culturally learned)

In the context of Igbo art, semiotic theory enables a systematic interpretation of symbols. For instance: A carved figure (representamen) may signify a deity or ancestor (object), While the meaning (interpretant) depends on cultural knowledge and ritual context. This theory is particularly useful for decoding the layered meanings embedded in artistic forms and understanding how these meanings are communicated within the society.

Integration of the Theories

The combination of Symbolic Interactionism and Semiotic Theory provides a comprehensive framework for this study:

Symbolic Interactionism explains how meanings are socially created and shared. Semiotic Theory explains how those meanings are structured and communicated through signs. Together, they allow for a deeper understanding of Igbo art as:

A system of symbols

A medium of communication

A tool for identity construction

Relevance to the Study

These theories are particularly relevant because they:

*Provide a basis for analyzing the symbolic nature of Igbo art

*Explain how meaning is derived from cultural context and social interaction

*Support the argument that art functions as a language of identity and cultural expression

By grounding the study in these theoretical perspectives, the research moves beyond description to offer a critical and analytical interpretation of symbolism in Igbo art and craft.

Data Analysis Based on Theoretical Framework

This section analyzes selected forms of Igbo art and craft through the lenses of Symbolic Interactionism and Semiotic Theory, with the aim of demonstrating how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and sustained within cultural contexts. The analysis focuses on how artistic symbols function as communicative tools that shape identity and social reality in Igbo society.

1. Masquerade (Mmanwu) as a Site of Symbolic Interaction

From the perspective of Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism, meaning emerges through social interaction and shared interpretation. The Igbo masquerade (mmanwu) provides a clear illustration of this process. The masquerade mask, in itself, is only a carved object (signifier). However, within the cultural setting, it is collectively interpreted as the embodiment of an ancestral spirit. This meaning is not inherent in the object but is socially constructed through rituals, performances, and communal beliefs.

Applying Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic model:

Representamen: The mask and costume

Object: The ancestral spirit or moral authority

Interpretant: The community understands the masquerade as a sacred presence. Furthermore, the behavior of the masquerade—its movements, voice, and actions—reinforces its symbolic authority. Community members respond with reverence, fear, or obedience, demonstrating Blumer's idea that people act based on meanings derived from social interaction.

Thus, the masquerade is not just art but a living symbol, actively shaping social order, enforcing norms, and reinforcing collective identity.

Uli Designs as Semiotic Expressions of Feminine Identity

Uli designs provide a rich example of how meaning is encoded visually and interpreted culturally. From a

semiotic perspective, uli motifs function as signs whose meanings are derived from shared cultural knowledge.

Using Ferdinand de Saussure's model:

Signifier: Linear and curvilinear patterns

Signified: Ideas such as beauty, harmony, femininity, and social celebration

These meanings are not universal but culturally learned. Only those familiar with Igbo traditions can fully interpret the symbolic significance of specific motifs.

From the standpoint of Symbolic Interactionism, uli is also a form of social communication. It is often applied during ceremonies such as marriage or festivals, where it signals social identity and participation. The act of applying uli itself is interactive, involving both the artist and the subject, thereby reinforcing shared meanings.

Additionally, the ephemeral nature of uli (its tendency to fade) symbolizes the transient nature of life. This interpretation emerges through cultural understanding, illustrating how meaning is negotiated within a social framework.

Sculpture and Carving as Symbols of Identity and Cosmology

Igbo sculptures, particularly those representing human figures, can be analyzed semiotically as complex sign systems. The exaggerated features—especially the enlarged head—serve as symbolic elements.

Applying Charles Sanders Peirce's classification:

The sculpture may function as an icon (resembling a human figure)

As a symbol, representing ideas such as destiny (chi), wisdom, or authority

The enlarged head (signifier) signifies the importance of the head (isi) as the seat of destiny and personal identity (signified). This meaning is culturally constructed and understood within Igbo philosophy. From a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, these sculptures gain meaning through their use in shrines, rituals, and communal settings. Their significance is reinforced through repeated interaction and cultural practice. Thus, sculpture operates as a material expression of Igbo cosmology, linking the individual to spiritual and communal realities.

Adornment and Beads as Markers of Social Identity

Adornment in Igbo culture—such as beads and clothing—can be analyzed as a system of signs communicating social information.

Using Ferdinand de Saussure’s framework:

Signifier: Beads, wrappers, ornaments

Signified: Status, wealth, age, and social position

For example, coral beads signify royalty and prestige. However, this meaning exists only within the cultural system that assigns it. From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, these items gain meaning through social recognition. A titled man wearing specific attire is treated with respect because the community collectively understands the symbolism of that attire.

Adornment therefore functions as a visual language of identity, enabling individuals to communicate their social position without words.

Synthesis of Analysis

Across all the forms analyzed, a consistent pattern emerges:

- *Meaning in Igbo art is not inherent but socially constructed (Symbolic Interactionism).
- *Artistic forms function as sign systems that encode and communicate meaning (Semiotic Theory).
- *Interpretation depends on cultural knowledge and context.

These findings reinforce the argument that Igbo art and craft operate as a complex symbolic system through which identity, values, and worldview are expressed and maintained.

Link to Research Argument

This analysis demonstrates that:

- *Igbo art is an active medium of communication, not passive decoration
- *Symbols are central to the construction of social reality
- *Artistic expressions play a crucial role in identity formation and cultural continuity

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that Igbo art and craft function as a complex symbolic system through which cultural meanings, social identities, and philosophical ideas are constructed, communicated, and sustained.

Drawing on Symbolic Interactionism and Semiotic Theory, the discussion highlights how meaning in Igbo art is not inherent but emerges through cultural context, social interaction, and shared interpretation.

Art as a System of Socially Constructed Meaning

One of the central findings of this study is that the meanings embedded in Igbo art are socially constructed rather than intrinsic. This aligns strongly with the principles of Symbolic Interactionism as articulated by Herbert Blumer (1969), who argues that individual's act based on meanings derived from social interaction.

The analysis of masquerades, uli designs, sculpture, and adornment demonstrates that these artistic forms acquire significance only within the framework of communal understanding. For instance, a masquerade is not perceived as a mere artistic object but as an ancestral presence because the community collectively interprets it as such. This reinforces the idea that meaning is negotiated and sustained through shared cultural practices.

Thus, Igbo art can be understood as a social language, where symbols function as communicative tools that guide behavior, reinforce norms, and shape collective consciousness.

Semiotic Nature of Igbo Art as a Sign System

The findings also affirm that Igbo art operates as a structured system of signs, consistent with Semiotic Theory as developed by Ferdinand de Saussure and

Charles Sanders Peirce. Artistic elements such as forms, patterns, materials, and colors function as signifiers that convey culturally specific meanings.

The study reveals that:

*The relationship between signifier and signified is culturally determined, not universal

*Interpretation depends on context and cultural competence

*Symbols often carry multiple layers of meaning, especially in ritual settings

For example, the enlarged head in Igbo sculpture signifies wisdom and destiny, while uli motifs communicate ideas of beauty and harmony. These meanings are intelligible only within the Igbo cultural framework, emphasizing the importance of indigenous knowledge in interpretation.

This supports the argument that Igbo art is not merely expressive but semiotically organized, functioning as a coherent system of visual communication.

Art as a Medium of Identity Formation

Another key finding is that Igbo art plays a fundamental role in the construction and expression of identity. Artistic forms such as adornment, masquerade, and body decoration serve as markers of:

Social status

Gender roles

Age-grade affiliation

Spiritual alignment

From a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, identity is formed through interaction and the interpretation of symbols. The study shows that individuals in Igbo society use artistic symbols to define themselves and to be recognized by others within the community.

For instance, the wearing of beads or specific attire communicates social position, while participation in masquerade performances reinforces communal identity. These findings highlight that identity in Igbo culture is not purely individual but is socially embedded and symbolically expressed.

Integration of Art, Spirituality, and Social Order

The findings further reveal that Igbo art exists at the intersection of aesthetics, spirituality, and social regulation. Artistic forms are deeply integrated into religious practices and are often used to mediate between the physical and spiritual worlds.

Masquerades, in particular, illustrate how art functions as an instrument of moral authority and social control, reinforcing communal norms and values. This supports earlier observations by scholars such as Sylvester Ottenberg that Igbo art is inseparable from its ritual and social context.

The implication is that art in Igbo society is not autonomous but is embedded within a broader cultural system that governs behavior and belief.

Continuity and Transformation in the Face of Modernity

While the study emphasizes the enduring significance of symbolism in Igbo art, it also reveals a growing tension between traditional meanings and contemporary realities. Modernization, globalization, and commercialization have contributed to:

- *The decline of indigenous artistic practices
- *The loss or dilution of symbolic meanings
- *A shift toward aesthetic appreciation without cultural understanding

However, the findings also suggest that Igbo art is not static but adaptive. In some contexts, traditional symbols are being reinterpreted and incorporated into modern artistic expressions, indicating a process of cultural transformation rather than total loss.

This highlights the dynamic nature of culture and underscores the need for deliberate efforts to preserve and transmit indigenous knowledge.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have several important implications:

- ◆Theoretical Implication: They validate the applicability of Symbolic Interactionism and Semiotic Theory in analyzing African art forms.
- ◆Cultural Implication: They emphasize the need to preserve the symbolic meanings embedded in Igbo art as part of cultural heritage.

◆Academic Implication: They contribute to scholarship on African aesthetics by foregrounding indigenous interpretive frameworks.

◆Practical Implication: They highlight the importance of cultural education in ensuring that younger generations understand the meanings behind traditional art forms.

Summary of Discussion

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that Igbo art and craft are:

- ♠Symbolically rich and culturally embedded
- ♠Structured as systems of signs and meanings
- ♠Central to identity formation and social organization
- ♠Dynamic and responsive to changing social conditions

These insights reinforce the central argument of the study that symbolism in Igbo art is fundamental to understanding cultural expression and identity in Igbo society.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Igbo art and craft function as complex symbolic systems, through which meaning, identity, and cultural values are communicated and sustained. Drawing on Symbolic Interactionism and Semiotic Theory, the research revealed that the significance of artistic forms such as masquerades, uli designs, sculpture, pottery, and adornment—is socially constructed, culturally contextualized, and interpreted collectively within Igbo society.

The findings confirm that:

Meaning is not inherent in artistic objects but emerges through communal interpretation and ritualized use.

Art is central to identity formation, social hierarchy, and moral regulation.

Igbo artistic expressions integrate aesthetics, spirituality, and social order, making them inseparable from everyday cultural life. While modernization presents challenges to the preservation of traditional meanings, Igbo art demonstrates adaptability, with symbols being reinterpreted and maintained in contemporary forms.

In essence, Igbo art is not merely decorative; it is a living language of culture, encoding the values, beliefs, and philosophical worldview of the Igbo people. Understanding these symbolic systems is therefore essential to preserving indigenous knowledge and sustaining cultural identity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study offers the following recommendations:

Cultural Preservation Programs: Stakeholders—including community leaders, educational institutions, and cultural organizations—should implement programs to document, teach, and promote traditional Igbo art forms and their symbolic meanings.

Integration into Education: Indigenous art and symbolism should be incorporated into school curricular

to ensure that younger generations understand the cultural, social, and spiritual significance of these forms.

Research and Documentation: Scholars should continue to conduct ethnographic and interpretive studies of Igbo art, particularly in under-researched regions, to expand knowledge on symbolism and its evolving role in society.

Promotion of Indigenous Aesthetics in Modern Media: Artists and cultural practitioners should creatively integrate traditional symbols into contemporary art, fashion, and media, thereby safeguarding cultural heritage while engaging new audiences.

Community Engagement: Local communities should be actively involved in the interpretation and transmission of meanings associated with art forms, ensuring that symbolism remains contextually relevant and socially recognized.

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**BEYOND SALARY INCREASES: TEACHER
BURNOUT, OCCUPATIONAL EXHAUSTION
AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG SECONDARY
SCHOOL TEACHERS IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The issue of teacher welfare has increasingly attracted scholarly and policy attention within contemporary educational systems, particularly in relation to salary improvements and workplace well-being. While salary increases are often introduced as mechanisms for motivating teachers and improving educational productivity, many educators continue to experience occupational exhaustion, emotional burnout, excessive workloads, and declining quality of life. This study empirically examined the relationship between salary increases, teacher burnout, occupational exhaustion, and quality of life among secondary school teachers in South-East Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative survey research design involving 400 respondents selected from public secondary schools across Abia, Anambra, Enugu, and Imo States. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using

descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that although salary increases moderately improved teachers' living standards and reduced financial stress, remuneration alone was insufficient for significantly improving teachers' overall quality of life. The study further revealed that excessive workload, administrative pressure, emotional labour, and workplace stress significantly contributed to teacher burnout and occupational exhaustion. Burnout was also found to negatively affect job satisfaction, teaching effectiveness, morale, and professional commitment among teachers. The study concludes that sustainable teacher welfare requires a holistic approach that combines fair remuneration with healthier working conditions, psychosocial support systems, manageable workloads, professional autonomy, and improved work-life balance policies. The paper contributes to broader sociological and educational debates on labour, occupational health, and teacher well-being in contemporary educational systems.

Keywords: Teacher Burnout; Workplace Stress;
Emotional Labour; Educational Systems;
Job Satisfaction.

Introduction

Education remains one of the most important institutions for social transformation, human capital development, and national growth in modern societies. Teachers occupy a strategic position within this institution because they are responsible for knowledge transmission,

socialization, moral orientation, and the intellectual development of future generations. Consequently, teacher welfare and occupational well-being have increasingly attracted scholarly attention within Sociology of Education, Industrial Sociology, and Occupational Health Sociology. Traditionally, discussions on teacher welfare focused heavily on poor salaries and inadequate financial incentives. However, contemporary educational realities increasingly reveal that salary improvements alone have not eliminated burnout, workplace stress, emotional exhaustion, and declining quality of life among teachers.

Globally, the teaching profession has become increasingly demanding due to technological advancement, expanding institutional expectations, administrative responsibilities, performance evaluation systems, emotional caregiving roles, and changing student behavioural patterns. Teachers are now expected not only to teach but also to function as counsellors, mentors, disciplinarians, emotional support providers, and administrative managers within educational institutions. These expanding responsibilities have intensified workplace pressure and contributed significantly to occupational exhaustion among teachers. Recent studies indicate that teacher burnout has become a major occupational health concern affecting teacher retention, productivity, and educational sustainability across various countries (Yao, 2025; Christopoulou et al., 2026).

Teacher burnout refers to prolonged physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion resulting from chronic workplace stress and excessive professional demands. Burnout among teachers commonly manifests through emotional fatigue, frustration, anxiety, low morale, depersonalization, declining job satisfaction, and reduced professional commitment (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Christopoulou et al. (2026), teacher burnout has become a significant occupational health problem with serious implications for educators' mental well-being, workforce retention, and educational effectiveness. Similarly, Yao (2025) observes that global research on teacher burnout increasingly links workplace stress, emotional labour, workload pressure, and work-family conflict to declining occupational well-being among educators.

Although governments and educational institutions frequently introduce salary increases and financial incentives to motivate teachers and improve productivity, emerging evidence suggests that remuneration alone cannot guarantee improved quality of life. Quality of life extends beyond income to include emotional stability, mental health, physical well-being, work-life balance, social relationships, job satisfaction, and overall life fulfillment. Studies continue to show that many teachers remain emotionally exhausted and psychologically stressed despite financial improvements because workplace pressures and institutional demands remain excessive. Wanyama et al. (2024) found that stress and burnout significantly affect teachers'

professional performance, emotional stability, and workplace effectiveness in public secondary schools in Kenya.

Another important issue associated with teacher burnout is emotional labour. Drawing from the work of Arlie Hochschild, emotional labour refers to the management and regulation of emotions to satisfy occupational expectations. Teachers are expected to remain patient, emotionally available, caring, calm, and supportive regardless of personal stress or emotional fatigue. Recent qualitative studies on primary school teachers in Ethiopia revealed that emotional pressure, excessive workloads, institutional demands, and limited psychosocial support significantly contribute to burnout and emotional exhaustion among educators (Taddese et al., 2025).

Contemporary educational systems also increasingly operate within performance-driven and bureaucratic organizational structures that prioritize accountability, productivity, measurable outcomes, and administrative compliance. Such systems intensify teachers' workload through continuous assessments, documentation, digital reporting systems, classroom monitoring, and performance evaluations. The OECD TALIS 2024 report identified workload pressure, classroom discipline challenges, and accountability systems as major contributors to stress among teachers globally (OECD, 2024). Similarly, RAND Corporation (2024) reported that teachers increasingly experience poor well-being,

workload stress, and declining job satisfaction despite policy efforts aimed at improving educational performance.

The growing crisis of teacher burnout also has serious implications for teacher retention and educational sustainability. Studies increasingly associate occupational stress and emotional exhaustion with teacher attrition, low morale, declining professional commitment, and reduced interest in teaching careers. Madigan and Kim (2021) found that burnout significantly predicts teachers' intentions to quit the profession. UNESCO (2023) further notes that worsening workplace conditions and poor occupational well-being contribute significantly to global teacher shortages and declining professional sustainability.

Furthermore, recent surveys reveal that teachers increasingly perceive salary improvements as inadequate when compared to the physical, emotional, and psychological demands of the profession. Reports from teachers' associations indicate that many educators experience chronic stress, worsening working conditions, low morale, and emotional exhaustion despite financial incentives and salary adjustments. In many cases, salary increases appear to function merely as compensation for enduring stressful occupational conditions rather than genuine improvement in teachers' quality of life.

This paradox between improved salaries and worsening occupational exhaustion raises important sociological questions regarding labour conditions, institutional support, and worker well-being in contemporary societies. Ideally, salary improvements should enhance workers' living standards, reduce stress, improve social well-being, and support healthier lifestyles. However, when teachers remain chronically exhausted and emotionally depleted despite financial incentives, remuneration alone becomes insufficient for meaningful occupational welfare. This situation reflects broader concerns within the sociology of work regarding the commodification of exhaustion in modern labour systems where workers are financially compensated for enduring unhealthy workplace conditions rather than being supported through sustainable organizational reforms.

It is against this background that this study examines the relationship between salary increases, teacher burnout, occupational exhaustion, and quality of life within contemporary educational systems in South-East Nigeria. The study argues that while fair remuneration remains important for teacher motivation and welfare, financial incentives alone cannot guarantee improved well-being when institutional structures continue to produce excessive workload, emotional strain, unhealthy work environments, and psychosocial stress.

Statement of the Problem

Efforts to improve teacher welfare in contemporary educational systems increasingly focus on salary increases and financial incentives. Although improved remuneration is expected to enhance teachers' quality of life and professional motivation, many teachers continue to experience burnout, occupational exhaustion, workplace stress, and declining psychological well-being. Excessive workload, administrative pressure, emotional labour, overcrowded classrooms, and expanding professional responsibilities continue to undermine teachers' occupational welfare despite salary improvements. This situation raises concerns about the effectiveness of financial compensation alone as a strategy for improving teacher well-being. In many cases, salary increases appear insufficient because stressful workplace conditions, emotional strain, and poor work-life balance persist within educational institutions. Consequently, many teachers continue to experience low morale, emotional fatigue, declining job satisfaction, and professional frustration. Although several studies have examined teacher salaries and workplace stress independently, limited empirical attention has been given to the paradox where improved salaries coexist with worsening burnout and declining quality of life among teachers. This study therefore examines the relationship between salary increases, teacher burnout, occupational exhaustion, and quality of life among secondary school teachers in South-East Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the relationship between salary increases, teacher burnout, occupational exhaustion, and quality of life among secondary school teachers in South-East Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the relationship between salary increases and teachers' quality of life in contemporary educational systems;
2. analyze the factors contributing to occupational exhaustion and burnout among teachers despite improved remuneration;
3. assess the implications of workplace stress and burnout on teachers' professional well-being and job satisfaction;
4. examine the influence of emotional labour on occupational exhaustion among teachers within contemporary educational environments.

Literature Review

Teacher welfare has remained a major concern in contemporary educational systems because teachers play a central role in knowledge transmission, socialization, and human capital development. Recent literature shows that teacher well-being extends beyond salary to include workload, institutional support, emotional stability, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and professional recognition (Day & Gu, 2013; Kurrle & Warwas, 2025). Kurrle and Warwas (2025) further argue that teacher

well-being significantly affects educational quality, teacher retention, and school effectiveness.

Teacher burnout has become one of the most discussed issues in educational and occupational health literature. Burnout refers to physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion caused by prolonged workplace stress (Maslach et al., 2001). Yao (2025) observes that burnout negatively affects teachers' job performance, well-being, and commitment to the profession. Similarly, Christopoulou et al. (2026) identify burnout as a major occupational health challenge affecting teachers' emotional resilience and workplace sustainability.

Studies also show that excessive workload is one of the major causes of teacher exhaustion. Teachers are increasingly burdened with lesson preparation, administrative documentation, classroom management, student supervision, digital communication, and extracurricular duties. The OECD TALIS 2024 report identified workload pressure and accountability systems as major sources of stress among teachers globally (OECD, 2024). Likewise, RAND Corporation (2024) found that many teachers work longer hours than comparable professionals while experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion and workplace dissatisfaction.

Although salary increases may improve teachers' financial conditions, recent studies suggest that remuneration alone cannot eliminate burnout and

occupational stress. Kurrle and Warwas (2025) argue that stressful working conditions, emotional pressure, and weak institutional support continue to undermine teachers' quality of life despite improved salaries. In the Nigerian context, Okey and Aja (2025) found that teachers' quality of work life is strongly associated with workplace conditions, institutional support, and emotional well-being rather than salary alone.

Emotional labour also contributes significantly to teacher burnout. Emotional Labour Theory associated with Arlie Hochschild explains how workers are expected to regulate emotions to satisfy workplace expectations (Hochschild, 2012). Teachers are expected to remain patient, caring, emotionally supportive, and professionally composed regardless of personal stress or emotional fatigue. Taddese et al. (2025) found that emotional pressure, excessive workload, and weak psychosocial support significantly contribute to burnout among teachers.

The literature further reveals that burnout negatively affects teachers' quality of life, emotional stability, professional effectiveness, and job satisfaction. Nwoko et al. (2023) argue that teachers belong to a high-demand occupational group that frequently experiences stress and emotional strain extending beyond the workplace into personal and family life. Wanyama et al. (2024) similarly found that occupational stress negatively affects teachers' professional performance and emotional well-being.

Overall, the literature suggests that teacher burnout is a multidimensional problem produced by excessive workload, emotional labour, weak institutional support, and stressful workplace conditions. While salary increases remain important, they are insufficient for improving teachers' overall quality of life when unhealthy organizational conditions persist within educational systems.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Job Demands–Resources Theory and Emotional Labour Theory. Job Demands–Resources Theory was developed by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli in 2001. The theory explains that every occupation contains job demands and job resources that influence workers' well-being and productivity. Job demands refer to workplace pressures such as excessive workload, emotional stress, administrative responsibilities, and long working hours, while job resources include supportive leadership, fair remuneration, manageable workload, institutional support, and healthy work environments. The theory is relevant to this study because it explains why teachers may continue to experience burnout and occupational exhaustion despite salary increases when workplace demands remain excessive and support systems remain inadequate.

The study is also anchored on Emotional Labour Theory developed by Arlie Hochschild in 1983. The theory explains how workers are expected to regulate and manage emotions to satisfy occupational expectations. In

the teaching profession, teachers are expected to remain patient, caring, emotionally supportive, and professionally composed regardless of personal stress or emotional fatigue. Continuous emotional regulation often contributes to emotional exhaustion and burnout among teachers. The theory is relevant because it explains why teachers may still experience occupational stress and psychological fatigue despite improved remuneration.

Together, the theories explain that teacher burnout and declining quality of life are not caused by salary issues alone but also by excessive workplace demands, emotional strain, weak institutional support, and stressful working conditions within contemporary educational systems.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative survey research design to examine the relationship between salary increases, teacher burnout, occupational exhaustion, and quality of life among secondary school teachers in South-East Nigeria. The study was conducted among public secondary school teachers in Abia, Anambra, Enugu, and Imo States.

The population consisted of teachers in public secondary schools across the selected states, while a sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane sampling formula. Respondents were selected through

stratified and simple random sampling techniques to ensure adequate representation.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The instrument covered salary satisfaction, workload pressure, emotional labour, burnout, occupational exhaustion, and quality of life indicators. The instrument was validated through expert review, while reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test which produced a coefficient of 0.86.

Data obtained from the field were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques including frequency tables, percentages, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Ethical principles such as confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	214	53.5
Female	186	46.5
Total	400	100.0

The table shows that 53.5% of the respondents were male while 46.5% were female. This indicates a moderate gender balance among teachers in the selected secondary schools across South-East Nigeria

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21–30 years	78	19.5
31–40 years	146	36.5
41–50 years	121	30.3
51 years and above	55	13.7
Total	400	100.0

The table reveals that the majority of respondents (36.5%) were within the 31–40 years age category, followed by teachers aged 41–50 years (30.3%). This suggests that a significant proportion of respondents were within the active and experienced workforce category.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
NCE	61	15.3
B.Ed./B.Sc.Ed.	214	53.5
Master’s Degree	98	24.5
PhD	27	6.7
Total	400	100.0

The findings indicate that most respondents possessed Bachelor’s degrees in education-related disciplines representing 53.5% of the respondents. This suggests that the majority of teachers possessed formal professional teaching qualifications.

Table 4: Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Experience (%)	Frequency	Percentage
1–5 years	84	21.0
6–10 years	153	38.3
11–15 years	97	24.2
16 years and above	66	16.5
Total	400	100.0

The table shows that 38.3% of respondents had between 6–10 years of teaching experience, indicating that many respondents possessed substantial professional exposure and understanding of workplace realities within contemporary educational systems.

Analysis of Research Objectives

Objective One: Salary Increases and Teachers’ Quality of Life

Table 5: Responses on Salary Increases and Quality of Life

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
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Recent improvements reduced financial stress among teachers	salary have	148	129	38	52	33	3.77
Salary increases improved teachers' standards	have	141	122	44	57	36	3.69
Improved positively teachers' family welfare	salary has affected	136	127	41	61	35	3.67
Salary increases alone are sufficient to improve teachers' quality of life		52	69	47	138	94	2.62

Decision Rule: Mean score above 3.00 = Accepted.

The findings indicate that while respondents generally agreed that salary increases helped reduce financial stress and moderately improved living standards, most respondents disagreed that salary improvements alone were sufficient for improving overall quality of life. This suggests that non-financial workplace factors significantly influence teachers' well-being.

Objective Two: Occupational Exhaustion and Teacher Burnout

Table 6: Responses on Burnout and Occupational Exhaustion

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
Excessive workload contributes to teacher exhaustion	182	139	26	31	22	4.07
Administrative responsibilities increase	171	148	24	34	23	4.03

workplace stress

Emotional pressure from 166 144 28 39 23 3.98
teaching contributes to
burnout

Work-related stress 174 133 31 37 25 3.99
negatively affects teachers'
personal lives

The findings reveal high levels of agreement among respondents that workload pressure, administrative demands, emotional labour, and workplace stress significantly contribute to teacher burnout and occupational exhaustion within contemporary educational systems.

Objective Three: Burnout and Professional Well-Being

Table 7: Responses on Burnout and Professional Well-Being

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
Burnout reduces teachers' job satisfaction	176	141	29	32	22	4.04
Occupational exhaustion reduces teaching effectiveness	183	136	24	34	23	4.06
Emotional stress negatively affects classroom performance	169	145	28	35	23	4.02
Teacher burnout contributes to low morale and frustration	181	132	30	33	24	4.03

The findings indicate that burnout significantly affects teachers' professional well-being, classroom effectiveness, morale, and job satisfaction. Respondents generally perceived occupational exhaustion as a major threat to educational productivity and workplace stability within secondary schools.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Salary increases have no significant influence on teachers' quality of life in contemporary educational systems.

Table 8: Regression Analysis on Salary Increases and Quality of Life

Variables	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Salary Increases	0.472	8.613	0.000

Model Summary

Statistics	Value
R	0.472
R ²	0.223
Adjusted R ²	0.218
F-value	74.183
Sig.	0.000

The regression analysis revealed that salary increases significantly influenced teachers' quality of life ($\beta =$

0.472; $p < 0.05$). The R^2 value of 0.223 indicates that salary increases accounted for approximately 22.3% of the variations in teachers' quality of life. Since the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. However, the relatively moderate explanatory value suggests that other workplace and psychosocial factors also significantly affect teachers' well-being.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Occupational exhaustion has no significant effect on teachers' job satisfaction.

Table 9: Regression Analysis on Occupational Exhaustion and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Occupational Exhaustion	-0.681	-11.927	0.000

Model Summary

Statistics	Value
R	0.681
R^2	0.464
Adjusted R^2	0.459
F-value	142.254
Sig.	0.000

The regression findings revealed that occupational exhaustion significantly and negatively affected

teachers' job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.681$; $p < 0.05$). The R^2 value of 0.464 indicates that occupational exhaustion explained approximately 46.4% of the variations in teachers' job satisfaction. Since the significance value was below 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings therefore suggest that increasing occupational exhaustion significantly reduces teachers' workplace satisfaction, morale, and professional commitment.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Workplace stress has no significant relationship with teacher burnout.

Table 10: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	r	Sig.
Workplace Stress & Teacher Burnout	0.736	0.000

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between workplace stress and teacher burnout ($r = 0.736$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that increased workplace stress was strongly associated with higher levels of burnout among teachers. Since the significance value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings therefore indicate that workplace stress significantly contributes to emotional exhaustion and occupational burnout within contemporary educational systems.

Hypothesis Four

H₀₄: Emotional labour has no significant influence on occupational exhaustion among teachers.

Table 11: Regression Analysis on Emotional Labour and Occupational Exhaustion

Variables	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Emotional Labour	0.644	10.874	0.000

Model Summary

Statistics	Value
R	0.644
R ²	0.415
Adjusted R ²	0.410
F-value	118.243
Sig.	0.000

The findings showed that emotional labour significantly influenced occupational exhaustion among teachers ($\beta = 0.644$; $p < 0.05$). The R² value indicates that emotional labour accounted for approximately 41.5% of the variations in occupational exhaustion. Since the significance value was below 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings therefore suggest that continuous emotional regulation and emotional care giving responsibilities significantly contribute to burnout and exhaustion among teachers.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that although salary increases moderately improved teachers' living standards and reduced financial stress, remuneration alone was insufficient for significantly improving teachers' overall quality of life. Many respondents reported persistent emotional exhaustion, workplace stress, and occupational fatigue despite recent salary improvements. These findings support Kurrle and Warwas (2025) who argued that teacher well-being extends beyond income to include emotional stability, work-life balance, institutional support, and occupational satisfaction.

The study further revealed that occupational exhaustion significantly reduced teachers' job satisfaction and professional well-being. Excessive workload, classroom pressure, administrative responsibilities, and emotional demands contributed substantially to teacher burnout within contemporary educational systems. These findings align with Maslach et al. (2001), Yao (2025), and Christopoulou et al. (2026) who identified chronic workplace stress and excessive professional demands as major predictors of occupational burnout among teachers.

The findings also showed a strong positive relationship between workplace stress and teacher burnout. Respondents generally agreed that administrative pressures, excessive documentation, overcrowded

classrooms, student behavioural challenges, and blurred work-life boundaries intensified emotional exhaustion and psychological stress among teachers. These findings correspond with the OECD TALIS 2024 report and RAND Corporation (2024) findings which identified workload pressure and administrative demands as major sources of stress within modern educational systems.

Another major finding of the study was that emotional labour significantly contributed to occupational exhaustion among teachers. Teachers are continuously expected to remain emotionally supportive, patient, calm, and professionally committed regardless of personal stress or fatigue. This finding strongly supports Emotional Labour Theory developed by Arlie Hochschild and aligns with Taddese et al. (2025) who observed that emotional regulation and emotional care giving responsibilities significantly contribute to teacher burnout and psychological fatigue.

The findings further revealed that burnout negatively affects teachers' morale, teaching effectiveness, classroom performance, emotional stability, and commitment to the profession. Persistent exhaustion was associated with declining workplace satisfaction, frustration, and reduced enthusiasm toward teaching responsibilities. These findings support UNESCO's (2023) position that worsening workplace conditions and occupational stress contribute significantly to declining teacher retention and professional sustainability globally.

Overall, the study demonstrated that teacher welfare cannot be reduced to salary improvements alone. Sustainable teacher well-being requires healthier working conditions, manageable workloads, emotional support systems, professional recognition, and improved work-life balance policies within educational institutions.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between salary increases, teacher burnout, occupational exhaustion, and quality of life within contemporary educational systems in South-East Nigeria. The findings revealed that although salary improvements moderately enhanced teachers' living standards and reduced financial stress, remuneration alone was insufficient for addressing the broader challenges affecting teachers' occupational well-being and quality of life.

The study established that teachers continue to experience significant levels of burnout, workplace stress, emotional exhaustion, and declining professional satisfaction despite recent salary improvements. Excessive workloads, administrative pressures, emotional labour, overcrowded classrooms, technological demands, and blurred work-life boundaries were identified as major contributors to occupational exhaustion among teachers. These workplace conditions significantly undermine teachers' mental health, morale,

productivity, emotional stability, and long-term commitment to the profession.

The study further demonstrated that burnout negatively affects teaching effectiveness, classroom performance, educational productivity, and institutional stability. Persistent occupational exhaustion contributes to low morale, frustration, declining job satisfaction, emotional fatigue, and reduced enthusiasm toward professional responsibilities. Consequently, salary increases alone cannot guarantee meaningful improvement in teachers' quality of life when educational institutions continue to operate within stressful and highly demanding organizational environments.

Using Job Demands–Resources Theory and Emotional Labour Theory, the study explained that teacher burnout emerges from the imbalance between growing workplace demands and insufficient institutional support systems. Teachers continuously perform intellectual, emotional, and psychological labour within performance-driven educational systems that often prioritize productivity and accountability over occupational well-being.

The study therefore concludes that sustainable teacher welfare requires a holistic and multidimensional approach that combines fair remuneration with healthier working conditions, manageable workloads, psychosocial support systems, emotional well-being, professional autonomy, institutional recognition, and

effective work-life balance policies. Without broader structural reforms within educational systems, salary increases may merely function as compensation for enduring stressful workplace conditions rather than genuine instruments for improving teachers' overall quality of life.

Recommendations

1. Governments and educational institutions should complement salary increases with broader workplace reforms aimed at reducing excessive workload, administrative pressure, and unnecessary bureaucratic responsibilities placed on teachers.
2. Educational institutions should establish structured psychosocial support systems including counselling services, stress management programmes, mental health initiatives, and emotional support mechanisms for teachers.
3. School administrators should promote healthier work-life balance policies by regulating working hours, reducing excessive after-school duties, and discouraging unnecessary work-related intrusions into teachers' personal lives.
4. Governments should improve classroom conditions through adequate staffing, recruitment of additional teachers, reduced teacher-student ratios, and provision of sufficient instructional resources to minimize occupational stress.
5. Teachers should be granted greater professional autonomy, institutional recognition, and participation in educational decision-making processes in order to

- improve morale, job satisfaction, and workplace commitment.
6. Educational institutions should organize regular professional development programmes focused on occupational wellness, emotional resilience, coping strategies, and burnout prevention among teachers.
 7. School management systems should adopt more supportive and less punitive performance evaluation methods that prioritize teacher well-being alongside productivity and educational outcomes.
 8. Further empirical studies should examine teacher burnout, occupational exhaustion, and quality of life across different educational levels, institutional settings, and socio-cultural environments in order to deepen understanding of teacher welfare within contemporary educational systems.

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SYMBOLISM AND CULTURAL MEANING IN IZHI-IGBO PROVERBS: A CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR APPROACH

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Abstract

This study examines symbolism and cultural meaning in selected Izhi-Igbo proverbs using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Proverbs occupy an important position in African oral tradition as repositories of communal wisdom, indigenous philosophy, and social regulation. Within the Izhi-Igbo speech community of Ebonyi State, proverbs are widely employed to communicate moral instruction, caution, justice, reciprocity, endurance, and communal expectations through symbolic and metaphorical expressions. Despite existing scholarship on Igbo proverbs, insufficient attention has been devoted to the symbolic and conceptual metaphorical structures underlying Izhi proverbial discourse. This study therefore investigates how symbolic metaphors in Izhi proverbs encode cultural meanings and communal worldview. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through oral interviews, participant observation, and consultations with elderly native speakers of the Izhi dialect. The data were analyzed using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, focusing on source domains, target domains, symbolic mappings,

and cultural interpretations. Findings reveal that Izhi proverbs derive their metaphorical structures largely from animals, body parts, domestic objects, roads, rivers, sacrifice, and environmental experiences. These symbolic domains are employed to conceptualize abstract realities such as justice, caution, morality, guilt, reciprocity, resilience, maturity, and social responsibility. The study further reveals that Izhi proverbs function not merely as artistic expressions but also as cognitive-cultural systems through which indigenous knowledge and communal philosophy are preserved and transmitted. The study concludes that symbolism and metaphor constitute important mechanisms of meaning-making in Izhi proverbial discourse and that Izhi proverbs represent significant repositories of indigenous cognition and cultural heritage.

Keywords: Izhi-Igbo, proverb, symbolism, metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, indigenous knowledge, oral tradition

Introduction

Language is deeply connected to culture, worldview, and social experience. In many African societies, proverbs constitute one of the most powerful linguistic resources through which communities preserve wisdom, regulate behaviour, and transmit indigenous knowledge across generations. Proverbs are not merely decorative expressions used to beautify speech; they are compressed cultural texts that encode communal experiences, ethical principles, and social philosophies.

Across African societies, proverbs function as instruments of instruction, persuasion, caution, reconciliation, and social regulation. Their meanings are often indirect, symbolic, and context-dependent, requiring shared cultural knowledge for proper interpretation (Aragbuwa & Omotunde, 2022).

Among the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria, proverbs occupy a central position in communication and traditional discourse. Proverbs are frequently employed in conflict mediation, interpersonal interaction, public speaking, storytelling, arbitration, and moral instruction. The communicative importance of proverbs in Igbo society is reflected in the popular expression that “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten,” emphasizing their role in enriching discourse and facilitating deeper understanding. Proverbs enable speakers to communicate criticism, wisdom, warning, or advice in culturally acceptable and diplomatically indirect forms. Studies have shown that Igbo proverbs embody communal philosophy, social norms, and indigenous patterns of reasoning (Kanu, 2014; Oweleke, 2022).

Within the Izhi-Igbo speech community of Ebonyi State, proverbs remain important cultural and communicative resources, particularly among elders and culturally knowledgeable speakers. Izhi proverbs frequently employ animals, body parts, domestic objects, roads, rivers, sacrifice, forests, food items, and environmental phenomena as symbolic representations of abstract human experiences and social realities. Through such

symbolic expressions, the proverbs communicate ideas relating to caution, justice, reciprocity, endurance, guilt, maturity, wisdom, and communal responsibility. For instance, the proverb *E mephee oku, o korueghul'iphu* (“If the rules concerning the fowl are violated, the goat becomes the victim”) metaphorically encodes the idea that small negligence may eventually produce greater consequences. Similarly, *A tunya mini, a turu eruyekobe iya* (“If one continues clearing particles from the surface of a pond, muddy water may emerge”) symbolically conceptualizes the dangers of excessive interference and the impossibility of attaining absolute perfection in social life. These expressions demonstrate that metaphor and symbolism in Izhi proverbs are not ornamental linguistic devices alone but culturally grounded mechanisms for interpreting and organizing human experience.

The symbolic and metaphorical nature of proverbs has attracted scholarly attention in linguistics, folklore, literary studies, philosophy, and anthropology. Existing studies on African and Igbo proverbs have examined themes such as indigenous philosophy, gender representation, communicative relevance, pragmatics, oral tradition, and cultural preservation. Kanu (2014), for instance, argues that Igbo proverbs embody African philosophical thought, while Oweleke (2022) examines the morphosyntactic and pragmatic dimensions of proverb-based personal names among the Igbo. Similarly, Aragbuwa and Omotunde (2022) investigate conceptual metaphorization in Yoruba proverbs,

demonstrating the cognitive and cultural dimensions of metaphorical structures in African proverbial discourse. However, despite the growing scholarship on African proverbs, insufficient attention has been devoted specifically to the symbolic and conceptual metaphorical structures underlying Izhi-Igbo proverbs. Many previous studies focus broadly on philosophy, thematic interpretation, or language preservation without closely examining how symbolic metaphors function cognitively and culturally within Izhi proverbial discourse. Consequently, the metaphorical mappings through which the Izhi people conceptualize morality, social relations, caution, reciprocity, justice, and communal life remain underexplored.

This gap becomes significant when viewed from the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), CMT argues that metaphor is not merely a stylistic feature of language but a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which abstract concepts are understood in terms of concrete human experiences. According to the theory, people conceptualize complex realities through metaphorical mappings between source domains and target domains. Conceptual metaphors therefore reflect how societies structure thought, interpret experience, and construct meaning. Studies applying CMT to African proverbial discourse have demonstrated that metaphorical structures often encode deeply rooted cultural ideologies and indigenous cognitive patterns (Aragbuwa& Omotunde, 2022; Kobia, 2016).

Against this background, this study investigates symbolism and cultural meaning in selected Izhi-Igbo proverbs using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The study seeks to identify the symbolic and metaphorical structures underlying the proverbs, examine how symbolic metaphors encode cultural meanings, and analyze the conceptual mappings through which Izhi communal values and social philosophy are communicated. The study contributes to scholarship in African oral literature, cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, and indigenous knowledge studies. It also contributes to the documentation and preservation of Izhi oral traditions at a time when modernization, urbanization, and language shift increasingly threaten indigenous systems of knowledge transmission.

Literature Review

Proverbs and African Oral Tradition

Proverbs constitute one of the oldest and most enduring forms of oral expression in African societies. They function not merely as artistic expressions but as repositories of communal wisdom, social philosophy, historical consciousness, and indigenous knowledge. In many African cultures, proverbs are deeply integrated into everyday interaction and are employed in conflict resolution, moral instruction, public speaking, social criticism, negotiation, and communal arbitration. Their authority derives largely from their perceived connection to ancestral wisdom and collective experience. As compressed expressions of social reality, proverbs provide guidance for behaviour and social relations within the community (Finnegan, 2012).

African oral traditions generally rely on figurative and symbolic language because indirectness is often culturally valued in communication. Rather than confront issues through blunt and literal speech, many African societies prefer proverb-based expressions that soften criticism, encourage diplomacy, and promote reflection. Proverbs therefore perform pragmatic functions beyond their literal semantic content. They regulate interaction, caution against social misconduct, and reinforce communal norms and values (Yankah, 1989).

Among the Igbo people, proverbs occupy a particularly prominent place in discourse. Proverbs are frequently used by elders and experienced speakers to demonstrate wisdom, rhetorical competence, and cultural knowledge. In traditional Igbo society, the effective use of proverbs enhances the credibility and persuasive force of speech. Proverbs are employed in family meetings, dispute settlements, storytelling, marriage negotiations, political discussions, and judicial proceedings. Their continued relevance in contemporary Igbo society demonstrates their enduring role as vehicles of indigenous philosophy and social orientation (Kanu, 2014).

Studies on Igbo proverbs have shown that they encode diverse aspects of social life, including morality, gender relations, power, justice, caution, responsibility, and communal identity. Ezeifeke (2017), for example, examines gender representation in Igbo proverbs and argues that proverbial expressions reflect broader cultural ideologies and social expectations. Similarly,

Oweleke (2022) observes that proverb-based expressions among the Igbo extend beyond entertainment and serve important morphosyntactic, pragmatic, and communicative functions within society. These studies demonstrate that Igbo proverbs are important linguistic resources through which cultural realities are constructed and interpreted.

Within Izhi-Igbo society, proverbs remain significant communicative tools through which communal values and experiences are transmitted. Izhi proverbs frequently draw their imagery from animals, agriculture, rivers, sacrifice, domestic life, kinship relations, and environmental experiences. Such symbolic representations enable speakers to communicate abstract realities through concrete and culturally familiar experiences. The continued vitality of these proverbs reflects the enduring importance of oral tradition within the Izhi cultural landscape.

Symbolism and Metaphor in Proverbs

Symbolism and metaphor are central features of proverbial discourse. Proverbs rarely communicate meaning directly; rather, they rely on symbolic representation and metaphorical mapping to convey deeper social and philosophical meanings. Symbolism involves the use of concrete entities, images, or experiences to represent abstract ideas and realities, while metaphor enables speakers to understand one domain of experience in terms of another (Kövecses, 2010).

In proverbial expressions, symbolic images often derive from everyday experiences within the cultural environment of the people. Animals, body parts, natural phenomena, food items, roads, farming tools, rivers, and domestic objects are commonly employed as symbolic resources for conceptualizing human behaviour and social relations. Such symbolic structures are culturally grounded because their meanings depend largely on communal experiences and shared cultural understanding.

African proverbs are particularly rich in metaphorical symbolism because many African societies conceptualize reality through concrete environmental and embodied experiences. Kobia (2016), in a study of Swahili proverbs, demonstrates that animal metaphors frequently encode human qualities, moral expectations, and social relations. Similarly, Aragbuwa and Omotunde (2022) argue that metaphorical structures in Yoruba proverbs reveal underlying cultural ideologies and social constructions. These studies suggest that African proverbs are not random figurative expressions but highly structured symbolic systems through which societies organize and communicate meaning.

In Igbo proverbial discourse, metaphor and symbolism often function together to encode caution, morality, reciprocity, wisdom, and communal philosophy. Expressions involving animals such as dogs, tortoises, goats, and chickens frequently symbolize social roles, moral behaviour, or human tendencies. Environmental phenomena such as rivers, forests, roads, and rain are

similarly employed to conceptualize movement, uncertainty, danger, maturity, and destiny. These symbolic mappings allow abstract realities to be communicated through concrete experiences familiar to members of the speech community.

The symbolic richness of Izhi proverbs demonstrates the cognitive sophistication underlying indigenous oral traditions. Through symbolic metaphorization, ordinary physical experiences become tools for interpreting social reality. Proverbs therefore function not merely as artistic expressions but also as cognitive and cultural mechanisms for organizing communal understanding and preserving indigenous worldviews.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) emerged from the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who argue that metaphor is not simply a stylistic feature of language but a fundamental mechanism of human thought and cognition. According to the theory, people understand abstract concepts through mappings from more concrete and experiential domains. These metaphorical mappings structure perception, reasoning, interpretation, and social understanding.

Central to CMT are the notions of source domain and target domain. The source domain refers to the concrete and familiar experience from which metaphorical meaning is drawn, while the target domain represents the abstract concept being understood. For example, in the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, the

concrete experience of movement and travel is mapped onto the abstract experience of human life. Through such mappings, metaphor becomes a cognitive process rather than merely a linguistic ornament (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

CMT has been widely applied in linguistic and cultural studies because it provides a useful framework for understanding how societies conceptualize reality through language. Kövecses (2010) argues that conceptual metaphors are often culturally grounded and shaped by the experiences, environment, and worldview of a people. Consequently, metaphorical structures may vary across cultures depending on the social and environmental realities familiar to members of a speech community.

The application of CMT to African proverbial discourse has shown that many African proverbs encode culturally specific patterns of thought and indigenous cognitive structures. In many cases, metaphorical expressions derive from farming, hunting, food production, kinship relations, spirituality, and environmental interaction. These embodied experiences become source domains through which abstract ideas such as morality, justice, caution, wisdom, and power are conceptualized.

Within Izhi-Igbo proverbs, conceptual metaphors frequently emerge through symbolic references to animals, sacrifice, body parts, roads, rivers, domestic objects, and environmental processes. Such metaphorical mappings reveal how the Izhi people interpret social

relations, moral responsibility, communal life, and human behaviour. Conceptual Metaphor Theory is therefore considered appropriate for this study because it provides a framework for examining how symbolic meanings and cultural philosophies are encoded in Izhi proverbial expressions.

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined African and Igbo proverbs from different scholarly perspectives. Kanu (2014) investigates Igbo proverbs as embodiments of Igbo-African philosophy and argues that proverbs encode communal wisdom, indigenous reasoning, and philosophical thought. The study demonstrates that Igbo proverbs function as important cultural and intellectual resources within African society.

Ezeifeke (2017) studies gender stereotypes in selected Igbo proverbs and observes that proverbial expressions often reflect prevailing social ideologies and cultural attitudes toward gender relations. The study highlights the role of proverbs in reinforcing and transmitting societal expectations within the community.

Oweleke (2022) examines proverb-based personal names among the Igbo from morphosyntactic and pragmatic perspectives. The study argues that proverb-related expressions extend beyond literary aesthetics and perform important communicative and social functions within Igbo discourse.

Outside Igbo studies, Kobia (2016) applies conceptual metaphor analysis to Swahili proverbs and demonstrates that metaphorical structures involving animals and environmental experiences are employed to conceptualize social relations and human behaviour. Similarly, Aragbuwa and Omotunde (2022) examine metaphorization in Yoruba proverbs and conclude that metaphorical expressions reveal underlying cultural ideologies and social constructions.

Although these studies contribute significantly to African proverb scholarship, insufficient attention has been devoted specifically to symbolism and conceptual metaphorization in Izhi-Igbo proverbs. Existing studies focus largely on philosophy, pragmatics, gender, or general cultural interpretation without closely examining the symbolic structures and metaphorical mappings underlying Izhi proverbial expressions. Consequently, the cultural meanings encoded through symbolic metaphors in Izhi proverbs remain insufficiently explored. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining symbolism and cultural meaning in selected Izhi-Igbo proverbs through the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

This study is anchored on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as propounded by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The theory emerged as a major shift from the traditional understanding of metaphor as merely a stylistic or ornamental feature of language. Rather than viewing

metaphor as a decorative linguistic device used mainly in literature and rhetoric, Conceptual Metaphor Theory argues that metaphor is fundamentally a cognitive phenomenon through which human beings conceptualize and understand reality. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), human thought processes are largely metaphorical because abstract experiences are often understood through more concrete and familiar experiential domains.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory is based on the assumption that metaphor involves systematic mappings between two conceptual domains: the source domain and the target domain. The source domain refers to the concrete or familiar area of experience from which metaphorical meaning is drawn, while the target domain represents the abstract concept being understood through the metaphorical mapping. In metaphorical cognition, features and structures associated with the source domain are projected onto the target domain to facilitate understanding and interpretation (Kövecses, 2010).

For example, in the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, experiences associated with movement, direction, obstacles, destinations, and pathways are mapped onto human life and existence. Through this mapping, abstract realities such as life goals, struggles, and progress become easier to conceptualize. Conceptual metaphors therefore influence not only language but also perception, reasoning, behaviour, and cultural interpretation.

CMT further argues that metaphorical structures are often grounded in embodied human experiences and environmental interaction. Human beings derive conceptual metaphors from bodily experiences, physical activities, environmental realities, and social interaction. As a result, metaphorical expressions within a society frequently reflect the lived experiences, environment, occupation, belief systems, and cultural worldview of the people (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This explains why many African proverbs derive their symbolic imagery from farming, animals, hunting, rivers, forests, domestic life, food, and communal interaction.

The applicability of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to African proverbial discourse has been demonstrated in several studies. Kobia (2016), for instance, observes that Swahili proverbs employ animal metaphors to conceptualize human behaviour and social relations. Similarly, Aragbuwa and Omotunde (2022) show that metaphorical expressions in Yoruba proverbs reflect deeper cultural ideologies and communal assumptions. These studies indicate that metaphor in African proverbial discourse functions as a cognitive and cultural system rather than merely a linguistic embellishment.

Within the context of Izhi-Igbo proverbs, metaphorical mappings frequently emerge through references to animals, sacrifice, body parts, roads, forests, streams, domestic objects, and environmental processes. Such symbolic domains are employed to conceptualize abstract realities including morality, caution, reciprocity, justice, endurance, guilt, wisdom, maturity, and

communal responsibility. For example, in the proverb *E mephee oku, o korueghul'iphu* (“If the rules concerning the fowl are violated, the goat becomes the victim”), the concrete experience of ritual sacrifice and escalating demands serves as the source domain through which the abstract idea of increasing consequences is conceptualized. Likewise, in *A tunya mini, a turu eruyekobe iya* (“If one continues clearing particles from the surface of a pond, muddy water may emerge”), the physical experience of disturbing pond water becomes the source domain for conceptualizing the dangers of excessive interference and perfectionism.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory is therefore considered suitable for this study because it provides an effective framework for analyzing how symbolic meanings are encoded in Izhi proverbs. The theory makes it possible to identify the metaphorical structures underlying the proverbs and to examine how the Izhi people conceptualize social relations, morality, caution, justice, and communal life through culturally grounded symbolic expressions. Through this framework, the study demonstrates that Izhi proverbs are not merely artistic sayings but cognitive-cultural structures that embody indigenous philosophy and communal worldview.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts the qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study is concerned primarily with interpretation, meaning, symbolism, and

metaphorical representation within Izhi-Igbo proverbs. The descriptive approach enables the researcher to identify, describe, and analyze the symbolic and conceptual metaphorical structures embedded in the selected proverbs.

Area of the Study

The study is situated within the Izhi-speaking area of Ebonyi State, southeastern Nigeria. Izhi is one of the major dialect clusters of the Igbo language spoken predominantly in Abakaliki, Ebonyi, and Izzi Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State. The speech community possesses a rich oral tradition in which proverbs occupy an important position in communication, conflict mediation, socialization, and cultural instruction.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of native speakers of the Izhi dialect, particularly elderly speakers and individuals considered knowledgeable in traditional oral expressions. Elders were considered appropriate for the study because they possess greater familiarity with traditional proverb usage, interpretation, and contextual meanings within the speech community.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling in selecting participants. A total of ten elderly native speakers of the Izhi dialect who are knowledgeable in traditional proverbial discourse were selected from different Izhi-speaking communities. The purposive sampling

technique was considered suitable because the study required participants with deep cultural competence and extensive knowledge of Izhi proverbs.

Although a large number of proverbs were elicited during the data collection process, selected proverbs that strongly reflect symbolic and conceptual metaphorical structures were purposively chosen for detailed analysis in this study.

Method of Data Collection

Data for the study were collected primarily through oral interviews and participant observation. The interview method enabled participants to provide proverbs, literal interpretations, contextual meanings, and cultural explanations associated with the expressions. Open-ended interview questions were used to allow respondents freedom in explaining the meanings and usage contexts of the proverbs.

Participant observation also assisted in understanding how proverbs are employed in natural communicative situations within the speech community. In addition, consultations were conducted with elders from different Izhi communities to verify the accuracy, interpretation, and contextual appropriateness of the proverbs collected.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The analysis focused on identifying the symbolic elements, source domains, target domains, and conceptual

mappings underlying the selected proverbs. The proverbs were grouped into thematic categories based on recurring symbolic patterns and cultural meanings.

Each proverb was analyzed in relation to:

1. its literal meaning,
2. its symbolic representation,
3. the conceptual metaphor underlying the expression,
4. and the cultural or philosophical meaning communicated through the proverb.

This analytical procedure enabled the study to uncover the metaphorical structures through which Izhi-Igbo proverbs encode communal values, indigenous philosophy, and cultural worldview.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analyzes selected Izhi-Igbo proverbs with the aim of identifying their symbolic structures, conceptual metaphors, and cultural meanings. The analysis is guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which views metaphor as a cognitive mechanism through which abstract realities are understood using concrete experiential domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In the proverbs analyzed, animals, body parts, environmental objects, domestic items, and physical experiences function as source domains through which broader social and cultural realities are conceptualized. For clarity and analytical coherence, the proverbs are grouped thematically according to dominant symbolic patterns and conceptual metaphorical structures.

Animal Symbolism and Cultural Cognition

Animals occupy an important symbolic position in Izhi proverbial discourse. Through references to dogs, chickens, goats, tortoises, lizards, and rats, the proverbs encode caution, guilt, reciprocity, hidden strength, aggression, wisdom, and consequence. The metaphorical deployment of animals reflects the close relationship between human social experience and environmental interaction within the Izhi cultural worldview.

**Table 1
Animal Symbolism and Conceptual Metaphors in
Izhi Proverbs**

S/ N	Proverb	Literal Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor	Cultural Meaning
1	<i>E mepheeku, o korueghul'iphu</i>	If the rules concerning the fowl are violated, the goat becomes the victim	SMALL NEGLIGENCE BECOMES GREAT COST	Failure to address minor issues leads to greater consequences
2	<i>Okuara ekwale o to nweueze, temu o nodu elweokwe elwempuma</i>	The chicken complains of lacking teeth yet swallows stones	HIDDEN CAPACITY IS POWER	Some individuals possess more ability than they admit
3	<i>Nkutaagbo ire adzophuruadz oonyenweunup hu</i>	The barking dog protects both the thief and the owner	CAUTION IS PROTECTION	Warnings protect both offender and victim
4	<i>Nkutaachingwere be enya akporul'aga</i>	The dog chasing a lizard gets pierced by thorns	AGGRESSION LEADS TO	Harmful pursuit often injures the

			PAIN	aggressor
5	<i>A kwafuta utara, a huma mbepfuęka</i>	When food is served, the tortoise's hand will be revealed	NECESSITY REVEALS CHARACTER	True abilities emerge under pressure
6	<i>A ta tudu onųokpuru oswa nkapfu le ge ahų mawaru ge onųdu iya</i>	One need not describe the whistle of the mouse after seeing its mouth	APPEARANCE REVEALS CHARACTER	Physical appearance may reveal inner tendencies

The proverb *E mephee oku, o koru eghul'iphu* demonstrates how ritual sacrifice functions as a symbolic structure for conceptualizing consequence and escalation. Within traditional Izhi cosmology, the movement from fowl to goat symbolizes increasing sacrificial demand resulting from negligence or delayed responsibility. The proverb therefore conceptualizes moral failure as accumulating social and spiritual debt. The metaphorical movement from a smaller sacrificial item to a larger one encodes the cultural philosophy that unresolved problems often produce greater consequences later.

Similarly, the proverb concerning the toothless chicken presents an ironic symbolic contradiction. Although the chicken lacks teeth, it is nevertheless capable of swallowing stones. The proverb metaphorically critiques performative helplessness and false claims of inadequacy. Here, the chicken becomes a symbolic representation of concealed ability and underestimated capacity. The proverb reflects the cultural belief that

outward complaints do not necessarily correspond with actual capability.

The barking dog proverb conceptualizes warning and caution as communal protection mechanisms. The dog's bark protects not only the owner of the house but also the intruder by preventing possible confrontation or violence. The proverb therefore encodes the cultural philosophy that caution and correction are socially beneficial to all parties involved. Similarly, the dog chasing the lizard conceptualizes aggression as self-destructive behaviour. Through the image of thorns piercing the dog's eyes, the proverb communicates the inevitability of consequence for harmful pursuits.

The tortoise proverb reflects the symbolic association of the tortoise with cunning, strategy, and hidden wisdom within Igbo folklore. The revelation of the tortoise's hand when food is served metaphorically suggests that circumstances expose hidden abilities and intentions. Likewise, the mouse-mouth proverb conceptualizes visible appearance as an indicator of deeper tendencies or potential behaviour.

Collectively, these animal-based metaphors demonstrate how Izhi proverbs derive abstract social meanings from concrete environmental and embodied experiences. Animals function not merely as decorative images but as cognitive-cultural symbols through which morality, caution, aggression, wisdom, and social relations are conceptualized.

Body Symbolism and Moral Representation

Body parts constitute another important symbolic resource in Izhi proverbs. Through references to hands, teeth, mouth, and bodily experiences, the proverbs conceptualize morality, capability, entitlement, punishment, justice, and social legitimacy. Body imagery enables abstract moral realities to be communicated through direct physical experience.

**Table 2
Body Symbolism and Conceptual Metaphors in Izhi Proverbs**

S/ N	Proverb	Literal Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor	Cultural Meaning
1	<i>Eka paruedja o wota maa opfu</i>	Hands bearing sacrifice can negotiate with spirits	SACRIFICE IS ACCESS	Fulfilled obligations create legitimacy
2	<i>Nwata nyiaedjo nshi be a ta akpudjedu iya ike le enwiri nwa</i>	One does not clean a child with sandpaper	PUNISHME NT SHOULD FIT OFFENCE	Responses should be proportionate
3	<i>Okuara ekwale o to nwedjeze</i>	The chicken complains of lacking teeth	TEETH REPRESENT POWER	Capability is symbolized through bodily strength
4	<i>A ta tudu onu okpuru oswa nkapfu</i>	One need not describe the whistle of the mouse after seeing its mouth	BODY STRUCTUR E REVEALS FUNCTION	Physical form suggests social or behavioural tendencies

In *Eka paruedja o wota maa opfu*, the hand symbolizes agency, labour, sacrifice, and moral qualification. The proverb conceptualizes fulfilled obligation as a form of legitimacy and entitlement. Through ritual symbolism, the proverb suggests that individuals who have performed their responsibilities possess the moral authority to negotiate, demand justice, or seek favour.

The sandpaper proverb reflects the cultural principle of proportionality in justice and discipline. The painful bodily imagery of cleaning a child with sandpaper symbolically condemns excessive retaliation and disproportionate punishment. The proverb conceptualizes justice as moderation and moral restraint rather than cruelty.

Similarly, teeth in the chicken proverb symbolize force, power, and destructive potential. Even in the absence of teeth, the chicken performs difficult acts, thereby challenging assumptions about weakness and limitation. The proverb therefore critiques deceptive self-presentation and exaggerated helplessness.

These body-centered metaphors demonstrate that bodily experiences serve as important cognitive foundations for conceptualizing morality, legitimacy, capability, and justice within Izhi cultural thought.

Environmental and Domestic Symbolism

Environmental and domestic objects constitute major symbolic resources in Izhi proverbial discourse. Rivers, ponds, roads, forests, pots, firewood, and other physical

elements from everyday life are metaphorically employed to conceptualize maturity, disorder, direction, social harmony, caution, and experiential wisdom. Such symbolic mappings demonstrate how the Izhi people derive abstract meanings from interaction with their immediate environment and domestic realities.

Table 3

Environmental and Domestic Symbolism in Izhi Proverbs ³	<i>Nwaajitee phudjedu uzo</i>	One who asks questions does not miss the road	KNOWLEDGE IS DIRECTION	Guidance prevents confusion and failure						
4	<i>Onye kpaishi, o toñudunge leawuḡhu</i>	One who inquires does not drink from a forbidden stream	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>INQUIRY / SAFETY</th> <th>IS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>S / N</td> <td>Proverb</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td><i>A tu mini, tūruruyo beiya</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	INQUIRY / SAFETY	IS	S / N	Proverb	1	<i>A tu mini, tūruruyo beiya</i>	Seeking counsel prevents danger
INQUIRY / SAFETY	IS									
S / N	Proverb									
1	<i>A tu mini, tūruruyo beiya</i>									

			2	<i>It ophueme ahumaip kahuיתה aru</i>			X P R I N C I S G I G	Y o u t h e v e n t u a l l y e n c o u n t e r s t h e r e a l i t i e s o f l i f e
5	<i>E doo nkuishirii, egudeti yap yooswa</i>	Well- arranged firewood passes smoothly through the forest	ORDER	IS	Proper organizatio n promotes harmony			
6	<i>Okunyiae hualiachij ahayaosọ</i>	When the fowl farts, the land pursues it	GUILT	IS	Wrongdoin g generates fear and insecurity			

The muddy pond proverb presents one of the most philosophically rich environmental metaphors in the corpus. The act of repeatedly removing particles from the surface of a pond eventually disturbs the mud beneath, thereby making the water dirtier. The proverb metaphorically critiques excessive perfectionism and

unnecessary interference in social affairs. It reflects the cultural philosophy that overcorrection may destabilize an already manageable situation. Here, environmental experience becomes a framework for conceptualizing moderation and pragmatic social conduct.

Similarly, the proverb concerning the new and old pot conceptualizes maturity through domestic imagery. The transition from a new pot to an old pot symbolizes the inevitable movement from youthfulness to experience. The proverb suggests that younger individuals will eventually encounter the same hardships, disappointments, and realities previously faced by elders. The pot therefore becomes a metaphor for human existence, endurance, and experiential wisdom.

Road and stream imagery similarly function as symbolic representations of guidance, direction, and survival. In *Nwa ajite ephudjedu uzo* (“One who asks questions does not miss the road”), movement along a road becomes the source domain for conceptualizing knowledge acquisition and social orientation. The proverb reflects the communal philosophy that humility and inquiry prevent failure. Likewise, the stream proverb conceptualizes ignorance as danger and inquiry as safety. Drinking from a forbidden or inappropriate stream symbolizes avoidable error resulting from failure to seek guidance.

The firewood proverb employs domestic labour imagery to conceptualize social organization and peaceful coexistence. Firewood that is properly arranged can be

transported easily through the forest without scattering. Metaphorically, the proverb suggests that dialogue, orderliness, and collective understanding make difficult social situations manageable. It reflects the communal value placed on negotiation, coordination, and social harmony.

Collectively, these environmental and domestic metaphors demonstrate how Izhi proverbs derive social philosophy from lived interaction with the physical environment. Everyday experiences involving water, roads, forests, streams, and household objects become symbolic structures through which abstract realities such as maturity, caution, moderation, knowledge, and peace are conceptualized.

Symbolism of Social Relations and Morality

Many Izhi proverbs employ symbolic metaphorization to regulate social relations and communicate moral expectations. Through images of friendship, reciprocity, punishment, protection, sacrifice, and communal interaction, the proverbs encode indigenous philosophies relating to justice, accountability, endurance, fairness, and social responsibility. Morality in these proverbs is frequently conceptualized through consequence, exchange, bodily experience, and reciprocal action.

**Table 4
Symbolism of Social Relations and Morality in Izhi Proverbs**

S/ N	Proverb	Literal Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor	Cultural Meaning
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1	<i>Atashianshi, o buruokpuehu</i>	When endurance stretches, it becomes strength	ENDURANCE IS STRENGTH	Perseverance eventually produces resilience
2	<i>A alodjeduogunw a le ikedu</i>	One does not protect a child because one is strong	LOVE IS RESPONSIBILITY	Protection arises from obligation and attachment
3	<i>Enyiruguchiau zo, eguaguhaya</i>	If laziness closes the door, hunger will open it	HUNGER IS FORCE	Necessity compels action
4	<i>Onya nguduiri, ipheemengunu a dijiri</i>	If you have ten friends, your troubles will be ten	FRIENDSHIP IS RISK	Social closeness may increase vulnerability
5	<i>O pfwirubeony eozo, ge o ghaaruiysohul' ibeya</i>	He who destroys another's home, may it return to his own	EVIL IS CIRCULAR	Harm eventually returns to the aggressor
6	<i>Nkutasurule o onyedaarubeiy a...</i>	Mutual falling upon one another is what makes play	RELATIONSHIP IS RECIPROCITY	Social harmony depends on mutual exchange
7	<i>E buruyeruuru, e buruyerukpu</i>	Cut to benefit both flesh and bone	JUSTICE IS BALANCE	Fairness requires equitable distribution
8	<i>Ogerenya mee ipheechietchachi, etchachi ala ukpo</i>	When an elder deserves flogging, canes become scarce	POWER ALTERS JUSTICE	Social hierarchy influences punishment
9	<i>Ogbogbolobua humaeme</i>	Negligence is an omen of evil	NEGLIGENCE IS	Carelessness creates

			DISASTER	avoidable problems
10	<i>Agboko tube era, o tube ntumatu</i>	When a maiden develops breasts, troubles begin	GROWTH IS BURDEN	Maturity comes with social responsibility and vulnerability

The proverb *A tashia nshi, o buru okpuehu* conceptualizes endurance as strength. Through embodied experience, prolonged suffering and perseverance become metaphorically transformed into resilience and social credibility. The proverb reflects the cultural admiration for patience, persistence, and emotional endurance within communal life.

Similarly, *A ta alodjedu ogunwa le ikedu* conceptualizes protection as an obligation rooted in attachment and responsibility rather than physical strength alone. The proverb reflects communal understandings of kinship, parental duty, and emotional investment. Protection here becomes a moral necessity rather than a performance of power.

The hunger proverb conceptualizes physical hunger as a compelling social force capable of overcoming laziness and withdrawal. Hunger therefore functions symbolically as necessity and survival pressure. The proverb reflects the cultural belief that hardship and need compel productivity and action.

Social caution is strongly represented in the friendship proverb, where increasing social connections metaphorically produce increasing vulnerability and potential conflict. The proverb reflects a pragmatic and cautious view of human relationships within communal life. Similarly, the proverb concerning destruction returning to one's own home conceptualizes morality as reciprocal force. Evil actions are metaphorically represented as circular movements capable of returning to the source. This reflects indigenous philosophies of justice, consequence, and communal accountability.

The reciprocity proverb involving dogs conceptualizes peaceful social relations as mutual exchange and balanced interaction. The proverb suggests that harmony depends on reciprocal conduct rather than one-sided benefit. Likewise, the proverb concerning balanced cutting conceptualizes justice as equitable distribution. Through the imagery of cutting meat to favour both flesh and bone, the proverb encodes the communal expectation of fairness and social inclusion.

The proverb concerning the elder deserving punishment introduces a culturally nuanced understanding of justice and social hierarchy. The scarcity of canes metaphorically reflects the reluctance or difficulty associated with punishing socially powerful or respected individuals. The proverb therefore recognizes the role of pragmatism and hierarchy within communal systems of justice.

Finally, the maidenhood proverb conceptualizes maturity as both opportunity and burden. Physical development becomes symbolically associated with social vulnerability, attraction, responsibility, and emerging societal expectations. The proverb reflects indigenous perceptions of social transition and the inevitable complications associated with adulthood.

Taken together, these proverbs demonstrate that Izhi proverbial discourse functions as an important moral and social regulatory system. Through symbolic metaphorization, the proverbs communicate indigenous philosophies concerning reciprocity, caution, endurance, fairness, justice, responsibility, and communal balance.

Discussion

Metaphor as Indigenous Cognition

The analysis of the selected Izhi-Igbo proverbs demonstrates that metaphor functions not merely as a stylistic feature of language but as an important cognitive mechanism through which the Izhi people conceptualize reality. The proverbs reveal that abstract experiences such as justice, caution, reciprocity, morality, endurance, maturity, guilt, and social responsibility are understood through concrete and culturally familiar domains including animals, sacrifice, bodily experiences, roads, streams, forests, domestic objects, and environmental processes. This finding aligns with the position of Conceptual Metaphor Theory that human beings understand abstract concepts through mappings from concrete experiential domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The recurrent use of environmental imagery in the proverbs reflects the close relationship between cognition and lived experience within Izhi society. Roads symbolize guidance and direction, ponds symbolize complexity and disorder, while forests symbolize difficulty and social navigation. Such metaphorical structures indicate that the Izhi people derive social understanding from direct interaction with their physical environment. The proverbs therefore reveal an embodied and experiential worldview in which social reality is interpreted through concrete environmental encounters.

Similarly, animals in the proverbs function as symbolic projections of human behaviour and social tendencies. Dogs symbolize caution, aggression, reciprocity, and surveillance; chickens symbolize vulnerability, guilt, and concealed capability; tortoises symbolize cunning and strategic intelligence; while goats symbolize escalating consequence and sacrificial burden. These symbolic mappings reveal a cognitive system in which human realities are interpreted through analogical relationships with the natural world.

The findings further suggest that metaphor in Izhi proverbial discourse performs epistemological functions. Proverbs serve as cognitive tools through which communal knowledge is preserved, organized, and transmitted across generations. Through symbolic metaphorization, complex philosophical and moral realities are compressed into memorable oral expressions that can easily be recalled and applied within social

interaction. The proverbs therefore function as repositories of indigenous cognition and communal philosophy.

Symbolism and Cultural Philosophy

The proverbs analyzed in this study reveal important dimensions of Izhi cultural philosophy. One of the dominant philosophical orientations reflected in the proverbs is the principle of consequence and reciprocity. Several proverbs conceptualize actions as forces capable of returning to their source. For example, the proverb *Ọ pfubwiru ibe onye ozo, ge o ghaaruiysohul'ibe ya* (“He who speaks to destroy another’s home, may it return to his own home”) conceptualizes evil as circular movement. Similarly, the proverb concerning the dog chasing a lizard conceptualizes aggression as self-destructive behaviour. These metaphorical structures reflect an indigenous philosophy that views social actions as consequential and reciprocal.

Another important philosophical orientation reflected in the proverbs is communal responsibility and interdependence. The proverb concerning the barking dog demonstrates that caution and warning serve collective rather than individual interests. Likewise, the proverb *A ta alodjedu ogu nwa le ikedu* (“One does not protect a child because one is strong”) conceptualizes protection as obligation rooted in attachment and responsibility. These expressions reflect the communal orientation of Izhi society where social responsibility and collective well-being are highly valued.

The proverbs also reflect a philosophy of moderation and pragmatic balance. The muddy pond proverb cautions against excessive interference and perfectionism, while the sandpaper proverb condemns disproportionate punishment and excessive retaliation. Such expressions reveal a cultural preference for restraint, proportionality, and social equilibrium. Similarly, the proverb concerning balanced cutting conceptualizes justice as equitable distribution and fairness. These findings suggest that Izhi proverbial discourse functions as a moral framework for regulating behaviour and preserving communal harmony.

The findings further reveal the cultural value attached to endurance and resilience. The proverb *A tashia nshi, o buru okpu ehụ* (“When endurance stretches, it becomes strength”) conceptualizes suffering and perseverance as sources of social strength and credibility. This reflects a communal philosophy that values patience, emotional restraint, and resilience in the face of hardship.

Proverbs as Instruments of Social Regulation

The study further demonstrates that Izhi proverbs function as instruments of social regulation and behavioural control. Many of the proverbs analyzed communicate caution, correction, warning, or moral instruction in indirect but culturally effective ways. Rather than employing direct confrontation, the proverbs encode criticism and advice through symbolic imagery and metaphorical expression. This indirectness reduces hostility and preserves social harmony during communication.

The proverb concerning negligence as an omen of evil, for instance, functions as a warning against carelessness and irresponsibility. Rather than attributing all misfortune to supernatural forces, the proverb emphasizes human accountability and practical responsibility. Similarly, the friendship proverb cautions against excessive social trust and vulnerability, while the maidenhood proverb warns about the social responsibilities and complications associated with maturity and adulthood.

The proverb involving arranged firewood reflects the importance of dialogue, organization, and collective understanding in resolving social difficulties. Through domestic imagery, the proverb promotes negotiation, cooperation, and social coordination as mechanisms for achieving communal peace. Likewise, the reciprocity proverb involving dogs emphasizes mutuality and balanced social interaction as conditions for peaceful coexistence.

These findings support the argument that African proverbs function as informal social institutions through which communities regulate conduct and preserve social order. Izhi proverbs therefore operate not merely as literary expressions but also as pragmatic tools for behavioural orientation and communal governance.

Symbolism and Indigenous Knowledge Preservation

The symbolic and metaphorical structures identified in the proverbs demonstrate the important role of oral tradition in preserving indigenous knowledge systems.

The proverbs encode practical wisdom relating to survival, caution, justice, reciprocity, conflict management, social interaction, maturity, and responsibility. Through repeated usage across generations, these symbolic expressions preserve communal memory and cultural philosophy.

The heavy reliance on environmental and domestic imagery further indicates that indigenous knowledge in Izhi society is closely tied to lived experience and interaction with the immediate environment. Rivers, forests, roads, sacrifice, farming activities, animals, and domestic objects become symbolic repositories of communal understanding. Through these familiar experiences, abstract philosophical realities are simplified and transmitted effectively within the speech community.

However, the continued preservation of such symbolic knowledge faces challenges arising from modernization, urbanization, language shift, and declining intergenerational transmission of oral traditions. As younger generations increasingly adopt foreign linguistic and cultural orientations, familiarity with traditional proverbs and their symbolic meanings may gradually decline. The documentation and scholarly study of Izhi proverbs therefore become important not only for linguistic scholarship but also for the preservation of indigenous cognitive systems and cultural heritage.

The study consequently reinforces the importance of African oral traditions as legitimate intellectual and

philosophical systems deserving continued scholarly attention. Izhi proverbs represent more than linguistic artistry; they embody indigenous ways of thinking, interpreting reality, and organizing communal existence.

Conclusion

This study examined symbolism and cultural meaning in selected Izhi-Igbo proverbs using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The analysis demonstrates that Izhi proverbs are not merely decorative linguistic expressions but culturally grounded cognitive structures through which the Izhi people conceptualize morality, justice, caution, reciprocity, endurance, maturity, responsibility, and communal life. Through symbolic and metaphorical mappings involving animals, body parts, domestic objects, sacrifice, roads, forests, streams, and environmental experiences, the proverbs encode indigenous philosophy and communal worldview.

The findings reveal that metaphor in Izhi proverbial discourse functions as an important mechanism of meaning-making and cultural interpretation. Animals such as dogs, chickens, tortoises, goats, and lizards are metaphorically employed to represent social tendencies, caution, aggression, wisdom, vulnerability, and reciprocity. Environmental and domestic symbols similarly conceptualize maturity, disorder, guidance, moderation, and experiential wisdom. Body symbolism further reflects indigenous understandings of power, capability, justice, entitlement, and proportionality. These metaphorical structures demonstrate that abstract

social realities within Izhi society are interpreted through embodied and culturally familiar experiences.

The study further establishes that Izhi proverbs function as repositories of indigenous knowledge and instruments of social regulation. Through symbolic metaphorization, the proverbs communicate communal expectations concerning fairness, accountability, perseverance, social balance, caution, and moral conduct. The proverbs therefore operate not only as artistic expressions but also as informal systems of education, behavioural orientation, and communal governance.

The application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Izhi proverbial discourse has shown that metaphor is deeply connected to indigenous cognition and cultural philosophy. The proverbs analyzed reveal patterns of thought rooted in environmental interaction, social experience, and communal living. They reflect an embodied worldview in which physical experiences and environmental realities become frameworks for understanding abstract human conditions and social relationships.

The study also underscores the importance of preserving indigenous oral traditions in the face of modernization, urbanization, and increasing language shift. As younger generations become less familiar with traditional proverbial discourse, important aspects of indigenous knowledge and cultural cognition risk gradual disappearance. The documentation and scholarly examination of Izhi proverbs therefore contribute not

only to linguistic and literary scholarship but also to the preservation of cultural heritage and indigenous intellectual traditions.

In conclusion, Izhi-Igbo proverbs represent sophisticated symbolic and cognitive systems through which communal philosophy and cultural meaning are encoded and transmitted. Their metaphorical richness demonstrates the intellectual depth of African oral traditions and reinforces the need for continued scholarly attention to indigenous systems of knowledge, language, and cultural expression.

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**EMPLOYEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND
MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT IN PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY IN ABIA
STATE UNIVERSITY, UTURU**

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Abstract

Merit-based recruitment remains a critical determinant of organizational efficiency especially in public tertiary institutions where workforce quality directly influences institutional performance. However, growing concerns persist regarding the increasing reliance on employee recommendations and informal recruitment channels in many Nigerian public universities. This study examined the influence of employee recommendation practices on merit-based recruitment and organizational efficiency in Abia State University. The study adopted a survey research design anchored on Herbert Simon's Decision-

Making Theory. A sample size of 682 respondents was selected from a population of 1,364 academic and non-academic staff using stratified and simple random sampling techniques while 564 properly completed questionnaires were analyzed. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using percentages, Chi-square statistics and contingency coefficients, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Findings revealed that employee recommendations constitute one of the dominant recruitment channels within the institution and significantly influence recruitment outcomes. The findings further revealed that excessive reliance on informal recruitment practices weakens transparency, reduces equal access to employment opportunities and contributes to perceptions of favouritism within recruitment exercises. However, respondents strongly agreed that transparent and merit-based recruitment systems positively improve workforce quality, employee confidence and organizational efficiency. The study concludes that although employee recommendations may provide organizational familiarity and reduce recruitment uncertainty, excessive dependence on informal recommendation systems undermines meritocracy and institutional credibility. The study therefore recommends stricter adherence to transparent recruitment procedures, open advertisement of vacancies and competency-based recruitment frameworks in public universities.

Keywords: Merit-Based Recruitment; Organizational Efficiency; Public Universities; Recruitment Transparency; Workforce Quality.

Introduction

Recruitment and selection remain central functions of human resource management because they determine the quality, competence and productivity of employees within organizations. In tertiary institutions, the effectiveness of recruitment systems significantly shapes administrative performance, academic productivity, service delivery and institutional sustainability. Contemporary human resource management literature emphasizes that merit-based recruitment systems enhance workforce quality, institutional credibility and organizational efficiency by ensuring that qualified individuals are selected through transparent and objective procedures (Dessler, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Recent scholarship further indicates that competency-based recruitment systems, digital recruitment frameworks and structured selection procedures have become increasingly important for improving workforce effectiveness and organizational competitiveness in both public and private institutions. Despite these advancements, recruitment practices within many developing societies continue to face institutional and administrative challenges. Studies on public sector recruitment increasingly reveal concerns relating to weak transparency, prolonged hiring procedures, informal recruitment channels and politically

influenced appointment systems. In several public organizations, recruitment decisions are sometimes shaped by employee recommendations, institutional familiarity, patronage networks and internal influence rather than strictly objective merit principles. Although employee referrals may reduce recruitment costs and accelerate hiring procedures, excessive dependence on informal recommendation systems may compromise equal opportunity, transparency and institutional fairness.

The use of employee recommendation systems has generated considerable debate within organizational and human resource management literature. Some scholars argue that employee referrals improve organizational trust, reduce uncertainty and enable institutions to identify candidates who fit organizational culture and expectations (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Employee recommendations may also improve early employee adjustment because referred individuals often possess prior knowledge of institutional processes and work environments. However, critics maintain that informal recruitment systems frequently encourage favouritism, patronage and biased hiring decisions that undermine meritocracy and workforce diversity (Guest, 2017; Dobbin & Kalev, 2021). Recent studies further suggest that recruitment systems lacking transparency may weaken organizational legitimacy, reduce employee morale and negatively affect institutional performance.

In public universities, recruitment practices are particularly sensitive because tertiary institutions are expected to maintain objective and merit-driven systems capable of attracting highly skilled academic and administrative personnel. Recruitment decisions within universities significantly affect teaching quality, research productivity, administrative efficiency and institutional reputation. Biedma-Ferrer and Medina-Garrido (2023) argue that merit-based recruitment remains fundamental within knowledge-driven institutions because workforce competence directly influences innovation, academic performance and organizational sustainability.

Recent empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that transparent and merit-based recruitment systems positively influence employee performance, organizational commitment and institutional productivity. Studies on public sector organizations and universities show that objective recruitment frameworks improve workforce efficiency and reduce organizational conflict associated with perceived unfairness. Furthermore, recent discussions on AI-supported recruitment systems emphasize transparency, fairness and accountability as increasingly important components of modern recruitment systems.

However, despite growing scholarship on recruitment transparency and organizational performance, limited empirical attention has been given to how employee recommendation practices influence merit-based recruitment and organizational efficiency within

Nigerian public universities, particularly in southeastern Nigeria. Existing studies have concentrated more on private organizations, corporate institutions and generalized public sector systems with limited institution-specific evidence from public tertiary institutions.

In many public universities, vacancies are not always openly advertised and internal recommendations sometimes dominate recruitment exercises. Such practices may restrict access to qualified external applicants and create perceptions of unfairness among employees and stakeholders (Dobbin & Kalev, 2021) where recommendation-based recruitment supersedes objective assessment procedures, institutions risk appointing under qualified personnel thereby, weakening workforce quality, administrative efficiency and organizational effectiveness.

It is against this background that this study examines employee recommendations and merit-based recruitment practices in Abia State University with emphasis on their implications for organizational efficiency. The study specifically evaluates the extent to which recruitment processes are influenced by employee referrals and how such practices affect recruitment transparency, workforce quality and institutional effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

Public universities are expected to maintain transparent and merit-based recruitment systems that promote workforce quality and organizational efficiency. However, concerns persist over the growing influence of employee recommendations and informal recruitment practices in many Nigerian public universities, including Abia State University. Recruitment vacancies are sometimes inadequately advertised, while internal networks and recommendations may influence employment decisions beyond objective merit principles. This situation may weaken transparency, encourage favouritism and reduce equal access to employment opportunities.

Although merit-based recruitment has been widely linked to improved organizational performance, limited empirical studies have examined how employee recommendation practices affect recruitment transparency and organizational efficiency within Nigerian public universities. This study therefore examines the relationship between employee recommendation practices, merit-based recruitment and organizational efficiency in Abia State University.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine employee recommendations and merit-based recruitment practices in public universities using Abia State University as a case study.

The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the extent to which employee recommendations influence recruitment exercises in the university;
2. determine whether recruitment processes are conducted based on merit principles;
3. assess the effect of employee recommendations on recruitment transparency;
4. evaluate the influence of merit-based recruitment practices on organizational efficiency;
5. examine the relationship between recruitment transparency and workforce efficiency in the university.

Literature Review

Concept of Employee Recommendation in Recruitment

Employee recommendation, also known as employee referral recruitment, refers to the process whereby existing employees recommend candidates for vacant positions within an organization (Dessler, 2020). Organizations often adopt this approach because it reduces recruitment costs and hiring time while increasing familiarity with prospective employees (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Similarly, Noe et al. (2021) and Boxall and Purcell (2016) argue that referral recruitment may improve organizational cohesion and reduce recruitment uncertainty.

Despite these advantages, excessive reliance on employee recommendations may weaken transparency

and meritocracy. Guest (2017) maintains that informal recruitment systems can encourage favouritism and limit equal access to employment opportunities. Likewise, Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev (2021) argue that weak recruitment transparency may reinforce institutional inequality and reduce organizational legitimacy. In public universities, merit-based recruitment remains essential because workforce quality directly affects teaching, research and institutional credibility (Biedma-Ferrer & Medina-Garrido, 2023).

Merit-Based Recruitment and Organizational Efficiency

Merit-based recruitment refers to a system where employment decisions are based on competence, qualifications and objective assessment procedures rather than personal relationships or political influence (Robbins & Judge, 2021). Studies show that merit-oriented recruitment improves workforce productivity, employee morale and organizational efficiency (Dessler, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

Organizational efficiency refers to the ability of an institution to achieve its goals through effective use of available resources (Daft, 2020). In universities, it is reflected in effective teaching, research productivity and administrative performance. Empirical studies indicate that transparent recruitment systems strengthen employee confidence, institutional trust and workforce productivity, while favouritism and weak recruitment

transparency reduce morale and organizational effectiveness (Salman et al., 2024). Recent human resource management studies also emphasize competency-based and digital recruitment systems as important strategies for promoting transparency and organizational efficiency (Wu et al., 2025; Ogba-Amaugo, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Decision-Making Theory developed by Herbert A. Simon. In *Administrative Behavior*, Simon (1977) argues that organizational decisions are made under conditions of limited information, institutional constraints and bounded rationality. According to the theory, decision makers do not always operate with complete objectivity because organizational decisions are often shaped by institutional pressures, personal judgment, administrative discretion and organizational culture. The theory explains that recruitment decisions within organizations are not always determined solely by competence and objective standards. Factors such as institutional familiarity, internal recommendations, political influence and social relationships may influence recruitment outcomes. Simon argues that because organizations operate within practical limitations, decision makers often adopt satisfactory rather than perfectly rational alternatives during organizational processes.

The relevance of the theory to this study lies in its explanation of how recruitment decisions may be influenced by both formal and informal considerations within institutions. In public universities, recruitment decisions are expected to be guided by merit principles, transparency and objective assessment procedures. However, where employee recommendations and informal networks dominate recruitment exercises, organizational decisions may deviate from purely merit-based standards. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding how employee recommendation practices influence recruitment transparency and organizational efficiency within Abia State University. It further explains how organizational effectiveness may be affected when recruitment decisions are shaped more by institutional familiarity and informal influence than by competence and professional qualifications.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies generally show that transparent and merit-based recruitment systems improve workforce quality, employee productivity and organizational efficiency. Studies by Awu et al. (2025) and Chali (2026) found that structured recruitment and selection practices significantly enhance employee performance and institutional effectiveness in public organizations. Similarly, Ayango, Kibet and Mwangi (2018) reported that competency-based recruitment positively influences employee satisfaction and organizational performance.

Conversely, studies indicate that excessive reliance on employee referrals and informal recruitment systems may weaken meritocracy and organizational fairness. Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev (2021) argue that informal recruitment channels often promote favouritism and social exclusion. Likewise, Salman, Khan and Iqbal (2024) found that weak recruitment transparency negatively affects employee trust, morale and organizational productivity.

Recent studies on digital and competency-based recruitment systems further emphasize transparency and accountability as important factors in improving organizational performance and reducing recruitment bias (Wu, Zhang & Li, 2025). Similarly, Biedma-Ferrer and Medina-Garrido (2023) maintain that merit-based recruitment is essential in universities because workforce competence directly influences teaching quality, research productivity and institutional credibility.

Despite these contributions, limited empirical studies have examined how employee recommendation practices influence merit-based recruitment and organizational efficiency in Nigerian public universities, particularly Abia State University. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design because it enabled the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from a large number of respondents regarding employee

recommendation practices and merit-based recruitment in Abia State University. The population of the study comprised 1,364 academic and non-academic staff of the university. A sample size of 682 respondents was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques to ensure adequate representation of different staff categories. Out of the 682 questionnaires distributed, 564 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 82.7%. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews involving administrative officers and senior staff connected to recruitment processes within the institution. The instruments were subjected to face and content validity through expert review while reliability testing using Cronbach Alpha produced a coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the research instrument. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, Chi-square statistics and contingency coefficients at the 0.05 level of significance with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data generated from interviews were analyzed using thematic content analysis involving coding, categorization and interpretation of recurrent themes. For ease of interpretation, responses categorized as Strongly Agree and Agree were merged as Agree, while Strongly Disagree and Disagree were merged as Disagree during analysis. Ethical principles guiding social science research including voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were strictly observed throughout the study.

Results, Data Analysis and Interpretation

Employee Recommendations and Recruitment Practices

Table 2: Employee Recommendation and Merit-Based Recruitment Practices (N = 564)

S/N	Items	Agree Frequency (%)	Disagree Frequency (%)
1	Employee recommendations significantly influence recruitment decisions in the university	468 (82.98%)	96 (17.02%)
2	Recruitment vacancies are always openly advertised	188 (33.33%)	376 (66.67%)
3	Merit principles are consistently followed during recruitment exercises	214 (37.94%)	350 (62.06%)
4	Employee recommendations sometimes override objective assessment procedures	442 (78.37%)	122 (21.63%)
5	Informal recruitment practices reduce transparency in recruitment exercises	457 (81.03%)	107 (18.97%)
6	Merit-based recruitment improves workforce quality and organizational efficiency	501 (88.83%)	63 (11.17%)
7	Recommendation-based recruitment contributes to perceptions of favouritism	473 (83.87%)	91 (16.13%)
8	Transparent recruitment procedures improve employee confidence in the institution	516 (91.49%)	48 (8.51%)
9	Recruitment processes in the university are sometimes influenced by internal networks	438 (77.66%)	126 (22.34%)
10	Non-merit recruitment practices	489	75 (13.30%)

negatively affect organizational performance (86.70%)

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The findings in Table 2 reveal that a significant majority of respondents (82.98%) agreed that employee recommendations significantly influence recruitment decisions within the university, while only 17.02% disagreed. This finding indicates that employee referral practices constitute one of the dominant channels influencing recruitment outcomes in the institution.

The results further show that only 33.33% of respondents agreed that recruitment vacancies are always openly advertised whereas 66.67% disagreed. This suggests that many respondents perceive recruitment exercises as lacking adequate transparency and openness. Similarly, 62.06% of respondents disagreed that merit principles are consistently followed during recruitment exercises, indicating widespread concerns regarding the objectivity of recruitment procedures within the institution.

The study also found that 78.37% of respondents agreed that employee recommendations sometimes override objective assessment procedures. This finding implies that informal recommendation systems may weaken merit-based standards within recruitment exercises. Furthermore, 81.03% of respondents agreed that informal recruitment practices reduce transparency within recruitment processes, while 83.87% agreed that

recommendation-based recruitment contributes to perceptions of favouritism.

Data further reveal that 88.83% of respondents agreed that merit-based recruitment improves workforce quality and organizational efficiency. This finding supports broader human resource management literature which emphasizes that objective recruitment systems positively influence employee competence, productivity and organizational effectiveness. Similarly, 91.49% of respondents agreed that transparent recruitment procedures improve employee confidence in the institution.

The findings additionally indicate that 77.66% of respondents agreed that recruitment processes are sometimes influenced by internal networks, while 86.70% agreed that non-merit recruitment practices negatively affect organizational performance. Overall, the results demonstrate that excessive reliance on employee recommendation systems weakens recruitment transparency and may negatively affect workforce quality and institutional efficiency within the university.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings generated through key informant interviews reveal important insights regarding employee recommendation practices, recruitment transparency and organizational efficiency within the university. Several recurring themes emerged from the responses of

administrative officers, senior staff and employees interviewed during the study.

Theme One: Dominance of Informal Recommendation Networks

Many respondents acknowledged that employee recommendations significantly influence recruitment exercises within the institution. Several participants explained that internal referrals and institutional familiarity often shape recruitment decisions, especially for non-academic positions.

One respondent stated:

“In many cases, people already know who will likely get the job before the recruitment process is concluded.”

Another participant explained:

“Recommendations from influential staff members sometimes carry more weight than open competition.”

The findings suggest that informal institutional networks continue to play major roles in recruitment outcomes within the university. Although some respondents considered recommendations helpful for identifying trusted candidates, many argued that excessive dependence on such systems weakens merit-based standards.

Theme Two: Weak Recruitment Transparency

A major concern repeatedly expressed by respondents relates to inadequate transparency during recruitment

exercises. Several participants stated that vacancies are not always sufficiently advertised to external applicants, thereby limiting equal access to employment opportunities

One respondent noted:

“Some vacancies are circulated internally before outsiders even become aware of them.”

Another participant explained:

“Many qualified applicants may never get the opportunity to apply because recruitment information does not always reach the public adequately.”

The findings indicate that weak transparency contributes significantly to perceptions of favouritism and institutional unfairness. Respondents further maintained that open advertisement and objective assessment procedures would improve confidence in the recruitment system.

Theme Three: Meritocracy and Workforce Quality

Many participants strongly emphasized the importance of merit-based recruitment for organizational efficiency and workforce productivity. Respondents argued that universities require highly competent personnel because academic and administrative performance directly affects institutional reputation and service delivery.

One respondent stated:

“A university system can only function effectively when competent people are employed based on qualification and performance.”

Another participant explained:

“When recruitment is based on merit, employees are more productive because people believe the system is fair.”

The findings therefore suggest that merit-based recruitment positively influences employee morale, workforce competence and institutional effectiveness.

Theme Four: Organizational Consequences of Non-Merit Recruitment

Several respondents linked recommendation-based recruitment practices to declining organizational efficiency, low morale and reduced confidence in institutional processes. Participants argued that where recruitment decisions are perceived as unfair, employee commitment and trust may weaken considerably.

One respondent explained:

“When people believe employment is based on connections rather than competence, confidence in the institution reduces.”

Another participant stated:

“Employing under qualified personnel eventually affects productivity and administrative performance.”

The findings indicate that weak recruitment transparency and excessive reliance on informal recommendation systems may negatively affect workforce quality, institutional credibility and organizational efficiency within the university.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₀:

There is no significant relationship between employee recommendations and recruitment transparency in the university.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Employee Recommendation and Recruitment Transparency

Variables	χ^2 Calculated	χ^2 Critical	Level of Significance	Decision
Employee recommendations and recruitment transparency	41.52	9.49	0.05	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Since the calculated Chi-square value of 41.52 is greater than the critical table value of 9.49 at the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that a significant relationship exists between employee recommendation practices and recruitment transparency within the university. The finding implies that excessive dependence on employee recommendations significantly

affects openness, fairness and transparency during recruitment exercises.

Hypothesis Two

H₀:

There is no significant relationship between merit-based recruitment and organizational efficiency in the university.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Merit-Based Recruitment and Organizational Efficiency

Variables	χ^2 Calculated	χ^2 Critical	Level of Significance	Decision
Merit-based recruitment and organizational efficiency	47.84	9.49	0.05	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Since the calculated Chi-square value of 47.84 is greater than the critical value of 9.49 at the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that a significant relationship exists between merit-based recruitment and organizational efficiency within the university. The finding suggests that transparent and objective recruitment procedures significantly improve workforce quality, employee productivity and institutional effectiveness.

Hypothesis Three

H₀:

There is no significant relationship between recruitment transparency and workforce efficiency in the university.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test of Recruitment Transparency and Workforce Efficiency

Variables	χ^2 Calculated	χ^2 Critical	Level of Significance	Decision
Recruitment transparency and workforce efficiency	39.63	9.49	0.05	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Since the calculated Chi-square value of 39.63 is greater than the critical value of 9.49 at the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that a significant relationship exists between recruitment transparency and workforce efficiency within the university. The finding indicates that transparent recruitment procedures positively influence employee morale, workforce competence and organizational productivity.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that employee recommendation practices significantly influence recruitment exercises within Abia State University and have important implications for recruitment transparency, workforce quality and organizational efficiency. The quantitative findings demonstrate that employee recommendations constitute one of the dominant channels influencing recruitment outcomes within the institution. The findings further reveal that recruitment vacancies are not always openly advertised

and that internal networks sometimes shape recruitment decisions.

The results indicate that employee recommendations significantly influence recruitment decisions within the university and constitute one of the dominant channels shaping recruitment outcomes. This finding supports existing organizational literature which argues that informal referral systems remain common within many public institutions because organizations often rely on trusted internal networks during recruitment exercises (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). While employee recommendations may reduce uncertainty and simplify recruitment procedures, the present findings demonstrate that excessive dependence on such informal systems weakens meritocracy and institutional transparency.

Evidence from the study further suggests that employee recommendations sometimes override objective assessment procedures during recruitment exercises. This finding aligns with the position of Guest (2017) and Dobbin and Kalev (2021) who argue that informal recruitment systems often encourage favouritism, patronage and biased hiring decisions. The findings suggest that where internal recommendations dominate recruitment exercises, equal access to employment opportunities may become restricted, thereby weakening confidence in institutional fairness.

The qualitative findings particularly revealed that vacancies are sometimes internally circulated before wider public advertisement, limiting opportunities for external applicants. This finding supports broader concerns regarding weak recruitment transparency within public institutions in developing societies. Recent studies further indicate that organizations characterized by weak recruitment transparency often experience declining employee trust and reduced organizational legitimacy.

The study also found that merit-based recruitment positively influences workforce quality and organizational efficiency. A significant majority of respondents agreed that transparent recruitment systems improve employee confidence, workforce competence and institutional productivity. This finding supports recent empirical studies which demonstrate that objective recruitment procedures significantly enhance organizational effectiveness, workforce commitment and employee morale. The findings further align with Armstrong and Taylor (2023), who maintain that merit-oriented recruitment systems improve employee motivation because workers perceive organizational procedures as fair and professionally managed.

The findings additionally indicate that non-merit recruitment practices negatively affect organizational performance within the university. Respondents linked weak recruitment transparency and recommendation-based hiring practices to reduced workforce productivity,

declining staff morale and weakened institutional credibility. This finding supports Salman, Khan and Iqbal (2024) who argue that organizations characterized by patronage-oriented recruitment systems frequently experience administrative inefficiency and low workforce confidence.

The study further supports the relevance of Herbert Simon's Decision-Making Theory. The findings demonstrate that recruitment decisions within organizations are not always determined solely by objective standards but are sometimes influenced by institutional pressures, internal networks and administrative discretion. The findings therefore validate Simon's argument that organizational decision making often occurs under conditions of bounded rationality where informal considerations may shape institutional outcomes.

The major implication of the findings is that excessive dependence on employee recommendation systems may weaken meritocracy and compromise organizational efficiency within public universities. Universities are knowledge-driven institutions where workforce competence directly affects teaching quality, research productivity, administrative performance and institutional credibility. Consequently, recruitment systems lacking transparency and objective assessment procedures may negatively affect long-term institutional effectiveness.

The study therefore argues that while employee recommendations may provide certain organizational advantages such as familiarity and reduced recruitment uncertainty, they should not supersede transparent and merit-based recruitment procedures. Transparent advertisement of vacancies, competency-based assessments and objective recruitment frameworks remain essential for strengthening workforce quality, organizational legitimacy and institutional efficiency within public universities.

Conclusion

The study found that employee recommendation practices significantly influence recruitment processes in Abia State University and often shape recruitment outcomes through informal institutional networks. Findings revealed that excessive reliance on such practices weakens recruitment transparency, encourages perceptions of favouritism and limits equal employment opportunities. The study further showed that merit-based recruitment positively enhances workforce quality, employee morale and organizational efficiency. It therefore concludes that transparent, fair and competency-based recruitment systems are essential for strengthening institutional credibility and long-term organizational effectiveness in public universities.

Recommendations

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

5. Public universities should strengthen transparent and merit-based recruitment procedures in order to improve workforce quality and organizational efficiency.
6. Vacancies within the university should always be openly advertised through official platforms to ensure equal access to employment opportunities for qualified applicants.
7. University management should establish stronger monitoring and oversight mechanisms to reduce excessive dependence on informal recommendation systems during recruitment exercises.
8. Recruitment decisions should be based primarily on competence, qualifications and objective assessment procedures rather than personal relationships and institutional familiarity.
9. Digital recruitment platforms, competency-based interviews and standardized evaluation procedures should be adopted to strengthen fairness and transparency in recruitment processes.
10. Staff involved in recruitment exercises should be regularly trained on ethical human resource management practices and merit-based recruitment principles.

11. Further empirical studies should be conducted on recruitment transparency, organizational fairness and workforce productivity within public tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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METAPHORIC SYMBOLISM IN IZHI PROVERBS AND THE ENCODING OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

This study examines the role of metaphorical symbolism in Izhi proverbs as mechanisms for encoding and preserving indigenous knowledge systems. Proverbs constitute important components of African oral tradition through which communities transmit practical wisdom, moral philosophy, social values, survival strategies, and communal experiences across generations. Within the Izhi-Igbo speech community of Ebonyi State, proverbs are extensively employed in social interaction, conflict resolution, moral instruction, communal arbitration, and cultural education. Despite increasing scholarly attention to African proverbial discourse, insufficient attention has been devoted to the role of Izhi proverbs as repositories of indigenous knowledge encoded through metaphorical structures. This study therefore investigates how symbolic metaphors in Izhi proverbs preserve communal philosophies, social regulation systems, and practical knowledge. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through oral interviews, participant observation, and consultations with elderly native speakers of the Izhi dialect. The data were

analyzed using Conceptual Metaphor Theory and indigenous knowledge perspectives. Findings reveal that Izhi proverbs encode indigenous knowledge relating to survival, caution, reciprocity, justice, conflict resolution, responsibility, endurance, and social balance through symbolic references to animals, environmental realities, body parts, domestic objects, and communal experiences. The study further reveals that Izhi proverbs function as informal educational systems and repositories of indigenous philosophy through which communal values and behavioural expectations are transmitted. The study concludes that metaphorical symbolism in Izhi proverbs represents an important mechanism for preserving indigenous cognition, oral philosophy, and cultural continuity within the Izhi speech community.

Keywords: Izhi-Igbo, proverb, indigenous knowledge, metaphor, symbolism, oral tradition, cultural philosophy, communal wisdom

Introduction

Indigenous knowledge systems constitute important components of African cultural existence and social organization. Across African societies, indigenous knowledge is preserved and transmitted through oral traditions such as folktales, songs, myths, rituals, chants, and proverbs. These oral forms function as repositories of communal memory, social philosophy, moral instruction, and practical wisdom. Unlike written systems of knowledge transmission, African indigenous knowledge systems rely heavily on collective participation, oral performance, symbolism, and

contextual interpretation. Proverbs, in particular, occupy a central place within this framework because they condense communal experiences and philosophical reflections into memorable symbolic expressions (Finnegan, 2012).

Among the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria, proverbs constitute important communicative and educational tools through which communal values and indigenous philosophies are transmitted. Proverbs are widely employed in family interaction, traditional arbitration, conflict mediation, public speaking, storytelling, and socialization. Through indirect and symbolic expressions, proverbs communicate caution, wisdom, morality, justice, perseverance, reciprocity, responsibility, and communal expectations. Their meanings often extend beyond literal interpretation and depend heavily on cultural context and shared communal understanding (Yankah, 1989).

Within the Izhi-Igbo speech community of Ebonyi State, proverbs remain deeply embedded in social and cultural interaction. Elders frequently employ proverbs during conflict settlement, moral instruction, negotiation, and communal deliberation. Through metaphorical symbolism involving animals, roads, rivers, forests, domestic objects, body parts, sacrifice, and environmental experiences, Izhi proverbs preserve practical knowledge relating to survival, caution, social balance, communal responsibility, and conflict management. For example, the proverb *Enyi ruguchia ụzọ, egu agu ha ya* (“If laziness closes the door, hunger

will open it”) encodes practical knowledge concerning labour, survival, and economic responsibility. Similarly, *Nwa ajite ephudjedu uzo* (“One who asks questions do not miss the road”) preserves communal philosophy concerning inquiry, guidance, and knowledge acquisition.

The symbolic structures underlying these proverbs demonstrate that indigenous knowledge within Izhi society is often organized metaphorically. Through familiar environmental and embodied experiences, abstract realities and practical lessons are simplified and transmitted across generations. Proverbs therefore function not merely as artistic expressions but also as oral archives through which communities preserve social philosophies, behavioural expectations, and practical survival strategies.

Existing studies on African proverbs have examined themes such as philosophy, pragmatics, oral tradition, gender representation, and figurative language. Kanu (2014), for instance, argues that Igbo proverbs embody African philosophical thought, while Oweleke (2022) demonstrates the communicative and pragmatic significance of proverb-based expressions among the Igbo. Similarly, Kobia (2016) applies conceptual metaphor analysis to Swahili proverbs and shows that metaphorical structures frequently encode social realities and behavioural expectations. However, despite increasing scholarship on African proverbial discourse, insufficient attention has been devoted specifically to the role of Izhi proverbs as repositories of indigenous

knowledge systems encoded through metaphorical symbolism.

This gap becomes important because indigenous knowledge systems are increasingly threatened by modernization, urbanization, globalization, and language shift. As younger generations become less familiar with traditional oral forms, many aspects of indigenous philosophy and communal knowledge risk gradual disappearance. The scholarly study and documentation of Izhi proverbs therefore contribute not only to linguistic and literary scholarship but also to the preservation of indigenous intellectual traditions and cultural heritage.

This study therefore investigates metaphorical symbolism in Izhi proverbs and the encoding of indigenous knowledge. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the symbolic metaphors underlying selected Izhi proverbs, examine how these metaphors encode communal knowledge and practical wisdom, and analyze the indigenous philosophies preserved through proverbial discourse. The study contributes to scholarship in African oral literature, indigenous knowledge studies, cultural linguistics, and African philosophy.

Literature review

Indigenous Knowledge Systems in African Societies

Indigenous knowledge refers to the body of knowledge, values, beliefs, practices, and philosophies developed by a people through long-term interaction with their

environment and social realities. Such knowledge is usually transmitted orally across generations and is closely tied to culture, communal experience, and everyday life. In African societies, indigenous knowledge systems constitute important mechanisms through which communities preserve practical wisdom relating to survival, morality, agriculture, conflict resolution, spirituality, leadership, and social organization (Mapara, 2009).

Unlike formal Western knowledge systems that depend heavily on written documentation, African indigenous knowledge systems are largely oral, participatory, and communal in orientation. Knowledge transmission often occurs through storytelling, apprenticeship, rituals, songs, folktales, and proverbs. These oral forms preserve collective memory and enable communities to maintain continuity in cultural values and social behaviour across generations (Finnegan, 2012).

Scholars have argued that indigenous knowledge systems are not inferior forms of knowledge but sophisticated intellectual traditions rooted in local realities and communal experiences. Dei (2000) observes that indigenous knowledge represents a culturally grounded system of understanding through which communities interpret reality and organize social existence. Such knowledge systems often reflect practical adaptation to environmental conditions, social relations, and communal survival needs.

Within African societies, proverbs constitute one of the most important vehicles for preserving indigenous knowledge. Proverbs condense communal experiences into brief symbolic expressions that communicate practical wisdom and social philosophy. Through repeated use in social interaction, these expressions become tools for education, behavioural regulation, and cultural continuity.

Proverbs as Repositories of Indigenous Knowledge

Proverbs occupy a central position within African oral traditions because they function as repositories of communal wisdom and practical philosophy. Across many African societies, proverbs are used to communicate caution, morality, justice, social expectations, conflict resolution strategies, and behavioural norms. Their authority derives largely from their association with ancestral wisdom and collective experience (Yankah, 1989).

The educational role of proverbs in African societies has attracted scholarly attention in several disciplines. Proverbs are often used to train younger generations in acceptable social conduct and communal values. Through symbolic and indirect communication, they caution against misconduct, encourage responsibility, promote perseverance, and reinforce communal expectations. Proverbs therefore function as informal educational systems through which indigenous philosophies are transmitted (Finnegan, 2012).

Among the Igbo, proverbs are regarded as important communicative resources through which social reality is interpreted and regulated. Proverbs are employed extensively during traditional arbitration, public speaking, family discussions, marriage negotiations, and conflict settlement. Their indirectness allows speakers to communicate sensitive ideas diplomatically while maintaining social harmony. Kanu (2014) argues that Igbo proverbs embody indigenous philosophical thought and encode communal understandings of morality, justice, and human relations.

Similarly, Oweleke (2022) observes that proverb-based expressions among the Igbo perform important pragmatic and communicative functions beyond literary aesthetics. Proverbs therefore represent not merely artistic expressions but systems of social knowledge and communal orientation. Within Izhi society, proverbs preserve practical knowledge relating to caution, reciprocity, endurance, social balance, labour, responsibility, and communal survival.

Metaphor and Indigenous Thought

Metaphor plays an important role in indigenous thought systems because many abstract ideas are understood through concrete environmental and embodied experiences. Conceptual Metaphor Theory argues that human cognition is largely metaphorical and that people conceptualize abstract realities through familiar experiential domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Such metaphorical mappings are often shaped by cultural

environment, communal experiences, and patterns of social interaction.

In African proverbial discourse, metaphorical structures frequently derive from farming, animals, rivers, forests, domestic labour, food production, hunting, and social interaction. These familiar experiences become symbolic frameworks through which societies conceptualize morality, justice, responsibility, caution, and social relations. Kobia (2016), in a study of Swahili proverbs, demonstrates that animal metaphors frequently encode behavioural expectations and communal philosophies. Similarly, Aragbuwa and Omotunde (2022) argue that metaphorical structures in Yoruba proverbs reflect underlying social ideologies and cultural assumptions.

Metaphorical symbolism therefore functions not merely as ornamentation but as a cognitive and educational mechanism. Through metaphorical expressions, complex philosophical ideas become easier to remember, interpret, and transmit within oral cultures. Proverbs consequently preserve indigenous thought systems by transforming abstract social realities into concrete symbolic experiences familiar to members of the speech community.

Within Izhi-Igbo society, metaphorical symbolism involving animals, roads, rivers, forests, sacrifice, body parts, and domestic objects frequently encodes practical communal wisdom. Such metaphorical structures preserve indigenous understandings of social

responsibility, justice, reciprocity, caution, endurance, and communal survival.

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined African proverbs from philosophical, pragmatic, linguistic, and cultural perspectives. Kanu (2014) studies Igbo proverbs as embodiments of Igbo-African philosophy and argues that proverbs function as important repositories of communal wisdom and indigenous thought. The study demonstrates that Igbo proverbs encode moral values, social expectations, and communal reasoning systems.

Ezeifeke (2017) examines gender stereotypes in selected Igbo proverbs and observes that proverbs reflect broader cultural ideologies and social constructions relating to gender relations. The study highlights the role of proverbial discourse in reinforcing communal expectations and behavioural norms.

Oweleke (2022) investigates proverb-based personal names among the Igbo from morphosyntactic and pragmatic perspectives. The study demonstrates that proverb-related expressions perform important communicative functions and preserve cultural meanings within Igbo discourse.

Outside Igbo scholarship, Kobia (2016) applies conceptual metaphor analysis to Swahili proverbs and demonstrates that metaphorical structures involving animals encode social behaviour and communal expectations. Similarly, Aragbuwa and Omotunde

(2022) examine metaphorization in Yoruba proverbs and conclude that metaphorical symbolism frequently reflects cultural ideologies and indigenous social philosophies.

Although these studies contribute significantly to African proverb scholarship, insufficient attention has been devoted specifically to the role of Izhi proverbs as repositories of indigenous knowledge encoded through metaphorical symbolism. Existing studies focus largely on philosophy, gender representation, pragmatics, or general figurative language without closely examining how metaphorical structures preserve practical communal wisdom and indigenous knowledge systems within Izhi society. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining metaphorical symbolism in Izhi proverbs and the encoding of indigenous knowledge.

Theoretical Orientation

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

This study is guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). CMT argues that metaphor is not merely a decorative feature of language but a basic structure of human thought. Human beings often understand abstract experiences through concrete and familiar experiences. In this sense, metaphor is not only found in poetry or literary expression; it is also present in everyday reasoning, cultural interpretation, and social communication.

The theory is built around the relationship between the source domain and the target domain. The source

domain refers to the concrete experience from which meaning is drawn, while the target domain refers to the abstract idea being understood. For instance, when knowledge is conceptualized as direction, the physical experience of finding one's way becomes the source domain, while knowledge, guidance, and understanding become the target domains. This kind of mapping is clearly present in the Izhi proverb *Nwa ajite ephudjedu uzo* ("One who asks questions, does not miss the road"). Here, the road represents life, direction, and social navigation, while asking questions represent the search for knowledge.

CMT is appropriate for this study because Izhi proverbs frequently encode indigenous knowledge through metaphorical mappings. Animals, roads, streams, hunger, firewood, friendship, the body, and domestic objects are used to explain abstract social realities such as caution, responsibility, justice, reciprocity, maturity, endurance, and survival. Through CMT, the study is able to show how Izhi proverbs transform everyday experience into cultural wisdom.

Indigenous Knowledge Perspective

The study is also informed by the indigenous knowledge perspective. Indigenous knowledge refers to the locally grounded knowledge systems developed by a people through long years of interaction with their environment, culture, history, and social life. It includes practical wisdom, moral codes, survival strategies, conflict-resolution principles, environmental awareness, and

communal philosophies transmitted from one generation to another.

In African societies, indigenous knowledge is often preserved through oral forms such as myths, folktales, songs, rituals, chants, and proverbs. Proverbs are especially important because they compress complex knowledge into short, memorable, and culturally meaningful expressions. They teach people how to live, relate, work, speak, endure, resolve conflict, and behave responsibly within the community.

In this study, the indigenous knowledge perspective helps to explain how Izhi proverbs function as oral archives of communal experience. They do not merely entertain; they preserve practical knowledge about life, labour, social relations, caution, fairness, responsibility, and survival. When combined with Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this perspective makes it possible to examine both the metaphorical structure and the cultural knowledge encoded in the proverbs.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts the qualitative descriptive research design. The design is considered appropriate because the study focuses on meaning, interpretation, symbolism, metaphor, and indigenous knowledge encoded in Izhi proverbs. The study does not seek to measure numerical variables but to interpret how selected proverbs preserve communal wisdom, social philosophy, and practical knowledge through metaphorical structures.

The qualitative approach further enables an in-depth exploration of the cultural meanings, symbolic patterns, and contextual interpretations associated with the proverbs. Since proverbial meanings are often indirect, culturally grounded, and context-dependent, qualitative analysis provides an effective framework for examining the indigenous philosophies embedded within the expressions.

Area of the Study

The study is situated within the Izhi-speaking area of Ebonyi State, southeastern Nigeria. Izhi is one of the major dialect clusters of the Igbo language spoken predominantly in Abakaliki, Ebonyi, and Izzi Local Government Areas. The speech community possesses a rich oral tradition in which proverbs are extensively employed for moral instruction, conflict mediation, social criticism, communal arbitration, and cultural education.

Within the Izhi cultural environment, proverb usage remains especially prominent among elders and culturally knowledgeable speakers. Proverbs are commonly used during traditional meetings, family discussions, negotiations, storytelling sessions, dispute settlements, and other forms of communal interaction. This strong proverbial culture makes the area suitable for the present study.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of native speakers of the Izhi dialect, particularly elderly members of the

speech community who possess extensive knowledge of traditional proverbial discourse. Elders were considered appropriate because they are generally more familiar with the meanings, contexts, interpretations, and cultural implications of Izhi proverbs.

The population also includes individuals recognized within the community for their competence in oral tradition, traditional communication, and indigenous cultural practices.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling in selecting participants. A total of ten elderly native speakers of the Izhi dialect were purposively selected from different Izhi-speaking communities. The participants were selected based on their demonstrated familiarity with traditional proverbs and oral expressions.

Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study required respondents with deep cultural competence and adequate knowledge of Izhi proverbial discourse. The technique enabled the researcher to obtain rich and culturally relevant data necessary for the analysis.

Although numerous proverbs were collected during the fieldwork process, only selected proverbs that strongly reflect metaphorical symbolism and indigenous knowledge structures were chosen for detailed analysis in the study.

Method of Data Collection

Data for the study were collected primarily through oral interviews, proverb elicitation, participant observation, and consultation with elders. The interview method enabled respondents to provide proverbs, explain their literal meanings, describe their contextual usage, and interpret the indigenous knowledge embedded in them.

The interviews were largely open-ended in nature to allow respondents freedom in explaining the cultural and philosophical implications of the proverbs. During the elicitation sessions, respondents were encouraged to provide proverbs relating to survival, caution, reciprocity, justice, labour, maturity, conflict resolution, responsibility, and communal life.

Participant observation also assisted the researcher in understanding how proverbs function within natural communicative settings. This method provided insights into the pragmatic deployment of proverbs during social interaction, communal discussion, and informal conversation. Additional consultations with elders from different Izhi communities further helped in verifying the accuracy, interpretation, and contextual appropriateness of the proverbs collected.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively using Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the indigenous knowledge perspective. The analysis focused on identifying the metaphorical structures, symbolic domains, conceptual mappings, and indigenous philosophies encoded in the selected proverbs.

Each proverb was examined in relation to:

6. its literal meaning,
7. its metaphorical structure,
8. the source domain and target domain,
9. and the indigenous knowledge or communal philosophy it communicates.

For analytical clarity, the proverbs were grouped thematically according to the type of indigenous knowledge they preserve. These thematic categories include:

12. survival knowledge,
13. social regulation,
14. conflict resolution,
15. moral education,
16. communal responsibility,
17. reciprocity,
18. and practical wisdom.

This analytical procedure enabled the study to demonstrate how Izhi proverbs function as repositories of indigenous knowledge through metaphorical symbolism and oral cultural transmission.

Data presentation and analysis

This section presents and analyzes selected Izhi proverbs with the aim of examining how metaphorical symbolism functions in the encoding and preservation of indigenous

knowledge. The analysis is guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the indigenous knowledge perspective. The proverbs are grouped thematically according to the forms of communal wisdom and practical knowledge they communicate.

The analysis demonstrates that Izhi proverbs preserve indigenous knowledge relating to survival, caution, reciprocity, justice, social regulation, responsibility, endurance, conflict management, and communal balance through metaphorical references to animals, roads, rivers, body parts, domestic objects, environmental realities, and social experiences.

Proverbs as Survival Knowledge

One important category of indigenous knowledge preserved in Izhi proverbs relates to survival, labour, endurance, resilience, and practical adaptation to hardship. These proverbs teach individuals how to endure difficult situations, respond to necessity, and navigate social and economic realities within the community.

**Table 1
Proverbs Encoding Survival Knowledge**

S/ N	Proverb	Literal Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor	Indigenous Knowledge Encoded
1	<i>Enyi ruğuchia uzo, egu agu ha ya</i>	If laziness closes the door, hunger will open it	HUNGER IS FORCE	Survival requires labour and productivity
2	<i>A tashia nshi, o buru okpuehu</i>	When endurance stretches, it	ENDURANC E IS STRENGTH	Perseverance produces resilience

		becomes strength		
3	<i>A tunya mini, a tury eruyeko bei ya</i>	Constantly clearing pond particles may stir muddy water	EXCESSIVE CONTROL CREATES DISORDER	Practical moderation is necessary in life
4	<i>Itophu emetcha huma ipheaka hu itehu maru</i>	The new pot will later see what the old pot saw	EXPERIENC E IS AGING	Life experience is unavoidable

The proverb *Enyi ruguchia uzọ, egu aguha ya* conceptualizes hunger as a compelling physical force capable of overcoming laziness and inactivity. Through bodily experience, hunger becomes a metaphor for necessity and survival pressure. The proverb preserves indigenous economic wisdom by teaching that labour and productivity are essential for survival. It further reflects the communal belief that hardship and necessity naturally compel human effort.

Similarly, *A tashia nshi, o buru okpuehu* conceptualizes endurance as strength. Through metaphorical transformation, prolonged suffering and perseverance become sources of resilience and credibility. The proverb preserves indigenous psychological knowledge concerning patience, emotional discipline, and survival under hardship. It reflects the communal admiration for perseverance within difficult social and economic conditions.

The muddy pond proverb preserves practical knowledge concerning moderation and pragmatism. The act of repeatedly removing particles from the surface of a pond

eventually disturbs the mud beneath and worsens the situation. Metaphorically, the proverb teaches that excessive interference and perfectionism may create greater problems. It therefore preserves indigenous knowledge concerning balance, caution, and practical judgment.

The proverb concerning the old and new pot similarly preserves experiential wisdom. The transition from a new pot to an old pot symbolizes the inevitable movement from youthfulness to experience. The proverb teaches that younger generations will eventually encounter the same difficulties and realities faced by elders. It therefore functions as a repository of intergenerational wisdom and life philosophy.

Collectively, these proverbs preserve indigenous survival knowledge relating to labour, perseverance, moderation, and experiential learning. Through metaphorical symbolism, practical life lessons are simplified and transmitted across generations.

Proverbs as Indigenous Knowledge of Guidance and Social Orientation

Another important category of indigenous knowledge preserved in Izhi proverbs relates to inquiry, guidance, direction, and social orientation. These proverbs emphasize the importance of seeking counsel, acquiring knowledge, and learning from others before taking action.

**Table 2
Proverbs Encoding Guidance and Social Orientation**

S/ N	Proverb	Literal Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor	Indigenous Knowledge Encoded
1	<i>Nwa ajite ephudjeduz o</i>	asks questions miss the road	KNOWLEDG E IS DIRECTION	Inquiry prevents error and confusion
2	<i>Onye kpaishi, o toñudungele awuèhu</i>	One who asks questions does not drink from a forbidden stream	INQUIRY IS SAFETY	Guidance protects against danger
3	<i>A ta tudu onuokpuru oswa nkapfu le ge ahumawaru ge onuđu iya</i>	One need not describe the whistle of the mouse after seeing its mouth	APPEARANC E REVEALS CHARACTER	Observation aids judgment and prediction
S/ N	Proverb	Literal Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor	Indigenous Knowledge Encoded

The road proverb conceptualizes knowledge as movement and direction. Missing the road symbolizes failure, confusion, or wrong decision-making, while asking questions symbolizes humility and the search for guidance. The proverb therefore preserves indigenous educational philosophy by encouraging inquiry and openness to counsel.

Similarly, the stream proverb conceptualizes ignorance as danger and inquiry as protection. Drinking from a forbidden or inappropriate stream symbolizes avoidable mistakes resulting from lack of knowledge. The proverb teaches that seeking clarification and guidance protects

individuals from social embarrassment, danger, and error.

The proverb involving the mouse's mouth preserves indigenous observational wisdom. Through the symbolic relationship between physical appearance and expected behaviour, the proverb teaches that careful observation aids judgment and prediction. The proverb therefore preserves practical communal knowledge concerning discernment and social interpretation.

Together, these proverbs demonstrate that indigenous knowledge within Izhi society values inquiry, observation, and guidance as important mechanisms for survival and successful social navigation.

Proverbs as Indigenous Knowledge of Social Regulation and Conflict Resolution

Many Izhi proverbs preserve indigenous knowledge relating to social regulation, conflict management, reciprocity, justice, caution, and peaceful coexistence. These proverbs function as informal mechanisms for regulating behaviour and maintaining communal harmony. Through metaphorical symbolism, they communicate behavioural expectations and conflict-resolution principles within the society.

**Table 3
Proverbs Encoding Social Regulation and Conflict Resolution**

S/ N	Proverb	Literal Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor	Indigenous Knowledge Encoded
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1	<i>Nkuta s̄urule ̄o onye daaru ibe iya, onye daaru ibe iya bu ebvu</i>	Mutual falling upon one another is what makes play	RELATIONS HIP IS RECIPROCI TY	Social harmony depends on mutual exchange
2	<i>E buru yeru uru, e buru yeru okpu</i>	Cut to benefit both flesh and bone	JUSTICE IS BALANCE	Fairness requires equitable distribution
3	<i>̄O pfubwiru ibe onye ̄ozo, ge ̄o gha aru iya ohul'ibe ya</i>	He who destroys another's home, may it return to his own	EVIL IS CIRCULAR	Harm eventually returns to the aggressor
4	<i>Nkuta agbo ire adzoiphuruadz ̄o onye nweunuphu</i>	The barking dog protects both the thief and the owner	CAUTION IS PROTECTIO N	Warning benefits all parties
5	<i>Ogerenya mee iphe echietchachi, etchachi ala uko</i>	When an elder deserves flogging, canes become scarce	POWER ALTERS JUSTICE	Social hierarchy influences punishment
6	<i>E doo nkuishirii, egudeiyapyoos wa</i>	Well-arranged firewood passes smoothly through the forest	ORDER IS PEACE	Dialogue and organization promote harmony

The proverb concerning reciprocal play conceptualizes peaceful relationships as mutual exchange and balanced interaction. Through the metaphor of play, the proverb teaches that social harmony depends on reciprocity rather than selfishness or one-sided advantage. It preserves indigenous social knowledge concerning cooperation, mutual respect, and communal balance. Similarly, *E buru ye ru uru, e buru ye ru okpu* conceptualizes justice as balance and equitable

distribution. Through the imagery of cutting meat to benefit both flesh and bone, the proverb teaches fairness, inclusion, and social equity. It reflects communal expectations that benefits and responsibilities should be distributed fairly among members of the society.

The proverb concerning destruction returning to one's own home preserves indigenous moral philosophy relating to consequence and accountability. Evil is metaphorically conceptualized as circular movement capable of returning to the source. The proverb therefore functions as a moral warning against dishonesty, false accusation, and destructive behaviour. It teaches that social actions produce corresponding consequences.

The barking dog proverb preserves indigenous knowledge concerning caution and preventive communication. The dog's bark protects both the owner of the house and the intruder because it prevents unexpected confrontation and possible harm. The proverb therefore teaches that warnings and corrections benefit both the offender and the larger community.

Similarly, the proverb concerning the elder deserving punishment preserves practical communal knowledge about social hierarchy and pragmatism in justice administration. The metaphorical scarcity of canes reflects the social difficulty associated with punishing powerful or respected individuals. The proverb demonstrates that indigenous justice systems often balance morality with social realities and communal stability.

The firewood proverb preserves indigenous knowledge concerning organization, dialogue, and conflict management. Properly arranged firewood passes smoothly through the forest without scattering. Metaphorically, the proverb teaches that difficult situations become manageable when issues are discussed collectively and handled in an organized manner. The proverb therefore promotes negotiation, social coordination, and peaceful coexistence.

Collectively, these proverbs preserve indigenous conflict-resolution strategies and communal philosophies concerning justice, reciprocity, caution, fairness, and social harmony.

Proverbs as Indigenous Moral and Philosophical Knowledge

Izhi proverbs also preserve deeper moral and philosophical understandings concerning responsibility, maturity, caution, guilt, negligence, and human behaviour. Through metaphorical symbolism, these proverbs encode indigenous ethical principles and practical philosophies of life.

**Table 4
Proverbs Encoding Moral and Philosophical Knowledge**

S/ N	Proverb	Literal Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor	Indigenous Knowledge Encoded
1	<i>Ogbogbolobu ahumaeme</i>	Negligence is an omen of evil	NEGLIGENCE IS DISASTER	Carelessness creates avoidable problems

2	<i>A ta alodjeduogun wa le ikedu</i>	One does not protect a child because one is strong	LOVE IS RESPONSIBILITY	Protection arises from obligation and attachment
3	<i>Okwaraekwale o to nwedyeze, temu o noduelweokw eelwemkpuma</i>	The chicken complains of lacking teeth yet swallows stones	HIDDEN CAPACITY IS POWER	Some individuals possess more ability than they admit
4	<i>Agbokọ tube era, o tube ntumatu</i>	When a maiden develops breasts, troubles begin	GROWTH IS BURDEN	Maturity comes with responsibility and vulnerability
5	<i>Okunyaehual iachiahayaosọ</i>	When the fowl farts, the land pursues it	GUILT IS PURSUIT	Wrongdoing produces fear and insecurity
6	<i>Nwatanyiaedj onshi be a ta akpudjeduiyai ke le enwirinwa</i>	One does not clean a child with sandpaper	PUNISHMENT SHOULD FIT OFFENCE	Justice requires moderation

The proverb *Ogbogbolo bu ahụ ma-eme* conceptualizes negligence as the origin of avoidable misfortune. The proverb preserves indigenous practical wisdom concerning caution, responsibility, and accountability. Rather than attributing every misfortune to supernatural causes, the proverb emphasizes human carelessness as a major source of suffering and social problems.

Similarly, *A ta alo djedu ogu nwa le ike du* preserves indigenous philosophy concerning responsibility and attachment. Protection is conceptualized not as an exhibition of strength but as a moral obligation rooted in care and emotional connection. The proverb therefore

reflects communal values relating to kinship, responsibility, and protective duty.

The proverb concerning the toothless chicken preserves indigenous psychological knowledge concerning hidden ability and deceptive self-presentation. Although the chicken lacks teeth, it still swallows stones. The proverb teaches that some individuals possess more capacity than they outwardly claim and cautions against underestimating people based on appearances or complaints.

The maidenhood proverb preserves communal knowledge concerning social transition and maturity. Physical development becomes symbolically associated with increasing social responsibility, attraction, vulnerability, and complication. The proverb teaches that every stage of life comes with corresponding opportunities and challenges.

The proverb involving the guilty fowl conceptualizes wrongdoing as psychological burden and fear. The land metaphorically “pursues” the fowl because guilt produces anxiety and insecurity. The proverb preserves indigenous moral philosophy concerning conscience and the psychological consequences of wrongdoing.

Finally, the sandpaper proverb preserves indigenous knowledge concerning moderation and proportionality in punishment. Through painful bodily imagery, the proverb condemns excessive retaliation and teaches that

justice should correspond appropriately to the offence committed.

Taken together, these proverbs demonstrate that Izhi proverbial discourse functions as an important repository of indigenous moral philosophy and practical ethical knowledge. Through metaphorical symbolism, communal wisdom concerning responsibility, moderation, caution, maturity, and justice is preserved and transmitted across generations.

Discussion

Proverbs as Oral Archives of Indigenous Knowledge

The findings of this study demonstrate that Izhi proverbs function as important oral archives through which indigenous knowledge is preserved and transmitted within the speech community. The proverbs analyzed encode practical wisdom relating to survival, labour, caution, reciprocity, justice, maturity, social regulation, and conflict management. Through repeated usage in everyday communication, these expressions preserve communal philosophies and behavioural expectations across generations.

The study reveals that indigenous knowledge in Izhi society is not preserved primarily through formal written systems but through oral symbolic structures embedded in social interaction. Proverbs therefore function as informal educational systems through which younger generations are introduced to communal values, practical survival strategies, and acceptable patterns of behaviour. This finding supports Finnegan's (2012) position that

oral traditions constitute important repositories of African cultural knowledge and collective memory.

The analysis further demonstrates that Izhi proverbs condense broad social experiences into short symbolic expressions that are easy to remember and apply in communication. Through metaphorical compression, practical wisdom becomes portable, memorable, and transferable across generations. The proverbs therefore function as mechanisms of cultural continuity and communal education.

Metaphorical Symbolism and Indigenous Cognition

The study also reveals that metaphorical symbolism constitutes an important cognitive mechanism through which indigenous knowledge is organized and communicated within Izhi society. Animals, roads, streams, hunger, forests, domestic objects, body parts, and environmental experiences serve as symbolic source domains through which abstract realities are understood. The road and stream proverbs, for instance, conceptualize knowledge as movement and direction. Missing the road symbolizes confusion and failure, while inquiry symbolizes guidance and protection. Similarly, hunger is conceptualized as force capable of compelling labour and productivity. Such metaphorical mappings reveal that indigenous cognition within Izhi society is deeply rooted in embodied and environmental experiences.

The findings therefore support the assumptions of Conceptual Metaphor Theory that abstract human

experiences are frequently understood through concrete experiential domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). However, the study further demonstrates that these metaphorical structures are culturally grounded because they derive from the lived realities, environment, and communal experiences of the Izhi people.

Animals similarly function as symbolic projections of human behaviour and social realities. Dogs symbolize caution, reciprocity, and surveillance; chickens symbolize vulnerability and hidden capability; while goats symbolize consequence and sacrificial burden. These symbolic structures demonstrate that the natural environment constitutes an important cognitive resource within indigenous thought systems.

The metaphorical organization of knowledge also contributes to the memorability and effectiveness of proverbial discourse. Through vivid symbolic imagery, abstract philosophies become easier to understand, remember, and transmit orally. Metaphorical symbolism therefore functions not merely as aesthetic ornamentation but as an important pedagogical and cognitive strategy within Izhi oral tradition.

Proverbs as Instruments of Social Regulation

The findings further demonstrate that Izhi proverbs operate as mechanisms of social regulation and communal control. Many of the proverbs analyzed communicate behavioural expectations, cautionary principles, and moral instructions intended to preserve social harmony within the community.

The reciprocity proverb, for example, teaches mutual respect and balanced social interaction, while the proverb concerning equitable cutting promotes fairness and distributive justice. Similarly, the proverb concerning destruction returning to one's own home cautions against harmful behaviour by emphasizing consequence and accountability. These expressions reveal that proverbs function as informal legal and moral systems through which behaviour is regulated.

The study also reveals that indirect communication through proverb usage reduces social tension during correction and criticism. Rather than confronting individuals directly, speakers employ symbolic expressions that encourage reflection without necessarily provoking hostility. Proverbs therefore function as diplomatic communicative tools that preserve communal relationships while still communicating correction and caution.

The proverb concerning arranged firewood further demonstrates that indigenous conflict-resolution systems value dialogue, orderliness, and collective understanding. Through domestic imagery, the proverb promotes negotiation and social coordination as mechanisms for resolving communal difficulties. Similarly, the barking dog proverb demonstrates that warning and preventive communication are viewed as socially beneficial to all parties involved.

These findings support the broader African oral tradition perspective that proverbs function as instruments of governance, socialization, and moral orientation within traditional societies.

Proverbs and Cultural Continuity

The study demonstrates that Izhi proverbs contribute significantly to cultural continuity and the preservation of communal identity. Through metaphorical symbolism, the proverbs preserve indigenous philosophies, behavioural expectations, historical experiences, and social values. Their continued use in communication therefore reinforces cultural identity and communal worldview.

The findings also suggest that the decline of proverb usage among younger generations may lead to gradual erosion of important aspects of indigenous knowledge. Modernization, urbanization, globalization, formal education, and increasing preference for dominant languages continue to reduce familiarity with traditional oral forms among many young people. As a result, valuable communal philosophies encoded in proverbial discourse risk gradual disappearance.

The documentation and scholarly analysis of Izhi proverbs therefore become important cultural preservation efforts. By recording, analyzing, and interpreting these proverbs, the study contributes to safeguarding aspects of Izhi indigenous knowledge that might otherwise be lost over time.

The study further reinforces the intellectual significance of African oral traditions. Izhi proverbs are not simplistic sayings or mere rhetorical embellishments; they represent sophisticated systems of indigenous philosophy, cognition, education, and communal regulation. Their metaphorical richness demonstrates the complexity and depth of African oral knowledge systems and underscores the need for continued scholarly attention to indigenous intellectual traditions.

Conclusion

This study examined metaphorical symbolism in Izhi proverbs and the encoding of indigenous knowledge within the Izhi-Igbo speech community of Ebonyi State. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the indigenous knowledge perspective, the study analyzed selected proverbs to demonstrate how metaphorical structures preserve communal wisdom, practical philosophy, social regulation systems, and cultural values.

The findings reveal that Izhi proverbs function as important repositories of indigenous knowledge through symbolic references to animals, roads, rivers, body parts, forests, domestic objects, sacrifice, hunger, and environmental realities. These symbolic domains are employed to conceptualize abstract experiences such as justice, caution, reciprocity, endurance, responsibility, maturity, conflict resolution, fairness, and survival. The study therefore demonstrates that metaphor within Izhi proverbial discourse functions not merely as linguistic ornamentation but as a culturally grounded cognitive and educational mechanism.

The study further establishes that Izhi proverbs preserve practical communal knowledge relating to labour, inquiry, social balance, moderation, accountability, reciprocity, and peaceful coexistence. Through repeated use in social interaction, the proverbs function as informal systems of education and behavioural regulation. They guide social conduct, caution against harmful behaviour, reinforce communal expectations, and preserve indigenous moral philosophy.

The findings also show that metaphorical symbolism contributes significantly to the memorability and effectiveness of indigenous knowledge transmission. By transforming complex philosophical ideas into concrete and culturally familiar experiences, the proverbs simplify communal wisdom and facilitate oral preservation across generations. Metaphorical structures therefore enhance the communicative and pedagogical power of proverbial discourse within Izhi society.

The study additionally highlights the important relationship between oral tradition and cultural continuity. Izhi proverbs preserve collective memory, communal worldview, and indigenous cognitive patterns. However, increasing modernization, urbanization, globalization, and language shift continue to threaten the transmission of such oral traditions among younger generations. The documentation and scholarly examination of Izhi proverbs therefore become important cultural preservation efforts.

In conclusion, Izhi proverbs represent sophisticated systems of indigenous knowledge encoded through metaphorical symbolism. They embody practical wisdom, communal philosophy, social regulation, and indigenous cognition within the Izhi cultural environment. The study consequently reinforces the importance of African oral traditions as legitimate intellectual systems deserving sustained scholarly attention and preservation.

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**SILENCED BY DEPENDENCY:
TRANSACTIONAL REPRESSION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN OIL HOST
COMMUNITIES OF THE NIGER DELTA,
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The relationship between oil multinational corporations and host communities in the Niger Delta has long been characterized by environmental degradation, economic dependency, and persistent social tensions. While several studies have examined the ecological and developmental consequences of oil exploration, limited attention has been given to the subtle mechanisms through which dependency suppresses resistance and normalizes environmental suffering within host communities. This paper examines the phenomenon of transactional repression and its role in sustaining environmental

injustice in oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. The paper argues that the dependence of local populations on oil companies for employment opportunities, community development projects, scholarships, contracts, and other corporate social responsibility benefits often compels community members to suppress grievances, minimize protests, and tolerate environmental degradation despite its adverse effects on health, livelihoods, and social wellbeing. Anchored on political economy, Michel Foucault's theory of power, and Environmental Justice Theory, the paper adopts qualitative conceptual approach using documentary evidence and empirical insights from previous studies on oil host communities in the Niger Delta. The analysis suggests that transactional relationships between corporations and host communities create patterns of silence, fear, negotiated loyalty, and internalized repression that weaken collective resistance against environmental exploitation. The paper further demonstrates that environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is sustained not only through institutional power and state complicity but also through socioeconomic dependency that conditions compliance. The paper concludes that sustainable development and environmental justice in oil-producing communities require the reduction of dependency structures, strengthening of community autonomy, transparent governance, and inclusive participation in environmental decision-making processes.

Keywords: Transactional Repression; Environmental Injustice; Oil Host Communities; Dependency; Corporate Power.

Introduction

The discovery and exploitation of crude oil in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria transformed the area into the economic backbone of the Nigerian state, generating enormous revenues that have sustained national development for decades. Despite its strategic economic importance, the region remains characterized by widespread poverty, environmental degradation, infrastructural deficits, unemployment, and persistent social unrest. The paradox of immense natural wealth existing alongside severe underdevelopment has attracted considerable scholarly attention within Environmental Sociology, Industrial Sociology, political economy, and development studies. Scholars have consistently argued that oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta have produced severe ecological consequences including oil spills, gas flaring, land degradation, water contamination, destruction of aquatic ecosystems, and loss of traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing (Okonta & Douglas, 2003; Obi, 2010; UNEP, 2011).

Environmental degradation in the Niger Delta has increasingly become a major issue of environmental justice due to the unequal distribution of ecological risks and developmental benefits between multinational oil corporations and local host communities. Studies have shown that communities located within oil-producing areas disproportionately bear the environmental and health burdens associated with oil extraction while receiving limited socioeconomic benefits in return

(Watts, 2008; Ako, 2012). This condition reflects what environmental justice scholars describe as environmental inequality, where vulnerable populations experience systematic exposure to environmental hazards due to political and economic marginalization. In many oil-bearing communities, polluted rivers, devastated farmlands, acid rain, and contaminated drinking water have significantly undermined public health and human security (UNEP, 2011; Ojakorotu & Gilbert, 2010).

Recent scholarship further demonstrates that environmental governance challenges, ecological insecurity, and livelihood vulnerability remain persistent realities within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta despite decades of intervention efforts (Adekola & Mitchell, 2022). Existing studies also suggest that weak regulatory enforcement, poor remediation practices, and unequal access to environmental protection continue to reinforce social vulnerability and developmental inequality within host communities (Akinola, 2023).

However, beyond the visible environmental impacts lies another complex sociological reality that has received relatively limited scholarly attention: the culture of silence and suppressed resistance within oil host communities. Although community members often experience the direct consequences of environmental degradation, many remain reluctant to openly challenge multinational corporations or state institutions responsible for environmental harm. This silence is not necessarily an indication of satisfaction or acceptance

but may reflect deeper structures of dependency, fear, and negotiated survival. The present paper conceptualizes this phenomenon as transactional repression, referring to the suppression of grievances, emotions, resistance, and collective dissent due to dependence on economic, political, or social benefits controlled by dominant institutions.

In the Niger Delta, multinational oil corporations frequently provide employment opportunities, scholarship schemes, skill acquisition programmes, contracts, community development projects, and corporate social responsibility initiatives to host communities. While these interventions are often presented as developmental partnerships, they may simultaneously function as mechanisms of social control and negotiated compliance. Community members who benefit directly or indirectly from these opportunities may avoid criticizing environmental practices or participating in protests for fear of losing access to economic privileges and social benefits. Consequently, dependency relationships may reinforce silence even in the face of environmental suffering, social dislocation, and declining health conditions.

This situation reflects broader sociological debates on power, domination, and symbolic control. Michel Foucault argues that modern systems of power operate not merely through force but through subtle disciplinary mechanisms that shape behaviour, normalize compliance, and regulate resistance. Similarly, Pierre

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence explains how dominated groups may unconsciously internalize structures of domination and perceive unequal social arrangements as natural or unavoidable. Within the context of oil host communities, transactional repression may therefore operate through internalized dependency, fear of exclusion, and negotiated adaptation to environmental exploitation.

The persistence of environmental injustice in the Niger Delta has also been linked to structural inequalities embedded within global capitalism and resource extraction systems. Political economy scholars maintain that multinational corporations, often in collaboration with state actors, prioritize resource accumulation and profit maximization over environmental sustainability and community wellbeing (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2010). Contemporary studies further argue that extractive capitalism in resource-rich African regions frequently reproduces dependency, environmental inequality, and community vulnerability through unequal governance structures and externally driven development priorities (Oriola & Knight, 2022). This has produced what some scholars describe as petro-violence, ecological dispossession, and resource control conflicts within the region. Yet, while violent conflicts and protests in the Niger Delta have been extensively studied, less attention has been paid to everyday silence, negotiated accommodation, and subtle repression that characterize many community-corporate relations.

Furthermore, contemporary corporate social responsibility frameworks in the oil sector often emphasize development partnerships, stakeholder engagement, and peace-building initiatives. Although such programmes may contribute to local development in certain contexts, critics argue that they sometimes function as strategies for managing resistance and maintaining operational stability rather than addressing the structural roots of environmental injustice (Idemudia, 2014). In this sense, corporate interventions may simultaneously alleviate and reproduce dependency conditions that discourage sustained environmental activism within host communities.

The sociological significance of this paper lies in its attempt to bridge discussions on environmental injustice with the emerging concept of transactional repression in resource-dependent communities. By examining how economic dependency shapes environmental silence and negotiated compliance in oil-producing areas, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on corporate power, environmental governance, and community agency in the Niger Delta. The paper specifically focuses on oil host communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, an area significantly affected by oil exploration activities and longstanding community-company relations.

This paper introduces transactional repression as a sociological framework for understanding how dependency relationships suppress environmental

resistance and normalize ecological suffering within extractive communities.

Ultimately, the paper argues that environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is sustained not only through ecological destruction and institutional failures but also through subtle social processes that suppress resistance and normalize environmental suffering. Understanding these processes is essential for developing more inclusive approaches to environmental governance, sustainable development, and community empowerment in oil-producing regions.

Statement of the Problem

Despite decades of oil exploration and enormous petroleum wealth, many communities in the Niger Delta continue to experience severe environmental degradation, poverty, and declining living conditions. Oil spills, gas flaring, polluted water sources, and destruction of farmlands have negatively affected the health and livelihoods of residents in oil-producing communities. Although these environmental problems persist, many host communities often remain silent or show limited resistance against multinational oil corporations responsible for environmental harm.

This silence is frequently linked to dependency on oil companies for employment opportunities, contracts, scholarships, compensation payments, and community development projects. Such dependency may discourage

open criticism and suppress collective resistance, thereby reinforcing environmental injustice and unequal power relations within oil-producing communities. While existing studies have focused mainly on militancy, conflict, and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, limited attention has been given to how dependency produces transactional repression and environmental silence within host communities. This paper therefore examines how dependency relationships contribute to transactional repression and sustain environmental injustice in oil host communities of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this paper is to examine transactional repression and environmental injustice in oil host communities of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

9. Examine how dependency on oil companies influences environmental silence among host communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area;
10. Investigate the relationship between corporate benefits and the suppression of resistance against environmental degradation;
11. Explore how transactional repression contributes to the persistence of environmental injustice in oil-producing communities.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Transactional Repression: Transactional repression refers to the suppression of grievances, resistance, criticism, or collective action because individuals or communities depend on powerful institutions for economic, political, or social benefits. In oil host communities, transactional repression occurs when residents tolerate environmental degradation or avoid protesting against multinational oil corporations because they depend on employment opportunities, contracts, scholarships, compensation payments, youth empowerment programmes, and community development projects. This form of repression differs from direct violence or overt coercion. It is subtle, negotiated, and embedded within everyday survival relations. Community members may remain silent not because they are satisfied with environmental conditions, but because resistance may threaten their access to corporate-controlled opportunities. Silence therefore becomes a survival strategy shaped by unequal socioeconomic relations.

The concept is linked to broader sociological debates on power and domination. Michel Foucault argued that power does not operate only through force but also through disciplinary mechanisms that regulate behaviour and normalize compliance (Foucault, 1977). Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu explained through the concept of symbolic violence that disadvantaged groups may unconsciously internalize unequal social arrangements

and perceive them as natural or unavoidable (Bourdieu, 1991). In oil-producing communities, dependency may therefore produce internalized silence, negotiated loyalty, and suppressed resistance.

Environmental Injustice: Environmental injustice refers to the unequal distribution of environmental risks, hazards, and burdens across different social groups. It occurs when poor, marginalized, or politically weak communities suffer greater exposure to pollution, ecological destruction, and health risks while powerful actors benefit from environmentally harmful activities. Environmental justice scholars emphasize fairness in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens as well as inclusive participation in environmental decision-making processes.

In the Niger Delta, environmental injustice is reflected in oil spills, gas flaring, contaminated water sources, destruction of farmlands, declining fish stocks, and public health challenges associated with petroleum extraction. Host communities often bear the ecological and social costs of oil production while multinational corporations and political elites enjoy the economic benefits. This unequal relationship reinforces poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion within oil-producing communities.

The environmental assessment conducted by UNEP (2011) in Ogoni land revealed severe contamination of

soil and groundwater resulting from decades of oil pollution. Similarly, Amnesty International (2011) reported that many Niger Delta communities continue to experience environmental pollution, destruction of livelihoods, and inadequate environmental remediation despite the enormous wealth generated from petroleum extraction.

Dependency and Corporate Power: Dependency in oil host communities refers to the reliance of residents on oil companies for survival opportunities and development benefits. In many communities, multinational oil corporations provide scholarships, employment opportunities, compensation payments, youth empowerment programmes, contracts, infrastructural projects, and healthcare interventions. While these benefits may appear developmental, they may simultaneously reinforce unequal power relations between corporations and host communities.

Corporate power becomes stronger where the state fails to provide basic infrastructure, social welfare, employment opportunities, and environmental protection. Under such conditions, oil companies increasingly function as alternative providers of development, thereby increasing community dependence on them. This dependence may weaken the ability of residents to openly criticize environmental practices or sustain resistance against ecological exploitation.

Political economy scholars argue that multinational corporations in resource-rich regions often exercise significant influence over local economic, political, and social structures (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2010). Contemporary studies further argue that extractive capitalism in resource-rich African regions frequently reproduces dependency, environmental inequality, and community vulnerability through unequal governance structures and externally driven development priorities (Oriola & Knight, 2022). Through control of opportunities and resources, corporations may shape community leadership, influence social relations, and manage resistance within host communities. Dependency therefore becomes both an economic condition and a subtle mechanism of social control.

Oil Exploration and Environmental Injustice in the Niger Delta: The Niger Delta is the major oil-producing region of Nigeria and has remained central to the country's economy for decades. Despite generating substantial petroleum revenue, the region continues to experience poverty, infrastructural neglect, unemployment, and environmental degradation. This contradiction has often been described as the resource curse, where resource-rich regions remain socially marginalized and environmentally devastated.

Oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta have produced serious environmental consequences including oil spills, gas flaring, soil contamination, destruction of aquatic ecosystems, water pollution, and loss of

biodiversity. These environmental conditions have weakened traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing, thereby increasing poverty and social insecurity among host communities.

Okonta and Douglas (2003) argued that multinational oil corporations have contributed significantly to environmental destruction while many host communities continue to experience poverty and neglect. Ojatorotu and Gilbert (2010) also observed that oil exploitation intensified social instability, environmental degradation, and livelihood insecurity within the Niger Delta. Similarly, UNEP (2011) documented extensive ecological damage in Ogoni land and emphasized the need for large-scale environmental remediation.

Recent studies further indicate that environmental governance challenges, ecological insecurity, and weak institutional regulation continue to sustain environmental injustice within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta (Adekola & Mitchell, 2022; Akinola, 2023). Consequently, environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is sustained by the unequal distribution of environmental costs and economic benefits. While oil corporations and the Nigerian state benefit economically from petroleum extraction, host communities continue to bear the burden of pollution, ecological decline, and public health risks.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Dependency: Corporate social responsibility has become one of the major approaches through which multinational oil corporations relate with host communities in the Niger Delta. CSR programmes commonly include scholarship schemes, employment opportunities, youth empowerment initiatives, road construction, healthcare interventions, water projects, and community development programmes. These initiatives are often presented as evidence of corporate commitment to sustainable development and peaceful community relations.

However, scholars have questioned the effectiveness and underlying motivations of CSR activities within the Niger Delta. Frynas (2005) argued that CSR initiatives by multinational oil corporations frequently produce limited developmental outcomes because they fail to address deeper structural inequalities and environmental injustices. Similarly, Idemudia (2014) maintained that CSR in many African extractive communities is often shaped by corporate interests, conflict management objectives, and operational stability concerns rather than genuine empowerment.

CSR may therefore perform contradictory functions within oil-producing communities. While it may provide short-term socioeconomic benefits, it may also reinforce dependency and discourage environmental criticism. Beneficiaries of contracts, scholarships, compensation payments, or empowerment schemes may become

reluctant to openly challenge oil corporations for fear of exclusion from future opportunities. In this way, CSR may become a subtle mechanism of transactional repression.

Environmental Silence and Suppressed Resistance: Environmental silence refers to the inability or unwillingness of affected populations to openly challenge environmental harm despite experiencing its consequences. Within oil host communities, silence may emerge from fear, poverty, dependency, weak institutional protection, political pressure, or internal community divisions.

This paper conceptualizes environmental silence as a product of transactional repression because silence is often linked to survival-based relationships between corporations and host communities. Residents may suppress grievances because protest could threaten their economic survival or exclude them from corporate benefits. Community leaders may also avoid confrontation if they receive contracts, allowances, or recognition from oil corporations.

Environmental silence should therefore not be interpreted as satisfaction or acceptance of environmental conditions. Rather, it reflects unequal survival conditions within which many host communities negotiate existence. Silence becomes a form of

adaptation to corporate power, state neglect, and economic vulnerability.

Power Relations and Corporate Control: Power relations between multinational oil corporations and host communities in the Niger Delta are deeply unequal. Oil corporations possess financial resources, political influence, legal capacity, security support, and institutional connections that often exceed the capacities of local communities. Host communities, by contrast, frequently experience poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and weak access to justice.

This imbalance allows corporations to influence local governance structures, shape community leadership, and regulate access to opportunities. Through selective distribution of contracts, compensation payments, scholarships, and employment opportunities, corporations may reward cooperative individuals or groups while excluding critics. Such practices may create internal divisions and weaken collective resistance within communities.

Watts (2004) described oil power in the Niger Delta as a form of govern mentality through which corporations and state institutions regulate social relations surrounding petroleum extraction. In this context, power is exercised not only through armed security or state repression but also through patronage, compensation, development projects, and selective access to opportunities. Transactional repression therefore explains how environmental injustice is sustained

through negotiated dependency and controlled access to economic benefits.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have examined the environmental, social, and political consequences of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. Existing evidence consistently shows that oil-producing communities experience severe environmental degradation, livelihood disruption, weak infrastructural development, and unequal access to the economic benefits generated from petroleum extraction.

One of the most comprehensive empirical investigations on environmental pollution in the Niger Delta was conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2011) in Ogoni land. The report revealed extensive contamination of soil, groundwater, rivers, and vegetation caused by decades of oil exploration and repeated oil spills. UNEP found that several communities were exposed to hydrocarbon contamination far above acceptable international standards, while many residents relied on polluted water sources for drinking and domestic use. The report further demonstrated that environmental degradation had significantly affected fishing, farming, food security, and public health within affected communities.

Similarly, Amnesty International (2011) documented widespread environmental pollution and livelihood

destruction in oil-producing communities across the Niger Delta. The report showed that many oil spills remained poorly managed and inadequately remediated despite their devastating effects on local populations. Communities studied by Amnesty International reported declining agricultural productivity, destruction of aquatic ecosystems, contaminated farmlands, and increasing socioeconomic hardship linked to environmental pollution. The report also emphasized that weak environmental governance and poor regulatory enforcement contributed significantly to the persistence of environmental injustice within the region.

Empirical studies by Okonta and Douglas (2003) further demonstrated that oil extraction activities in the Niger Delta intensified poverty, social exclusion, and ecological destruction despite the enormous wealth generated from petroleum resources. Their study showed that many host communities lacked basic social infrastructure such as clean water, electricity, healthcare facilities, and accessible roads even while multinational corporations continued extensive extraction activities within their environments. The study argued that unequal distribution of oil wealth reinforced resentment, distrust, and perceptions of exploitation among local populations.

Research by Ojakorotu and Gilbert (2010) also established a strong relationship between oil exploitation, environmental degradation, and social conflict in the Niger Delta. Their findings revealed that destruction of traditional livelihoods such as fishing and farming contributed significantly to youth

unemployment, insecurity, and community instability. The study additionally observed that environmental degradation weakened local economic systems and intensified frustrations against both oil corporations and the Nigerian state.

Watts (2004; 2008) provided important empirical insights into the political economy of oil extraction and resistance in the Niger Delta. His studies demonstrated that oil exploration produced complex forms of environmental dispossession, corporate domination, and social inequality within host communities. Watts further argued that while some communities engaged in violent resistance and militancy, many others adopted negotiated accommodation strategies shaped by poverty, fear, dependency, and unequal access to opportunities controlled by oil corporations.

Empirical evidence on corporate social responsibility in the Niger Delta also reveals contradictions between development claims and community realities. Frynas (2005) found that CSR initiatives implemented by multinational oil corporations often produced limited developmental outcomes because they focused primarily on conflict reduction and corporate legitimacy rather than long-term structural transformation. Similarly, Idemudia (2014) observed that CSR programmes in many African extractive communities were frequently shaped by corporate interests and operational stability concerns. Scholarship schemes, youth empowerment programmes, contracts, and community projects often

benefited selected individuals or groups while broader structural problems such as unemployment, environmental pollution, and underdevelopment remained unresolved.

Recent studies continue to show that environmental insecurity and ecological vulnerability remain major concerns within the Niger Delta despite years of intervention efforts. Adekola and Mitchell (2022) observed that environmental degradation within the Niger Delta wetlands threatens ecosystem sustainability, food security, local livelihoods, and human wellbeing. Their study emphasized that communities dependent on natural resources remain particularly vulnerable to the long-term consequences of environmental pollution and ecological decline.

Similarly, Akinola (2023) found that oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta continue to experience weak environmental accountability, inadequate remediation, and persistent livelihood insecurity despite evolving environmental governance frameworks. The study further argued that ineffective regulatory institutions and unequal power relations between corporations and host communities continue to sustain environmental vulnerability and social marginalization within the region.

Although existing empirical literature has extensively examined oil pollution, conflict, CSR, militancy,

environmental degradation, and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, limited studies have specifically examined how dependency relationships suppress environmental resistance and normalize silence within oil host communities. Most empirical studies focus primarily on visible forms of protest, militancy, and resource-control struggles, with less attention given to subtle forms of repression embedded within everyday community-corporate relations.

This paper therefore extends existing literature by introducing transactional repression as a sociological explanation for how dependency on corporate-controlled opportunities may discourage environmental criticism, weaken collective resistance, and sustain environmental injustice within extractive communities of the Niger Delta.

Gap in Literature

Existing studies on the Niger Delta have focused largely on environmental degradation, militancy, resource conflicts, corporate social responsibility, and underdevelopment within oil-producing communities (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2010; Frynas, 2005). While these studies provide important insights into the ecological and political consequences of oil exploration, limited attention has been devoted to the subtle sociological processes through which dependency suppresses resistance and normalizes environmental silence within host communities.

Most empirical studies explain visible forms of resistance such as protests, militancy, and resource-control struggles, but fewer studies examine quieter forms of repression embedded within everyday community-corporate relations. Consequently, there is insufficient conceptual attention to transactional repression as a mechanism through which host communities negotiate survival while enduring environmental injustice.

This paper addresses this gap by introducing transactional repression as a sociological framework for understanding how dependency relationships contribute to environmental silence, negotiated compliance, and suppressed resistance within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on Michel Foucault's theory of power and Environmental Justice Theory. These theoretical perspectives provide important sociological explanations for how dependency, corporate domination, and environmental inequality interact within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta.

Foucault (1977) argues that power operates not only through physical force or direct coercion but also through subtle disciplinary mechanisms that regulate behaviour, normalize compliance, and shape social conduct. According to him, modern systems of power

function through control of opportunities, institutional influence, surveillance, and the production of acceptable forms of behaviour. Within oil host communities, multinational oil corporations exercise influence through employment opportunities, scholarships, compensation payments, contracts, and corporate social responsibility initiatives. These forms of economic and social influence may discourage resistance and produce negotiated silence among residents who depend on corporate-controlled opportunities for survival.

The theory is particularly relevant to this paper because it explains how transactional repression may operate through dependency rather than overt violence. Community members may suppress grievances or avoid environmental protest because of fear of exclusion from economic benefits controlled by oil corporations. Consequently, power becomes embedded within everyday social relations and shapes how residents respond to environmental suffering and ecological injustice.

The paper also utilized the Environmental Justice Theory which emphasizes the unequal distribution of environmental risks and developmental benefits within society. The theory argues that politically and economically marginalized populations are often disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards while powerful actors enjoy greater economic gains and environmental protection (Bullard, 2018). In the Niger Delta, oil-producing communities experience oil spills,

gas flaring, water contamination, destruction of farmlands, and declining public health conditions associated with petroleum extraction, while multinational corporations and political elites continue to benefit economically from oil production.

Environmental Justice Theory is relevant because it explains the structural inequalities that sustain environmental degradation and social marginalization within extractive communities. The theory further highlights how weak political influence, poverty, and unequal power relations contribute to environmental injustice in oil host communities.

Together, these theories provide a sociological framework for understanding how corporate power, dependency, and unequal environmental relations produce transactional repression and environmental silence within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta.

Methodology

This paper adopted a qualitative conceptual research design to examine transactional repression and environmental injustice in oil host communities of the Niger Delta, particularly in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area. The paper relied primarily on documentary and secondary sources including scholarly journal articles, books, policy documents, environmental reports, and previous studies relating to oil exploration,

environmental governance, corporate social responsibility, dependency, and community resistance in the Niger Delta. Documentary materials were purposively selected based on relevance, credibility, and analytical contribution to discussions on oil exploration, environmental governance, corporate social responsibility, and environmental injustice in the Niger Delta (Frynas, 2005; Idemudia, 2014).

Relevant documentary materials from organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme and Amnesty International were critically reviewed and interpreted alongside sociological and political economy literature on oil extraction and environmental governance in Nigeria (UNEP, 2011; Amnesty International, 2011). The paper employed thematic and interpretive content analysis to identify major sociological themes relating to dependency, environmental silence, corporate influence, repression, and environmental injustice.

The paper is therefore conceptual and analytical in orientation, focusing on sociological interpretation, theoretical explanation, and critical analysis of existing literature rather than primary field-based data collection. The paper is intended as a conceptual contribution to Environmental Sociology and political ecology debates on power, dependency, and environmental injustice in extractive communities.

Discussion and Sociological Analysis

The analysis suggests that dependency on multinational oil corporations significantly contributes to environmental silence within oil host communities in the Niger Delta. Existing literature indicates that residents who depend on oil companies for employment opportunities, scholarships, contracts, compensation payments, and community development projects often suppress grievances and avoid active resistance against environmental degradation (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2010). Within such unequal socioeconomic relations, silence becomes a survival strategy shaped by fear of exclusion from corporate-controlled opportunities and benefits. Transactional repression therefore operates through negotiated dependency relations in which economic vulnerability weakens collective resistance against environmental exploitation.

This argument aligns with the theory of power advanced by Michel Foucault, who maintained that power operates not only through direct coercion but also through subtle disciplinary mechanisms that regulate behaviour and normalize compliance (Foucault, 1977). In the context of oil host communities, corporate influence is exercised through selective access to contracts, employment opportunities, compensation payments, and development projects. These opportunities shape community behaviour and discourage opposition to environmental practices. Community members may therefore internalize silence because access to economic opportunities depends largely on maintaining favourable

relationships with oil corporations. This analysis also reflects Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, which explains how dominated groups unconsciously internalize unequal social relations and perceive them as normal or unavoidable (Bourdieu, 1991).

The analysis further demonstrates that environmental injustice persists because oil-producing communities continue to bear the environmental and health consequences of oil extraction while receiving limited long-term developmental benefits. Existing studies on the Niger Delta consistently show that oil spills, gas flaring, contaminated water sources, destruction of farmlands, and declining public health conditions remain persistent realities within host communities (UNEP, 2011; Amnesty International, 2011). These environmental conditions have weakened traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing while simultaneously increasing poverty, livelihood insecurity, and social vulnerability within the region (Ojakorotu & Gilbert, 2010; Okonta & Douglas, 2003).

This argument supports Environmental Justice Theory, which maintains that socially and economically marginalized populations are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards while powerful actors benefit economically from environmentally harmful activities (Bullard, 2018). In the Niger Delta, multinational oil corporations and political elites continue to benefit from petroleum extraction while local communities experience the ecological costs associated with oil

production. The unequal distribution of environmental risks and developmental benefits therefore reinforces structural inequality and environmental marginalization within oil host communities.

The analysis additionally suggests that corporate social responsibility initiatives may unintentionally reinforce dependency and negotiated silence within host communities. Although CSR programmes such as scholarships, youth empowerment schemes, employment opportunities, skill acquisition programmes, healthcare interventions, and infrastructural development projects provide certain socioeconomic benefits, they may simultaneously discourage environmental criticism. Beneficiaries may become reluctant to openly challenge corporate environmental practices because of fear of exclusion from future opportunities and benefits. Existing literature therefore suggests that CSR may function both as a development strategy and as a subtle mechanism of social control within extractive communities (Frynas, 2005; Idemudia, 2014).

Recent environmental justice scholarship increasingly emphasizes that corporate accountability, participatory governance, and inclusive environmental decision-making are essential for addressing ecological marginalization and environmental inequality within extractive communities across the Global South (Temper et al., 2023). This suggests that sustainable environmental justice in the Niger Delta requires structural reforms capable of reducing dependency,

strengthening community participation, and promoting transparent environmental governance.

This interpretation supports Idemudia's (2014) argument that CSR initiatives in the Niger Delta are frequently shaped by conflict-management objectives and operational stability rather than genuine structural transformation. Frynas (2005) similarly argued that CSR activities by multinational corporations in developing regions often fail to address the deeper roots of environmental injustice, underdevelopment, and inequality. Consequently, dependency relationships created through selective development benefits may weaken community resistance and normalize environmental suffering.

The analysis further indicates that environmental silence within oil-producing communities should not be interpreted as satisfaction or acceptance of environmental conditions. Rather, silence often reflects fear, economic vulnerability, weak institutional protection, dependency on corporate-controlled opportunities, and lack of viable alternatives for survival. This perspective challenges dominant narratives that focus mainly on militancy, violent protest, and resource control conflicts in the Niger Delta while neglecting quieter forms of repression and negotiated accommodation (Watts, 2008; Obi, 2010).

The concept of transactional repression therefore contributes to sociological understanding of how environmental injustice is sustained through subtle social processes rather than overt force alone. Oil corporations exercise influence not only through economic power but also through their ability to regulate access to opportunities, shape local leadership structures, and influence community behaviour. These dynamics reveal that environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is maintained through the interaction of corporate power, socioeconomic dependency, weak governance structures, and unequal environmental relations.

Overall, the paper argues that meaningful environmental justice in the Niger Delta cannot be achieved solely through environmental remediation or corporate development projects without addressing the broader structures of dependency, exclusion, and unequal power relations that shape community-corporate interactions in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area and other oil-producing communities.

Conclusion

This paper examined transactional repression and environmental injustice in oil host communities of the Niger Delta, with particular focus on Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area. The paper argued that environmental injustice in the region extends beyond ecological degradation to include subtle forms of dependency, social control, negotiated silence,

and suppressed resistance within community-corporate relations. Existing literature and sociological analysis suggest that dependence on multinational oil corporations for employment opportunities, scholarships, contracts, compensation payments, and community development projects often discourages open criticism and weakens collective resistance against environmental degradation.

The paper further demonstrated that transactional repression operates through unequal power relations in which silence becomes a survival strategy for many members of oil-producing communities. Corporate social responsibility initiatives, although beneficial in certain respects, may unintentionally reinforce dependency and negotiated compliance within host communities. Consequently, environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is sustained not only through pollution, weak governance, and institutional failures but also through social and economic structures that normalize silence and limit community agency.

The paper therefore concludes that achieving sustainable environmental justice in oil-producing communities requires more than environmental remediation and corporate development projects. There is a need for policies and interventions that strengthen community autonomy, reduce dependency, promote transparent environmental governance, and encourage inclusive participation in environmental decision-making processes. Addressing the structural foundations of

transactional repression is essential for promoting environmental accountability, social justice, and sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

Recommendations

Based on the sociological analysis and existing literature reviewed in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Multinational oil corporations should adopt more transparent and environmentally accountable operational practices in order to reduce pollution, environmental degradation, and public health risks within host communities.
2. Government agencies responsible for environmental regulation should strengthen monitoring mechanisms, enforcement capacity, and sanctions against environmental violations by oil companies operating in the Niger Delta.
3. Oil host communities should be economically empowered through sustainable livelihood programmes capable of reducing excessive dependence on oil-company-controlled opportunities and benefits.
4. Corporate social responsibility initiatives should focus more on long-term community empowerment, participatory development, and institutional sustainability rather than selective distribution of benefits that may reinforce dependency and environmental silence.
5. Civil society organizations and community-based groups should intensify environmental awareness

- campaigns and advocacy programmes aimed at strengthening environmental consciousness and community participation in environmental governance.
6. Mechanisms for inclusive dialogue, environmental accountability, and community participation should be strengthened to ensure that residents can express grievances without fear of exclusion, victimization, or loss of economic opportunities.
 7. Further sociological and political ecology studies should explore transactional repression, environmental silence, and dependency relations in other extractive communities across Nigeria and Africa in order to deepen understanding of the hidden dimensions of environmental injustice.

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**FAITH PRACTICES AND THE DURATION OF
UNTREATED PSYCHOSIS (DUP) AMONG
YOUTH IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigates how Pentecostal faith practices in Southeast Nigeria contribute to delayed psychiatric intervention for youths with psychosis. In Pentecostal settings, mental illness is often viewed as demonic possession, leading to prolonged spiritual warfare and neglect of clinical treatment. Such neglect increases the risk of psychiatric decline, sometimes causing irreversible damage. The study addresses the obstruction of timely mental healthcare caused by misguided religious interpretations in southeastern Nigeria. Using a mixed method design, it combines qualitative interviews, literature analysis, and digital media review with a quantitative descriptive survey of 600 respondents. Open and close ended interviews were used to collect data on belief patterns and health responses. The theoretical lens of Arthur Kleinman's 1978 explanatory models of illness guides the analysis, showing the strong influence of spiritual beliefs on treatment choices. Findings reveal that religious superstition delays psychiatric care. Recommendations include mental health education and dialogue with religious leaders.

Key Words: Faith Practices, Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP), Youth,

Southeastern Nigeria, Pentecostal Churches

Introduction

Religion holds immense value, yet when taken to extremes, it can degenerate into superstition. Deeply

religious individuals often attribute psychosis to evil forces and disregard medical explanations, seeking spiritual rather than clinical solutions with grave outcomes. Psychosis may result from brain disorders, infections, drug use, psychiatric illness, trauma, or stress (Mayo et al., 2017). While cultural and religious perspectives influence understanding, they do not cause psychosis. Rejecting medical reasoning reflects a denial of scientific knowledge as a sacred gift, and even the educated may err without discernment (Setta&Shemie, 2015). Understanding psychosis and the duration of untreated psychosis (DUP)—the period between symptom onset and medical intervention—is vital, as DUP significantly affects prognosis, recovery, and overall outcomes (Zhang et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant among adolescents in Southeastern Nigeria, where faith, culture, and medicine closely interact.

Psychosis is a severe disorder marked by a loss of contact with reality, hallucinations, delusions, disorganisation, and social dysfunction (Lindhardt et al., 2022). Prolonged DUP is associated with poor clinical outcomes, slow recovery, and long-term impairment. Cultural and religious interpretations of mental illness strongly shape perception and help-seeking patterns across Africa. In Southeastern Nigeria, psychosis is often viewed as a spiritual or moral affliction rather than a biological one (Ran et al., 2021). Families typically consult traditional healers, prophets, or prayer houses before seeking psychiatric care, attributing symptoms to witchcraft, ancestral vengeance, or divine trial. Though

these faith-based responses provide identity and comfort, they often prolong DUP and delay intervention. Even in urban and educated circles, religious practices and biomedical understanding remain unintegrated, perpetuating superstition (Murphy, 2020; Okore, 2025). The belief that psychiatric care reflects weak faith intensifies the conflict between spiritual and medical approaches.

Superstition also distorts health beliefs by linking illness to fate or unseen forces while dismissing scientific reasoning (Taher&Pashaeypoor et al., 2020). Such beliefs hinder treatment adherence and discourage evidence-based care. Traditional healers often depend on unverified practices, leading to severe complications and deaths (Uwayezu&Ntigura et al., 2022). Persistent faith in demonic causation of mental illness fuels prolonged spiritual warfare while medical intervention is neglected. In parts of Africa, including Nigeria, superstition continues to obstruct healthcare access and results in preventable deaths (Kosmin, 2022). Religious and cultural misinterpretations also prevent early psychiatric attention, particularly in societies where pastors or prophets act as the primary health authorities (Mauda&Mokwena et al., 2023).

Empirical evidence links superstition to poor health literacy and inadequate self-care. In Warri, Nigeria, superstition significantly weakened the relationship between literacy and self-care among diabetic patients (Ukpabi, 2021). Similar findings in Adun reveal superstition as a major barrier to diagnosis (Ojen, 2014).

While traditional interpretations of illness may reflect cultural norms, substituting clinical treatment with superstition constitutes medical neglect. Religious leaders should encourage medical consultation alongside prayer to promote timely care (Salami & Kanmodi et al., 2023).

This study focused on youth psychosis in Southeast Nigeria, where recent evidence shows a growing prevalence. Many affected youths roam the streets without treatment as their conditions deteriorate due to prolonged Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP), largely driven by superstitious beliefs that hinder timely medical care (Igweze et al., 2017; Okeke et al., 2023; Eneh&Eneh, 2024; I. Eze, I. Eluka, & K. Arize, personal communication, August 10, 2025).

This study investigates how Pentecostal beliefs influence or cause delays in responses to psychosis among youths in Southeast Nigeria. It raises critical questions: why do many Pentecostal churches and their leaders in this region continue to rely solely on prayer warfare in addressing youth psychosis, even when such delays increase the risk of prolonged Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP) and lead to severe or irreversible mental illness and death? Pentecostal doctrine affirms that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17, KJV), yet there remains a marked reluctance to accept medical and clinical therapies as legitimate responses to mental illness. If these therapies are divine provisions, what explains the unwillingness of

many Pentecostal leaders to embrace them? Why do superstitious beliefs that cause harm continue to shape public attitudes across communities in Southeast Nigeria? What role do Pentecostal teachings on spiritual warfare play in discouraging clinical treatment for psychosis, and to what extent do religious leaders influence public perceptions of psychiatric care in regions affected by untreated psychosis? This gap demands empirical research using Kleinman's explanatory model to determine how Pentecostal doctrine and pastoral authority prolong the duration of untreated psychosis among youths in Southeast Nigeria.

Literature Review on Youth Psychosis in Southeast, Nigeria

Nwokocha and Chinawa et al. (2017) examined somatisation disorder among 485 adolescents aged 10 to 19 years in four secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria using the Enugu Somatization Scale. Their results showed that 51.8 percent experienced head-related symptoms, 54.0 percent had body-related symptoms, and 62.5 percent reported either head or body symptoms, while 43.3 percent experienced both. There were notable age-related variations in symptom presentation, with slight gender differences as 51.3 percent of males and 52.2 percent of females reported head symptoms. Their findings indicate that psychosomatic conditions, often overlooked in paediatric care, are common and possibly increasing among adolescents in the region. Ogbonna et al. (2020) affirm that psychosis among youths is prevalent in Southeast Nigeria, particularly in Enugu, where schizophrenia spectrum and related disorders are

the most frequent diagnoses. The condition is more common in males, though females record higher rates within categories such as schizophrenia and depression. Substance use and neurodevelopmental conditions appear more frequent among males. Older adolescents, especially those aged 18, show higher rates of mental illness, while those aged 15 report lower rates. The study underscores the urgency of early mental health services and targeted interventions.

Ughasoro and Onukwuli et al. (2022) reveal that adolescents in Southeast Nigeria experience high levels of violence, mostly within the home and often from relatives. Such violence is strongly associated with mental illness, as more than half of affected youths show signs of psychological distress. Girls, particularly those not living with parents and those from poor households, are most at risk. The authors highlight violence as a key driver of adolescent mental health problems in the region. Mbanuzuru and Oriji (2022) link the growing use of methamphetamine among Southeast youths to rising incidents of violence and suspected psychosis. Easy access, supported by local production and global drug circulation, worsens the situation. Their analysis warns that the trend is alarming and calls for urgent attention. Eneh and Eneh (2024) analysed three years of mental health hospital records in Southeast Nigeria, involving 380 index and 180 post-index cases. Of these patients, 55 percent were male, 65.27 percent had post-primary education, and the mean age was 39.87 years. Most were single and unemployed. Schizophrenia constituted 68.42 percent of diagnoses, with a relapse rate of 52.1 percent,

mainly among males (61.62 percent), the unemployed (61.62 percent), traders (9.60 percent), and professionals (5.05 percent). Relapse was more frequent in those with illness duration of five years or more (52.02 percent) and in those with poor drug compliance (66.16 percent), with a mean relapse age of 34.23 years. Relapse correlated with age, marital status, education, and employment at p value 0.10. Patients whose illness exceeded three years were 1.17 times more likely to relapse, and early onset predicted 2.479 times more relapse. Employment and family support reduced relapse risk by 1.110 times. The authors call for better mental health services, education, and job opportunities for single, unemployed, and uneducated individuals below thirty-five years.

Umezurike (2025) asserts that psychosis among youths in Southeast Nigeria is increasingly associated with the abuse of substances such as “monkey tail,” a mixture of ogogoro and cannabis or opioids, “gutter water,” and “gegemu,” a fermented herbal drug often laced with unknown psychoactive elements. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that over 14.3 million Nigerians aged 15 to 64 has used drugs, with cannabis as the most common. In urban and semi-urban areas, about 20 percent of youths have experimented with drugs, while over 10 percent are regular users (Umezurike, 2025). These substances are linked to rising cases of drug-induced psychosis, suicide, rape, imprisonment, assault, truancy, academic decline, and violence, particularly among school and street youths. Many Pentecostal churches and communities interpret psychosis as demonic possession, relying on

prayer and spiritual warfare rather than medical care. This belief delays treatment, reflecting how Pentecostal teachings, stigma, and religious leadership influence health-seeking behaviour. The study addresses this gap by showing how such beliefs prolong access to psychiatric treatment.

The reviewed studies reveal significant evidence on the prevalence, causes, and clinical features of youth psychosis in Southeast Nigeria, yet they fail to address how Pentecostal belief systems shape responses to the condition. Most existing research focuses on epidemiological data, drug abuse, violence, and relapse patterns, with little attention to the socio-religious dynamics that influence the duration of untreated psychosis. There is limited inquiry into how Pentecostal teachings on spiritual warfare, demonology, and divine healing obstruct timely psychiatric intervention. The gap lies in understanding the behavioural and theological mechanisms through which faith-based interpretations replace medical reasoning, especially among families who prioritise prayer houses over hospitals. This study therefore advances knowledge by examining how Pentecostal beliefs and practices contribute to delayed treatment, using Arthur Kleinman's Explanatory Model of Illness to explain how religious interpretations of psychosis shape help-seeking decisions and reinforce prolonged Duration of Untreated Psychosis among youths in Southeast Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Arthur Kleinman's 1978 Explanatory Model of Illness Theory is utilised in reinforcing this study's rationales. The model illustrates how patients understand sickness through cultural, religious, or personal beliefs that may differ from medical views. The model helps doctors ask clear questions, understand the patient's beliefs, and adjust treatment to match their needs and behaviour (Lynch & Medin, 2006; Hodson, 2025). According to Hallenbeck (2024), Arthur Kleinman said that understanding a patient's beliefs about their illness helps reveal the meaning they give to it, their treatment goals, and what they expect from care. Clinicians should always inquire to understand these beliefs.

A major criticism of Author Kleinman's Explanatory Model of Illness is that it oversimplifies complex health beliefs by reducing them to fixed cultural categories, ignoring individual variation and power dynamics in clinical settings. It also idealises mutual understanding between patient and clinician, despite the reality of institutional pressures and unequal relations that often hinder genuine dialogue (Dein, 2003; Good, 2012).

Despite its limitations, Kleinman's model remains relevant to this study as it reveals how local beliefs shape the understanding of illness and care. In Southeastern Nigeria, spiritual interpretations of psychosis often lead families of affected youths to delay medical treatment in favour of religious rituals. While the model may not account for every individual or power relation, it still

provides a useful way to explain how belief systems hinder timely clinical intervention.

Arthur Kleinman's Explanatory Model of Illness helps to show how people understand sickness within their culture. In this study, it explains why many Pentecostal pastors, citizens, and families of youth with psychosis in Anambra State see the condition as a spiritual attack rather than a medical issue. Some pastors believe evil forces cause psychosis and urge families to seek help in prayer houses instead of hospitals. The model also shows how pastors influence how people view illness. In some Pentecostal groups, they have strong control over their members and can easily direct them away from medical treatment. Many teach that psychosis is proof of demonic activity, leading people to choose deliverance instead of clinical care.

This belief causes delays in getting proper treatment, putting many youths at risk of long-term harm. Kleinman's model explains the clash between medical understanding and spiritual belief, which often results in poor response to early psychiatric care. Understanding what illness means to people in this setting is vital in planning mental health education. The model supports involving religious leaders in mental health awareness because they have strong influence in their communities. When they begin to see that prayer and medical care can work together, more families may seek early and effective help.

Methodology

The survey investigated the influence of Pentecostal beliefs on the management of psychosis and resistance to clinical treatment among adolescents in the region. The inquiry was conducted in metropolitan and semi-urban areas where Pentecostal groups exert strong social and spiritual influence. This study focused on youth psychosis in Southeast Nigeria, where recent evidence shows a growing prevalence. Many affected youths roam the streets without treatment as their conditions deteriorate due to prolonged Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP), largely driven by superstitious beliefs that hinder timely medical care (Igweze et al., 2017; Okeke et al., 2023; Eneh&Eneh, 2024; I. Eze, I. Eluka, & K. Arize, personal communication, August 10, 2025). A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative aspect consisted of structured questionnaires distributed to 600 participants, while the qualitative aspect involved in-depth interviews designed to capture detailed personal experiences and theological explanations related to psychosis. The integration of both approaches allowed for convergence between numerical patterns and narrative depth. Quantitative data revealed trends and frequency distributions, while qualitative data illuminated the meanings and beliefs behind those patterns. The qualitative component has already been articulated and justified in this study to address the concern that the analysis relies heavily on figures. Thematic analysis, supported by quantitative findings, was therefore used to enrich the interpretation of results.

Purposive and stratified sampling ensured balanced representation of gender, age, education, and occupation among the 600 participants. The selection process involved identifying individuals across artisan groups, traders, educators, students, and clergy from Pentecostal backgrounds. Each category was represented in proportion to its population in the study area to ensure inclusivity. Recruitment challenges included reluctance among some clergy to discuss mental health due to spiritual sensitivity. However, this approach provided the benefit of obtaining insights from diverse social and religious perspectives.

Although the focus of the study was on youths, adults aged 15 to 65 were included to capture the views of parents, religious leaders, and caregivers who influence help-seeking behaviour. Their inclusion was justified as their opinions and decisions often determine whether affected youths receive medical or spiritual treatment. Their insights enriched understanding of the societal and theological dynamics shaping youth psychosis management.

A systematic interview guide containing both open and closed questions was used to gather data on demographics, perceptions of prayer versus medical therapy, theological beliefs, superstitions, teachings on spiritual warfare, roles of religious leaders, and perspectives on integrating faith healing with medical intervention. Frequency counts and descriptive statistics were applied to the quantitative data to identify trends,

while thematic analysis was used to interpret open-ended responses.

Recurring themes emerged from participants' accounts, including the spiritual interpretation of psychosis as a manifestation of demonic influence or sin, a strong preference for prayer and deliverance over medical care, scepticism towards psychiatry due to perceived conflicts with faith, advocacy for integrating faith and science, and community stigma that encourages secrecy and avoidance. These themes formed the analytical foundation for the discussion of how theological and cultural beliefs shape Pentecostal responses to psychosis and resistance to treatment.

The analysed survey data were organised thematically under categories such as superstition, spiritual warfare, religious leadership, and integration of treatment, with frequency distributions showing participants' responses across each variable as presented in the data table.

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after clear explanation of the study objectives. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and participation was voluntary. The research protocol received approval from an institutional ethics committee in line with international research ethics standards.

Understanding Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP)

Morré and Hancq (2023) explain that Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP) is the time between the first psychotic symptom and the start of proper treatment. They report that in the United States, the median DUP is about 74 weeks. Long DUP may harm the brain, worsen symptoms, and lower treatment success. According to Morré and Hancq, it is linked to reduced grey matter, altered brain structure, and chemical imbalance. They add that DUP can cause poor social functioning, worse symptoms, less insight, and increased substance use. Early treatment can prevent brain changes and improve recovery. Zoghbi et al. (2022) show that long DUP leads to poor clinical outcomes, weak treatment response, and low functioning. They note that only a few studies found clear brain changes, mostly in the temporal regions. Salazar de Pablo et al. (2022) state that there is no strong proof that untreated psychosis causes widespread brain damage, as limits in imaging may hide minor changes.

Marshall et al. (2005) found that delays in treatment after first symptoms result in worse outcomes such as higher symptom levels, poor functioning, and low remission. They stress that delay itself has a harmful effect, even after early life adjustment is considered. Their findings from comparisons between shorter and longer treatment delays show clear differences after six and twelve months (Marshall et al., 2005). This confirms the need for early detection and treatment of psychosis to improve recovery chances. When religious beliefs cause families to delay hospital care and seek prayer warfare instead,

especially among youth in Southeast Nigeria, the illness becomes more severe.

Origins and Spiritual Emphasis of Nigerian Pentecostalism

The Pentecostal movement in Nigeria began in the early twentieth century when believers seeking deeper spiritual experiences separated from mission-established churches. Joseph Ayo Babalola's leadership led to the formation of the Christ Apostolic Church in 1941, while the Cherubim and Seraphim movement gained influence by mid-century (Afunugo, 2025). The call, "Come out from among them," from 2 Corinthians 6:17, symbolised a conscious rejection of traditional ecclesiastical structures (Afunugo, 2025). From the 1970s, Pentecostalism grew across Nigeria, building large congregations and contributing to education and social services. Afunugo (2025) observes that Pentecostals became a dominant force within Nigeria's Christian landscape, shaping politics and development.

Pentecostal spirituality in Nigeria centres on divine healing, deliverance, and miracles as expressions of authentic faith (Afunugo, 2025). Miracles are seen as proof of God's presence, while prayer, holiness, and faith are considered channels for supernatural intervention. G. Anaso, C. Ike, O. Emele, and K. Obidiegwu (personal communication, 30 June 2025) confirm that spiritual authenticity remains vital under leaders such as Bishop Francis Wale Oke. Nigerian Pentecostals interpret life through belief in an unseen spiritual realm that influences their political, moral, and

cultural outlook (Wariboko, 2014). This conviction frames their engagement with society and affirms their sense of divine purpose.

Bachmann (2017) explains that Pentecostals regard witchcraft as a tangible expression of evil responsible for illness, misfortune, and family disorder. Drawing from testimonies and media narratives, Pentecostals link such forces to the devil and respond through prayer and deliverance (Bachmann, 2017). This perception sustains widespread fear and superstition within their ranks. I. Ofor, A. Anene, and I. Okafor (personal communication, 30 June 2025) state that in Southeast Nigeria, this belief system leads many Pentecostal leaders to interpret youth psychosis as demonic attack, often rejecting medical care in favour of spiritual intervention. Such delay in clinical response prolongs the Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP) and worsens its outcomes.

Evidence-Based Survey

Nigeria consists of six geopolitical zones: North Central, North East, North West, South West, South South and South East. The South East, which is mainly Igbo, includes Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States (Daily Independent, 2014; European Union Agency for Asylum, 2024). Abuoma (2015) reveals that several Pentecostal churches in Southeast Nigeria interpret medical conditions such as sickle cell anaemia and psychotic symptoms as manifestations of demonic possession. Spirits such as Ogbanje and other traditional beliefs are often invoked as explanations. The author argues that deliverance sessions in which youths roll on

the floor and claim deliverance from demons reflect superstition mistaken for spiritual discernment. Such practices obstruct access to medical care and contribute to the long Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP) among youths.

Ikwuka et al. (2016) conducted a study among 602 Igbo respondents across Southeastern Nigeria and found that more than half displayed authoritarian views and preferred primary social distance from people with mental illness. One third of the participants endorsed social restrictiveness, rejected community-based care, and supported secondary social distance. Negative attitudes were significantly predicted by older age, male gender, low education, Pentecostal affiliation, and lack of contact with persons with mental illness. The study identified cultural beliefs, stereotypes, spiritual explanations, and poor mental health knowledge as key mediators. Psychosis is thus viewed through a spiritual or moral lens rather than a medical one, showing that superstition strongly shapes stigma.

Ndu and Nwankwo (2018) discovered in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State that many people believe mental illness is punishment from the gods. This view is widespread among the lower class, where hardship and social pressures are also blamed. Their findings revealed that men were more likely than women to link mental illness to divine wrath. Families led by men who hold strong traditional and religious convictions often seek spiritual rather than medical remedies for psychosis. According to A. Ifemenam and

P. Onunkwo (personal communication, July 5, 2025), many continue to rely on Pentecostal prayers and deliverance, convinced that spiritual warfare will bring healing. They stress that such dependence leads to prolonged suffering and delayed treatment, sometimes ending in death. They affirm that where healing seems to occur, it often happens after medical options have failed. Further evidence from Ikwuka et al. (2024) shows that supernatural explanations dominate beliefs about schizophrenia among the Igbo. The study, which surveyed 200 participants through multi-stage sampling, found that older people and women were more inclined to hold supernatural views, while those with higher education and members of mission churches were more likely to endorse psychosocial or biological causes. The findings demonstrate that many Pentecostal leaders and members attribute psychosis to evil forces, rejecting clinical treatment in favour of warfare prayers, which prolongs DUP.

Okafor et al. (2025) reported similar findings in Anaocha and Idemili South Local Government Areas of Anambra State. Their interviews with ten males and ten females showed that beliefs in supernatural forces and traditional healing continue to define local understanding of depression and psychosis. Symptoms are often linked to ancestral punishment or spiritual attacks rather than to medical conditions. These beliefs, combined with stigma and cultural expectations, discourage help-seeking and delay clinical intervention. Pentecostal practices and prayers are often preferred, reinforcing superstitious interpretations of youth psychosis.

According to I. Edeh, A. Eze, O. Nwankwo and O. Obodoeze (personal communication, June 30, 2025), many people in the Southeast depend on deliverance prayers, believing Pentecostal pastors understand youth psychosis. However, after prayer sessions, the affected youths fall under what is termed anointing while their condition remains unchanged. U. Umeh and N. Umeh (personal communication, July 2, 2025) narrated their experience of taking their son to a Pentecostal church in Awka on the advice of others. After years of repeated deliverance sessions, the psychosis worsened, and the boy later died. Similarly, E. Onu, K. Udeze and A. Mbamalu (personal communication, July 4, 2025) reported that a Pentecostal pastor demanded a seed of faith offering for the healing of their seventeen-year-old relative with psychosis. A subsequent medical report confirmed advanced paranoid schizophrenia. These experiences reveal how early reliance on spiritual remedies results in delayed treatment and chronic illness. The evidence across these studies and communications demonstrates that superstition surrounding youth psychosis in Southeast Nigeria remains entrenched. Pentecostal leaders often interpret the condition as demonic and prescribe prayer warfare as the only solution. This belief system sustains prolonged DUP and worsens suffering among affected youths. Many families continue to rely on spiritual means rather than clinical care. While not all residents belong to Pentecostal churches, many regard their pastors as spiritually powerful and capable of addressing psychosis (A. Okafor, O. Ezichi and H. Iloh, personal communication, June 28, 2025). The influence of religious authority

continues to shape help-seeking behaviour and limits access to medical intervention, particularly in poor communities.

Significant Causes of Youth Psychosis in Southeast Nigeria

The evidence-based findings and literature review of this study reveal that youth psychosis in Southeast Nigeria results from a combination of biological, psychological and social factors. Major causes include genetic vulnerability, substance use such as mkpulummiri, cannabis, methamphetamine and alcohol, childhood trauma and inadequate parental care (A. Okafor, O. Ezichi and H. Iloh, personal communication, June 28, 2025). Many young people also struggle with academic pressure, peer influence and social isolation, which undermine mental stability and may trigger early symptoms of psychosis if not addressed.

The ongoing economic hardship in Nigeria has intensified family stress in the Southeast. Many households face poverty, joblessness and increasing living expenses. Youths unable to meet personal or family needs often experience depression and anxiety, which can progress to psychosis. Limited access to professional mental health services, together with stigma and poor awareness, worsens the problem as many cases remain untreated for long periods.

According to K. Chidume, C. Sam-Obi and U. Arize (personal communication, July 6, 2025), some Pentecostal pastors in the Southeast teach that demonic

powers and evil forces are responsible for youth psychosis. This study, however, affirms that medical causes such as brain chemical imbalance, severe infections and untreated neurological disorders are well established. The spiritual dimension of illness may be recognised, yet superstition should never replace clinical diagnosis. Spiritual considerations are relevant only when comprehensive medical evaluation reveals no biological cause.

Dispelling Superstition through Faith-Inspired Mental Health Care

Many faith-based clerics and adherents have lost their lives, both in the past and in recent times, because of excessive dependence on fasting and warfare prayers while neglecting medical care (Fraser, 2019; Swan, 2020; Children's Health Care, 2025). This study affirms that human beings are not God and must value medicine as a divine gift. All medical insight and advancement come from God, who grants knowledge for human progress. God often leads humanity from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Rejecting modern discoveries such as mobile phones or digital devices would now mean isolation. In the same way, God continues to reveal Himself and meet human needs through scientific and technological developments, including medical therapy. Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, particularly in the Southeast, use social media and digital platforms to share messages, advertise programmes and communicate with followers. It is therefore hypocritical to claim that youth psychosis is caused only by evil forces when evidence shows that many cases arise from stress,

substance abuse, obsession and frustration. It is also deceptive to preach faith in public while privately taking one's family to the hospital for treatment.

This study does not deny the reality of miracles or the existence of evil, but it stresses that individuals must know when to seek help through legitimate means. Medical and psychological care should not be treated with suspicion, for such care is also a divine provision. As Dr. I. Emelummadu observes, "We treat, but God heals" (I. Emelummadu, personal communication, June 8, 2002). This view supports the research assertion: "strive as if everything depends on striving and pray as if everything depends on praying." Healing in youth psychosis requires both psychological therapy and prayer (Afunugo, 2023; Afunugo, 2025). Therapy and medication restore the mind, while prayer and pastoral counselling strengthen the spirit. Together, they promote balanced recovery that meets emotional and spiritual needs.

Pastors and Pentecostal leaders should make conscious efforts to improve their knowledge through formal education. They are encouraged to study theology, religion, psychology, medicine and related fields to enhance their understanding. Where necessary, they may seek sponsorship for such studies. Broader intellectual and spiritual formation is vital for freeing the mind from superstition and cultivating sound judgement and creativity in pastoral ministry.

Interview Summary Table

<i>Section</i>	<i>Q.No</i>	<i>Summary</i>
<i>Demographic</i>	1	Age: 15–65 years
<i>Demographic</i>	2	Gender: 250 males, 350 females
<i>Demographic</i>	3	Occupation: Teachers=50, Traders=100, Artisans=400, Pastors=50
<i>Demographic</i>	4	Education: No formal=200, Primary=100, Secondary=100, Tertiary=200
<i>Demographic</i>	5	Religion: Pentecostal=300, Catholic=100, Anglican=100, Traditional=100
<i>Demographic</i>	6	Church leaders: Yes=50, No=550
<i>Demographic</i>	7	Experience with psychosis: Yes=230, No=370
<i>B: Prayer vs Clinical</i>	8	First response to psychosis: Prayer=400, Hospital=100, Traditional=100
<i>B: Prayer vs Clinical</i>	9	Why prayer first: Spiritual belief=400, No knowledge=150, Routine=50
<i>B: Prayer vs</i>	10	Risks of delay: Worsening=550, God handles

<i>Clinical</i>		it=50
<i>B: Prayer vs Clinical</i>	11	Prayer alone heals: Strongly Agree=150, Agree=100, Disagree=100, Strongly Disagree=250
<i>C: Theology & Therapy</i>	12	Medical healing from God: Yes=550, No=50
<i>C: Theology & Therapy</i>	13	Church teaching on hospitals: Faith=550, Avoid hospitals=50
<i>C: Theology & Therapy</i>	14	Why pastors avoid hospitals: Role=400, Fear=150, Financial=50
<i>C: Theology & Therapy</i>	15	Take relative to hospital first: Yes=150, No=150, Depends=300
<i>D: Superstition</i>	16	Causes: Witchcraft=50, Spiritual=200, Drug=300, Medical=50
<i>D: Superstition</i>	17	Psychosis is spiritual: Yes=500, No=70, Not sure=30
<i>D: Superstition</i>	18	Effect of superstition: Poor treatment=550, Faith-based approach=50
<i>D: Superstition</i>	19	Improve belief: Awareness=400, Media=150,

		Retain faith=50
<i>E: Spiritual Warfare</i>	20	Heard of warfare: Yes
<i>E: Spiritual Warfare</i>	21	Teaching: Spiritual attack=400, Jealousy=150, Substance=50
<i>E: Spiritual Warfare</i>	22	Teaching stopped hospital: Yes=400, No=200
<i>E: Spiritual Warfare</i>	23	Warfare discourages treatment: Yes=500, No=100
<i>F: Religious Leaders</i>	24	Most trusted: Pastor=200, Doctor=100, Family=100, Traditional healer=200
<i>F: Religious Leaders</i>	25	Leaders' view: Encourage=200, Discourage=350, Neutral=50
<i>F: Religious Leaders</i>	26	Pastor influence: Very High=230, High=270, Low=70, None=30
<i>F: Religious Leaders</i>	27	What pastors should do: Inform=400, Educate=150, Divine tool=50
<i>G: Final Thoughts</i>	28	Church handling: Awareness=400, Collaborate=150, OK=50
<i>G: Final</i>	29	Integrate treatment: Yes=400,

Critical Discussion of Key Findings

1. Demographic Structure:

- i. The majority of respondents are artisans, and their degrees of education range from low to high. Two hundred of them have no formal education.
- ii. Pentecostalism is the religion that is the most common, accounting for 300 out of 600 people.
- iii. The majority of respondents (550) do not have relevant experience in church leadership, although they do have psychosis experience (230).

2. Preference for Prayer over Clinical Treatment (RQ1):

- i. Four hundred of the respondents place an emphasis on prayer and delivery as the primary treatment.
- ii. The primary factors are the spiritual cause and the lack of awareness regarding mental disease.
- iii. In spite of the fact that 550 people acknowledge that delaying medical treatment can lead to an increase in psychosis, 250 people "strongly disagree" that prayer alone can heal it.

3. Theological Beliefs vs. Medical Therapies (RQ2):

- i. There is a widespread conviction that receiving medical treatment is a blessing from God (550).
- ii. Theological teachings have a significant influence on behaviour, notably among leaders of the Pentecostal denomination.
- iii. There are approximately 300 individuals who would only go to the hospital if the circumstances demanded it, which indicates that they are hesitant.

4. Superstition and Misattribution (RQ3):

- i. The most common causes that are stated are drug abuse and psychic powers, also known as witchcraft or spiritual attacks.
- ii. Over five hundred individuals have linked psychosis to spirituality, which is indicative of the widespread presence of superstition.
- iii. A total of 550 respondents identified superstition as a factor contributing to unfavourable results.

5. Spiritual Warfare Teachings and Resistance (RQ4):

- i. The term "spiritual warfare" is well known to the majority of people.
- ii. It has been reported that these beliefs have hindered persons from receiving hospital care, as indicated by four hundred reports.
- iii. There is consensus among 500 individuals that spiritual warfare ideologies hinder clinical acceptance.

6. Influence of Religious Leaders (RQ5):

- i. It is estimated that two hundred percent of people have faith in traditional healers, making them even more trusted than medical professionals.
- ii. According to the majority of respondents (350), pastors are believed to be opposed to the practice of mental therapy.
- iii. There are five hundred people who are of the opinion that pastors have a high to extremely high level of influence.

7. Suggested Reforms (Final Thoughts):

- i. Four hundred of the respondents support expanded awareness, and one hundred and fifty of them recommend professional partnership.
- ii. On the other hand, 200 people believe that prayer is adequate on its own, and fifty people believe that pastors are already successful.
- iii. The results are improved, according to 400 people, when prayer and professional treatment are combined.

Summary

The findings reveal a strong relationship between faith, perception, and medical understanding in the treatment of psychosis among Pentecostal adherents in Southeast Nigeria. Most respondents were artisans, with Pentecostalism as the dominant faith, and many relied on prayer and deliverance rather than clinical therapy. Their preference reflected beliefs in spiritual causation and

poor awareness of mental illness within their communities. Although many participants recognised that delays in medical care worsen psychosis, superstitious beliefs and teachings on spiritual warfare often discouraged clinical intervention.

Pastors and traditional healers exerted notable influence on treatment choices. Their teachings shaped perceptions of illness, while several Pentecostal leaders expressed caution or resistance towards medical intervention. Such influence sustained faith-based interpretations that overshadowed psychiatric explanations. The dominance of religious authority over scientific knowledge reflected a persistent conflict between spirituality and medicine within mental health discourse.

These findings correspond with Exline and Wilt (2023), who observed that supernatural attributions delay treatment, and with Ahad et al. (2023), who linked delayed care to poor recovery outcomes. The themes of spiritual attribution, faith-over-medicine ideology, and pastoral dominance illustrate the complex relationship between religion and mental health. The study therefore recommends structured mental health education and collaboration between faith leaders and medical practitioners to align spiritual care with clinical intervention for sustainable recovery.

Conclusion

The study reveals a pressing need to close the gap between Pentecostal beliefs and clinical care for young people with psychosis in Southeast Nigeria, where many

attribute mental illness to demonic causes. Such beliefs often delay treatment and worsen outcomes. While acknowledging the spiritual dimension of healing, the study cautions against replacing medical intervention with faith-based practices. Its analysis, though insightful, remains limited in scope and geographic focus, restricting its general applicability across Nigeria's varied regions and faith traditions.

The study's conclusions are also constrained by its limited attention to social and structural determinants such as poverty, stigma, and weak health systems, all of which shape mental health outcomes. A wider approach is needed to capture how these contextual elements interact with religion to influence care-seeking behaviour. Addressing these factors would enhance understanding of the broader socio-religious landscape that defines youth mental health in Nigeria.

Future research should explore comparative theological positions, rural–urban disparities, and the long-term effects of delayed treatment. Strengthening collaboration among church leaders, healthcare practitioners, and policymakers remains essential for advancing mental health awareness, improving service delivery, and encouraging early psychiatric intervention for young people.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study suggests that:

1. Religious leaders should be trained to understand mental illness as both a medical and spiritual

concern. Their sermons should promote early medical intervention alongside prayer to reduce the Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP).

2. Government health agencies and faith institutions should collaborate to create mental health education programmes within Pentecostal communities. This will correct misconceptions and encourage informed health-seeking behaviour.
3. Pentecostal churches should establish referral systems that link prayer houses with psychiatric hospitals to ensure prompt professional assessment of suspected psychosis cases.
4. The Ministry of Health should integrate faith-based mental health education into existing community health campaigns in Southeastern Nigeria to reach rural and urban populations.
5. The curriculum of theological seminaries should include courses on mental health awareness and pastoral counselling to equip ministers with scientific and compassionate approaches to mental illness.
6. Public enlightenment campaigns should address superstition and stigma through radio, social media, and community outreach, using testimonies of recovered patients to promote trust in medical care.
7. Health professionals should engage pastors in dialogue and joint workshops to develop culturally sensitive treatment models that respect faith but emphasise clinical care.

8. Policymakers should support legislation that recognises mental illness as a public health priority and funds collaborative programmes between churches and psychiatric institutions.
9. Families should receive community-based education on recognising early symptoms of psychosis and the dangers of prolonged spiritual warfare without clinical intervention.
10. Further research should explore comparative studies among different Christian denominations and regions to understand variations in faith influence on psychosis management and to strengthen the theoretical application of Kleinman's model within religious contexts.

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THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERSONALITY TRAITS ON CLASSROOM TEACHERS INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN SOUTHERN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

The study determined the personality attributes of school principals and performance effectiveness of classroom teachers in southern Senatorial District of Cross River State Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 2051 the sample size of 300 was selected through proportional stratified random sampling technique. Researchers made questionnaires tagged "Principal personality attributes and teachers effectiveness (PPATEQ) and teachers work performance effectiveness questionnaire (TWPEQ) were employed to generate data from the study. The instrument was validated by the supervisor of this work. The reliability

coefficient, determined using Test reliability technique was 0.83 hence, the instruments were considered reliable. Pearson retest moment correlation analysis technique was used in testing the hypotheses. The findings of the study show that principals' motivational skill, coordination skill, principals charismatic personality, principals level of experience, principals' affective behaviour and principals dynamic behaviour have positive and significant influence on teachers' effectiveness. Based on the result of the findings, it was concluded that principals' personality do influence the outcome of teachers' efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, it was recommended that principals should adopt the right type of attitude that will encourage and enhance teachers' effectiveness as well as the general performance of the school

Keywords: Principal Personality, Teacher Effectiveness, Instructional Leadership, Motivational Skills, Charismatic Leadership, School Management, Southern Cross River State.

Introduction

The quality of every society is largely predicated on the quality of its educational system. That is why the educational system expects very much its operators (academic and non-academic personnel) Okoroma, (2008 pg. 35). Each individual within the system is expected to perform the functions assigned to hi to the best of his ability and in accordance with stated

objectives Various stakeholders in the educational system ranging from policy makers to policy implementations have in recent years contributed so much in attaining the goals but from the collected data such as results obtained from examinations administered by West African Examination Council (WAEC) exhibits that the purported attainment is not within reach

This short coming in the attainment is observed through the poor results obtained in recent years. Ajayi (2002), Adeyemi (2008) have shown in their studies the extent of poor performance of students in public examinations. This was further affirmed by punch newspapers (September 27, 2008) where it reported that 8.3% of the candidates that sat for the May/June 2008 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) failed. To clear all doubts of continuous failing streak observed, WAEC spokesman Mr. Eguidu said that out of a total number of 1,692, 435 candidates that sat for the May/June 2014 examination, a total number of 529,425 candidates representing 31.28 percent obtained five credits and above. This figure when compared to the 2012 and 2013 WASSCE diets shows a marginal decline in the performance of candidates.

The noticeable and worrisome poor performances have raised concerns about the effectiveness of policy implementers. The principals and teachers are held responsible for the outcome. In the educational system, the academic performance of students is seen as purely dependent on the effectiveness of the teacher which in

turns depends on the leadership effectiveness of the principals

The behaviours of leaders have been identified as one of the major factors influencing the productivity of subordinates in any organization in which the school system is not an exemption (Babayemi 2006). Omeke (2012) remarked that "principals of secondary school constitute dynamic leaders who influence classroom teachers who are their immediate subordinates in the school management system" Thus it can be inferred from the authors, school administrators are responsible for the success or failure of the system because resources are within their disposal to harness effectively which will lead to the expected success of the educational system.

This shows that teachers' effectiveness in delivering their work has actually been determined by a great extent by the personality attributes of their principals. This observation was noted by Anadi (1987) that the teachers' level of commitment, conformity, co-operation and participation can be affected either negatively or positively by the leadership behavior of his principal. It was against this backdrop that the present study seeks to find out the relationship between principals' personality attributes and effectiveness of teachers in secondary schools

Statement of the Problem

Efficient leadership involves a deep concern for the system and the individuals working in the system to bring about effective co-operation of both the system's

interest and that of the individuals. Efficient leadership depends on the personality attributes of the leader, this was observed by Okoroma (2008) that leadership attributes such as selfless service, compassion for people, show of love have contributed to enhance the accomplishment of assigned responsibilities Thus teachers who are shown compassion and interest in their welfare are expected to be more effective in performance and their expected duties as compared to those who are not considered in the management process. Unreasonable and lackadaisical attributes towards work is common among such teaching staff. Chess (1969) attributed this to the discrepancy between need expectations and need satisfaction of teachers and because of this; the teaching profession is plagued by constant lateness to work, absenteeism, truancy and low morale among teachers.

It has become imperative to investigate whether achievement of results in secondary school certificate examination depends on the personality attributes exhibited by individual principals towards coordinating their teachers to become more effective. The study is to investigate how principal's personality attributes can significantly relate with teachers' work effectiveness. The attributes in focus are:

Motivation Skill
Coordination skill
Charisma
Level of Experiences
Affective and Dynamic behaviour

Research Questions

The following questions were posed for the research.

- (1) To what extent is the principal's motivational skills related to teachers effectiveness?
- (2) What is the significant relationship between principal's coordination skills and teachers' effectiveness?
- (3) How does principal's charisma enhance teacher's effectiveness?
- (4) To what extent does the level principal's experience influence teachers' effectiveness?
- (5) To what extent does the principal's affective behaviour relate with the effectiveness of teachers
- (6) How doc's principal's dynamic behaviour enhance teachers' effectiveness?

Statement of Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between principal's motivation ability and teachers' effectiveness?

There is no significant relationship between principal's coordination skills and teachers' effectiveness?

There is no significant relationship between principals charismatic and personality teachers' effectiveness?

There is no significant relationship between the principals' level of experience and teachers' effectiveness?

There is no significant relationship between principal's affective behavior and teacher's effectiveness?

There is no significant relationship between principal's dynamic behavior and teachers' effectiveness?

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to find out the influences of principals' personality attributes on teachers' effectiveness, in particular, to find out the following:-

To find out if there is any significant relationship between principal's motivation skill and teachers' effectiveness?

To investigate if there is any significant relationship between principal's coordination skill and teachers' effectiveness?

To try and understand if there is any significant relationship between principal's charisma and teachers' effectiveness?

To understand if there is any significant relationship between the level of principal's experience and teachers' effectiveness?

To ascertain if there is any significant relationship between principal's affective behaviour and teachers' effectiveness?

To find out if there is any significant relationship between principal's dynamic behaviour and teachers' effectiveness?

Significance of the Study

It is often said no activity can record any success beyond the commitment of the leaders that direct such activities. Thus school system like every other organization cannot attain its expected goal without effective administration (Okoroma 2008) It is on this note that the study is relevant to the stakeholders of education. The following significance arises in this study.

The schools principals will benefit immensely from this study, because it will reorient them and make them have a better understanding in building and coordinating their teachers towards goal attainment. On the part of the teachers, they will appreciate the need to carried along and be encouraged in improving their skills towards better job performance. Students stand to reap immense benefits, as teacher's effectiveness will affect them positively.

In summation, administrators will be made to understand that personality attributes plays a quintessential role within their sphere of influence to achieve desired goals.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the secondary schools in the southern educational zone of Cross River State making up of all the local governments" areas under the state's southern senatorial district.

Only public schools are used in this study, this study is limited to only chief executives of the secondary schools. Vice principals and other officers in these schools are not used. This study involves classroom teachers who handle teaching subjects. Non-teaching staff are excluded

Limitation of the Study

Some of the constraints posed on the investigation:

Some of the principals were not easy to come by, because some of them were not always in the office as at the time, the researcher would be in school to administer the questionnaires This slowed the progress of this study. The attitude of some of the teachers was not encouraging because some did not fill or return the questionnaire on time. Since the analysis of the study was based on data collection from teachers, the study does not guarantee a perfect result.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Frameworks

The following theories were reviewed for the purpose of giving this study a good background

Personality Trait Theory

Leaders are born not made, have been a long age opinion held by many scholars and theorists. Trait leadership has been defined as integrated patterns of personal characteristics that reflect a range of individual differences and foster consistent leader effectiveness

across a variety of group and organization (Zaccaro, Kemp, and Hader, 2004).

The theory of trait leadership developed from early leadership research dwells primarily on finding a group of heritable attributes that differentiated leaders from non-leaders. It was the belief of some scholars, that leadership is not acquired, so this means that not everyone is expected to be a leader. Galton (1986) in his book stated that leadership was a unique property of extra ordinary individuals, and suggested that the traits which leaders possessed were immutable and could not be developed Cowley (1931) commented that the approach to the research of leadership should always be through the study of traits. One can infer from the above statement that a leader must possess certain attributes that must distinguish him from the group. As noted by Sandra (1989), she explained that a good leader display certain characters This attributes that must be exhibited by the leader are intelligence, confidence, good communication skill, must possess good human relation, must have a well-developed intuition and so on. Argyris (1955) was also of the same opinion, when he stated that an effective leader must possess certain personality trait such as: alertness, integrity, originality and self confidence

This trait theory of leadership was widely accepted until the late 1940s and early 1950s, when researchers began to deem personality traits insufficient in predicting a leader's effectiveness. In 1945, Stogdill stated that leadership exists between persons in a social situation,

and that persons who are leaders in one situation may not be leaders in other situations. Sharing the same opinion, Carwright and Zander (1968) emphasized that effective leadership does not depend on a particular trait but how well the traits match the requirement of the situation he or she is facing. These statements have been cited ubiquitously as sounding the death knell for trait leadership theory. Other scholars who shared the opinion of Stogdill commented that any trait's effect on leadership behaviour will always depend on the situation (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 1996; Yuki & Van Fleet, 1992). Bass (1990) observed that trait theory of leadership has given way to behavioural and situational analyses of leadership to become the dominant research indicator on leadership. Owing to the widespread rejection of the personality trait theory, other theories became dominant such as Fielders' (1967) contingency model, Blake and Mouton's (1964) managerial grid, and Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) situational leadership model.

Despite the growing criticisms of trait leadership theory, recent researchers have faulted Stogdill's (1948) review against leaders' trait. Zaccaro (2007) pointed out that Stogdill's review contains conclusions supporting that individual differences could still be predictors of leaders' effectiveness. With an increasing number of empirical studies directly supporting trait theory (Judge et al, 2002; Judge, Colbert & Llies, 2004), traits theory have re-emerged in the lexicon of the scientific research into leadership. In recent years, the research about leaders' traits has made some progress in identifying a list of

personality traits that are highly predictive of leader effectiveness. Some of the traits identified included intellectual emotional and physical characteristics

This theory explains the importance of personality traits as determinants of effective leadership. It makes us understand, that physical stature, level of intelligence and extroverted lifestyle plays significant role on how one can influence and control the actions of a group towards achieving a common goal

Still of the traits leadership, a recent french paper also reveal some fact's which, (Odey. Veronica, Ayeni Queen, and Ndifon Mamina, 2026p.2) mentioned that : << Dans le contexte nigérian, plusieurs recherches se sont intéressée au rôle des enseignants face à l'hétérogénéité linguistique ,en particulier dans la région de Cross River .

Elles révèlent que la supervision pédagogique et la formation continue jouent un rôle central dans l'efficacité de l'enseignement: visites de classe, contrôle des notes et encadrement régulier sont corrélés à de meilleures performances et à des pratiques plus rigoureuses (Sule et al. 2015, p. 43–46)>>

Five Factor Model Theories

In psychology, the big five personality traits are five broad domains or dimensions of personality that are used to describe human personality. Many psychologists have many years work on the human personality traits. The initial model was advanced by Ernest Tupes and

Raymond Christal in 1961 but failed to reach an academic audience until the 1980s. In 1990, J. M. Digman advanced his five factor model of personality which Lewis Goldberg extended to the highest level of organization

The theory base on the Big five factors is called the five factor model (FFM) the five factors are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Acronyms commonly used to refer to the five traits collectively are OCEAN. A summary of the factors are as follows, Openness to experiences. Openness reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and a preference for novelty and variety a person has. He is unconventional and independent, this leads to flexibility. People that possess this trait welcomes innovation and criticism easily, and are adaptable to make changes to a greater good.

Conscientiousness: this exhibits a tendency to be organized and dependable, show self-discipline, act dutifully, aim for achievement and prefer planned rather than spontaneous behaviour. People who exhibit this trait exhibits high sense of coordinating activities towards attaining set goals.

Extraversion: This means assertiveness, sociability and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others, and talkativeness. People who possess this trait are mostly charismatic in nature. They can inspire others to work towards attaining a common target because of their social dexterity.

Agreeableness: A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. It is also a measure of one's trusting and helpful nature. People with this trait can carry the group along easily because they are people oriented and know how to maintain a balance relationship between group concern and achieving goals

Neuroticism: It is referred to as the degree of emotional stability and impulse control although it also means the tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety and vulnerability. Those who score high in neuroticism are emotionally reactive and vulnerable to stress, they are more likely to interpret ordinary situations as threatening, and minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult.

At the other end of the scale, individuals who score low in neuroticism are less easily upset and are less emotionally reactive. They are calm, emotionally stable and free from negative feelings.

The psychological theory of traits exhibits the traits that influence the personality of individuals as the five factor model (FFM). Individuals who possess the adverse side of the five major traits are likely not to do well in group activities. What this infers is that leaders who exhibit the adverse side of the five major traits are not effective leaders. Conversely those who possess and maximize the positive side of the identified major traits are believed to be effective leaders

Literature Review

The empirical research findings of other scholars in areas that are related to the topic under investigation were reviewed under the following subheadings:

Principals' motivation skill and teachers' effectiveness

Principals' coordination skill and teachers' effectiveness

Principals' charisma and teachers' effectiveness

Level of principals' experience and teachers' Effectiveness

Principals' affective behaviour and teachers' effectiveness

Principals' dynamic behaviour and teachers' effectiveness

Principals' Motivation Ability and Teachers' Effectiveness

Schools may be built by government and organizations, providing the best equipment and serene to facilitate learning, but all these will only half solve the educational problem if teachers who are the bedrock of any educational system are not treated fairly. Therefore what any effective school head should possess is the motivational skill to keep the fire burning in his workers.

Educational system like every other organization is no exception. Research carried out by Peter Young, associate professor of educational policy at Michigan State University reveals that the high rate at which teachers change their jobs owes to lack of motivation.

from their school heads. Musaazi (1992) explains that motivation is the inner drive which prompts people to act in a certain way. Motivation could also be seen as an urge or drive within or outside an individual which makes him take an action. Thus, the success of any school system depends largely on the quality of those who perform the task.

It is against this background that school administrators must possess the ability to motivate their teachers by providing the physical facilities, money and well thought out policies that will enhance their productivity Otu (2006) noted that leadership motivation is an intense desire to lead others to reach shared goals. She explains further, that motivation is not bribery, and it is not manipulation. It is all about comprehending the need of workers and providing ways to help attain or satisfy those needs through the organization Schools that are fortunate to have administrators that posse the motivation traits do better than these schools that are not fortunate to have such administrators. This was however observed by Olusola (1986) that unmotivated workers are dissatisfied, produced substandard output and absent themselves from work. He further explained that it is a general belief that most teachers in Nigeria are undermotiavted. This observation can be accepted, because of poor performance exhibited by the students in their external examination results conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC)

Ulrich & Ulrich (2010) states that money is not the only source of workers motivation, as be believes that more

money does not equal happier workers; rather he suggested other measures to be used to motivate workers. These were,

Recognition

Applauses

One on one coaching

Good work environment

Time off

Outside seminars

Otu (2006) is of the same opinion when she suggested her principles of motivation as follows;

Principle of participation

Principle of recognition

Principle of delegated authority and

Principle of communication

Alternative working patterns such as Job-rotating, job-sharing and flexible working condition have been branded as effective working tools by Llopis (2012) Moreover, Llopis argues that motivational aspects of alternative working pattern have been appreciated by organizations that adopt them as against those which do not practice such. An interesting viewpoint regarding the issue has been recommended by Wylie (2004), according to which he recommends managers to adopt a proactive approach in terms of engaging in self-motivation practices

According to Thomas (2009) the main challenge of motivation in workplaces is identifying what motivates each individual difference. This means that school heads that wish to be effective must be able to perceive their workers individual differences and try as much as possible to motivate each and every one of them according to their expectations. Furthermore Llopis (2012) draws attention to the increasing relevance of the work life balance problem for modern employees and stress that unless employees achieve an adequate level of work life balance in personal level management investment on the level of employee motivation can be wasted

This view point is based on hierarchy of needs theoretical framework proposed by Abraham Maslow (1943), according to which there is a certain hierarchy for individual needs, and more basic human need to be satisfied in order for the next level of needs to serve as motivators,

Therefore, one of the personality traits that must be possess by any effective administrator is having the motivational skills to induce the workers and assist them to carry out their role assignment in a dependable fashion

Principal's Coordination Skills and Teachers' Effectiveness

No matter the amount of resources available, if not property utilized to achieve the purported goals, it

amounts to waste. This is where coordination is essential and is one indispensable skill needed by a school principal if he wants to ensure efficient and effective teaching and learning in the school to as to be able to produce quality outputs.

The success or failure of the school rests on the shoulders of the principal. This is why Uyanga (2007) opined that the principal must identify and set goals and objectives of the school which must be in line with the national objectives. It therefore means one can inferred from the statement that a principal must analyze tasks and share responsibilities of the staff according to specialization and expertise It also means the principal must carry out certain activities to ensure the school meet required minimum standard.

Ojo (1999) elucidated on the activities involved in school administration which he stated as,

“Administering the curriculum and teaching, pastoral care, discipline, assessment evaluation and examinations, resource allocation, costing and forward planning, staff appraisal relationship with the community and use of practical skills necessary for surviving the policies of the organization”

The various activities within the school system cannot produce result without effective coordination of resources. Ekudayo (2010) tries to summarize these activities by stressing out areas where the principal

should lay emphases, to enable him have a holistic coordination of the school. He suggested that principals should pay attention to management of school finance, provision and maintenance of physical facilities, curriculum instructional supervision and good communication skill to enhance effectiveness of staff

From the above suggestion, on the holistic approach of effectively coordinating the school activities, some authors concord to this different suggestion. On the aspect of management of school finance a study carried out by Rutgers University Professor Bruce Baker concludes that more equitable and adequate allocation of financial inputs leads to positive outcome of all the inputs that need financial attention, teachers' salaries must be taken seriously by the principal because prompt payment of staff salaries gives them sense of security which in turn boost their morale which transcend to better productivity. As the chief accounting officer, the principal is expected to be acquainted with the various accounting books, such as the vote book, cash book and so on, to ensure the judicious utilization of the revenue. Ekudayo (2010) asserts that a principal who is a good coordinator need not wait to receive all the funds from government alone. He can complement that by urging different stakeholders such as parent teachers association (PTA), board of governors, old students association and non-support the school governmental organization to raise funds to support the school.

Another area the principal should not slumber as a coordinator is the provision and maintenance of physical

facilities. As noted by Obidoa (2006) who opined that principals must be concerned with physical environment and other facilities around the school. This is because dilapidated buildings, leaking roofs, abandoned projects, overgrown trees and lawns have demoralizing effects on the students and teachers. He is not left alone in this opinion, as Corcoran et al (1988) share similar view as they stated that physical facilities have direct positive and negative effects on teachers' morale, sense of safety, feelings of effectiveness in the classroom and on the general learning environment. They concluded that teachers who work in schools with good and updated facilities do far better than their counterparts who work in schools with dilapidated facilities.

Furthermore, another quintessential aspect that ensures effective coordination is communication Osamor (1999) averred that the effectiveness of managers depends directly on the effectiveness of communication within the organization. Therefore it implies if a principal wants to effectively coordinate the various activities to achieve a targeted goal he needs effective communication so as to keep the teachers and students informed of what is required of them. Afolayan (1989) ascertain to this when he asserted that good communication in a school does not only enable individuals to be aware of their duties and the general progress being made in school, it also serves as an important psychological function because the teachers are abreast with the progress of the school.

Corrective measures and discipline is also done through communication from the principal to staff who have put

up deviant behaviours. Agreeing to this, Smithburg (1990) stated that principals correct unprofessional and deviant behaviours among teachers and students by constant expression of anger, via verbal or written communication.

Principals' coordination is incomplete in a school when curriculum and instructional supervision is not taken seriously. The success of a school hangs on the effective implementation of the curriculum. This aspect requires that the principal must be knowledgeable on instructional delivery so as to carry out effective instructional supervision Odok (1990) noted that for a principal to be efficient as an instructional supervisor, he must know the rudiment of classroom activities Adesina and Ogunsaju (1984) points out that a good principal would ideally inspects the lesson notes, the actual teaching and teachers procedures for evaluation or assessment of students such as giving of test and examinations. This entails that a principal must provide the teachers with adequate educational information, he should ensure they work with the appropriate instructional tools, methods and procedures in the teaching of students. With such close and effective monitoring there is higher probability of attaining better learning outcome.

From the above discussion, one can inferred that coordination is no easy task Schmidt and Hunter (2000) study revealed that the ability to coordinate the activities of staff effectively and harness other resources within the reach of an administrator to attain purported goals is no

easy feat and such requires high level of mental coordination to bring about positive output among the staff.

Principals Charismatic and Teachers' Effectiveness

Charisma is compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others. The academic literature of some authors (Howell & Frost, 1989, Koene, Vogelaar & Soeters, 2002) has demonstrated that charismatic leaders can be more effective than their less charismatic counterparts. It is one personality trait that is quite essential in bringing out the best in the employees.

Charismatic leaders are passionate visionaries who inspire others through selflessness. Leaders with charisma recognize their employees' skills and talents, and they utilize those strengths to attain organizational goals. A microanalysis of studies of charismatic leadership showed that it is consistently related to various measures of leadership effectiveness (Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

Waldman et al (2004) found that manager's charisma was related to subsequent organizational performance as measured by net profit margin and return on equity. He went further to explain that charismatic strategic leaders may influence organizational performance because of their ability to overcome setbacks that keep organizations from successfully adapting to new environment. In a changing world, the school system is not exempted new technologies are fast replacing old

instructional tools, new societal demand is making some subjects obsolete or not much needed by students, demand for higher qualification to teach at certain education strata is now the new educational policy and lots more. With this fast development is enough to make some teachers feel out of place, but with charismatic principals there is greater encouragement in energizing them to adapt to the changing situation. Shamir and Howell (1999) noted that the vision of charismatic leaders helps followers to see opportunities in change and provides them with the hope and confidence in the future that allow them to mobilize their energy in pursuit thereof Teachers can be encouraged to upgrade their skills through in-service training and education upgrade of their qualification.

Aside those charismatic principals are much needed when the working environment becomes unstable. This is as a result of delay in the payment of wages, no incentives, and attrition of personnel due to death or retirement and so on. The perceived risk of organizational failure is greater when working environment is unstable, it is imperative to have a leader with an extraordinary motivational force to keep the spirit of the employees burning. This was observed by Pawar and Eastman (1997) who suggested that charismatic leadership will be more highly related to organizational performance when an organizations environment is uncertain and volatile. The charismatic leader gathers followers through dint of personality and charm, rather than any form of external power or

authority, people follow others that they personally admire

The charismatic leader has the dexterity of attaching himself firmly to the identity of the group, such that to join the group is to become one with the leader. This means, when a school head creates an atmosphere where the teachers look up to him because of his self-sacrifice and believe in the goals of the organization, this in turn will instill the commitment to ideological goals of the organization in the teachers. This was noted by Musser (1987) that charismatic leaders seek to instill commitment to ideological goals and also devotion to themselves from their followers.

The values of charismatic leader are highly significant. If they are well intended towards others, they can elevate and transform an entire organization. Conger and Kanungo (1998) describe five behavioural attributes of charismatic leaders that indicate a more transformational viewpoint;

Vision and articulation

Sensitivity to the environment

Sensitivity to member needs

Personal risk taking

Performing unconventional behaviour

Despite their charm and apparent concern, the charismatic leader may well be somewhat more concerned with themselves than anyone else. Their self-belief is so high, they can easily believe that they are infallible, and

hence lead their followers into an abyss, even when they have received adequate warning from others. The self-belief can also lead them into psychotic narcissism. Scholars as Conger and Kanungo (1998) and Maccoby (2000) proposed that the narcissistic tendencies of charismatic leaders might neutralize the benefits of their leadership, Yoki (1999) postulated that charismatic leadership is not more effective leadership He points this to misuse of power by charismatic leaders, and polarization of organization members Such negative consequences of charisma have not been tested in extant research.

Level of Principals Experience and Teachers' Effectiveness

It is widely believe for one to be an expert he must have intense experience through practice and education in a particular field. In this regard, one who is rogarde as an experience person is expected to be more knowledgeable than an average person or persons in that specific field.

In this regard, a principal is no exception. It is expected for one to rise to the position of a principal he must be professionally qualified as a teacher so as to be effective in guiding the activities of others (teachers) in actualizing predetermined school goals. This view is supported by Peter, D. (2015) who believes that school leaders should have a few years of experience in the classroom before they take up the role. He suggested that the least number of years should be ten. By this period, most teachers have come to fully grasp the rudiments of

the teaching profession and the workings of the educational system in general. In his words they would "gain the confidence in themselves and their knowledge base to stand up to bad ideas and say No!

It is assumed that principals who come from outside the profession to be saddle with the responsibility of steering the affairs of the schools most time brings dissatisfaction to the teachers. This is noted in an article written by Dr. Spector who was cited by Peter, D. asserted that principals with no teaching experience in the classroom have reaked havoc on the school system. This is because they cannot correct any deficiency or handle any major challenge due to the fact that they do not have sufficient knowledge on what is actually confronting them. This in turn cripples the learning outcome as teachers who are expected to be guided property may become inefficient in the performance of their duties.

According to Darling-Hammond (1997), he believes that a principal with a teaching expertise is essential to improving instruction. He further states that if teachers are critical to the school improvement process, principals must be prepared to provide assistance in refining their teaching skills. This assistance may even require principals to go into classrooms to give demonstration lessons Fullan (2000) believes that extended knowledge about instruction is vital for instructional leadership Strong instructional leaders notice differences in teacher expertise and how they impact learning.

Principals are seen as expert in particular content areas and provide day to day leadership and take everything into consideration when providing the enabling environment for teaching and learning to be effective. It is obvious, teachers work better and show a high sense of commitment to work when they know, there is someone who understands their plight and carries them along. In a study conducted by Ekwegh (1992) it was found that a principal who fools he can ignore the teachers and yet expects good results simply creates an atmosphere of dissatisfaction which reduces productivity.

In order to improve the teachers' effectiveness, experience principals are expected to provide training programmes and so, Ozigi (1977) states that training of staff improves their competence and their relationships.

Although not everyone may totally agree that you need to be a teacher to become a good principal but is obvious from findings made from scholars that those with expertise knowledge in classroom teaching tend to make better principals which in turn leads to high productivity on the part of the teachers. Through experience he can effectively guide and supervise instructional delivery to see an effective learning outcome is attained.

Principals Affective Behaviour and Teachers' Effectiveness

Compassion as being defined by Jinpa quoted in Chade Mengtan (2012) is a mental state endowed with a sense

of concern for the suffering of others and aspiration to see that suffering relieved. Okoroma and Uwalaka (1999) identified compassion as one of the quintessential attribute that must be possessed by a leader. This attribute consider the welfare of the people as very paramount. A compassionate leader will show commitment in the service of the people rather than service to self. As noted by Wiles and Lovell (1975) for a principal to succeed, he should see himself as one of the teachers, not as a big boss from outside. They maintained that the principal should constantly seek to improve his sensitivity to the feelings of the teachers, increase the accuracy of his estimate of group opinion on important issues.

It is believe there is a great connection between teachers' productivity and compassionate attributes exhibited by the school head. Ogunsaju (1983) expresses the view that a principal who does not care for the welfare of the people he supervises will definitely lower their morale. He therefore admonished principals to maintain good relationship and concern towards teachers if they (principals) expect the staff to be effective.

Teachers get easily irritated by fixated principals, whose unbendable character is to implement every rule to the letter, notwithstanding the circumstances. This lackadaisical attitude towards teachers' plight has led to low productivity and less interest in the job. Ray Williams (2012) noted that inhuman drive for perfection can burn out even the most motivated workers. Ray Williams in his article noted a research conducted by

Richard et al published in the Boston Globe They concluded that a less or no compassionate leader could cause the employees stress, induce depression and anxiety or even trigger the onset of serious illness. They emphasized but the lackadaisical and mediocre attitude towards employees would eventually lead to huge lost in productivity.

Christine Zust (2001) asserts that a compassionate leader is flexible. He is willing to set aside rules and procedures for the greater good. She went further to explain that when leaders go all the way to show great assistance to employees, they never forget, and as a result, the leader develops more loyal employees. People will want to work for the leader because he cares Christine concluded that leaders who become professional and goal oriented build impenetrable armour around themselves The resultance effect is less committed workers. Conversely the compassionate leader will fare better in handling administration effectively.

Christina Boedker of the Australian school of business conducted a research study on the link between leadership and organizational performance and collected data from more than 5600 people in 77 organizations. She concluded that the ability of leaders to spend more time and effort developing and recognizing people, welcoming feedback and fostering cooperation among staff were critical to success Moreover she noted that the ability for a leader to be compassionate, that is "to understand people's motivators, hopes and difficulties and to create the right support mechanism to allow

people to be as good as they can be" had the greatest correlation with profitability and productivity.

It goes a long way to show that teachers' effectiveness truly depends on how compassionate the principal is, no worker can put up his best when his welfare is neglected. Jacobson (1975:15) noted that the school cannot be an effective organization unless teachers find satisfaction in their work. It is a major responsibility of the school head to create conducive climate; the school head should take time to get to know his teachers individually. Their insecurities should be his concern, when this is taken care of; it brings out the best in them. It has actually becomes practicable to have a welfare board which is expected to delve into a circumstances that demand support for a staff in times of predicament, Teachers fare better and become effective in carrying out their assigned duties once they are aware that the administrations have concern towards their personal wellbeing excluding salaries and other fringe benefits which are expected to be their entitlement.

Principals Dynamic Behaviour and Teachers Effectiveness

Openness to experience is one of the personality traits that are recognized in the five model theory. It is one of the essential traits that are expected to be possessed by leaders. Principals are expected to be open and loose themselves from the conventional ways of doing things. John (1992) observed that people who score low on openness are considered to be closed to experience. They

tend to be conventional and traditional in their outlook and behavior. This implies that school heads with such close mind cannot readily embrace change.

Okoroma and Okah (2007) shared this opinion by noting, this disposition of a leader to take criticism, which will enable him to improve on his performance. This is an asset in the management of responsibilities. From this note, one can infer that school heads that believe in self infallibility, putting deaf ears to advices from staffs and external observers are bound to be less effective in performance. Terri barber (2009) acknowledges openness to change is very quiet essential in improving an organization, the leaders that lacks openness will eventually run the organization to stagnation, bankruptcy and put the workers into a mode of depression. She admonished leaders with traits of openness are always on the look out for opportunity to grap when it presents itself.

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion of Findings

General Description of Data

In this chapter, the data collected and prepared for this study were analyzed and interpreted to test the hypothesis of the study. The data comprised of items from the instruments designed for the study to test the variables of principal's personality attributes and its effects on teachers' classroom effectiveness.

Hypothesis by Hypothesis Presentations of Results of Data Analysis

In this section, each of the hypotheses was subjected to statistical analysis. In each case, the hypothesis was stated in the null form. This was followed by a brief explanation of the data analysis procedures before result was presented in a tabular form. The presented result was interpreted to test the stated hypothesis at 0.05 levels of significance.

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that, there is no significant relationship between principals' motivation ability and teachers' effectiveness. To test this hypothesis, the first set of five (5) items in the principals personality attribute questionnaire was subjected to statistical analysis along with the response to the items in the teachers' effectiveness instrument using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis as presented in the table below,¹⁴⁵ The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between principals affective behaviour and teachers' effectiveness.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Principals' Affective Behaviour and Teachers' Effectiveness

Variables	$\Sigma X \Sigma Y$	$\Sigma X^2 \Sigma Y^2$	Σ^{XY}	N	Cal-r	Df
Principals' affective behavior (x)	16017	482324				
			482687	300	0.83	298
Teachers'	16504	495628				

effectiveness (y)						
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Significant at 0.05

The table above shows the correlation co-efficient of the relationship between principal's affective behaviour and teachers' effectiveness. The result shows that the correlation co-efficient $r=0.83$ and is higher than the observed r which is 0.25 hypothesis as stated above is rejected. This therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between principal's affective behaviour and teachers' effectiveness in schools headed by such principals

Hypothesis Six

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between principal's dynamic behaviour and teachers' effectiveness. This hypothesis was also subjected to statistical analysis using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis as shown below;

Variables	$\Sigma X \Sigma Y$	$\Sigma X^2 \Sigma Y^2$	ΣXY	N	Variables	$\Sigma X \Sigma Y$
Principals' dynamic behavior (x)	15481	486002			Principals' dynamic behavior (x)	15481
			486752	300		
Teachers' effectiveness (y)	16504	495628			Teachers' effectiveness (y)	16504

Significant at 0.05

The table above shows a very significant level of correlation at 0.81 which is greater than the critical value

of 0.27. Hence, it could be deduced that principals' dynamic behaviour significantly relates with the teachers' effectiveness. In view of the above findings, it could be stated that the null hypothesis which stated that principals' dynamic behaviour has no significant relationship with teachers' effectiveness is rejected.

Summary of Findings

From the statistical analysis of the tested hypothesis of this study, the following findings were made; there is a significant relationship between principals' motivation ability and teachers' effectiveness. There is a significant relationship between principals' coordination skills and teachers' effectiveness. There is a significant relationship between principals' charismatic personality and teachers' effectiveness. Principals' level of experience has a significant relationship with teachers' effectiveness. There exists a significant relationship between principals' affective behaviour and teachers' effectiveness in public schools. There is a significant relationship between principals' dynamic behaviour and teachers' effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

Principals' Motivation Ability and Teachers' Effectiveness

The first hypothesis sought to find out if there is any significant relationship between principals' motivation ability and teachers' effectiveness in schools. The result showed that there is a significant positive relationship between principals' motivation ability and teachers' effectiveness in schools. The result showed that there is a

significant positive relationship between these two variables. This therefore implies that principals' motivational ability goes a long way to influence the effectiveness of teachers working under them.

This finding is in line with the study of Llopis (2012) which revealed that motivation plays a very significant role in the productivity level of workers in organizations.

Moreover, Thomas (2009) identified motivation in work places as a major challenge to effectiveness of staff members.

It also collaborate the study of Musaazi (1992) which revealed that motivation from the school heads prompts inner drive within the teachers, and has the potentials of spurring them up for greater dedication to duty. The implication of this finding is that the actual productivity level of any school is determined by the effective output of its staff. This positive level of output ought to be ensured through adequate motivation

It is therefore pertinent that school heads try as much as possible, even with the little available resources to appreciate their staff or make use of parameters that can elicit intrinsic motivation among the teachers, so as to encourage them to put in their best.

Principals' Coordination Skills and Teachers' Effectiveness

This hypothesis sought to ascertain if the principals' coordination skills relate with teachers' effectiveness in

public schools. The result of the analysis of the hypothesis did confirm that there is a positive correlation between these two variables.

This finding supports the findings of the study of Brackett and Brackett (2012), Marzano and Pickering (2003) which identified the level of managerial coordination of staff members by the school head as a very important element contributing to teachers' efficiency.

The finding also supports Bunguyi (1998) study which identified principal's coordination style as an important variable of teachers' effectiveness. In this study, it was noted that principals' coordination has an important role in fostering a positive or negative social atmosphere in the school, and commitment to duty

The finding of the study also reiterates the view of Everstom et al (2006) that effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed environment but rather in a positive atmosphere as conditioned by the school head through his/her managerial style.

Principals Charismatic Personality and Teachers' Effectiveness

This hypothesis aimed at finding out if there is a significant relationship between principals' charismatic personality and teachers' effectiveness. The result of the analysis of the study revealed a positive correlation existing between principal's charismatic personality and

teachers' effectiveness. Thus it can be inferred that a charismatic leader has an extraordinary motivational force that keep the spirit of the employees burning. He creates an atmosphere where the teachers look up to him because of his self sacrifice and believe in the goals of the organization which in turn instill high level of commitment.

Vogelaar and Socters (2002) posited that charismatic leaders can be more effective than their less charismatic counterparts. It re-emphasizes their view that this variable is one important personality trait that is quintessential in bringing out the best in the employees.

The finding also supports Shamir and Howell (1999) that the vision of charismatic leaders helps followers to see opportunities in change, and also providesthem with the hope and confidence in the future that allow them to mobilize their energy in pursuit thereof. This also noted by Musser (1987) that charismatic leaders seek to instill commitment to ideological goals and also devotion to themselves from their followers

It can be inferred from the findings which support the opinions of the mentioned scholars that a charismatic principal has an enigmatic charm which spurs extraordinary zeal and commitment from teachers to give their best to their job which leads to positive learning outcome of students.

Principals' Level of Experience and Teachers' Effectiveness

This hypothesis pose for the study sought to ascertain if principal's level of experience has any significant relationship with teachers' effectiveness. The hypothesis was subjected to statistical analysis and the result reveals a positive correlation between the two variables. Based on this finding, it is deduced that the level of experience possessed by a principal has a corresponding effect on the effectiveness of teachers.

It is not debatable, the fact that experience plays a crucial role on the successful transition of managerial acumen to the productivity level of any given organization This asserts to the opinion of Peter, D. (2015) that a principal must have a classroom experience as a teacher, so as to enable him be of advantage position to note mistakes and correct them.

It is widely upheld that bringing one that does not have a fair knowledge about the activities of the school system to be a school administrator will bring a lot of dissatisfaction to the teachers, as he might not give proper assistance when needed nor detect weakness even when is technically obvious. This averred the opinions of Hammond (1997) and Fullan (2000) who believes that a principal must be an instructional expertise and who is able to perceive the lapses among teachers and correct it, even it means to carry out demonstrations to put them through

It is therefore not surprising that respondent to the study did agree on the fact that the experience displayed by their school head did impart either positively or negatively on them

Principals Affective Behaviour and Teachers' Effectiveness

The fifth hypothesis for the study aimed at ascertaining if there is a significant relationship between principal's affective behaviour and teachers' level of effectiveness. The result of the analysis shows that there is a significant correlation existing between these two variables

This findings gives credence to the study of Okoroma & Uwalaka (1997) who identified compassion as one of the quintessential attribute that must be possess by a leader. In this study, it was noted that principals should constantly seek to improve his sensitivity to the feelings of the teachers, and ensure their effectiveness.

This affirms the conclusion of Musser (1987) that charismatic leaders seek to instill commitment to ideological goals and also command devotion to themselves from their followers. When a principal is charismatic enough, he or she helps drives home a sense of unwavering commitment in the teachers which enable them to approach their job with much enthusiasm which lead effectiveness, this boost productivity and promote a positive learning outcome from the students. This is because the teachers can go all out to ensure the institutional goals are achieved.

More so, the study support Zust (2001) that a compassionate leader is flexible. This means he performs unconventional behaviour so to enable favorable organizational climate, where teachers' innovative ideas will be welcome. The study had explained that when principals go all the way to show great assistance, it creates byal teachers. This has a significant effect on their level of effectiveness

In summation, the findings reveal that teachers' effectiveness truly depends on few compassionate the principal is

Principals Dynamic Behaviour and Teachers' Effectiveness

This hypothesis aimed at finding out if there is a significant relationship between principals dynamic behaviour and the effectiveness of the teachers in schools. The result of the analysis of the study confirmed that a positive correlation exists between the two variables.

The findings of this study collaborates the study of John (1992) on the importance of principals' dynamism in ensuring that positive change occurs in their schools. In fact if a school head is open to change, there is every indication that teachers with positive ideas would be accommodated and this would ensure effectiveness in schools

Furthermore, Okoroma & Okah (2007) noted that dynamic leaders are open to criticism, which enables

them to improve on their performances. It can be deduced from this observation that school heads who believe they are infallible and put deaf ears to advice from staff and external observers are bound to be less effective in performance of the school.

Moreover, the study supports the finding of Wisewolf (2012) who stated that "situational leaders" non-rigid behaviour creates room for flexibility which makes it possible for all kinds of staff to participate in the implementation process.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn;

There is a significant relationship between principals' motivation ability and teachers' effectiveness in public schools. There is a significant relationship between principals coordination skills and teachers' effectiveness

There is a significant relationship between principal's charismatic personality and teachers' effectiveness.

Principal's level of experience has a significant relationship with teacher's effectiveness. There is a significant relationship between principal's dynamic behaviour and teachers' effectiveness in public schools

A significant relationship exists between principals' affective behaviour and teachers' effectiveness

Implications of the Study

The implications of the findings of this study are that secondary school principals play a very significant role

in the performance of the teaching staff. This is in view of the fact that these teachers represent a centripetal force in the educational system. Not only does the teacher have to promote the development of students cognitive and psycho motive domains, he or she is also saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the development of students' affective abilities. Consequent upon this fact, it is imperative that teachers should be made to work in friendly and conducive environments so as to elicit commitment to work.

The findings of this study have also revealed the important role the school principals play in ensuring the effectiveness of the teachers. In view of the above, it is pertinent that school heads adopt those teacher-friendly managerial styles so as to get the best out of those teachers. Transactional and democratic styles of leadership have been shown by this research to be appropriate in this regard

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and subsequent conclusions, the following recommendations are made;

Principals should undergo in-service and refresher courses on the modern rudiments of leadership styles.

The appointment of principals should be based on competence, experience and dedication to duty.

School administrators should give teachers more opportunities to participate in decision-making
Principals should organize workshop for their teachers so as to boost productivity, this will lead to high level of performance.

Principals should consistently exhibit behaviours capable of inducing and directing the behaviour of teachers to greater productivity.

Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher calls for more research into these areas, School plant management and teachers' work performance

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**DEATH, THE BODY, AND RITUAL PRACTICE IN
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES OF CANADA:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF LONG-TERM
CARE SETTINGS**

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Abstract

This study explores death rituals and cultural practices surrounding the preparation of the deceased in long-term care facilities in Canada's Northwest Territories. Drawing on ethnographic observation and interviews with caregivers and family members, the study examines how Indigenous cosmological beliefs shape post-mortem rituals. The findings reveal that death in long-term care is not merely a medical event but a culturally mediated transition involving ritual acts such as body cleansing, candle lighting, and spiritual guidance for the deceased. These practices reflect Indigenous understandings of the relationship among the living, the dead, and the ancestral world. The study contributes to scholarship in death studies, medical anthropology, and Indigenous cultural practices by documenting how traditional beliefs coexist with institutional healthcare settings. The study uses a qualitative ethnographic approach to examine death rituals in long-term care settings in Norman Wells, Northwest Territories. Data were collected through participant observation and informal interviews with caregivers, family members, and community participants

involved in end-of-life processes. Field observations were conducted during the researcher's time in long-term care facilities. Interview data were supplemented by observational notes documenting post-death ritual practices, including body preparation, candle lighting, and pastoral visitation. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring cultural patterns related to death rituals and Indigenous cosmological beliefs. The researcher's professional experience as a personal support worker in long-term care facilities in Norman Wells provided unique observational insight into caregiving practices and ritual responses to death within institutional settings.

Keywords: Death rituals, Indigenous Cosmology, Long-term care, and end-of-life care.the long term

Introduction

Long-term care is specialized care for seniors in the Northwest Territories of Canada. The children of these seniors always bring their parents into long-term care to be cared for by seasoned healthcare personnel, including doctors, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and personal support workers. Whenever these seniors are brought in, there is always an agreement on how long they will stay, either as a rest home or permanently. All of this is well documented. Long-term care in Norman Wells, Sahtu, follows these detailed processes to ensure seniors are well cared for.

Long-term care in Sahtu, especially in Norman Wells, a small community where all members know one another, centers on health centers that serve as the

community hospital. People are referred outside their community only when an illness is beyond the health center's capacity to manage. This paper, therefore, focuses primarily on the various ritual procedures performed before, during, and after a person's passing. Paul Ike observed that "the long-term care looks like a forgotten zone for some clients, whose families do not check up regularly, except when informed of a danger."

Akas Nicholas maintained that when older adults are brought to long-term care, it is always a two-sided coin; either they live long and die, or their families might want to take them back home to continue care. Long-term care always creates room for different types of workers whenever someone dies, and these workers will be discussed in this paper. The first set of people are the emotional staff; the second set are the business-as-usual; and the third set are the next set of people.

1. **The Emotional Staff:** Paul Frank observes that "this is the soft part of human weakness, irrespective of how they struggle to overcome." Heck Wings maintained that the staff of long-term care. Unconsciously, non-emotions arise simply from caring for the seniors or the dead among them. Helen King's submission truly affects this group of staff in long-term care, using Norman Wells as a study. They have cared for these seniors so much that their death, or even the announcement of death, leaves them emotionally depressed or down, and they struggle to get back on their feet again. Someone might argue that they are professionals and should detach emotions from work. But Harry Code posited that emotions are not planned; rather, long closeness with

someone triggers them, either for good or bad. This set of caregivers feeds, showers, and dresses them, and even reports whenever their health conditions become abnormal. These daily actions awaken unplanned emotions whenever a client or resident dies in long-term care. This set of caregivers goes as far as attending the funerals of their clients whenever they die.

2. **The Business-As-Usual Caregiver:** This group of caregivers, though professional in their work with clients, believes that everyone who enters long-term care is going to die, no matter how prayerful or religious they are. Mike Utah (interviewed) said that long-term care is a pathetic stage for every senior who lives in long-term care; all they are accounting for is just days to die. Sand Helen (interviewed) said, "Yes, I am a caregiver. Whether the seniors live or die is not my worry. I don't want anything that will hurt my emotions." Moreover, everyone must surely die one day. This set of caregivers does not care about the emotions surrounding the deaths of those they care for, since it is obvious that their death is not far from the first day of their arrival into the long-term care facility; therefore, there is no reason to cry when they are not related to the person, and their salaries are constantly paid. The business accepts this set of people, meaning that when someone dies, there is room to welcome a new client.
3. **Whose is Next Caregiver:** This set of caregivers in long-term care does not see death as scary; rather, they discuss it as their favorite show. They think that every senior has a foreboding sickness that will kill

them one day, so they are always at ease whenever such clients are proclaimed to have a future or imminent death. They come to work to discuss the date given for the death of any of their residents anytime they want, joking about it. Jeremiah Ikem (interviewed) observed that he was just a caregiver who wished to die a less painful journey and therefore joked about the proclaimed death, which helps him stay professional. This is where most long-term caregivers belong because they are more concerned about their money, shifts, and vacation; death means nothing at all.

Perception of Death in Long-Term Care

The act of dying in long-term care, especially in the Northwest Territories, always evokes mixed feelings among family members. Some see it as a welcome rest for their loved ones who have suffered prolonged illness. Others see it as a profound emptiness in their lives and families. When seniors fully enter long-term care, families are always open to whatever comes, whether death or partial recovery, which may not be the same as before. Families in the Northwest Territories of Canada who bring their aged parents to long-term care do so not to hasten their parents' deaths, but to ensure they are taken care of.

Wander B. (interviewed) said, “The reason we brought our mother to long-term care is for professionals to take care of her.” Frank H. (interviewed in 2026) points out that before bringing parents to long-term care in the Northwest Territories of Canada, the decision was a family one, not an individual one. He further adds that the family decision is not only about the children but

also about extended families. The perception of death remains unresolved, depending on the manner of dying and when death occurred. Brown Philips suggested that any death in long-term care leaves the family heartbroken and rejected, especially when the person is cherished and loved by all.

The style of death determines the core ideology of families of the deceased in long-term care. Families are always exposed to two types of dying in long-term care: natural death and supportive death using palliative methods. At this point, the act of a loved one dying becomes very challenging and emotionally traumatizing. Some people in the Northwest Territories of Canada find the act of sleeping and not waking up less painful, knowing fully that the deceased did not struggle so much before dying, which they appreciate so much. Supportive death using medical palliative care is very traumatizing and depressing, especially whenever they receive that information through what is called “Conference Meeting.” The word conference meeting is the medium used by Northwest Territories professionals in long-term care to inform the families of the client or resident whenever they have started approaching the end of life, with symptoms such as difficulty eating, urinating, or breathing; reduced socialization; feeling weak; and sleeping too much. When all these things are happening, it automatically becomes the moment to alert the family before the last stage of the palliative process is introduced. At this stage, the perception of death becomes horrifying, depressing, and full of regret. All these psychological effects do not mean that they are against the person dying, but rather that the thoughts of

knowing they are going to watch their loved ones die slowly become a problem. Joy Philip stated that the use of palliative care during the end of life in long-term care is not always like feeling the plug of death, as families assume, but is a way of assisting the dying not to be excessively in pain at that stage. This is always true medically, but the families fail to understand the acts of dying at that stage, thereby seeing death in long-term care as a punishment. The use of the word "punishment" here is because they are aware it will happen, and watch it happen.

Caregiver and Cultural Diversity in Touching the Dead Body in the NWT

When it comes to caregiving jobs, front-line workers are personal support workers or residential care aides, as used in the Northwest Territories of Canada. This group of healthcare workers serves as the voice for clients who are seriously ill and cannot speak out. They do so by observing changes in their skin color and in their inability to respond to social activities. This high level of training embedded in personal support workers serves as the compass that RNs and LPNs use to reach a final verdict when dealing with clients.

One challenging aspect these professionals face is the trauma of touching deceased clients, even after they have passed, simply because the job requires it. Akas Nicholas observed that when it comes to touching the deceased, everyone should always try to understand the cultural implications surrounding doing so and the aftermath. Kelly and Marcella (2015) maintained that when caregivers are exposed to touching deceased

clients or even preparing them to be moved to the morgue, management always fails to ask whether they are comfortable; rather, what they want is for the job to be done quickly, irrespective of cultural diversity.

Respecting cultural diversity always helps management understand the four stages of cultural diversity when it comes to touching the dead bodies of the client in long-term care.

1. **The Culture Aware:** The set of caregivers understands that dead bodies are not touched without performing the necessary cultural ritual of cleansing, no matter how Western ideology tries to make it look ordinary. But when examined from a cultural perspective, there are serious side effects, so they try to avoid touching or even claiming to be sick and walking home.
2. **The Cultural Unaware:** This group of caregivers does not understand the cultural implications of touching a dead body; to them, it is just a dead body. Maybe they have been influenced by Western ideology, which de-emphasizes cultural diversity or norms. Because their parents do not groom them, they cannot defend a culture they do not know.
3. **The Cultural Hearsay:** The set of caregivers is culturally confused. They are not aware of any cultural diversity beyond what they have heard on the radio or seen on television. They find it very difficult to identify with a particular cultural norm, belief, or ideology when it comes to touching the dead bodies in long-term care. Their major concern is getting the job done as directed

by management or floor supervisors; this group of caregivers frowns on discussing culture and on doing their jobs properly. Based on the group they belong to, they would like to listen just for the sake of it, and not much else.

4. **The Cultural Referrals:** This group of caregivers always refers back to a single cultural ideology when it comes to touching dead bodies. They will always say, depending on the culture, without taking a firm stand on where they belong. They act as cultural police when it comes to how cultures ought to be, especially when touching the dead bodies of clients who passed on in long-term care. They know cultural norms by association or reading, like cultural hearsay. They are the ones who always remind others to perform their cultural purification whenever they touch a dead body that is not a family member.

Managerial Mistakes When Managing Death and Grief among Personnel Support Workers in the Northwest Territories

Management is the heart of organizational processes in long-term care; it comprises trained registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, ensuring everything are managed effectively. They are responsible for training all staff in long-term care and ensuring they have the essential skills to care for seniors. But one thing they fail to do as part of the training is to help personal support workers manage their emotional grief and psychological semi-trauma whenever their clients die on their shifts. They are the ones who set them up, ready to be moved to the mortuary.

The language management understands that the job must be done. Doing the job is not the problem; how personal support workers feel after seeing clients die during their shifts matters a great deal. Steffox Katherine (2022) submitted that the major weakness of management in long-term care is the poor care of the emotional well-being of personal support workers, who are the frontline workers. She further added that many support personnel struggle to cope with the pain on their own without managerial support, which is unethical. Management should always seek to understand how personal support workers cope, especially when they encounter unexpected deaths during their shifts. The various core areas where managerial mistakes are made in long-term care in the North West Territories or any other long-term care in Canada are as follows:

1. **Psychic Evaluation:** The management of long-term care in the Northwest Territories, especially in Norman Wells, should always try to engage the personnel support workers who were on shift whenever someone dies to check that they are coping with the shock or grief of the death. They should not assume all is well, or they ought to know that death must occur once they are employees in long-term care. The essence of psychic evaluation is to understand the state of mind of those witnessing such a demise and how to help them recover.
2. **Cultural Awareness:** This is where management must always strive to understand and represent people's cultural beliefs regarding touching dead bodies, as cultural differences must be respected.

Knowing an individual's personal support worker's cultural beliefs helps determine whether they are not breaking cultural norms or engaging in unknown aftermath simply because they are being professional and dishonoring the cultural mythology.

3. **Fear Management:** Many personal support workers experience unwanted fear simply from seeing or touching the bodies of deceased clients in long-term care. This inability to manage fear has led some personal support workers to become depressed or to have difficulty sleeping at night, due to the sudden death of clients during their shifts. The ability to manage fear is not part of training during or after the hiring process.

What Is Death Among Indigenous People In Canada?

The Aboriginal people of Canada, like their counterparts in Africa, believed that death is not the end of life but a continuation of existence in an ancestral world, where the spirit lives on. They believed that when someone is about to die, that person is automatically regarded as one of the good spirits of their forefathers. When it comes to handling the deaths of their relatives in long-term care, they always believe that crying is judging the dead and accusing the creator of allowing the person to be created. The ideology of death among the Indigenous people of Canada makes ceremonial practices important, especially if the person has reached a certain age in life.

When their loved ones are about to die in long-term care, they are always prepared to witness the death and perform all other required ceremonial rituals. One might argue that the long-term care facility space might

be a limitation in performing such rituals when it comes to the dead bodies of these loved ones. But this is not a barrier, and the custodians of ritual rites, irrespective of gender, are always ready to perform the final ritual to allow the spirit of the dead a peaceful transition to the ancestral world. The indigenous people of Canada are known as the owners of the land, so both the land and the water are sacred to them, and the spirit of the dead can travel through either the land or the water once the ritual is performed.

During workshops or seminars, management should always ask this question about fear management and suggest coping strategies for those who find it difficult to manage fear. Management does not understand what happens when personal support workers are off duty and alone in their quiet moments; these fears do not go away so easily.

The Ritual Procedure for Respecting the Dead Body at the Long-Term Care NWT

The death of any loved one in long-term care is deeply painful, heartbreaking, and unbearable for the family. Families always feel empty whenever they lose loved ones in long-term care. Indigenous people of Canada, like other cultures in Africa and beyond, who respect the dead and their bodies, have an idealized way of honoring the bodies of their loved ones. They call it a ritual procedure because it is required; otherwise, the deceased cannot join the ancestral world peacefully. Any close relative of the deceased can perform the rites to ensure the spirit has a safe, decent journey. Some of the ritualized procedures are as powerful.

The Preparation ForThe Death

This is the height of everything in long-term care, the point at which both the personal support workers and the client's family (as addressed) are informed by the doctor that the client is approaching the end-of-life stage. They have developed the following signs: inability to move properly, inability to socialize properly, and fatigue. The doctor, through the long-term care supervisor, informed the caregiver of what was about to happen. The family members were also informed through a conference meeting about what was happening and when it would happen, including whether there was a possible date. At this point, the family is fully aware, which always evokes sadness.

There has been a situation where a doctor has given a date for the client's death. Some worked on the exact date, while others did not. Once the family members are aware that the client is coming soon, the first visitation will start. At this stage, people you have not seen or do not know who are related to the client who is about to die will start coming to the long-term care to see the client while alive, before they finally die.

Family members are to pay their last respects with kisses, kind words, and photos to preserve the person's memory upon their death. At this point, the indigenous people speak more of their indigenous language to the dying person for easier communication and understanding.

The Full Presence

This is the irony of presence in the life of a client who is about to die. The irony is that most people

coming to see the dying client might not have visited for the first time during their stay in long-term care in the Northwest Territories of Canada. Some believed that once they were being taken care of by the personal support worker in long-term care, everything was okay, and they didn't need regular visits, only calls. Some of the deceased children or extended families can stay about 10, 18, or 20 years without visiting long-term care to see their sick parent or relations, which might be totally different when compared with African or Indian ideology, where it is a must that the children or relatives of the deceased must be fully present from the beginning to the end. But in the Northwest Territories, the ideology of full presence begins with the person's death. Immediately, the children or the relatives will decide to stay with the dying client throughout the entire process. This is where you will see different forms of affection and attention to the dying person. When this full presence begins, the children or relatives of the person about to die in long-term care can stay days, weeks, or even months until the person finally takes the last breath. At this point of full presence, emotions are totally irresistible.

The Pastoral Visit

It is important to note that most Indigenous people in the Northwest Territories of Canada are devout Catholics; therefore, they place great importance on the Bible and the rosary. In long-term care, the sick always have other rosaries, a Bible, and a statue of Mother Teresa around them, before and during the dying process. During the pastoral visit, the Rev. Fr. will be

notified in the community about the dying person at the long-term care facility. The priest immediately visits the dying person to offer the final prayer and communion to those who can still receive it. Some of them, because of illness, cannot confess, but the priest, through prayer, forgives their sins.

The death

This is where the ritual begins immediately after the person's passing is announced. The members of the family will gather immediately to pay their last respects to the dead body, such as:

- a. **The Body Adjust:** This is where the family members adjust the body of the deceased as they wish. If the deceased died with the mouth or eyes open, or with legs bent, it is the duty of the family members to do the needful. They take their time while adjusting the body of the deceased, touching every part of the body. They have a worldview that properly aligns the body, helping the deceased associate with their forefathers in the ancestral world.
- b. **The Washing of the Body:** This is where the deceased's direct siblings use warm water and a clean white towel to wash the body of their loved one in long-term care. During this body-washing, only family members are allowed in the room. While the cleaning is underway, they offer prayers in their native language, telling the deceased that "they are washing the body just to make sure they arrive in the ancestral world looking clean and nice." The cleaning also symbolizes that "any burden the person died with is dropped in their room, so the person is

joining the ancestral world with a more relaxed mind.” The use of warm water is also symbolic because it helps relax the body. I believe that since the Northwest is very cold, the journey to the ancestral spirit might be cold as well, so the warm water will help keep the body warm throughout the journey.

- c. **Not Crying:** It is forbidden to cry in the room where the dead body is. The reason is that crying is seen as the living judging the person who has died. So, the family members and the children of the deceased always hold back their tears whenever paying their last respects to the dead. The spirit of the dead needs to ensure that family members are happy after the deceased joins the ancestral world. In other cultures, the ability to cry shows that one feels the pain, but to the indigenous people of Canada, not crying shows strength instead of weakness.
- d. **Three Days of Lighting a Candle:** According to the beliefs of Indigenous people of Canada, when a person dies, the children of the deceased must keep a candle lit so the spirit of the dead can see while traveling to the world of the dead. Christian B. (interviewed) said that the essence of the candle is to guide the spirits of the dead, not to disturb the living. It is believed that if the deceased is confused while traveling to the ancestral world, the candle helps. The lit candle also reminds the spirit of the dead that they don't belong in the world of the living again. The essence of lighting a candle for three days is that, for three days, the spirit of the deceased will be

completely confused about where to go, but the candle serves as a guide.

- e. **The Opening of the Windows:** Opening the windows when someone dies in long-term care is a significant ritual among Indigenous people in Canada. The purpose is to allow the spirit to leave the room peacefully, without obstruction. Opening the windows tells the spirit that the living are not keeping it from leaving the room. However, at times, long-term care facilities do not have open windows; the door can also be opened for the spirit to travel.
- f. **The Good Wish of the Living to the Spirit of the Dead:** It is believed that a few hours after a client dies, the client's spirit is released. The spirit of the deceased remains in the room. At that point, the living can make a good wish while the spirit is still in the room. The belief is that the spirit of the deceased will ensure such wishes manifest. It is believed that those who care for the deceased are blessed in everything they do.

Conclusion

Death in long-term care settings in the Northwest Territories is not solely a clinical event but a deeply cultural and spiritual process shaped by Indigenous cosmological beliefs. The ritual practices observed in this study show how families and communities actively guide the spirit of the deceased into the ancestral world. Through acts such as body cleansing, candle lighting, pastoral visitation, and ceremonial presence, death is transformed from a medical event into a meaningful cultural passage. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing Indigenous ritual traditions

within institutional healthcare settings. Long-term care environments must acknowledge that culturally embedded death practices remain essential for both the deceased's spiritual transition and the emotional well-being of families and caregivers. By documenting these practices, this study contributes to broader discussions in death studies and medical anthropology about the coexistence of traditional belief systems and modern healthcare institutions.

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GOVERNANCE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: SUPPORT FOR IGBO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

by

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Abstract

This paper argues that the centralised model of governance in the Catholic Church, rooted in medieval hierarchical structures and reinforced through centuries of institutional development, has systematically excluded Igbo women from meaningful participation in Church governance. Drawing on the Igbo Ohakrasi model of decentralised, participatory governance as an alternative framework, and engaging critically with Vatican II's ecclesiological reforms, this paper makes the case for a more inclusive governance model that honours the dignity, gifts and lived experience of Igbo women within the Catholic community in South-eastern Nigeria.

Key Concepts: *Vatican II Council, Centralised and decentralised governance, Igbo Ohakrasi women and Catholic Church.*

Introduction

This article examines the ecclesiological understanding of Catholic governance theologies, the clergy, the laity and the place of women in Catholic Church communities, particularly the Igbo women of South

Eastern Nigeria. It reviews the history of the centralised model of governance in the Catholic Church while alluding to the Vatican II appeal to modernity, showing how these have influenced governance. As power and authority is vested in the Clergy in the Catholic Church model of governance, the laity and particularly women's participation continue to draw a huge debate. The paper moves through a critical analysis of the Roman Pontiff and papal authority, the episcopate and presbyterate, lay participation, and the specific question of women and ordination, before drawing conclusions about the need for change in governance. Throughout, the Igbo Ohakrasi decentralised model is proposed as an alternative that more faithfully reflects both the early Church tradition of participatory hierarchy and the lived experience and dignity of Igbo women.

The Vatican II Council gives this study its context and background. As Cadorette (2009:126) noted, the Second Vatican Council succeeded on many scores, *producing a systematic explanation of the Catholic theology as well as reinvigorating the battered structures of the institutional church*. This council represented a period when Roman Catholic Church governance structures were widened to all who are called Catholics, opening new doors of participation for all her members including Igbo women.

By contrast, the Igbo Ohakrasi order represents a decentralised form of governance among the Igbo of South-eastern Nigeria. As Muo and Oghojafor (2012:160) note, this form has no centralised

concentration of power in the hands of one individual; rather, governance is organized in such a way as to involve most people to participate in governing activities within the community. Igbo women experience active participation in governance — in decision making, education, agriculture, trade and manufacture — through this decentralised system. Centralised forms of governance, by contrast, concentrate power in the hands of an individual or group over the majority, a pattern that defines most chiefdoms, kingdoms, and also the Roman Catholic Church (Cadorette, 2009:182). This pattern has denied Igbo women a place of practice and common experience in their faith communities.

Finally, *Ohakrasi* governance is defined as a theory and practice that implies society-centred ventures, programmes, and plans geared towards progress or common-development (Nwankwor, 2013:330). Iroegbu (1997:3) describes it as an ethical-political theory which is community-centred and capable of solving the long dilemma situation of African countries and indeed the whole lot of human society. In the Igbo system of governance, as Green (1964:133) observes: "...the entire group or population participate actively in the day to day running of life social affairs." As a participatory model, *Ohakrasi* is built on collaboration, inclusion, mutual respect and listening, empathy and shared ownership of decision making, which facilitates execution. In its root meaning, *Ohakrasi* reflects and demonstrates the rule by the people, assembly, society or community over themselves for their fundamental or basic wellbeing, which revolves around the common good and

development of Igbo communities. It is this model that provides the paper a ground of experiment of decentralised governance by which Igbo women are progressive and fully empowered.

A History of Centralised Model of Governance in the Catholic Church

The central aim and focus of Catholic Church governance is for the “good of souls” (Arrieta, 2000: xxv). Based on this definition, the Church’s organization must enrich and promote the human good. As an organized society, the Church’s governance is hierarchical in nature and is reserved for celibate male members who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders (Dupuis, 2001:345). The historical basis of the Church governance can be identified with 13th Century Western Europe where Church and state worked hand in hand. Cadorette (2009:87) describes this arrangement:

Church and state were like an elaborate wedding cake, the pope, bishop, priest made up the sacerdotium, or priestly caste, while the emperor, aristocracy, and their appointed administrator made up the principium, or ruling caste. At the bottom of this arrangement was an enormous mass of women and men whose lives and labor made this social order possible.

The Constantine period in the 4th century and the councils thereafter were mainly concerned with organizational issues and with growing a centralised model of governance within the Catholic Church.

Hornsby-Smith (2000:17) notes the tension evident in the Catholic Church's critical decision-making and institutional governance structures, arguing that:

...Vatican II represented a break with this pattern and the emergence of new patterns of authority at all levels in the Church from the collegiality of the bishops to the birth of bishops' conferences, diocesan pastoral councils and parish councils and the call to responsible participation by all the "people of God."

The centralisation of power in the Catholic Church has not been totally wrong. This practice has helped the Catholic Church to respond to some religious and social challenges of the 20th and 21st centuries, including the provision of leadership to the entire Christian world who look up to the Roman pontiff for direction on social and moral issues. The Vatican II provided a culture of contextual application to certain cultural, gender, sociological, political and language directives in the Church, but the insistence and resistance of the new order by the Roman Catholic hierarchy has not facilitated resolutions faster (Cadorette, 2009:182).

Uzukwu (1996) argues that it is not necessary for the church in Africa — specially the Igbo — to carry the burden of medieval Christianity, namely centralization. In line with the Vatican II documents and recommendations, Uzukwu (1996) deems that the adaptations of Catholic culture among the Igbo with regards to culture, use of language, gender participation and a host of other social issues have not been well

articulated owing to centralised governance of the Catholic Church. The mistake that ‘unity’ is ‘uniformity’ was planned and carefully carried out in the 11th century by Pope Gregory VII. Thus Uzukwu (1996:57) concludes:

...the Spanish liturgy ceased to exist. The West became simply Latin; the local bishop was gradually reduced to a representative of the Roman pope. Gradually also all the local churches became incorporated into the local church of Rome, so that the idea of multiplicity in the one church was totally lost. ...the West became one local community and lost the aspect of unity in plurality.

This complete centralization was transported all over the Catholic world including Africa and the Igbo. Uzukwu (1996:58) calls this “uniform ecclesiology” — a type that does not recognize the context, history, cultural experience or environment of its host. Such practice implicitly denied that Africa’s particular experience of the divine was authentic. As Uzukwu (1996:58) concludes: “...it is not surprising that in Africa we live in a church which is dependent at all levels and which is turned towards Rome – a church which, from the start, was ignorant of its autonomy as local church in the one church.” The enforcement of centralization within the Igbo community amounts to wiping away of Igbo history and experience, contradicting what the Igbo people stand for, particularly women.

The Roman Pontiff: A Brief Account of Papal Authority and Governance

The early Church indicates what Nichols (2004:111) called “Participatory Hierarchy.” Citing the principle of common discussion affirmed by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, Nichols (2004:118) notes that decisions were reached through debate:

They dealt with heresies and current problems by debate in common, since it was established as certain that when the disputed question is set out by each side in communal discussions, the light of truth drives out the shadow of lying. The truth cannot be made clear in any other way when there are debates about questions of faith, since everyone requires the assistance of his neighbour.

In the early Church, laypeople selected and elected their local bishops. Nichols (2004:118) cites Hippolytus writing in about 215: “Let the bishop be ordained being in all things without fault chosen by all the people.” The achievement of consensus or common agreement was a sign that the decision expressed the will of the Holy Spirit, not merely human will. All major early councils — 1st and 2nd Nicaea, 1st and 2nd Constantinople, and Chalcedon — took place in circumstances of dialogue and near consensus (Dupuis and Neuner, 2001:5; 99). Nichols (2004:116) shows Peter acting as spokesperson and facilitator of consensus, not as a hierarchical commander, through numerous New Testament instances (Matthew 10; Luke 9; John 17; Acts 1, 2, 6, 15; 1Cor. 12). Acts 15, the 1st Jerusalem Council, remains

the ideal of how issues ought to be handled in Church governance. No session of the faithful, whether ordained or lay, should be side-lined when there are serious issues of faith governance on the table.

The deviation from participatory hierarchy took effect in the reign of Pope Siricius (384–389). Nichols (2004:119) notes that it was in Siricius’ era that we find “...the commanding style of the imperial court. ...Before this, only synods could create new law in the Church. Now papal writings were placed de facto on the same level as synodal law.” Pope Leo the Great in the 5th century declared himself head of the whole church. Pope Gelasius (496) held that “the Roman See judges the whole church, but can itself be judged by no one.” By the 11th century, Pope Gregory VII’s reforms changed every view of the church. Nichols (2004:119), citing Yves Congar, notes this was the greatest change Catholic ecclesiology has ever known:

Ecclesiology changed from a conciliar mode to an imperial mode, in which the authority of the church derives from the pope, its head, who alone represents Christ on earth, and who has not only primacy, but jurisdiction over all other churches.

This command-hierarchy led to the 12th century Byzantine Schism and the 16th century Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther reacted against the papacy on governing issues including the sale of Indulgences. Three further epochs affected centralization: the French Revolution, Modernity, and the Vatican II Council.

The Effects of French Revolution

The French Revolution of 1789 was a defining moment in challenging Church domination and centralization. In 1789, Catholicism was the official religion of France. The French Catholic Church, known as the Gallican Church, recognised the authority of the pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church but had negotiated certain liberties that privileged the authority of the French monarch, giving it a distinct national identity characterised by considerable autonomy. France's population of 28 million was almost entirely Catholic, with Protestants and Jewish minorities denied full membership of the state (Betros, 2010:1). By 1794, France's churches and religious orders were closed and religious worship suppressed.

A watershed event in modern European history, the French Revolution that ended in the late 1790s with the ascent of Napoleon Bonaparte brought enormous pressure on the Catholic Church's authority, challenging it to reform in matters of domination of power and centralization. During this period, French citizens destroyed and redesigned their country's political landscape, uprooting centuries-old institutions such as absolute monarchy, headed by Louis XIV, and the ecclesiastical feudal system. The French Revolution was influenced by Enlightenment ideals, particularly the concepts of popular sovereignty and inalienable rights (Komanchak, 1997:357). The revolutionary period thus created the context in which the Catholic Church had to reckon with its own structures of authority and centralization in a rapidly changing world, a reckoning

that would continue to shape Catholic governance well into the modern era.

The Effect of Modernity on Church Governance

Modernity was a reaction against certain religious opinions and medieval practices. According to Berman (2010:16–35), it designates both a historical period and a collective of particular socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices that arose in post-medieval Europe. It also refers to the subjective or existential experience of the conditions these new approaches produced, and their on-going impact on human culture, institutions, and politics. Matunhu (2011:65), citing Hussain et al. (1981), notes that modernization is the movement of the mid-20th century rooted in capitalism which incorporates the full spectrum of the transition and drastic transformation that a traditional society has to undergo in order to become modern. Matunhu (2011:65), citing Coetzee et al. (2007), lists key characteristics of modernity including: readiness to accommodate transformation; continuous broadening of life experiences and receptiveness to new knowledge; continuous planning and calculability; high premium on technical skills; and changing attitudes to kinship, family roles, and the role of religion. Modernity has had a tremendous effect on the Catholic Church's domination of power and centralization of governance, challenging age-long institutions to reform in accordance with changing human culture and perceptions.

The Effect of Vatican II Council on Church Governance

The Vatican II Council (1963–1966) resulted from the expansion of the Church outside its local Roman circumstances into non-Western cultures. Both colonialism and World War II having taken their toll in the world, the council was to open a new door and window to let in some fresh air (John XXIII, 1963). Due to new cultures and societies that the Church had encountered through her missionary agents in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, a considerable change was being noted that slowly affected the nature of Catholicism. Having come to appreciate and accept that the church was now part of a pluralistic and secular world, John XXIII called for *aggiornamento*, or updating of the Church, convinced that honest conversation could end the “dialogue of the deaf” that had persisted since the Enlightenment and French Revolution, and letting go of the meaningless symbols of the church that no longer had anything to do with its core mission (Cadorette, 2009:197).

The Vatican II thereby decentralised Church governance to the level of local bishops’ territories. Pope S.J. (2004:7) notes that the Vatican II emphasis on the church as the “People of God” (LG.9–17) truly distinguished between the hierarchy and the laity at large, and its emphasis on collegiality among bishops and cooperation between clergy and laity corrected the centralizing emphasis of Vatican I. Pope S.J (2004:7) concludes:

...the image of “People of God” ...accented the inclusive character of the church, and particularly the significance of the laity within its life. This imagery not only acknowledges that the church includes all the people (and not just members of the hierarchy, as is often taken for granted when average Catholics refer to “the church”), but also emphasizes the universal equality of Christian dignity and discipleship. Correcting the older dualism that identifies the clergy with the church and the laity with temporal affairs, the Second Vatican Council taught that, in virtue of the sacrament of baptism, the entire People of God share a common call to holiness and responsibility for the church and the world.

The Episcopate: The Local Ordinary and Church Governance

The office of the bishop became fully established in the Western Church in the 3rd century when Cyprian held the office of bishop of Carthage in 248. The quick expansion of ecclesiastical structure and hierarchy came about owing to the conversion of Constantine the Roman emperor in the 4th century, affirming Christianity as an official religion. It was within this era, and the gradual but irreversible progression that followed, that the gap between the clergy — namely the bishop — and the laity widened further as Church structural hierarchy firmed. Up to the 4th century period, the laity was still involved in the selection of the clergy, therefore being part of the Church governance, before the centralization era

removed them from the picture (Cardman, 2004). The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1555; LG.20) describes the episcopate:

...amongst those various offices which have been exercised in the Church from the earliest times the chief place, according to the witness of tradition, is held by the function of those who, through their appointment to the dignity and responsibility of bishop, and in virtue consequently of the unbroken succession going back to the beginning, are regarded as transmitters of the apostolic line.

Though the Vatican II council reopened the door for the laity to be part of Church governance, the clergy continued to dominate Church power and authority, with episcopal consecration conferring the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders (LG.21; CCC.1557).

The Presbyter: The Local Priest and Church Governance

The clergy in the Catholic Church comprises three Orders — the episcopate, presbyter and diaconate — all gendered and conferred only on men, as the Church determines it is keeping to the tradition of Jesus and the apostles (Dupuis and Neuner, 2001:750, No:1752). In matters of governance, the priests and bishops govern by possessing the “power of jurisdiction” within the institutional Church as authorized by the Code of Canon Law (Pope S.J., 2004:4–5). These go through rigorous training of usually four to six years in seminaries. The function of the bishops’ ministry was handed over in

subordinate degree to priests “so that they might be appointed in the order of the priesthood and be co-workers of the Episcopal order for the proper fulfilment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ” (Presbyterorum Ordinis PO.2; CCC.1562). Priests depend on the bishops in the exercise of their proper power: the priest can only exercise his ministry in dependence on the bishop and in communion with him (LG.28; CCC.1567). More and more regulations encourage and strengthen centralization of power around the bishop, further separating the clergy from participatory service to the Gospel.

The deacons, mostly married, were slowly included in the Church’s governance to supply clergy to places where regular priests could not reach. Deacons are ordained not to priesthood but to a ministry of service in the liturgy, preaching and charity (Arrieta, 2000:13). Their tasks are carried out under the pastoral authority of their bishop and the presbyterate (CCC.1596, 1588; LG.29).

It is to the situation of ‘Clericalism’ that Groome (2004:200) accuses the Church of clerical colonization of the consciousness of the laity, thereby denying full and equal participation of the laity and particularly women.

The Participation of the Laity in Church Governance

According to the Vatican II Council, the term “laity” is understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders. The faithful in their own way, share in the

general priesthood, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, witnessing for Christ’s mission in the world and in the Church (LG.31). The laity as laymen and women are full members of the People of God through the sacraments of initiation and therefore share in the full mission of the church (LG.30–38). Pope S.J (2004:7), emphasizing Edward Schillebeeckx’s thought, acknowledges that by their baptism, the laity receives a share in the real function of the Church — “the charge to give visible stature to the faithful communion with Christ in grace, in and through their whole life.”

The CCC (911) notes the governance role the laity can play:

...lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this power (of governance) in accord with the norm of law. And so the Church provides for their presence at particular councils, diocesan synods, pastoral councils, the exercise in solidum of the pastoral care of a parish, collaboration in finance committees, and participation in ecclesiastical tribunals, etc.

Yet the emphasis on the laity’s task as “can cooperate” — not decisively a governing body — makes it difficult for the laity to be fully part of the organization and governing body of their Church. Indeed, the term “laity” in a rather critical understanding gives a description that has “disenfranchised” the ordinary populace or members of the Church, describing and denoting to the centralization of the Igbo Church governance around the

clergy, who are the “rulers” and “kings” of the same Church of God. This term has removed the ordinary persons in the Church far away from active participation and governance of the same institution owned by all who belong to the Church. Hornsby-Smith (2000:14), reiterating Collins (1997), notes how the gains of Vatican II are being resisted:

...Progressive theologians, such as Hans Kung, have been stripped of their official teaching roles, and progressive bishops, such as Helder Camara, have been replaced by conservative traditionalists. Indeed, the strategy of appointing conservative bishops throughout the world has been followed ruthlessly under the present papacy.

Pope S.J (2004:8) emphasizes that pastors should not lead their parishes as monarchs or treat their parishioners as children. Rather pastors should evoke and coordinate the talents, gifts, and ministries in their local churches so that “all may cooperate unanimously, each in his or her own way, in the common task.” Hornsby-Smith (2000:14) concludes: “...there are numerous instances of autocratic styles of leadership at the diocesan and parish levels, often without forms of due consultation which the rhetoric about collaborative ministries in the post-Vatican Church would lead one to expect.”

Uzukwu (1996:105) captures what the 1994 synod’s interventions indicate — the desire for a new kind of clergy:

What the interventions in the synod appear to indicate is the desire for a new kind of clergy, a new kind of ministry... “future priests” who will be true servants and animators of the Christian community. They want people who will be formed to work with and to recognize the laity as full members of the church...the laity do not simply want to observe what the clergy are doing; rather, they want to participate and make their contribution to the up-building of the church-community. ... “collaborative ministry” becomes essential...

The clergy dominated and centralised Igbo Church governance remains a huge challenge to the Igbo Ohakrasi decentralised system, which allows communities, particularly women, to participate actively in social life and organisation.

Women and Ordination in the Catholic Church

This paper argues that women as part of the laity in the Catholic Church have not been given the time and space to realize their full potential. This paper remains incomplete unless the double standard practised by the Catholic Church with regards to the full participation of women in governance is examined and discussed. The 21st century Feminist Movements have generated high interest and considerable sympathy, both in and outside the Catholic Church, on questions regarding women’s full participation in Church governance. The place and role of the faithful Catholic women in Church governance can no longer go unheard, displaced or be silenced. For this paper, concern on women’s place in

religious space becomes a ‘human right’ issue, especially when Igbo women in particular continue to experience discrimination in matters of governance in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church cannot continue to claim hesitancy about ordaining women based on a 1st century Jewish/Palestinian understanding, when traditional culture continues to renew itself as it comes in contact with new reality. The Vatican II Council in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) promotes an open culture where all will have a conducive space for cultural experience, concluding:

At present women are involved in nearly all spheres of life: they ought to be permitted to play their part fully according to their own particular nature. It is up to everyone to see to it that women’s specific and necessary participation in cultural life be acknowledged and fostered (GS.60).

The official stand of the Catholic Church on ordination is stated in the CCC (1577):

...only a baptised man validly receives sacred ordination. The Lord Jesus chose men to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ’s return. The Church recognises herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible (Canon Law, 1024; 1Tim 3:1–13).

John Paul II, through his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* of 1989 (CL.51), affirmed that:

...in speaking about participation in the apostolic mission of the Church, ...a woman is called to put to work in this apostolate the “gifts” which are properly hers: first of all, the gift that is her very dignity as a person exercised in word and testimony of life, gifts therefore, connected with her vocation as a woman.

John Paul II concluded, as cited by Dupuis and Neuner (2001:759), that “...in her participation in the life and mission of the Church a woman cannot receive the sacrament of Orders and therefore cannot fulfil the proper function of the ministerial priesthood.” In his Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994, 4), he declared that the Church does not possess in any way the faculty to confer priestly ordination on women, and that this ought to be considered as definitive by all the faithful.

Yet, as Uzukwu (1996:141) observes, life in a church developed in a ‘Semitic milieu’ was noted for looking down upon women, and for Jesus to have made any attempt to choose a woman as apostle would have amounted to a suicidal approach towards his full mission. The question that arises is: who are we reading in the Bible? And who wrote what we read about women’s place in the priestly ministry? The situation in which Jesus lived and worked cannot be underestimated in making a strong case in view. Hence, the contextual understanding around the case of Jesus’ choice of men as

Apostles could reflect the choice of men writing to soothe their ego in the domination of women. Moreover, Rakoczy (2004:202) applies three New Testament criteria for apostolic qualification — a person must have accompanied Jesus during his lifetime (Acts 1:21), must have seen the risen Jesus (1Cor.15:3–9), and must have been commissioned by Jesus (Gal 1:11–17) — noting clearly that Mary Magdalene fulfils all three conditions and therefore qualifies to be addressed as an apostle, thereby nullifying the argument that no woman was ever chosen as an apostle in Jesus’ tradition.

In modern Africa, women have generally exercised effective power in a corporate manner (Uzukwu, 1996:138). In modern times, the oppression and subjugation of women may have increased with colonialism but continues with the practice of mainline Christianity, which remains a Western cultural imposition. Recalling the aim of the synod Fathers of the 1994 Special Assembly for Africa, this paper would agree that a paradigm shift towards the inclusion of women in Church governance has become unavoidable. Women as part of the Church as family, should be encouraged to take their place and participate meaningfully in Church governance. This paper submits that given these clear evidences, no cogent reason should prevent women from being given equal chance to participate in the governance of the Catholic Church just as their male counterparts. The Christian faith is all-inclusive, embracing all her children to participate equally whether they are men or women. No one’s gender should exclude them from playing their God-

given role in the governance of the Church. The application of power to dominate by using male structures in the Catholic Church among the Igbo of South-eastern Nigeria is therefore challenged not only to include Igbo women in all ramifications of the Church's life but also to consider women as active partners in governance. The model of a listening church cannot continue indefinitely to exclude women. The Igbo Ohakrasi model offers a compelling alternative: a participatory, inclusive form of governance that the Catholic Church in Igbo South-eastern Nigeria can fruitfully engage.

Conclusion

Women have often been portrayed as people who depend on men for sustenance and directives. This paper has found that women are truly agents of leadership and change in the society. Igbo women contribute to the economic development of their society and, as shown in this research, have the ability to lead and contribute meaningfully, ensuring improved livelihoods. Women not only survive and struggle like their male counterparts, but also live purposeful lives while giving meaning to life through dignified and sustainable hard work. This paper has extensively traced the history of centralization as a major feature in the governance of the Catholic Church and how this has informed the Igbo land of South-eastern Nigerian Catholic Church in relation to women's participation. As power and authority is vested in and around the Clergy, the Igbo Ohakrasi women argue for full participation of all who belong to the Catholic Church.

The laity remains a valuable asset to the faith community with their gifts, talents and expertise. They should be encouraged to realize these in the Church family — not just for the laity, but for the entire Catholic Church to realize its full mission of salvation entrusted to all and not just to the ordained ministry. The Igbo Ohakrasi decentralised system of governance stands as a concrete, living alternative model of participatory governance that the Catholic Church in South-eastern Nigeria would do well to engage more deeply, rather than imposing a centralised uniformity that denies the indigenous history and experience of its people. The contemporary world has challenged ancient institutions like Catholicism to respect and acknowledge the place and role of all human beings, particularly Igbo women. Religion and its models of governance have gone beyond the limited parameters of Church buildings and praying chapels; hence the wider audience of Catholic Church governance cannot be neglected any longer by mere arguments of immemorial traditions. Change in the Catholic Church governance is now most imperative and inevitable.

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THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON CULTURAL PRESERVATION

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Abstract

Tourism has emerged as one of the most transformative forces in the modern world, reshaping not only economies but also the cultural landscapes of societies across the globe. As international tourist arrivals recovered to approximately 91 percent of pre-pandemic figures by the third quarter of 2023 (UNWTO, 2023), the relationship between tourism and cultural preservation has become a matter of profound and urgent significance. This article provides a comprehensive, critical, and multidimensional examination of that relationship, drawing on contemporary scholarly literature, empirical case studies, and international policy frameworks. The analysis explores tourism's dual role: as a vehicle for revitalising tangible and intangible heritage, generating economic incentives for conservation, and fostering cross-cultural understanding; and simultaneously as a force capable of commodifying, eroding, and displacing the very cultures it claims to celebrate. Emerging frameworks of sustainable tourism, community-based tourism (CBT), regenerative tourism, and digital heritage technologies are examined as means of reconciling tourism's economic imperatives with the preservation imperative. The article concludes that

tourism, when governed with cultural sensitivity, community agency, and institutional rigour, can be a powerful instrument of cultural preservation.

Keywords: cultural preservation, heritage tourism, sustainable tourism, cultural commodification, community-based tourism, over tourism, intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO.

Introduction

Culture constitutes the living memory of humanity — encompassing accumulated knowledge, beliefs, arts, customs, and transmitted values that define how communities understand themselves and their place in the world. Cultural heritage, both tangible (monuments, artifacts, architectural sites) and intangible (oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, traditional craftsmanship), form the irreplaceable foundation of human civilisation. Its preservation is not merely an aesthetic concern but a profound ethical and political imperative.

Tourism occupies a deeply ambivalent position in relation to this imperative. It can generate the economic resources, global visibility, and institutional attention that heritage sites and traditional communities require to survive in the modern world, while simultaneously enabling the commodification, physical degradation, and cultural displacement that pose existential threats to the very heritage that draws visitors. This paradox — that tourism can simultaneously preserve and destroy culture — lies at the heart of this article. The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily suspended global travel and, in

doing so, illuminated this contradiction: research in the Cook Islands found that indigenous communities experienced a resurgence of authentic cultural practice in the absence of tourists, raising profound questions about the relationship between tourism, authenticity, and cultural agency (Frontiers in Sustainable Tourism, 2024).

This article is organised to address the topic systematically. Following a theoretical framework, it examines the positive and negative impacts of tourism on cultural preservation, reviews sustainable and regenerative tourism frameworks, considers the role of digital technologies, analyses policy responses, and presents regional case study evidence before concluding with recommendations for policy and practice.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Cultural heritage is broadly defined by UNESCO (2003) to encompass both intangible heritage — oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, and traditional craftsmanship — and tangible heritage including movable artifacts, immovable monuments, and archaeological sites. In cultural studies, heritage is understood not as a static repository of the past but as an active, contested, and politically charged process of selection, interpretation, and representation (Smith, 2006, as cited in Flyen et al., 2023). Tourism intervenes in this process by shaping which aspects of culture are rendered visible, legible, and marketable to outsiders.

Cultural commodification — the transformation of cultural practices, artifacts, and identities into marketable

products for tourist consumption — is the central analytical concept through which scholars assess tourism's cultural impact. Cohen (2020) identifies a spectrum along which this occurs, from benign commercialisation that retains cultural authenticity to wholesale distortion in which practices are redesigned entirely as spectacles for tourist consumption. Closely related is Urry's (1990) concept of the 'tourist gaze,' which describes how tourism structures the perception of places and cultures, creating demand for exotic, authentic 'otherness' that the act of mass tourism ironically tends to destroy. Devkota et al. (2020) demonstrate how intensive tourist culture can drive westernisation in host communities, fundamentally altering social norms, while Fan et al. (2020) document the dilemma facing indigenous groups who must choose between culturally erosive engagement with tourism and economically costly rejection of it. The normative framework of sustainable development — particularly UN SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) — provides the policy context within which these tensions are addressed internationally.

Positive Impacts of Tourism On Cultural Preservation

Economic Incentives for Heritage Conservation

Tourism's most immediate positive contribution to cultural preservation is the economic revenue it generates for heritage sites and institutions. When appropriately managed, tourism creates a compelling economic rationale for preserving cultural heritage that

might otherwise be demolished or left to decay under development pressure. UNESCO's World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme explicitly integrates heritage conservation with tourism planning, directing tourism revenues into restoration and maintenance (UNESCO, 2021). The designation of UNESCO World Heritage Sites — expanded in 2023 to 1,199 properties across 168 countries — reliably generates significant increases in international visitation, channeling funding towards conservation (Grand View Research, 2024).

Revitalisation of Intangible Heritage and Community Empowerment

Tourism can also revitalise intangible cultural heritage by creating economic demand and social recognition for traditional music, dance, cuisine, craftsmanship, and ceremonial practices. Research by Kostopoulou et al. (2021) on Silk Road heritage branding demonstrates how tourism narratives can rescue neglected regional heritage by positioning it as a premium product. In China, the coupling coordination between intangible cultural heritage and tourism development showed a sustained positive trend over the decade to 2022, suggesting that policy-enabled integration can support simultaneous advances in both domains (Nature, 2024). Community-based approaches amplify these benefits: research by Kim et al. (2023) demonstrates that community-developed tourism strengthens social cohesion and cultural identity, while UNESCO's micro-grants programme in Cameroon — awarding \$40,000 to support 160 community members in arts training, traditional knowledge transfer, and sustainable enterprise

— provides a concrete model of tourism-driven cultural empowerment (UNESCO, 2024).

Cross-Cultural Understanding and Digital Preservation

Heritage tourism fosters cross-cultural empathy and serves important diplomatic functions, functioning as a bridge for intercultural exchange in inbound tourism (Yue, 2024). The growth of digital heritage technologies — VR, AR, and AI platforms — driven in part by tourism's commercial imperatives, has generated powerful new tools for documenting and disseminating cultural heritage. Science Direct (2025) identifies VR as playing a pivotal role in revolutionising cultural preservation by offering immersive experiences that reduce physical visitation pressure on fragile sites. In 2024, Tencent's virtual reconstruction of Beijing's Central Axis, coinciding with its UNESCO designation, demonstrated the potential of integrating digital heritage technology with formal conservation (Grand View Research, 2024)

Negative Impacts Of Tourism On Cultural Preservation

Cultural Commoditization and Loss of Authenticity

The commodification of culture for mass tourist consumption is among the most pervasive threats to authentic cultural preservation. When cultural practices are repackaged as tourist attractions, they are frequently simplified, sanitised, or exoticised to meet tourist expectations, eroding the depth and meaning they hold for their originating communities. As Nurhadi et al. (2022) document in their study of the Osing community

in Indonesia, this commodification involves an ethical transition in which original cultural meanings are displaced by commercial entertainment. Religious and sacred practices are especially vulnerable: research on indigenous communities in Chiang Mai, Thailand, illustrates how tourist demand can compel communities to reconstruct their ethnicity as palatably as possible for visitors, stripping ceremonies of their sacred character (Chai Lai Orchid, 2021). The souvenir industry compounds this problem: commercial pressures drive mass-manufactured copies of traditional craftsmanship that undermine living artisanal traditions while deceiving consumers into believing they are acquiring authentic cultural products (Sustainability, 2024).

Overtourism and Physical Degradation of Heritage

Overtourism — the overwhelming of destinations by visitor numbers that exceed their carrying capacity — causes direct physical damage to heritage sites through erosion, structural destabilisation, and pollution, and generates indirect harm through pressure on surrounding environments and communities. Flyen et al. (2023) demonstrate that even remote High Arctic heritage sites in Svalbard are not immune from tourist-driven degradation. In Bali, rapid international tourism growth has led to the erosion of traditional practices, the commercialisation of sacred ceremonies, and the displacement of local communities, producing what researchers describe as a profound crisis of cultural identity (Acadlore, 2024). Overtourism also inflates housing costs, homogenises commercial environments,

and disrupts the social fabric within which cultural traditions are sustained and transmitted.

Indigenous Displacement and the Demonstration Effect

Indigenous communities are disproportionately harmed by tourism's negative impacts. Tourism development frequently encroaches upon indigenous territories, disrupting traditional land use and severing the ecological relationships through which cultural identities are sustained. As Cultural Survival (2022) documents, tourism often encourages the exploitation of indigenous lands as tourist destinations in ways that ignore indigenous governance systems. The pandemic research from the Cook Islands, cited above, underscores how tourism can fundamentally alter the internal cultural dynamics of indigenous communities in ways that are difficult to reverse. Coleman (2021) advocates for frameworks grounded in the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) to enable respectful and reciprocal engagement between indigenous communities and the tourism industry. Beyond indigenous communities, Devkota et al. (2020) identify the 'demonstration effect' — the adoption by local residents of tourists' behaviours and values — as a driver of cultural homogenisation that gradually replaces distinctive local cultures with globally standardised tourist products. In the Global South, heritage-rich countries such as Nigeria face compound disadvantage: Old Oyo town exemplifies the advanced neglect of heritage resources when preservation investment, contingent on tourism revenues that have not

materialised, is absent (Tandfonline, 2023). As of 2022, UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger contained 52 properties, with the greatest concentrations in Africa and the Middle East (UNESCO, 2022).

Sustainable, Community-Based, and Regenerative Tourism

Sustainable tourism — defined as tourism that addresses the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs — provides the primary normative framework within which the tourism–preservation tension is addressed. Rustini et al. (2022) emphasise that community involvement at every stage of tourism development is essential to sustainable outcomes, while Fatina et al. (2023) demonstrate that properly coordinated multi-stakeholder participation can deliver simultaneously positive economic, social, and cultural results, as evidenced in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia. Community-based tourism (CBT) represents the most promising practical approach, giving communities control over how their cultural heritage is presented and monetised. Research by Lopez-Guzman et al. (2022) documents CBT's multiple benefits: strengthening social cohesion, empowering women and youth, and creating economic incentives for the continuation of traditional practices. The Guna people of Panama's indigenous-led tourism governance system — codified in their Statute of Guna Tourism — provide a globally cited model of community-controlled cultural tourism. Research from Lithuania (MDPI, 2025) confirms that CBT initiatives effectively preserve cultural heritage and stimulate local

economies, though funding gaps, regulatory barriers, and stakeholder conflicts require formal organisational structures to overcome.

Regenerative tourism goes further, aspiring to actively restore and renew the cultural and ecological systems it engages rather than merely minimising damage (Ateljevic, 2020). New Zealand's Tiaki Promise, a nationwide initiative engaging tourists, locals, operators, and government in the stewardship of Aotearoa's natural and cultural heritage, demonstrates regenerative principles at a national scale, promoting eco-friendly practices, supporting local artisans, and preserving traditional Māori practices (Carr & Slevitch, 2023). Carr and Slevitch (2023) argue that this regenerative paradigm requires a fundamental reorientation of tourism's relationship to culture: from extraction to stewardship, from consumption to creation.

Policy Frameworks and Institutional Responses

UNESCO's World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme (WH+ST) represent the most comprehensive international policy framework for the relationship between heritage tourism and cultural preservation. It integrates planning for tourism and heritage management at the destination level, ensuring that cultural assets are valued and protected while appropriate tourism is developed. Its UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators framework enables States Parties to monitor and report on the sustainability of tourism at World Heritage properties (UNESCO, 2025). The 46th session of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi (2024)

deepened this agenda by foregrounding indigenous rights and the principle of FPIC in heritage governance, reflecting a significant normative development in international heritage management (UNESCO, 2025).

At the national level, Fan (2022) documents how China's integration of culture and tourism as a strategic development objective has reshaped the tourism industry's development philosophy towards the protection and inheritance of local culture, with government investment in cultural and tourism bonds demonstrating positive driving effects on regional industry structures. In heritage-rich developing countries, effective policy must integrate conservation, community engagement, tourism development, and skills training in a coherent framework. The ICOMOS Charter for Cultural Tourism and the UNWTO's Tourism and Culture Synergies framework provide the overarching international normative environment within which national policies are situated.

Regional Case Study Evidence

Africa's cultural heritage tourism exemplifies both the potential and the challenges of the tourism–preservation relationship. Cameroon's UNESCO micro-grants programme demonstrates that community-centred, institutionally supported approaches can catalyse authentic cultural tourism development in resource-constrained environments (UNESCO, 2024), while Nigeria's Old Oyo town illustrates the devastating consequences of heritage neglect when preservation investment fails to materialise (Tandfonline, 2023).

In Asia, China's managed integration of intangible cultural heritage and tourism development has yielded sustained positive results at the provincial level (Nature, 2024), contrasting sharply with Bali's experience of cultural crisis driven by unmanaged mass tourism (Acadlore, 2024). The Pacific offers instructive indigenous case studies in both directions: the Cook Islands' pandemic-era research documents tourism's erosive effects on cultural agency (Frontiers in Sustainable Tourism, 2024), while New Zealand's Tiaki Promise and the Guna people of Panama demonstrate that indigenous communities can exercise meaningful cultural agency within the tourism system when provided with adequate legal protections and institutional support.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This article has argued that tourism is inherently neither preservative nor inherently destructive of cultural heritage: its impact depends entirely on the governance structures within which it operates, the degree of community agency it enables, and the normative frameworks that guide its development. When tourism generates sustainable economic incentives for heritage maintenance, revitalises intangible practices through demand and recognition, empowers communities to manage their own cultural resources, and operates within robust institutional frameworks, it can be a powerful preservation force. When it commodifies culture for mass consumption, overwhelms heritage sites through over tourism, displaces indigenous communities, or

drives cultural homogenisation through the demonstration effect, it becomes a force of destruction.

The following recommendations are grounded in the evidence reviewed. First, community-centred governance — with FPIC systematically applied in all contexts involving indigenous communities — must be placed at the heart of cultural heritage tourism policy. Second, scientifically assessed carrying capacity limits must be rigorously enforced at heritage sites using digital visitor management tools and visitor dispersal strategies. Third, the economic benefits of heritage tourism must be equitably distributed through regulatory frameworks that prioritise local employment and reinvestment of revenues in community welfare and cultural preservation. Fourth, investment in VR, AR, and AI-powered digital heritage technologies must be significantly expanded as tools of cultural documentation and immersive heritage experience. Fifth, regenerative tourism principles should be systematically integrated into heritage governance at national and international levels, moving beyond harm minimisation to active cultural revitalisation. Sixth, UNESCO and the UNWTO must strengthen support for heritage management capacity in the Global South, where the gap between cultural heritage abundance and institutional preservation capacity is most acute.

Future research should pursue longitudinal study of digital heritage technologies' long-term impacts on physical visitation and authenticity; comparative empirical analysis of governance structures and heritage

outcomes across cultural contexts; and the scalability of CBT without loss of community-centred character. Most critically, future scholarship must prioritise the epistemological contributions of indigenous communities and Global South cultures that have historically been marginalized in both academic research and international policy debates. The imperative to develop tourism models that actively support cultural preservation, rather than undermine it, has never been more urgent.

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**DEPICTION OF HARD LABOUR AND
VIOLENCE AGAINST A CHILD IN SELECTED
YORUBA NOVELS**

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Abstract

This paper examines the recurring issue of hard labour and violence against a child in the Nigerian society drawing evidences from the Yoruba novelists' perspectives and societal experiences. Although there are existing studies on various forms of violence in the society even against children, yet there is still need for a research on how various forms of violence against children have been depicted in Yorùbá novels, causes of these violence and preventive measures suggested by the novelists, to eradicate or reduce to minimal level in the society. This is the focus of this paper. Six Yorùbá Novels were purposively selected that depict one form of violence or another against a child, relating to the current happenings in the Nigerian society. Attachment theory was used to validate the findings of this research. Three major forms of violence against a child were identified: physical, sexual, and psychological violence. This

violence was then reflected in forms of beating a child, child hard labour, prevention from education, child hawking during school hours, emotional manipulation, and rape. The research discovers that the main perpetrators of child violence are mostly adults who have attached themselves to the child as sole provider or caregiver. In conclusion, the paper, as suggested by the novelists, submits that there is an urgent need for continuous counseling of children, parents and the society at large on the issue of violence against children about the provision of the Nigerian child Act of 2003 for the protection of each child. There is also a need of a grave punishment for pedophiles beyond prison sentencing but should be incarcerated immediately.

Keywords: Child, violence, mirror image, Attachment theory, Yoruba Novels

Introduction

A child according to the Nigerian constitution is anyone below the age of 18. This implies that age 0 to 17 is considered a minor or child in the Nigerian society. This set of people is believed to be under the care of a parent or caregivers. Violence is defined as a way of inflicting harm or danger to a person that can cause injury, death, underdevelopment or deprivation (WHO). Hence, child violence is defined as a process of intentionally causing harm, danger or even death to a child which may lead to physical, social, psychological or sexual assault.

The concept of violence is not just pertaining to children alone; it can be among the adults as well. However, the focus of this paper is on violence where the child is a

victim and adult or older persons are the perpetrators of the assaults. The Nigerian society is on daily bases, growing with high rates of violence of all forms against children. This inhumane act has been captured by Nigerian literary writers in their works including Yoruba Novels. The forms, consequences and preventive measures are likewise discussed. The six purposively selected novels are *Kádàrá àti Ègbón Rẹ* by *J.F Odúnjọ* and *A.B Oládipúpò, Iyán Ogún Odún* by *Olúfúnmilólá Akinodé, Odún Á yako?* by *Nikè Adésànyà, Iná Ayé, Sisi Olóbi,* and *Şé Dandan ni?* by *Fadékẹmi Adágbádá.*

The Yoruba Worldview and Concept of Violence against Child

Procreation is a feature of all living creatures in general including human beings. Thus, it is believed that the purpose of the creation of both sexes by the creator is for reproduction. The two universally accepted holy books (Bible and Quran). This is established in Genesis 1: 28, the Creator commands the man and woman he created to be fruitful and multiply. And Quran 18: 46 supports the same claim that "children are the adornment of life". In essence, children became an important entity of any union either legal or traditional between a man and a woman. Albeit, it will be an overgeneralisation to say that children is highly valued by all human culture.

From the African point of view, children are highly valued. Africans believed that the purpose of marriage is to reproduce children. They are of the view that the main reason, if not justification, for polygamy and other forms

of marriage which may be considered more or less strange from the perspective of other cultures are children (Tangwa, 2002). Conversely, childlessness remains one of the main causes of divorce in Africa, as a childless marriage is considered equivalent to no marriage at all. Tangwa reiterate further that, the idea of an illegitimate child or bastard is not applicable in traditional Africa because of the high value they place on children. He gave a vivid instance of his illustration from a Cameroon practice;

In Cameroon, it is very common for the parents of a girl who is approaching her thirties as a childless spinster to urge her to try and get a child by all means “before it becomes too late” if after words she finds a husband, her parents are usually only too happy to keep her premarital child, who often in any case, bears the father’s name.

In the same vein, Yorùbá society as a part of Africa, holds children in great value. A child is very essential in a Yorùbá family. This is evident in the names they give to their children such as *Ọmọboríowó* (child is beyond money), *Ọmọgoróplá* (child is above wealth); *Ọmọlayọ* (child equals joy), *Ọmọladùn* (child equals pleasure); *ỌmoniẸ* (child equals honour), *Ọmọlẹyẹ* (child equals dignity), etc. This shows that a child is valued more than any materialistic possession, be it money, jewelries, or wealth. They believe that the child is a source of joy, happiness, dignity and recognition to the family. In like manner, the Yorùbá have established their views about the child in their oral genres, specifically we shall

examined it from some Ifá verses, proverbs, aphorism, and Èkún iyàwó.

Yorùbá society sees children as replacement or better put successor after them. This they say;

omọ ẹni ní ń ṣelédè léyìn ẹni/ omọ ẹni níí wolé deni.

one's child is his representative in his absence.

This means that, it is ones child that looks after the house when one is dead. They tend to compare this to when a plant or tree falls and another of its kind spring up, *bógèdè bá kú, a fọmọ rẹ rọpò*. When a plantain's tree dies another young one springs up. This reveals the high esteem in which this society takes children. This can also be affirmed in the prayer they pray for a new wife on her journey to her husband's house.

The concept of Violence against A child

The concept of violence against a child which can also be referred to as 'child abuse' according to Dorothy (2008) could be traced to post world war 11 experiences of the 1940s. Scholars try to define child abuse from their various fields of studies, which include psychology, education, social workers, health education, law enforcement and psychiatrics. Chase (1976), a psychologist, defines child abuse as the deliberate and willful injury on a child by a guardian, either by hitting, beating, slamming against the wall, burning with cigarettes, scalding with hot water, locking in a dungeon, torturing, sexual abuse and even killing. This involves active and hostile aggressive treatment, lack of care and interest. It is believed by some scholars that the child

forms a story of emotional attachment to his parents and others who contribute to his/her physical and psychological comfort. However, once this comfort has been removed from the child, then it means the child has been abused as asserted by attachment theory. Ajuwọn and Ojie (2014) who are educators also define child abuse as synonymous with negative, excessive, or over usage of something, in this sense the child. They further explain the Yoruba means of abusing children by establishing the fact that a child to some extent in cultural perspective is a bonafide property of the parents, and if this view holds, it literally means the parent can do anything to their property either positively or negatively without anyone questioning them for it.

According to Kalu (1996) an educator also sees, violence against a child as an act of omission or commission that denies a child of basic rights to healthy development physically and socially. Violence against a child is also defined as physical or psychological maltreatment of a child by his/her parents is it fosters parents, guardians, relatives or other adults. From an educator point of view, Alekseeva (2007), as cited in Dryden (2009), also stated that adults are responsible for any form of child abuse that children encounter;

Children make up the segment of society that is the most defenseless, vulnerable, and completely dependent on adults. It is the fault of adults when children end up in areas of natural disasters and catastrophes or zones of military combat operation and become the hostages and victims of physical, sexual, and emotional violence

The International Labour Organisation (1999) looks at the different social malady of violence as it has taken different forms, from child slavery, forced labour, child trafficking, debt bondage, prostitution, child battering, and other forms hazardous and exploitative work. When the fundamental human right of a child is tampered with, it can also be seen as violence against a child.

World Health Organisation (1999) postulates that child abuse or maltreatment as constituting all forms of physical or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power. From the foregoing definitions of violence against a child, we can rightly submit that children are mostly abused by people who are basically their caregiver and who the children totally rely on. Joyce (2009) also gave a vivid and elucidating definition of child abuse, as;

Any inflicting of serious physical injury upon a child by persons other than accidental happening, suffering harm by reason of neglect, sexual abuse, and malnutrition, exposure to physical, mental, spiritual. Psychological and emotional torture which could be prevented is child abuse.

Notably, as most of the definitions above indicated, children are mostly abused physically, sexually or psychologically by their parents or caregivers. There is also a consensus that child abuse is not an accidental act

but an intentional one. There are overlapping in the different forms of child abuse cited above by scholars and organisations. They could however be summarized into the following types; sexual violence, psychological violence, social violence, and child labour. It has been discovered that there is always an issue of child abuse on daily news reported in Nigeria.

Child sexual harassment and child trafficking is the most common of them. The situation has reached an alarming state that needs an immediate intervention as stated by the chairman of Nigerians in Diaspora, Abike Dabiri-Erewa, that over 7,000 women and children are involved in trafficking to Libya only (2025 Report). This is not including to other part of the world like the America and Europe. It is not only in the media that the issue of abuse has been recognised but Yoruba literary artists being the watchmen of the society, have also observed these various forms of violence against children in their works.

Adunmo (2012) identifies the societal class below poverty line as those among whom child abuse is more common than any other. He debunks the popular assertion that people who abuse their children are probably suffering from mental disorders. He opines that children abusers suffering mental illness are as fewer as just 10% of total abusers. To him, violence or abuse against child is a result of a complex combination of personal, social and cultural factors, which he tried to group under four categories; intergenerational transmissions of violence; social stress; social isolation

and low involvement in community development; and unequal family structure.

Oyèdèjì (1999) applauds of Adunmo's (2012) claim that child abuse may be as a result of response to the economic stress in the family, desire to satisfy or boost one's ego, lack of knowledge on effective method of child control, transferred aggression, bad cultural practices, sheer hatred and jealousy, anxiety and response to various societal forces. He also stated that child abuse as evident in Yorùbá literary works, have created implications on the society at large and bad effect on the victims.

Having gone through some of the previous works on violence against children in the Yorùbá society, Nigeria and the world as a whole, the momentum gathered will help in this paper to channel our work towards a meaningful direction, to be able to identify and discuss meaningful different types of the abuses in the selected novels.

Attachment Theory

One of the theories useful in explaining certain aspects of child abuse is the attachment theory. Through attachment theory tries to explain the importance and significance of a well-bound attachment between a caregiver (parents or guidance) and a child. The theory emphasises deep and enduring emotional bounds that connect one person to another across time and space. It is a psychological, evolutionary and ethnological theory concerning the relationships between human beings which were

formulated by a psychiatrist and psychologist John Bowlby in 1963. The core principle of the theory is that a young child needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for social and emotional development to live normally. The attachment theory further explains that if a child lacks the necessarily required attachment from his/her caregivers, his/her subsequent development will be endangered.

Attachment theory in psychology originates with the seminal work of John Bowlby (1958). In the 1930's John Bowlby worked as a psychiatrist in a child guidance clinic in London, where he treated many emotionally disturbed children. This motivated or instigated his propagation of attachment theory. His experience leads him to consider the importance of the child's relationship with their mother especially in terms of their social, emotional and cognitive development. Bowlby (1958) propped that attachment can be understood within an evolutionary context in that caregiver provides safety and security for a child.

This research adopts the concept of attachment to underscore the fact that most of the time; lack of closeness and due attention to a child can be regarded as an abuse in itself which gives room for other types of violence which make negative impacts on the child. In another word, while the child completely rely upon and trust his/her caregiver for maximum safety, not taken seriously, rather it is betrayed and this finally leads to an emotional effect on the child. Hence, a child can be abused through neglect or lack of attachment from

his/her parents/ caregivers. In a subsequent analysis, we shall analyse how the lack of necessary bond between a child and his/her caregiver leads to abuse and finally gave consequence on the growth and wellbeing of the child. The advantage a person can take on a child because of how the child has attached him/herself to the caregiver or adult can leads to various forms of violence as it shall soon be revealed in the cause of the finding from the selected novels.

Depiction of Hard Labour and Violence Against a Child

Child Hard Labour

Child hard labour is one of the major ways in which a child can be abused. According to child right constitution of Nigeria, every child is expected to be in school at their tender age. Therefore any altering to this right of children is a violation of their rights. Inasmuch as when a child is expected to be in school but found doing other things like working, selling, being used for hard work as a means of self-survival, then his/her right has been infringed on. African novelists have portrayed this form of abuse in the work, for instance, Adésànyà portrayed this in "Ọdún Á Yako?" where, Asíndemádé gave four of her daughters to a friend to take them to town, to be used as house helps and after a while learning a trade. And their father was collecting the money from the girls' slavery.

Àwọn ègbón Róláyò mérin tí wọn ti parí ẹkọ
alákòòbèrè sáájú rẹ ní wọn í kúrò ní ilú
Ayégbẹgẹ lọ sí ilú òkèèrè. Bàbá wọn yònda
wọn fún àwọn ọrẹ ẹ rẹ pèlú àdéhùn pé wọn

yòò wá iṣẹ̀ kọ̀ léyìn ìgbà diẹ̀ tí wọn ti ẹ̀ iṣẹ̀
omọ̀ ọ̀dò." ("Ọ̀dún Á Yako? Pp.13)

Four of Róláyò's elder one who had finished primary school before her have left Ayégbẹ́gẹ́ village for the city. Their father released them to his friends with the agreement that they will learn a hand work after serving as a maid for some time.

This is a serious violence against children, as their parents see them as a form of business or commodity that they could exchange for money. In the Nigerian society today, parents have turned their child (ren)/ward to a source of financial way out from poverty. The sole responsibility of a parent to provide for the child has been shifted to the children. Children are not just been use as inter-tribal slaves or house helps but it has been an international trade where children are sent has far as Libya as house helps so that they can send the profit from it to their parents at home. In fact, the chairman of Nigerian in Diaspora, Abike Dabiri-Erewa gave a recent report of house children especially girls are stuck in Libya after being maltreated by the agent that took them there and wanted to come back home desperately. She stated that over 7,000 children are women are involved in slavery in Libya alone. This she called 'Modern slavery'.

Prevention for Education

Education is a very important aspect of child development by the parent, and the father especially is meant to be responsible for all the academic need of the child, as the financial head of his family. According to

the Nigeria children Act, a section of the Nigeria fundamental human Act, in subsection seven. It is stated that; "... the child is entitled to receive education. Which will promote his general culture and enable him/her on a basis of equal opportunity..." but as reflected by Yorùbá novelists, parents tend to deny their children especially the female children of this right. Some of these are portrayed in the novels. For instance, in "Şé Dandan ni?" Adágbádá portrayed Adélaní as one of those Yorùbá fathers who refuse to send their children especially the female ones to school, on the ground that they are female, with no profit afterall.

Bàbá yín kúkú ti ní ilèèwé girama tí mo fí ó sí kò kan òun, ó ti ní kí o lọ kòşé..." (Pp.44)

Your father had avouched that he is less concern with your enrolment in Grammar School, he said you should go and learn a trade...

In the same vein, it was also reflected in "Ọdún Á Yakọ? Which described how Asíndemádé refused to send all his female children to pass primary school, claiming that it is a waste of resources.

Mo ti wí fún ọ tẹlẹ pé èmi kọ ni yóò şe àşedànù, tí n ó tọ ọmọbìnrin ní ilé-ìwé.

...layé nń kọ? Kòsı lámọ̀n şe lẹfọ́ ebòlò, yóò rùngbé kánhìn náà ni. Tàbí taa ni o fẹ fí tirẹ jọ? Bóbìnrin bá ka m̀titi, ilé idáná ọkùnrin kan ni yóò parí i rẹ sí. ("Ọdún Á Yakọ? Pp.12)

Initially, I have told you that I will not labour in vain, for me to educate a female child.

... not in this world? A leopard will never change his spot. Or whom to do want to take after? If a female child is given all the due education, she will definitely end it up in one man's kitchen.

This denial of education ends up turning these children to street hawking or other unhealthy activities in the society. When a child is denied access to education at a tender age that his/ her brain is till eager to learn about any or everything around, such child will satisfy his curiosity with things really available and polluted in the society. Some of these children make end up as street hawkers or street boys and girls.

Hawking during school hour

Under the child's rights as listed in the fundamental human rights constitution of Nigeria, a child has right and privilege to nine years of primary education which should be free. In essence, no parents should prevent or obstruct this government plan for the child. The moment a parent obliges against this child education right then such a child has been denied of his/her education right. Some parents/caregivers instead of allowing their child/ward to benefit from the government millennium goal of free education to all children in irrespective of race or gender or colour, they use the child also as a means of providing for the family. Some of these children are what are seen on the major roads, corners,

market or streets hawking all manner of things at a very tender age. This atrocity committed by parents is what Yoruba novelists have described or reflected in their works. As portrayed by Adésànyà in "Oḍún Á Yakò?" Róláyò was exposed to hawking bread at a very tender age of ten when most of her age mates wake up in the morning and go to school, she instead wakes up to go to the bread factory to collect bread she will hawk for the day. Though, she was forced to make this decision after her father refused to send her to school and she was asked to choose a trade.

Ní àfẹ̀mójúmọ̀, iṣẹ̀ búrẹ̀dì kíkiri ni Róláyò sọ fún bàbá rẹ̀ pé òun yóò máa ṣe. Róláyò tí ó fí diẹ̀ lé ní ọ̀mọ ọ̀dún mẹ̀wàá pa orúkọ dà ní àdúgbò, ó di ọ̀dọ̀mọ̀dé oníbúrẹ̀dì. Róláyò, ẹ̀ni tí ó fẹ̀ràn láti lọ sí ilé-ìwé, bá ara rẹ̀ ní ìdí ọ̀jà títa lápà̀ndodo láàárọ̀ kùtù ayé rẹ̀." (Oḍún Á Yakò? Pp. 14)

At dawn, Róláyò told her father that she will engage in hawking of bread. Róláyò who is ten years plus change her name in the neighbourhood, she turns a small child who sells bread. Róláyò, who loves to go to school, finds herself in the compulsory selling of bread at her preliminary stage.

This above excerpt reveals that this young girl whom the author has described as a very brilliant student while she was still in primary school would love to further her education but she was denied by her father. Instead, she was turned into a money-making machine to be responsible for her family at a tender age of ten. This

behaviour was warranted because Róláyo's father believed that only a male child needs education. Though, this believe that a girl child should not be educated is gradually fading off among the Yoruba tribes but it is still very prominence and other major tribes in Nigeria. There was a report and plead by an Instagram user on May 18, 2026, requesting for support for some children he is schooling for free that the community wants to give their hands out in marriage to older adults. She pleads for aids so that he can continue to teach them and prevent them from child marriage.

Asides, from child labour, there are many other violence against children in the Nigerian society today such as physical assault, sexual assault and forceful decision on children.

Physical Violence

Physical violence against a child is an omission or commission of physical assault against a child which can lead to visible damage or hurt the child. This can be seen in form of beating, bullying a child or even causing the death of a child.

This form of physical violence occurs when an adult exercises his/her superiority over a child, not in form of correction of a bad behaviour but to bully the child. This is another common behaviour in the Nigeria society, where adults beat children for unknown reasons. Though, there is an adage that says 'sphere the rod and spoils the child. This means that beating or spanking a child for a wrong doing is accepted in Yoruba culture.

There is no disputing fact about this because this is a way of training up a child to become an acceptable future citizen and ambassador of the society' '*omólúàbí*'. However, this goes out of hand when it is considered as the only means of training a child to the extent of putting bruises on the skin of the child or damaging a part of the body of the child or just beating the child for any behaviour exhibited by the child. This is a form of violence against the child. Some of Yoruba novels have reflected this in their works. For instance, Akinlabi portrayed this form of abuse in "*Iná Ayé*" when Gbònjúbólá Aṣàkún, the main character's uncle's wife beat him, as a transfer of aggression from her husband's abuse on her.

Àfí pòò lójúu Rẹ̀mí, ó kì í mólẹ̀, ó nà án bíi-kúkú-bíi-yíyẹ̀. Bí kò bá ẹ̀ Músílí, kò pé òun kò ní rán an lọ sódò iyáa rẹ̀ lórun. Igbe nílá sọ, gbogbo àwọn ará àdúgbò pé, àwọn obìnrin ní patẹ̀ pópó. Wọn ní sọ kòbákúngbé ọ̀rọ̀ sí Gbònjú pé kò sì Ẹ̀aánú omọ ọ̀rukàn" (*Iná Ayé*, Pp.5)

And Rẹ̀mí received a slap on his face; she grabbed him and beat him mercilessly. If not for Musili, she does not mind of sending him to heaven to meet with his mother. And a loud noise breaks out as all the neighbour's gathers, and women were clapping. While lots of abuse and

debasing words are cast on Gbonju
for not have passions for the orphan.

This behaviour of Gbónjúbólá is not to correct Rèmí's bad attitude or train him but she only transfers the aggression from her husband on the boy. Since she could not confront her husband to fight him back, she then avenges it on the poor boy. Proven from the comments of the spectators Gbónjúbólá has beaten the boy beyond acceptable way.

This habit of wrong correction or punishment for an offense done by a child is rampant in the Nigerian society today, there are daily reports of how parents out of anger beat their children or ward to death. A woman chained his son inside a sack in the house for several days without food or water because she was told that he was a witch and the only way to drive out the witchcraft is to starve him to death.

Sexual Violence or Rape

Fayaz, 2019 defines Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) as a form of violence against in which an adult or older adolescent who is in a relationship of accountability, trust or control, uses a child for sexual stimulation (Fayaz, 2019). This implies that when a child is being touched inappropriately or forced to do any sexual act is sexual assault to the child.

In the society, as of date, the high level of child rape is increasing rapidly every day. Various methods are being adopted to lure these children to have forceful sex with

them. Especially this days has it is been reported in the daily news, there is a no certain week where there will not be a report of an older man raping a child or teenager. This is a great atrocity and decadence in our society. Parents are scared of leaving their female children alone at home. These children cannot be lonely send on earn without being raped. This enormity act has also be portrayed by novelists in their works. In "Sisí Olóbi" for instance, Akinlábi reflected how older men can use metaphysical power to force sexual intercourse on a child. This was seen in the incident that transpired between Şaléwá (Fadéké's mother) and Làtí the mechanic man, who used charm to rape her in his workshop.

...gbogbo ibàdí ti kan mí. Mo bú sẹkún nínú yàrá mí. Mò ń finú ẹpẹ̀ fún Làtí tó fí tipátipá tẹmí lógo. Èmi tí mo ti ní àsikò 'honey moon'ni n ó tó mo ọkùnrin, ìgbà náà ni mo fẹ́ kí ọkọ mi gbé àgbè ẹmu tí n ru bàlà wá sílé wa lódò bàbá mi pẹ̀lú ẹ̀kúnrẹ̀rẹ̀ isàná láti fihàn pé èmi kii ẹ̀ animáshahun ọmọ.

Emi náà wá ni mekáníiki, tó ti ní iyàwó męta sílé tún fí tipátipá bá lópò nínú mótò jági. (Pp.53-54)

The waist has been aching me. I burst into tears in my room. And I with wholeheartedly continue cursing Làtí who forcefully took away my pride. For I have planned to get disvirgin during

my honeymoon, it is then I want my husband to bring strong spurring palm-wine to my father's house with a full packet of matches to show that I am not a share- out promiscuous child.

It is the same I that a just mechanic, who has three wives in his house now forcefully have sex with inside a lorry.

This man could not find a lady which is of his age range to marry but he preferred to rape a young teenager who in her mind has a bright future. This singular act automatically ended her ambition, and so is the ambition of many children and teenager of today ambition terminated once they are involved in this type of abuse. One can see that the cause of this abuse was as a result of another abuse on the child by her parents, who left her unmonitored because she was exposed to selling even though she was schooling. This is to show that via children hawking or left to live on their own without appropriate monitoring at a young age, they can be exposed to rape especially by unknown persons.

Emotional Violence

Child emotional violence occurs when the psychological aspect of the life of a child is been disparaged. This is making a child feels rejected or denied even where he or she is meant to be welcome and celebrated as the theory of attachment stipulated. This type of abuse can be manifested when a child is been forced to rival a specific character against his/her own detriment. This can be in

forceful emulation of character/profession or forceful child marriage.

Forceful Emulation of Character

This mostly happened when parents want to force their wish especially their line of profession on their children. This is common practice in Yoruba society, where parents will want their children to continue family line of the profession when it is the desire of the child. They want their children to emulate their way of life, their religious practices, and habits. They have seen this as a family taboo to any child that discern from it. Some of Yoruba novelists have portrayed these in the pieces to reflect the emotional implication of this on the children. For instance, In "Kádàrá àti Ègbón Rẹ̀" the authors use the whole storyline of the novels to portray this form of abuse. Kádàrá suffers various forms of abuse just because he refused to emulate his father's family profession of farming to go for husbandry.

Odidì ewúré méjì ní Agbégbè mí pa fún Akóbí ní ojò ipàdé yì láti fì ẹ̀ẹ fun un nítorí tí iṣẹ̀ àgbẹ̀ tí ó yàn; sùgbón omi toro ọ̀bẹ̀ ẹ̀ran nàà lásán kò kan Kádàrá l'ẹ̀nu rara.

Agbégbè mí kills two complete goats for his first born during the meeting in order to honour him for him to have chosen farming, but a drop from the goat soup did not touch Kadara's mouth.

...Àgbégbè mí pàápàá ná owó ju bí ó ẹ̀ se yẹ̀ lẹ̀,
nítórí pé ó n̄se f̄óríf̄órí tí Kádàrá tí kò gba àṣẹ̀
sí i lẹ̀nu.

Agbègbè mí even overspend beyond
normality, for he was trying to make Kadara
who did not oblige to his instruction feel
regretful.

...Kádàrá kákò sí kòrò yàrá ní gbogbo àkókò
tí aṣeyẹ̀ yì n̄lẹ̀. Ọkàn rẹ̀ bàjẹ̀ pé bàbá òun àti
gbogbo ẹbí n̄hu ìrú ìwá yí sí òun nítórí pé
òun kò yan iṣẹ̀ àgbẹ̀." (Kádàrá àti Ègbón Rẹ̀,
Pp.15)

As the ceremony was going on, Kadara folds
himself up in one corner of the room. He
was extremely sad that his father and family
members could react to him in such way as
he did not choose to farm.

Forceful Child Marriage

Forceful marriage is another form of abuse that has
reflected in the selected novels. This form of abuse can
be portrayed in two ways either the parents forced the
child to marry someone he/she does not like or they
force the child to early marriage. For instance, in "Ọdún
Á Yakọ?" Róláyò's father plan to disown her by sending
her out of the house if she did not come with someone
she wants to marry at a given time, not minding her
tender age.

Mo fún ọ ní oṣù kan kí o mú ọkan nínú àwọn oníbààrà rẹ, bí bẹ̀ẹ̀ kó, ikòkò kò ní gba omi kó tún gba ẹyìn èmi irẹ nínú ilé yì. O ó sì kúrò lẹ̀èdè mi, nítorí irú yín n gboyún kánhìn nàà ni." (Ọdún Á Yakọ? Pp.58)

I give you just a month to choose one out of your customers, if not; we both will not find things easy for each other in this house. And you shall leave my apartment, for people like you gets pregnant at the later end.

Child marriage in the Yoruba society is gradually getting reduced; however, it is still paramount among some tribes as mentioned earlier. There are children ages 9 to 13 being forced to marry a man old enough to be their grand or great grand-father. And it is not as if they will be kept till they are old enough before having sexual intercourse with them. No, they are molested and impregnated at this tender age.

Consequences of violence against a child

The various forms of child abuse listed above have developed to various effects or outcome on both the child and the society at large. Some of the results of abuse on children which reflected in the selected novels viewed as social effect, health effect, psychological effect or eventually death of a child.

Health Effects

When a child goes through such abuse as physical and sexual abuse it mostly results in some health complications on the child. This implication the novelists has also revealed in the work. For instance, in 'Oḍún á Yakò?', Adésànyà presented the effect of Aṣíndemádé's neglected of his female children with diverse disease which was as a result of him sending his children away in slavery. Móbóníkẹẹ contacted Hiv/Aids in the cause of staying in a foreign land;

Móbóní ti rù ó kojá síṣọ. Gbogbo àwọn tó rí i ló mo pé nńkan n ẹ se é. ...èsi àyẹwò jádé léyìn wákàtí diẹ tí wọn gba èjẹ rẹ wọ yàrá àyẹwò. Móbóní ti kó kòkòrò àrùn èèdì.

Moboni, has slim down beyond recognition. Everyone who sees her knows that something is wrong with her. ...the result of her test came out after few hours after taking her blood sample. Moboni has been infected with HIV.

Móbóníkẹẹ could not keep her feelings and regret as a result of her father's behaviour when she was narrating the cause of her mischief to the doctor who tested her Hiv/Aids positive. She lamented that perhaps her father has not sent them into slavery and also appreciate them as a child not because they are female but as a gift from God, probably she will be not have contacted this disease.

Bàbá bi mi tan mo di alarìnkiri. Ìyànjú ló mú mi lọ sílè òkèrèrè lọ şàtipó bóyá màá rí bátişé. Mo deñi ñ sunilé ijó, ilé oṭí, ilé ìtura kiri nítorí àtìjèu. Kín ni ìwúlò eni tí ó kó kòrkòrò àrùn èèdì bíi tèmì. Àmó o, tí mo bá tún ilé ayé yìí wá, n ó tún ipín mi yàn.

My father gave birth to me and I become a wayward. I tried struggled to go oversee to do dirty jobs to prosper in life. I became on sleeping in dance arenas, hotels, bars round just to survive. What is the usefulness of a person infected with HIV like myself. However, if I have the chance of coming back to this world, I will choose a different destiny.

Apart from Móbóníkèé, Morómoké the eldest son of Aşíndemádé also died of unknown diseases coupled with sexually transmited infection. As reported by those who brought her from the foreign land unconscious it was her shout of angony that they heard, before coming to her rescue, meanwhile her supposed husband has disappered before then;

Àwọn alájogbé rè sàà sọ wí pé léyìn ariwo tí ó pa kò lè sòrò mó. Ó kàn lájú sílè bí òkú àguntàn ni. ...dókítà sọ wí pé Rómoké ni àrùn oríşííríşíí lára àti pé diè nínú àwọn àrùn yìí ni ó kó láti ara ibi ìbálópò.

Her neigh

Unwanted pregnancy

Unwanted pregnancy is another vital effect of child abuse, especially sexual abuse. In essence, when a child becomes pregnant at a young age as a result of abuse or unnecessary exposure to sex, as reflected above. The victim meant not want to keep the pregnancy, which will lead to termination of the pregnancy or after birth abandonment of the child. This effect was revealed by Akinlabí and Adésànyà in their works. In *sisí Olóbì*, Šaléwá (Fadéké's mother) attempted abortion to terminate the pregnancy she conceived after Látí raped him. However, this abortion almost claims her life. Even though she did not die but she damages her uterus which made it difficult for a long time for her to conceive again. Apart from, Morórunfóláké, Ašindémádé's second daughter in '*Odún á Yakò?*' also died in the process of abortion in the novel, which is also the result of their father neglecting them to unknown people.

Drug Abuse leading to suicide

In the society of today, most youths are suffering from drug abuse. This most times is as a result of one form of abuse or the other they have been exposed to in their early life and that they are still experiencing at the moment. They then see overuse of a particular drug which can raise their moral to do thing which superseded normal. Over time the intake of such drugs or substance may lead to abnormal behaviour and/or eventually death. The novelists have portrayed examples of such children who as a result of their abusive experience, involved in consuming some substances to put an end to their lives. For instance, Mótáyò's son for Adélaní committed

suicide because he could not withstand the abuse from his father again. Though his intention was just to use sleeping pills, to prevent him from hearing his father's verbal abuses but he overused the dose, which causes his death.

Regrets of one's behaviour

Regrets of one's behaviour is always the aftermath of a perpetrator of abuse. Most abuser at the end of any abusive behaviour always regrets their action. Especially when they began to dance to the music of their actions. The consequences will not only affect the abuser alone but to the whole community in which the abuse has taken place. For instance, in 'Kádàrá àti Ègbón rẹ. The effect of what Àgbègbèmí and Àkòbí did to Kádàrá did not only affected them when Kádàrá becomes successful in his husbandry profession but it also affected the whole of Àgbègbèmí's community. As a matter of fact, if Kádàrá had been allowed to practice his profession in his land, a good number of Àgbègbèmí's indigenes will have benefited from it. Some of the younger ones in the community will have also learn how to rear. It will have brought in a lot of foreigners to their village who have come to purchase his animals. This is the belief that when foreigners come into a community then there will definitely be more development in that community over time. All these where was the town where Kádàrá later settled down enjoyed via his profession.

In the same vein, in *Ọdún á Yako?* Aşındemádé, also regretted his action of neglecting his female children and using them as slave to other people. The novelists

through the mouth of the character voiced out his regrets, thus;

Róláyò ọmọ̀ mi. Ó pẹ́ kí ó tó yé mi. Ojà ti kún láàárò, mo sì fi ọwa ara mi tú ukí alá tóó lẹ́. Mo pàdánù ọmọ̀ męta nínú àwọn tí Èlédùà fi ta mí lọrẹ. ẹ wo òdù ayòmi tó kún bó ẹe n deyọ̀ lójú ayèè mi. My child, Rolayo. It was too late before I understand. I used my hands to scatter what I have earlier gathered. I lost three children from the children God gave to me. See, how my full river got waste right in my presence.

This shows that Àşindemádé has indeed seen the consequences of his actions, and there is no remedy to it, three of his children were already dead. However, it is not only Àşindemádé alone that suffers the consequence of his children death but also the whole community of Ayégbęgę. In the sense that Róláyò who was the only living daughter of Àşindemádé after self-strife becomes a successful accountant who becomes a good ambassador of her community in other places. Imagine if all of Róláyò's sisters also have privilege to education but they would have become to the community? This is also a regret on the community at large.

Misconception about certain people

Another vital effect of abusive behaviour is misconception about people. Anyone who has been a victim of any abusive behaviour tends to have some perception about some particular set of people in the society. Especially those in line with the perpetrator of

violence. Some children who are abused by their father will naturally have bad impression about men. Such set of people will find it hard to go out with any man and if situation warranted it, they tried to be over defensive. They generally see all men as misogyny. Adésànyà reflected in 'Ọdún á Yako? Róláyò becomes defensive has a result of her experience with her father. Hence, she sees all men as such. In her words, if it is culturally accepted for a woman to marry another woman she will have buy into that.;

Kì í ẹ̀ pé o kò wù mí lókùnrin ẹ̀gbón
mo ti pinnu lókan mi pé tí kò bá ẹ̀ẹ̀şe
látifẹ̀ obìnrin bíi tẹ̀mi, kí n kúkú dúró
láilólọ̀. (Pp93)

It is not that I do not like you as a man
but I have made up my mind if it is
impossible to marry a woman like
myself, I will rather remain unmarried.

It took a lot of efforts before Bòsípò could convince this notion of Róláyò, that marrying same sex is a criminal offense. He begged her to forgive all that men has done to her and marry him. Though, lesbianism is a criminal offense in Nigeria but there are some people who will try every possible means to travel out of the country to where it is acceptable to bring their wishes to pass. There are several reports of similar cases on the social media today.

Homelessness

Homelessness occurs in abuse when the parent neglects their children or when a child is physically abused. In order to escape these types of abuses, the child will

rather prefer to leave such an abusive environment and end up on the streets or other immoral places like prostitution house, like the case of Mope in *Ìyán Ogún ọdún*. Some end up in clubhouses and beer parlours, like in the case of Mòbóníkẹẹ in *Ọdún á Yako?*. Kádàrá in 'Kádàrá àti Ọgbón rẹ' was also homeless as a result of his father and brother's frustration of his life and profession. The boy has to live the home to an unknown destination just because he wanted to be far away from his abusive environment. A good number of homeless children in the society have similar challenges from their parents/caregivers.

Death

The most tragic and extreme consequences of violence against a child is any form of violence that can lead to death of a child. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has estimated that about 155,000 children of ages 15 or younger died every year around the world as a result of abuse (Pinheiro,2006). This implies that larger number of children are assaulted every year even though some may not lead to death but other consequence. There is evidence of fatal violence in the selected novels. In *Ọdún á Yako?* three of Róláyò's sisters died as a result of their father abusive acts.

In the light of the above-stated consequences of violence against a child, it is glaring that violence against children may venture into a wide range of diverse effects for both children and adolescents. This may end up making some of the survival of violence against a child, a future abuser. Which may be as a result of the notion infuse

into them through their experience, especially about some specific set of people in the society.

Preventive Measures to Violence against a Child

To prevent the reoccurrence of various types of abuses against children in the society, the novelists have also been able to proffer realistic and practicable solutions or preventive measures against such abuses. In the light of this, some of the solutions are as follows:

Giving of public lecture

To prevent child abuse at all cause, there should be a regular public lecture on the dangers associated with child abuse especially abuse of female child. Adésànyà gave an example of such solution in *Ọdún Á Yakọ?* where Róláyò was seen giving a public speech to her community on the rights of a child at her wedding. Here, she established the five points rights of a child to the whole public as entrenched in the constitution. She also advocated for equal treatment of children irrespective of their sex. She finally, enumerated various positions in which women have held and still holding in the society, to state the fact that girl education is very important.

Discouragement of Gender Discrimination

Novelists also are of the opinion that if every misconception about female child can be eradicated in the society, it will limit the level at which children, especially female, are being abused in the society. However, each child should be seen as a gift from heaven, which some people are spiritually struggling to have. In *Ọdún Á yakọ?* the Doctor Lábáké who

counselled Mọnbóníkèé established this. She narrated how a child should be cherished by her parents. She gave a practical example of her vilage to portray an ideal society where the gender of a child is not a barrier to the care of the child.

Bàbá mi kò lè sàì tọ mi ní ilé-ìwé nítorí pé omọ tí a kò kọ ni yóò gbé ilé tí a kò tà, àti pé àwọn òbí mi kò ní sísẹ tàbí àìsẹ ju pé kí wọn gbà f'Òlọrun fún ohun tí ó mú wá. ...Àmọ́ n kò dá bàbá rẹ lẹbi o, nítorí èrò àwọn èniyàn nípa obìnrin lágbègbè yí yàtò púpọ sí tí ilú Ìdána. (pp. 40, 45)

My father could not resist sending me to school because a child that is not trained, wilol definately sells ones house, and my parents have no choice than to accept their fate. ... But i do not blame you father, because the view of people in this community about women is different from that of Ìdána city.

Apart from here, it is also established in *Şé dandan ni?* that female children when educated can become or hold any principal positions in the society. This is the advise giving to Adélaní and his friends in the novel, through the novelists herself. The novelist thereby portray that women can hold positions that some cultural beliefs have been reserved exclusively for men alone such as becoming a medical doctor, a lecturer, a lawyer and so on.

Discarding of some cultural practices or belief system.

Another cogent solution to violence against a child is that, the society has to cast off some inherited cultural norms that are already outdated in this modern society, some of such include compelling a child to marry at his/her own detriment, like it was seen in the case of Raláyò in *Ọdún Á Yako?*. Perhaps if Mọrólágbé had not forced Jọké on his son to marry probably she would not have been the tragic victim. The novelists encourage the society to allow their children or wards to make such decision personally. In like manner, Ọdúnjò and Oládípúpò in *Kádàrá àti Ègbón rẹ* advise parents to always support their child/ward chosen profession and they should desist from enforcing a particular family profession on a child as it is common in our society today. The writers use the incident of Kádàrá as a case study to attest that each child has a definite profession he wants to practice and he/she should be given the right to do so with full support.

Incarceration and Castration of children rapist or child sexual abusers

Incarceration and castration of children rapist or child sexual abuser is another solution to curb this immoral and criminal act in the society as it has been made available under the children Rights Acts of 2003 and the enforcement Procedure Rule of 2015. The government should follow due process by ensuring that rapists of the minor are tried in courts immediately. If found guilty, they should be made to bear the full weight of the law

not just by being sentence to prison for few years but also by preventing them from committing such act in future. Though in *Sisi Olóbì*, Làtí wassentenced to two years imprisonment just like the case of the Nigerian Nollywood actor, Olanrewaju Omiyinka (Baba Ijesa) who was sentence to just three years imprisonment and he is back into the society.

In conclusion, this paper submits that the issue of violence against a child is still a recurring case in the Nigerian society and studies on this cannot be overemphasised. There is need for more studies on in-depth research like this on violence against children from other Nigerian literature to serve as continuous advocacy in eradicating this menace away from the Nigerian society, so that a child can really understands his/her rights in the society.

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