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**CRITICAL DRAMA PEDAGOGY FOR
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Abstract

This study argues that critical drama pedagogy, understood as the fusion of Freirean dialogue and Boalian rehearsal, offers Nigerian and African higher education a distinctive route to intercultural competence, but only under specific conditions. Anchoring on a conceptual synthesis of published Nigerian and African scholarship, the study pursues three objectives: to establish how critical drama converts intercultural knowledge from inert content into embodied, socially witnessed action, extending Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence beyond cognition into performance; to examine, through a documented Nigerian case, the conditions under which this conversion fails and instead surfaces ethnocentrism, illustrated by role refusal among theatre arts students at the University of Benin; and to integrate Ubuntu and its pedagogical form, ubuntu-gogy, as a corrective to Byram's individualist assumptions, reframing intercultural competence as a communally negotiated achievement rather than a private cognitive trait. Read together, Freire, Boal, Byram, and Ubuntu form one integrated framework rather than four separate theories. Each supplying what the others lack. The study closes with a proposed framework for Nigerian higher education and implications for curriculum design, teacher preparation, and assessment, arguing that critical drama pedagogy requires deliberate institutional investment, not incidental classroom enthusiasm, if it is to deliver genuine intercultural learning.

Keywords: Critical pedagogy, Drama-in-education, Intercultural communicative competence, Ubuntu, Translanguaging, Nigerian higher education.

Introduction

Nigerian classrooms are already intercultural before any lesson names them so. Students bring dozens of ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds into the same room, and instruction can flatten this plurality into a false uniformity or use it as material for learning. Drama is often proposed as the pedagogy best suited to the second option, because it requires learners to inhabit voices and bodies other than their own rather than simply read about them (Akinsola, 2025). Yet drama is not automatically critical, and it does not automatically build intercultural competence. Much classroom drama in Nigerian and African institutions remains recitational. Students perform scripted roles, are graded on delivery, and leave with their assumptions about self and other unchanged. This article distinguishes critical drama pedagogy; drama organized around Freirean dialogue and Boalian rehearsal, from this recitational default, and asks what such pedagogy can realistically do for intercultural competence in Nigerian higher education.

Incidentally, the discussion is conceptual, built from published Nigerian and African scholarship rather than new fieldwork, and proceeds through an integrated theoretical framework, a focused literature review, a

methodological statement, a critical analysis organized around the article's central claims, a proposed framework for Nigerian institutions, and implications for curriculum, teacher preparation, and assessment. Throughout, the article treats a single documented Nigerian classroom episode as illustration rather than proof, a distinction that matters because a conceptual argument about what critical drama pedagogy can achieve should not rest its evidentiary weight on one case being representative of Nigerian higher education as a whole. The purpose is to show how four bodies of theory, brought into deliberate relation to one another, can guide practice more precisely than any one of them applied alone.

Problem Statement and Gap

Two literatures currently run in parallel without meeting. Nigerian and African scholarship on theatre in education documents drama's contribution to sociocultural learning in broad terms, reporting that theatre deepens learners' acceptance of difference and their sociocultural knowledge (Akinsola, 2025; Akam et al., 2026), but rarely engages Byram's (1997, 2021) model of intercultural communicative competence by name or specifies which of its component skills a given classroom practice actually builds. Meanwhile, applications of Byram's framework in language education were developed for European learners preparing to study or work abroad, and they assume an individual learner free to question inherited belief

without communal consequence, an assumption that does not travel intact into Nigerian classrooms where a student's willingness to perform a role is often bound up with family and community judgment (Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide & Usadolo, 2022).

The problem this creates is practical as much as theoretical. Departments that adopt drama for its presumed intercultural value, have no framework that both names what should be learned, in Byram's precise vocabulary, and accounts for the communal pressures under which Nigerian students actually learn it. Existing accounts also lean heavily on single-institution case material, most visibly one documented instance of role refusal at the University of Benin (Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide & Usadolo, 2022), without a broader theoretical apparatus for interpreting what such refusal means or how a curriculum should respond to it. This article addresses that gap by integrating Freire, Boal, Byram, and Ubuntu into a single framework capable of naming outcomes, explaining resistance, and guiding institutional practice at once.

Objectives

Three objectives organize the discussion that follows;

1. To establish, conceptually, how Freirean dialogue and Boalian rehearsal convert intercultural knowledge from inert content into embodied, correctable action that gives practical shape to Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence.

2. To examine, through a documented Nigerian case, the conditions under which critical drama pedagogy fails to build intercultural competence and instead surfaces ethnocentrism or role refusal.

3. To integrate Ubuntu and ubuntuogy into this framework as a corrective to Byram's individualist assumptions, and to translate the resulting integrated framework into concrete recommendations for curriculum, casting, language use, and assessment in Nigerian higher education.

Research Questions

1. By what mechanism does critical drama pedagogy convert cultural knowledge into the embodied competencies Byram's model describes?

2. What does documented Nigerian classroom evidence reveal about the limits of this mechanism, particularly around ethnocentrism and role refusal?

3. How can Ubuntu and ubuntuogy be integrated with Freire, Boal, and Byram to produce a framework, and associated institutional practices, suited to Nigerian higher education?

Literature Review

Recent African scholarship agrees that drama can build intercultural or sociocultural competence, while disagreeing on how reliably it does so. Akam et al.

(2026) argue that pedagogical drama helps translate internally held cultural competence into observable intercultural behavior, a translation that conventional instruction often fails to achieve. In Nigeria, Akinsola's (2025) review of studies published between 2004 and 2024 concludes that theatre-in-education deepens learners' sociocultural knowledge and their acceptance of difference, framing this as central to decolonizing Nigerian curricula.

Classroom-level research complicates this optimism. Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide and Usadolo (2022) document theatre arts students at the University of Benin refusing roles perceived as incongruent with their ethnic or religious identity, one participant citing anticipated family disapproval. This finding shows that drama can surface ethnocentrism as readily as dissolve it, and it is the case this article treats as an illustration below, not as evidence that Nigerian drama classrooms are typically resistant to intercultural work.

A related strand situates drama within participatory rather than intercultural-competence traditions specifically. Abuku (2021), writing from direct experience at Benue State University, describes Boal-influenced collaborations between Nigerian university theatre students and metropolitan schoolchildren as vehicles for developing critical thinking through engagement with schools beyond the campus. Obukoadata et al. (2024) report drama's value for civic education in a Cross River State primary school,

suggesting the pedagogy's reach extends below tertiary level. Omodan and Diko (2021) argue separately that ubuntu pedagogy corrects the residual individualism of imported critical pedagogies, including Freire's own, when applied without adjustment in African settings, a claim this article extends specifically to drama pedagogy.

This literature reveals two further gaps this article addresses. Firstly, studies of drama and sociocultural competence in Nigeria (Akinsola, 2025; Akam et al., 2026) rarely engage Byram's model by name, describing intercultural gains in general terms rather than through his specific *savoirs*, while applications of Byram's framework in language education rarely engages African critical or communal pedagogies like ubuntu pedagogy. Secondly, none of this literature considers language choice within drama pedagogy through the lens of translanguaging, the deliberate deployment of a learner's full linguistic repertoire rather than a single target language (García & Wei, 2014), despite Nigerian classrooms being multilingual by default. Three propositions from this literature structure the analysis that follows: drama can build intercultural competence when practiced dialogically; this outcome is not guaranteed and may instead expose entrenched ethnocentrism; and African frameworks like Ubuntu can correct the individualism of imported models without discarding their analytic value.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The argument advanced in this article rests on four bodies of theory, read not as parallel resources but as a single cumulative chain in which each stage answers a limitation in the one before it.

Freirean Critical Pedagogy: Freire's (1996) starting point is a distinction between banking education, where teachers deposit knowledge into passive students, and problem-posing education, where teacher and learner investigate reality together through dialogue. His concept of conscientização, or critical consciousness, describes learners coming to see cultural hierarchies as constructed, and therefore changeable, rather than natural. Applied to intercultural learning, this means cultural difference should be interrogated as a set of relationships, not memorized as fixed content. A banking-model lesson on, for instance, Nigeria's religious diversity might list beliefs and practices for students to record and reproduce; a problem-posing lesson would instead ask why those beliefs are held, by whom, and with what consequences for the people sitting in the room. Freire supplies the goal of the framework proposed here: learners who see cultural hierarchy as constructed and changeable. He does not, however, supply a classroom method for reaching that goal, which is where Boal becomes necessary rather than merely complementary.

Boalian Theatre of the Oppressed: Boal (1979) supplies that method. His Theatre of the Oppressed operationalizes Freirean dialogue through techniques such as Forum Theatre, in which spectators become spect-actors who may stop a scene and physically replace a character to try an alternative response. Boal's description of theatre as an instrument the audience itself can wield reframes classroom drama as rehearsal for real encounters rather than performance for its own sake (Boal, 1979, as cited in Support Centre for Elites, n.d.). For intercultural competence, this structure matters because it lets learners attempt an intercultural encounter, fail, stop, and try again, turning a cultural misstep into a repeatable exercise rather than a single costly event. Boal therefore supplies the method the Freirean goal requires: rehearsal that makes intercultural missteps visible, correctable, and non-final. What Boal's method does not supply, on its own, is a vocabulary precise enough to say what a student has actually learned once a scene has been rehearsed and revised, which is the function Byram's model performs next.

Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence: Byram (1997, 2021) names what such rehearsal should produce. His model identifies five interrelated savoirs: attitudes of curiosity and openness (*savoir être*), knowledge of one's own and other cultures (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness, the capacity to evaluate cultural practices, including one's

own, against explicit criteria (*savoir s'engager*). Where Freire supplies the goal and Boal the method, Byram supplies the vocabulary for naming what has actually been learned, which matters for curriculum design because a pedagogy that cannot name its outcomes cannot be assessed, defended, or improved in any systematic way. His later extension of this model toward intercultural citizenship, emphasizing political engagement and social action as outcomes of intercultural learning rather than private attitude change alone, sits comfortably with Boal's *spect-actor*, since both frameworks require the learner to act rather than only reflect. Byram's model was, however, built for European learners preparing to study or work abroad, and it assumes an individual learner free to question inherited belief without communal consequence, an assumption that does not travel intact into Nigerian classrooms.

Ubuntu and Ubuntugogy: Ubuntu and its pedagogical elaboration as *ubuntugogy*, closes this gap. *Ubuntugogy* treats teaching and learning as processes validated by community, not by individual achievement alone, captured in the maxim that a person is a person through other persons (Omodan & Diko, 2021). It does not replace Byram's *savoirs*; it governs how they should be pursued in African classrooms, reframing openness and critical awareness as communal virtues the group models together, not only private dispositions graded in isolation. Omodan and Diko (2021) present *ubuntugogy* explicitly as a decolonial pedagogy, positioned against curricula that remain, in form if not in stated content,

structured around Eurocentric assumptions about the autonomous individual learner. This positioning, matters for critical drama pedagogy specifically because Boal's own techniques travelled to Africa through Brazilian and European theatre traditions, and can themselves be practiced in ways that quietly retain those assumptions unless deliberately re-grounded in African communal norms. Ubuntu supplies what none of the first three elements can: an account of the communal accountability a Nigerian student's classroom choices remain answerable to outside the classroom itself.

Proposed Integrated Framework: This article proposes that these four elements be treated formally as an integrated framework, which the analysis below labels the Freire-Boal-Byram-Ubuntu (FBBU) model. In this model, Freirean dialogue sets the pedagogical orientation of a course; Boalian technique, principally Forum Theatre, supplies its recurring classroom method; Byram's *savoirs* supply the outcomes against which a course is designed and assessed; and Ubuntu supplies the governing ethic that determines how casting, language use, and assessment are negotiated in practice. Each stage answers a question the previous stage leaves open, which is why the framework should be read as integrated rather than stacked, and why removing any one element, as the critical analysis below demonstrates, leaves a specific and identifiable gap in the other three.

Methodology

This study is conceptual rather than empirical. It adopts what Jaakkola (2020) terms a theory-synthesis approach. It draws together separate bodies of theory, Freirean critical pedagogy, Boalian applied theatre, Byram's intercultural communicative competence, and Ubuntu/ubuntu pedagogy, that have rarely been read together in African drama-education scholarship, and integrates them into a single explanatory framework. No new fieldwork, interviews, or classroom observation was conducted for this article; the analysis proceeds instead through a structured reading of published Nigerian and African scholarship on drama pedagogy, intercultural competence, and decolonial education theory.

Sources were selected purposively rather than through a systematic database review, prioritizing peer-reviewed Nigerian and African studies published between 2021 and 2026 that address drama, theatre in education, or applied theatre in African higher or basic education, supplemented by the foundational theoretical texts (Freire, 1996; Boal, 1979; Byram, 1997, 2021) each Nigerian study implicitly or explicitly draws upon. This selection strategy suits a conceptual, theory-synthesis design, whose aim is to demonstrate the coherence and utility of an integrated framework rather than to establish the prevalence of any classroom phenomenon across a defined population (Jaakkola, 2020).

The single documented case discussed at length below, Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide and Usadolo's (2022) account of role refusal at the University of Benin, is used as an illustrative case rather than as data subjected to independent analysis; the study did not re-interview participants or re-examine primary transcripts, and it does not claim the case is representative. This limitation is a deliberate feature of the conceptual method chosen, not an oversight. The case functions to test whether the proposed FBBU framework can coherently interpret a documented classroom event, not to generalize from it. Because the study involved no primary human participants and relied exclusively on published secondary sources, no institutional ethical clearance was required; ordinary conventions of accurate attribution and non-fabrication of sources were nonetheless followed throughout.

Critical Analysis

The FBBU framework proposed above is now tested against six practical dimensions of Nigerian classroom drama: it's embodied mechanism, its documented limits, Ubuntu's corrective role, language choice, casting, and assessment.

Drama as Embodied Intercultural Rehearsal

Critical drama pedagogy works by making cultural misunderstanding visible. In a conventional lecture on, say, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, or Fulani custom, a student's misunderstanding stays invisible and can be repeated on

an examination script without correction. In a Forum Theatre exercise, the same misunderstanding becomes visible the moment it is performed, because classmates who embody or study that culture can intervene, replace the actor, and demonstrate an alternative. Boal'sspect-actor is therefore doing intercultural work as much as political work: it converts one-way transmission of cultural information into a negotiation among students who often already embody the very differences the syllabus is trying to teach.

This visibility changes the classroom's incentive structure. A lecture rewards a student for reproducing the correct answer about another culture on demand; a Forum Theatre scene rewards a student for responding well to an unscripted challenge from a peer, closer to the improvisational demands of a genuine intercultural encounter outside the classroom. Byram's *savoir apprendre*, the skill of acquiring new cultural knowledge in real time through interaction, is difficult to teach through content delivery alone precisely because content delivery removes the improvisational pressure that gives the skill its point; drama restores that pressure inside a setting where the consequences of a poor response are pedagogical rather than social or reputational.

What critical drama adds to Byram's largely cognitive account is risk and affect. A student who physically takes on a role from an unfamiliar ethnic or religious background experiences decentering somatically, through voice, gesture, and audience judgment, not only

intellectually. Akam et al.'s (2026) claim that pedagogical drama helps translate latent competence into observable behavior is best explained by this quality: knowledge that exists only privately is not yet intercultural competence in Byram's behavioral sense, and drama is one of the few pedagogies that forces knowledge into public, correctable action, a conclusion Akinsola's (2025) review reaches independently by arguing that theatre-in-education deepens sociocultural knowledge precisely because it combines cognitive and affective engagement rather than delivering information alone.

Limits, Resistance, Ethnocentrism and Role Refusal

The mechanism described above is not self-executing, and one documented case shows why. Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide and Usadolo (2022) report a theatre arts student at the University of Benin refusing a role set among the Itsekiri-speaking part of Nigeria, citing likely family disapproval and asking instead for a role closer to their own lived reality. The researchers read this refusal as ethnocentrism that made intercultural work difficult in that classroom. The case is used here as a single illustration of a structural risk in drama pedagogy, not as evidence about Nigerian students generally, since one classroom episode cannot establish how common such refusals are across Nigeria's many institutions.

Read through Freire, the refusal is not a failure to be corrected by instruction but raw material for further

dialogue. Compelling the student into the role would repeat the banking model's authoritarianism in reverse; treating the refusal itself as a Forum Theatre moment, performable and discussable by the class, keeps the pedagogy dialogic rather than coercive.

Read through Byram, the case exposes a specific limit rather than a general flaw. *Savoir s'engager* presumes a learner positioned to evaluate cultural practices against explicit criteria, typically within an educational culture where questioning inherited belief carries little social cost. The Benin student's refusal was a rational response to anticipated communal consequence, a factor Byram's model, built for a different context, does not foreground. Reading the refusal as a simple failure of critical awareness, as the original study's framing risks doing, imports an assumption from European language education that does not straightforwardly hold in a Nigerian classroom.

A note on scope is warranted, since the case carries real argumentative weight here. Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide and Usadolo (2022) report a single documented refusal within one production at one Nigerian university; neither they nor this article claim such refusals are frequent or typical across Nigerian theatre classrooms. The case is useful because it is concrete and well documented, not because it is representative; its argumentative role is to demonstrate that the mechanism in the preceding section can surface resistance as well as openness, a possibility

any theory of critical drama pedagogy must accommodate.

Ubuntu as Communal Corrective

Ubuntugogy reframes what counts as success in a case like the one above. An ubuntugological reading does not ask only whether the individual student became more open in Byram's sense; it asks whether the classroom, as a communal unit, developed shared norms for handling the conflict between artistic role-play and communal identity (Omodan & Diko, 2021). Success becomes the group's capacity to negotiate which roles are performable, under what conditions, and with what consent, rather than one student's willingness to perform any role assigned.

This communal framing extends rather than contradicts Freire and Boal. Freire treats dialogue as a relationship between equals, not a technique for individual attitude change; Ubuntu simply names the collective this dialogue is answerable to in an African classroom. Boal's Forum Theatre already distributes agency across the group each time a spect-actor intervenes; Ubuntu explains why that distribution matters culturally, not only dramaturgically. And where Byram's *savoir être* treats curiosity and openness as an individual disposition to be assessed, ubuntugogy reframes them as virtues the group models together, restoring the communal ties a student's refusal is protecting rather than treating that refusal as a deficit alone.

This corrective is conceptual, not a general finding about Nigerian students' attitudes. It describes how the framework should be applied, not what most Nigerian classrooms actually do. What the theoretical argument establishes is narrower and more defensible. A framework combining Freire, Boal, and Byram without Ubuntu has no principled way to distinguish a student's ethnocentrism from a student's legitimate communal accountability, and will tend to read both as the same deficit.

Language and Translanguaging

Instruction in Nigerian higher education typically runs in English, a colonial inheritance, even as decolonial pedagogy urges the reclamation of indigenous languages as vehicles of thought, not only communication (Omodan & Diko, 2021; Ngugiwa Thiong'o, 1986). Drama conducted only in English privileges students already confident in English performance, reproducing the hierarchy critical pedagogy aims to dismantle.

Translanguaging theory offers the FBBU framework a precise account of what a genuinely multilingual alternative looks like. García and Wei (2014) describe translanguaging as the deliberate deployment of a bilingual or multilingual speaker's full linguistic repertoire as one integrated system, rather than as switching between separate, bounded languages; on this view, a Nigerian student moving fluidly between English, an indigenous language, and Pidgin within a

single Forum Theatre scene is not code-switching between discrete systems but drawing on one repertoire treated as legitimate throughout. Genuinely critical drama pedagogy needs to be translanguaging by design, treating Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Pidgin, and code-switched performance as legitimate resources rather than deviations from an English-medium norm.

A Forum Theatre scene performed partly in a student's first language, with peers translating or responding in kind, does more intercultural work than the same scene performed uniformly in English, because it makes linguistic difference itself, not only ethnic or religious content, and an object of negotiation inside the exercise. Read through Byram, translanguaged performance exercises *savoir comprendre* directly, since interpreting a peer's meaning across languages is itself an act of intercultural interpretation; read through Ubuntu, it also affirms that a student's home language belongs in the classroom's shared communal space rather than being confined to informal, unofficial use outside it.

Casting and Cultural Identity

Role assignment in Nigerian classrooms is rarely culturally neutral: ethnicity, gender, and religion together shape which roles a student can perform without communal cost, as the Benin case illustrates for ethnicity alone. A female student may face different constraints than a male student in performing certain roles, and students from strongly Christian or Muslim backgrounds

may object to portraying characters associated with traditional ritual or spirit possession, independent of any ethnic dimension. Because Forum Theatre allows any spect-actor to stop a scene and propose an alternative, it does not require one student to carry the full weight of an uncomfortable role for an entire production; discomfort can be distributed and renegotiated across the group instead of concentrated on a single performer.

Teacher preparation should treat casting as an intercultural negotiation to be opened before rehearsal begins, not an administrative decision made in advance and revisited only when a student objects. Under the FBBU framework, casting becomes the point at which Boal's method and Ubuntu's ethic meet most directly: the spect-actor mechanism supplies the technical means for redistributing an uncomfortable role, while Ubuntu supplies the reason such redistribution should be treated as ordinary classroom practice rather than a disruption to a fixed production plan.

Assessment

Conventional drama assessment in Nigerian institutions rewards diction, memorization, and stagecraft, criteria largely unrelated to Byram'ssavoirs. If critical drama pedagogy is to count as intercultural pedagogy rather than occasional enrichment, assessment must capture reflection directly: portfolios analyzing a student's own decentering during rehearsal, peer assessment of how respectfully a group negotiated a contested casting

decision, or structured post-performance dialogue scored for critical cultural awareness rather than polish.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that coloniality in African institutions persists less through overt content than through inherited structures, including assessment regimes modeled on colonial education; a rubric that credits multilingual, negotiated performance is therefore decolonial work, not merely pedagogical preference. Lecturers have little incentive to invest the extra time dialogic, negotiated drama requires relative to scripted performance unless assessment recognizes that time, so rubric reform is not a peripheral administrative step but a condition for the rest of the FBBU framework to function in practice.

None of the three practical constraints identified above, language, casting, and assessment, is insurmountable, and evidence from adjacent fields suggests deliberate investment pays off. Obukoadata et al. (2024) report that drama deployed with clear pedagogical intent achieved measurable civic-education engagement gains even in an under-resourced Cross River State primary school, without special funding beyond teacher commitment and lesson redesign. This suggests the three constraints are chiefly matters of institutional will and curriculum time, not unavoidable features of Nigerian higher education, though this remains to be tested directly at tertiary level rather than assumed.

Proposed Framework for Nigerian Education

Bringing the preceding analysis together, this article proposes a four-stage FBBU implementation model for Nigerian departments seeking to adopt critical drama pedagogy deliberately rather than incidentally.

Stage One, Naming: Departments state, in Byram's vocabulary, which savours a given course or module intends to build, so that intercultural aims are explicit rather than assumed as a by-product of theatre training.

Stage Two, Rehearsing: Boalian technique, principally Forum Theatre, functions as the recurring classroom method through which those named outcomes are pursued, beginning with low-stakes scenes drawn from everyday campus life before introducing scenes that deliberately foreground ethnic, religious, or linguistic difference, and conducted translanguaging by design rather than in English alone (García& Wei, 2014).

Stage Three, Governing: Casting, language use, and role refusal are treated as matters for communal negotiation under Ubuntu's ethic rather than administrative decisions imposed in advance, with facilitators trained specifically to treat a student's refusal as a Freirean dialogic opening rather than a disciplinary problem.

Stage Four, Assessing: Rubric reform scores reflection, negotiation, and critical cultural awareness directly, following Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013) argument that

assessment structures, not only syllabus content, carry coloniality forward if left unexamined.

The four stages are cyclical rather than linear in practice: a casting negotiation conducted under Stage Three becomes assessable material under Stage Four, and what a rubric rewards in Stage Four shapes which scenes are rehearsed under Stage Two in the following term. Departments implementing this model should expect it to require a full semester to establish, since Stage Three in particular depends on students trusting that a refusal will be treated as an opening rather than a deficiency, a trust that develops only after facilitators have visibly honored it more than once. The model does not require additional funding beyond what Obukoadata et al. (2024) identify as sufficient for drama-based civic education at primary level, teacher commitment and lesson redesign, though it does require institutional endorsement, since individual lecturers redesigning assessment unilaterally risk conflicting with departmental grading conventions.

Implications for Practice and Research

Nigerian departments of English, theatre arts, and education should treat critical drama as a distinct pedagogy requiring its own preparation, not an occasional supplement to dramatic literature. Courses should pair Boalian technique with explicit learning outcomes framed in Byram's *savoirs*, so intercultural gains can be named and assessed rather than assumed.

Teacher education programs should train facilitators to treat role refusal as a pedagogical opening consistent with Freirean dialogue and ubuntu pedagogy, not a disciplinary problem to be overridden. This requires specific facilitation skills current Nigerian teacher-training curricula rarely name explicitly: how to pause a rehearsal without shaming the student who has raised an objection, how to open the objection to class discussion, and how to co-design an alternative scene or role with the group. Departments should also audit the linguistic design of drama exercises, ensuring indigenous languages function as legitimate performance media under a translinguaging approach (García & Wei, 2014) rather than informal departures from English-medium instruction.

For researchers, the Benin case points to a gap rather than a conclusion. Nigerian and African scholarship needs longitudinal studies tracking intercultural outcomes of critical drama pedagogy across a semester or degree program, not only single-production case studies. Comparative work is also needed to examine how communal accountability structures, ethnicity, religion, and gender together shape students' willingness to engage in intercultural role-play across federal, state, and faith-based institutions, since the Benin case cannot indicate whether other institutional types would show a different pattern. Finally, studies pairing drama-based intervention with pre- and post-assessment using Byram-derived instruments would help establish, with more confidence than a single case allows, how much of the

intercultural gain claimed in this literature is attributable to drama specifically.

Conclusion

This article has pursued three objectives. It has shown how critical drama pedagogy turns cultural knowledge into embodied, witnessed, and revisable action, giving Byram's cognitive model a practical mechanism through Freirean dialogue and Boalian rehearsal. It has shown, through one documented Benin classroom episode treated as illustration rather than proof, that this conversion is conditional, not automatic: drama can surface ethnocentrism as readily as dissolve it. And it has integrated Ubuntu and ubuntu pedagogy as the correction the first two claims require, treating intercultural competence as a communally negotiated achievement rather than a private, gradable trait.

Together, Freire, Boal, Byram, and Ubuntu form the FBBU framework proposed here: name the goal, rehearse the method, measure the outcome, and govern the process communally. Freire and Boal without Byram give a critical method with no vocabulary for what has been learned; Byram without Freire and Boal gives a vocabulary with no classroom method for reaching it; and any combination of the three without Ubuntu risks reading Nigerian students' legitimate communal accountability as a deficit to be corrected rather than a condition to be respected. Nigerian universities that invest in this integrated model, through curriculum

redesign, facilitator training, and assessment reform, stand to gain a more realistic and more genuinely decolonial route to intercultural competence than either uncritical enthusiasm for theatre-in-education or the unreflective import of European frameworks alone.

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**FRAMING POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION IN
PUNCH AND PREMIUM TIMES NEWSPAPERS:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ONLINE REPORTS
FROM JANUARY 2025 TO JULY 2026**

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Abstract

Postpartum depression (PPD) is an important maternal mental-health concern that can affect women's psychological well-being, family relationships and experiences of caring for their infants. The media play an important role in informing the public about health conditions and shaping how such conditions are understood. This study examined the framing of postpartum depression in PUNCH and Premium Times online reports published from January 2025 to July 2026. Specifically, the study sought to: (1) determine the frequency and prominence of PPD reports published by PUNCH and Premium Times; (2) identify the dominant frames used in reporting PPD; (3) examine the tone of the reports; and (4) examine the solutions and interventions emphasized in the reports. Anchored on Framing Theory, the study adopted a quantitative content-analysis design. A census of all eligible reports

published by the two selected online newspapers during the study period was undertaken. Data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The findings showed that six eligible PPD reports were identified, with PUNCH accounting for five (83.3%) and Premium Times one (16.7%). Five reports (83.3%) had high prominence, while one (16.7%) had moderate prominence. The social/family/cultural frame was dominant, accounting for three reports (50.0%), followed by the medical/clinical frame with two (33.3%) and the stigma/misinformation frame with one (16.7%). Regarding tone, four reports (66.7%) were neutral/informational and two (33.3%) were positive/supportive, with no predominantly negative/stigmatizing report identified. Family, partner and social support was the most frequently emphasized intervention, occurring in five reports (83.3%), while professional treatment/counselling and awareness/education each occurred in three reports (50.0%). The study concludes that although coverage of PPD was limited, the reports examined generally presented the condition in an informative and supportive manner, with considerable emphasis on family and social support. It recommends that PUNCH and Premium Times increase the frequency and continuity of PPD coverage and provide more comprehensive information on early identification, professional treatment, and counselling and available mental-health services. The study further recommends sustained collaboration between journalists, health professionals and maternal-

health institutions to promote accurate, balanced and non-stigmatizing reporting of postpartum depression.

Keywords: Postpartum Depression, Media Framing, Online Journalism, Health communication, PUNCH, Premium Times

Background to the Study

Pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period constitute important stages in the reproductive life of women and are accompanied by significant physical, psychological and social adjustments. The period following childbirth is particularly important because women require continued care and support to recover physically and psychologically while adapting to the demands of caring for a newborn. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022a) identifies the first six weeks following childbirth as a critical period for the health and well-being of both mothers and newborns and recommends comprehensive postnatal care that addresses women's physical, emotional and social needs. One of the mental-health conditions that may occur during the postnatal period is postpartum depression (PPD), also commonly described as postnatal depression. Maternal mental-health problems are recognized globally as an important public-health concern. The WHO reports that mental disorders, particularly depression, can occur during pregnancy and after childbirth and may affect women's functioning and well-being as well as the development and well-being of their children (WHO, 2022b). The organization therefore

recommends that maternal mental-health needs should be incorporated into maternal and child health services rather than being treated as separate from routine maternal care.

The mass media constitute important channels through which health information is communicated to members of the public. In contemporary media environments, online news organizations have become significant sources of information because they can disseminate health stories rapidly and make them accessible to audiences beyond the traditional newspaper readership. Online journalism also permits health reports to be presented through combinations of headlines, text, photographs, hyperlinks and quotations, thereby providing several ways through which an issue can be made prominent to audiences. The importance of online media in health communication makes their treatment of postpartum depression worthy of investigation. Media reports can introduce audiences to the symptoms and consequences of a health condition, provide information from health professionals, present personal experiences and draw attention to available interventions. At the same time, the selection and emphasis of information can shape how audiences understand a health problem. A report that emphasizes clinical symptoms and professional treatment, for example, presents a different understanding from one that concentrates on family relationships, cultural practices, social support or personal experiences.

This process is closely related to the concept of media framing. Entman (1993) explains framing as the selection of certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in communication. In news reporting, framing can therefore influence how an issue is defined, what causes are attributed to it, how moral evaluations are presented and what solutions are proposed. The framing of postpartum depression is important because different frames can draw attention to different dimensions of the condition. A medical frame may emphasize diagnosis, symptoms, treatment and professional expertise, while a social or family frame may focus on relationships, social support and the circumstances surrounding motherhood. Similarly, a cultural frame may emphasize traditional beliefs and practices, whereas a public-health frame may draw attention to health systems, prevention, and access to care and institutional responsibilities. Examining these frames can therefore provide insight into the perspectives through which Nigerian online audiences are likely to encounter information about postpartum depression.

PUNCH and Premium Times are therefore relevant media platforms for examining the framing of postpartum depression in Nigerian online journalism. Their online reports provide an opportunity to investigate how the condition has been presented to Nigerian audiences during a recent period. Examining their coverage can reveal whether postpartum depression is predominantly framed through medical, individual,

social, cultural, family, stigma and prevention or public-health perspectives and whether the reports emphasize particular sources and solutions.

Despite the growing attention given to postpartum depression in Nigerian health research, there remains a need for communication-focused research examining how the condition is represented in online news media. It is against this background that this study examines Framing Postpartum Depression in PUNCH and Premium Times from January 2025 to July 2026.

Statement of the Problem

Postpartum depression (PPD) is an important maternal mental-health concern that can affect women following childbirth and may have implications for maternal well-being, family relationships and child development. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022a) identifies the postnatal period as a critical stage for maternal mental and physical recovery and recommends that postnatal services include the identification and management of maternal depression and anxiety. WHO (2022b) also emphasizes that perinatal mental-health problems require appropriate identification, support and care within maternal and child health services.

The problem is relevant to Nigeria, where research has continued to examine postnatal depression and appropriate approaches to its management. For example, Jidong et al. (2025) conducted a multicenter pilot randomized controlled trial involving Nigerian women

and examined a culturally adapted psychological intervention for postnatal depression. The study demonstrates both the presence of postnatal depression as a concern among Nigerian women and the importance of developing interventions that are appropriate to the Nigerian cultural context. The availability and effectiveness of interventions, however, depend partly on awareness, recognition of symptoms and willingness to seek appropriate assistance.

Despite increasing attention to postpartum depression in Nigerian health research, there remains limited empirical attention to how the condition is constructed in Nigerian online journalism. Existing Nigerian research has largely focused on the clinical and psychosocial dimensions of postnatal depression and on interventions for affected women. The 2025 study by Jidong et al. (2025), for instance, focused on treatment through a culturally adapted psychological intervention rather than on media representation. This leaves an important communication gap concerning how Nigerian audiences encounter postpartum depression through online news.

PUNCH and Premium Times provide appropriate cases for examining this issue because they are established Nigerian online news platforms that publish health-related reports. However, the mere presence of postpartum-depression stories on these platforms does not reveal how the condition is framed. It is necessary to examine systematically the frequency and prominence of reports, the dominant frames, the tone of coverage, the

sources whose perspectives are represented, and the solutions or interventions emphasized. The problem addressed by this study, therefore, is the lack of sufficient empirical evidence on how postpartum depression is framed in Nigerian online news reports. In particular, it is not adequately known which aspects of postpartum depression receive prominence in PUNCH and Premium Times, what dominant frames are used in presenting the condition, what tone characterizes the reports, whose voices are represented as sources of information, and what solutions or interventions are promoted. Examining reports published from January 2025 to July 2026 will provide recent evidence on the media construction of postpartum depression and contribute to scholarship in health communication, journalism and maternal mental-health communication.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the framing of postpartum depression in PUNCH and Premium Times online reports from January 2025 to July 2026 while the specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the frequency and prominence of postpartum depression reports published by PUNCH and Premium Times from January 2025 to July 2026;
2. Identify the dominant frames used by PUNCH and Premium Times in reporting postpartum depression;

3. Examine the tone of postpartum depression reports published by PUNCH and Premium Times;
4. Examine the solutions and interventions emphasized in the reporting of postpartum depression by PUNCH and Premium Times.

Significance of the Study

This study will have both theoretical and practical significance. For theoretical significance, the study will serve as a reference for researchers interested in media framing, health journalism, maternal mental health and the representation of health issues in Nigerian digital media.

For practical significance, the study will be beneficial to journalists and online media organizations. Findings from the study will reveal the dominant frames, sources, tone and solutions used in reporting PPD in PUNCH and Premium Times. This may help health journalists and editors identify strengths and possible gaps in their coverage of maternal mental health. For health professionals and maternal mental-health practitioners, the findings may provide insight into how information about PPD is being communicated to the public through prominent online news platforms. The study may help practitioners understand which aspects of PPD receive media attention and whether professional voices are adequately represented. The study will also be useful to government. The study will also be relevant to women, families and the wider public because online news

coverage can provide information about health conditions, available support and appropriate responses.

Concept of Postpartum Depression

Postpartum depression (PPD), also referred to as postnatal depression, is a significant mental-health problem associated with the period following childbirth. It should be distinguished from the temporary emotional changes that some women experience after delivery because postpartum depression can be persistent and may require professional assessment and treatment. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022b) identifies depression among the mental-health conditions that may occur during the perinatal period and emphasizes the need for early identification, appropriate support and effective management within maternal and child health services. PPD can affect a woman's emotional well-being and ability to function during the period after childbirth. Maternal mental-health problems can also have implications for the mother-infant relationship and the wider family environment. WHO (2022b) notes that untreated perinatal mental-health conditions can affect women's well-being and may also have consequences for infants' development. Consequently, the identification and management of postpartum depression are important not only for individual mothers but also for families and public health.

Recent Nigerian research demonstrates the continuing importance of developing appropriate responses to

postnatal depression. Jidong et al. (2025) conducted a multicentred pilot randomized controlled trial involving Nigerian women and evaluated a culturally adapted psychological intervention for postnatal depression. The researchers reported that the intervention was culturally appropriate and acceptable and showed preliminary clinical effectiveness among participating mothers in Nigeria. The study reinforces the importance of considering cultural context when designing responses to postnatal depression.

The concept of postpartum depression is therefore relevant to communication as well as clinical practice. The extent to which women, families and communities recognize symptoms, understand possible causes and know where to obtain assistance may be influenced by the information available to them. The WHO (2022a) explicitly recognizes information and support as components of quality postnatal care. Consequently, communication channels that provide information about postpartum depression have an important potential role in increasing awareness and encouraging appropriate responses.

For the present study, postpartum depression is understood as a significant mental-health condition occurring in the period following childbirth and requiring recognition, appropriate support and, where necessary, professional intervention. This conceptualization provides the basis for examining how

Nigerian online newspapers represent the condition and which aspects of it they make prominent in their reports.

Postpartum Depression in Nigeria

Postpartum depression has increasingly attracted attention within Nigerian maternal and mental-health research. This attention reflects broader recognition that maternal health encompasses both physical and psychological well-being. The WHO (2022a) recommends comprehensive postnatal care that addresses women's physical, emotional and social needs, while its perinatal mental-health guidance emphasizes identification and management of mental-health conditions within maternal and child health services (WHO, 2022b).

The Nigerian context presents particular reasons for examining the condition from both health and communication perspectives. Maternal mental health can be influenced by social relationships, cultural expectations, access to health services and the availability of appropriate support. The WHO (2022b) recommends that perinatal mental-health services be adapted to local and cultural contexts, indicating that responses developed without consideration of women's social environments may be less appropriate or acceptable.

Recent Nigerian intervention research provides evidence of efforts to address postnatal depression through culturally responsive approaches. Jidong et al. (2025)

evaluated a culturally adapted cognitive behavioural intervention combined with learning through play among Nigerian mothers experiencing postnatal depression. The researchers found the intervention to be culturally appropriate and acceptable, with preliminary evidence of clinical effectiveness. This finding is important because it demonstrates that Nigerian research is moving beyond simply identifying the existence of postnatal depression towards developing contextually appropriate responses.

The Nigerian literature also highlights the importance of making maternal mental-health information accessible to women and families. The WHO (2022b) recommends creating an environment in which women feel safe to discuss mental-health difficulties and can receive respectful, non-stigmatizing care. Communication is therefore relevant to the Nigerian PPD problem because information can influence recognition of symptoms, understanding of the condition and awareness of possible sources of support.

The present study addresses this communication dimension by examining PPD reports published by PUNCH and Premium Times between January 2025 and July 2026. Rather than investigating the prevalence or clinical causes of PPD, the study focuses on the ways online news reports select and emphasize particular aspects of the condition. This distinction is important because the study is concerned with media representation and framing, not clinical diagnosis.

Media Framing of Health Issues

Media framing provides a useful approach for understanding how news organizations construct and present issues to their audiences. Entman (1993) conceptualizes framing as the selection of certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient within a communicating text. Frames can therefore influence how audiences understand what a problem is, what causes it, how it should be evaluated and what solutions may be appropriate.

The application of framing to health communication is particularly useful because health problems can be represented from different perspectives. A health condition may be framed primarily in terms of medical diagnosis and treatment, individual responsibility, social circumstances, public policy or institutional responsibility. Each frame highlights certain dimensions while potentially giving less attention to others.

In reporting postpartum depression, for example, a medical frame may emphasize symptoms, diagnosis, professional expertise and treatment. A personal frame may focus on the experiences of individual mothers. A social or family frame may emphasize relationships, social support and the responsibilities of partners and relatives. A cultural frame may draw attention to cultural practices and beliefs surrounding childbirth. A public-health frame may focus on prevention, health systems, access to care and institutional responsibility. A stigma

frame may emphasize misunderstanding, discrimination and barriers to seeking assistance.

Framing is therefore appropriate for the present study because the objective is not simply to count PPD stories but to identify the dominant patterns of meaning contained in those stories. Examining frames can reveal which explanations, actors, causes and solutions receive prominence in Nigerian online reporting of postpartum depression.

For this study, framing is operationalized through observable characteristics of PUNCH and Premium Times reports, including the dominant problem definition, causes attributed to postpartum depression, sources used, tone, emphasis and solutions or interventions proposed. This operationalization will enable the study to move from the theoretical concept of framing to measurable content-analysis categories.

Empirical Review

Adeniran, Kayode, and Oso (2019) examined the framing of maternal and child healthcare (MCH) issues in Nigerian newspapers. The study was based on the premise that the frame adopted in reporting health issues can influence how audiences understand health problems. Using content analysis, the researchers examined 1,235 MCH-related editorial items published by four Nigerian national newspapers over a 12-month period. The study focused particularly on the public-health frame and the coping-versus-alarm message

frame. The findings showed limited adoption of the public-health frame, with only 12% of the analyzed items reflecting the frame, while coping messages were more dominant than alarm messages. The researchers also observed considerable reliance on official sources, which they argued could limit the contextual depth of health reporting.

The study is closely related to the present research because both employ content analysis to investigate the framing of health-related issues in Nigerian newspapers. It also provides useful methodological support for examining frames, sources and the nature of health reporting. However, Adeniran et al. focused broadly on maternal and child healthcare rather than postpartum depression as a specific maternal mental-health condition. Their study also examined four newspapers and was conducted using an earlier 12-month period, whereas the present study focuses specifically on PPD reports in PUNCH and Premium Times from January 2025 to July 2026. Although Adeniran et al. established that Nigerian newspapers may frame maternal and child-health issues in particular ways, the study did not establish how postpartum depression specifically is framed. It also did not examine the more recent online-media environment represented by PUNCH and Premium Times. The present study fills this gap by concentrating specifically on PPD and examining the dominant frames, tone, sources, prominence and proposed interventions in recent online reports.

Ahmad, Ismail, and Mat (2025) investigated the framing of exclusive breastfeeding in Nigerian newspapers. The study examined how Nigerian online newspapers presented exclusive breastfeeding and paid particular attention to the predominant tone used in the reporting. The researchers adopted a qualitative content-analysis approach and purposively selected four newspapers based on readership and circulation. The study is particularly relevant because it demonstrates the application of media-framing analysis to a maternal and child-health communication issue in Nigerian online newspapers.

The study is similar to the present research in three important respects. First, both studies investigate health communication through Nigerian online newspapers. Second, both employ content analysis to examine media treatment of a maternal-health-related issue. Third, both are concerned with the way news organizations give prominence to particular aspects of a health issue and the tone through which the issue is presented. However, Ahmad et al. focused on exclusive breastfeeding, not postpartum depression. Exclusive breastfeeding is primarily maternal and infant nutrition/health behaviour, whereas PPD is a maternal mental-health condition involving psychological, social and cultural dimensions. Consequently, the frames relevant to PPD may extend beyond those applicable to breastfeeding. In addition, the present study focuses specifically on PUNCH and Premium Times and covers January 2025 to July 2026. Whereas Ahmad et al. demonstrate that framing

analysis can reveal how Nigerian online newspapers communicate maternal and child-health issues, they did not explain how Nigerian online newspapers construct the meaning of postpartum depression. The present study addresses this gap by examining PPD-specific frames, including medical, personal, social/family, cultural, stigma, public-health and solution-oriented frames, together with the sources and tone associated with those frames.

Onaolapo et al. (2024) investigated the framing of maternal-health news in three Nigerian newspapers. The researchers selected PUNCH, The Guardian and Nigerian Tribune purposively and analyzed 370 articles. The study was motivated by concerns about the attention given to maternal-health reporting and the possible implications of media coverage for public awareness. The study is highly relevant to the present research because it examines maternal-health news framing in Nigerian newspapers and includes PUNCH, one of the two media organizations selected for the present study. It therefore provides a useful basis for understanding how maternal-health issues have previously been investigated through Nigerian newspaper content analysis. Their study, while the present research compares PUNCH with Premium Times. In addition, the present study is concerned with the online reports published during a clearly defined contemporary period of January 2025 to July 2026. The earlier study establishes that maternal-health issues receive particular forms of framing in Nigerian newspapers but does not reveal the specific

frames used when postpartum depression is reported. The present study consequently extends the literature by narrowing the subject from maternal health generally to PPD specifically and by comparing the framing practices of two prominent Nigerian online news platforms.

However, an important gap emerges from the reviewed literature. None of the identified studies combines the specific subject of postpartum depression with systematic analysis of its framing in PUNCH and Premium Times online reports during January 2025–July 2026. Existing framing studies have concentrated on maternal and child health generally, exclusive breastfeeding, or maternal health as a broad category, while the Nigerian PPD study identified above concentrated on clinical intervention rather than media representation.

The present study therefore seeks to bridge this gap by examining how postpartum depression is framed in PUNCH and Premium Times online reports from January 2025 to July 2026. Beyond determining the amount of coverage, the study will examine the dominant frames, prominence, tone, sources and solutions/interventions represented in the reports. This focus provides a distinct contribution to Nigerian health-communication and journalism scholarship.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Framing Theory, The theory is particularly relevant because the study is concerned

not simply with the amount of coverage given to PPD, but with the particular aspects of the condition that the selected online newspapers emphasize, the sources they use, the tone of their reports, the causes they identify and the solutions they propose. The intellectual roots of framing can be traced to the work of Goffman (1974), who explained frames as interpretive structures through which individuals organise and make sense of everyday experiences. In the field of mass communication, Entman (1993) developed the concept further by explaining framing as the process through which communicators select certain aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text. From a media perspective, framing suggests that news organizations do not simply reproduce reality in an entirely neutral manner. Journalists and editors make choices about what events or issues deserve attention, which aspects should appear in headlines and leads, whose views should be quoted, what information should be emphasized and what information should receive less attention. These decisions can give audiences particular ways of interpreting an issue. Entman (1993) therefore argues that framing involves selection and salience: some elements of an issue are selected and made more noticeable than others.

For the present study, Framing Theory provides a basis for identifying the different ways PUNCH and Premium Times construct postpartum depression in their online reports. The study will examine whether reports define PPD primarily as a medical/clinical problem, a personal

or psychological problem, a family/social problem, a cultural problem, a stigma-related problem, or a public-health and institutional problem. These categories will be operationalized in the coding instrument so that the frames can be systematically identified and compared across the two media organizations. The theory also provides a basis for examining how causes of postpartum depression are presented. Identifying such causal explanations is important because the way a problem is explained can influence how responsibility for the problem is understood. Entman's (1993) conception of framing specifically recognizes causal interpretation as one of the important functions of a frame.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative content analysis research design to examine the framing of postpartum depression (PPD) in online reports published by PUNCH and Premium Times from 1 January 2025 to 31 July 2026. The population comprised all accessible online reports published by the two newspapers within the specified period in which postpartum depression or postnatal depression constituted a substantive focus. PUNCH and Premium Times were purposively selected because of their established presence in Nigerian online journalism and their publication of health-related reports. The individual online report constituted the unit of analysis, while a census sampling technique was used, meaning that every report that satisfied the inclusion criteria was analyzed. Data were collected using a

structured coding sheet. Cohen's kappa coefficient was used to determine the level of inter-coder agreement. A coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable. The coded data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The results were presented in tables and interpreted according to the four objectives of the study

Results

Table 1a: Frequency of PPD Reports by Online Newspapers

Online Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
PUNCH	5	83.3
Premium Times	1	16.7
Total	6	100

Source: Author's Analysis 2026

Table 1a shows that, PUNCH accounted for the greater proportion of PPD reports during the period under study.

Table 1a: Prominence of PPD Reports by Online Newspapers

Online Newspapers	High (%) Low (%)	Moderate (%)	Total
PUNCH	4(80.0) 0(0.0)	1(20.0)	5(100.0)
Premium Times	1(100.0) 0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(100.0)
Total	5(83.3) 0(0.0)	1(16.7)	6(100.0)

Source: Author's Analysis 2026

Table 1b shows that five (83.3%) of the reports had high prominence and one (16.7%) had moderate prominence.

Table 2: Dominant Frames used in Reporting PPD PPD Reports by Online Newspapers

Medical/Clinical	Frequency	Percentage (%)
PUNCH	2	33.3
Social/Family/Cultural	3	50.0
Stigma/Misinformation	1	16.7
Total	6	100.0

Source: Author's Analysis 2026

Table 2 indicates that the social/family/cultural frame was the most dominant, accounting for three reports

(50.0%). The January 31 PUNCH report provided a distinct misinformation/stigma frame by reporting a false attribution concerning PPD and the subsequent correction.

Table 3: Tone of Postpartum Depression Reports

Tone	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Neutral/Informational	4	66.7
Positive/Supportive	2	33.3
Negative/Stigmatizing	0	0.00
Mixed	0	0.0
Total	6	100.0

Source: Author's Analysis 2026

Table 3 shows that informational tone is evident in the reports that relied on medical experts to explain PPD, its risk factors and available interventions. The supportive tone was particularly evident in reports emphasizing family, partner and traditional support for new mothers.

Table 4: Solutions and Interventions Emphasized in PPD Reports

Solution/Intervention	Frequency	Percentage of Reports (%)
Family,partner/social support	5	83.3

Professional treatment/Counselling	3	50.0
Awareness/Education	3	50.0
Early identification/Screening	1	16.7
Responsible Information/Correction of Misinformation	1	16.7

Source: Author's Analysis 2026

Table 4 shows that family, partner and social support was the most frequently emphasized intervention, appearing in five of the six reports (83.3%). Professional treatment and counselling and public awareness/education each appeared in three reports (50.0%). Early identification/screening and correction of misinformation appeared in one report each (16.7%). The emphasis on social support is particularly clear in the PUNCH reports on husbands' support and Omugwo, while the Premium Times report recommends psychotherapy, medication, mental-health screening and stronger.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective sought to determine the frequency and prominence of postpartum depression (PPD) reports published by PUNCH and Premium Times from January 2025 to July 2026. The findings shows that five (83.3%) of the reports gave PPD high prominence, while one

(16.7%) gave it moderate prominence. This indicates that although PPD received relatively limited coverage in terms of frequency, the reports that substantially focused on the condition generally accorded it considerable editorial attention. The finding also suggests that postpartum depression had not yet become a consistently prominent issue within the online health-news agenda of the selected newspapers during the study period. The finding is consistent with Adeniran, et al (2019), who found that Nigerian newspapers give varying levels of attention to maternal and child-health issues and that the nature of media attention can influence the visibility of such issues. The present study extends this observation by focusing specifically on postpartum depression and contemporary online newspaper reports.

The second objective examined the dominant frames used by PUNCH and Premium Times in reporting postpartum depression. The study found that the social/family/cultural frame was the most dominant, accounting for three (50.0%) of the six reports. The medical/clinical frame accounted for two (33.3%), while the stigma/misinformation frame accounted for one (16.7%). The dominance of the social/family/cultural frame indicates that the selected newspapers did not construct postpartum depression solely as a medical disorder. This finding is significant within the Nigerian context because postpartum experiences are influenced by family structures, cultural expectations and social relationships.

The third objective examined the tone of PPD reports published by the two newspapers. The study found that four (66.7%) reports adopted a neutral/informational tone, while two (33.3%) adopted a positive/supportive tone. No report was classified as predominantly negative or stigmatizing. The predominance of a neutral/informational tone suggests that the selected newspapers generally approached postpartum depression as a health issue requiring explanation and public understanding. Rather than portraying women experiencing PPD in a negative manner, the reports largely provided information about the condition, its manifestations and possible responses.

The fourth objective examined the solutions and interventions emphasized in the reporting of postpartum depression. The study found that family, partner and social support was the most frequently emphasized intervention, appearing in five (83.3%) of the six reports. The findings therefore indicate that the selected newspapers generally framed solutions to PPD in a supportive manner, with particular emphasis on family and social support

Summary of Major Findings

The major findings are summarized in line with the four specific objectives of the study.

1. The study found that six eligible reports on postpartum depression were identified within the study.

2. The finding indicates that the selected newspapers presented postpartum depression not only as a medical condition but also as an issue associated with family relationships, cultural practices, social support and information.

3. The finding indicates that the selected newspapers generally approached postpartum depression from an informational and supportive perspective rather than using overtly negative or stigmatizing representations.

4. The finding shows that the reports largely emphasized supportive interventions involving families and partners, while professional care, counselling and public education were also recognized as important responses to postpartum depression.

Recommendations

1. PUNCH and Premium Times should increase the frequency and continuity of their coverage of postpartum depression.

2. Journalists should maintain the valuable social and cultural dimensions of PPD reporting while also providing adequate medical and psychological information.

3. Journalists should avoid language that blames ridicules or portrays women experiencing postpartum depression as weak or incapable mothers. Reporting

should instead promote understanding and encourage appropriate help-seeking.

4. Journalists should continue to highlight the role of husbands, partners, families and caregivers in supporting women experiencing postpartum depression. However, coverage should also provide more information about professional treatment, counselling, early identification and appropriate mental-health services so that social support is presented as complementary to, rather than a substitute for, professional care when needed.

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**THE ENGLISH BIBLE AS A TRANSLATED TEXT
AND ITS ROLE IN NATIONAL COHESION
AMONG CHRISTIANS IN FCT ABUJA**

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Abstract

This study examined the perceived role of the English Bible as a translated text in promoting national cohesion among Christians in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The study was anchored on Allport's Contact Hypothesis and Linguistic Relativity Theory. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were obtained from 338 valid respondents drawn from the six Area Councils of the FCT. A structured questionnaire containing four five-point Likert-scale items and one open-ended item was used for data collection.

Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, while thematic analysis was employed for the open-ended responses. The findings revealed a high overall perception of the English Bible's contribution to national cohesion, with a weighted average mean of 4.12. The highest-rated dimension was unity across ethnic backgrounds ($\bar{x} = 4.29$), followed by interethnic understanding ($\bar{x} = 4.18$) and peaceful coexistence ($\bar{x} = 4.12$). Although respondents also perceived English as making Christian teachings more widely acceptable ($\bar{x} = 3.88$), this dimension recorded comparatively greater variation in responses. The open-ended responses identified better communication (34.9%) as the leading contribution, followed by language marginalisation (32.8%) and unity promotion (31.4%). The study concludes that the English Bible functions as both a shared religious and communicative resource and a potential source of linguistic marginalisation. It recommends multilingual Christian communication that retains English as a bridge while strengthening indigenous-language Bible use.

Keywords: English Bible; Bible translation; national cohesion; interethnic communication; linguistics marginalisation.

Introduction

The Bible occupies a distinctive position in the history of translation because Christianity has historically

depended on the movement of its sacred texts across languages and cultures. The Bible was not originally produced in English; its principal textual traditions are associated with Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Consequently, every English Bible is, in an important sense, the product of translation, involving the transfer of religious concepts, cultural references, metaphors, idioms and theological meanings from biblical source languages into a receptor language. Bible translation therefore extends beyond the substitution of words between languages. It involves the interpretation and communication of meanings within particular linguistic, cultural and religious environments.

The international history of Bible translation demonstrates that translated Scripture can influence not only religious practice but also literacy, language development, cultural identity and social organisation. One of the most influential examples is Martin Luther's German Bible, which contributed significantly to the development and wider diffusion of written German. The wider history of Bible translation similarly illustrates the capacity of translated religious texts to enter the linguistic and cultural life of communities and to acquire functions beyond their original religious purpose.

Translation scholars have consequently treated Bible translation as a particularly important area for understanding the relationship between language, culture and meaning. Nida's (1964) theory of dynamic equivalence, for example, emphasised the importance of

producing a response in the receptor audience that is comparable to that of the original audience. This approach was particularly influential in religious translation because it shifted attention from formal correspondence alone towards the communicative effect of translated texts. Bible translation therefore raises questions about how religious meanings can be made intelligible and culturally meaningful to audiences whose linguistic and cultural experiences differ from those of the source text.

The history of Bible translation also demonstrates that language choice can have social consequences. When a sacred text is translated into a language accessible to different communities, it can create a shared textual space through which members of those communities encounter common narratives, values and religious teachings. In multilingual societies, such a shared textual resource can contribute to communication and the formation of collective identities. At the same time, the selection of one language over others may establish linguistic hierarchies. A language associated with religious authority, education or institutional power can acquire greater prestige, while other languages may become less prominent in particular domains.

This dual possibility is especially relevant to the English Bible. English is not merely a linguistic vehicle in contemporary societies; in many parts of the world, it is associated with education, international communication, administration, science, media and social mobility.

When biblical discourse is communicated through English, therefore, the religious message becomes connected to the wider social meanings attached to English. The English Bible may consequently function simultaneously as a religious text, a translated text and a linguistic resource through which people from different linguistic backgrounds encounter a common body of Christian teachings.

The relationship between Bible translation and language becomes particularly significant in Africa because Christianity developed within highly multilingual and culturally diverse societies. Missionary expansion from the nineteenth century was accompanied by extensive linguistic activity, including the production of grammars, dictionaries, primers and biblical translations in African languages. Religious translation consequently became one of the major areas through which European missionaries encountered, documented and systematised African languages (Naudé & Miller-Naudé, 2011). Bible translation thus participated in both religious evangelisation and the development of written linguistic resources.

However, the African history of Bible translation cannot be understood solely as a positive story of linguistic development. It was also embedded within colonial encounters and unequal relations of cultural power. Mbuwayesango (2018) argues that Bible translation formed part of the wider colonial project in Africa and that translation choices sometimes distorted or rejected

culturally significant African concepts. Similarly, Naudé and Miller-Naudé (2011) emphasise that religious translation in Africa must be understood in relation to the social, cultural and historical circumstances surrounding the source and receptor languages. Translation therefore became an important site where Christianity, European linguistic practices and African cultural systems interacted.

Nevertheless, African-language Bible translations also enabled African Christians to appropriate Christianity through their own languages. Translation into indigenous languages made it possible for communities to read, interpret and discuss biblical texts using linguistic resources embedded in their own cultural experiences. Zogbo (2011) observes that African Bible translation encounters distinctive challenges because biblical concepts and cultural objects do not always have straightforward equivalents in African languages. At the same time, African translators possess important advantages because aspects of African social life, including community values, hospitality, honour, shame and extended family relationships, may provide conceptual points of contact with biblical materials.

This process illustrates an important principle: translation can simultaneously domesticate a religious message and transform the receptor language. African languages are not passive containers into which foreign religious meanings are poured. They can expand their lexical, semantic and functional resources in order to

accommodate new religious concepts. Recent scholarship on African Christianity similarly shows that vernacular Bible translations have enabled African readers to integrate biblical teachings with indigenous perspectives, thereby contributing to distinctive forms of biblical interpretation and Christian practice ([Asamoah-Gyadu](#), 2026).

The African experience therefore presents a significant paradox. On one hand, indigenous-language Bible translation can strengthen linguistic identity, cultural participation and religious ownership. On the other hand, the dominance of European languages in missionary, educational and institutional contexts can contribute to linguistic hierarchy and marginalisation. Aikins (2025), for example, argues that mother-tongue engagement is important for cultural identity and meaningful theological expression in African communities. This tension provides an important background for examining the English Bible in a multilingual country such as Nigeria.

Nigeria provides an especially appropriate context for examining the relationship between English, Bible translation and national cohesion because of its exceptional linguistic and ethnic diversity. English occupies a powerful position as the principal language of formal education, government, media, administration and much interethnic communication. Contemporary research describes English as a dominant language across official, educational, media, religious and

interethnic domains in Nigeria (Ugwuanyi, 2026). In such a multilingual environment, English can function as a relatively common communicative medium among Nigerians who do not share an indigenous language.

The position of English has important implications for Christianity. Christian organisations, particularly churches with congregations drawn from different ethnic groups, frequently employ English to communicate religious teachings across linguistic boundaries. The use of English can therefore reduce the linguistic barriers that might otherwise exist among Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Gbagyi, Tiv, Idoma, Efik, Ibibio and numerous other language communities. In this respect, English may function as a linguistic bridge through which Christians from different ethnic backgrounds participate in shared worship and engage with common religious texts.

The relationship between English and national cohesion is nevertheless complex. The same language that facilitates communication, can also reproduce inequalities between English and indigenous languages. English has historically been associated with colonial administration, formal education and socioeconomic mobility, whereas many indigenous Nigerian languages have had more restricted institutional domains. Consequently, the use of English in religious settings may make Christian teachings accessible across ethnic boundaries while simultaneously reducing the visibility or functional relevance of indigenous languages.

This is particularly important when the English Bible is considered as a translated text. The English Bible does not simply represent Christianity in a neutral linguistic form. It represents a particular linguistic mediation of biblical meanings. Nigerian Christians who use the English Bible encounter Christian teachings through English rather than through Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek, and their interpretations are consequently mediated through the lexical, grammatical and cultural resources of English. The fact that many Nigerian Christians nevertheless find the English Bible communicatively effective demonstrates how translation can create a common textual resource across linguistic boundaries.

Nigeria's own history of Bible translation provides a useful illustration of the reciprocal relationship between translation and language development. Samuel Ajayi Crowther's early linguistic and biblical work included the production of an *Igbo religious primer* containing scriptural passages, the *Ten Commandments* and the *Lord's Prayer*. Subsequent Bible translation activities in Igbo contributed to the development of written forms of the language. Oyali (2018) argues that Bible translation into Igbo contributed to language elaboration, expanding the language's functional domains and introducing lexical and semantic resources for expressing Christian concepts.

The history of the Union Igbo Bible is particularly instructive. Fulford (2002) shows that the translation was not simply a matter of transferring biblical content into

Igbo; it was connected to broader questions about the development and unification of the Igbo language. The attempt to produce a common Igbo Bible consequently intersected with assumptions about whether Igbo could or should be treated as a unified linguistic entity. Oyali (2018) similarly demonstrates that the history of Igbo Bible translation involved Isuama Igbo, Onitsha Igbo and Union Igbo before later developments in Standard Igbo.

The Igbo case therefore, provides a particularly useful example for understanding the relationship between translation and social cohesion. Translation can create a common linguistic resource, but the definition of the language into which translation occurs may itself involve questions of identity, standardisation and linguistic representation.

The relevance of Igbo language and worldview to the present study lies in the importance attached to relationality, community and social interconnectedness. Igbo thought has frequently been characterised by a strong communitarian orientation in which the individual is understood in relation to the community. Ogbu and Abah (2019), for example, describe Igbo communitarian thought in terms of relationship, connectedness, solidarity, social justice, trust and communal responsibility.

This worldview provides a useful conceptual lens for interpreting the idea of national cohesion. In an Igbo

context, the principle commonly expressed as “Igwebuike”, literally associated with the strength of the group or community, encapsulates the importance of collective strength and cooperation. Scholarship on Igbo communal life connects this principle with solidarity, hospitality, friendship, mutual assistance and working together (Ogbu & Abah, 2019). Related concepts such as *nwanne* and *umunna* similarly foreground relationships and belonging.

The relevance of such concepts to Bible translation lies in the fact that religious meanings do not exist independently of cultural conceptual systems. A translated expression concerning brotherhood, fellowship, peace, community or mutual responsibility may acquire additional significance when encountered by speakers whose worldview already gives strong importance to communal relationships. Translation is therefore an interpretive encounter between textual meaning and the conceptual resources of the receptor community.

Igbo proverbs provide another useful illustration. Proverbs are deeply embedded in Igbo communicative practice and are used to express social values, wisdom, moral expectations and relationships. Research on the translation of Igbo proverbs shows that differences in cultural context, linguistic structure and communicative function can affect the extent to which meaning and social intent are retained when Igbo expressions are translated into English (Eze & Nwike, 2025). This

observation is relevant to biblical translation because it demonstrates that translation between English and an indigenous African language is not merely a lexical operation. Cultural meaning, social relationships and communicative purposes must also be considered.

For example, the Igbo expression “Igwebuiké” can be rendered approximately as “there is strength in unity” or “community is strength,” but neither English formulation necessarily reproduces all of the cultural associations of the Igbo concept. The example illustrates the broader problem of translation: a translated expression may communicate the central propositional meaning while leaving some culturally embedded associations implicit. The same issue can arise when biblical concepts are translated into African languages or when English-speaking readers encounter biblical concepts whose original cultural environment differs from their own.

The Igbo experience therefore demonstrates two sides of the relationship between translation and cohesion. Translation can create shared linguistic resources and make religious teachings accessible to a wider population. However, the choice of language and the treatment of culturally embedded meanings can also influence whose linguistic and cultural perspectives become visible within religious discourse.

The Federal Capital Territory provides a particularly significant setting for examining these issues because Abuja is characterised by substantial ethnic, linguistic

and religious diversity. The FCT is not simply a geographical centre of government; it is also a major site of migration and interaction among Nigerians from different parts of the country. Indigenous communities include Gwari/Gbagyi, Koro, Gwandara, Ganagana, Afo, Hausa, Fulani and Bassa peoples, while the wider population includes people from numerous other Nigerian ethnic and linguistic communities.

This diversity makes Abuja an especially appropriate environment for investigating whether a common religious language can facilitate interaction across ethnic boundaries. Christians from different parts of Nigeria may attend the same churches, participate in the same religious organisations and encounter the same biblical texts despite having different mother tongues. In such circumstances, English can provide a shared communicative medium. Contemporary research on Nigerian English similarly identifies its role in interethnic communication and notes that its perceived ethnic neutrality can make it attractive as a common language in multilingual contexts (Ugwuanyi, 2026).

The religious composition of Abuja further reinforces the relevance of the issue. The FCT is situated within Nigeria's religiously diverse Middle Belt, where substantial Christian and Muslim populations coexist. Historical accounts of religious life in Nigeria identify the Federal Capital Territory among areas in which Christians and Muslims live in significant numbers, alongside considerable denominational diversity within

Christianity. Abuja consequently provides a setting in which questions of communication, identity, coexistence and social cohesion have particular significance.

Within Christian communities, the English Bible can provide a common textual point of reference for people whose mother tongues differ. A Christian from an Igbo-speaking background, for example, may worship alongside a Hausa, Yoruba, Tiv or Gbagyi speaker while all participants engage with the same biblical passage in English. The shared language does not eliminate ethnic or linguistic differences, but it may create a temporary communicative space in which participants identify primarily through their shared religious affiliation.

The present study is therefore concerned with whether this potential communicative function is perceived by Christians in FCT Abuja as contributing to national cohesion. The issue is not whether English is intrinsically unifying, nor whether translation automatically produces social harmony. Rather, the relevant question is how Nigerian Christians perceive the English Bible as a translated religious text operating within a multilingual social environment.

At the same time, the Abuja context makes it necessary to recognise the possible cost of linguistic unification through English. If English becomes the dominant language through which religious knowledge is accessed, indigenous languages may have fewer opportunities to function in formal Christian education,

biblical interpretation and worship. The open-ended findings of the present study are particularly important in this regard because respondents identify better communication, unity promotion and language marginalisation as closely competing themes. This suggests that the English Bible may have both integrative and exclusionary linguistic consequences.

The issue can therefore be conceptualised as a tension between communicative integration and linguistic diversity. On one side, the English Bible may provide a common religious text through which Christians from different ethnic backgrounds communicate, understand shared teachings and construct a common Christian identity. On the other side, the privileging of English may reduce the visibility and functional domains of indigenous Nigerian languages. This tension is consistent with wider African scholarship showing that Bible translation can facilitate cultural and religious participation while also being implicated in colonial linguistic hierarchies (Mbuwayesango, 2019; Naudé & Miller-Naudé, 2011).

Against this background, the English Bible in FCT Abuja can be understood as more than a religious document. It is a *translated text, a communicative resource and a socially situated linguistic practice*. Its potential contribution to national cohesion emerges from its capacity to provide Christians from different linguistic backgrounds with a shared textual and communicative medium. Yet its social meaning cannot

be separated from Nigeria's multilingual reality and the historical status of English. The present investigation consequently examines whether Christians in FCT Abuja perceive the English Bible as promoting unity, interethnic understanding and peaceful coexistence, while also considering the extent to which its dominance may contribute to the marginalisation of indigenous languages.

Objective of the Study

The specific objective of the study is:

To examine the extent to which the English Bible promotes national cohesion among Christians in FCT Abuja, with particular attention to its role in fostering unity across ethnic backgrounds, enhancing the acceptability of Christian teachings, promoting interethnic understanding, encouraging peaceful coexistence, and facilitating communication among Christians from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study will focus on the extent to which the English Bible promotes national cohesion among Christians in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The central objective will be to examine how the English Bible contributes to unity, interethnic understanding, effective communication, and peaceful coexistence among Christians from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The study will also examine respondents'

views on whether the use of the English Bible contributes to or hinders national cohesion, particularly through better communication, unity promotion, peaceful coexistence, and the possible marginalisation of indigenous languages.

Geographically, the study will cover all six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory: Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Bwari Area Council, Gwagwalada Area Council, Kuje Area Council, Kwali Area Council, and Abaji Area Council. The inclusion of all six Area Councils will provide a broader representation of Christians across the FCT and will enable the study to capture perceptions from different geographical, ethnic, linguistic, and sociocultural settings within the territory. Abuja's diverse population, comprising people from different parts of Nigeria, will provide an appropriate context for examining how a shared religious text in English may facilitate communication and interaction among Christians who may not share the same indigenous language.

Conceptually, the study will centre on the English Bible and national cohesion. The English Bible will be considered a translated religious text because biblical materials originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek have been translated into English. However, the study will not evaluate the accuracy, quality, equivalence, or translation strategies of particular English Bible versions. Translation will be considered primarily as the linguistic and historical context through

which the English Bible functions as a shared religious text among linguistically diverse Christians.

The empirical scope will be delimited to four dimensions of perceived national cohesion: unity across ethnic backgrounds, universal acceptability of Christian teachings, interethnic understanding, and peaceful coexistence. These dimensions will correspond directly to the four structured questionnaire items. An additional open-ended item will provide respondents with an opportunity to explain how the English Bible contributes to or hinders national cohesion. The responses will be examined in relation to themes such as better communication, unity promotion, peaceful coexistence, and language marginalisation.

The study will focus on respondents' perceptions rather than causal determination. Consequently, a high perception that the English Bible promotes unity or peaceful coexistence will not be interpreted as proof that the English Bible directly causes national cohesion. Rather, the study will establish how respondents across the six Area Councils perceive and experience its potential contribution to cohesion within their religious and social environments.

The study will not seek to generalise its findings to all Nigerian Christians outside the FCT. Although the discussion will draw on Nigeria's wider multilingual context and use examples from Igbo language, Igbo worldview, and Igbo Bible translation to illuminate

issues of language, culture, translation, and cohesion, these examples will be illustrative rather than separate empirical components of the study.

Thus, the scope of the study will ultimately be defined by its central objective: to determine the extent to which the English Bible is perceived to promote national cohesion among Christians across the six Area Councils of the FCT, Abuja, while recognising both its integrative communicative function and its potential implications for indigenous languages.

Theoretical Framework

Contact Hypothesis (1954)

The study will be anchored partly on Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis, which proposes that interaction among members of different social groups can contribute to the reduction of prejudice and the development of more positive intergroup relationships, particularly where interaction occurs under favourable conditions. The theory will be relevant to the present study because Christians in FCT Abuja will come from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and may not share the same indigenous language. The English Bible may provide a common linguistic and religious resource through which these Christians encounter similar biblical teachings, participate in worship, communicate religious ideas, and develop a sense of shared Christian identity.

From this perspective, the study may find that respondents perceive the English Bible as contributing to unity among Christians from different ethnic backgrounds, interethnic understanding, and peaceful coexistence. It is also possible that respondents will identify English-mediated biblical communication as facilitating interaction among Christians whose indigenous languages differ. Such findings would support the proposition that a shared communicative and religious medium can create opportunities for interaction across ethnic boundaries.

The theory will therefore provide a basis for interpreting possible findings concerning whether the English Bible helps Christians to move beyond ethnic and linguistic differences towards a broader sense of religious and national belonging. However, the theory will not imply that the use of a common language automatically produces cohesion. The extent to which the English Bible contributes to cohesion will depend on respondents' experiences and perceptions within their particular social and religious contexts.

Linguistic Relativity Theory (1956)

The study will also draw on the Linguistic Relativity perspective, associated particularly with Sapir (1929) and Whorf (1956), which emphasises the relationship between language, thought, perception, and cultural experience. The theory will be relevant because the study

will examine the English Bible as a translated religious text operating within a multilingual Nigerian society.

From this perspective, the language through which biblical teachings are encountered may influence how religious concepts are understood and communicated. English may provide a common medium through which Christians from different ethnic groups access biblical teachings, potentially making communication across linguistic boundaries easier. At the same time, the dominant use of English may raise questions about the place of indigenous languages in religious communication.

The study may therefore find that respondents associate the English Bible with better communication and wider accessibility of Christian teachings. Conversely, some respondents may perceive the dominance of English as contributing to the reduced use, visibility, or relevance of indigenous languages in Christian contexts. Such possible findings would be consistent with the Linguistic Relativity perspective because they would demonstrate that language choice is not merely a neutral means of transmitting information but may have implications for cultural identity, meaning-making, and linguistic practices.

The theory will also provide a useful basis for incorporating the Igbo linguistic and cultural perspective into the interpretation of the study. For instance, an Igbo concept such as *Igwebuike*, which conveys ideas of

collective strength and solidarity, illustrates how culturally embedded meanings may not always be fully represented by a single English equivalent. Similarly, concepts expressed through Igbo proverbs and other culturally specific forms may undergo semantic and cultural negotiation when translated into English. The study may therefore reveal that the English Bible facilitates communication across linguistic boundaries while also generating concerns about the preservation and continued use of indigenous languages.

Relationship of the Theories to Possible Findings

The two theories will complement each other. Contact Hypothesis will primarily explain the possible social and interethnic effects of sharing the English Bible, whereas Linguistic Relativity will help explain the possible linguistic and cultural implications of using English as the medium through which biblical teachings are communicated.

Thus, the study may potentially identify a dual relationship:

*English Bible → shared religious communication
→ interethnic interaction → unity and peaceful
coexistence*

while also potentially identifying:

*English Bible in English → greater cross-
linguistic accessibility → reduced reliance on*

indigenous languages → possible linguistic marginalisation

This theoretical combination is particularly appropriate because it allows the study to investigate both sides of the research objective without assuming the outcome in advance. The empirical data will determine whether respondents ultimately perceive the English Bible as predominantly cohesive, communicative, marginalising, or a combination of these functions.

Related Studies

Recent scholarship has continued to demonstrate that Bible translation is not merely a linguistic exercise but a process with implications for communication, cultural identity, religious participation, and social relations. However, much of the recent literature has concentrated on the translation of the Bible into indigenous African languages, cultural adaptation, and comprehension rather than on the contribution of the English Bible to national cohesion among Christians in a multilingual urban Nigerian setting. Three recent studies are particularly relevant to the present study.

Alawode (2024) examined the historical and missiological relevance of Christian translation, with particular attention to Bible translation into vernacular languages. The study employed a descriptive approach based on relevant literature and internet sources. It argues that Christian translation has played an important role in the spread of Christianity and has implications for

literacy, cultural preservation, and the localisation of Christianity. The study further maintains that translating Christian materials into indigenous languages can make Christianity more meaningful to local populations by connecting biblical teachings with their linguistic and cultural environments.

The relevance of Alawode's study to the present research lies in its recognition of translation as a communicative and cultural process rather than merely a transfer of words from one language to another. This perspective is important to the present study because the English Bible will be considered as a translated religious text operating within Nigeria's multilingual environment. Alawode's emphasis on communication and cultural relevance also provides a basis for considering whether the English Bible can facilitate communication among Christians who have different indigenous languages.

However, Alawode's study is primarily historical and missiological. It does not empirically examine whether the English Bible promotes national cohesion, interethnic understanding, unity, or peaceful coexistence among Christians in a specific Nigerian setting. It also does not focus on FCT Abuja or investigate Christians' perceptions through questionnaire data. The present study will therefore extend this line of inquiry by examining the perceived social and cohesive functions of the English Bible among Christians in FCT Abuja.

Aikins (2025) investigated the relationship between Bible translation, indigenous languages, and cultural identity in Africa, focusing particularly on the Mfantse, Akuapem-Twi, and Konkomba communities of Ghana. The study emphasises the importance of mother-tongue engagement in theological expression and argues that indigenous languages are central to the interpretation and application of Scripture within African communities. It further suggests that reducing linguistic imperialism and strengthening mother-tongue expression can contribute to dignity, unity, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that the language through which religious teachings are communicated can have implications for identity and social belonging. It also provides an important basis for examining the possible tension between the use of English as a common language and the preservation of indigenous languages. This is relevant to the present study because Christians in FCT Abuja may use English as a common medium even when they belong to different indigenous-language communities.

Aikins' study, however, concentrates on indigenous-language Bible translation and cultural identity in Ghana, rather than the English Bible and national cohesion in Nigeria. Its emphasis is also on cultural identity and mother-tongue integration rather than on respondents' perceptions of unity across ethnic groups, interethnic understanding, and peaceful coexistence. The present

study will address this gap by examining whether the English Bible, despite its association with a dominant language, can function as a shared religious resource capable of facilitating communication and cohesion among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in FCT Abuja. At the same time, the study will remain attentive to the possibility that such linguistic commonality may have implications for indigenous-language use.

Asamoah and Acheampong (2026) examined Bible reception in African Christianity using the Mfantse Bible as a case study. The study employed textual analysis alongside semi-structured questionnaires administered to users and readers of the Mfantse Bible. It found that the availability of a translated Bible does not necessarily guarantee complete understanding. In particular, the authors examined cases where transliteration of biblical names and terminology could remain unclear to local readers. The study consequently argues for approaches to Bible translation that give greater attention to meaningful interpretation, accessibility, and the communicative needs of indigenous users.

The relevance of this study to the present research is its demonstration that the existence of a translated religious text and its actual communicative effectiveness are not necessarily the same thing. This distinction is important when considering the English Bible in Nigeria. English may provide a shared linguistic medium for Christians from different ethnic groups, but its use does not

automatically mean that all Christians will experience biblical teachings in exactly the same way. Factors such as language proficiency, cultural background, literacy, and familiarity with English may influence reception.

Nevertheless, Asamoah and Acheampong's study focuses on Bible comprehension and reception in Mfantse, rather than the relationship between the English Bible and national cohesion. It also investigates a Ghanaian context rather than FCT Abuja. The present study will therefore move beyond comprehension to examine the wider social implications of a shared English-language biblical text, particularly its perceived contribution to ethnic unity, interethnic understanding, communication, and peaceful coexistence among Christians in Abuja.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The three studies collectively demonstrate that recent scholarship views Bible translation as a process with consequences for communication, cultural identity, linguistic participation, comprehension, and religious engagement. Alawode (2024) establishes the broader communicative and cultural significance of Christian translation; Aikins (2025) highlights the relationship between Bible translation, indigenous languages, cultural identity, and belonging; while Asamoah and Acheampong (2026) demonstrate that translation does not necessarily guarantee effective comprehension and that reception depends partly on linguistic and cultural accessibility.

Despite these contributions, an important gap remains. The reviewed studies do not specifically investigate the English Bible as a shared translated text and its perceived contribution to national cohesion among Christians in FCT Abuja. In particular, there is limited recent empirical attention to whether English-mediated biblical communication can promote unity across ethnic backgrounds, interethnic understanding, and peaceful coexistence in a highly multilingual Nigerian urban environment. There is also insufficient attention to the possible tension between English as a common language of communication and its potential contribution to the marginalisation of indigenous languages.

The present study will address this gap by examining Christians' perceptions in FCT Abuja. It will specifically investigate whether the English Bible is perceived to foster unity among Christians from different ethnic backgrounds, make Christian teachings more widely acceptable, promote interethnic understanding, and encourage peaceful coexistence. The study will further use respondents' open-ended explanations to explore whether the English Bible is perceived primarily as a vehicle of communication and unity, or whether its use also raises concerns about indigenous-language marginalisation. In this respect, the study will extend recent Bible-translation scholarship from questions of translation and cultural accessibility to the social function of a shared translated religious text in national cohesion.

Methodology

Research Design

The study will adopt a descriptive survey research design to examine the extent to which the English Bible promotes national cohesion among Christians in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The design will be appropriate because the study will seek to obtain and describe respondents' perceptions of the role of the English Bible in fostering unity across ethnic backgrounds, promoting interethnic understanding, facilitating communication, and encouraging peaceful coexistence. The study will focus on respondents' perceptions and will not attempt to establish a direct causal relationship between the use of the English Bible and national cohesion.

Area of the Study

The study will be conducted in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and will cover all six Area Councils: Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Kwali, and Abaji. The FCT will be suitable for the study because of its considerable ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity. Christians from different parts of Nigeria reside and worship within the territory, making it possible to examine how a shared English-language religious text may function as a common medium of communication and interaction across ethnic and linguistic boundaries.

Population of the Study

The population of the study will comprise Christians residing in the six Area Councils of the FCT who have experience using the English Bible in activities such as personal Bible reading, church worship, Bible study, preaching, teaching, or other Christian religious activities. The population will include Christians from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds in order to reflect the multicultural character of the FCT.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A total of 400 respondents will be targeted for the study across the six Area Councils. A multistage sampling procedure will be employed to ensure representation across the geographical areas of the FCT.

At the first stage, all six Area Councils will be included in the study. At the second stage, Christian worship centres will be selected from the respective Area Councils. At the third stage, eligible Christian respondents will be selected from the identified locations. Efforts will be made to include respondents from diverse denominational, ethnic, linguistic, age, and educational backgrounds so that the study will capture a broad range of perceptions concerning the English Bible and national cohesion.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire designed in accordance with the objective of the study. The relevant section of the questionnaire will contain four closed-ended items and one open-ended item.

The four closed-ended items will examine respondents' perceptions of whether:

1. the English Bible helps Christians from different ethnic backgrounds feel united;
2. reading the Bible in English makes Christian teachings more universally acceptable to Nigerians;
3. the English Bible contributes positively to interethnic understanding among Christians in Nigeria; and
4. the English Bible promotes peaceful coexistence among Christians in FCT Abuja.

The items will be measured using a five-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The open-ended item will ask respondents to explain how the English Bible contributes to or hinders national cohesion. This will allow respondents to provide explanations that may not be adequately captured by the structured items.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The questionnaire will be subjected to face and content validation by experts in Linguistics, Translation Studies,

Religious Studies, and research methodology. The experts will assess the instrument for clarity, relevance, adequacy, and consistency with the objective of the study. Their observations and recommendations will be incorporated before the final administration of the questionnaire.

A pilot test will be conducted among Christians who will not form part of the main sample. The responses from the pilot study will be used to identify ambiguous or poorly worded items and to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. Where appropriate, Cronbach's alpha coefficient will be used to determine the reliability of the Likert-scale items.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher will administer the questionnaires to eligible Christian respondents across the six Area Councils of the FCT. Respondents will be informed about the purpose of the study, and participation will be voluntary. They will be allowed sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires will be collected, screened, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data will be analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. Frequencies and percentages will be used to

describe the distribution of respondents' responses across the five Likert categories.

Mean scores will be used to determine the general level of respondents' perceptions of each statement. The mean scores for the four structured items will also be aggregated to obtain a weighted average mean, which will provide an overall indication of respondents' perception of the role of the English Bible in promoting national cohesion.

The open-ended responses will be analysed using thematic analysis. Responses will be coded and grouped according to recurring themes. Anticipated areas of analysis will include better communication, unity promotion, peaceful coexistence, language marginalisation, and other relevant themes that emerge from the respondents' explanations. Frequencies and percentages will subsequently be used to show the prominence of the identified themes.

Decision Rule

The study will adopt a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The criterion mean will be calculated as: $(5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1) \div 5 = 3.00$

Accordingly, a mean score of 3.00 and above will indicate a high perception, while a mean score below 3.00 will indicate a low perception. The overall weighted average mean will similarly be used to determine the

general perception of the English Bible's contribution to national cohesion.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The chapter reports the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data obtained from 338 valid respondents across the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire examining the role of the English Bible in promoting national cohesion among Nigerian Christians. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used for the Likert-scale items, while thematic categorisation was applied to the open-ended responses. A five-point Likert scale was adopted, with a mean score of 3.50 and above interpreted as high perception and a score below 3.50 as low perception.

The demographic findings indicated that the 338 respondents represented diverse age groups, genders, ethnic groups, geographical locations, educational levels, occupations, Christian denominations, and durations of Christian commitment.

- **Age:** The largest proportion of respondents fell within the 30–39-year age group (45.6%), followed by 18–29 years (27.5%) and 40–49 years (23.4%). Respondents aged 50–59 years constituted 3.6%.
- **Gender:** The distribution showed near parity between male respondents (41.7%) and female

respondents (42.0%), while 16.3% preferred not to disclose their gender.

- Ethnicity: Northern minority groups constituted the largest ethnic category (37.9%), followed by Southern minorities (26.9%), Igbo (21.9%), Yoruba (11.8%), and Hausa/Fulani (1.5%). This distribution reflected considerable ethnic diversity within the sample.
- Area Council: Respondents were drawn from all six Area Councils, with Kwali and Abaji recording the highest proportions (18.6% each), followed by Abuja Municipal (17.5%), Kuje (17.2%), Bwari (14.8%), and Gwagwalada (13.3%).
- Educational level: Bachelor's degree holders constituted the majority (63.9%), followed by NCE/OND holders (18.0%), Master's degree holders (9.2%), secondary-school qualification holders (6.5%), and Doctorate holders (2.4%).
- Occupation: Civil/public servants formed the largest occupational group (45.6%), followed by self-employed/business respondents (24.0%), health workers (18.0%), and private-sector employees (12.4%).
- Religious denomination: Anglicans constituted the largest denominational group (28.1%), followed by Catholics and Living Faith Church members (17.5% each), with other mainline and Pentecostal/Charismatic denominations also represented.

- Duration of Christian commitment: The majority of respondents had been Christians for more than 20 years (59.5%), while 16.9% reported 11–20 years of Christian commitment. Thus, 76.4% of respondents had at least 11 years of Christian experience.

In all, the demographic results showed that the sample comprised respondents from all six Area Councils and represented substantial ethnic, educational, occupational, denominational, and age diversity. The predominance of respondents with higher educational qualifications and long-term Christian experience provided a relevant respondent profile for examining perceptions of the English Bible's role in communication, interethnic understanding, unity, peaceful coexistence, and national cohesion.

The English Bible and National Cohesion

Research Question: To what extent does the English Bible promote national cohesion among Christians in FCT Abuja?

Items 1–4 in this section examined respondents' perceptions of the English Bible's role in fostering national unity, universal acceptability, interethnic understanding, and peaceful coexistence. Item 5 was an open-ended question inviting explanatory narratives.

Table 1: The English Bible and National Cohesion (N

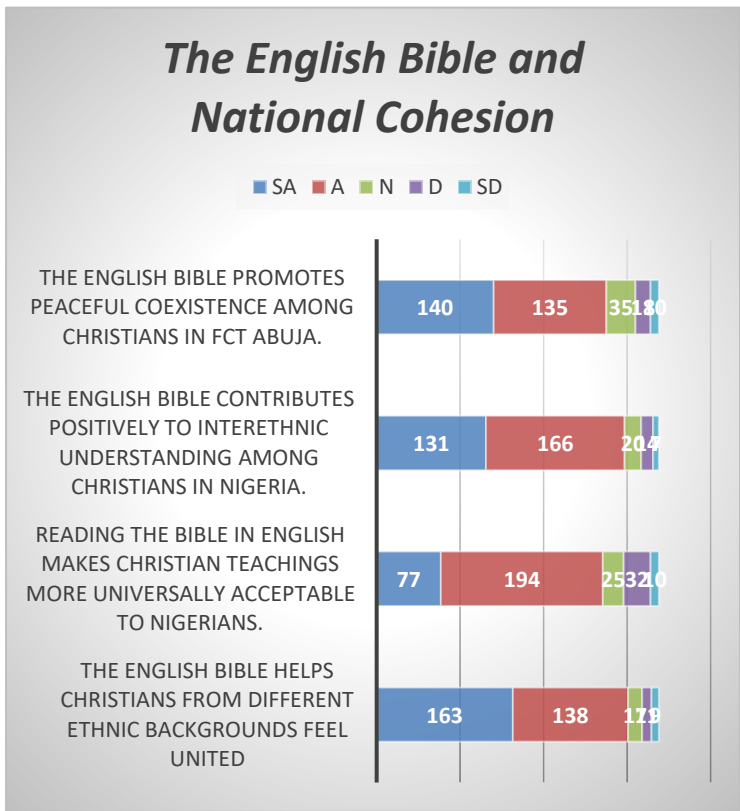
S/ N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
1	The English Bible helps Christians from different ethnic backgrounds feel united.	163 (48.2)	138 (40.8)	17 (5.0)	11 (3.3)	9 (2.7)	4.29	0.907	High Perception
2	Reading the Bible in English makes Christian teachings more universally acceptable to Nigerians.	77 (22.8)	194 (57.4)	25 (7.4)	32 (9.5)	10 (3.0)	3.88	0.966	Low Perception
3	The English Bible contributes positively to interethnic understanding among Christians in Nigeria.	131 (38.8)	166 (49.1)	20 (5.9)	14 (4.1)	7 (2.1)	4.18	0.876	High Perception
4	The English Bible promotes peaceful coexistence among Christians in FCT Abuja.	140 (41.4)	135 (39.9)	35 (10.4)	18 (5.3)	10 (3.0)	4.12	0.993	High Perception

= 338)

Source: Research Report, 2026 | Weighted Average Mean = 16.47 / 4 = 4.12 (High Perception)

Figure 1

Analysis and Discussion



The data in Table 1 and Figure 1 reveal a predominantly high perception of the English Bible's role in national cohesion, with a weighted average mean of 4.12. Item 1 recorded the highest mean ($\bar{x} = 4.29$, $SD = 0.907$), with

89.0 per cent of respondents (48.2% SA + 40.8% A) agreeing that the English Bible helps Christians from different ethnic backgrounds feel united. Item 3 also reflects a high perception ($\bar{x} = 4.18$, $SD = 0.876$), with 87.9 per cent affirming the Bible's positive contribution to interethnic understanding. Item 4 records 81.3 per cent combined agreement ($\bar{x} = 4.12$, $SD = 0.993$) regarding peaceful coexistence in the FCT.

Item 2, which addresses universal acceptability, yielded a mean of 3.88, categorised as Low Perception despite 80.2 per cent combined agreement. The relatively higher standard deviation (0.966) and the 12.5 per cent disagreement rate suggest greater variability of opinion: not all respondents accept that English automatically renders Christian teachings more accessible to Nigerians. This is a nuanced finding, implying that acceptability depends on factors beyond language alone, such as literacy, denominational culture, and individual attachment to indigenous languages.

The weighted average mean of 4.12 across the four items confirms that, overall; Nigerian Christians in the FCT hold a high perception of the English Bible as a unifying instrument. These findings align with lingua franca theory, which posits that a shared language creates a common communicative and symbolic space that transcends ethnic boundaries. As one respondent summarised:

Theme / Response	Frequency (%)
Unity Promotion	106 (31.4%)
Better Communication	118 (34.9%)
Peaceful Coexistence	2 (0.6%)
Language Marginalisation	111 (32.8%)
Others	1 (0.3%)
Total	338 (100.0%)

Table 2: Open-Ended Responses: Item 5 (N = 338)

Source: Research Report, 2026

"The English Bible brings us together at the level of the Word of God. When we read the same verse in English, our tribal differences fade, and we are simply Christians."

Open-Ended Responses to Item 5: How the English Bible Contributes to or Hinders National Cohesion (N = 338)

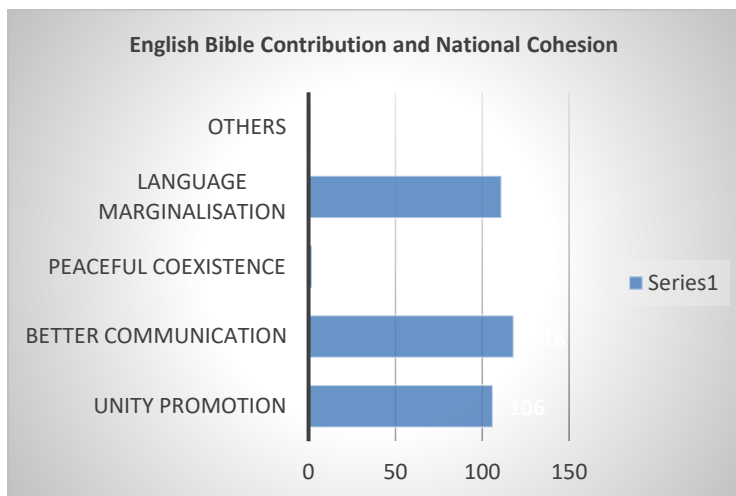


Figure 2

The open-ended responses to item 5 present a revealing distribution. Better Communication emerged as the most frequently cited theme (34.9%), followed closely by Language Marginalisation (32.8%) and Unity Promotion (31.4%). The proximity of these three dominant themes is sociologically significant: while the English Bible is broadly seen as a communicative and unifying tool, an almost equal proportion of respondents simultaneously recognise that it marginalises indigenous languages. This tension between the Bible's unifying and excluding functions reflects the inherently paradoxical nature of a

colonial-inherited religious language serving as a vehicle for post-colonial national cohesion.

Findings

The study examined the extent to which the English Bible promotes national cohesion among Christians in FCT Abuja. Based on the analysis of the four structured items in Table 4.9 and the open-ended responses in Table 4.10, the study produced the following findings.

First, the study found that Christians in FCT Abuja generally perceived the English Bible as contributing positively to national cohesion. The weighted average mean of 4.12 indicated a high overall perception. This suggests that respondents generally regarded the English Bible as a shared religious and communicative resource capable of bringing Christians from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds together.

Second, the study found that the strongest perception concerned unity across ethnic backgrounds. The statement that *“The English Bible helps Christians from different ethnic backgrounds feel united”* recorded the highest mean score of 4.29 (SD = 0.907), with 89.0% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing. This indicates that the English Bible was widely perceived as providing a common religious reference point through which ethnic differences could be transcended within Christian communities.

Third, the study found a high perception of the English Bible's contribution to interethnic understanding. The statement that “*The English Bible contributes positively to interethnic understanding among Christians in Nigeria*” recorded a mean of 4.18 (SD = 0.876), with 87.9% of respondents agreeing. This finding suggests that the use of English in biblical communication may facilitate interaction among Christians whose indigenous languages differ.

Fourth, the study found that respondents also perceived the English Bible as contributing to peaceful coexistence among Christians in FCT Abuja. The item recorded a mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.993), with 81.3% of respondents agreeing. This indicates that respondents associated the shared use of the English Bible with peaceful religious interaction and harmonious relationships among Christians from different backgrounds.

Fifth, the study found a comparatively lower perception concerning the proposition that reading the Bible in English makes Christian teachings more universally acceptable to Nigerians. Although 80.2% of respondents agreed with the statement, its mean score was 3.88 (SD = 0.966). The relatively lower mean and greater variability suggest that respondents were less unanimous on the idea that English automatically makes Christian teachings universally acceptable. This indicates that linguistic accessibility may depend on factors such as English proficiency, literacy, denominational practices,

cultural background, and individuals' relationships with their indigenous languages.

Sixth, the open-ended responses revealed that better communication was the most frequently identified contribution of the English Bible, accounting for 118 responses (34.9%). This finding reinforces the quantitative result that the English Bible functions as a common communicative medium among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds.

Seventh, language marginalisation emerged as the second most prominent theme, accounting for 111 responses (32.8%). This finding is particularly important because it introduces a counterpoint to the generally positive perception of the English Bible. While English was recognised as facilitating communication and unity, a substantial proportion of respondents also perceived its use as potentially marginalising indigenous languages.

Eighth unity promotions accounted for 106 responses (31.4%) further confirming the quantitative finding that the English Bible is perceived as a unifying religious resource. The relatively close distribution between better communication, language marginalisation, and unity promotion demonstrates that respondents recognised both the integrative and potentially exclusionary linguistic consequences of the English Bible.

Overall, the findings reveal a dual or paradoxical function of the English Bible. It is perceived as a resource for communication, ethnic unity, interethnic

understanding, and peaceful coexistence, while its dominance also raises concerns about the marginalisation of indigenous languages. Thus, the English Bible appears to occupy a complex position within the multilingual Christian environment of FCT Abuja: it can provide a common linguistic and religious space while simultaneously contributing to the reduced visibility of indigenous languages in religious communication.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the English Bible is perceived to play a significant positive role in promoting national cohesion among Christians in FCT Abuja. The overall weighted average mean of 4.12 demonstrates a high level of perceived contribution to cohesion. In particular, respondents associated the English Bible with unity across ethnic boundaries, interethnic understanding, and peaceful coexistence.

The findings suggest that the significance of the English Bible extends beyond its function as a religious text. As a translated text communicated through a language widely used across Nigeria's diverse linguistic communities, it can provide a shared communicative and symbolic space for Christians who do not necessarily share the same indigenous language. In this sense, English-mediated biblical communication may facilitate the development of a common Christian identity that cuts across ethnic and linguistic boundaries.

However, the study also concludes that the cohesion-producing function of the English Bible should not be understood as entirely unproblematic. The substantial proportion of respondents who identified language marginalisation (32.8%) demonstrates that linguistic integration through English may occur alongside the reduced visibility or use of indigenous languages. The English Bible may therefore promote cohesion at one level while creating linguistic tensions at another.

The study consequently concludes that national cohesion and linguistic diversity should not be treated as mutually exclusive objectives. The unifying potential of the English Bible can be maintained while greater attention is given to indigenous-language Bible translation and religious communication. A multilingual approach to Christian communication would allow English to continue serving as a bridge across ethnic communities while also enabling Nigerians to encounter biblical teachings through their own languages and cultural conceptual systems.

Ultimately, the English Bible should be understood not simply as an English-language religious document but as a translated text operating within Nigeria's multilingual and multicultural social environment. Its contribution to national cohesion lies principally in its capacity to provide shared religious communication across linguistic boundaries. At the same time, sustainable linguistic inclusion requires that this shared medium should

complement rather than displace Nigeria's indigenous languages.

Recommendations

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

1. **Promotion of multilingual Christian communication:** Christian organisations and churches in FCT Abuja should encourage the complementary use of English and indigenous Nigerian languages in Bible reading, preaching, teaching, and other religious activities. This will preserve the communicative advantages of English while strengthening indigenous-language use.
2. **Encouragement of indigenous-language Bible translation:** Bible translation organisations and Christian denominations should give greater attention to the translation and wider distribution of biblical materials in Nigerian indigenous languages. This will help reduce possible linguistic marginalisation and make biblical teachings accessible within different cultural and linguistic contexts.
3. **Use of the English Bible as a bridge across ethnic groups:** Churches should continue to use English as a common medium where appropriate, particularly in ethnically and linguistically

diverse congregations. Its potential to facilitate communication and interaction among Christians from different backgrounds should be harnessed to promote unity and peaceful coexistence.

4. **Promotion of interethnic understanding through religious activities:** Christian institutions should organise Bible studies, seminars, fellowship programmes, and community activities that deliberately bring together Christians from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Such activities can strengthen mutual understanding and reinforce the unifying potential of shared religious texts.
5. **Greater attention to cultural meaning in translation:** Bible translation initiatives should consider the cultural and worldview differences between English and Nigerian indigenous languages. Concepts with strong cultural meanings should be communicated in ways that preserve their intended religious and cultural significance.
6. **Integration of linguistic diversity into church policy:** Churches and Christian organisations in the six Area Councils should develop language practices that recognise Nigeria's multilingual character. English should not be allowed to completely displace indigenous languages in religious communication.

7. **Further empirical research:** Future researchers should conduct comparative studies involving English and selected Nigerian indigenous-language Bible translations to examine how language choice influences religious understanding, ethnic identity, communication, and national cohesion. Similar studies could also be extended to other parts of Nigeria beyond the FCT.

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Appendix I

Table 3: Gender Distribution of Respondents (N = 338)

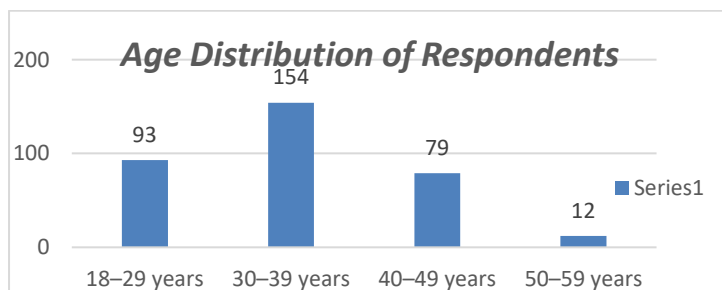
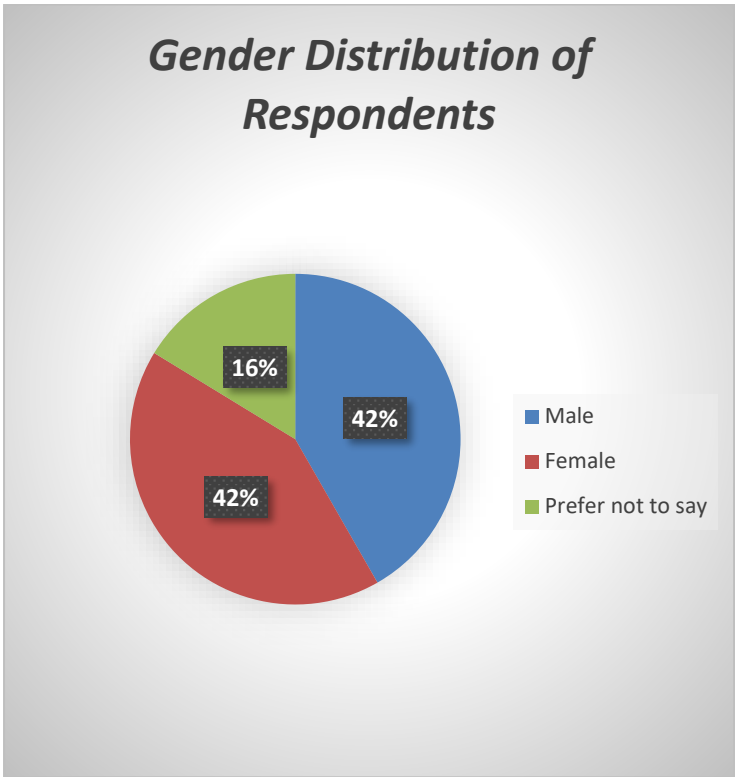


Table 4

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	141	41.7
Female	142	42.0
Prefer not to say	55	16.3
Total	338	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hausa/Fulani	5	1.5
Yoruba	40	11.8
Igbo	74	21.9
Minority-North	128	37.9
Minority-South	91	26.9
Total	338	100.0



Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gwagwalada	45	13.3
Kwali	63	18.6
Kuje	58	17.2

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bwari	50	14.8
Abuja Municipal	59	17.5
Abaji	63	18.6
Total	338	100.0

Table 5: Ethnic Group of Respondents (N = 338)

Source: Field Survey, 2026

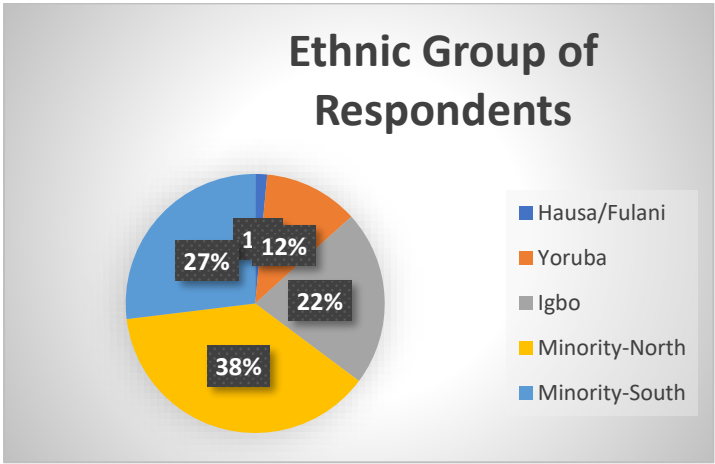


Table 6: Area Council of Residence (N = 338)

Source: Field Survey, 2026

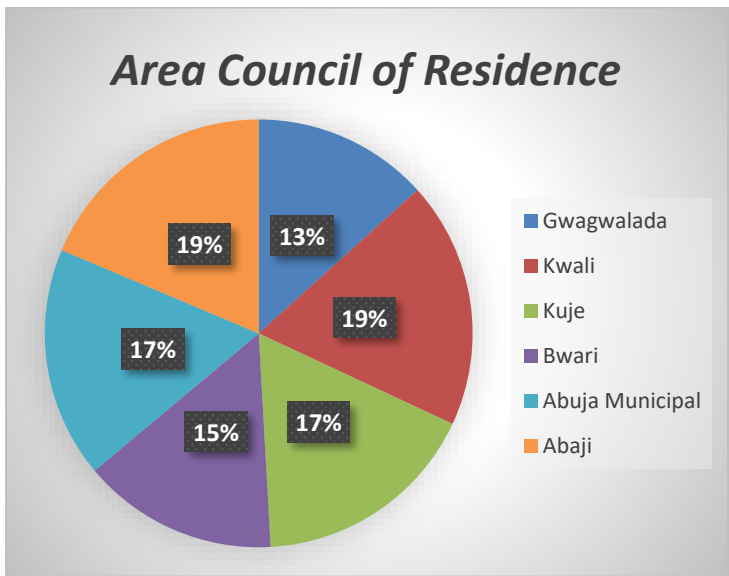


Table 7: Occupation of Respondents (N = 338)

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 8: Religious Denomination of Respondents (N = 338)

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Civil/Public Servant (incl. teachers)	154	45.6
Private Sector Employee	42	12.4
Self-Employment/Business	81	24.0
Health Workers	61	18.0
Total	338	100.0

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Anglican	95	28.1
Catholic	59	17.5
Living Faith Church	59	17.5
Baptist	22	6.5
Assemblies of God	22	6.5
RCCG	23	6.8
Deeper Life Bible Church	20	5.9
Other Pentecostal/Charismatic	20	5.9
Methodist	11	3.3
Other	7	2.1
Total	338	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

**INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
AS PREDICTORS OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT
THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN
ANAMBRA STATE**

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Abstract

The elucidation of innovative instructional techniques in educational settings impacts students' learning styles, enhances engagement through personalized learning strategies, and advances academic achievement in English language. The study explored innovative instructional strategies as predictors of academic achievement in English language. Our study adapted a

predictive correlational research design. The sample size is made up of 857 secondary school students in Anambra State. Our findings showed that in the unique contribution, technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning positively contributed to the predicting model. Also, the analysis of variance revealed that the regression equation was significant ($3, 853) = 6.006, p < .05$. This implies that at least one of the independent variables significantly predicted students' digital learning readiness scores. Based on these findings, it was recommended that students should utilize technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based teaching and learning strategies in the learning of English language in the classroom so as to increase interest and achievement in the English language proficiency.

Keywords: Technology Devices, Brainstorming,
Inquiry-Based Learning, English Language,
and Academic Achievement

Introduction

The development of students' mental abilities has become a critical goal of the educational process at all level. This is because the progress of countries is measured by the capacity to develop the minds of their children. This developmental process is characterized by changes surrounded by many challenges that included scientific process, technological development and openness to the world of communication. In order to

cope with these challenges in the educational process, the usage of innovative instructional strategies should be considered as an alternative for the development of creative minds capable of solving existing problems in the learning contexts. The choice of effective instructional methods is not only to improve the level of achievement of students in the preparation period, but also to become part of the preparation program and to be helpful in the future practice of education (Malkawi & Smadi, 2018). This technique of teaching is based on the interaction between the teacher and the learner or between the learner and other learners, as it helps in the development of thinking strategies or reduces the idea of automation that are given in one direction from the teacher to the learner.

Teaching strategies/methods refer to the style of instructional delivery adopted by a teacher. Shotoyeke (2014) opined that teaching methods can be defined as practical application of teaching principles based on the nature of the learner, the nature of the subject and their learning needs. To make sure that our students are well equipped with the necessary tools to face the demands and expectations of the future, there has been a clear need for innovative instructional practices that promote critical thinking, reflection, questioning, collaboration, and communication that are critical to academic achievement. This is because the primary purpose of teaching at any level of education is to bring a fundamental change in the learner (Tebabal & Khassay, 2011). As education depends on teaching and learning

process, learning depends on the process of instructions. To facilitate the process of instruction in the classrooms, teachers should apply appropriate teaching strategies that guarantees specific objectives and sustainable achievement. However, questions about the effectiveness of teaching strategies on students' learning and achievement in schools have consistently raised considerable interest in the field of educational research. It is on this observation that we hypothesized that innovative instructional strategies could predict students' academic achievement in English language if properly utilized by the teachers. The innovative instructional strategies in this aspect comprised of technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning.

This study sought to explore the impact of these innovative instructional strategies in the classroom teaching and learning. For Example, Anburaji, Christopher Ming (2014) indicated that innovative instructional strategies assist in bringing change in classroom instruction by making them better. In their remark, they indicated that the innovative strategies help to enact, teach conversation, and incorporate creative projects and assignments with the help of multimedia (audiovisual resources). Common innovative language strategies are the ones that integrate technology approach in the teaching process because information and communication technology (ICT) has become essential in school learning contexts.

Using technology devices in the academic institutions has become essential and efficient with digital apparatus such as; laptop computers, tablet and smart phones as part of teaching and learning modern facilities (Mothe, 2018; Ismail, 2016). For example, advances in technology in Australia have influenced the way people create, share, use, and develop information in the society, and young people need to be highly skilled in their use of information and communication technology (Eady & Lockyer, 2013). The primary goal of education is for students to interact and form bonds with the classroom (Ahmad *et al*, 2022). According to Backfisch *et al* (2021) the use of technology devices in the classroom is seen as a substantial innovation in education that will enhance the processes of teaching and learning in the 21st century. Therefore, incorporating technological devices in the teaching process is crucial to assisting students in overcoming challenges like speaking the language of interaction. On these premises, we hypothesize that integrating technology devices in the teaching of English language could positively influence the learning process and predict the students' achievement in the subject domain. Students' proficiency in English language could be actualized when technology devices and other teaching techniques such as such as inquiry-based learning and brainstorming are effectively utilized in the process of instructional delivery.

Vithal, Shama, Subbash, and Ramachandran (2015) indicated that teachers' usage of brainstorming technique

provides students with a single stimulus that serves as a clue for a large number of responses. The approach provides a large volume of productive language practice on the part of the students relative to the contribution of the teacher which allows students to compose utterances at a convenient level (Al-Shmmari, 2015). Fontaine (1981) as cited in the study of Malkawi and Smadi (2018) stressed that brainstorming is a way of bringing ideas without considering their evaluation. This does not mean leaving the evaluation, but only postponing it to the end of the session. The brainstormed should be aware that brainstorming is not guaranteed to get new ideas. That is brainstorming is not just a way to encourage new ideas, but to encourage all participant to contribute to the teamwork.

The nature of brainstorming is characterized as working on the flow of ideas without criticism and tries to speed thinking, break the deadlock, and challenge the minds (Malkawi and Smadi, 2018). This focuses on the positive participation of learners in the educational process, and invites them to build different patterns and images of ideas. It expands student's creative views and opens their minds, during addressing problems, proposing solution, and presenting terminology on the contradictions existing in problem. It is on these observations that we hypothesized that teachers' usage of brainstorming in the teaching process could facilitate students' willingness to get connected with cognitive aspect necessary to understand phenomenon, facts, and concepts that are relevant to achieve academically in English language.

On this note, we considered linking technology device, brainstorming with inquiry-based learning in the process of teaching and learning context to see how effective they could be in influencing students' academic achievement in English language.

The inquiry-based learning demands that students are actively participating in their own learning (Khan *et al*, 2011). Inquiry-based strategies allow for students to interact with their surroundings, ask question, and develop their innate curiosity. This was introduced and effectively implanted in the general secondary teaching methods course at the American university in Dubai (Alain, 2019). In the present study, we elucidate to know if teachers' inquiry-based approach in the instructional delivery has contributed positively to proficiency level of English language of the students. This, we help to understand the extent to which the students had engaged in exploring instructional contents that promote higher order thinking skill and conceptual development, by using inquiry-based learning in the domain of English language. Inquiry is a term used both in education and in daily life to refer to seeking explanations or information by pursuing questions (Harlen, 2013). This an instructional practice where students are at center of the learning experience and take ownership of their own learning by pursuing, investigating, and answering questions (Caswell & LaBrie, 2017).

(Spronken-Smith and Walken, (2016), also considered inquiry-based learning as a form of self-directed learning

where students take responsibility for their learning. This is in line with the assertion which states that inquiry-based learning is seen as a system of learning that support the development of students' problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Maxwell, Lambeth, & Cox, 2015). Although, inquiry-based learning is student oriented, Zangori *et al* (2012) *argue* that teachers may direct students at times during the learning process. Guido (2017) examined inquiry-based learning from both the student and the teacher's perspective. Guido's findings explained that from the student's perspective, inquiry-based learning focuses on investigating an open question or problem, while from the teacher's perspective, it focuses on moving students beyond basic curiosity into the realm of critical thinking and understanding. Mackenzie (2016) had classified students' inquiry-based learning into four aspects such as; (1) Structured inquiry, as where students follow the lead of the teacher as the entire class engages on one inquiry together. (2) Controlled inquiry, where the teacher chooses topics and identifies the resources students will use to answer the questions. (3) Guided inquiry, it deals with the teacher chooses topics, and questions, and students design the product or solution. (4) Free inquiry, it is on this aspect that students choose their topics without reference to any prescribed outcomes. It is on these premises that we hypothesized that inquiry-based learning used by both the teachers and students in the learning process could predict students' academic achievement in English language.

Suffice it to say that understanding how the intricate interplay of innovative instructional strategies can facilitate the students' learning and achieving in the English language domain at the secondary school level has a gap in the knowledge in the academic literature. Despite the continuous efforts exerted by the ministry of Education in Nigeria, represented by all the educational institutions, aimed at improving the quality of the learning process, abysmal results continued to in the domain of English language. Within the framework of the research for finding a way to overcome this phenomenon, the present study reexamines the techniques of teaching that will foster students' positive learning and achievement in English language.

In the context of cultural globalization, English language is acknowledged as one of the most widely used and favored language. Therefore, English language teachers must be aware of innovative techniques in teaching and have confidence in using them in the teaching process. This includes; incorporating technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning for the students to achieve academically. In supporting this, assumption, Ojo and Oyeniran (2023) opined that the creation of innovation in educational system in Nigeria is a welcome development. This is necessary because the educational system is not static but rather dynamic. According to the scholars, this dynamism calls for a series of innovative practices from the various stakeholders involved in the educational system in order to make the system better. Teachers are curriculum

interpreters at secondary school teaching and they are expected to be innovative to ensure that the school goals and objectives are achieved.

Many studies have examined the impact of innovative instructional strategies on teachers' profession and students' academic achievement. Yawman and Kubi (2016) examined the relationship between teaching approaches and their effect on the performance of students' learning and it showed that the innovative teaching impacted positively on students' performance in sciences. Ojo and Oyeniran (2023) reported that teachers' innovative practices assisted in secondary school students' performance. The study of Simanguntak et al (2019) reported that teaching speaking by applying brainstorming technique, affected the students' speaking achievement in English language. The study of Shalah (2009) which examined the effect of brainstorming in teaching Educational Psychology on both curiosity and performance improvement. It also revealed an improvement on the achievement test among the students. Gholam (2019) revealed that inquiry-based learning approach creates a culture of deep and transferable learning and strengthens student's engagement and allows for differentiation and empowers student's voice and choice. Finally, Edulan *et al* (2025) indicated no significant correlation between teachers' use of technology in institution and students' academic performance in English language. Therefore, identifying the instructional strategies that will facilitate students' intelligence in the demand of English language will help

teachers to support their students' proficiency and academic achievement in English language.

Students' academic achievement is a key measure of students' progress in an educational setting. It helps educators to assess students' standing across courses and signals areas for improvement (Edulan *et al*, 2025). Predicting students' academic achievement in English language is vital for optimizing students' academic success in other subject areas. It is on this observation that we presumed that using innovative instructional strategies will serve as an option to strengthen students' achievement in English language. Despite the existence of separate research findings in literature, a comprehensive study that will elucidate the impact of innovative instructional strategies as predictors of students' academic achievement in English language at the secondary school level remained imperative in the Nigerian academic research.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are the assumptions of multiple regression equation for predicting students' academic achievement scores in English language using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores met?
2. What is the nature of the regression equation for predicting using technology devices,

- brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores?
3. What are the unique contributions of using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores in predicting students' academic achievement scores in English language?
 4. Which of the independent variables such as; using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores best predicted students' academic achievement scores in English language?

Hypotheses

1. The regression equation does not significantly predict students' academic achievement scores in English language using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores.
2. The unique contributions of using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores do not significantly predict students' academic achievement scores in English language.
3. Using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores do not significantly predict students' academic achievement scores in English language.

Research Method

The researchers adopted a predictive correlational design and used questionnaires to collect data for the study. The sample size of our study consists of 1,050 secondary school students in Anambra State. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents. The first stage consisted of randomly sampling 30 secondary schools (five from each education zone) that made up six Education Zones in Anambra State. At the second stage, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 35 students from each secondary school, which resulted to 1,050 students. The study adapted two standardized research questionnaires for data collection. For example, using technology devices was examined with Technology Integration in Instruction Questionnaire (TIIQ) that was developed by Edulan (2025). Teachers' innovative Practices Questionnaire (TIPQ) which was developed by Ojo and Oyeniran (2023) was used for brainstorming and inquiry-based learning. Participants were directed to rate the support provided by each source on six different items using a scale of six-point rating from Very Untrue (VU) = 1, Mostly Untrue (MU) = 2, Somewhat Untrue (SU) = 3, Somewhat True (ST) = 4, Mostly True (MT) = 5, and Very True (VT) = 6. The students' achievement scores were obtained from the schools before the start of the administration of the other two questionnaires. The achievement scores used in the study were the results of the state wide SS1 promotion examination in English language.

The methods used for validating the instruments were face and construct validity by the three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. Cronbach's alpha reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items in the research questions and 0.71, 0.82, and 0.73, 0.79 were obtained for using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning respectively. The data were analyzed using standard multiple regression analyses. Research question 1 was answered using multiple regression equation. Research question 2 was answered using unstandardized β . Research question 3 was answered using adjusted R^2 . Research question 4 was answered using unstandardized β . Hypothesis 1 was tested F-test for regression model. Hypothesis 2 was tested using t-test for adjusted R^2 . at .05 alpha level significance while hypothesis 3 was tested using t-test for β . Then, using multiple regression tools for investigating the study is significant because it is convenient to examine the relationships between multiple variables by relating one variable to a set of variables. This helped to identify the effect of one variable while adjusting for other observable differences. The decision rule for research questions was that the proportion for variable that is below 10% is low, 11% to 30% is moderate, 31% to 50% is high while 51% and above is considered very high according to Cohen's *d* (1988) statistics guideline. The decision rule was to accept the null hypotheses if the p-value was greater than 0.05 level of significance ($p > 0.05$) and reject the null hypotheses if the p-value was less than 0.05 level of

significance ($p < 0.05$). Also, Reject the null hypotheses if the p-value was equal to 0.05 level of significance ($p = .05$).

Results

Presentation of Results

The data were first screened for missing values, and 193 respondents had missing values representing 18.38%. Hence likewise deletion approach was adopted. After deleting the 193 respondents, the sample size was reduced to 857. Thereafter, analysis of the study was carried out using standard multiple regression analysis with SPSS 25.

Research question 1: To what extent are the assumptions of the regression equation for predicting students' academic achievement scores in English language using their technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores met?

Table 1: Correlation and descriptive statistics of independent and dependent variables in the regression model for this study (N = 857).

Variables		TD		B	IBL	ACHX	SD	VAR
SK	KU	TF	VIF					
TD		1				20.47	3.76	14.16
-.244	.768	.942	1.062					
B		.236**	1			20.41	3.80	14.46
.072	1.333	.939	1.065		.000			
IBL-.070*		-.090*	1		20.62	3.70	13.69	.227
								-

.427	.989	1.011	.040	.008		
ACH.084*	.065	.097** 1	58.389.5090.27	.241	.041	
.....		.014	.056.005			

Std. Residual Min = -3.05, Std. residual Max = 3.762, Durbin Waston statistics = 2.011. TD = Technology Devices, B = Brainstorming, IBL = Inquiring-Based Learning, and ACH = Academic Achievement.
 Fig 1 the normal P.P plot of standardized residuals data points of students' academic achievement.



Fig 1 the normal P.P plot of standardized residuals data points of students' academic achievement.

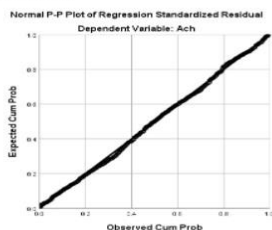


Fig 2 the normal distribution curve of standardized residuals data points of students' academic achievement.

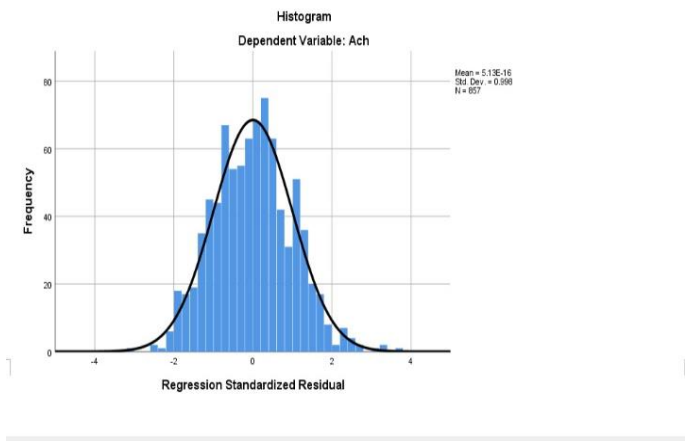


Fig 3 the scatter plot of standardized residuals data points of students' academic achievement.

Fig 3 the scatter plot of standardized residuals data points of students' academic achievement.

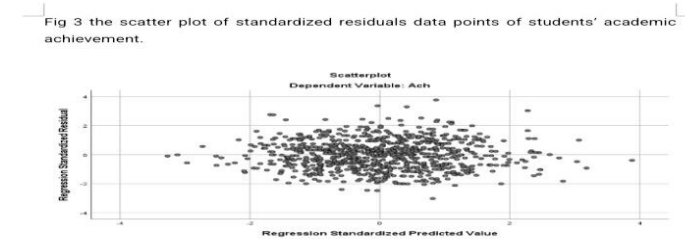


Fig 3 the scatter plot of standardized residuals data points of students' academic achievement.

To answer research question 1, seven assumptions of multiple linear regression were tested in this study. First, the assumptions of normality of the data were tested using Skewness and Kurtosis. The assumptions were made since none of the Skewness and Kurtosis values of each of the variables do not exceed + 3 and – 3 as recommended. Second, the assumptions of absence of multivariate outliers were checked using standardized residual statistics and Cook's distance statistics (1977). Result of standardized residual values indicated that the (Std, Residual Min = -3.025, Std, Residual Max = 3.762). It lies between -3 to 3 as recommended by (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2018). While the result of the Cook's distance shows a maximum value of .031 which is less than 1 as recommended by (Cook, 1977). Hence, the assumptions of absence of multivariate outliers were not violated. Third, the assumptions of absence of multicollinearity among the predicting variables were checked using Variance Inflated Factor (VIF), and Tolerance Factor (TF). The Tolerance Factors and Variance Inflated Factors (Technology Devices, TF = .942, VIF = 1.062, Brainstorming, TF = .939, VIF = 1.065; Inquiry-Based Learning, TF = .989, VIF = 1.011 of the independent variables show that the values were less than 10 for Variance Inflated Factor and greater than .20 for Tolerance Factor respectively as recommended by (Schumaker, 2015). Hence, this assumption of absence of multicollinearity was made. Forth, the assumption of independent of error was tested using Durbin Waston statistics. The result shown a Durbin Waston statistics of .951 is less than 3 but greater than 0

as recommended by (Denis, 2020). Hence, the assumption of independent of error was not violated. Fifth, the assumptions of normality of error distribution were tested using normal P.P plot of standardized residual. Figure 1 shows that the normal P.P plot of standardized residual data points were normally distributed. Histogram of the standardized residual in figure 2 also testified to that. Sixth, the assumption of homogeneity of variance and linearity was tested using scatter plot of standardized predicted values. The result in figure 3 shows that the data met the assumption of homogeneity of variance and linearity as the predicted values were distributed above zero in both dimensions and do not show any pattern. Seventh, the assumptions of non-zero variance were tested using variance statistics and the data also met the assumptions of non-zero variances (Technology Devices, Variance = 14.16; Brainstorming, Variance = 14.46; Inquiry-Based Learning, Variance = 13.69; Academic Achievement, Variance = 90.27) as there is no zero variance for the variables in the study as shown in the table 1.

Research Question 2: What is the nature of the regression equation for predicting students' academic achievement scores in English language using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores?

Table 2: Regression coefficient for technology devices, brainstorming, and creative inquiry-based learning scores (N = 857).

Model	Unstandardized beta	Std. Error
Standardized beta		
Constant	45.764	3.021
Technology devices	.198	.078
Brainstorming	.141	.056
Inquiry-based learning	.276	.107

Using the information in table 2, the nature of the regression equation for predicting students' academic achievement scores in English language using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores follows:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3$$

$$Y = 45.764 + .198x_1 + .141x_2 + .276x_3$$

$$ACH = 45.764 + 0.198 + 0.282 + 0.819$$

$$ACH = 45.764 + 0.198TD + 0.282B + 0.819IBL$$

TD = Technology Devices, B = Brainstorming, IBL = Inquiry-based learning. The equation shows that for every unit increase in student's technology devices, students' achievement in English language increased by 0.198. For every unit increase in brainstorming, students' achievement in English language increased by 0.282. For

every unit increase in inquiry-based learning, students' achievement in English language increased by 0.819. The implication of these findings is that these innovative instructional strategies have positively influenced the students' desire to engage in the learning process of English language.

Research Question 3: What are the unique contributions of students' technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores in predicting their academic achievement scores in English language?

Table 3: Regression model summary of technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores in predicting their academic achievement scores in English language (N = 857).

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.144 ^a	.021	.017	9.41876

To answer this research question, the adjusted multiple regression R square was used. The result of study shows that using students' technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores yielded an adjusted R squared of .017. This implies that predictors accounted for about 1.7% of the variance in students' academic achievement scores in English language.

Research Question 4: Which of the independent variables such as, students' technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores best predicted their academic achievement scores in English language?

Table 4: Regression coefficient for predicting students' academic achievement scores in English language using their technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores (N = 857).

Model		Unstandardized β	Std. Error
Standardized β			
Constant	45.764	3.021	
Technology devices	.198	.088	.078
Brainstorming	.141	.087	.056
Inquiry-based learning	.276	.087	.107

Table 4: Regression coefficient for students' academic achievement scores in English language scores using their technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores. To answer this research question 4, the standardized regression coefficient (β) in table 4 was used for comparison. The regression coefficients presented in table 4 shows unstandardized (β) and standardized regression coefficient (β) for technology devices scores are .198 and .078. For brainstorming scores are .141 and .056. For inquiry-based learning are .276 and .107. Using the standardized (β) for comparison, students' inquiry-based learning mostly predicted academic achievement scores in English

language as shown by the β of .276. Students' technology devices are the second most predicted academic achievement scores in English language as shown by the β of .198. Students' brainstorming is the third mostly predicted academic achievement scores in English language as shown by the β of .141 respectively.

Hypothesis 1: The regression model does not significantly predict students' academic achievement scores in English language.

Table 5: F- test for regression model of technology devices, brainstorming and inquiry-based learning scores (N = 857).

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F
Sig.				
Regression	1598.490	3	532.830	6.006
Residual	75672.208	853	88.713	.000 ^b
Total	77270.698	856		

The analysis of variance in the table 5 shows that the regression equation was significant $(3, 853) = 6.006, p < .05$. This implies that at least one of the independent variables significantly predicted students' academic achievement scores in English language.

Hypothesis 2: The unique contributions of students' technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores to predict their academic achievement scores in English language is not statistically significant.

Table 6. t-test of adjusted R square of the regression model for this study (N = 857).

Model crt.	R Remark	R- Square Adjusted	Std. Error	t – cal for	DF	t-
		R- Square	Estimate	adj. R ²		
1.960	.144 ^a S	.021	.017	9.418776	4.300934	855

To test hypothesis 2, t-test for adjusted R square was conducted. Results of the study shown in table 6 indicate that t-critical for adjusted R square is 1.960 while that of the t-calculated is 4.300934. Since the t-calculated for adjusted R square 4.300934 is greater than t-critical 1.960, the null hypothesis which states that the unique contributions of students' technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores to predict their academic achievement scores in English language is not statistically significant is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. In other words, the unique contributions of students' technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores to predict their academic achievement scores in English language is statistically significant. The implication of this findings is that the perceptions students have toward the teachers' utilization of technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning in the instructional delivery contributed significantly to their English language proficiency. Effect sizes were also evaluated using adjusted R^2 comparing it with Cohen's d

statistics guideline, where $d < 0.20$ indicates a minimal effects size, $0.20 < d < 0.50$ indicates a small effect size, $0.50 < d < 0.80$ indicates a moderate effect size and $d > 0.80$ indicates a large effect size. The value of R adjusted square .021 indicates a small effect size.

Hypothesis 3: Students' technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores do not significantly predict their academic achievement scores in English language.

Table 7: t-test of regression coefficient of students' academic achievement scores in English language using their technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning scores (N = 857).

Model	Unstandardized β	Std. Error	Standardized β	T	P-value	Remark
Constant	45.764	3.021			15.149	.000
S						
Technology devices	.198	.088	.078		2.246	.025
S						
Brainstorming	.141	.087	.056		1.611	.107
NS						
Inquiry-based learning	.276	.087	.107		3.154	.002
S						

Table 7 shows that using technology devices, and inquiry-based learning scores by the teachers significantly predicted students' academic achievement scores in English language since their p-values are smaller than .05. While brainstorming strategy used by the teachers does not significantly predict their academic achievement scores in English language since their p-

values are greater than .05. This shows that students are more adaptive in using technology devices, and inquiry-based learning than brainstorming strategy in the teaching and learning process.

Discussion of findings

The findings from the study indicated that the seven assumptions that were tested did not violate the statistical guides being consulted in the process of checking them. This shows that teachers' innovative instructional strategies have had positive impact on students which make them to adapt with those strategies in their learning of English language. It means that when teachers effectively utilized technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning to be students centered in their teaching process, students' desire to develop high level of mastery on English language domain that involves reading, writing, and speaking proficiency will be enhanced. In the study, it was indicated that the relationship among using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning in teaching students relatively recorded a low and moderate significant relationship with students' academic achievement in English language. This indicates that English language teachers must take cognizance of the impactful roles of these innovative instructional techniques and utilized them effectively in the teaching process. This finding supported the study of Ojo and Oyeniran (2023) which reported that teachers' innovative practices assisted in secondary school

students' performance. This finding did not supported the study of Edulan *et al* (2025) which indicated no significant correlation between teachers' use of technology in institution and students' academic performance in English language.

The findings from the result revealed that on the nature of regression equation, technology devices, brainstorming and inquiry-based learning had contributed positively to the predicting model. This shows that when teachers are positively using these innovative instructional strategies in the teaching process, the positive impacts will increase the chances of achieving academically by the students. These supported the study of Simanguntak *et al* (2019) which reported that teaching speaking by applying brainstorming technique, affected the students' speaking achievement in English language. The findings also supported study of Shalah (2009) which examined the effect of brainstorming in teaching Educational Psychology on both curiosity and performance improvement, as Shalah's study revealed an improvement on the achievement test among the students.

Findings from the study also indicate that the independent variables have intricate roles to play on students' academic achievement in English language. In the present study it was revealed that technology devices and inquiry-based learning significantly predicted students' academic achievement in English language, while brainstorming did not significantly predict

students' academic achievement in English language. This was supported by the study of Gholam (2019) which revealed that inquiry-based learning approach, creates a culture of deep and transferable learning and strengthens student's engagement and allows for differentiation and empowers students voice and choice. Finally, these findings were supported by the study of Yawman and Kubi (2016) examined the relationship between teaching approaches and their effect on the performance of students' learning and it showed that the innovative teaching impacted positively on students' performance in sciences.

Conclusion

From the findings in the study, it was interesting to unveil that teachers using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning in the teaching process significantly predicted students' academic achievement in English language. Conclusively, it was found in the present study that the regression model of using technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning was positively significant.

Reccomendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. One of the most prominent recommendations was to refer to those concerned in the educational

process, especially in the field of teaching English language, where the study sheds light on the use of technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based learning and how to benefit from it by the students to narrow the gap resulting from traditional practices in the teaching of English language. This is to reach the objective results that reflect the pedagogical and educational reality regarding the level of students' achievement in the English language proficiency.

2. It was also recommended that students should utilize technology devices, brainstorming, and inquiry-based teaching and learning strategies in the learning of English language in the classroom so as to increase their interest and achievement in the English language proficiency.

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REGULATING THE DIBJA INSTITUTION IN ANAMBRA STATE: PROSPECTS FOR COMBATING FRAUD, PROTECTING CITIZENS AND PRESERVING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

The Dibia institution constitutes an important component of Igbo indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage, with historical associations with traditional healing, herbal medicine, divination, spirituality and other specialised forms of knowledge. In contemporary Anambra State, however, concerns have emerged regarding individuals who appropriate the identity of the Dibia to engage in deception, exploitation, unsafe practices or other forms of criminality. The challenge presents a complex governance problem because an effective response must simultaneously protect citizens, regulate potentially harmful practices and preserve legitimate indigenous knowledge. This article examines the prospects of the Anambra State Government in addressing the menace of fraudulent Dibia practices within the context of recent developments in traditional medicine regulation in the state and Nigeria. Drawing on scholarly literature, official policy documents and relevant legal and institutional developments, the article argues that the

appropriate policy response is not the indiscriminate suppression of the Dibia institution but the development and effective implementation of a transparent regulatory framework that distinguishes legitimate traditional practice from fraud and criminal conduct. The article identifies practitioner registration and licensing, professional standards, public enlightenment, inter-agency collaboration, community participation, digital monitoring, research and documentation of indigenous knowledge, and evidence-based enforcement as important prospects. It further argues that regulation will only succeed if it is implemented with procedural fairness, institutional capacity, cultural sensitivity and accountability. The article concludes that Anambra State has an opportunity to develop a model of indigenous medicine governance in which public safety, cultural preservation and responsible regulation reinforce one another.

Keywords: Dibia, traditional medicine, indigenous knowledge, Anambra State, regulation, public safety, cultural heritage, fraudulent practice

Introduction

Traditional medicine occupies a significant place in Nigeria's health, cultural and social landscape. Its continued relevance is associated not only with the therapeutic practices of indigenous communities but also with accessibility, affordability, cultural familiarity and

deeply rooted beliefs concerning health and illness. A recent systematic mixed-method review found that socioeconomic conditions, cultural beliefs, social norms and gaps in formal healthcare continue to influence the use of traditional medicine in Nigeria (Adebayo et al., 2025). The persistence of traditional medicine therefore cannot be adequately understood as a simple rejection of modern medicine. Rather, it reflects the interaction of cultural identity, healthcare access, economic circumstances and established systems of indigenous knowledge.

Within Igbo society, the Dibia occupies a particularly important and complex position. The term has historically been associated with practitioners possessing specialised knowledge relating to healing, herbal medicine, divination, spirituality and other forms of indigenous practice. Ogu (2022) notes that Igbo folk medicine; is embedded within omenala and incorporates ethical principles that historically structured relationships between healers and members of the community. More recent scholarship has similarly described the dibia as a broad category encompassing medicine men, priests, diviners and healers within Igbo communities (Agbo, 2024). The institution therefore represents considerably more than the narrow image of a person who performs spiritual rituals for financial gain.

The contemporary environment, however, has created conditions in which the identity of the Dibia can be commercially appropriated. Urbanisation, expanding

digital communication, economic hardship and the weakening of some traditional mechanisms of social accountability have made it possible for individuals to advertise traditional or spiritual services to large audiences without necessarily possessing the training, ethical standards or community accountability historically associated with indigenous practice. The problem becomes particularly serious when claims of spiritual or traditional authority are used to facilitate deception, financial exploitation, unsafe medical practices or criminal activities.

This development has generated an important public-policy question for Anambra State. How can the government protect citizens from fraudulent or harmful practitioners without undermining legitimate traditional medicine and indigenous cultural institutions? The question is particularly timely because Anambra State has recently strengthened its legislative and institutional response to traditional medicine. In April 2025, Governor Chukwuma Soludo assented to the Anambra State Indigenous Traditional Medicine Practices Law, 2025, alongside the Anambra State Herbal Practice Law, 2025 and amendments to the state's homeland-security framework (News Agency of Nigeria [NAN], 2025). The state's legislative trajectory subsequently included the regulatory-agency framework for indigenous traditional medicine practices reported in 2026.

At the federal level, the policy environment has also moved towards greater standardisation and

professionalisation. The Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare maintains a Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine Department whose mandate includes developing and monitoring policy, initiating legislation, promoting indigenous Nigerian traditional medicine and pursuing its integration into the national healthcare system. The Ministry's current policy materials also provide for registration, knowledge assessment, training and regulation of traditional medicine practitioners.

Against this background, this article examines the prospects of Anambra State Government in combating the menace associated with fraudulent Dibia practices. The central argument is that the state should move beyond a binary opposition between “traditional” and “modern” practice. Instead, it should establish a regulatory environment in which legitimate indigenous knowledge is recognised and preserved, practitioners are accountable, consumers are protected and criminal conduct is dealt with through due process.

The Dibia Institution, Indigenous Knowledge and Contemporary Change

Understanding the problem of fraudulent Dibia practice requires an appreciation of the institution's cultural and historical significance. Indigenous knowledge systems are not merely collections of isolated beliefs; they are bodies of knowledge developed through the accumulated experiences of communities and transmitted across

generations. Traditional healthcare knowledge may encompass knowledge of medicinal plants, preparation methods, therapeutic practices, environmental resources, diagnosis and culturally specific approaches to illness.

Research on the Igbo Dibia confirms the diversity of the institution. Agbo (2024), in an ethnographic examination of dibia practices among Nsukka-Igbo communities, describes the dibia broadly as a medicine man, priest, diviner or healer and demonstrates that contemporary dibia practices remain connected to wider questions of African religious and cultural identity. Similarly, Ogu (2022) argues that the ethical foundations of Igbo folk medicine are connected to omenala, indicating that traditional healing historically operated within cultural expectations concerning appropriate conduct.

This historical embeddedness is important to contemporary regulation. If the state conceptualises the Dibia exclusively as an unregulated or suspicious actor, it risks confusing an entire cultural institution with the misconduct of particular individuals. Such an approach could weaken cooperation between government and legitimate practitioners and could inadvertently contribute to the loss of indigenous knowledge.

At the same time, cultural significance cannot provide immunity from accountability. Traditional knowledge may contain useful therapeutic information, but claims associated with such knowledge should be evaluated responsibly where public health is involved. Foley et al.

(2023), in a systematic review of traditional knowledge in contemporary health practice, education, research and policy, emphasise the importance of appropriate criteria for selecting, evaluating and applying traditional knowledge. The implication is that respect for traditional knowledge and critical evaluation are not mutually exclusive.

The appropriate policy objective is therefore neither wholesale rejection nor unquestioning acceptance. It is responsible recognition. Legitimate knowledge should be documented, protected and, where appropriate, scientifically investigated, while deceptive claims and harmful practices should be subject to regulation.

The Menace of Fraudulent Dibia Practice

The expression “fake Dibia” is widely used in public discourse, but its meaning requires careful academic qualification. It should not be understood simply to mean a practitioner whose spiritual claims cannot be scientifically established. Such a definition would place the state in the difficult position of determining the truth or falsity of metaphysical beliefs. A more defensible approach is to define fraudulent practice in terms of observable conduct.

For purposes of public policy, a fraudulent Dibia may therefore be understood as a person who falsely represents himself or herself as possessing legitimate traditional expertise or who uses the identity, authority or cultural legitimacy associated with the Dibia

institution to deceive, exploit, endanger or unlawfully manipulate members of the public.

This distinction is important because traditional medicine itself cannot reasonably be equated with fraud. The Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare explicitly recognised traditional, complementary and alternative medicine as an area requiring policy development, regulation, research and integration into healthcare. The Ministry's stated vision includes preserving cultural heritage while ensuring respectable practitioners and quality healthcare.

The principal concerns surrounding fraudulent practice are consequently related to exploitation and harm. Vulnerable individuals may seek assistance for illnesses, infertility, financial difficulties, marital problems, bereavement or other serious challenges. Where practitioners exploit such vulnerabilities through deliberately deceptive claims or coercive practices, the relationship becomes problematic from both ethical and regulatory perspectives.

Health-related claims present another important concern. Herbal medicines and traditional remedies are not automatically safe merely because they are derived from natural substances. Awodele et al. (2014) found significant concerns surrounding the regulation and safety monitoring of herbal medicines in Nigeria, while Adebayo et al. (2013) reported that many users of herbal medicines were insufficiently aware of potential adverse

effects and herb-drug interactions. More recent regulatory research has continued to identify enforcement and compliance challenges within Nigeria's traditional medicine environment (Mponda et al., 2025).

The issue is therefore not that indigenous remedies are inherently harmful. Rather, unregulated use, unsupported therapeutic claims, inappropriate preparation, inadequate labelling and absence of accountability can create preventable risks. This distinction should remain central to government policy.

Traditional Medicine, Public Safety and the Need for Regulation

The case for regulation does not arise from a rejection of indigenous knowledge. It arises from the need to protect citizens in a complex and changing social environment. Nigeria already has important federal mechanisms for regulating herbal medicinal products. NAFDAC's Herbal Medicine and Related Products Registration Regulations require relevant herbal medicinal products to be registered, while its labelling regulations establish requirements concerning information, therapeutic claims and evidence. The regulations also restrict misleading claims and require appropriate qualification of therapeutic claims where they have not been adequately evaluated.

NAFDAC's advertising regulations further prohibit false or misleading information and unsubstantiated claims relating to herbal medicines and related products. They

specifically restrict advertisements that create impressions of universal cures or use exaggerated claims to induce consumption.

These federal provisions illustrate an important principle for the Anambra context: regulation should focus on the risk generated by a practice or product rather than simply on its cultural origin.

This principle is particularly important in the regulation of Dibia practice because not all practitioners perform the same functions. Some may work principally with herbs; others may engage in spiritual or divinatory practices; some may combine several forms of traditional knowledge. A single regulatory template may therefore be inadequate.

The Nigerian policy environment recognises this complexity. The Traditional Medicine Policy for Nigeria provides for the assessment and classification of traditional medicine practitioners according to their knowledge and methods of knowledge acquisition and envisages appropriate registration and training procedures. Pal and Isa (2024) similarly observed that although traditional medicine remains widely used in Nigeria, structured education, training and institutionalised research remain inadequate. They argue that government-supported education and training are essential to strengthening traditional medicine practice.

Effective regulation should therefore consequently combine recognition, classification, training, monitoring and enforcement.

Theoretical Perspective: Social Control Theory

The regulatory challenge can be understood through Social Control Theory. Hirschi's social control perspective proposes that conformity is strengthened through social bonds and mechanisms that connect individuals to accepted social expectations. Costello and Laub (2020), reviewing the continuing significance of Hirschi's theory, explain that its enduring contribution lies in its attention to the mechanisms through which social relationships and institutions constrain deviant behaviour.

In the context of fraudulent Dibia practice, the theory provides a useful framework for understanding the importance of both formal and informal controls. Historically, community recognition, apprenticeship, family reputation, traditional institutions and relationships between practitioners and clients could provide informal mechanisms of accountability. When such mechanisms weaken, individuals may find greater opportunities to act outside accepted norms.

Government regulation represents a form of formal social control. Registration, licensing, inspection, sanctions and professional standards establish external constraints on conduct. However, formal regulation cannot operate effectively in isolation. Traditional

institutions, community leaders, professional associations, researchers and citizens also constitute important sources of informal control.

The theory therefore supports a multi-level regulatory model in which government establishes enforceable standards while communities and legitimate practitioners participate in maintaining professional and cultural norms. The objective is not simply to punish offenders after harm occurs but to create an institutional environment in which fraudulent conduct becomes more difficult and legitimate practice becomes more visible.

Anambra State's Emerging Regulatory Framework

Anambra State's recent legislative developments create an important opportunity for addressing the problem. The state's enactment of the Indigenous Traditional Medicine Practices Law in 2025 demonstrated a movement towards formal recognition and regulation of traditional medicine. The law was among six measures assented to by Governor Soludo in April 2025 and was presented by the state as part of a broader effort to strengthen governance and integrate traditional healthcare practices into the state's medical framework (NAN, 2025).

The subsequent regulatory-agency framework reported in 2026 further indicates that the state's approach is moving towards institutionalisation. Reporting on the 2026 law indicates provisions relating to registration, licensing, monitoring and sanctions for non-compliance.

The state government has also publicly emphasised the distinction between legitimate traditional medicine and practitioners allegedly involved in fraudulent or criminal activities.

This development is significant because it potentially changes the state's approach from predominantly reactive intervention to preventive regulation. A practitioner operating within a recognised regulatory system can be identified, monitored and held accountable. Members of the public can also be given a means of distinguishing licensed practitioners from individuals who merely assume traditional titles.

Nevertheless, legislation alone does not constitute effective regulation. The ultimate test lies in implementation. The state must ensure that registration procedures are accessible, criteria are transparent, enforcement is consistent and the regulatory institution possesses sufficient technical and financial capacity.

Prospects for Effective Government Action

Institutionalisation of Registration and Professional Accountability

The strongest immediate prospect is the establishment of a credible system for identifying legitimate practitioners. Registration should not be reduced to collecting names and fees. It should provide a mechanism for determining the practitioner's area of practice, location, training or

apprenticeship background and compliance with relevant ethical and safety requirements.

A publicly accessible register would also strengthen consumer protection. Individuals seeking traditional medicine services could verify whether a practitioner is recognised by the state before patronage. Digital identification could make this system more efficient and reduce opportunities for impersonation.

The federal Traditional Medicine Policy already envisages registration and classification based on practitioners' knowledge and methods of knowledge acquisition (Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2023). Anambra therefore has an opportunity to translate an established national policy direction into a functional state-level system.

Professional Training and Ethical Standards

Regulation should also create opportunities for professional development. Traditional practitioners may possess extensive indigenous knowledge but have limited exposure to contemporary requirements relating to hygiene, record keeping, emergency referral, drug-herb interactions, patient confidentiality and public-health risks.

Training should not be designed to erase indigenous knowledge. Instead, it should supplement existing knowledge with competencies necessary for safe contemporary practice. Pal and Isa (2024) emphasise the

need for government-sponsored education and training as part of strengthening traditional medicine in Nigeria.

A state-supported continuing professional development programme could therefore become one of the most constructive aspects of Anambra's regulatory framework.

Public Enlightenment and Consumer Protection

Citizens are an essential component of effective regulation. Even a well-designed regulatory system will have limited impact if members of the public cannot identify legitimate practitioners or recognise fraudulent claims.

Public enlightenment should encourage citizens to verify registration, demand appropriate information about remedies and report suspected abuse or fraudulent conduct. Particular caution should be encouraged where practitioners promise guaranteed cures, extraordinary wealth, immediate solutions to serious medical conditions or other outcomes that exploit desperation.

Such campaigns should be culturally sensitive. The objective should not be to ridicule traditional beliefs or portray all Dibia as fraudulent. Rather, government communication should emphasise that legitimate cultural practice and public accountability can coexist.

This approach is consistent with the Federal Ministry of Health's stated vision of preserving cultural heritage

while promoting respectable practitioners and quality healthcare.

Research, Documentation and Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge

Anambra State also has an opportunity to transform regulation into a platform for cultural preservation.

Traditional knowledge can disappear when knowledge holders die without transmitting their expertise to younger generations. Research institutions and universities can collaborate with recognised practitioners to document indigenous medicinal knowledge, subject appropriate claims to scientific investigation and preserve culturally significant information.

Such research must, however, respect ethical requirements and the rights of knowledge holders. Documentation should not become a mechanism through which commercial actors appropriate indigenous knowledge without recognition or benefit to the communities from which the knowledge originates.

The need for responsible evaluation is supported by Foley et al. (2023), whose systematic review demonstrates that the contemporary application of traditional knowledge requires appropriate criteria for selection, evaluation and use. The objective should therefore be neither romanticisation nor rejection, but responsible knowledge development.

Collaboration between Government, Traditional Institutions and Research Bodies

The complexity of traditional medicine makes inter-institutional collaboration essential. Government agencies, traditional rulers, recognised practitioner associations, universities, healthcare professionals, researchers and community organisations possess different forms of expertise.

Traditional institutions can provide cultural knowledge and assist in identifying established practitioners. Researchers can contribute methods of documentation and evaluation. Health professionals can contribute knowledge concerning safety and referral. Government agencies can provide regulation and enforcement.

Such collaboration could also reduce mistrust. Practitioners are more likely to participate in regulation when they perceive the system as a mechanism for recognition and professional improvement rather than merely a mechanism for punishment.

Digital Regulation and Monitoring

The expansion of social media has fundamentally changed the way traditional services are advertised. Claims that were previously limited to a village or town can now reach thousands of people through Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube and other platforms.

This creates both a regulatory challenge and an opportunity. The government should develop mechanisms for monitoring public advertising by registered practitioners, particularly claims concerning medical cures, extraordinary powers and financial transformation.

Existing NAFDAC advertising regulations provide a useful federal benchmark because they already prohibit false, misleading and unsubstantiated claims concerning herbal medicinal products. Anambra can build complementary practitioner-level monitoring around this product-focused framework.

Firm but Evidence-Based Enforcement

The state government's recent campaign against alleged fraudulent native doctors demonstrates its willingness to use enforcement measures where it considers traditional practices to be connected with criminality. The state's own public communication frames the campaign as an effort to distinguish fraudulent actors from legitimate traditional medicine.

The long-term legitimacy of such enforcement, however, depends on due process. Allegations should be investigated, evidence should be preserved and prosecutions should proceed through appropriate legal institutions. A practitioner should not be treated as criminal merely because his or her beliefs are culturally unfamiliar or because a spiritual claim cannot be empirically demonstrated.

The appropriate dividing line should be unlawful or demonstrably harmful conduct. This principle is especially important because regulation that is perceived as arbitrary can generate resistance among legitimate practitioners and traditional communities. Conversely, fair and predictable enforcement can strengthen public confidence in the regulatory system.

Challenges to Effective Regulation

The existence of a legal framework does not automatically resolve the problem. One major challenge is the difficulty of defining legitimate traditional practice. Traditional knowledge is transmitted through diverse apprenticeship systems, and there may be no universally accepted credential equivalent to those used in conventional professions.

Institutional capacity is another concern. Registration, inspection, investigation and enforcement require trained personnel, funding, data systems and administrative structures. Without these resources, regulation may remain largely symbolic.

There is also the possibility of regulatory capture. If licences can be obtained through political influence, financial inducement or personal connections, regulation may legitimise rather than eliminate fraudulent practice. Transparency and accountability are therefore essential.

Cultural resistance may also emerge if practitioners perceive government regulation as an attempt to impose

foreign standards on indigenous practice. The state can reduce this risk through consultation and participation. Regulation developed with practitioners is likely to be more legitimate than regulation imposed without them.

Another challenge concerns the boundary between cultural practice and criminal conduct. The state must avoid transforming disagreement with a particular belief into a criminal offence. The stronger regulatory approach is to focus on conduct that produces identifiable legal, health or public-safety consequences.

Finally, enforcement must not become collective punishment. The misconduct of particular practitioners should not justify indiscriminate suspicion of the entire Dibia institution. Such an approach would undermine the very cultural heritage that the state should seek to preserve.

Towards a Balanced Model of Dibia Regulation in Anambra State

The most sustainable approach for Anambra State is a three-dimensional model built around protection, regulation, and preservation.

Protection requires government to shield citizens from fraud, dangerous products, exploitation, coercion and criminal conduct.

Regulation requires identifiable standards governing who may practise how practitioners should operate and what sanctions apply to violations.

Preservation requires the state to recognise and protect legitimate indigenous knowledge rather than allowing fraudulent practitioners to define the public image of the Dibja institution.

These objectives are mutually reinforcing. A well-regulated system can protect legitimate practitioners from being confused with impostors. Recognition can encourage practitioners to submit to professional standards. Documentation can preserve knowledge that might otherwise disappear. Public education can help citizens make safer choices. Enforcement can deter those who attempt to use cultural or spiritual identities as covers for criminal activities.

The central policy objective should therefore be to create a system in which legitimacy becomes visible and fraud becomes difficult to conceal.

This requires more than legislation. It requires implementation, monitoring, research, public participation and periodic evaluation. The effectiveness of the regulatory framework should be assessed through indicators such as practitioner registration and compliance, public awareness; complaints received and resolved enforcement outcomes, practitioner training and evidence of improved consumer protection.

Recommendations

The Anambra State Government should prioritise the effective implementation of its traditional medicine legislation and ensure that the relevant regulatory institution has adequate personnel, funding, technical capacity and operational independence. Registration should be transparent and accessible, while licensing criteria should reflect the diversity of legitimate traditional medicine practices without compromising basic standards of public safety.

The government should establish a reliable digital register through which citizens can verify recognised practitioners. Each licensed practitioner should be identifiable by a verifiable registration number or certificate. Such a system would provide a practical means of distinguishing recognised practitioners from individuals who simply assume the identity of Dibia.

A structured continuing professional development programme should also be introduced. Training should cover hygiene, safe preparation and handling of medicinal substances, record keeping, and confidentiality, recognition of medical emergencies, appropriate referral and relevant legal and ethical obligations.

Government should further strengthen collaboration among the traditional medicine regulatory authority, the Ministry of Health, NAFDAC, universities, research institutes, traditional institutions and law-enforcement

agencies. Such collaboration should recognise the different mandates of these institutions while creating mechanisms for information sharing and coordinated intervention.

Public enlightenment should become a permanent component of the regulatory strategy. Citizens should be educated about the importance of verifying practitioners, recognising deceptive claims and reporting suspected abuse. Communication should be culturally respectful and should avoid equating traditional medicine generally with fraud.

Anambra State should also invest in the documentation and responsible study of indigenous medicinal knowledge. Universities and research institutions in the state can provide an important platform for ethnobotanical, pharmacological, sociological, anthropological and legal research. Indigenous knowledge holders should participate meaningfully in such research and should receive appropriate recognition and protection.

Finally, enforcement against fraudulent and criminal practitioners should remain firm but evidence-based. Government should focus on conduct that constitutes fraud, abuse, unsafe practice or other legally recognisable wrongdoing. Arrests, prosecutions and sanctions should operate within the rule of law so that the campaign against fraudulent practice strengthens rather than weakens public confidence in government.

Conclusion

The menace associated with fraudulent Dibia practice presents Anambra State with a complex challenge involving public safety, cultural identity, traditional medicine, consumer protection and governance. The challenge should not, however, be framed as a choice between protecting citizens and preserving indigenous culture.

The more productive approach is to recognise that effective regulation can serve both objectives.

Traditional medicine remains socially and culturally significant in Nigeria, and the Dibia institution represents an important component of Igbo indigenous knowledge. At the same time, cultural legitimacy cannot provide a shield for fraud, exploitation, dangerous practice or criminality. The state's responsibility is therefore to establish a credible boundary between legitimate practice and harmful conduct.

Anambra State's recent legislative developments provide an important foundation for this process. The enactment of the Indigenous Traditional Medicine Practices Law and the subsequent movement towards a dedicated regulatory framework indicate a transition towards more systematic governance of traditional medicine.

The real test, however, will be implementation. Registration must be meaningful, licensing must be transparent, training must be continuous, monitoring

must be effective and enforcement must respect due process. Traditional institutions and practitioners must be treated as partners in cultural preservation while remaining subject to appropriate accountability.

The fight against fake Dibia should therefore not become a campaign against the Dibia institution itself. It should be a process of protecting the public from fraudulent appropriation of the institution while protecting the institution from being discredited by fraudulent actors.

If Anambra State successfully combines regulation with cultural sensitivity, research, public participation and rule-of-law enforcement, it can develop a distinctive model of traditional medicine governance in which indigenous knowledge is preserved, legitimate practitioners are recognised, fraudulent practices are constrained and citizens are better protected. The ultimate prospect is therefore not the disappearance of the Dibia but its responsible repositioning within a contemporary system of public accountability.

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THE EFFECT OF FAKE MIRACLES OF PASTORS IN OUR TRADITIONAL HEALING SYSTEMS

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of fake miracles performed by some pastors on traditional healing systems in Nigeria. Traditional healing has played an important role in African communities through the use of herbs, medicinal plants, bone setting, traditional birth attendance, massage, spiritual healing, and indigenous medical knowledge. However, the increasing activities of some pastors who present staged or exaggerated miracles have created concerns about the survival and public acceptance of traditional healing practices. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and relied mainly on secondary sources including books, journal articles and publications from the World Health Organization. The study found that fake miracles can reduce public confidence in traditional healing, contribute to the loss of indigenous medical knowledge, reduce patronage of traditional healers and create

negative perceptions of indigenous healthcare practices. The study also found that fake miracles may encourage financial exploitation, delay appropriate medical treatment, create social divisions and cause psychological harm to vulnerable individuals. The major causes identified include the desire for wealth, competition among churches, poverty, and the desire for popularity, weak regulation, media influence, poor religious education and lack of verification of miracle claims. The study concludes that fake miracles should not be confused with genuine Christian faith or legitimate religious healing. It recommends stronger regulation of fraudulent miracle claims, responsible religious leadership, public education on safe healthcare, proper research and documentation of traditional healing practices and greater cooperation among religious leaders, traditional healers, researchers and health professionals. These measures can help protect vulnerable people while preserving useful indigenous healing knowledge and cultural heritage.

Keywords: Fake miracles, pastors, traditional healing systems, traditional medicine, faith healing, miracle ministry, indigenous knowledge, Nigeria.

Introduction

Religion has always been important in African society. Before Christianity, Africans depended mainly on traditional religion and traditional healing to treat

illnesses and solve spiritual problems. Traditional healers used herbs, roots, divination, spiritual knowledge and cultural practices passed down through generations. These practices were an important part of African culture (WHO, 2023).

The coming of Christianity introduced practices such as prayers, faith healing, anointing oil, deliverance and miracle services. Although many Christians believe in genuine miracles, some pastors have been accused of presenting fake or exaggerated miracles to attract followers, gain popularity and make money (Marshall, 2021). Fake miracles may involve false healing claims, staged testimonies or people pretending to be sick and later claiming to have been healed.

These practices can affect traditional healing because some people may abandon traditional medicine and depend only on miracle services. Some pastors also describe traditional healers as evil or involved in witchcraft which can cause people to lose confidence in indigenous healing practices. However, traditional medicine continues to provide healthcare, spiritual guidance and community support in many African communities (WHO, 2023).

Therefore, fake miracle practices can contribute to the rejection of traditional healing, financial exploitation, misinformation and the loss of indigenous knowledge. This study examines how fake miracles performed by

some pastors affect traditional healing systems, especially in Nigeria (Adogame, 2022; WHO, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Traditional healing systems have served African societies for many centuries by providing healthcare through herbs, natural medicines, spiritual guidance and indigenous knowledge. Despite their continued importance, these systems have increasingly been rejected because some pastors describe them as evil or demonic while promoting miracle healing as the only acceptable solution to sickness.

Many churches now organize miracle crusades, healing services and deliverance programmes where pastors claim to cure serious diseases instantly. In some cases, investigations have shown that certain miracle claims were staged or exaggerated. As a result, many people lose trust in traditional healing, abandon indigenous medicine or delay seeking appropriate healthcare.

The continued spread of fake miracles has also encouraged religious exploitation, financial abuse, and misinformation about health. Some vulnerable individuals spend large amounts of money believing they will receive miraculous healing while others stop taking prescribed medication. This situation not only affects public health but at the same time traditional healers who practise genuine indigenous medicine face increasing criticism and declining public trust because many people now associate all spiritual healing with fraud.

Although many studies have examined faith healing and religion, fewer studies have specifically explored how fake miracles influence people's perception of traditional healing systems in Nigeria. This study therefore seeks to bridge this gap by examining the relationship between fake miracles and the decline of traditional healing systems.

Literature Review

Miracles

A miracle is generally understood as an extraordinary event that occurs through the power of God and cannot be fully explained by natural or scientific means. In Christianity, miracles demonstrate God's authority, compassion and ability to intervene in human affairs. The Bible contains many accounts of miracles performed by Jesus Christ and His disciples including healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, raising the dead and calming storms (Matthew 9:35; John 11:43–44). These miracles were not only acts of kindness but also signs that pointed people towards God and strengthened their faith.

According to Wright (2021), miracles in Christianity are signs of God's kingdom and are intended to strengthen faith rather than entertain people or generate wealth. Genuine miracles are therefore believed to bring glory to God, encourage people to trust in him and demonstrate his power over situations that appear impossible. In this sense, a miracle should be connected with faith,

compassion and the spiritual well-being of the people involved.

In Nigeria today, many churches organise healing crusades, prophetic conferences, prayer meetings and miracle services where pastors pray for healing, deliverance, financial breakthrough, and other forms of divine intervention. Many Christians believe that God still performs miracles through faith and prayer. For example, some people testify that they experienced healing after prayers while others report receiving help from difficult situations through their religious faith.

However, the increasing reports of fake miracles have raised questions about the authenticity of some miracle claims. Some pastors have been accused of staging healings, using paid actors, exaggerating testimonies or presenting ordinary events as supernatural occurrences. Such practices can mislead worshippers and reduce public trust in genuine Christian healing practices (Marshall, 2022). The issue is particularly important in Nigeria because many people depend on religious leaders for spiritual and in some cases, health-related support. Therefore, there is a need to distinguish genuine expressions of Christian faith from deceptive practices carried out for popularity, financial gain or personal influence.

Pastor

A pastor is a Christian religious leader responsible for preaching the gospel, teaching the Bible, praying for

members, providing counselling and guiding believers in their spiritual lives. The pastor is expected to be a servant and role model to the members of the church. According to the Bible, pastors should care for the people under their leadership willingly and with humility rather than using their position for personal benefit (1 Peter 5:2–3). A good pastor should therefore demonstrate honesty, love, patience, discipline and integrity in dealing with members.

In modern society, especially in Africa, pastors perform several social functions beyond conducting church services. They provide emotional and spiritual support to people who are experiencing difficulties such as family problems, poverty, bereavement and other challenges. Some pastors also organize charitable activities, educational programmes, youth activities and community development projects. Through these activities, pastors can contribute positively to the welfare of individuals and communities (Burgess, 2020).

Because of these responsibilities, many people place a high level of trust in pastors. Church members may believe the advice and prayers of their pastors and may also consider them to have special spiritual authority. In some communities, pastors are consulted not only about religious matters but also about marriage, family problems, employment, education and health-related concerns. This level of trust makes the character and behaviour of pastors very important because their actions can strongly influence the people who follow them.

However, some individuals misuse the position of pastor for personal gain. Instead of using their leadership to serve God and the community, they may use religion to acquire wealth, political influence, fame or social recognition. Some may advertise special miracles, prophecies, healing, and deliverance programmes mainly to attract large crowds and increase church income. When miracles are deliberately staged or exaggerated, such practices can deceive worshippers and damage people's trust in genuine religious activities (Marshall, 2021).

The commercialization of religion has therefore become an important issue in the study of contemporary Christianity. Marshall (2021) observes that in some religious settings, the emphasis on material success and spectacular religious activities can shift attention away from spiritual growth and responsible Christian living. This does not mean that all pastors are dishonest or that all claims of miracles are false. Rather, it shows the need for pastors to maintain honesty, accountability and proper Christian values. Genuine pastoral leadership should focus on serving people, strengthening their faith and promoting their well-being rather than using miracles as a means of exploitation.

Fake Miracles

Fake miracles are deliberate acts of deception in which individuals pretend that supernatural healing or divine intervention has taken place when, in reality, the event

has been staged, manipulated or falsely presented. Such practices may include false testimonies, paid individuals pretending to have been healed, manipulated medical reports, fake prophecies and exaggerated claims of supernatural power. Fake miracles can therefore make people believe that an extraordinary act of God has occurred when there is no genuine evidence to support the claim (Ukah, 2021).

Fake miracles are different from genuine religious experiences because they involve deliberate deception. The purpose is often to make people believe that a pastor has special spiritual powers. Some fake miracles are performed to attract large crowds, increase church membership, gain public recognition, receive media attention or encourage members to give more money. When such practices occur, they can take advantage of the faith and trust of ordinary worshippers.

According to Adogame (2022), the commercialization of religion has contributed to the growth of spectacular religious activities in some African churches. Some religious leaders compete for popularity by presenting dramatic miracles, prophecies, deliverance programmes and healing services. In such situations, the attention may shift from genuine spiritual teaching to public displays designed to attract followers and financial support.

Fake miracles can have serious effects on individuals, churches and society. People who believe false claims

may spend money on repeated prayer sessions or stop seeking appropriate medical or professional assistance. They may also lose trust in religious leaders when they later discover that a miracle was staged. Therefore, pastors and church leaders have a responsibility to promote honesty, transparency and responsible religious practices. Religious faith should not be used to deceive vulnerable people or exploit their hopes for healing and solutions to their problems (Adogame, 2022; Ukah, 2021).

Traditional Healer

A traditional healer is a person who is recognised and accepted within a community as someone who possesses indigenous knowledge and skills for preventing, diagnosing and treating illnesses. Traditional healers may use medicinal plants, herbs, roots, therapeutic massage, bone setting, spiritual counselling, rituals and other culturally accepted methods of healing. Their knowledge is often acquired through family traditions, apprenticeship, personal experience or training from other experienced healers (WHO, 2019).

Traditional healers play an important role in many African communities because they are usually familiar with the language, customs, beliefs and social conditions of the people they serve. They may provide care for physical illnesses as well as problems that the community understands in spiritual or social terms. In rural areas, traditional healers may also be more

accessible and affordable than formal healthcare services, making them an important source of healthcare for many people (WHO, 2023).

In the African traditional setting, the work of a healer may extend beyond giving herbal medicine. Some traditional healers provide counselling, spiritual guidance, assistance during childbirth, treatment of fractures and support for individuals experiencing problems that are believed to have spiritual causes. Their position is therefore connected not only with healthcare but also with the cultural and spiritual life of the community. However, traditional healing practices differ from one community to another and not all practices have been scientifically evaluated for safety and effectiveness (WHO, 2019).

Traditional Healing System

Traditional healing systems refer to indigenous methods of preventing, diagnosing and treating diseases using knowledge that has been passed from one generation to another. These methods include the use of medicinal plants, herbs, roots, spiritual counselling, massage, bone setting, traditional birth attendance and other cultural healing practices. Traditional medicine is an important part of healthcare in many African societies because it is closely connected to the culture and beliefs of the people (WHO, 2019; WHO, 2023).

Traditional healing is based on the belief that health involves physical, spiritual, emotional and social well-

being. Traditional healers often understand the customs, language and beliefs of their communities, making their services more acceptable to local people. In many African communities, traditional healers may also provide counselling and spiritual support in addition to physical treatment. This shows that traditional healing often considers the person as a whole rather than focusing only on the symptoms of a particular illness (WHO, 2019).

Traditional medicine remains important in many African communities because it can be affordable, locally available and culturally familiar. The WHO has reported that a large proportion of people in the African Region use traditional medicine as part of their healthcare, particularly where access to modern healthcare services is limited (WHO, 2019). Traditional medicine can therefore complement formal healthcare when it is practised safely and responsibly. However, the safety, quality and effectiveness of particular traditional treatments need to be properly assessed.

Despite its importance, traditional healing has faced criticism from some religious groups, particularly where indigenous spiritual practices are associated with witchcraft, idolatry or demonic activities. In some Christian communities, this has contributed to the rejection of traditional healers and indigenous healing practices. Such attitudes can affect the preservation of indigenous knowledge and may create conflict between traditional healing and Christian approaches to health

and spirituality. Therefore, there is a need for balanced understanding, proper documentation, safety standards and respectful discussion of traditional healing practices (WHO, 2023; WHO & UNESCO, 2022).

Faith Healing

Faith healing is the belief that prayer, faith in God and divine intervention can restore health. Many religions including Christianity and African Traditional Religion recognize the power of God or a Supreme Being to bring healing and relief from sickness. In Christianity, the Bible contains several accounts of Jesus healing people through faith, prayer and divine power (Mark 5:34; James 5:14–15). Faith healing can therefore provide people with hope, comfort and emotional support during periods of illness.

Faith healing becomes problematic when individuals reject all medical treatment or traditional medicine because they expect miraculous healing alone. Some religious leaders may encourage members to stop taking prescribed medicines or avoid hospitals after receiving prayers. Such actions can be dangerous, particularly when dealing with serious or life-threatening illnesses. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) emphasizes the importance of safe and evidence-based healthcare while recognizing the continuing role of traditional and complementary forms of care.

Prayer and medical treatment do not necessarily have to be seen as opposites. Many people combine prayer with

hospital treatment, believing that God can work through doctors, nurses, medicines and other healthcare professionals. Faith can provide emotional strength and hope while medical treatment addresses the physical causes of illness. Therefore, genuine religious faith does not necessarily require a person to reject appropriate healthcare (Keener, 2021).

The relationship between faith healing and modern medicine is particularly important in Nigeria, where churches and religious leaders have significant influence on people's health decisions. Pastors can play a positive role by encouraging members to pray while also advising them to seek qualified medical attention when necessary. This approach can protect lives and prevent religious beliefs from being misused. Faith healing should therefore promote hope and spiritual support without encouraging people to abandon safe and appropriate healthcare (WHO, 2023).

Miracle Ministry

Miracle ministry refers to a Christian practice in which pastors or religious leaders pray for people who are seeking God's intervention in their lives. It commonly focuses on healing, deliverance, prophecy, restoration and other forms of supernatural assistance. The practice is strongly associated with Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity where believers are encouraged to have faith in God's ability to solve difficult problems (Anderson, 2021).

In Nigeria, miracle ministry has become an important part of contemporary Christian worship. Many churches organise healing services, miracle nights, prayer meetings, deliverance programmes and crusades. During these programmes, pastors pray for people experiencing sickness, infertility, unemployment, family problems and other difficulties. Television, radio and social media have also increased the popularity and spread of miracle ministries (Kalu, 2022).

Miracle ministry can provide hope, encouragement and emotional support to people facing difficult situations. However, problems arise when some religious leaders make false claims, stage healings or demand money in exchange for miracles. Such practices can exploit vulnerable people and may also encourage some individuals to depend entirely on prayer while delaying appropriate medical treatment. The World Health Organization (2023) emphasizes the importance of safe and appropriate healthcare alongside respect for traditional and complementary medicine.

It is important to distinguish genuine miracle ministry from fake miracles. Not every pastor who prays for healing is involved in fraud. The problem occurs when supernatural events are deliberately staged or exaggerated to gain money, fame or followers. Such practices can reduce public trust in Christianity and may also affect people's attitudes toward traditional healing systems. Therefore, miracle ministry should be practised

with honesty, compassion, accountability and respect for human life.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Max Weber's Social Action Theory, which explains that people's actions are influenced by the meanings and beliefs they attach to situations. According to Weber, individuals make decisions based on their values, emotions, traditions and personal goals. In the context of this study, many people choose miracle centres because they believe that pastors possess divine healing powers. Their decisions are often influenced by religious teachings, fear of illness, hope for healing and trust in spiritual leaders. At the same time, these beliefs may cause some people to reject traditional healing systems especially when they are taught that indigenous healing practices are evil or unchristian. The theory therefore helps to explain how religious beliefs and social influences shape people's attitudes and healthcare choices. It is suitable for this study because it provides a better understanding of why fake miracle claims continue to affect the acceptance of traditional healing systems.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research approach which focuses on understanding people's beliefs, opinions and experiences. Information for the study was obtained mainly from secondary sources including books, scholarly journal articles, government publications,

reports from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other credible academic materials related to religion, fake miracles and traditional healing.

Types of Traditional Healing Systems

Traditional healing systems in Nigeria differ across ethnic groups and communities but they have remained an important part of healthcare and cultural life. These systems are based on indigenous knowledge that has been passed from one generation to another. Some traditional healing practices focus on the use of medicinal plants while others involve the treatment of physical injuries or assistance during childbirth.

Herbal Medicine

Herbal medicine is one of the most common forms of traditional healing in Nigeria. It involves the use of roots, leaves, bark, seeds, fruits and other parts of plants to prepare remedies for different health conditions. Traditional healers usually have knowledge of the plants found in their local environment and how they can be prepared and used. Some remedies may be taken orally, applied to the body or used in baths and other traditional preparations. Herbal medicine is also culturally important because its knowledge is often transferred from older practitioners to younger generations. The World Health Organization recognizes the importance of traditional medicine and encourages the safe and evidence-based use of traditional and complementary medicine (WHO, 2023).

Bone Setting

Traditional bone setting is another important form of traditional healing in Nigeria. Traditional bone setters specialize in the treatment of fractures, dislocations, sprains and other injuries affecting the bones and joints. They commonly use methods such as massage, splinting, bandaging, and the application of locally prepared materials. In many rural communities, people continue to patronize traditional bone setters because their services are often cheaper and more accessible than hospital-based treatment. However, serious injuries require appropriate medical assessment because improper treatment can result in complications, permanent disability or delayed healing.

Traditional Birth Attendants

Traditional birth attendants (TBAs) assist women during pregnancy, childbirth and the period after delivery. They are particularly important in some rural communities where hospitals and skilled health professionals may be far away or difficult to access. Traditional birth attendants may provide support during labour, advice on pregnancy and assistance with basic postnatal care. Many women also prefer them because they are familiar with the community, culturally accepted and often more affordable. However, childbirth can involve serious complications, so traditional birth attendants need appropriate training and should work with formal healthcare services to ensure that pregnant women and

newborns can receive emergency medical care when necessary.

Spiritual Healing

Spiritual healing is an important aspect of some traditional healing systems in Nigeria. It is based on the belief that certain illnesses may have spiritual, supernatural or social causes. Traditional healers may use prayers, divination, cleansing rituals, sacrifices, incantations or other spiritual practices to address what they believe to be the cause of an illness. In many communities, these practices are connected to religious beliefs, ancestral traditions and the cultural understanding of health and sickness. Spiritual healing therefore serves not only as a means of seeking relief from illness but also as a way of maintaining cultural identity and addressing people's spiritual concerns. However, serious or unexplained illnesses should also receive appropriate medical attention.

Massage Therapy

Traditional massage therapy involves the use of the hands and sometimes natural oils or other materials to massage parts of the body. It is commonly used to relieve body pain, reduce muscle tension, improve movement and support recovery after minor injuries. Traditional massage practitioners may use different techniques depending on the person's condition and the customs of the community. It is particularly common for problems such as body aches, muscle stiffness, sprains,

and general physical discomfort. Massage may provide relaxation and temporary relief but serious injuries, fractures or persistent pain should be properly assessed by qualified healthcare professionals to prevent complications.

Effects of Fake Miracles on Traditional Healing Systems

The study found that fake miracles have several significant effects on traditional healing systems in Nigeria. The activities of some pastors who stage or exaggerate miracles can influence how people understand healing, sickness and traditional medicine. While genuine faith healing and traditional healing may continue to play important roles in society, false claims of supernatural healing can create confusion and affect people's confidence in different healing systems.

Decline in Public Confidence

One major effect is the decline in public confidence in spiritual and traditional healing practices. When people discover that a supposed miracle was staged or exaggerated, they may begin to doubt other forms of healing. This doubt may not be limited to the pastor or church involved; it can extend to traditional healers and other spiritual practitioners. Consequently, people may become suspicious of genuine healing practices because they find it difficult to distinguish between authentic healing and deception.

Loss of Indigenous Medical Knowledge

Another important effect is the loss of indigenous medical knowledge. Traditional healing systems contain knowledge about medicinal plants, herbs, spiritual practices, diagnosis and methods of treating certain illnesses. Much of this knowledge is passed orally from older practitioners to younger generations. However, when young people are encouraged to believe that all healing should come through instant miracles in churches, they may lose interest in learning from traditional healers. As elderly practitioners die without transferring their knowledge, some indigenous healing practices may gradually disappear.

Negative Public Perception of Traditional Healers

Fake miracles also contribute to a negative public perception of traditional healers. In some communities, traditional healers are quickly labelled as fraudulent whenever their methods are questioned. This situation can be worsened by reports of fake miracles in religious settings because it creates a general atmosphere of suspicion around spiritual forms of healing. Genuine traditional practitioners may therefore suffer reputational damage even when they are not involved in fraudulent activities. This can reduce society's appreciation of indigenous knowledge and traditional healthcare practices.

Decline in Patronage of Traditional Healers.

Furthermore, fake miracles may lead to a decline in patronage of traditional healers. Some people are attracted to miracle centres because they expect immediate solutions to their health problems. They may abandon traditional healers because they believe that prayer and miraculous intervention can provide faster results. This can reduce the number of people consulting traditional practitioners and may affect the survival of some traditional healing practices. In the long term, reduced patronage may discourage younger people from entering the practice thereby creating another challenge for the preservation of indigenous healing knowledge.

Delay in Medical Treatment

One major effect of fake miracles is the delay in seeking appropriate medical treatment. Some individuals who are seriously ill may spend weeks or months attending prayer meetings, revival programmes and miracle services because they believe that they will receive supernatural healing. In some cases, they may stop taking prescribed medication or avoid visiting hospitals because they are convinced that their condition will be cured through prayer. Such delays can allow illnesses to become more serious and difficult to treat. Therefore, while prayer may be important to a person's faith, it should not be used as a replacement for appropriate medical care.

Commercialization of Religion

Fake miracles can also contribute to the commercialization of religion. Religion is expected to promote faith, moral values, compassion and service to humanity. However, when pastors use healing programmes to demand money, special offerings or payments for supposed miracles, religious activities may begin to look like business transactions. Some vulnerable people may spend money they cannot afford because they believe that financial contributions will bring healing. This can lead to financial exploitation and weaken the spiritual purpose of religious activities. The situation may also create the impression that God's blessings and healing can be bought with money.

Social Division

Fake miracles can create social division and disagreement among different groups involved in healing and healthcare. Churches and pastors may promote faith healing while traditional healers defend indigenous healing practices and medical professionals emphasize scientific treatment. When false miracle claims are exposed, arguments may arise about which method of healing should be trusted. Some religious groups may describe traditional healing as unacceptable while traditional practitioners may feel that their knowledge is being unfairly rejected. Similarly, healthcare workers may become concerned when miracle claims encourage people to avoid hospitals. These disagreements can

reduce cooperation and mutual respect among religious, traditional and medical communities.

Psychological Harm

Another important consequence of fake miracles is psychological and emotional harm to victims. People who sincerely believe that they have received a miracle may experience deep disappointment when they later discover that they were deceived. They may feel embarrassed, angry, betrayed or hopeless. In serious cases, repeated disappointment may contribute to emotional distress, loss of faith and distrust toward pastors and religious institutions. Some victims may also become suspicious of genuine spiritual experiences because of their previous negative experiences. Therefore, fake miracles can cause harm that goes beyond financial loss or physical health; they can also affect a person's emotional wellbeing and relationship with religion.

Overall, the effects of fake miracles extend beyond religious institutions. They can influence people's attitudes toward traditional healing, reduce confidence in indigenous practitioners, discourage the transmission of traditional medical knowledge and weaken the patronage of genuine traditional healers. Therefore, there is a need for greater public awareness, responsible religious practice and proper recognition of legitimate traditional healing knowledge.

Causes of Fake Miracles

Several factors contribute to the rise of fake miracles among some pastors and religious leaders. These factors are connected to economic hardship, competition among churches, the desire for popularity and the vulnerability of people who are looking for solutions to difficult problems. Fake miracles may therefore not be caused by one factor alone but by a combination of personal, religious, social and economic pressures.

Desire for Wealth

One major cause of fake miracles is the desire for wealth and financial gain. Some religious leaders may present themselves as miracle workers in order to attract offerings, tithes, donations and special financial contributions from members. They may claim that people must give a certain amount of money before receiving healing, deliverance or financial breakthrough. Because many worshippers strongly desire solutions to their problems, they may be willing to give money when they believe that a miracle is guaranteed. In this situation, the promise of supernatural intervention can be used as a means of obtaining financial benefits. The commercialization of healing can therefore encourage dishonest practices among some religious leaders.

Competition among Churches

Another important cause is competition among churches for members and public attention. The growth of

Pentecostal and charismatic churches has increased competition for worshippers. Some churches organize special miracle services, healing programmes, deliverance sessions and revival meetings to attract people. Where competition becomes excessive, some pastors may feel pressured to produce impressive testimonies and dramatic miracles. They may exaggerate healing claims, arrange testimonies or use other forms of deception to make their ministry appear more powerful than others. The desire to build a large congregation and become popular can therefore contribute to the spread of fake miracles.

Poverty

Poverty and economic hardship also contribute to the problem. Many Nigerians face unemployment, low income, high living costs and difficulties in meeting basic needs. These conditions can make people desperate for quick solutions to their problems. A person who is unemployed may easily believe a promise of sudden financial breakthrough while someone who cannot afford medical treatment may depend heavily on a promise of miraculous healing. Such vulnerable individuals may therefore become easy targets for religious leaders who make false miracle claims. Poverty does not mean that people are foolish rather difficult circumstances can increase their dependence on hope and promises of immediate change.

Desire for Popularity and Recognition

The desire for fame and recognition can also encourage fake miracles. Some pastors may want to become widely known as powerful men of God or miracle workers. When a pastor becomes famous because of reported healings and deliverances, more people may attend the church and the ministry may receive greater financial and social attention. This can create pressure to maintain an image of supernatural power. As a result, some leaders may be tempted to create or exaggerate miracle testimonies in order to protect their reputation and remain popular.

Ignorance and Lack of Verification

Another contributing factor is lack of proper verification of miracle claims. Many people accept testimonies immediately without asking whether the alleged healing has been medically confirmed or whether the person was actually suffering from the claimed illness. Some miracle testimonies may involve conditions that naturally improve, temporary symptoms or situations that were never properly diagnosed. When church members accept every claim without evidence, dishonest individuals may find it easier to continue making false claims. Greater public awareness and careful verification can therefore help reduce the spread of fake miracles.

Weak Regulation

Weak regulation of religious activities is another factor that can contribute to the spread of fake miracles. Religious organizations generally enjoy considerable freedom to conduct worship services, healing programmes and other activities. However, miracle claims are not always properly investigated unless there is evidence of fraud, financial exploitation, or another criminal offence. This limited monitoring may allow dishonest religious leaders to make exaggerated or false claims without facing immediate consequences. Stronger accountability and transparent practices could help protect worshippers from deception while still respecting religious freedom.

Media Influence

The influence of the media and social media has also contributed to the spread of fake miracles. Television, radio, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok and other platforms allow miracle testimonies to reach thousands or millions of people within a short period. Dramatic videos can make a pastor appear more powerful and successful than may actually be the case. In some situations, videos may be edited, selectively presented or accompanied by exaggerated testimonies to attract viewers. The desire for likes, followers and increased popularity can therefore encourage the production and promotion of misleading miracle content.

Poor Religious Education

Poor religious education is another factor that makes people vulnerable to fake miracles. Some believers may have limited knowledge of the Bible and may not be able to distinguish between genuine Christian teachings and manipulative practices. As a result, they may accept every claim made by a pastor without asking questions or examining the evidence. Some may also believe that questioning a religious leader shows a lack of faith. Adequate religious education can help believers develop critical understanding, recognize manipulation and distinguish genuine faith from fraudulent miracle claims.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of fake miracles performed by some pastors on traditional healing systems in Nigeria. The study found that false miracle claims can create negative attitudes toward traditional healing and cause people to abandon indigenous healthcare practices. Some vulnerable people may also be exploited financially or encouraged to depend only on miracle claims instead of seeking appropriate medical treatment.

This further showed that constant condemnation of traditional healing can contribute to the loss of indigenous medical knowledge and cultural heritage. However, the study does not condemn Christianity or genuine religious healing. Rather, it focuses on the

negative effects of deliberately false miracle claims used to deceive or exploit people.

Fake miracles can have negative effects on health, culture, religion and traditional healing systems. There is therefore a need for responsible religious leadership, proper regulation, scientific research, and preservation of useful indigenous healthcare knowledge.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

5. Government should regulate fraudulent miracle claims and protect people from religious exploitation.
6. Pastors and other religious leaders should be honest about healing claims and encourage members to seek appropriate medical care.
7. Traditional healing practices should be researched, documented and properly regulated.
8. Government, universities and health organizations should educate the public about safe and evidence-based healthcare.
9. More research should be carried out to preserve indigenous medical knowledge.
10. The media should investigate miracle claims and educate the public about fake miracles.

11. Traditional healers should work with researchers and health authorities to improve the safety and effectiveness of traditional medicine.
12. The public should critically examine miracle claims and seek proper medical diagnosis when necessary.

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