



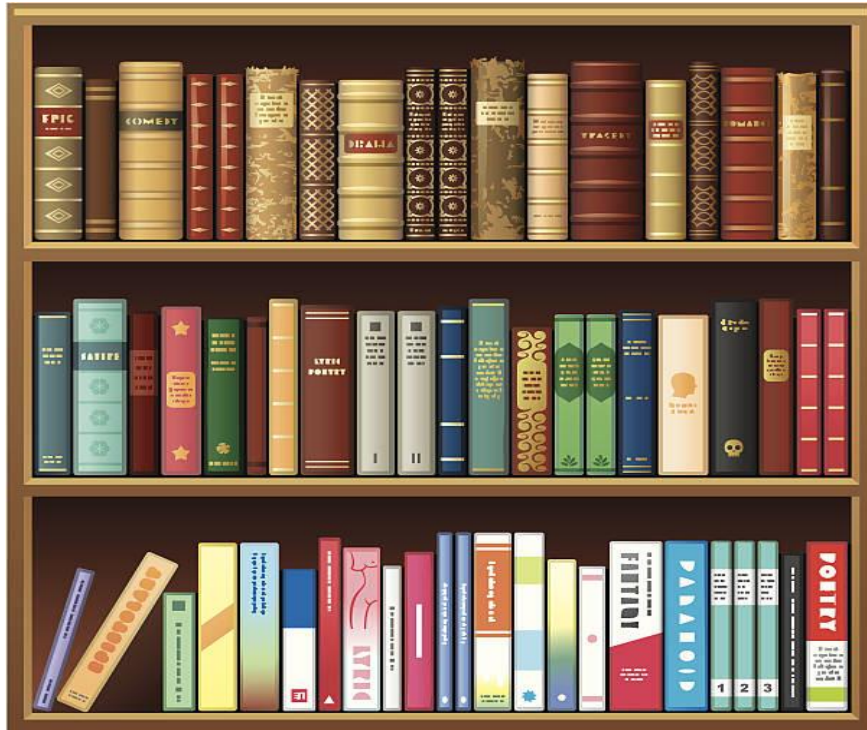
THE NOUN SCHOLAR VOLUME 3  
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# THE NOUN SCHOLAR

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## DECEMBER, 2023

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This is to acknowledge the University Management for its support in the production of this Special Edition of the journal. We do not take this for granted. It is part of the vision of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Olufemi Peters, in encouraging top-notch research at the university. We are grateful, sir, to be a beneficiary of this magnanimity in the Faculty of Arts.

We acknowledge the openness with which Professor Godwin Sogolo shared his career experiences with us. His dedication to duty while still in service was also exemplary. We appreciate his commitment and contributions to the growth of the Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy programme for the Faculty. His support for the faculty and high standards in her contributions were truly exemplary.

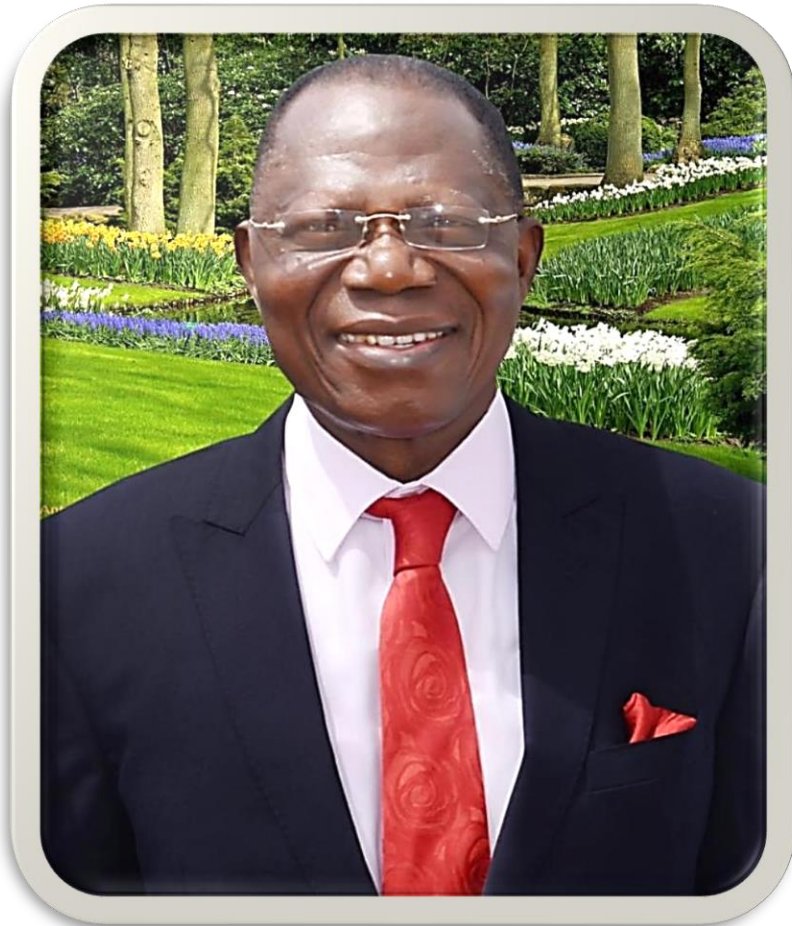
We appreciate the Editorial Team and the Interview Team for a job well done. All members of the Faculty who submitted their papers to celebrate him are truly appreciated. All our colleagues from sister universities who also contributed to the success of this Special Edition of the journal are acknowledged too.

### **The Editorial Board**

## DEDICATION

***THE NOUN SCHOLAR SPECIAL EDITION, Vol 3, No 2***

is dedicated to



**Emeritus Professor Godwin Sogolo, *FNAL***  
of the National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja





## INTERVIEW WITH

### EMERITUS PROFESSOR GODWIN SOGOLO, *FNAL, fspsp*



*You started your teaching career in 1975 as a Tutor in Philosophy at the University of Wales, Cardiff, UK.*

***What was your experience like?***

Answer: It was a challenging, but fruitful experience, handling foreign students at that time.

***What aspect of your living in some regions aided your acquisition of Philosophy proficiency?***

Answer: The period of my PhD studies at the University of Wales, UK (1973-1976).

***Post-retirement? What is your innovative trajectory on the significance of "blackness" in the modern world?***

Answer: The continued reflection on the role of Philosophy in human development, with a focus on contemporary Africa.

***What led to your interest in the controversial question of whether or not there is something distinctive that can be described as African philosophy?***

Answer: In early post-colonial Africa, it was doubtful if there were disciplines that had unique African features: History, Literature, Linguistics, Sociology, Economics, etc. Philosophy was one of such disciplines. The main question at the time, was whether or not there was African Philosophy. This question preoccupied the minds of those of us who were trained in Philosophy. One of my major publications was "Options in African Philosophy", published in *Philosophy, Journal of the Royal*





*Institute of Philosophy*, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK (1990, Vol. 65, No 251, pp. 39-52).

### **Who is an African Philosopher?**

Answer: From my own perspective, an African Philosopher is a Philosopher whose subject of analysis is drawn from the African experience.

### **Why is African philosophical tradition said to be nourished within the context of African culture, history, and experience?**

Answer: African Philosophical tradition must be nourished within the context of African culture, history, and experience because it is the subject matter that determines the tradition of Philosophy, rather than the practitioner.

### ***How can one apply Aesthetics Epistemology, Ethics, Logic and Metaphysics to everyday living?***

Answer: Aesthetics, Epistemology, Ethics, Logic and Metaphysics are some of the major components of Philosophy, as universally conceived. These aspects exist in all human experiences, Africa inclusive. Therefore, they need to be clarified, analysed and understood by the individuals in each of the societies. Where the need arises, these components of Philosophy may be developed, in keeping with changing circumstances.

### **As an experienced African Philosopher, elaborate on African Feminism, African Philosophy of Religion and African Political Philosophy**

Answer: As an African Philosopher, the idea of Feminism has a unique meaning derived from the fact that the African woman is an autonomous and independent agent who, in most cases, is the breadwinner in the family. I must confess that experts in feminism are in a better position to analyse this concept. African Philosophy of Religion should not be different from the Philosophies of Religion elsewhere, since religion in all societies, whether Africa, Europe or Asia, is the same by definition – it is the same belief in supernatural entities and corresponding practices – although the modes may depend on individual societies. African Political Philosophy is



defined as the critical reflection on the principles and institutions of governance in Africa. Among notable African political doctrines are *Ujaama* by Julius Nyerere, *Consciencism* by Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor's *Négritude*, etc.

**Africana philosophy includes pre-Socratic African philosophy and modern-day debates discussing the early history of Western philosophy, post-colonial writing in Africa and the Americas, black resistance to oppression, and black existentialism in the United States**

**Shed light on this philosophical orientation.**

Answer: This question encompasses distinct traditions of Philosophy, each with a vast body of literature that cannot be elaborated here. Suffice it to say that contemporary post-colonial African Philosophy is intimately connected with pre-Socratic Greek Philosophy/Western traditions of Philosophy. For instance, there are existential Philosophers, particularly in Franco-Phone Africa, whose works are intellectually linked to the tradition of French Existentialism.



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## **Editorial Policy**

*The NOUN Scholar*, Faculty of Arts Journal of Humanities, is an international peer-reviewed Journal of Faculty of Arts, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Jabi-Abuja. *The NOUN Scholar* sets out from the frontiers of humanities to publish well-researched, scholarly, peer-reviewed articles and book reviews on topics and subject matters relating to religious motifs, Biblical Studies, Ethics, Systematic Theology, Church History, Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Sharia, Islamic Heritage, Quran and Hadith, Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Ancestral worship, The Living Dead, Reincarnation, Witchcraft, Archaeology, Anthropology. It also encourages works in Fine Arts, Visual and Performing Arts such as Music and Theatre, Gender Studies, Linguistics, Culture, Humanistically oriented ‘Social Sciences’, Philology, Musicology, Art History, Literary Studies, Poetry, Ethnomethodology, Folk Culture, General/Applied Linguistics and Interface Areas: Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Semantics, Morphophonology, Morphosyntax; Glottochronology and Lexicography; Sociolinguistics, Multilingualism and Intercultural Communication, Linguistics and Translation, Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics; New Media and Society, Linguistics and Communication Studies/ ICT; Linguistics and Pedagogy - Mother Tongue Education; Topics in African Linguistics and their Interfaces and any other topics related to the field of Arts and Humanity Studies.

This is a special edition of the journal. The journal is intended to be the preferred podium for scholars and researchers to publish their most recent research findings to a broader audience, both in print and online.

## Guidelines for Scholars and Contributors

- All manuscripts should be submitted to the editor in soft copies.
- All manuscripts should be typed in 1.5-line spacing, with margins of 1 inch on each side, using Times New Roman, font size 12, not exceeding 15 pages including references. Kindly use block paragraphing.
- The cover page should carry only the title of the paper, name(s), address(es) or institution(s), e-mail address(es), and phone number(s) of the author(s).
- The second page should carry the title of the paper also for blind review, an abstract of between 250-300 words (optional) with, at most, seven (5) keywords.
- Submission could be made in electronic format to **foanounscholar@noun.edu.ng**.
- Manuscripts could be written in English, Hebrew, Greek, French, Arabic, Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba.
- All manuscripts should be original and not have been submitted elsewhere for consideration or publication.
- Citations, tables and references should follow the current APA, MLA, Turabian or Chicago format depending on the author(s) choice.
- Empirical manuscripts should have the following sub-headings: introduction, review/theoretical framework/conceptual definitions or framework/method, results, discussions, conclusions and recommendations.
- Quotations exceeding 40 words should be indented on the left side only in single-line spacing. Those that are 40 words or less should





be integrated with quotation marks: both should designate page number(s).

- It is recommended that **50%** of an article’s references should span 10 years or below.
- Submissions will be peer-reviewed at a non-refundable cost of **N5000** (five thousand Naira) only.
- Where the paper is found publishable with or without corrections, an unsoiled copy shall be a prerequisite for publication as well as **₦20, 000** (twenty thousand Naira) for the print copy (publication fees).
- Papers will go through blind peer review/assessment. Those found publishable shall appear in *THE NOUN SCHOLAR*.



## **From the Editor-in-Chief**

Once again, you are welcome to this edition of our journal. It has really been a long and tortuous journey. However, our thirst for excellence is the major guide to our carefulness in the preparation for the publication of the journal. This edition is another Special Edition, dedicated to one of our dedicated and reliable elders in the Faculty. Professor Emeritus Godwin Sogolo, *FNAL* is a well-known philosopher-scholar in Nigeria and beyond. He is the only Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Arts, National Open University of Nigeria. He is also a Fellow of the prestigious Nigerian Academy of Letters. He gave details of his scholarship journey in the interview above.

When the Faculty of Arts Academic Board decided to dedicate Volume 3, Number 2 of the journal, *The NOUN Scholar*, to celebrate his scholarship, it received wide acceptance among colleagues. This acceptance resulted in the many articles you see in this volume of the journal. Indeed, that he is a scholar of repute to be reckoned with in his field is without doubt. The Editor provides the details below. I hope you enjoy reading this as much as we enjoy bringing it to you; serving you with such dedication.

Thank you for remaining a part of our pursuit for excellence in this journal.

**Prof Iyabode O. A. Nwabueze, *MNAL***  
*Editor-in-Chief*



## *Words from the Editor's Desk*

Dear colleagues,

We are happy, once again, to bring out this special edition in honour of our mentor, Emeritus Professor Godwin Sogolo, an astute scholar of philosophy. He has spent his time, even at this level, mentoring young academics, not only in philosophy but also in other humanities disciplines. As usual, and especially because of that, this edition is multi-disciplinary. The edition starts with an interesting in-depth interview, which helps the reader to understand our great intellectual. The edition contains twenty (20) thoroughly researched and well-written articles cutting across the following subject/thematic research areas in Arts and Humanities: language and linguistics, literature, philosophy and religion, ethics and violent conflicts, communication and language policy, women's participation in politics, ICT and language teaching, among others. The edition features the following articles: **The Relationship between Religion and Western Drama** by Onyeka Francisca Iwuchukwu, **Language for Higher Education: The Place of the English Language in Nigeria** by Joy Eyisi, Sheriff Olamide Olatunji & Joy Eyisi Jr; **Is the Pandemic So Far Gone? A Semiotic Analysis of COVID-19 Fading Imageries** by Iyabode O. A. Nwabueze, Bibian Ugoala, Felicia Oamen and Gloria Anetor. This is followed by Kenneth Ekezie in **Implicit Multilingual Radio Language Policy in Nigeria: A Case Study of Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria**. Alheri Vanessa Bala & Joshua Olumide Orimiyeye continue the discourse in **Community Perception on Prevalence of Female Involvement in Substance Abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Kaduna State** while Christopher Chinedu Nwike's article takes a look at the **The Effect of Consonant Omission on Igbo Words**. **The Role of Religious Textual Interpretation Towards Reducing Insecurity in Nigeria: A Christian Theological Approach** by Philip Tachin takes a Christian theological approach. This is followed by **Child Narrative Voice as Satire for Rape in Ernest Emenyonu's *What the Babysitter and my Bishop had in Common*** co-authored by Ekpang, Juliet Nkane and God'sgift Ogban Uwen, **Violent Conflicts in Tivland: An Ethical Assessment of The Loss of Human Dignity and Moral Values in The Contemporary Society** by Simeon Iember Aande and Godwin

Aonover Gbande follows. The intellectual discourse continues with **A Rhetorical Analysis of Acts 17: 16-34 in Light of Handling Religious Plurality in Nigerian Society** by Finke Elizabeth Oyenkan. **The Impact of Christianity on the Ohen Festival of Ikao in Edo State, Nigeria** by James, Mari Ogbemudia, **Atheism in Igbo Religio-cultural Philosophy: Justification for the Proof of God’s Existence** by Amos Francis Dike, **A Generative Account of Allomorphic Variations in Nigerian English: Some Observable Typologies in L2 Spoken Prose** by Ubong E. Josiah and Hannah Clifford. **Teaching Literature of Incarceration in the African Context: Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Paradigms** by Sunday Adekunle Osinloye. **Analyse de la perception des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV: une étude socio-historique** (In French) by Peter Akongfeh Agwu & Peace Onwanua. **A Corrupt Member in the Cabinet of Jesus Christ: John 12:3-8 In Light of Effective Management of Corruption in Nigeria** Honore Maupego Sewapo. **Instructions on Women’s Participation in Nigerian Politics** by Christopher Terande Annger. **Open Distance Learning and Foreign Languages: Challenges and Prospects of Learning French Language in the 21st Century** by Akese, Manasseh Teryima PhD, and Akpen, Augustin Leval. **A Critical Discussion of Imam Al-Ghazali’s Philosophical Analysis of Dhātul-Lah (Essence of God)** by Murtala Abdus-Salam Ajani; **Effect of ICT Implementation in The Teaching of Igbo Language Grammar by Igbo Language Students** by Nneka Justina Eze.

We at *The NOUN Scholar* invite you to join in this academic journey as we honour this great asset, especially in the Faculty of Arts at the National Open University and the academic world in general. Happy reading.

**Doris Laruba Adejoh-Obieje, MNAL**  
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## **The Relationship between Religion and Western Drama** **Onyeka Francisca Iwuchukwu**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the relationship between religion and drama from the ritualistic origins of drama in oral traditions, the Greek classical age through some major dramatic periods to contemporary Nigerian society. The method adopted is mainly analytical with materials drawn from relevant literature (on/offline), personal observations, and interaction with religious and drama groups. The study observes that drama and religion share some similarities. Findings indicate that religion and drama share a symbiotic relationship both in Classical Greece and contemporary Nigeria but that while it was a communal affair in Greece with the involvement of the State, in Nigeria it is a personal affair for personal enrichment. Another finding is that the utilization of drama by Christian groups has led to the establishment of not just professional drama groups but also institutions for training theatre practitioners who become self-employed as well as employing others. Consequently, it is contributing to the reduction of unemployment in Nigeria as professional theatre practitioners like script writers, actors and various designers. It is expected that this study will add to scholarship in the areas of religious and dramatic studies. In addition, it is hoped that it would help to create awareness of the existence of such avenues for Christian moral growth and personal empowerment. More Christian and even secular groups or individuals may also utilize the dramatic medium for evangelization, edification and empowerment, especially for the youths.

**Keywords:** Relationship, Religion, Western Drama, oral traditions, personal empowerment

### **Introduction**

Religion is a very contentious word, especially in contemporary Nigerian society where it seems to have assumed a worrisome meaning and application leading to a high level of intolerance among different religious groups. Generally, religion should connote love and peace but unfortunately, religious intolerance has assumed such an overwhelmingly negative level that some fanatics kill, maim and destroy natural and material



resources in defense of their religion. The situation is so devastating that religion and ethnicity are becoming interchangeable as religious and ethnic groups view themselves with mutual suspicion that sometimes leads to deadly attacks against one another. Basically, in Nigeria, the three main religious groups are Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion. All of them preach tolerance, love and peace. The expectation, therefore, is that there should be peaceful co-existence among the citizens but the reverse is the case. Fortunately, some religious groups are utilizing drama to preach against hate, violence and other social vices geared towards a more peaceful society. In addition to evangelism, the relationship between drama and religion in contemporary Nigeria has aided the reduction of unemployment, especially among the youth. This is because drama production involves many members of staff who work as technical crew in addition to the actors and actresses we see on stage, television, home video, DVDs, series, soaps, cinema, films and many other media through which the performances are presented. Many Christian denominations in Nigeria are utilizing the dramatic medium for evangelism as well as for economic gains. This is evident in the upsurge in the establishment of drama groups, drama ministries, professional theatre companies, and theatre academies to train theatre professionals in various areas of drama and film productions. The ‘drama ministry’ is growing in leaps and bounds so much so that conferences are being organized for stakeholders in the industry. A good example is the recently concluded one tagged “God is a Film Maker” hosted by Kunle Adepoju, a renowned cinematographer held from December 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> at Molete Baptist Church, Idk odo, challenge Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.



There are so many sites on the internet but this study intends to bring the attention of more people to the existence of such opportunities for the public to subscribe to either as students or as employees on the

internet for the propagation of various media for religious evangelism through drama.

## Religion

Scholars believe that it is difficult to define religion. For instance, BAC Obiefune asserts that religion is “an ubiquitous and perverse concept. It is broad and yet, it is simple...it does not enjoy any uniformly acceptance...” (7). Oladele Balogun opines that it is not basically about definition but that “...the major contention among scholars is on goals, methods, creeds and subjects of religion.” He explains that “Etymologically, *religionis* is from latin words I *ligare* (to bind) *relegere* (to unite or link) and *religio* (relationship). In this sense, religion deals with a binding or uniting or having of a relationship with something that could either be natural or supernatural; although, in most cases, such a relationship is often associated with worldly or transcendental entities. (9). In his own contribution, J. I. Obilor sees religion as “...a capacity or a power which enables man to observe the laws of his nature, the natural and /or the divine law ” (137). Although scholars agree that it is difficult to have one single definition of religion, BAC Obiefune opines

...the idea of religion emanates from the uncertainties associated with existence. The origin, existence (sustenance) of humans and the rest of creation have been mind-bugging. Philosophical investigation has not fathomed it, nor scientific experimentations. Questions about ultimate realities stare people in the face. The only explanation appears to be anchored in the belief and understanding that there must be a Being other than humans, transcendent and immanent, responsible for all that exists. The Being must not be subject to uncertainty, the character of existence; and as such not subject to mutations, the result of which would be corruptibility. (6-7)

For a layman, religion is simply one’s belief in a supernatural being who is given different names in different religious cultures and is responsible for the daily existence of human beings on earth. This being is therefore revered and worshipped in adoration, supplication and thanksgiving to obtain material favours in this world and everlasting happiness in heaven. Religion



could therefore be seen as “... man’s archetypal journey in search for his soul, his identity, his god (Yesufu:59)”

### **Drama, Ritual and Religion**

Sometimes, religion and ritual are used interchangeably because they are similar in some aspects. A ritual is seen as an honest act that follows a particular pattern that is performed for a particular effect (result) and in accordance with a particular tradition. It seems to have evolved because of man’s desire to ensure harmony and equilibrium in the traditional society. For instance, if there is a disruption in the seasons or an incidence of calamity in a community, it is attributed to an offence against the gods and so an attraction of the god’s wrath. Consequently, they seek ways or means of appeasing the gods as we see in the play, *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles where there is a plague and the citizens are suffering. The King therefore went in search of the cause of the plague to find out what to do (appeasement) to avert further loss of life or its outright stoppage.

This appeasement is usually conducted only once but, in some cases, it becomes a regular form of ceremony for the community. When it becomes a regular occurrence following a definite pattern to achieve a specific result, it becomes a ritual. Ritual involves a group of people so, is communal in nature. Religion also is communal in practice but personal in nature because it is a belief in one form of supernatural being or the other and an individual chooses who/what to believe in and how to practice it. Faith is usually associated with religion because, it is through faith that a person would subscribe to an unseen being in a manner of supplication for positive expectations of what is asked for, and thanksgiving for favours received. Drama is simply an imitation/re-enactment of action. Somehow, both ritual and religion involve enactment or re-enactment that looks like drama but is different from drama because of intent and mode of presentation. When the intent is simply to entertain, inform, or educate, it is drama and the audience is made up of human beings. But if the intent is to achieve a particular result and the audience involves both human and supernatural beings, it is ritual or religion.

## **Drama**

The word drama comes from the Greek verb “dran” which means ‘to act’ or to perform. Generally, the origin of drama is traced to ritual performances used in supplication or appeasement to gods in some traditional societies. This ritual, as expected, involved a ceremony in which the priest played an important role (acting) at a designated location, mostly shrines (stage). The priest would normally wear a special dress (costume) for the occasion. So role-playing/acting, costume, and utterance or incantations (language) are regarded as dramatic elements. If the ritual is presented for entertainment and there is an element of impersonation, imitation of an action, or re-enactment of an action, it becomes drama. Another account traces the origin of drama to man’s desire for entertainment which is manifested during festivals or other ceremonies, where they recreate the feats of some legendary or mythical heroes to entertain the people. This recreation contains elements of impersonation/re-enactment which are elements of drama. Drama is the performance genre of oral literature others being the spoken (fiction) and the sung (poetry).

Scholars are divided on the origin of Western drama. Some trace the origin to Greece but others insist that drama in its definitive form or pattern evolved from Egypt which is regarded as one of the cradles of civilization in the world. The latter group argues that it was borrowed by Western merchants who developed and documented it and thereafter, traces the origin to Greece. However, the account of tracing the origin of drama to Greece is more plausible because the evolution is clear and well-documented (Iwuchukwu: 10). Greek drama evolved from a religious festival (ritual) in honour of Dionysius to ensure the fertility of the land and the well-being of its people. During this festival, a chorus of fifty men sang and danced around the altar of the god dressed in goatskins. The choral song, known as dithyramb, was sung in honour of the god some of which were stories about the god. The choral leader who sometimes dresses like a mythological character performs as part of the chorus. During a particular performance, a member of the chorus called Thepsis stood out from the chorus and instead of singing in the honour of the god, sang as the god, pretending to be the god. He performed in between the dances of the chorus and conversed at times with the leader of the chorus. Thus, dialogue was also introduced. With this action by Thepsis, drama was literally born and





he is believed to have been the first person to introduce the elements of the individual actor, impersonation and dialogue and so “the performance changed from poetry performance to drama (Brocket: 67)”.

There are numerous definitions of drama but Aristotle’s definition sums up all others. He defines drama simply as an imitation of an action. Besides Aristotle’s postulations on drama, generally, drama is used to educate, entertain and inform the audience and sometimes for social mobilisation.

The presentation of drama and religious ceremony share similar elements which include character (role-playing), central idea or message, costume/make-up, stage and audience. Sometimes, drama is presented as part of a religious ceremony or festival, and at other times it stands on its own in the form of entertainment. Some of the performances are used as instruments of social engineering in society just like in religion. Language is also utilized in religion and drama. Despite these seeming similarities, the relationship between drama and religion has been both pleasant and unpleasant. Another element that drama shares with religion is the employment of “restored behaviour” or behavior that is repeated. “This repetition sets dramatic performance and religious behaviour apart from the behavior of everyday life. The distance of the performers from the behaviour (role-playing) makes the behaviour “...symbolic and reflexive” in a way that normal human behaviour is not. (Obilor: 16) Another important element that is central to both drama and religious performances is the use of stage. This may not necessarily be in the form of the proscenium stage in the Western theatre but there is usually a designated space for the performer and another one (auditorium) for the audience.

Some societies especially in Western culture assigned “the secular theatre a religious importance and power” (Odunaike:12) as seen in ancient Greece, where, in the sixth century BC, the Grecian ruler, Peisistratus, raised the status and expanded the scope of the Dionysian festival to include drama contests. In addition, he instituted prizes for the best play presented during the festival. Some of the great tragic playwrights of that age who presented trilogies were Aeschylus and Sophocles while Aristophanes wrote comedies. We learn that

The first tragic contest occurred in 534 BC. During this festival, the priest of Dionysius occupied the central seat at the dramatic performances yet the plays did not have religious undertones. Instead, the playwrights explored secular themes that helped to ...reinforce the Athenian class and political ideology. Athenian playwrights of the fifth century seemed particularly interested in analysing the benefits of Athenian institutions, such as democracy or the courts. The plays were performed at a religious festival but other than that, have very little connection with religious thought (Brockert:70).

Although there seems to be a good relationship between drama and religion in the Classical Greek period it was during the same age that Plato threatened to banish dramatists in his Republic. This shows that from the classical age to the present the relationship between drama, the state and religion has not always been cordial. Some religious groups banned dramatic performances and barred their members from associating with drama or dramatists. For instance, the early Christian church discredited drama as seen in Tertullian's book, *De Spectaculis* quoted in Omole, in which he insisted that Christians should not attend dramatic performances because such performances depict licentious behaviour as acting arouses passions that could lead to sinful feelings/actions so performing a role is immoral while actors are immoral people. Consequently, leaning on the element of make-belief in drama, he condemns acting insisting that "God regards as adultery all that is unreal... [and] will never approve any putting on of voice, or sex, or age; He never will approve pretended loves, and wraths, and groans, and tears" (23). This is akin to Plato's claim that dramatic performances are thrice removed from the truth because dramatists deceive people by presenting unrealistic actions like fighting and winning battles on stage but not in reality. Concluding, Tertullian linked acting to pagan worship because Roman theatre was a temple of Venus while Greek drama originated from the Dionysian ritual festivals. The Catholics shared the above views so together with the Puritans banned drama and the theatres were closed down during the early medieval and commonwealth periods respectively.





## **The Rebirth of Drama in the Medieval Age**

The Catholic Church which spearheaded the suppression of drama became instrumental in its rebirth in the medieval age. This rebirth resulted in the emergence of different forms of drama like liturgical drama, mystery, and morality plays some of which have survived to date.

The rebirth of drama in the late medieval period started with the liturgical drama. The Catholic mass is believed to be the re-enactment of Christ's passion, death and resurrection but in the early church. It was conducted in Latin. As time went on, the priests realised that the congregation did not actually understand the mass, especially the liturgical epistles and gospels. They therefore introduced the dramatisation of the gospel so as to make the biblical stories more vivid and concrete for easier understanding and assimilation of the message by the congregation. This dramatisation started with the gospel of the Easter celebration which is the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In biblical documentation, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his body but were met at the entrance of the tomb by an Angel who said to them: "Why are you looking among the dead for one who is alive? (Mark: 24:5). This drama, popularly known as *Quem Queritis* (Whom do you seek), was presented in the form of a dialogue between the Marys and the Angel at the tomb, Gradually, it metamorphosed into a short simple play with stage directions written by Bishop Ethelwold in the *Regularis Concordia*. The stage direction comprised instructions to the monks (actors) on how to position themselves around the tomb (blocking) "in imitation of the angel seated in the tomb, and of the women coming with spices to anoint the body of Jesus" (Gassner;37). The initial and original performance took place in a space beside the altar for the congregation.

However, as it grew in popularity, some modifications were added and gradually extended to other major feasts in the liturgical calendar of the church. It also grew in magnitude so much that it became a distracting feature during Mass, deviated from the original intent and some priests could no longer handle the performances. Drama was therefore taken outside the church. The scope kept on expanding to include some other interesting stories from the bible that were not part of the liturgical readings. Guilds were also formed with each of them adopting a patron saint and

started dramatising the lives of the saints thereby increasing the number of performances to assuage the yearnings of the people for more performances. As soon as the drama was taken outside the church, the priests lost control, some stories were then performed in the vernacular with the infiltration of extraneous issues into the plays like the sheep stealing episode in *The Second Shepherd's Play*. The institution of the Feast of Corpus Christi by Pope Urban IV in 1264 added a significant boost to the liturgical drama. The celebration of the feast though in a procession was like a pageant (Ogden:26). This feast presents a public affirmation of the catholic doctrine of the transmutation of Christ in the Eucharist. In addition, dramatists modified and extended biblical themes to include secular issues but the plays still retained a didactic focus. Gradually full-blown plays were presented leading to the emergence of three genres of drama-

1. Liturgical Drama- plays presented during mass
2. Mystery/Miracle Plays- plays on miracles/mysteries in the bible and the lives of saints.
3. Morality Plays – full-length plays used to teach morals.

Two surviving plays of the Medieval age are *The Second Shepherd Play* and *Everyman*.

### **Religion, Drama and the Renaissance/Neoclassical Age**

During the Renaissance, the age following the medieval, new forms of drama emerged. This could be attributed to the spirit of the renaissance age which emphasised freedom and desire for knowledge and innovations. The Elizabethan in England is sometimes interchanged with the Renaissance which is referred to as the golden age of drama because Queen Elizabeth I loved pomp and pageantry. she patronised and promoted dramatic performances and indeed took drama to enviable heights. During this age, there were patrons for dramatists and dramatic performances and it also produced great and renowned playwrights like William Shakespeare, Ben Johnson and Christopher Marlowe as well as the building of great theatres like the Globe.

However, the long-drawn battle between the Catholics and the Protestants influenced the drama of this period adversely. Playwrights were conscious of this and so avoided plays that could ignite religious conflict between the two religious groups. For instance, despite her encouragement for drama,



Queen Elizabeth 1 banned religious drama in England in 1559 and specifically suppressed cycle plays in 1570. (Ogeden:12) This notwithstanding, some Renaissance plays contain moral undertones as seen in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus (1588). The play reflects the conflicting worldviews of the Medieval and the Renaissance worlds as the playwright dramatises forces of good and evil fighting for Faustus's soul and condemns excess materialism, especially unrestrained quest for worldly knowledge which, he feels, should be pursued with caution. The conclusion of the play projects the biblical injunction of "what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul". (Mark: 8:34-38)

Christian clergy continued to influence the development of Western drama. For instance, a few years after the Puritans in England closed down the theatres during the Commonwealth, the Protestant minister Jeremy Collier aided the suppression of Restoration comedy insisting in his "Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage" (1698) that the licentious behaviour of the characters, particularly the women, in restoration plays was condemnable and that the way the characters were taking the Lord's name in vain; mocking the clergy and the way evil was rewarded in the plays was not right (Brocket: 24).

Neo-classical age witnessed the decline of the power of the church so in Italy, some powerful families resuscitated and began to celebrate an Italian culture that pre-existed the church. The Medici family, for instance, sponsored spectacles that included drama. However, Christian morality still influenced artistic productions. In the sixteen century, the neoclassicists advocated a return to the Classical ideals and insisted "that truthfulness meant a higher, moral truth rather than a specific, historical truth" so did not really care about morality and drama (Brocket 31) but were more interested in the purity of the dramatic form - adherence to set rules. In the Modern period, dramatists reflect religion from various perspectives like as dramatization of religious themes, infusion of religious elements and outright propaganda and evangelism.

### **Drama and Religion in Nigeria 1: Oral Literature**

In oral literature, drama is referred to as the performance genre, others being the sung (poetry) and the spoken (Prose). Drama as an art form therefore

thrives on performance because it involves imitation of an action, an enactment, or a re-enactment of a story in lifelike situations to entertain, lampoon, condemn, satirize, educate, or inculcate moral values. In all these, action or imitation of an action is involved. Aristotelian concept of drama with its emphasis on imitation, plot, dialogue, conflict and so on has generated much controversy on what constitutes drama in the context of Nigerian traditional performances. Based on the Aristotelian concept, Ruth Finnegan insists that drama did not exist in pre-colonial African societies but that what existed is what she described as “certain dramatic and quasi-dramatic phenomena” (500). This generated a controversy among Nigerian dramatic scholars on the definition of African traditional drama. While some oppose her, others align with her leading to the emergence of the relativist and the evolutionist schools of thought on the issue. My position in the controversy is that, for drama to exist there must be an element of imitation of an action but dialogue and unified plot structure should not be considered as obligatory. However, in some traditional performances ritual and drama are so interwoven that, it becomes difficult to extricate the drama embedded in such performances. Some of these performances include masquerades some of which are seen as gods or heroic ancestors (impersonation). Masquerades take different forms and a variety of features depending on the cultural background, the purpose, the content and the pattern. A mask is a covering or a disguise (costume) used to transform the identity of the individual or the wearer into that of another character (acting). So, there is an element of impersonation and role-playing. In traditional Nigerian mask performances

Also, ancestral worship is very common in some Nigerian traditional communities. Deceased relatives, especially the elders, are regarded as ancestors and are believed to have some influence on their younger generations. People, therefore, are cautious not to offend their ancestors but whenever such a thing happens, such ancestors are appeased. Apart from such appeasement, ancestors are invoked or revered from time to time as the occasion demands to intercede or intervene for the living in some critical moments. These are presented in ceremonies which sometimes contain dramatic elements. In some Igbo societies for instance, after breaking the kola nut, a piece of the kola nut is thrown outside for the ancestors to eat before the mortals would eat their own share. Also, before taking a gulp of



palm wine, part of the wine is used to pour libation to the ancestors before the mortals drink their own, thus acknowledging the ever-presence of the ancestors.

However, whenever there is a serious problem or in a communal reverence, the diviner is usually consulted and he prescribes the requirements for the ceremony. He acts as a mediator (role-playing) between the living and the dead so the living worships the dead with reverence in supplication, penitence, invocation, or thanksgiving. This in some cases assumes a higher sacrificial dimension and culminates in a festival in which some forms of representation and imitation of action are involved. The priest yields his personality as a person and assumes the role of a priest. Unfortunately, some of these dramatic performances, as part of rituals or bigger festivals, are gradually being phased out due to the intervention of Christianity, the colonial religion that condemned every aspect of indigenous religion and dramatic performance.

### **Drama and Religion in Nigeria 2: Concerts to Written Plays**

Western drama was introduced in Nigeria through Christianity and education. They established primary and secondary schools where the students were exposed to drama presentations as concerts mainly at the end of the year ceremonies. The Catholic Church pioneered the use of drama in evangelization drama to bridge the communication gap. In the words of Yemi Ogunbiyi, "... the French Order of Catholic Priests (Societes des Missions Africaines) which arrived in Lagos in 1867, was compelled to rely on the power of the theatre for a more effective communication...." (18). In addition to religion and politics, these colonialists brought their culture of going to theatres for amusement. They organized concerts to entertain some important personalities from Britain and the priests/teachers tried to influence their parishioners and pupils with European civilization-like concerts which became one of the "steps of doctrinal and cultural indoctrination" (Gbilekaa 3). In missionary schools, dramatic clubs or societies were established to organise concerts at the end of their school calendar or during festivities like Easter and Christmas. The Catholic Church was the greatest producer of drama during this period because it also used the dramatic medium to teach English Language in an effort to improve communication between foreigners and the indigenes (Ogunbiyi:18).

Gradually, like the medieval drama, the drama was taken outside the church. For instance, the French priests who founded St Gregory’s College in 1818 organised grand concerts where drama sketches and plays by playwrights like Moliere were staged. The Reverend Sisters who founded St Mary’s convent were not left out of these performances which were usually parts of Easter and Christmas festivities. These dramatic presentations were so effective and popular that the “Catholic Church built a hall that could sit about 800 (eight hundred) people for perhaps staging of concerts” (Gbilekaa:6).

Apart from concerts in schools, other associations in the Catholic Church also presented dramatic performances on their founders/feasts and other significant feasts in the liturgical calendar just like in the medieval age. One prominent feature of the dramatic presentations of the Church was that, they dealt with religious or secular issues so classical/renaissance plays were equally presented. In contemporary Nigeria, the re-enactment of Christ’s grueling journey to Golgotha and his ignominious death on the cross by the Catholic Church, during the stations of the cross on Good Friday, has taken a greater dimension. This aspect of the Easter Tridum liturgy is now taken away from the church to the streets. Even the reading of the passion is also a form of drama as three people, the priest and two lectors present the gospel in a form of re-enactment/impersonation but the acting is reflected mainly through inflection of tones and sometimes, with gestures. The role of Jesus is played by the priest while one lector impersonates other characters and the second lector is the narrator linking the story for a fuller understanding by the congregation.

I was part of the school and religious concerts as a pupil at St Patrick’s Primary School Awka and a member of Children of Mary at the St Patrick’s Catholic Church Awka. In the school, we had end-of-the-year concerts that included drama presentations, poetry performances, songs and dances. The plays were usually improvisations or adaptations of abridged versions of foreign stories like *Cinderella*, plays from *More Tales* and *Lamb Tales from Shakespeare*, and others.

Also, in the church, there was always one dramatic presentation or the other by different societies in the church especially, the women groups of the





Catholic Women Organisation (CWO). For instance, St. Theresa's group has their patron feast day on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October while the Immaculata group celebrates their own on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December. In my society, Children Mary, our plays were improvised based on contemporary issues or traditional folktales. They include tales about the wicked stepmother, the children who refused to help an old woman and the consequences of such action; the untrained young girl who was rejected by her husband; the young girl who rejected many suitors and ended up marrying a monster and many others. The plays were didactic and provided entertainment for the audience made up of the priests and members of the congregation who stayed back after mass.

The Catholic Church which continued to be at the vanguard of promoting Christian doctrines with dramatic performances was very rigid with the themes being dramatized to avoid the infiltration of pagan practices. Some of their followers were not comfortable with it so left to form their own churches just like King Henry VIII did in England. This led to secession and the establishment of other churches and eventually, the concerts, as the main manifestation of colonial theatre in Nigeria, declined and were unable to evolve an authentic Nigerian character” (Banham, 145)

Some modern Nigerian playwrights infuse religious elements in their plays in terms of reflection on such elements, inculcation of religious belief systems and or the dramatisation of religious themes. For instance, Wole Soyinka in his play, *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) incorporated the Egungun mask religious practice and the concept of the 'willing carrier' by the king's horseman, Elesin Oba, on the night of the king's burial. He also dramatized religious hypocrisy as a theme in his play, *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1964). Other Nigerian playwrights have continued to incorporate religious beliefs, elements and themes from various perspectives in their plays. I have also dramatized religious themes, especially religious hypocrisy and reflected some religious beliefs in almost all my plays.

### **Drama and Religion in Nigeria from Stage to Screen/Academy**

Information technological advancement in mass communication started from the radio through the television to various forms of films. Christianity groups have followed the trend, utilizing these media for evangelism



through drama. Drama in the church started with adaptations of biblical stories and stories presented to teach moral lessons. Gradually, globally, the plays were broadcast on radio and gradually to television and films. There is no doubt that drama aids evangelism because “drama teaches morality by capturing and portraying venality, corruption and biased judgment... by daring to pronounce judgment on social vices ” (Mbachaga:45) but it is also a viable avenue for gainful employment.

Now in contemporary Nigerian society, the high rate of unemployment has led to the proliferation of churches and accelerated the explosion of drama evangelization and the establishment of professional theatre companies and academies. Nearly all major Pentecostal churches own television stations with drama channels and theatre companies which include film production units. In addition, some of them incorporate Drama ministry in the curriculum of their universities while others have established theatre academies where they teach various courses in acting, technical theatre and film production including marketing. In a recent study published online, Gospel Film News, Daniel Damilare, listed twenty Drama and Film Schools in Nigeria with details of the operation of each of them and affirms that the schools are “reliable and affordable”. He opines that these schools have been a strong part of drama evangelism in Nigeria since the inception of Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama in 1995 and that the list is not exhaustive as “very few of these schools are known”. (<http://www.globalfilma.info/html/about.php>) [List of Christian Drama and Film Schools in Nigeria - Gospel Film News](#). The pastors, provosts and general overseers are working tirelessly to outdo themselves in the establishment of film production schools to the extent that by 2021, Damilare listed twenty such schools in Nigeria. The interesting aspect in all these is that even those who condemned drama as sinful like Pastor Kumiya, have joined the ‘rat race’ of using drama for evangelism. The obvious reason is that it is very profitable though they all claim that they are winning souls for Christ. Whatever the case, the good news is that Christian drama ministry is providing employment opportunities to many youths who are exploring and utilizing their talent in various aspects of drama production. The justification for the use of drama is hinged basically on the ability of drama to present stories realistically to the audience in a concrete form. Thus, Vilox explains:



“When we act out scriptural stories and principles, we're ...making them real to those who are performing as well as to those who are watching. A dramatic performance can be more transformative and memorable than simply conveying information. Preaching becomes more attractive when something visual is added than when it is presented as just a monologue from behind the pulpit” Again to completely comprehend a message, people need to "see" it, absorb it, and integrate it for an extended period of time’ He, therefore, encourages more churches to use drama but the intent should be “... not just a financial one” but to use the resources to honor God and inspire people” (Vince Wilcox) <https://www.dramaministry.com/directors-chair/view/95/10-powerful-reasons-why-church-drama-is-a-good-> retrieved October 6, 2023

## **Conclusion**

Sometimes, religious practices and dramatic presentations share many elements in common. They include role-playing, performance space and an audience. In addition, many of the world's dramatic forms evolved from religious rituals. Some of them continued to be connected to religious celebrations in one way or the other. Drama in the classical period evolved from religious Dionysian festival and continued to be part of the annual festival. Serious drama in Europe was reborn in the Middle Ages within the Catholic Church and gave the dramatic world three forms of drama-liturgical drama, mystery and morality plays. Throughout the ages, drama and religion have shared relationships that were sometimes cordial and sometimes not too cordial. However, Christians in the contemporary world have continued to utilize the dramatic medium for evangelism, and correction of social ills for the edification of their members while reaping some financial benefits. Drama in the church has grown from short drama sketches, and concerts through stage/radio/television plays to movies and films. Other religious groups should be encouraged to follow suit for evangelism, financial benefits and job creation to reduce the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria.

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## Language for Higher Education: The Place of the English Language in Nigeria

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### Abstract

This paper looks into the language of higher education: the place of the English language in Nigeria. It is not an overstatement to say that of all the legacies bequeathed to Nigeria by the colonial masters, the English language is the most essential. This is because the nation cannot strive successfully without a unifying language like English in Nigeria. It is the language of education in Nigeria and is used as the language of instruction from upper primary school to tertiary education. Due to the importance of the English language, good performance in it is crucial to getting admitted into tertiary institutions and getting decent employment in the country. It is unique in Nigerian education because of the significant role it plays. This paper concludes that students need to understand the English language with appropriate vocabulary for them to achieve academic success. Proficiency in English is essential not only because it is the language of instruction in Nigerian schools but it plays an important role in the communicative sphere of the world. Based on the importance attached to the English language in higher education, the government should employ more competent lecturers to handle the teaching of the language in higher institutions of learning. This study would make students understand the place of the English language in higher education and why they should be exposed to standard English and its usage.

**Keywords:** Language, the English Language, Higher Education

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## Introduction

Language occupies an important position in human life. It is very important because it is the means through which concepts, ideas, thoughts and facts can be conveyed. Language is indispensable to man because it helps man to give expression and fully explore his environment to his advantage (Kolawole, 2016). According to Idiakhwa and Omoike (2020), language is a system or means of communication through spoken or written words by any group vital to the users as air is to human beings.

Donald (2010) states that language is a system of vocal auditory patterned sound units and assembled according to set when interacting with the experiences of its users. He concluded that language is a tool that is intimately used by man in all his daily activities. Blosch and Trager (1942) describe language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which social group cooperates. It is a non-instructive method of communicating ideas, feelings and desires by means of a system of sounds and sound symbols. Okedara (1997) views language as an essential factor in human survival and national development. In fact, without language, the life of a nation becomes meaningless. It occupies a very strategic position in human affairs. Very strategic in the sense that language is the vehicle through which concepts, ideas, thoughts, facts and a host of others can be conveyed. Language is characterised by a set of arbitrary symbols. There is no one-to-one correspondence between the object and the symbols which stand for it. The meaning attached to any object in any human society is purely arbitrary (Akindele and Adegbite, 2005).

Obanya (2004) distinguishes language among three concepts: Learning in, with and from a language. “Learning in” means studying the language as a school subject. “Learning with” refers to using the language for instructional purposes, that is using it to teach the school subjects. “Learning from” has a broader perspective as it embodies the linguistic and cultural/educational elements. The linguistic aspect is the acquisition of the language for communicative purposes. The cultural dimension entails the cultural values inherent in the language.

According to Crystal (1977), the importance of language in the life of individuals has been well-documented over the years despite the fact that



language was never created, in the strict sense of the word creation, when other things were created. Still, language has found its way into existence and has become so central to development, advancement, civilisation, education, science and technology, without which it will be impossible to talk of civilisation.

Language is the most important tool of learning. It serves as the most crucial part of the teaching and learning process because all the educational messages the teacher has to pass across to the learner are packaged in a language. It is the bedrock of formal education. Proper knowledge of the language used in school is of absolute necessity for learners to succeed in their quest for knowledge. Education largely depends on the communication of knowledge and language is indispensable for that communication (Chimhundu, 1997). This paper considers the place of the English language in higher education for students to know why it is important for them to understand the language. Proficiency in the English language is mandatory for academic and career advancement. This paper looks into the language situation in Nigeria, the English language in Nigeria, the place of the English language in Nigeria and the English language as the language of higher education in Nigeria.

### **Language Situation in Nigeria**

There are many countries in the world and every country has its own unique language. Ogunsiyi (2004) describes Nigeria as a multilingual nation. It has the English language as its official language and many indigenous languages are still widely used across the country. Nigeria chose English language as the official language to unite the country because of its heterogeneous nature. According to Oladipupo (2008), from various databases, the official number of languages spoken in Nigeria is intractable. Bamgbose (1971) estimates the number of languages spoken in Nigeria to be 400. Akinjobi (2004) notes that there are 470 living languages in Nigeria. Gordon and Raymond's *Ethnologue* (2005) note that the number of languages in Nigeria is 521, 510 are living, two are second language without mother-tongue speakers, while nine have gone into extinction. According to *Ethnologue* (2019), Papua New Guinea has the most languages, with 840 living languages. Indonesia has 710 living languages and Nigeria has 515



living languages. Lewis, Gary and Fenning's Ethnologue (2013, 2020 and 2021) claim that 522 to 527 languages are living, while seven have gone into extinction. It can be concluded from the above that, Nigeria is blessed with many languages.

### **The English Language in Nigeria**

There is no gainsaying the fact that English has become a Nigerian language. The language has become an invaluable legacy of the British which has provided Nigerians with yet another means of expressing their culture. Before the incursion of the Europeans into various African States, a kaleidoscopic linguistic diversity was already in existence. Many of these languages are genetically and historically related. The extreme linguistic complexity before the advent of the Europeans has largely remained unchanged up till now. Many African states were already bilingual or multilingual in many local tongues. So, it was possible that bilingualism and multilingualism in local languages were not a new phenomenon before the coming of the whites.

The coming of the Europeans to the continent helped to compound the linguistic situation at least one step further with the addition of the English language (Akindele and Adegbite, 2005).

Furthermore, the use of English in Nigeria survived the departure of the colonial administrators as the language of administration. Now, several years after independence, English still survives and has assumed a more important status in Nigeria. Apart from being a medium of social and inter-ethnic communication, English is a national language and it is used to conduct legislative, executive and judicial functions at the three tiers of local, state and federal government levels. Some of the main factors for its initiation and retention in Nigeria are discussed as follows (Akindele and Adegbite, 2005).

According to Akindele and Adegbite (2005), the English language performs three broad functions in Nigeria: accommodation, participation and social mobility. In performing the accommodating function, the English language is recognised as a world language; so it performs international functions. It

serves as a link between people of multilingual societies of Africa and the outside world. It is the language of international politics. Nigeria has no language other than English for taking part in political deliberations. English also opens the door to high technology, science, trade and diplomacy. All these are possible because of the large number of English speakers. English also serves as the official language in the country. It is the language with which the government conduct its business. It is the language that literate people from different ethnic groups use to communicate with one another.

### **The Place of the English Language in Nigeria**

The English language is unique in Nigerian education because of the significant role it plays. It enhances students' educational attainment and improves their communicative competence. Nigerian government made it a core and compulsory subject for students in Nigerian schools. The importance of the language in Nigeria's educational system cannot be over-emphasized because it plays a crucial role. Apart from being the medium of instruction, especially at the upper primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, it is also the language of the textbooks (Ezeokoli, 2005). Danladi (2013) asserts that the English language is the medium of instruction in our schools and a compulsory subject that must be passed at all levels of education in Nigeria. It is the language through which all other subjects in the curriculum are taught.

The English language played a very significant role in the development of Nigeria, brought in by the colonial masters. The multilingual and multicultural nature of Nigerian polity and the absence of a national unifying indigenous language on the other hand, have led to the adoption of the English language as a medium of intra-national and international communication (Fakeye 2011). The English language therefore plays a unifying role because of the numerous local languages in Nigeria (Ohia, 2010). Its uniqueness cannot be downplayed as it relates to almost all sectors. It enhances students' educational attainment and improves their



communicative competence. The state of the English language as a second language in Nigeria and the importance attached to the language, compel numerous Nigerian citizens to learn and speak the language (Ogunsiji, 2004).

The language has not only engineered human development through education but it has also conferred other significant opportunities on Nigerians. At different levels of education in Nigeria, students are equipped with lifelong knowledge and skills that would make them realise their full potential as human beings. The skills and knowledge provided by education for human development will not be possible without the English language in which the concepts are expressed (Akeredolu-Ale and Alimi, 2012). The advantages, global influence and functions of the English language have been acknowledged widely. Adekunle (1974) notes that the English language is a medium of instruction in Nigerian schools and it is believed that competence in the language is a key to effective knowledge in the development of science, art and technology.

### **The English Language as Language of Higher Education in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the English language is considered indispensable to modern life and this is why children must be encouraged to learn it effectively in schools right from the primary to the tertiary level (Adegbile, 1998). Fakeye (2002) asserts that because of the importance attached to the English language, most students are being delayed from advancing from their studies to higher institutions because of the inability to obtain credit in the subject which is a prerequisite for admission into tertiary institutions. Since proficiency in the language is mandatory for academic and career advancement, efforts must be made to ensure that the teaching and learning of the subject is effective.

According to Babajide (1998), the English language has not only been a central subject in schools, polytechnics and universities but also has been gaining increasing importance in day-to-day human activities worldwide. Literacy in the language is a sure means to educational advancement, job

opportunities and fuller participation in national activities. Competence in the English language assumes great importance for students as it directly affects the level of progress attainable, irrespective of aptitude in their particular fields. Okonkwo and Okpara (1991) note that competence in the English language is an essential prerequisite for educational and career success.

English Language is seen as one of the most important subjects (if not more than all other subjects in the school and government circle) because it is the bedrock for higher institution admission. English is important in securing good jobs and a credit pass in the language is a prerequisite for admission into the universities (Ohia, 2008; Oyeleye, 2016). Students who are not proficient in the English language will find it difficult to make meaningful progress in school (Fakeye and Ogunsiji, 2009).

Geraldine (2012) notes that the English language is very important and that is why students of Nigerian tertiary institutions are taught the Use of English as a compulsory course. Above all, the English language is a passport to good employment. Competence in the English language is observed as an index of academic excellence because it is a yardstick for measuring students' academic performance. Furthermore, no student can graduate from tertiary institutions in Nigeria without passing the Use of English courses.

It is inevitable that for a long time to come, the English language will indisputably be the medium of instruction for higher education in Nigeria. It has no rival among the indigenous languages which are still far from being able to accommodate the expression of modern scientific and technological concepts. As a subject in higher education, English ought to serve in two different contexts: The primary academic and secondary academic contexts (Afolayan, 1984). The primary academic context refers to the situation in which English constitutes the subject matter of obtaining a certificate or degree after undergoing the necessary higher educational



programmes. The secondary academic context is the situation in which the English language is used in support of obtaining a certificate or degree in another academic field. The first context from the point of view of university undergraduate programmes could take the form of a single honours or combined honour degree programme. In contrast, the second context from the same point of view of tertiary institutions is what has been called the “Use of English” or General Studies Course in English (Akindele and Adegbite, 2005).

### **Conclusion**

This paper has looked at language for higher education: the place of the English language in Nigeria. Students need to understand the English language with appropriate vocabulary for them to achieve academic success. Proficiency in English is essential not only because it is the language of instruction in Nigerian schools but it plays an important role in the communicative sphere of the world.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the importance attached to the English language in higher education, the government should employ more competent lecturers to handle the teaching of the language in higher institutions of learning. Students should be exposed to standard English and its usage. They should be equipped with the knowledge of grammar, lexis, phonology, semantics, vocabulary, spelling and so on for them to have communicative competence. Students should imbibe a good reading culture as it will acquaint them with correct spelling, punctuation and other grammatical mechanics. Students should be trained not to use cyber language (internet language) in formal contexts because it differs from the traditional approach to language teaching and learning. Also, it is not suitable for examinations, academic writing and official communication.



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## Is the Pandemic So Far Gone? – A Semiotic Analysis of Covid-19 Fading Imageries

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### Abstract

The interest of this work is in the examination of diverse pictorial items produced and circulated in public places during the pandemic to educate, warn and sensitise the global citizenry of the dangers inherent in the COVID-19 pandemic as well as how they could protect themselves from it. However, these days, most of the pictures of COVID-19 seem to hang forlornly, appearing like abandoned artefacts. This paper is thus a semiotic study of selected COVID-19 pictorials posted in public places in and outside Nigeria during the pandemic. The data comprise twenty-two (22), images, using the purposive sampling method, in line with the thematic preoccupation of the study. A semiotic analysis of the data was done, using Kress' (2010) multimodal analytical approach to discourse study. Findings reveal that the producers of the COVID-19 images employed semiotic resources such as linguistic and pictorial elements as well as colours to encode the preventive messages of COVID-19 during the pandemic. In addition, the visual state of the images signified that they have become neglected, and people appear to no longer care to observe the safety measures that are encoded in them. The study concludes that, in spite of the grave implication of COVID-19 in relation to human existence, the physically tattered state of most of the images produced to serve as precautionary measures to the spread of the coronavirus in and beyond Nigeria suggests that the global citizens now view the pandemic as a thing of the past. The study recommends that governments of nations should sustain societal sensitisation of COVID-19 because, according to the World Health Organisation, although the virus is no longer a public health emergency, the disease is still a global threat.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 pandemic, Semiotic analysis, Multimodal instrument, Fading imageries, Post-pandemic era

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## Introduction

Perhaps due to the devastating effects that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the world generally, the outbreak of the virus has attracted scholarly attention (e.g. Hosen et al, 2022; Eze et al, 2021); and research remains ongoing on the pandemic from different disciplines and scholarly perspectives. This research work was a motivation for a larger research work (see Nwabueze, et al., 2022). However, we decided to do a sectional study to look right into the face of the issue that gave rise to the other research work in an in-depth manner. The interest of this work is in the examination of diverse pictorial attempts produced and circulated within and without Nigeria's public places from the onset of the pandemic to educate, warn and sensitise the global citizenry of the dangers inherent in the COVID-19 pandemic as well as how they could protect themselves from it. Contrariwise, these days, most of the pictures and the warnings on COVID-19 hang forlornly in public places where they appear like abandoned artefacts. They now hang like torn notices on office walls where they were formerly placed as important semiotic materials. The warnings that were the toast of many of these COVID-19 materials, even on those that are not looking faded are now ignored as if they do not exist. The wash-hand basins created for the COVID-19 ablutions now stand, looking wistfully at passers-by who used to worship faithfully at their altars.

The question then is: how far gone is the COVID-19 pandemic that the lives of many Nigerians and others around the globe seem to have returned to normal as we had it in the pre-pandemic era? Have Nigerians and peoples of other climes moved into the post-pandemic era? It appears as if many have actually moved into the post-pandemic era. Answers to these questions guided our investigation into this new state of affairs.

**Corona Virus that Began in 2019 and the World in the Grip of a Pandemic**  
COVID-19 stole on the people stealthily in December of 2019. It was around Christmas 2019 that the global news network, special reference to Cable News Network (CNN), filtered out the news of the type of sickness that caused the shops to close in China instead of preparing for the traditional Chinese festival that was commonly held at such a time when Christians the world over would also be completing the Christmas



celebrations and preparing for the New Year festivities. The sad situation in China appeared pitiable and very far away. However, by January, it had reached Europe. And by February, the first case in Nigeria was recorded, brought in by an Italian man, apparently fleeing from the unimaginable number of deaths that Italy was being ravaged with at the time. The news of the many deaths and the huge number of coffins were being shown on the global news network, Euronews and the others. Then came the data from the United States, India, Brazil and more. The world seemed to be at war with itself. Coffins became the new images flitting across our television sets. The whole world was in the grip of fear. Armageddon seemed to have finally arrived among humans as the preachers had predicted for centuries.

It got so bad that some people tuned off their television sets. Everyone appeared helpless and unable to determine what exactly to do. Then came the season of lockdown. In an attempt to save lives, countries put in place precautionary measures to limit the spread of COVID-19. One of these measures was restrictions on mobility to limit human-to-human transmission of the virus. Thus, the free flow of people was affected through strict migration restriction measures (UN, 2020).

The world was doing trial and error in attempts to end the plague. Different images of past plagues began to flit across social media. But one advice given by scientists was the need to observe a series of protocols if people necessarily had to hold in-person meetings. Therefore, different organisations decided to put up varied types of notices to intimate people about their required behaviour protocol if they must come to their physical space. The way everyone seemed helpless to solve the problem, it appeared that everyone must also come together to see an end to the problem of the outbreak that took on a pandemic proportion and humbled the modern world in a manner never before imagined.

However, recently, the authors observed that there seemed to be a kind of lackadaisical attitude to the pandemic now. The question to ask then is: Is the pandemic over? Among other things, one of the tell-tale manners to determine this appears to be the imagery of the pandemic itself. The relics of its having been among us include the different warning signs in the public



spaces where people needed to meet physically to conduct their businesses – be it religious, economic, social, or even sometimes, medical.

This study thus seeks to find the answer to the question of whether the pandemic is over. It investigates the semiotics of the imageries that denoted the expected protocols that visitors or members of the community were expected to carry out as safety measures at the time the coronavirus held the world in its grip.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. examine the nature and state of the COVID-19 pandemic-related images vis-à-vis the current state of affairs in the world once held captive by the pandemic; and
- ii. investigate how the COVID-19 messages are encoded in the images.

### **Research Questions**

Specifically, the study sought to find out:

- i. How do pictorial representations of the COVID-19 pandemic protocols expose the current state of the pandemic in the world?
- ii. How are the COVID-19 messages encoded in the images?

### **COVID-19 and the Global Hope**

According to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), globally, the number of reported COVID-19 cases and deaths continues to decline. This improvement is attributed to the general vaccination rates globally (WHO, 2022). It is asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic is not completely gone; nobody really knows when the pandemic will be completely gone. Instead, the virus will likely become “endemic,” eventually fading in severity and folding into the backdrop of regular, everyday life. Once endemic, COVID-19 will not dictate your daily life decision-making as much. Endemic illnesses are always circulating throughout parts of the world but tend to cause milder illnesses because more people have immunity from past infections or vaccinations. You might get a cough and sniffles, but if you are up to date on your vaccinations, you will be protected enough to prevent severe illness or hospitalization.



COVID-19 could eventually become like other respiratory viruses; there will be times of the year when COVID-19 infections peak — most likely the colder fall and winter months, but in the tropical climate, it may never be as peaked. The warning is that: It is not time to say the virus is over! As of 12 June 2022, over 533 million confirmed cases and over 6.3 million deaths were reported globally (WHO, 2022). Udenze and Ugoala (2022) aver that the outbreak of COVID-19 places everyone in the society, even the older adults or the elderly a risky position due to their age.

Prevention strategies, like regularly washing your hands and maintaining distancing practices in high-risk settings, could also stick around, especially in crowded environments; but mask-wearing may still be encouraged to continue in areas with flu or when one is close to someone with cough and catarrh. In this case, people need to take personal responsibility and stay at home when they are sick or when they are symptomatic, in which case they could work from home.

It is noteworthy to remark that preventive measures must not be completely put aside in low-income countries because vaccination rates are much lower in these countries (WHO, 2022). Nigeria is one of such low-income countries. The perception that the pandemic is over is understandable, but we must be on guard as no one is sure when another variant of the virus will emerge. This thus gives us reason to investigate the true status of the pandemic as indicated by the pictorial representations of its prevention and our protection from its spread.

### **Pictorial Semiotics and Multimodality as Analytic Instrument**

Discourse as a concept continues to generate discussions in terms of definition and description. While textually oriented linguists' perception of discourse presents it as connected speech or writing, socially oriented views perceive discourse as actual instances of language use in different social and cultural contexts, which contribute to people's views of the world, events and people (Paltridge, 2012). This explanation of the concept suggests that the ordering of discourse is institutionally and culturally based. In addition, it shows the dialectical nature of discourse, which indicates that discourse is socially constitutive and socially conditioned (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

Gee (1999) differentiates between discourse and discourses by describing the former as referring to language in use while the latter is described as referring to different ways in which humans integrate language with such different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, believing, among others, to enact identities and activities. In this wise, discourse produced in the medical sphere could be classified as a type of discourse. It has however been noted that research in discourse analysis initially focused more on the study of the linguistic elements that characterised language use. However, the advancement in technology in the 21st century has ushered in increased use of multimodal semiotic elements in communication. Messages either spoken or written now combine many modes. These modes are semiotic elements that communicate our understanding of the world around us (Forceville, 2011). Nwabueze (2021) used semiotic analysis of the posters of Ambode and Agbaje during their Lagos governorship campaign in 2015 to show that pictorial semiotics have inherent communicative power that could determine the destiny of a people. The analysis of the pictorial self-representations points to how the candidates were able to convince the Lagos public who the better man for the job was.

From the multimodal perspective, scholars (e.g. Leeuwen, 2005; Hodge, 2023) have argued that all texts are multimodal in nature and thus cannot be adequately analysed without a holistic investigation of all the semiotic modes employed in their meaning-making. Semiotics is an investigation into how signs, either visual or verbal, are created and how meaning is communicated through the signs. This is because each mode has specific potentials and limitations with regard to communication. Nonetheless, the signs used in passing across messages are familiar to the people in a particular geographical location, provided they are able to interpret them instinctively and instantly. According to the New London Group (1996), five broad semiotic or meaning-making systems could be applied when discussing how meaning is created. These are **written-linguistic**, **visual**, **audio**, **gestural**, and **spatial** patterns of meaning. These semiotic elements are not all used in a single communicative scenario.



This study draws insights from Kress' (2010) approach to multimodal analysis for its investigation of imageries produced and posted in public places during the COVID-19 pandemic. The multimodal approach is employed to examine the ways in which language, image and other semiotic modes integrate to convey meaning in different contexts (Hussein et al, 2020). Following this perspective, this paper thus analyses the semiotic structures in diverse pictorial representations of prevention messages circulated at different locations within and outside Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to determine their current statuses in terms of their representations and citizens' apparent view of them.

### **Multimodality and COVID-19 Discourses**

Research has been carried out by scholars who have adopted different approaches to the study of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the studies investigated the incidence of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Fawole, et al, 2021), the adverse effect of COVID-19 on tertiary enrolment during the pandemic (Eze et al, 2021; Hosen et al, 2022), coping strategies for COVID-19 pandemic (Ilesanmi & Fagbule, 2020). Nwabueze et al. (2022) is a pilot study of a wider study (hinted at above), which is focused on how the reluctance to get vaccinated by people in Nigeria is proving to be an issue that could make the risk of COVID-19 recurrence real. It however focused essentially on the communication factors that enhance or detract from the readiness of people to get vaccinated against the virus as a preventive measure.

Other studies have focused on the analysis of the discourse of the COVID-19 pandemic from different theoretical standpoints. Ternenge et al (2022) is a discourse study of the surviving strategies adopted by the mass media in Nigeria in the post-COVID-19 era. Using the social media theory and the political economy of the media theory, the study revealed that the mass media in Nigeria was sustained during the pandemic through support in the form of bailouts, loan facilities from the Central Bank of Nigeria and donor agencies. While the study highlighted the challenge of sustainability as an outcome of the pandemic, it did not delve into the analysis of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the discourse of the mass media. Oamen (2021) is a critical discourse analysis of discrimination as expressed in host-

migrant COVID-19 discourse. The findings of the study revealed that host communities' use of linguistic elements and discursive strategies in media discourse demonstrated their discrimination against migrants during the pandemic. While the study provided insight into the expression of power in Sino-African host-migrant COVID-19 discourse, it focused mainly on the linguistic aspect of the discourse.

However, other studies (e.g. Aragbuwa & Adejumo, 2021; Shodipe & Opeibi, 2023; Adebomi, 2023) have analysed COVID-19 discourse from a multimodal perspective. Aragbuwa and Adejumo (2021) is a multimodal study of the compositional, interactive and representational resources deployed in the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) COVID-19 online advertising campaign. The findings of the study revealed that narrative, frontal, action, transactive and offer resources are effectively deployed in the online visuals to communicate the need for citizens of Nigeria to take responsibility with regards to the prevention and spread of the coronavirus. Adebomi (2021) adopted van Leeuwen's approach to the study of multimodal resources deployed in pictorials circulated on the World Health Organisation Centre for Disease Control's website to promote awareness of COVID-19 vaccination. The findings of the study showed that the semiotic resources employed in the pictorials were used, not only for informative purposes but to achieve attitudinal change towards the spread of the virus. Shodipe and Opeibi (2023) is a multimodal study of web-based public health discursive practices produced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The findings indicated that multimodal resources of online communication on coronavirus complemented its lexico-semantic properties. These studies all indicate that the multimodal investigation of media communication of COVID-19 provided insights into the interplay of the different modes of discourse employed by text producers to disseminate information on the virus during the pandemic. Nevertheless, while the studies focused on the analysis of the multimodal resources produced to sensitise the public during the pandemic, there is a dearth of research on the current state of the COVID-19 pictorials posted in public places in Nigeria and beyond, and their semiotic signification of citizens' attitude to the pandemic after the lockdown. This study intends to fill this gap.



## Methods

The data from the study were COVID-19 posters in the form of instructions posted at various strategic locations during the coronavirus pandemic in Abuja and Lagos in Nigeria and Paris in France. The data comprised different semiotic elements in the form of words and visuals of instructions to people to wear their masks before entering a building or an office or in some places where interactions are expected. The researchers took many snapshots of these posters for the study. The posters and diverse images snapped were purposively selected to fit the theme of the study. In the analysis section, the data were described and categorised according to their similarity and contiguity. These were then semiotically analysed, using the multimodal instrument to determine their message/meaning contents and the import of these for the true status of the pandemic in Nigeria and globally currently. These should help to expose the views of the Nigerian and other global citizens in relation to the situation described above during the time the pandemic was raging as well as how it appeared to be affecting them right now, both in Nigeria and in other shores.

## Data Analysis and Discussion

During the peak of COVID-19, some safety measures people were advised to take were:

- i. wear a mask
- ii. maintain social distance
- iii. wash hands regularly

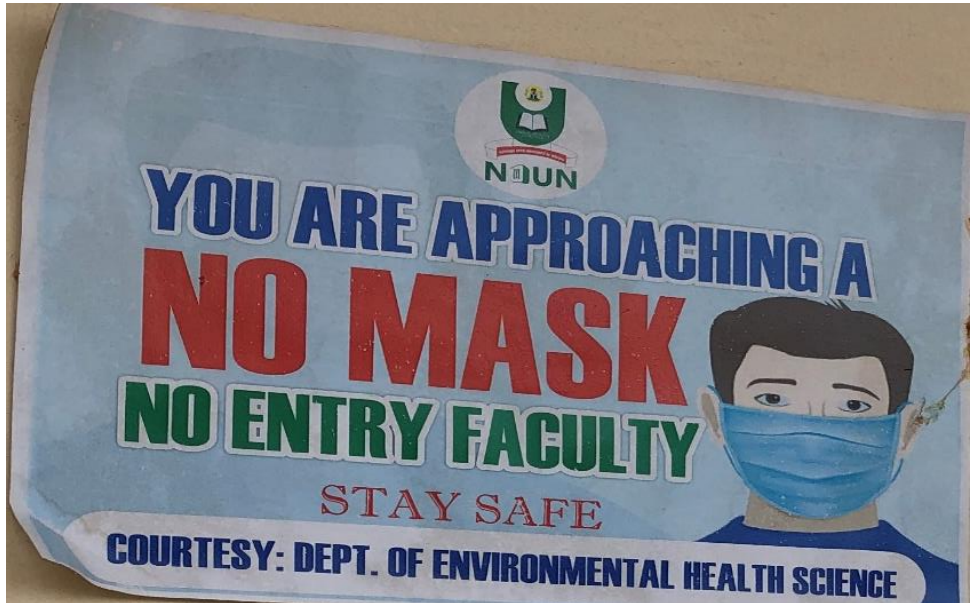
So, we commence the analysis by looking at this question: How do pictorial representations of the COVID-19 pandemic protocols expose the current state of the pandemic in the world now?



*Figure 1. National Open University of Nigeria*



Figure 1 is a warning about COVID-19 based on background knowledge of the prevalence of the virus. The linguistic elements are made up of a declarative statement. As can be seen, part of the image is torn, showing a total neglect of the warning in the image, and a total disregard for the pandemic. This suggests the fact that the people that initially placed the sign so prominently do not see it as a threat anymore.



*Figure 2. National Open University of Nigeria*

Figure 2 is also one of the notices during the height of the pandemic. It uses so many semiotic resources in its message. There is a human face wearing a mask to complement the verbal message in different colours. The “NO MASK” in red font is symbolic as it stands out from the rest of the message. Again, like Figure 1, this notice is sort off coming off if you look at the edges on the left and right-hand sides. It shows a seeming neglect of the message contained in it. This is another sign that those who placed the message no longer consider it of any more urgency that require maintenance to keep it as a focus of attention.



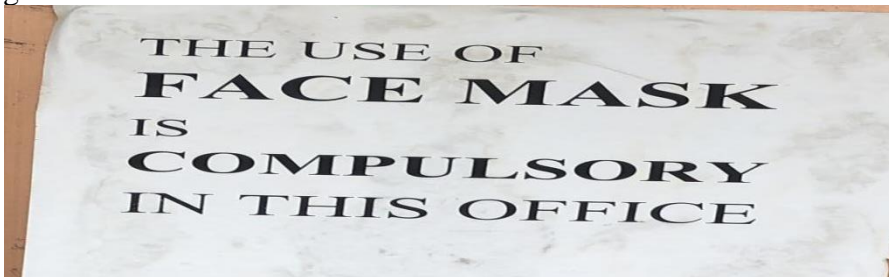
*Figure 3. National Open University of Nigeria*

As stated in the third safety measure during the peak of the pandemic that people should wash hands regularly, Figure 3 is an icon of the need to wash hands regularly during the height of the pandemic. As can be seen, the wash-hand basin is dirty and lacks attention. The way it is seems to show total neglect as well as being currently not in use. In other words, people have stopped using the basin to wash their hands! Again, this gives the impression that people who are entering the building where it is placed do not see it as a necessity neither do those in that building demand it being used as would have been the case in the height of the pandemic. Obviously, this suggests that all concerned do not regard the virus as a threat anymore and do not need to fight it to a standstill as was the case at the height of the pandemic.



*Figure 4. National Open University of Nigeria*

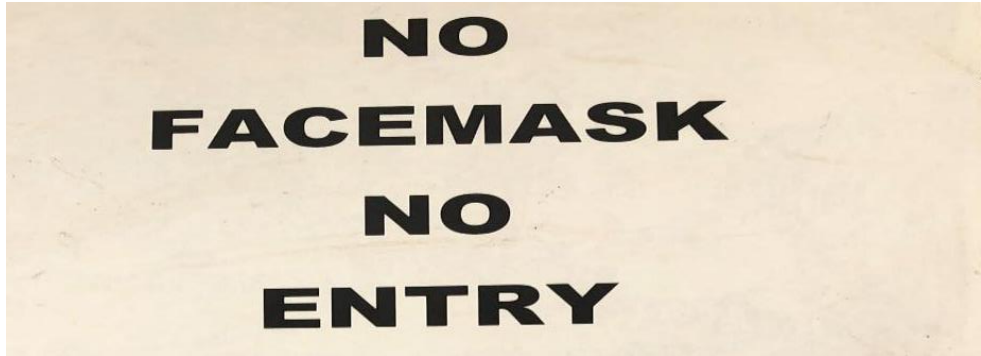
Similar to Figure 3 is Figure 4, a wash hand basin that has been neglected and not in use. Is the pandemic totally gone to warrant a total neglect of the wash hand basin? In this case, there is an empty soap dispenser, which is missing in Figure 3. Obviously, both wash-hand basins tell similar tales of abandoned brides who were once darlings but are now forsaken by their grooms.



*Figure 5. National Open University of Nigeria*

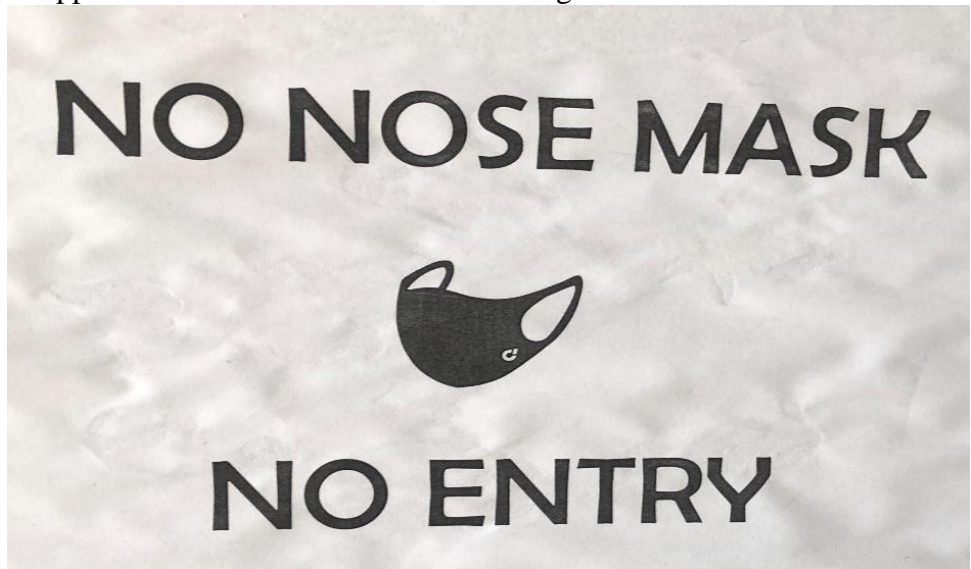


Figure 5 is also a stern warning about the use of face masks. The important words are put in bold letters, **FACE MASK**, and the adjective **COMPULSORY**. This shows then the desire to implement the need for face masks to be worn at all times during the peak of the pandemic in that particular office; but now, the notice seems not to be in force anymore with the tattered nature of the notice as can be seen from the torn edges of the notice.



*Figure 6. National Open University of Nigeria*

Figure 6 is similar to the notice in Figure 1. The declarative statement is set in upper case to sort of reinforce the message in the notice.



*Figure 7. National Open University of Nigeria*



Figure 7 uses a pictorial representation of the mask and some linguistic elements in passing across its message that mask-wearing is required in accessing the office where it is placed. It is a stern warning to people that the use of masks is important to help in curtailing the spread of the deadly coronavirus. Though the virus is not mentioned in the notice, the background knowledge people have about the virus helps to make the message clear. Again, the notice is not significant anymore, as people no longer adhere to it.

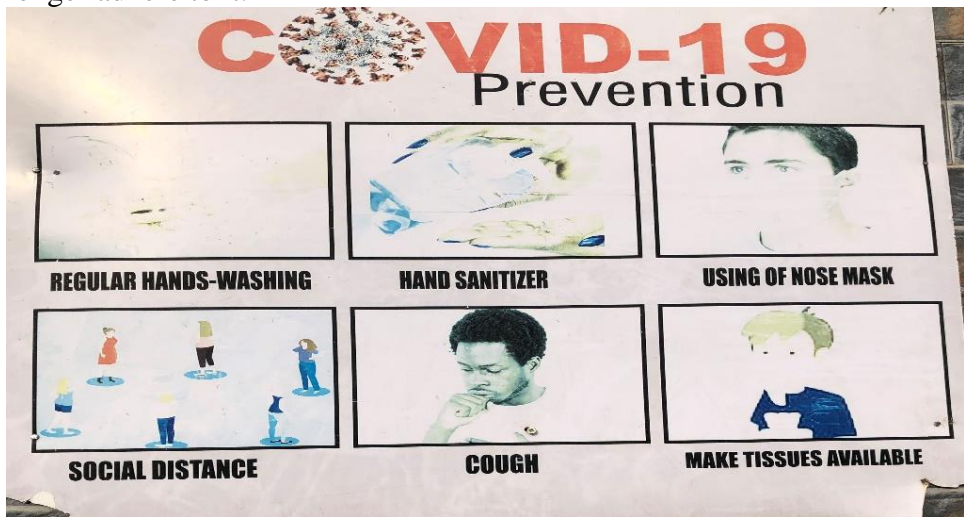


Figure 8. Living Faith Church, Lokogoma, Abuja

Figure 8 is a conglomeration of many semiotic elements of the *dos* and *don'ts* during the peak of COVID-19. Each semiotic element is vital to the non-spreading of the virus. Like other images analysed above, it is torn at the edges showing a total neglect of the possible impact of the coronavirus. More interesting is that it was once a colourful pictorial representation of these messages but now faded. Indeed, this particular sign motivated the study in the first place, thereby giving it its title. While previous images analysed were sourced from an academic institution, specifically, the National Open University of Nigeria headquarters, Figure 8 is sourced from a church, which is also located in Abuja. This shows that the growing neglect of the pandemic cut across different sectors in the life of the citizens.



*Figure 9. National Open University of Nigeria*

Figure 9 is similar to Figure 8 in the use of many semiotic elements in the passing of information about the virus, and how its spread can be curtailed. However, this takes us back to the signs in the National Open University of Nigeria. This is a major sign at the entrance of the building hosting four Faculties. It is no surprise that it is made to handle so many things at the same time. This same sign was also seen placed at other strategic points in the University. However, as it is said, it appears that this very one is the last ‘man’ standing. This is another way to show that many seem to think we are already in the post-pandemic era.



*Figure 10. National Open University of Nigeria*

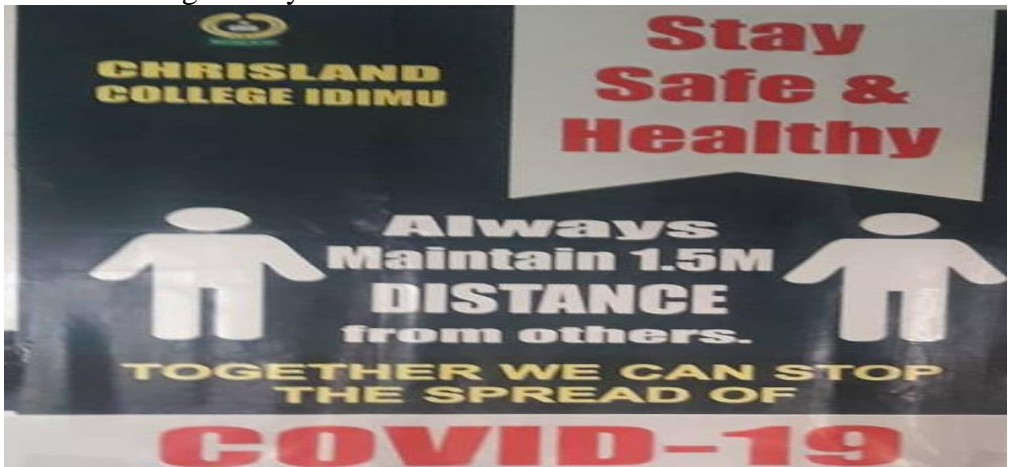


Figure 10 is also a declarative statement about how the spread of the virus can be curtailed. As we have in other notices, its physiognomy is tattered, also showing a disregard for the possible existence of the pandemic.



*Figure 11. Chrisland Schools, Idimu, Lagos State*

Figure 11 also shows, through the use of multiple semiotic elements, what is to be done in order to prevent the spread of the virus. It is torn at the edges like other images analysed above.



*Figure 12. Chrisland College, Idimu, Lagos State*



Figure 12 deploys pictorial elements, linguistics elements, and colours in the passing across of its message. Unlike the images analysed above, Figure 12 does not really include the use of masks, but focuses on the distance people should maintain so as to stop the spread of COVID-19. Like others, it appears also torn at the edges.

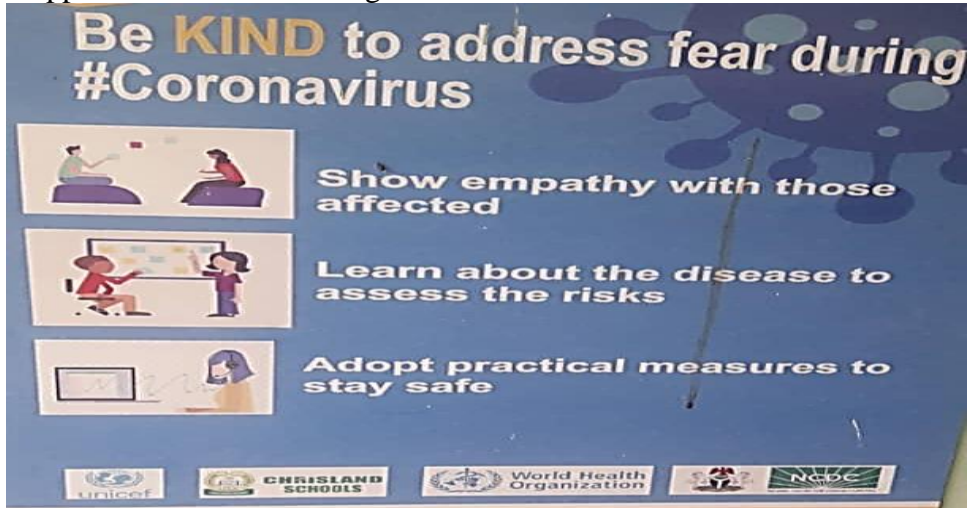


Figure 13. Chrisland Schools, Idimu, Lagos State

Figure 13 encodes so many messages about how to relate with those affected by the virus, a directive for people to learn more about the virus, and the measures people should adopt in order to stay safe, and so on. Each semiotic element passes across a unique message. Like other images, it is torn too, showing a neglect of the still possible prevalence of the virus.



Figure 14. Chrisland Schools, Idimu, Lagos State

This image is similar to others analysed above in its tattered edges. It focuses on the use of hand sanitizer as one of the safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus. The image of a human hand and a can of sanitizer complement the linguistic elements.

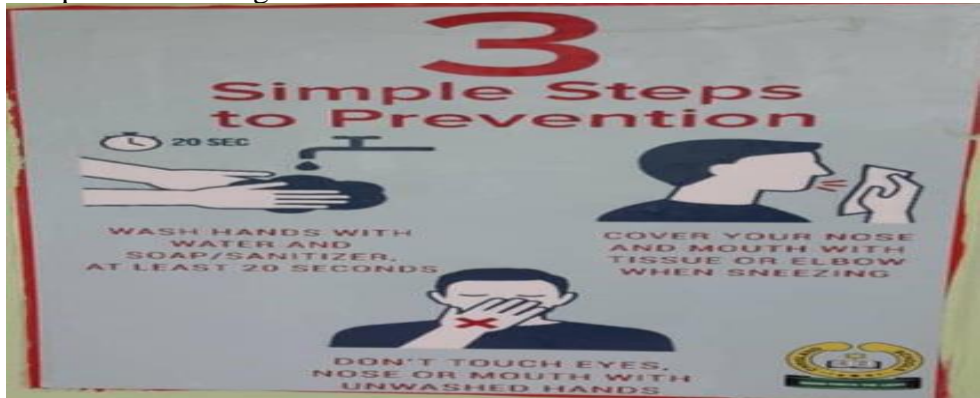


Figure 15. Chrisland Schools, Idimu, Lagos State

The edges of Figure 15 are torn like others above. It deploys so many semiotic elements to pass across the message of how to stop the spread of COVID-19. Though COVID-19 is not obviously mentioned in the image, it is easily understandable that COVID-19 is what is being talked about here.

All these images show that Chrisland Schools actually took seriously its duty to warn the members of its community. However, again, we can deduce that for the managers of the school, the pandemic appears over as the warning signs have now taken on a forlorn look by their presentation within the public space in terms of their faded and torn nature. They are not alone in these as we have seen above; and we will still see below.



Figure 16. University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State





The appearance of Figure 16 shows a total neglect of the possible existence of the virus. The image is rumpled. Not even passers-by nor those who placed it there consider the need to smoothen the rumpled poster and keep it in focus. This shows total neglect by the originator of the image, as well as the passers-by. The implication of this is a suggestion that there is no longer much regard for the virus that motivated the placement of the poster in the first place.



Figure 17. University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State

Figure 17 also reinforces what is observable in other images analysed above. It shows total neglect by the people/person who hung the poster. The haphazard nature of the image shows abandonment and neglect.

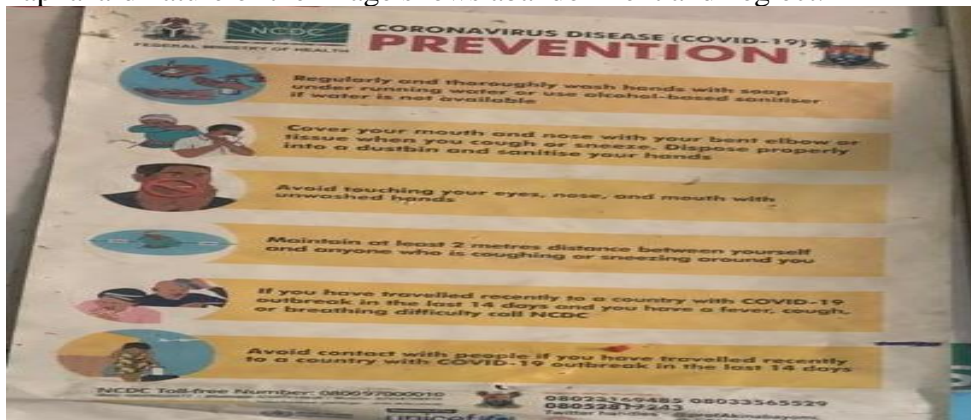


Figure 18. Federal Medical Centre, Ebute Metta, Lagos

Figure 18, like some of the images analysed above, used so many semiotic elements in passing across messages about the virus, and how to stop its spread. The torn edges show total neglect of the possible existence of COVID-19. Interesting though is that this particular poster is located in a tertiary medical institution, where you would think there would be more sensitivity about the state of the public health this poster should be announcing. Once again, it could be observed that this poster is in a state of disrepair and disregard. This poster screams louder than all the others that we seem to have arrived at the post-pandemic state in Nigeria.

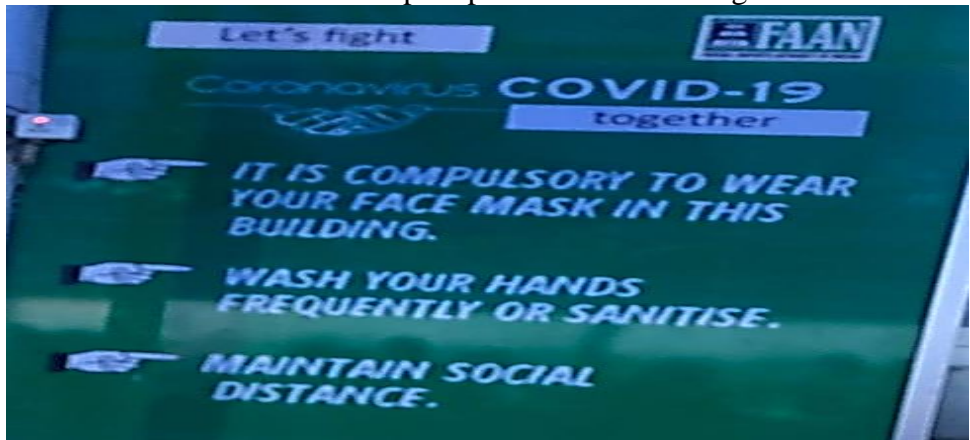


Figure 19. Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN)



Figure 20: Murtala Muhammed International Airport



Figure 19 is located at Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos. This photograph was taken when one of the members of the team was travelling for a conference in France. She noticed that these big messages were everywhere but seemed not to be having any effect on the behaviour of the people compared to what she saw previously at the same location during the height of the pandemic as shown in Figure 20. This image is also a strong warning for people to adhere to the safety measures of COVID-19 while in the airport area. While unlike many others seen above, it is apparently not torn at the edges, the behaviour around it appeared totally at variance with these warnings. Not many people were wearing masks, and no one was definitely maintaining the social distance it was advocating. Comparing this to Figure 20, which was taken in June 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (everyone dutifully wore the masks at the airport area), it is obvious that a lot has changed since then.

This same could be seen to be the case at the Charles de Gaulle Airport in France when the traveller landed there the following morning. Again, despite all the beautiful signs all over the airport (cf. Figure 21 and Figure 22 below), shining through and beautiful to behold, no one seemed to be paying any attention to them, except, of course, the curious researcher who is a member of this team that was looking out for the images and how they are being regarded by the people around her!



*Figure 21: Charles de Gaulle Airport, in line*





*Figure 22: Charles de Gaulle Airport – in front of the Border Control Officer*

### **Findings and Implications**

As regards the first objective of this study, the images analysed here show a total neglect of the possible existence of the virus. The images show that people no longer care to observe the safety measures that are encoded in the



images. The safety measure, which required that people wear masks to stop the spread, is no longer adhered to. The wash-hand basins put in strategic locations for people to use in washing their hands to help curb the spread of the virus are all neglected. People no longer maintain reasonable social distance in public places as seen above, especially, the airports that used to be the most sensitive points for its enforcement. The neglected and fading images appear to point to the fact that, many people have grown comfortable and seem to think of the pandemic as no longer existing among us.

The COVID-19 messages are encoded in the images through the use of single and multiple semiotic elements. The single semiotic element comprises the use of linguistic elements, which are declarative warnings to people to observe the safety measures of COVID-19. In some images, COVID-19, the virus and the pandemic are not even mentioned, but the messages are passed based on the common ground knowledge of the existence of the coronavirus. This exemplifies Ugoala's (2020: 57) observation that "words of a structure, though not distinct, still make meaning to the reader." The multiple semiotic elements complement one another in passing across the message to the audience. This agrees with scholars' view (Shodipe & Opeibi, 2023; Aragbuwa & Adejumo, 2021) that multimodal resources produced to create awareness of coronavirus actually served complementary purposes with the lexico-semantic properties of the discourse.

Those pictorial elements are full of contents that effectively put across both intended and unintended messages and cannot be overemphasised. Daniel (2008; 2011) demonstrates the power of images in communicating. Pictorial semiotics continue to show us that message contents are latent in posturing and showing the internal state of affairs as well as external projections of intentions and intendments. Nwabueze (2021) clearly shows how this could be a political power-broking force. This is what we are witnessing here too, a post-pandemic reality seems to be descending upon us, unawares.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the state of the notices of the prevalence of COVID-19 shows total neglect of the still possible presence of the pandemic. There is no official statement from any quarters of the total eradication of the virus, except we want to take WHO (2022) as above as such. However, the way the notices are shown in the data above to indicate a total disregard for the still possible threat of the coronavirus suggests a post-pandemic state of affairs now. The tattered and faded images as discussed above clearly indicate a post-pandemic reality. The way no one appears to care about the signs put up to control behaviours to break the transmission of the virus apparently indicates that the pandemic is over. Indeed, the question is: Are we now out of the pandemic? The images studied in this work seem to suggest that people believe that this is the case. In line with this, this work has shown that there is no direct correlation between the visuals of COVID-19 warnings and the state of the virus across the globe. There has not been any categorical and scientific statement that the virus has been eradicated from the earth to warrant the neglect of the warning signs of the virus. Therefore, we recommend that while people no longer live in the palpable fear that gripped the world during the COVID-19 pandemic, becoming careless in not remaining on guard against it or any such possible outbreak is to have learned nothing from the pandemic. Indeed, the imageries giving out warnings to the public have faded as our findings revealed above, suggesting the end of the pandemic, but caution is the sensible self-preservative and protective gear to wear against any future resurgence of the coronavirus. This lurking fear may explain why no one is ready to officially declare the pandemic over.



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## Implicit Radio Language Policy in Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the implicit radio language policy in Nigeria, with a specific focus on Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria, against the backdrop of multilingual broadcasting in the absence of explicit legal provisions. Despite the lack of regulatory frameworks, these stations have consistently broadcast in multiple languages for over three decades, demonstrating their commitment to multilingual programming. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of language policy in Nigerian broadcast media, a topic that has received limited attention. Data collected through informal interviews and personal observation reveal that monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual language policies are in practice in Nigeria. Notably, Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria have established a stable and equitable implicit multilingual language policy. The study highlights the similarities, differences, and sustainability strategies employed by these stations, as well as the challenges they face in their multilingual language practice. The language used in these stations reflects an attempt to align with national legislation and promote linguistic diversity in radio broadcasting.

**Keywords:** Language Policy, Radio, Multilingualism, Bond FM, Voice of Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Language policy is a language practice, beliefs and management decisions of a community or polity (Bernard 2004:9). It can be practised in any domain. According to Bernard (2004), language policy refers to the regular process and habitual practice of choosing from the range of language varieties that make up the linguistic repertoire. Language policy represents a set of beliefs about language usage, accompanied by deliberate attempts to influence and shape language practices through strategic planning and management. This aspect of the study has not been investigated in a



Nigerian government-owned radio station which Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria represent. The linguistics situation in Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria is very interesting. The two stations have been broadcasting in various languages for over thirty years, with a wide coverage of various impactful programmes in Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba languages, featuring commentaries, news bulletins, press reviews, news reports, articles, etc (Ndukwe 2012, Okudo and Ifeagwazi 2014). Voice of Nigeria employs other languages such as Ki-Swahili, Arabic, French, English and Fulfude. This is at the heart of what is considered the implicit multilingual language policy in these two stations. Language policy relates to the role and status of language in a multilingual situation, as well as corpus and acquisition planning (Obukadeta 2019). Nigeria has about 540 indigenous languages with English as the official language, and Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba as the major indigenous languages while other languages are classified as minority languages (Obiorah 2021). The Nigerian linguistic situation is also reflected in the legislations that affect language use in the media in Nigeria. Some of these legislations are the Nigeria 1999 constitution as amended, the National Broadcasting Code (NBC) 2014, the National Language Policy 2023, and the Freedom of Information Act 2011.

The 1999 Nigeria constitution provides in section 39(1) as follows: ‘Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference’. Nigerian 1999 constitution recognises English, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, but acknowledges other Nigerian languages. Freedom of Information Act 2011 also grants all Nigerian citizens, the freedom to access information in any Nigerian language but is silent on how and when that will be possible.

For the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2014:29) ‘a community broadcast service shall give prominence to the languages spoken within the community’ indicating that, broadcasting shall be done in English and Nigerian languages (especially the language of the immediate environment) but this does not necessarily pose any obligation on the language of broadcasting in public and private stations. These two tiers of broadcasting appear to be at liberty to choose whatever language they consider suitable



for their audience. The new Nigerian National Language Policy (2023) which is a principled document of the Federal Government of Nigeria, with a statutory flavour, guides the official use of different languages in Nigeria (Mba 2012). The provisions made by the Nigerian National Language Policy (2023:25) on media, that relate to radio broadcasting, admonished that concerted efforts should be made to ensure the effective utilisation of Nigerian languages in the conventional broadcast. It went on to say in article 8 that “broadcast media organisations shall ensure that not less than 60% of their programmes are carried out in the Nigerian languages commonly used in the communities where they are domiciled. From these national laws, it is obvious that there is an implicit provision for the use of any Nigerian language, especially languages in the immediate environment of the media station. However, these regulations do not mandate stations on the number of languages to use in their broadcast stations. The key factor in a broadcast station's success is having a sound language policy that fosters clear communication and language quality.

Currently, the English language is used in all broadcasting platforms in Nigeria. Nigerian Pidgin is also used in radio programmes involving sports, entertainment and call-in programmes. However, the time allotted to English in most radio stations in Nigeria cannot be compared with other languages. English is usually given more time. This is because English has been domesticated and made an official language in Nigeria. Other foreign languages like French, German, Russian and Chinese which are degree courses in Nigerian universities do not feature in Nigerian radio like English, due to a lack of broadcasters who are competent speakers, and audience factors, to some extent. Major Nigerian languages such as Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba and Fulfulde have a common appearance in Nigerian radio especially in state-owned radio stations where these languages are the language of the immediate environment. There are other smaller media size Nigerian languages like Edo, Ibaji, Igala, Egun, Isoko Ebara, Okun, Bassa Nge, and Bassa Kwomu which are also used in radio broadcasts in some state radio stations (Obukadeta 2019). Based on the dearth of research on language policy in Nigerian Radio, this study intends to study multilingual language policy in Nigerian radio stations with explicit reference to Voice of Nigeria and Bond FM. The reason for studying this policy in two radio

stations is because both stations broadcast in various languages, and allot what this study considers as ‘reasonable time’ to the languages when compared with other radio stations.

## **1.2 Language Policy in Broadcast Stations**

Language policy is a body of rules that guide language use and practice in a particular domain in order to solve and achieve linguistic aims (McCarty 2011). It exists in every radio station even when it has not been made explicit. Many scholars have initiated a discussion on language policy in various broadcast stations. For example, Obukadeta (2019) examined language policy and planning in the broadcast media of a multilingual context focusing on Kogi state, Nigeria. Relying on the assumptions of the grounded theory method, the study argues that implicit media language policy exists in the state. According to Obukadeta (2019), there are different languages that are assigned different functions in the station. As usual, English was allocated more time in the station’s programmes, followed by the major Nigerian languages, and then followed by the minor ones. In Mpofu et al., (2019), the authors studied the structure of the multilingual broadcasting policy in Zimbabwe’s Broadcasting Service Act 2007 and its subsequent implementation at the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation with a focus on the treatment of indigenous languages. The findings reveal that the implementation of the Act is constrained politically, economically and sociolinguistically.

The study by Nwaneri (2014) investigated the various linguistic and mass communication issues, as well as the problems encountered in the multilingual situation in South Africa using the South African Broadcasting Corporation as a case study. The study documented the reactions of the audience and the challenges associated with daily news broadcasts and entertainment in the eleven official languages in South Africa. The study’s findings indicate that viewers’ programme preferences are influenced by the language of the broadcast, with English emerging as the predominant language used by the station. Nevertheless, the station successfully catered to the diverse linguistic needs of its audience in the region. In the study conducted by Evans (2011), the author examined the attitudes of viewers towards South African Broadcasting Corporation language policies and the



factors that influenced such attitudes. The attitudes of the audience were reported to be complex in the sense that first-language English speakers were neutral to the language policy of the corporation while first-language isiZulu speakers were more loyal to isiZulu and other African languages.

Language policy is very important in broadcasting in Africa. Wherever a language policy is initiated and well-managed, the result is always positive. This is evident from Schwyter (2008), who discussed the radio language policy of the British Broadcasting Corporation and developed a radio language policy aimed at promoting and maintaining the standard variety of English, specifically Received Pronunciation (RP). Similar to the government radio station in this study, the BBC, as a government-affiliated news agency, institutionalized the standardization of RP. To achieve this, the BBC established an Advisory Committee on Spoken English, comprising language experts from diverse backgrounds, to guide its media language policy. The advisory committee worked with the station's research unit that concentrated on consistent and accurate pronunciation. The work of this committee affected the development of the British Broadcasting Corporation's spoken English at the level of uniformity and standardization. Unfortunately, most radio houses in Nigeria lack standard radio language policy and competent hands to facilitate their language policy. The British Broadcasting Corporation's language committee comprised a diverse range of linguistic experts, including:

Dr. Robert Bridges, an American literary scholar and essayist

Logan Pearsall Smith, a renowned literary figure

G. Bernard Shaw, a celebrated Irish playwright, critic, and polemicist

Daniel Jones, an academic at University College London and author of the English Pronouncing Dictionary

Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, a distinguished actor

A. Arthur Lloyd James, a phonetician at a university

This committee developed a manual that the station consulted as needed, ensuring the highest standards in language usage. A distinctive aspect of the British Broadcasting Corporation's language use is its deliberate approach to language management, made possible by a dedicated committee

comprising individuals with diverse linguistic expertise and professional backgrounds. The station's success in maintaining its language policy is largely attributed to this committee, whose members brought unique perspectives and specializations to the table.

Nwachukwu (2005) attempted to initiate the discussion of such a radio language policy for radio stations broadcasting in the Igbo language. He suggested that the type of committee set up in the early BBC is needed for broadcasting in the Igbo language on radio. He advised that the Igbo language board should be set up with different professionals which must include heads of programs in two Igbo-speaking states of Anambra and Imo State broadcasting stations (as it was then). Emenanjo (2005) also advocated for a functional Language Planning Agency that will include academics, media practitioners, knowledgeable people in the language and culture whose functions should include collating and editing for publication, dissemination and installation of terms already agreed upon by the parent body that are consistent in pronunciation' ... and total overhaul, revival and revitalization all facets of Igbo language, from phonetics to pragmatic in the media. Although the plan did not materialise as planned it shows that it is a much-needed policy that will benefit radio stations and revitalising the language of broadcasting.

### **Methodology**

To make a broad assessment of implicit language policy in Nigeria, a survey was carried out on language use in fifteen radio stations across Southern Nigeria from January to December 2022. The stations are 91.1 FM, Lagos Talks, Nigerian Info, Wazobia FM, and Rhythm FM. Faji FM, Top Radio, Lasgidi FM, Splash FM, Radio Lagos, Bond FM, Voice of Nigeria, ABS, and Real Power. Informal interviews were conducted with radio presenters in Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria based on their experience in multilingual broadcasting which has spanned over thirty years. Personal observation was also employed during the research visit to the station after due permission was obtained from the radio stations.



### **Different types of Radio Language Policy in Nigeria.**

In Nigeria, a common practice among radio stations is the adoption of a monolingual language policy, where only one language is used in all programming. Examples of stations that follow this approach, using English exclusively, include 91.1 FM, Lagos Talks, Nigerian Info, Wazobia FM, and Rhythm FM. Notably, there are no radio stations in Nigeria that solely use an indigenous Nigerian language, without any English programming. Some Nigerian radio stations adopt a bilingual language policy, characterized by asymmetric bilingualism, where two languages are used unevenly. Examples include: Faji FM, which broadcasts in Yoruba and Pidgin, Top Radio uses English and Pidgin, with English dominating the airtime, Lasgidi FM, which employs Yoruba and Pidgin, Splash FM uses Yoruba and English. In these bilingual settings, the allocation of airtime can vary, with English sometimes receiving more attention than Nigerian languages or vice versa. For instance, Radio Lagos Tiwa-Tiwa prioritizes Yoruba but reads the news in English, demonstrating a mixed approach to language use. In a multilingual radio language policy, a station dedicates significant airtime to three or more languages. Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria exemplify this approach, allocating substantial time to multiple languages. Radio 1, initially a bilingual station using English and Pidgin, has recently added Yoruba to its repertoire. Similarly, ABS Onitsha primarily broadcasts in Igbo and English, with a limited selection of Igala programming. Real Power 100.5 also uses a multilingual approach, broadcasting in English, Igbo, and Hausa, although the time allocated to non-English languages is significantly less than that of Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria. This is why the latter two stations were selected as the focus of this study.

### **Bond FM**

Bond FM, a subsidiary of Radio Nigeria in Lagos State, was established in response to the Director General of FRCN's observation in 1987 that a significant portion of the population, who spoke major Nigerian languages like Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba but were not proficient in English, were excluded from radio programs. To address this, the Director General



envisioned a station catering to the interests of the unlettered audience. At the time, Radio 1, another FRCN unit, broadcast solely in English on shortwave and FM mono at 92.9, was established in 1976 ahead of FESTAC '77. All stations were simulcasting the same content, prompting the management to seek approval to convert the FM station to an indigenous language station, thereby avoiding the need for a new transmitter and the associated bureaucratic hurdles. Approval was granted by President Obasanjo on September 20, 1987. The station recruited young school leavers fluent in Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa and initially operated from Lagos Island before relocating to Ikeja mainland to be closer to its target audience, earning it the nickname "grassroots radio." Bond FM's programming schedule is divided into language segments, with Yoruba from 4 am to 12:30 pm, Igbo from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm, Hausa from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm, and Yoruba again until the end of the day, with each language unit headed by a team leader and staffed by language professionals.

### **Implicit language policy on Bond FM**

Nigeria's language policy recognizes Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba as dominant languages, which informed the selection of these three languages for Bond FM. The national language policy prioritizes the language of the immediate environment, resulting in Yoruba receiving more airtime than Igbo and Hausa. In accordance with the National Broadcasting Code, Bond FM has implemented this policy by emphasizing Yoruba. This study agrees with Igbokhare (2011) that using Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa in one station meets the language needs of approximately 90% of Nigerians.

Furthermore, Bond FM's use of these languages benefits non-native Yoruba speakers in Lagos, providing an opportunity for language learning. Research by Okudo and Ifeagwazi (2014) shows that Igbo language programming on Bond FM enhances Igbo language knowledge among Lagos secondary school students. Although no studies have investigated the impact on Hausa speakers, it is assumed to have a positive effect, as the station promotes cultural preservation through indigenous languages. The station's director emphasizes the importance of mother tongue education,



especially in a cosmopolitan city like Lagos, where the choice of major Nigerian languages reflects the city's linguistic reality. With experienced broadcasters and a legacy spanning over thirty years, Bond FM serves as a training ground for future Nigerian language broadcasters. The use of these three languages in Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria solidifies their status in the Nigerian context.

### **Voice of Nigeria**

Voice of Nigeria, established in 1960 as an international radio station under the Nigeria National Broadcasting Corporation (now Federal Radio Corporation), aims to broadcast authentic information about Nigeria and Africa to the world. Its primary objective is to provide public service in the interest of Nigeria by offering global radio broadcast services in multiple languages. Initially based in Ikorodu, Lagos State, the station's headquarters has been relocated to Abuja, with an additional station in Lagos. As an international radio station, Voice of Nigeria transmits programs beyond Nigeria's borders. Initially limited to two hours of daily transmission in French and English for West Africa, the station now reaches a global audience through its digital platform, broadcasting in eight languages: English, Igbo, French, Arabic, Kiswahili, Yoruba, Fulfulde, and Hausa. Programs in these languages are transmitted from either Abuja or Lagos stations, with Hausa and English broadcast from Abuja and other languages from either station. English dominates the airtime, while the other languages share equal time, with most languages broadcasting programs twice or thrice daily.

### **Implicit language policy of Voice of Nigeria**

Voice of Nigeria broadcasts news and programs in four indigenous Nigerian languages - Igbo, Yoruba, Fulfulde, and Hausa - alongside four other languages, including English, French, Arabic, and Kiswahili. While all languages receive equitable treatment, English dominates the airtime. The inclusion of Arabic and French, foreign languages used in Nigerian schools and religious centers, acknowledges their significance in the country's educational and cultural landscape. Arabic is primarily used in religious

contexts and schools, while French is taught in schools nationwide. Kiswahili, spoken outside Nigeria, is also part of the station's language repertoire. This multilingual approach demonstrates a deliberate language policy pattern, paving the way for future adoption by state and private stations. By embracing both major and minority languages, this policy has the potential to contribute to language preservation and revitalization in Nigeria.

### **The differences in the language policy in Bond and Voice of Nigeria**

Both Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria, two radio stations, share similarities and differences in their language policies and practices. Bond FM's language policy aims to preserve Nigerian culture, unite diverse populations, and give speakers of major languages a sense of belonging. In contrast, Voice of Nigeria's language policy is driven by internal and external factors, prioritizing information dissemination. While Bond FM focuses on language acquisition and promoting indigenous languages, Voice of Nigeria's policy doesn't aim to elevate the status of languages like Kiswahili, Arabic, French, and English, as their status is already established. Despite differences, both stations strive for equitable language use, reflecting a balance based on language status.

The language choices of Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria share similarities, in the sense that both prioritize major languages like Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Arabic, French, Fulfulde, Kiswahili, and English. This focus on major languages indicates a bias towards languages with larger audiences, neglecting minority languages prevalent in Nigeria and other African countries. Both stations allocate more time to languages with greater listener bases, reflecting a similar policy approach. However, Bond FM's language policy is locally focused, using only indigenous languages like Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba, whereas Voice of Nigeria employs both local and foreign languages. The stations' time allocation patterns also mirror each other, with Voice of Nigeria dedicating more time to English and Bond FM prioritizing Yoruba programming, while Igbo and Hausa share equal time on Bond FM.



Interestingly, despite this similar language policy pattern, Voice of Nigeria does not accept public advertisements, unlike Bond FM.

### Strategy in Sustaining the Multilingual Language Policy in Voice of Nigeria and Bond FM

Both Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria tailor their programs and news to cater to their audience's preferences in the respective languages. Bond FM features popular shows like Oyorima and Omenilgbo, presented by Igbo speakers, Kukan Kurciya in Hausa, and Edun Okan, Omo to Omo colour, Adelebere, and others in Yoruba. Similarly, Voice of Nigeria designs its programs to attract listeners. Regarding staffing, both stations employ full-time staff who produce programs, although they are often underpaid, leading to demotivation and absenteeism. The meagre stipends offered to presenters contribute to this issue.

Both Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria promote Nigerian culture by playing local music, featuring oral poets, organizing drama, and storytelling in their respective languages. Bond FM takes it a step further by employing an interviewing strategy where presenters conduct on-the-spot interviews with the audience, which are later aired on the station. This approach encourages audience engagement and loyalty, as listeners tune in to hear their own voices. Additionally, Bond FM hosts phone-in programs where audience members can suggest show ideas, and presenters incorporate some of these suggestions into their programmes.

To further reinforce their multilingual policy, both radio stations organize events that celebrate native languages and cultures. They invite prominent socialites from the Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo communities to attend these events, which attracts a large audience. During these events, outstanding presenters receive awards of excellence, and winners of phone-in programs receive gifts. This creates a wonderful opportunity for both the audience and presenters to connect and bond, fostering a sense of community and inclusivity.

## **Challenges**

The facilities housing Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria in Lagos require renovation and upgrading. The stations need improved physical infrastructure, including reliable transportation for news gathering and interviews, some digital recorders that can capture high-quality audio, and adequate equipment to facilitate effective news sourcing. However, some broadcasters still rely on personal phones for news gathering, and others translate news without verifying sources. Additionally, some units lack junior staff, posing a threat to their survival when senior broadcasters retire. Staff training is crucial for growth, but training allowances are not provided, forcing staff to pay for courses at government-owned institutions. Moreover, there is a lack of quality reference materials for staff to consult during broadcasting and translation, hindering their knowledge and efficiency. Addressing these issues is essential for sustaining the multilingual policy in both stations.

## **Conclusion**

This study examines the implicit language policies of Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria, despite the absence of explicit policies mandating multilingual broadcasting. The stations' success in broadcasting in multiple languages for years highlights their potential for language engineering and development. By leveraging this potential, Nigerian radio stations can play a vital role in preserving and revitalizing endangered languages. Voice of Nigeria's long-standing use of eight languages demonstrates the feasibility of expanding language offerings with proper planning. To achieve this, the stations must articulate their language policies, emulating the BBC's successful approach. This will inform policy formation, staff recruitment, training, and development, setting a precedent for other Nigerian radio stations. This study reveals the implicit language policies in these government-owned stations, showcasing the Federal Government's efforts to align with constitutional specifications, national broadcasting codes, language policies, and freedom of information acts.



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## **Community Perception on Prevalence of Female Involvement in Substance Abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Kaduna State**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates community perception of the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State adopting a descriptive survey research design anchored on ‘social learning theory’. The population of the study comprised 130,000 inhabitants of Sabon-Tasha Ward in Chikun LGA of Kaduna State, while 399 adults were selected to participate in the study using a purposive sampling technique. The study used a validated structured questionnaire to collect primary quantitative data from the selected participants, while data analysis was carried out using frequency/percentage analysis and the Chi-Square goodness of fit test. Findings from the study revealed that the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Kaduna State is ‘relatively high’ (Chi-Square = 133.869, DF = 4, P = 0.000). Findings also revealed that alcohol was the most abused substance by females in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State (Chi-Square = 58.503, DF = 6, P = 0.000). Findings also revealed that ‘the use and abuse of substances by parents/siblings/relations/friends’ (27.1%) was the major cause of substance abuse among females in Sabon-Tasha, Kaduna State, while ‘engagement in crimes, social vices, and violent behaviours’ (35.6%) was the major consequence of substance abuse among females in the area. Based on these findings, the study concludes that the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Kaduna State was ‘relatively high’, and recommended among other suggestions that parents and guardians as well as religious leaders in the community should help provide proper guidance and counselling to youths, especially females on

drug/substance abuse and its dangers to help restrain their involvement in the act of drugs/substances abuse.

**Keywords:** Female, Involvement, Substance Abuse, Perception, Prevalence

## **Introduction**

### **Background to the Study**

The global society is threatened with social and economic challenges such as drug or substance abuse (Oluwasola, Layefa, & Babaleye, 2021). These have triggered notable changes among youths in society which are indications of bad upbringing and nurturing (Oluwasola, Layefa & Babaleye, 2021). According to the UNODC (2019), an estimated 271 million people from the age of 15 to 64 were found to engage in drug and substance abuse. Substance abuse has become a global issue that has attracted the attention of many. Thus, the menace of substance abuse is not new to Nigerian society as the country is witnessing an increase in crimes and offences that are related to substance abuse (Abdullahi & Abdullahi, 2023).

According to Oluwasola, Layefa and Babaleye (2021), medical substances have been used by humans from time immemorial, for the treatment of different ailments and for enhancing human health. This assertion was supported by Abdullahi and Abdullahi (2023) who stated that ‘substance abuse could be traced to the advent of contemporary medical drugs and substances, which people found to be effective for stimulating, calming, and thrilling them when consumed. In the past, people utilized herbs and plants to cure ailments, earn additional energy, or get rid of work stress. These drugs and substances, when properly consumed through the prescription of a medical practitioner are a source of succor to humans and blessings to the society at large.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The menace of drug/substance abuse among youths has further deteriorated in developing countries like Nigeria through globalization; thereby, resulting in public health challenges, worldwide (Balamurugan, 2018). Also, the use and consumption of drugs not prescribed by medical



practitioners as well as the consumption and utilization of illicit drugs is not only common to males alone, as a good proportion of females in many societies in the world now engage in this act. According to Abdullahi and Abdullahi (2023), peer pressure also causes young adults to succumb to the experimentation of drug and substance abuse in society. According to Asagba, Agberotimi, and Olaseni (2021), there are enough pieces of evidence that suggest an increase in the extent of females in drug/substance abuse in Nigeria. The trend is rather disturbing and has become a subject of key national interest in Nigeria (Adenugba & Okeshola, 2018). Most of the females who engage in substance abuse do not fully understand the long-term repercussions of this, and even when they understand it, they find it very hard to do away with the habit, and also difficult to look for help from professional counsellors, because they do not want people to know about their substance-abusing habit (Abdullahi & Abdullahi, 2023).

Several studies carried out on female involvement in substance abuse did not focus on the perception of the community on female involvement. Since it is desirable to know the perception of the community on the involvement of females in substance abuse, it is important for studies to be conducted to ascertain this. In light of the above, this study is conducted to investigate the perception of community members on the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to investigate community perception of the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha Ward of Chikun LGA in Kaduna State. However, the specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the perception of the community on the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha.
2. Ascertain the most abused substance by females in Sabon-Tasha.
3. To examine the causes of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha.
4. To assess the consequences of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha.

## Research Questions

Based on the specific objectives above, the research questions of the study are:

1. What is the perception of the community members regarding the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha?
2. What is the most abused substance by females in Sabon-Tasha?
3. What are the causes of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha?
4. What are the consequences of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha?

## Research Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: There is a significant difference in community perception of the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the substances abused by females in Sabon-Tasha.

## Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Sabon-Tasha Ward in Chikun LGA of Kaduna State. Hence, it is restricted to only adult females who reside in Sabon-Tasha and engage in substance abuse.

## Review/Theoretical Framework/Conceptual Framework:

### Definition of Drug/Substance

Drugs or substances are biochemical mixtures that when taken in substantial quantities intoxicate and influence the physical and psychological behaviour, thinking, sense of reasoning, and actions of the consumer (Abdullahi & Abdullahi, 2023). In the view of Siro (2014), a substance is a biochemical mixture that is used in the prevention and treatment of ailments and diseases. He further maintained that a drug or substance is any blend with the exclusion of food, which when consumed or administered emotionally affects the functioning and structure of a living being due to the biochemical constituents in it.



### **Concept of Drug Abuse**

Mamman, Othman, and Lian (2014) defined drug abuse as the indiscriminate over-reliance or misapplication of a specific type of drug with or without a previous clinical diagnosis and prescription from a medical practitioner. The trio further stated that drug abuse is the unsafe use of either a permissible or illicit substance that alters the human mind, as well as the administration of legally approved drugs through self-medication without the consent and prescription of a medical practitioner. According to Abdullahi and Abdullahi (2023), substance abuse is the consumption of medical drugs when they are not clinically required and when used against legal prohibition. The duo further affirmed that substance abuse is the excessive utilization and intake of drugs without following medical instructions.

Drugs or substances properly and reasonably consumed are effective in curing ailments and diseases, while drugs or substances incorrectly and unreasonably consumed have adverse effects on the health and normal functioning of the human brain, mind, and body (Abdullahi & Abdullahi, 2023). The utilization and abuse of substances have become a common happening among teenagers in many societies, and this has resulted in severe consequences (Nalini, Joseph, & Sathya, 2016).

According to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency in 2017, there is an increasing female involvement in drug/substance abuse in Nigeria. The report also affirmed that the growing proportion of females who participate in drug abuse consists mostly of undergraduate female students and those who began the act of substance abuse when they were undergraduates (NDLEA, 2017).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the ‘social learning theory’ put together by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory suggests that learning takes place as a result of people observing the behaviour of other people as well as the consequences of the observed behaviours. The theory also suggests that all behaviour is learnt through conditioning, and cognitive theories, which consider psychological effects such as attention and memory (Edinyang: 2016). The



‘social learning theory’ is focused on the ability of learners to observe and imitate behaviours exhibited within their environment. According to Nabavi (2014), adolescents are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents, characters on mass media and social media, friends, peer groups, religion, other members of society, and the school. These teenagers pay attention to some of these agents of socialization and observe the behaviour- at a later time, they may emulate the observed behaviour irrespective of whether they are proper or not. The social learning theory, therefore, integrates mental and behavioural theories and provides a more all-inclusive model that can be used to explain an extensive range of conducts in the real world. The theory is considered appropriate for explaining the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse, and the social environment within which they live, which probably stimulates them to engage in the act. Hence, it is used as the theoretical framework for explaining community perception of the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in this study.

### **Review of Prior Empirical Studies**

Abdullahi and Abdullahi (2023) conducted a study to examine the perception of female undergraduates on female students’ involvement in drug abuse in Kano State adopting a survey research design. The study used a sample size of 306 female undergraduate students who were selected from the Faculty of Education at Bayero University Kano (BUK), Kano University of Science and Technology (KUST), and Yusuf Maitama Sule University Kano (YUMSUK) using a proportionate stratified sampling technique. The study collected primary quantitative data using a questionnaire, while data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), independent samples t-test, and One-Way Analysis of variance test (One-Way ANOVA). Findings from the study revealed that female undergraduates in Kano State had highly negative perceptions of female students’ involvement in drug abuse in Kano State. Findings also revealed that the most common drug abused by female university students in Kano State was benylin.

Adeyemo, Ohaeri, Pat, and Ogodo (2016) carried out a study to determine the prevalence of drug abuse among students at the University of Benin,



Benin City, Edo State adopting a descriptive survey research design. The study used a sample of 800 students selected from a total target population of 7,570 using a multi-stage sampling technique. The study used primary quantitative data which were collected using a questionnaire, while data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Findings from the study revealed that the prevalence of drug abuse among students in the University of Benin was 43.9% and that coffee and alcohol were the most commonly abused drugs among the students.

Namadi and Haruna (2019) conducted a study to assess the prevalence and causes of substance abuse among females in Gombe Metropolis adopting a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) research design. The study used a sample of 385 adults selected from a total target population of 168,000 using multistage sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The study used quantitative and qualitative data which were collected with questionnaires and in-depth interviews, respectively. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using frequency/percentage analysis, while the qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. Findings from the study revealed that the most commonly abused substance among females in the Gombe metropolis was benylin.

Lawan and Farouq (2016) conducted a study to determine the perception of tertiary institutions' students in Kano State on vulnerability factors of women's involvement in drug abuse and the types of drugs commonly abused by women in Kano State adopting a descriptive survey research design. The study used a sample of 200 male and female students randomly selected from four (4) randomly selected tertiary institutions in Kano State. The study used a questionnaire to collect primary quantitative data, while data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and t-tests. Findings from the study revealed that students of tertiary institutions in Kano State were of the perception that women in Kano State were highly involved in drug abuse. Findings also revealed that the most commonly abused drugs by women in Kano State were; sedative-hypnotics, stimulants, lysergic acid, syrup, and demerol.

Oshikoya and Alli (2006) examined the perception of drug abuse amongst Nigerian undergraduates at Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo adopting a descriptive survey research design. The study used a sample of 1000 students who were selected randomly using a multistage sampling technique, while quantitative data for the study were collected using a questionnaire. The data were analyzed using frequency/percentage analysis. Findings from the study revealed that the most commonly abused drugs by undergraduate students in LASU, Ojo were; marijuana and coffee/caffeine.

## **Methods**

### ***Research Design***

A descriptive survey research design was adopted in carrying out this study.

### ***Population of the Study***

This study was conducted in the Sabon-Tasha ward of Chikun LGA of Kaduna State. The current population of the ward was difficult to get at the time of conducting the study. However, the Kaduna State Bureau of Statistics in 2018 projected the population of Sabon-Tasha in 2020 to be 130,000 (KDSBS, 2018). Hence, the population of this study is taken as 130,000.

### ***Sample Size of the Study***

The study used an ideal sample size of 399 which was estimated using Yamane technique (Yamane, 1967) with an error margin of 5% ( $e = 0.05$ ).

### ***Sampling Technique***

Respondents in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique. However, only persons from the age of 18 years who reside within the study area were included as participants in the study.

### ***Instrumentation***

This study used primary quantitative data collected from respondents through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contains close-ended questions with multiple answer options and is self-administered. It is made of two (2) sections – A and B. Section A contains questions that endeavour to know respondents' socio-demographic characteristics such as sex, age,



marital status, highest educational attainment, and occupation. Section B contains questions that endeavour to know the perception of respondents regarding the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse as well as the substances mostly abused by females in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State.

**Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected through a questionnaire in this study were analyzed using frequency/percentage analysis and the Chi-Square goodness of fit test. The data analyses were carried out with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 25 (SPSS 25.0).

**Results**

The selected 399 respondents in this study were each administered a copy of the questionnaire to respond to the questions and subsequently, return the completed copies of the questionnaire to the researcher. Nevertheless, only 306 completed copies of the questionnaire were returned or retrieved. This is an indication that a response rate of 76.7 percent, is deemed to be a reasonable response rate for the researcher to continue with the study. Hence, the basis for data analysis in the study was 306 and not 399.

**Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	116	37.9
Female	190	62.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age Category</b>		
18-25 years	36	11.8
26-33 years	49	16.0
34-41 years	61	19.9
42-49 years	75	24.5
50-57 years	53	17.3
58 years and above	32	10.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Marital Status

Single	85	27.8
Married	146	47.7
Separated	37	12.1
Divorced	17	5.6
Widowed	21	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Highest Educational Attainment

Postgraduate	22	7.2
First Degree/HND	95	31.0
NCE/ND	75	24.5
School Certificate	56	18.3
Primary School Certificate	27	8.8
No Formal Education	12	3.9
Others	19	6.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Occupation

Farming	83	27.1
Civil Servant	53	17.3
Trading	58	19.0
Entrepreneurship	46	15.0
Artistry	49	16.0
Others	17	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the distributions of respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics in this study? The first panel of the Table shows the sex distribution of the respondents of which 116(37.9%) were males, while 190(62.1%) were females. This distribution implies that the majority of the respondents in this study were females. This is also an indication that there are more females than females in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State.

The second panel of the Table shows the age distribution of the respondents of which most of them 75(24.5%) were in the age category of ‘42-49 years’,





while the least were in the age category of ‘58 years and above’ 32(10.5%). This distribution implies that the majority of the respondents in this study were in the age category of ‘42-49 years’. This is also an indication that most adults in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State are in the age category of ‘42-49 years’.

The third panel of the Table shows the marital status distribution of the respondents of which most of them 146(47.7%) were ‘married’, while the least 17(5.6%) were ‘divorced’. This distribution implies that the majority of the respondents in this study were ‘married’. This is also an indication that most adults in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State are married.

The fourth panel of the Table shows the educational attainment distribution of the respondents of which most of them 95(31.0%) had ‘First Degree/HND’, while the least 12(3.9%) had ‘no formal education’. This distribution implies that the majority of the respondents in this study had ‘First Degree/HND’. This is also an indication that most adults in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State have attained a ‘First Degree/HND’.

The fifth panel of the Table shows the occupational distribution of the respondents of which most of them 83(27.1%) were into farming, while the least 17(5.6%) were into other occupations not listed. This distribution implies that the majority of the respondents in this study were into farming. This is also an indication that most adults in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State are into farming as their main occupation.

**Respondents’ Views Regarding Prevalence of Female Involvement in Substance Abuse**

**Table 2: Are you aware that females are involved in substance abuse?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	290	94.8
No	0	0.0
Can't Say	16	5.2
Total	306	100.0

**Source:** Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 shows the distribution of responses on whether respondents were aware that females were involved in substance abuse? The Table reveals that 290(94.8%) of the respondents indicated ‘yes’; 0(0.0%) indicated ‘no’, while 16(5.2%) indicated ‘can’t say’. This distribution of responses implies that the majority of the respondents in this study indicated that they were aware that females were involved in substance abuse. This is also an indication that most adults in Sabon-Tasha are aware that females were involved in substance abuse.

**Table 3: Do you know of any female in your vicinity that is involved in substance abuse?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	226	73.9
No	64	20.9
Can't Say	16	5.2
Total	306	100.0

**Source:** Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 shows the distribution of responses on whether respondents knew of any female in their vicinities that was involved in substance abuse? The Table reveals that 226(73.9%) of the respondents indicated ‘yes’; 64(20.9%) indicated ‘no’, while 16(5.2%) indicated ‘could not say’. This distribution of responses implies that the majority of the respondents in this study indicated ‘yes’ that they knew of females in their vicinities who were involved in substance abuse. This is also an indication that most adults in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State know of adults in their vicinities who are involved in substance abuse.



**Substances Mostly Abused by Females in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State**

**Table 4: What are the substances abused by these females in your vicinity?**

	Frequency	Percent
Alcohol	73	23.9
Tobacco	51	16.7
Coffee	28	9.2
Kola nut	20	6.5
Marijuana (Indian Hemp)	30	9.8
Codeine/Benylin	68	22.2
Others*	36	11.8
Total	306	100.0

\* Heroin, Tramadol, Morphine, Roche, Glue/Gum, and Cocaine

**Source:** Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 shows the distribution of responses on the substances mostly abused by these females in respondents’ vicinities. The Table reveals most of the respondents 73(23.9%) indicated ‘alcohol’, while the least 20(6.5%) indicated ‘kola nut’. This distribution of responses implies that the majority of the respondents were of the view that the most abused substance by female substance abusers was alcohol. This is also an indication that the most abused substance by female substance abusers in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State is alcohol.

**Respondents’ Perceptions Regarding the Prevalence of Female Involvement in Substance Abuse in Sabon-Tasha**

**Table 5: What do you think is the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha?**

	Frequency	Percent
Very High	42	13.7
High	137	44.8
Moderate	23	7.5
Low	67	21.9
Very Low	37	12.1
Total	306	100.0

**Source:** Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 shows the distribution of responses on the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha? The Table reveals that 42(13.7%) had the perception that the prevalence was very high; 137(44.8%) had the perception that it was high; 23(7.5%) had the perception that it was moderate; 67(21.9%) had the perception that it was low, while 37(12.1%) had the perception that the prevalence was very low. This distribution of responses implies that the majority of the respondents in this study had the perception that the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha was relatively high. This is also an indication that there is a relatively high prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha.

### **Causes of Substance Abuse among Females in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State:**

**Table 6: What are the causes of substance abuse among females in your vicinity?**

	Frequency	Percent
Societal acceptance of the use of substances, e.g. alcohol	36	11.8
Ignorance about the hazards of substance abuse	66	21.6
Peer group influence	72	23.5
Use and abuse of substances by parents/siblings/relations/friends	83	27.1
Desire to feel popular among colleagues	49	16.0
Total	306	100.0

**Source:** Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 shows the distribution of responses on the causes of substance abuse among females in respondents’ vicinities? The Table reveals that most of the respondents 83(27.1%) indicated that ‘use and abuse of substances by parents/siblings/relations/friends’ was the cause of substance abuse among females in their vicinities; while the least 36(11.8%) indicated ‘societal acceptance of the use of substances, e.g. alcohol’. This distribution of responses implies that the majority of the respondents were of the view that ‘use and abuse of substances by parents/siblings/relations/friends’ was the major cause of substance abuse among females in their vicinities. This is



also an indication that ‘use of substances by parents/siblings/relations/friends’ is the major cause of substance abuse among females in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State.

**Consequences of Female Involvement in Substance Abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State:**

**Table 7: What are the consequences of substance abuse among females in your area?**

	Frequency	Percent
Physical health problems such as liver cirrhosis, pancreatic, peptic ulcer, hypertension, and tuberculosis.	81	26.5
Low self-esteem.	44	14.4
Anxiety, depression, and psychological disorders.	72	23.5
Engagement in crimes, social vices, and violent behaviours	109	35.6
Total	306	100.0

**Source:** Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023

Table 7 shows the distribution of responses on the consequences of substance abuse among females in respondents’ vicinities? The Table reveals that most of the respondents 109(35.6%) indicated ‘engagement in crimes, social vices, and violent behaviours’ was the major consequence of substance abuse among females in their vicinities; while the least 44(14.4%) indicated ‘low self-esteem’. This distribution of responses implies that the majority of the respondents were of the view that ‘engagement in crimes, social vices, and violent behaviours’ was the major consequence of substance abuse among females in their vicinities. This is also an indication that ‘engagement in crimes, social vices, and violent behaviours’ was the major consequence of substance abuse among females in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State.

**Tests of Hypotheses**

The Chi-Square goodness of fit test is used to test the null hypotheses formulated to guide this study using a level of significance of 5% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).



### Null Hypothesis #1

H<sub>01</sub>: There is a significant difference in community perception of the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha.

The results of the Chi-Square goodness of fit test for the first null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) in this study are shown in Table 8:

**Table 8: Chi-Square Test Statistics**

	What is your perception regarding the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha?
Chi-Square	133.869
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

**Source:** Researcher's SPSS Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test Output, 2023

Table 8 shows the result of the Chi-square goodness of fit test used in testing the first null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) that the community has the perception that the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha is not relatively high. Since the test returned a Chi-Square statistic value of 133.869 with 4 degrees of freedom, and an associated P value of 0.000 which is less than the level of significance value of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ), it implies that the first null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) is rejected at 5%. Hence, it is concluded that the community has the perception that the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha is relatively high.

### Null Hypothesis #2

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the substances abused by females in Sabon-Tasha.

The results of the Chi-Square goodness of fit test for the second null hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>) in this study are shown in Table 9:

**Table 9: Chi-Square Test Statistics**

	What are the substances abused by females in your vicinity?
Chi-Square	58.503
Df	6
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

**Source:** Researcher's SPSS Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test Output, 2023



Table 9 shows the result of the Chi-square goodness of fit test used in testing the second null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) that there is no significant difference in the substances abused by females in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State. Since the test returned a Chi-Square statistic value of 58.503 with 6 degrees of freedom, and an associated P value of 0.000 which is less than the level of significance value of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ), it implies that the second null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) is rejected at 5%. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the substances abused by females in Sabon-Tasha. From Table 4, it can be observed that the most abused substance in Sabon-Tasha is alcohol (23.9%). This implies that alcohol is the most abused substance by females in Sabon-Tasha.

## **Discussions, Conclusion, and Recommendations:**

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study was conducted with the main objective of investigating community perception of the involvement of females in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State adopting a descriptive survey research design. The study utilized a purposive sample of 399 inhabitants of the study area, while primary quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire. The data were analyzed using frequency/percentage analysis and the hypotheses were tested using the Chi-Square goodness of fit test. The results were all presented in Tables and duly interpreted, with some important findings deduced from them. These findings are discussed here in relation to findings of prior empirical studies earlier reviewed in the study.

The results of the data analysis revealed that the majority of the respondents in the study were; females (62.1%), in the age category of '42-49 years', married (47.7%), attained First Degree/HND (31.0%), and were farmers (27.1%).

One of the major findings of the study was that the community had the perception that the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha was relatively high (Chi-Square = 133.869, DF = 4, P = 0.000). This finding is consistent with that of Abdullahi and Abdullahi (2023) whose study revealed that female undergraduates in Kano State had

the perception that the prevalence of drug abuse among female students in Kano State was relatively high. The finding also supports that of Lawan and Farouq (2016) whose study found that students of tertiary institutions in Kano State were of the perception that women in Kano State were highly involved in drugs abuse.

Another major finding of the study was that alcohol was the most abused substance by females in Sabon-Tasha (Chi-Square = 58.503, DF = 6, P = 0.000). The finding partially agrees with that of Adeyemo et al., (2016) whose study revealed that coffee and alcohol were the most commonly abused drugs among students at the the University of Benin. However, the finding is inconsistent with that of Abdullahi and Abdullahi (2023) whose study found benylin to be the most commonly abused drug by female university students in Kano State. The finding also contradicts that of Namadi and Haruna (2019) whose study found that the most commonly abused substance among females in the Gombe metropolis was benylin. The finding also disagrees with that of Lawan and Farouq (2016) whose study revealed that the most commonly abused drugs by women in Kano State were; sedative-hypnotics, stimulants, lysergic acid, syrup, and demerol. The finding is also divergent from the finding of Oshikoya and Alli (2006) whose study revealed that the most common drugs abused by undergraduate students in LASU, Ojo were marijuana and coffee/caffeine.

The study also found that the causes of substance abuse among females in Sabon-Tasha were; societal acceptance of the use of substances, e.g. alcohol, ignorance about the hazards of substance abuse, peer group influence, use and abuse of substances by parents/siblings/relations/friends, and the desire to feel popular among colleagues. However, ‘use and abuse of substances by parents/siblings/relations/friends’ (27.1%) were found to be the major cause of substance abuse among females in the area.

The study also found that the consequences of substance abuse among females in Sabon-Tasha were; physical health problems such as liver



cirrhosis, pancreatic, peptic ulcer, hypertension, and tuberculosis, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, psychological disorder, engagement in crimes, social vices, and violent behaviours. However, ‘engagement in crimes, social vices, and violent behaviours’ (35.6%) was found to be the major consequence of substance abuse among females in the area.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the above findings, the study concludes that the prevalence of female involvement in substance abuse in Sabon-Tasha, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State is ‘relatively high’.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

- Parents and guardians as well as religious leaders in the community should help provide proper guidance and counselling to youths, especially females on drug/substance abuse and its dangers so as to help restrain their involvement in the act of drug/substance abuse.
- The government of Kaduna State should establish counselling centres in Sabon-Tasha Ward, empowering and equipping them to provide appropriate counselling and guidance to women who are involved in substance abuse in the area, which by extension will help reduce the high prevalence of substance abuse among females in the community.
- The government of Kaduna State should enact appropriate laws to regulate the sales of alcoholic beverages in the state, as well as prohibit pharmacies and patent medicine stores from selling benylin and other cough syrups that are abused to individuals without Physicians’ prescriptions.
- Further studies should be conducted in the study area with the main objective of determining the factors that influence female involvement in substance abuse.

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## The Effect of Consonant Omission on Igbo Words Christopher Chinedu Nwike

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### Abstract

This study examined the multifaceted effects of consonant omission in the Igbo language, focusing on investigating the phonetic, semantic, and grammatical changes resulting from Igbo consonant omission. Consonant omission, a phenomenon increasingly observed in spoken Igbo, leads to significant phonological alterations that impact the intelligibility and acoustic patterns of the language. Morphologically, this omission can alter word formation processes, affecting the integrity of prefixes, suffixes, and root morphemes, thereby shifting grammatical meanings. Semantically, consonant omission often results in lexical ambiguity and the potential emergence of new meanings, complicating communication. Sociolinguistically, this phenomenon reflects and influences social dynamics, including regional dialect variations and attitudes among different age groups and social strata. Lastly, the study explores the orthographic challenges posed by consonant omission, particularly in the context of literacy, linguistic integrity, semantic changes and shifts, phonetic and grammatical implications, changes in word class, and contextual dependence. These findings underscore the importance of understanding consonant omission as a dynamic linguistic process with profound implications for the preservation and evolution of Igbo.

**Keywords:** Consonant omission, Phonological impact, Morphological consequences, Semantic and lexical changes, Sociolinguistic Implications

### Introduction of the study

Consonants are fundamental components of the Igbo language, contributing significantly to its phonetic structure, grammatical functions, and overall linguistic diversity. Understanding the Igbo consonant system is pivotal in distinguishing meanings, grammatical categories, and maintaining the



phonetic integrity of words. Consonants in Igbo are fundamental to the language's phonology and syntax Eze, Nwike, & Ezeudo, 2023. They help define the semantic and grammatical functions of words. The presence or absence of specific consonants can significantly alter the meaning and function of a word, impacting both verbal and written communication. In terms of articulation and phonetic features, the Igbo consonant system consists of a diverse range of sounds, each produced with specific articulatory properties. For instance, the stop consonants. These are sounds where the airflow is completely blocked and then released. Examples in Igbo include /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, and /g/. Another is fricative consonants. These involve a continuous airflow through a narrow channel, creating friction. Examples are /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/. More so, there are nasal consonants. These are sounds produced by airflow through the nasal cavity. The nasal consonants in Igbo are /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/. The Igbo language has approximant consonants. These are sounds produced with a slight obstruction in the airflow. Igbo includes approximants like /w/, /j/, and /ɹ/. In all of these, according to Nwike (2021) and Ofomata (2019), the following are the consonants of Igbo:

b   ch   d   f   g   gb   gh   gw   h   j   k   kp   kw  
 l   m   n   ñ   nw   ny   p   r   s   sh   t   v   w  
 y   z

In line with the above, there are phonological roles for consonants in Igbo. Consonants in Igbo fulfill several phonological roles. For instance, there are minimal pairs. Here, different consonants distinguish meanings between words, known as minimal pairs. For Ezeuko and Chira (2005:57-67), minimal pairs can be realised from phonemes at the initial, medial or final position of words in Igbo. For instance, ‘pee /p/, bee /b/, (initial), odu /d/, otu /t/, (medial), aku /u/, aka /a/ (final) position.’ For word structure, consonants contribute to syllable structure and word formation rules in Igbo phonology. There are also phonotactics of Igbo. Upon this, it is crucial to mention that Igbo has specific rules governing which consonants can appear together in words, influencing phonotactic patterns. Then, on syntactic and

semantic functions, there are grammatical markers, according to Kielar, Meltzer, Moreno, Alain, and Bialystok (2014). Here, consonants often serve as grammatical markers, indicating tense, aspect, mood, and other grammatical categories in verbs and nouns. For semantic distinctions, consonants differentiate meanings not only between words but also within sentences, aiding in precise communication.

In connection with the foregoing, there are regional variations and dialectical influences. The Igbo consonants exhibit regional variations across different dialects, influenced by historical, geographical, and cultural factors (Eziaku, Amam, Chioma, 2023). These variations enrich the language's diversity but also pose challenges to standardizing phonetic and orthographic norms. On orthographic representation, in written Igbo, consonants are represented using a modified Latin alphabet supplemented with diacritics and special characters to denote specific sounds. Orthographic rules ensure accurate representation of consonantal sounds, aiding in proper pronunciation and comprehension. In all of these, there is a consonant omission in Igbo.

Consonant omissions in Igbo can significantly alter the meaning of words. Igbo is a tonal language with a rich consonantal and vowel system, so removing a consonant can lead to a loss of meaning or the creation of a new, unintended word. Consonant omission in Igbo words can have profound effects on meaning, transforming nouns into verbs, changing parts of speech, and altering the semantic content of words. This highlights the importance of accurate pronunciation and careful attention to phonetic details in the Igbo language. So, understanding the potential changes that arise from consonant omission is essential for effective communication and the preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage. For instance, "Nri" (food) versus "Ri" (eat). Here, "Nri" means "food." So, omitting the initial consonant "N" results in "Ri," which means "eat." By implication, the omission transforms a noun into a verb, showing a shift from an object to an action. Again, the example underscores the critical role of consonants in maintaining the meaning and grammatical function of words in Igbo. The omission of consonants can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications, particularly in spoken language where context might



not always clarify the intended meaning. For learners of Igbo, both native and non-native, precise pronunciation is essential to ensure clarity and accuracy in communication. However, the phonetic integrity of words is crucial to preserving the linguistic heritage and cultural identity embedded in the Igbo language. Consonant omission can lead to the erosion of these elements, as the nuanced meanings and cultural significance of words may be lost or altered. Based on the foregoing, this study examines the effect of consonant omission on Igbo words. The objective of this study is to investigate the phonetic, semantic, and grammatical changes resulting from Igbo consonant omission. In line with the choice of this study, the primary motivation is the observed gap in linguistic research concerning the specific impacts of consonant omission in Igbo. Given increasing globalization and digital communication, there is a pressing need to understand these phonetic nuances to preserve the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Igbo language.

### **Scope and Significance**

This study focuses on a range of Igbo words across different word classes, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions. By examining these words, the study highlights the breadth of changes that consonant omission can cause. The findings of this research are significant for several reasons. First, there will be an educational impact. Here, this study will enhance the teaching of Igbo pronunciation and spelling. Again, there will be linguistic preservation, and this study will contribute to the preservation of Igbo phonetic and grammatical structures. And finally, cultural relevance. This study will support the maintenance of clear and effective communication within the Igbo-speaking community.

### **Literature Review**

Existing literature on Igbo phonology and syntax provides a foundation for understanding the role of consonants. Studies have highlighted the importance of consonants in distinguishing minimal pairs and maintaining syntactic order. However, there is a gap in research specifically focused on the effect of consonant omission in Igbo, which this study aims to address.



## **Theoretical Study**

Exploring the effect of consonant omission in the Igbo language involves drawing on various linguistic theories that explain phonetic variation, phonological processes, and their effects on language structure and communication. This section discusses several theories that are relevant to understanding how consonant omission impacts Igbo phonology and semantics.

### **Optimality Theory (OT)**

Optimality theory, developed by Prince and Smolensky (1993), focuses on the interaction between conflicting constraints in language. It suggests that phonological patterns emerge from the competition between markedness constraints (which prefer certain structures) and faithfulness constraints (which prefer faithful representations of underlying forms). In Igbo, the consonant omission may result from constraints favouring simplification or ease of articulation. For instance, the omission of the consonant cluster in Igbo words might be explained by constraints favouring syllable structure simplicity (markedness) over the preservation of consonants (faithfulness).

### **Natural Phonology**

Natural phonology, proposed by Stampe (1969), emphasizes the psychological and functional aspects of phonological processes. It argues that phonological rules are shaped by ease of articulation and perceptual factors. In Igbo, consonant omission could be attributed to natural phonological processes where speakers simplify or reduce sounds for ease of production or perception. For instance, natural phonology would explain consonant omission in Igbo as a result of phonetic economy, where speakers omit sounds that are more difficult to articulate or perceive.

### **Sociolinguistic Theory**

Sociolinguistic theory, such as Labov's (1972) variationist approach, examines how language variation and change are influenced by social factors. In Igbo-speaking communities, consonant omission might vary depending on factors such as dialectal differences, education level, and urbanization. For example, sociolinguistic theory would investigate how



consonant omission in Igbo varies across different social groups and contexts, reflecting social identity and linguistic variation.

### **Phonological Theory: Generative Phonology**

Generative phonology, proposed by Chomsky and Halle (1968), offers insights into how phonological rules govern sound patterns in languages. It posits that underlying representations (URs) are transformed into surface representations (SRs) through phonological rules. In Igbo, consonant omission can be analysed within this framework to understand how underlying phonological structures are altered in pronunciation and spelling due to phonological processes such as deletion and assimilation. For example, according to generative phonology, the omission of the initial consonant in Igbo words like "nna" (father) changing to "na" (to be/in) can be explained as a surface representation resulting from a phonological rule. In line with the above, these theoretical frameworks provide valuable perspectives for understanding the influence of consonant omission in Igbo. They offer explanations for phonological processes, semantic shifts, and sociolinguistic variations observed in the language. By applying these theories, this study can deepen its analysis of how consonant omission affects Igbo phonology and contribute to broader discussions on language change and maintenance.

### **Empirical study**

Okwudishu (2018) carried out a study on the phonological processes in Igbo: A Case Study of Consonant Omission. This study explores various phonological processes in Igbo, including consonant omission, analysing how these processes affect the phonetic and semantic structure of Igbo words, but the current study is on the effect of consonant omission on Igbo words.

Ezeani (2015) conducted a study on sociolinguistic variation in consonant omission among Igbo speakers. Ezeani examines sociolinguistic factors influencing consonant omission in Igbo, highlighting how regional dialects, educational background, and social factors contribute to variation in consonant pronunciation and usage, but the current study is on the effect of consonant omission on Igbo words.

Obiamalu (2017) studied a comparative analysis of phonological rules: consonant omission in Igbo and Yoruba. The study compares phonological rules governing consonant omission in Igbo and Yoruba languages, elucidating similarities and differences in how these languages handle phonetic variations, but the current study is on the effect of consonant omission on Igbo words.

Okeke (2019) conducted a study on the historical and diachronic perspectives on consonant omission in Igbo. Okeke investigates the historical evolution and diachronic changes in consonant omission patterns in Igbo, tracing developments from earlier to contemporary forms of the language, but the current study is on the effect of consonant omission on Igbo words.

Onwuegbuzie (2016) researched a psycholinguistic study on the perception and processing of consonant omission in Igbo. Onwuegbuzie examines how native Igbo speakers perceive and process consonant omission, exploring cognitive mechanisms and implications for language comprehension and production, but the current study is on the effect of consonant omission on Igbo words.

From the above, these studies provide a comprehensive overview of research conducted on the effect of consonant omission in Igbo, offering insights into phonological processes, sociolinguistic variations, comparative analyses, historical perspectives, and psycholinguistic aspects of the phenomenon.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative approach. It equally adopts a descriptive survey design and analyses some selected Igbo words that undergo consonant omission. These words are examined to determine the resulting phonetic, semantic, and grammatical changes, and they were selected at random for broader explanation to represent the list of words sampled in this study. The research involves phonetic analysis, where the focus will be on identifying changes in pronunciation; semantic analysis, thus



understanding shifts in meaning; and finally, grammatical analysis, where this study will assess changes in word class and syntactic function.

### **Data presentation and analysis**

This section of the study shall present a list of some Igbo words that were used for the study and be analysed based on the objective of the study.

1. Agwọ (Snake) [Noun] versus ‘Gwọ’ (Heal) [Verb]
2. Azụ (Fish) [Noun] versus ‘Zụ’ (Buy) [Verb]
3. Eke (Python) [Noun] versus Ke’ (Tie) [Verb]
4. Ncha (Soap) [Noun] versus ‘Cha’ (Scrub) [Verb]
5. Ngwa (Hurry) [Verb] versus ‘Gwa’ (Tell) [Verb]
6. Ngwá (Quick) [Adjective] versus ‘gwá’ (tell) [Verb]
7. Ngwa (Tool) [Noun] versus ‘Gwa’ (Tell) [Verb]
8. Ngwuro (Cripple) [Noun] versus ‘Gwuro’ (Crumble) [Verb]
9. Nkita (Dog) [Noun] versus ‘Kita’ (now) [Verb]
10. Nkụ (Wood) [Noun] versus ‘Kụ’ (Hit) [Verb]
11. Nkwọ (Market Day) [Noun] versus ‘Kwo’ (Backing) [Verb] as ...ikwọ n’azụ)
12. Nkwụ (Palm wine) [Noun] versus ‘Kwụ’ (Stand) [Verb]
13. Nkwusi (End) [Noun] versus ‘Kwusi’ (Stop) [Verb]
14. Nna (Father) [Noun] versus ‘Na’ (To be/In) [Preposition/Verb]
15. Nne (Mother) [Noun] versus ‘Ne’ (Watch) [Verb]
16. Nri (Food) [Noun] versus ‘Ri’ (Eat) [Verb]
17. Nsi (Poison) [Noun] versus ‘Si’ (Say) [Verb]
18. Nso (Holy) [Adjective] versus ‘Sọ’ (avoid) [Verb] as (isọ mmadu asọ)
19. Ntụ (Dust) [Noun] versus ‘Tụ’ (Throw) [Verb]
20. Ogo (In-law) [Noun] versus ‘Go’ (Worship) [Verb] as (...go mmụọ)
21. Ogwu (Medicine) [Noun] versus ‘Gwu’ (End) [Verb]
22. Okpo (Blow) [Noun] versus ‘Kpo’ (Call) [Verb]
23. Oku (Fire) [Noun] versus ‘Kụ’ (Hit) [Verb]
24. Oku (Heat) [Noun] versus ‘Kụ’ (Hit) [Verb]
25. Oku (Light) [Noun] versus ‘Kụ’ (Strike) [Verb]
26. Okuko (Chicken) [Noun] versus ‘Ko’ (tell) [Verb]
27. Okwo (Navigator) [Noun] versus ‘Kwo’ (backing) [Noun] as (ikwo n’azụ)

28. Okwu (word) [Noun] versus ‘Kwú’ (talk) [Verb]
29. Ọsọ (Run) [Noun] versus ‘Sọ’ (avoid) [Verb] as (ịsọ mmadụ asọ)
30. Ọzụ (buyer) [Noun] versus ‘Zụ’ (Train) [Verb]
31. Ụzọ (Road/Way) [Noun] versus ‘Zọ’ (Seek) [Verb]

### **Analysis of the data used for the study**

This section shall pick a few words of Igbo at random, as presented above, to represent all the data used for this study in its analysis for a broader explanation. Again, the analysis is done based on the objective of the study, thus investigating the phonetic, semantic, and grammatical changes resulting from Igbo consonant omission. For instance.

**In example 2**, which is "Azụ" (Fish) versus "zụ" (Buy)

"Azụ" means "fish." Omitting the initial consonant "A" results in "zụ," which means "buy," a verb as the word class. So, this change converts a noun to a verb, again illustrating a significant semantic shift.

**In example 14** above, which is "Nna" (Father) versus "Na" (To be/in)

"Nna" means "father." So, the omission changes the word from a noun denoting a family member to a preposition or a verb, completely altering its syntactic and semantic role.

**In example 16**, which is "Nri" (food) versus "Ri" (eat),

"Nri" means "food." The omission of the initial consonant "N" results in "ri," which means "eat," a verb. So, the omission transforms a noun into a verb, showing a shift from an object to an action.

**In example 23**, which is "Ọkụ" (Fire) versus "Kụ" (Hit)

"Ọkụ" means "fire." By omitting the initial consonant "Ọ," it results in "Kụ," which can mean "hit." The transformation from a noun denoting an element to a verb highlights the drastic shift in meaning.

**In example 31**, which is "Ụzọ" (Road/Way) versus "Zọ" (Seek)

"Ụzọ" means "road" or "way." Omitting the initial consonant "Ụ" results in "zọ," which means "seek," a verb. However, this change alters the meaning



from a physical path to an action, demonstrating the semantic shift caused by consonant omission.

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that these examples illustrate that consonant omission can drastically change the meaning of words in Igbo, making it crucial to maintain accurate pronunciation and spelling to preserve the intended meaning. More so, consonant omission in Igbo significantly affects the language's spelling, pronunciation, and meaning, illustrating the importance of consonants in maintaining linguistic clarity and coherence. The shift from nouns to verbs, changes in meaning, and potential for miscommunication highlight the critical role consonants play in the Igbo language. Ensuring accurate pronunciation and usage is essential for preserving the integrity and richness of Igbo linguistic traditions.

### **Findings on the effect of consonant omission in Igbo**

The study on the effect of consonant omission in the Igbo language reveals significant impacts on various aspects of linguistic structure and communication. Consonants are crucial in distinguishing meanings, grammatical functions, and maintaining the phonetic integrity of words. The findings of this study shed light on how consonant omission affects the spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of some Igbo terms. However, the key findings of the study are as follows:

1. **Linguistic Integrity:** Consonant omission impacts the overall linguistic integrity of the Igbo language. Preserving consonantal sounds is crucial for maintaining the rich phonetic and semantic diversity of Igbo. The study underscores the role of consonants in differentiating between various parts of speech and conveying precise meanings.
2. **Semantic Changes/Shift:** The omission of consonants can lead to significant changes in meaning, which can result in confusion and miscommunication. For instance, 'Ọkụ' (fire) [noun] becomes 'Kụ' (hit) [verb] and 'Ọgọ' (in-law) [noun] versus 'Gọ' (worship) [verb] as (...gọ mmụọ). In line with this, words that lose consonants may



- retain a phonetic similarity but diverge completely in their semantic interpretation.
3. **Phonetic and Grammatical Implications:** Consonant omission in Igbo not only changes the spelling and pronunciation of words but also has profound implications for their grammatical categories and meanings. This phenomenon highlights the interconnectedness of phonetics and grammar in the language. For instance, the omission of initial consonants often results in a shift from nouns to verbs, indicating actions rather than objects or concepts. Such changes can lead to misunderstandings if not properly contextualized. For instance, ‘Ngwá’ (quick) [adjective] versus ‘gwá’ (tell) [verb] and ‘Okwu’ (word) [noun] versus ‘Kwú’ (talk) [verb]. The study indicates that orthographic precision is essential in written Igbo to avoid ambiguity.
  4. **Change in Word Class:** Noun shifts to verb, and it is one of the most noticeable effects of consonant omission in word classes. For example, ‘Nna’ (Father) [Noun] becomes ‘Na’ (To be/in) [Preposition/Verb], and ‘Nri’ (Food) [Noun] becomes ‘Ri’ (Eat) [Verb]. Again, consonant omissions can also shift adjectives to verbs or nouns. For instance, ‘Ngwa’ (quick) [adjective] becomes ‘Gwa’ (tell) [verb].
  5. **Contextual Dependence:** The meaning of words after consonant omission becomes highly context-dependent. Without the omitted consonants, words may require additional contextual clues to be correctly understood. For instance, ‘Nkụ’ (wood) becomes ‘Kụ’ (strike). So, understanding the intended meaning depends on the surrounding words and context.
  6. **Educational Implications:** The findings suggest a need for enhanced focus on phonetics and orthography in Igbo language education. Teaching strategies should emphasize the importance of consonants to prevent omissions that alter meanings. Language learners should be trained to recognize and produce consonants accurately to preserve the intended meanings and grammatical structures.



Summarily, the study reveals that consonant omission in Igbo has profound effects on spelling, pronunciation, and meaning. These omissions can change word classes, create semantic shifts, introduce phonetic and orthographic variations, and increase the potential for miscommunication. To maintain the linguistic integrity of Igbo, it is essential to emphasize the importance of consonants in both spoken and written forms. Educational practices should focus on accurate pronunciation and spelling to ensure clear and effective communication.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study on the effect of consonant omission in the Igbo language, several recommendations are proposed to mitigate the negative impacts of consonant omission and to preserve the linguistic integrity of Igbo. These recommendations are targeted at educators, linguists, language learners, and speakers of Igbo.

1. **Linguistic awareness:** There should be awareness campaigns. Launch awareness campaigns, highlighting the significance of consonants in Igbo. Use multimedia resources, such as videos and infographics, to demonstrate the impact of consonant omission on meaning and communication. Incorporate linguistic awareness into cultural programs and events to educate the broader community about the importance of preserving consonantal integrity.
2. **Enhanced phonetic education:** There should be phonetic training. Implement comprehensive phonetic training in Igbo language curricula at all educational levels. Emphasis should be placed on the correct articulation of consonants and the differences between similar-sounding words. Also, there should be pronunciation drills. Incorporate regular pronunciation drills and exercises that focus on consonant sounds to help students develop a strong phonetic foundation.
3. **Orthographic precision:** This is about spelling accuracy. Encourage the practice of accurate spelling in both written and spoken Igbo. Educators should stress the importance of maintaining consonants in words to avoid changes in meaning. There should also be dictation

- exercises. Use dictation exercises to help students practice and reinforce correct spelling and pronunciation.
4. **Teacher Training/Professional Development:** Offer professional development programs for Igbo language teachers that focus on advanced phonetic and orthographic training. Equip teachers with the tools and knowledge to effectively teach consonant pronunciation and spelling. There will be resource materials. Provide teachers with high-quality teaching materials that include detailed explanations, examples, and exercises on consonant usage and omission.
  5. **Research and Documentation:** Encourage further research into the phonetic and grammatical aspects of Igbo, with a focus on the effects of consonant omission. Support studies that explore innovative methods for teaching and preserving consonantal sounds. On linguistic documentation, document and preserve various dialects and regional variations of Igbo to ensure that the full range of consonantal sounds and their usages are captured and maintained.

So, by implementing these recommendations, educators, linguists, and the Igbo-speaking community can work together to address the challenges posed by consonant omission. These efforts will help preserve the richness and clarity of the Igbo language, ensuring effective communication and cultural continuity for future generations.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the effect of consonant omission in Igbo, highlighting the critical role of consonants in maintaining the language's integrity. The findings underscore the importance of accurate pronunciation and spelling in preventing miscommunication and preserving the richness of the Igbo language. The recommendations offered aim to enhance language education and support the ongoing preservation of Igbo linguistic heritage.



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## APPENDIX

### Consonant chart of Igbo language

Mkpọpụta Mgbochiume, Ụda ha na ka e si Akpọpụta ha		Mkpurụdemede Mgbochiume, Ụda ha, Ebe Ụda Ha Si Apụta Na Ebe E Si Akpọpụta Ha						
		Egbughere Abụọ	Egbughere Na Eze	Egbughere Na Akpo	Akpo Ibu	Akpọ Ime	Anyurụ Na Akpo	Akpịrị (Eko)
<b>ỤDAIKE</b>	Kendakpa	p<	ɓ	gw kw				
	Keekporọ (Kendapụta)	p	b			k g	t d	
	Kemkpọzaka	pʃ	bʃ					
	Kemkpọzuume	pʰ	bʰ			kʰ gʰ	tʰ dʰ	
	Kemkpọeegbughere	gb	kp			kw gw		
Kensineeko							t d	
<b>ỤDARI</b>	Keekporọ						ɣ	
	Kemkpọnmi						ɣ̃	
<b>ỤDAYI</b>		w			j			
<b>ỤDAIMI</b>	Keekporọ	m			ɲ	ŋ	n	
	Kemkpọeegbughere					ŋw		
	Keegbugherezaka	ʃm						
<b>ỤDALI</b>							l	
<b>ỤDASHI</b>					tʂ dʒ			
<b>ỤDASHI</b>	Keekporọ		f v		s	y	ʂ z	h
	Kemkpọzaka		ʃ vʃ		ʂj		ʂj zj	hj
	Kemkpọnmi		f̃ ṽ				ʂ̃ z̃	h̃
	Kemkpọeegbughere							hw

Source: *Ndezu Ụtọasụsụ Igbo* by Chinedum Ofomata, 2019





## **The Role of Religious Textual Interpretation Towards Reducing Insecurity in Nigeria: A Christian Theological Approach**

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### **Abstract**

This research stands on the assumption that religion is indispensable to human existence. It is a medium through which God communicates His benevolent intentions for humanity. Given the context of human sinful conditions, religion has always been used either for good or bad objectives. As a critical analysis of the existing textual reference for human actions, this research seeks to acquiesce the negatives in religion by arguing that more attention should be paid to religious texts that promote the greater good of human co-existence. This requires that scholars and practitioners should interpret texts in ways that are constructive rather than destructive. To construct better human relations, Jesus Christ set an exemplary model for the re-interpretation of texts that seem to breed tension and violence in human society, which we can extrapolate in accordance with God's agenda for human existence on his own terms. This direction is very important for scholars and preachers to explore in academics and worship places, and it could be one of the best approaches to remedying the precarious situation in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Religion, Justice, Human society, Violence, Textual interpretation, Peace

### **Introduction**

Historical evidence has put religion on both sides of the positives and negatives. Positively, we have seen that religion has brought tremendous development in different societies. Here in Nigeria, Christian missionaries who brought the gospel came along with development projects such as education, health care, agriculture and other important development



concepts. Apart from these, the ethical dimension through catechetical teachings inculcated some enlightenment orientation on personal and collective development. Many great nationalists in Nigeria were products of this missionary enterprise and the impact has continued to grow. Nevertheless, the ugly side of religion has also been witnessed as many people have seen religion as an instrument to destabilize society when various sects within one religion or different religions fight among themselves over doctrinal, economic and political interests. This has led to persistent tension, violence and destruction of lives and property. Most scholars pay more attention to the political, economic, nepotism, and other forms of control as causes of religious violence in Nigeria.

Religion has been a driving force in shaping human society for thousands of years. However, throughout history, certain religious texts have been interpreted in a way that promotes violence and conflict. Jesus Christ, the central figure of Christianity, offers a unique perspective on the interpretation of violent religious texts. His teachings and actions exemplify the true essence of peace, compassion, and love, often contradicting violent interpretations. In examining the interpretation of violent religious texts, it is important to recognize that context plays a crucial role. Many religious texts, including the Bible, contain passages that condone or even promote violence. However, it is essential to consider the historical and cultural context in which these texts were written and understand their intended messages. This research opines that this negative trend can be stemmed by reconsidering an interpretive approach that can harmonize other texts that advocate for the love of humanity.

### **Is religion an instrument for human destruction?**

As we continue to experience violence in our society today, this fundamental question has been begging for answers: “How can men and women live in reasonable peace and security without subordinating themselves to the arbitrary demands of a tyrant?” (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985: 13-14). Though the authors treat this more from the psychological factors with a sociological slant, which stems from the individual’s constitution, I wish to draw in the religious dimension in dealing with this question to address both the ontic and environmental aspects.

Religion, by its very nature, is supposed to adduce a great difference in criminal tendencies because of the teachings of reward and punishment (Dilulio, 2009). McCain (2014) believes that “religions provide us with the moral framework which provides structure and stability in life” (ix). The promise of reward for violence against humanity should be completely acquiesced. The problem of criminality and religious violence is partly rooted in various factors such as economic, loose laws, family upbringing, abuse of substance and other social influences (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1998). Though religion is supposed to induce good behaviour, the global practical reality shows the reverse which in some instances very deeply religious people precipitate the destruction of lives to please God and attain rewards in heaven (Dilulio, 2009). This is the greatest crime against humanity in the name of God.

However, the question is whether it is intellectually logical for human beings to help God in physical battles so as to inflict pain on other people in his name. Is it not God that should fight for his own people in his own chosen ways? A striking lesson can be drawn in the book of Judges 6:28-31, the worshippers of Baal came to fight against Gideon for violating their god but his father, Joash advised them that if their god is real and living, let him fight for himself. This logic stemmed from the religious tension that these people came fuming with and they withdrew.

On the contrary, it is God who fights for his people (Exod. 14:14; Deut. 3:22; 20:4) because he says a number of times that the battle is his (1Sam. 17:47; 2Chron. 20:15). And for Christians, Scripture teaches that the battle we are involved in is spiritual rather than physical (Eph. 6:12). This means we are engaging with the mindset by setting the principles of godliness against ungodliness. If God is Spirit and all things pertaining to him are spiritual, it is vain glory to turn his battles into physical ones where human lives and property are destroyed. Humanity are servants of God but there are certain obligations that are exclusively his prerogative such as punishment by death except as the law confers such powers upon the state to fight against crime, rather than individuals or certain groups of religious people.



Those who wish to minimize the value of religion in human well-being opine that comparative studies have shown modern Japan, which is relatively less religious than the Latin-America to have lower crime rates whereas the latter prides itself in high crime rates despite its higher religious practices (Dilulio, 2009). This comparison implies as if Japan is less religious but this is misinformation. Other research works have shown that religion plays a role in the politics and national life of Japan, (Toyoda, 2002; Beyers, 2015) though may not be exactly the same as it does in other countries such as Latin America and even in Africa.

The failure of some countries that are religious is not the failure of religion in itself but that of those who fail to imbibe the positive teachings of religion. God remains good even when people fail to do it and this is the case of religion. Religion is like a mirror that only shows e deficiency upon one's self but does not take it away but for the person to remedy one's appearance. Godly religious principles expose our depraved nature so that we can seek genuine transformation by the power of God and be a new people. Practitioners of Christianity and Islam should therefore promote religious teachings that extol virtues that breed a healthy society and bind humanity together. A number of scholarships (Dilulio, 2009, citing Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985:119) have lamented the disappointing face of religion: "The uncertainty we face in attempting to assess the influence of religion on family life is but a special case of the general problem of understanding the relationship of personal traits, family processes, cultural values, and the development of human character".

Many people have different views about the use of religion. Mastin (2011) explains the Marxist view on this:

Karl Marx saw religion as a political tool utilized by the oppressing ruling classes, arguing that it is in the interests of the ruling classes to instil in the masses the religious conviction that their current suffering will lead to eventual happiness so that they will not attempt to make any genuine effort to understand and overcome the real source of their suffering. It was on this basis that he described religion as 'the opium of the people (para. 5)

This perspective has a huge influence on many people but a lot more other people think otherwise. Much of what Marx said is the ugly reality because the privileged powerful people see religion as an easy tool that can be used to achieve so many gains for themselves. Politicians use religion to achieve their political gains (Gwamna, 2014). The fact that religion and politics mutually inform one another provides room for being used both negatively and positively. Religion has religionized politics and vice versa because all things are viewed from both angles in Nigeria. Politicians have used religion as a strong tool for political control and such a relationship between religion and politics has rather heightened the existing tensions (Oshewolo & Maren, 2015; Beyers, 2015). In the same way, politics has found its space in religion.

### **God’s Purpose in creating a religious humanity**

All human societies need justice and this must be rooted in the plan of God. God’s agenda in a fallen world is “doing righteousness and justice” (Wright, 2006: 363). Again, Wright argues that there is an ethical pedagogy that is founded on the concept of the “The way of the Lord,” which shapes the religious explication of his people with universal implications (363). God’s intention for human society is for it to flourish. The original creation with all its beauty and excellence declares this wonderful intention. This means a comprehensive agenda that takes everyone into account for all the benefits with which God has endowed the earth. From the perspective of God, this is an all-inclusive agenda. “He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing” (Deut. 10:18). This justice derives from the very nature of God. He prescribes this justice system and hands it to us to establish in our societies. “The ethical challenge to God’s people is, first, to recognize the mission of God that provides the heartbeat of their very existence and, then, to respond in ways that express and facilitate it rather than deny and hinder it” (Wright, 2006:357). This means that true worshipers of God must bear his semblance in the world by intent and conduct to mould a better world. God’s intervention in human affairs is to tackle the unjust realities that assail humanity and he commands us to cooperate with him. This intervention and command owe to God’s ownership of the entire universe.



God owns everything that humanity possesses, including culture. This means all humanity can only move and have its being in God, which is the essence of true religion (Acts 17:28). This means our attitude, culture, and social relationships all derive from the providential character of God so that apart from him, we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5). We should understand culture as “what human beings do with God’s creation. The marks of the fall permeate it. We see cruelty in human government, nihilism in human art, lies in human journalism. But redemption changes people comprehensively so that they carry God’s wisdom into their workplaces: compassion and justice into government, meaning into art, truth and journalism” (Frame, 2010, Foreword, X). The redemptive work of Christ is an expression of the highest care and concerns that God has for the entire creation, both for humanity and nature, so that as he seeks to reconcile the world to himself, so also should we be reconciled with one another and strive to live peacefully (2Cor. 5:19; Rom. 8:19-22). On this note, “The gospel has motivated God’s people to care for widows and orphans, to build hospitals, to paint and sculpt, to oppose tyranny, to take God’s Word to the ends of the world” (Frame, 2010, Foreword, XI).

Religion is not supposed to be against the people and their well-being. It is supposed to stand with the people and fight against the evil forces and systems that work against the good of humanity. This fight is not necessarily violent but working to effect changes in the interest of the best against the worst. Bavinck (2008) argues that “If the Christian religion of today wants to regain its lost influence and become a blessing to society, its attitude will have to change radically” (120). While this is addressed primarily to Christianity, it is also applicable to other religions that claim to be worshipping the one true God. In other words, the dividing wall between the high class and low class should be brought down so that the resources of the wealthy would seek to address the plight of the downtrodden. This stands on the premise that the gospel of Jesus was focused on the poor (Bavinck, 2008). While God allows human freedom in human society, he does not institute imbalances in it such that the privileged are not supposed to lord over the less privileged ones. Rather the law that God gave to his people in the Old Testament was to invigorate piety, morality and civility in



the society which could be summed up as “all power in Israel had a servant character...” (Bavinck, 2008:124).

Bavinck however, seems to be in self-conflict when he asserts that Jesus “never stood up directly for the poor and oppressed, the widows and orphans, the slaves and the day labourers as such” but “accepts social conditions as he finds them and never tries to bring about a change or improvement in them” (Bavinck, 2008:130). This position of Bavinck is in sharp contradiction to the proclamation of Christ in Luke 4: 18: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” This is much too plain to state the case for Jesus standing for the downtrodden except for any exegesis that seeks to turn this upside down. And we cannot over-spiritualize this at the expense of the physical and social needs of the whole person. The whole person needs a comprehensive redemptive package which God has provided in Christ and our sinful human agenda should not stand in the way of God. Rather, we are required to obediently join God in bringing healing and justice to the fallen world. And even if Christ did not lay down an explicit doctrine for social transformation in several passages of Scripture, he condemned the social structures that held many to perpetual injustice. Though his work was primarily spiritual redemption, he never ignored the physical negative forces against humanity and practically changed a number of situations.

The best of religious teaching can be judged by the positive impact that it throws out into society. Though Calvin had his lapses, he adopted an approach to draw out the best of religious teaching that would bring transformation to society. His doctrine of predestination excited great responses from believers whose positive attitudes towards work resulted in the birth of capitalism. The doctrine teaches that God, from eternity, has chosen people for salvation, and such people must demonstrate practically in their personal lives in all their social and vocational engagements that they are truly heavenly citizens. Religion is not supposed to diminish humanity but to exact the best in them for the common good and divine glory.



Both Luther and Calvin taught that labour, which is construed in social relations is for the glory of God (Weber, 2004). Weber has extensively provided great insights to support the religious agenda for the good of humanity as he says:

The world exists to serve the glorification of God and for that purpose alone. The elected Christian is in the world only to increase this glory of God by fulfilling His commandments to the best of his ability. But God requires the social achievement of the Christian because He wills that social life shall be organized according to His commandments, in accordance with that purpose (64).

This understanding and teaching influenced believers to strive for a work ethic that would be pleasing to God with bountiful fruits for their enjoyment. This brought a spontaneous and unprecedented economic boost in the West. Furthermore, the wonderfully purposeful organization and arrangement of this world is, according to both the revelation of the Bible and natural intuition, evidently created by God to serve the utility of mankind (Weber, 2004:64). Believers' actions are evidence of the good God that they serve. Thus "their action originated from the faith caused by God's grace, and this faith in turn justified itself by the quality of that action" (Weber, 2004: 68). This teaching forged a life system that is not just for the private life of the Christian but collectively for the economic and social structures as a comprehensive whole (Weber, 2004:71). People have made use of religion in various ways, some in unhelpful ways while others in great ways. There is so much to be applauded in religion for its positive contributions which is the goal of this work to advance.

God has revealed all that is good for humanity to know and practice. This knowledge of the good is not merely the rituals that are to be done directly to God in order to appease him. The good pertains to our ethical conduct. God is indeed concerned with what we do to one another than what we think we are doing directly to him. True love of God begins with love of fellow human beings (1Jn. 3:10-18; Jas. 1:27). What God calls good is good and that is what God has revealed to humanity to exemplify. In the prophetic

proclamation of Micah God has shown humanity three fundamental things justice, mercy and humility. These three virtues constitute a strong dosage for human society to be healthy. God requires justice because it flows from his character. Injustice is the cradle of all evil because it deprives vulnerable people of the quality of life that they should enjoy.

The success of this justice agenda in human society stands on the human virtues of justice, mercy and humility. One of the key texts is Micah 6:8: “He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” The prophet cried out against injustice in the old Israeli society in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The society was thoroughly evil spanning from wicked religious practices involving human sacrifice to social evil such as corruption, indiscriminate murders, economic imbalances which steeped the poverty of the poor, bribery and corruption, etc (Mic. 3:1-3; Isa. 1:17). The rulers reconstructed the practical antithesis between good and evil by normalizing and promoting evil over good. Those who controlled society never felt conscientious about how they deliberately dehumanized their own citizens. Though Israel was a theocratic nation under God, they were not bothered about their accountability to him. The people became weary of God’s demands upon them and probably sought autonomy (Mic. 6:3; Isa. 43:22; Mal. 1:13; 3:14). They rather thought that they could “bribe” him with big sacrifices so that he could overlook their crimes (Mic. 6:6-7). How then do we stem the tide of insecurity that is framed through religious preaching and keep with the good purpose of religion as a reformatory instrument?

### **The problem of violent texts: Christ’s interpretive method**

There is a plethora of writings on religious violence in Nigeria but surprisingly, there is almost nothing linking to the interpretation of texts from which violence is incited. Perhaps, the fundamentalist attitude that easily combusts violently is presumed in certain texts but no explicit mention of that is the case. Sampson (2012) comes close to hitting right on the issue of texts where religious fundamentalism erupts when he references “critical preaching” and “monopoly of salvation and truth” that disparages another religion (120). Sulaiman (2016) also concurs with this causal factor



where provocative preaching arises from either “misinterpretation” or outright “mischief” when “scriptural texts have been given whimsical and capricious interpretations towards predetermined ends” (91).

In the Old Testament, the Mosaic tradition of retribution renders: “But if any harm follows, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Exod. 21:23-25; cf. Lev. 24:17-22). This law seems to warrant individuals to adjudicate justice by themselves and does not allow for tolerance, which on the one hand might appear to rid the society of criminal offense by fear of retribution. But this has not been proven to always achieve its results. In Jesus’ teachings, which are called Sermons on the Mount or the Beatitudes, he addressed this issue. It is interesting that no one particularly had issues with some of these teachings but Jesus knew how important they were in human society as they were reoccurring issues in human relationships.

Though Christ came to fulfill the OT, his goal was not to enforce an interpretive tradition that would induce violence. Even in dealing with enemies, Christ introduced a new understanding that intends a smooth societal co-existence.

Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you (Matt. 5:38-44; cf. Lk. 6:27-36).

Calvin (1999) explained in this text that the judicial application was the prerogative of the state, not individuals or groups of persons as the Jews of Jesus’ time misunderstood as much as some people in our time would. And Jesus’ teaching is to further create emotional stability despite any offense

(Calvin, 1999). Though it is quite challenging for anyone in his or her natural volition to let go of any injury unjustly inflicted upon one, it seems that Christ's unique interpretation of this law that "believers should learn to forget the wrongs that have been done them, — that they should not, when injured, break out into hatred or ill-will, or wish to commit an injury on their part, — but that, the more the obstinacy and rage of wicked men was excited and inflamed, they should be the more fully disposed to exercise patience" (p. Calvin, 1999, 197). This new dimension of responding to offense may not be natural to human experience except by learning to adapt to it.

Those who seek the consistency of the rule of God in our society hold that believers "must expend their energy in faithfully proclaiming the gospel and bringing the peaceful, reconciliation-seeking way of life to bear within the church community" (VanDrunen, 2009: 334). This text is a component of Jesus' sermons on the Mount, which present a comprehensive picture of what God wants us to do in his own world. The human relational aspect of the teaching is unique such as non-retaliation on a personal note as well as loving even an enemy which is not ordinary for anyone.

On another occasion, a woman was caught in adultery and by Jewish tradition, she was to be stoned (Jn. 8:3-11). What was curious about this scenario was the fact that it takes two people to commit adultery but the Jews saw nothing wrong in holding only one person responsible for breaking the Mosaic Law. Where was the man? This is the unanswered question but they insisted on killing this woman by stoning. Jesus tactically showed them how skewed their understanding of religious legal applications sometimes manifested. When he allowed that the one who has never sinned before should be the first to cast a stone, their conscience condemned them and exposed them before the divine light to which they all fell short and they all dispersed. Christ wants us to be humane in our mentality and understanding of God's intention for our co-existence.

Jesus' approach was like a shocker to the conservative Jewish authorities whose pride would not allow an enemy to see them as weak people. In his book, Neusner (2000) presents a Jewish reaction against Jesus on a number of grounds, and he shows why Christians would follow Jesus but Jews



would rather follow the Mosaic Torah. Jesus thought that as the world progressed and advanced in civilization, certain changes were necessary while not deleting the old traditions. The Jews thought that the world was static and so also were their traditions. However, Jesus' approach introduces a dimension in human religious practice that seeks to bring humanity together in harmonious existence despite the possibilities of conflicts and offences that are inevitable in all human relationships. It shows that not all scriptural givens must be practised the way they are scripted. The necessary dynamism in religious practice requires that we extract the best of the teachings in religion that are constructive to human prosperity.

Jesus challenged the violent interpretations of religious texts prevalent during his time. He consistently emphasized love, forgiveness, and peace as central tenets of his teachings. In Matthew 5:38-39, Jesus counters the Old Testament's "eye for an eye" principle by saying, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." Furthermore, Jesus' actions often contradicted violent interpretations. When confronted with violence, Jesus responded with nonviolent resistance, such as when he stopped his disciples from using force to defend him during his arrest. Jesus' final act, the crucifixion, is a powerful testament to his commitment to nonviolence. Despite being unjustly persecuted, he chose not to retaliate, instead offering forgiveness and salvation to his oppressors.

Jesus' message of love and peace fundamentally challenges the interpretation of religious texts that promote violence. He summons his followers to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). This radical commandment challenges the notion of vengeance and encourages believers to transcend their natural inclination towards violence. Additionally, Jesus demonstrated compassion and empathy towards the marginalized and outcasts of society. He continually upheld the dignity and worth of every human being, nurturing a spirit of inclusivity rather than exclusion. This



inclusive approach stands in stark contrast to violent interpretations of religious texts that seek to divide and discriminate.

The apostolic tradition follows the interpretive method of Christ. The apostle Paul says that we can and should overcome evil with good, not evil with evil (Rom. 12:21). This is the hallmark of the Christian life, which is exemplary, exclusive and distinctive, and the return of good over evil is the melting point for the true gospel. Henry (2004) comments on Rom. 12:21 thus: “Recompense to no man evil for evil. That is a brutish recompense, befitting only animals, which are not conscious of any being above them, or of any existence hereafter. And not only do, but study and take care to do, that which is amiable and creditable, and recommends religion to all with whom you converse” ( 1803). Notably, repaying evil with evil can only double the magnitude and effect of evil, just as responding to evil with good both reduces its tally and increases the sum of good (Stott, 2012). Our human dignity and respect for one another are anchored on a constant quest for peaceful co-existence irrespective of our differences.

This perspective of changing the interpretive principle can effectively tame the tide of religious violence because “the charismatic nature of the authority of preachers and religious scholars... may be expected to facilitate their influence over the worldviews and discursive frames employed by their followers” (Ehrhardt, 2016: 340). Furthermore, “Together, high trust in religious leaders and the intimate interactions between religious leaders and their followers suggest that these leaders can have a considerable impact on what their followers think (their ‘discursive frames’)” (Ehrhardt, 2016: 341).

Religious scholars in Nigeria owe those who are not well taught in religious matters a good sense of direction that would make their followers more responsible towards one another. Good religious teachers should be concerned about developing the country in healthy ways rather than indoctrinating attitudes that would breed more destruction. For the Christian scripture, it is important the OT war texts be harmonized with the NT texts, following the teachings of Christ and the apostolic traditions. While the apostolic tradition was not ignorant of the OT war contexts, it completely



emphasized love, patience, forgiveness, tolerance, doing good to one another, and spiritual battles through prayers rather than physical assault. This development followed the principle of reconciliation that God initiated in Christ to bring humanity back to him and also improve relationships among humanity. This explains why Christ emphasized that the commandments of God hinged on the love of God and the love of neighbour (Matt. 22:36-40).

A fundamental misconception in Islamic theology which probably becomes an impediment in Muslim-Christian relations is what (Byimui, 2013) calls the principle of abrogation as “some Muslim scholars argue that Islam abrogation of Judaism and Christianity is obvious since Islam is the last in the series of God’s revelation of the Divine Will” (111). With this conviction, the difficulty in resolving this is challenging. As we slowly progress towards civilization in Nigeria, religious scholars and preachers should consciously see the task of religion mainly as accelerating better life and development as a way of worshipping God. This can be achieved through re-interpreting violent texts in the religious scriptures by eliminating the call to violence in the name of God as Christ has exemplified. While we cannot re-write those texts, we can replace their old meaning with new meaning in keeping with our growing civility.

Human criminality is an inherent problem in human nature that the law alone can only address externally. Therefore, it requires a combined effort of religion which deals with the internal character of human nature and the law to achieve a complete result. A refined religious orientation is the best antidote for human criminality. The focus of religion is upon the heart to seek its repentance. Several punishments could not change the obstinate idolatrous behaviour of Israel and God decided to introduce another method: “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26-27; cf. Ezek. 11:19, Jer. 31:33; 32:39-40, Heb. 8:10). While the law can make one to be convicted, regretful and remorseful of crime or sin (Rom. 7:7-8), religion indulges repentance, which relates to the deep intellectual and emotional recesses of the whole person. This underscores the essentiality of religion in dealing with the grave impact of

the sinful human condition. Research has shown how the incarceration of criminals only puts temporary restrictions on them but a real change of heart from the crime comes from religious and other psychological approaches.

The positive impact of religion on human development is evident in many human societies, including Nigeria, and the indispensability of religion for human stability is cogent as Hubbard (2014) argues:

When religion is not influential in a society or has ceased to be, the state inherits the entire burden of public morality, crime and intolerance. It then must use punishment and police. Yet this is unsuccessful as morality, integrity and self-respect not already inherent in the individual, cannot be enforced with any great success. Only by a spiritual awareness and inculcation of the spiritual value of these attributes can they come about. There must be more reason and more emotional motivation to be moral, etc., than the threat of human discipline (para. 25).

We definitely have a big challenge when we come face to face with some of the passages in the OT that spewed violence. However, we can note that the OT was a peculiar context, in which under a theocratic rule, the national identity of the Jewish people inevitably erupted in political struggles against the surrounding nations. Nevertheless, we are not required to take all those violent moments as general paradigms for replication by all people at all times (Ford, 2020; Collins, 2004).

### **Drawing on the Positive Teachings of Scripture**

A number of scholars have affirmed the transformational power of religion when properly harnessed (Lederach, 1996, 1997; Appleby, 2000; Smock, 2006). If religious education should be focused on the positive aspects of religion (Silvestri and Mayall, 2015), then the textual interpretation and preaching are even more critical. The problem however is that religious followers do not understand the exact meaning of certain texts which might not be necessarily understood literally and they depend on the interpretation of religious leaders. Therefore, such interpreters should lay more emphasis



on “humane concepts” that would help both Christian and Islamic religions in Nigeria to develop a more non-violent attitude (Abu-Nimer, 2003). This stance should help in generating narratives that underscore “human dignity and reconciliation” (Silvestri and Mayall, 2015:71).

In discussing the best teachings in religions that should be advanced for the good of Nigerian society, I have chosen some OT texts as the basis for this discourse because Christians and Muslims agree on some basic OT ideas, though with some variations, having emerged from the Abrahamic faith. The OT contains both positive and negative texts which religious adherents try to draw from in exacerbating crisis. The point of this writing is to argue that adherents of these two religions should learn to bring out the best of their positive teachings that can harmonize and develop a healthy society. But before delving into what those best teachings are, the question is: what is the basis for selecting those teachings? Who determines how the society should be managed, the Creator or the creature? These questions are very important because humanity has perpetrated moral evil in the world in alarming ways and the question of human origin and accountability is important for re-orienting our minds.

The secular scientific view does not recognize the creation trajectory but elevates the evolutionary framework. And if there is no creation, then there is no creator to be accountable to. However, the case for scientific evolution has failed to answer many critical questions about the complexity and organic functional universe. Several attempts to argue God out of existence have also failed as some world-acclaimed atheists surrendered their views to theism (Flew & Varghese, 2007; Marsh, 2012; Blanchard, 2016). Therefore, we rest with the Creator-creature framework which pushes us to consider that as the Creator it must be God who determines the worth and sanctity of the creation. The worth and sanctity of the creation proceeds from the character of the Creator who bestows all the benevolent values upon it. There must be a purpose for any act of God and this includes our world.

The OT portrays God as the creator and owner of the universe. God invested goodness in the creation which makes it intrinsically good. This goodness flows from the goodness of God. The earth belongs to the Lord and its fullness (Ps. 24:1). By virtue of being the Creator, God is the landlord and title holder while human beings are tenants, which places us in a subservient position to him (Wright, 2006). As tenants, we are required to treat our estate well as part of our worship and honour to God, our landlord. God conferred a cultural mandate to humanity to take control of the cosmos (Gen.1:26-29). Control of the universe is an act of worship and true worship of God requires that our “strong motivation is the compassionate response to the reality of human need – all the physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of our fractured human condition. So we are motivated to tackle the destructive effects of sin in all those areas too, through medical, social, educational and economic action” (Wright, 2006: 416).

Like Christian theology, Islamic theology too acknowledges God’s ownership of the universe, which was placed under the dominion of humanity through its vested “moral and rational powers” and turns it “in the service of good ends” (Rahman, 1967:8, 17). Sadr (2011), expatiates the role of humanity in God’s world: “Man’s God-given nature and colour are like seeds and potentials which are hidden in him at the beginning of creation and will flourish when man follows the right path” (para.7). Therefore, the original purpose and meaning of the existence of the world cannot be determined by humanity but God who created it. God who sets the foundational principles for governance called humanity into partnership with him in governing the world.

However, since the fall, humanity has been responsible for all moral evils. The principles of sin are antithetical to the things of God. The noetic influence of sin has misled humanity into becoming the centre of all things with devastating consequences. The Bible laments the depravity of the human heart. Gen. 6:5 describes the gravity of the sinful heart thus: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth



and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” This underscores the magnitude, all-inclusive, extensive and intensive nature of sin as it affects the mind in all its thoughts. Jer. 17:9 further attests to this terrifying condition: “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things* and desperately wicked; Who can know it?”

These passages underscore human wickedness that is expressive in selfishness, envy, arrogance and the propensity for destruction. This is why the powerful in the society do not care so much about justice and fairness which the weak and vulnerable suffer social evils of varying magnitude. Human crime has been interpreted by sociologists and psychologists on many factors, some genetic and environmental. Some argue that just as intelligence is genetic, so also are some criminal behaviours (Wilson & Herrnstein 1985; Gibbs, 1985). However, environmental conditions also add up to the negative tendencies. It is in this context that evil people inculcate wicked attitudes in others and the Bible clearly warns about that (Prov. 1:10; 1Cor. 15:33).

And the sad aspect of this is when such evils are exacerbated in the name of religion. While religion has contributed positively to certain developments, it has also demonstrated its negative aspects by the acts of terrorism of different qualifications. Many religious adherents and in this context, Christians and Muslims have inflicted so much pain on humanity for the sake of godliness. Christianity has self-inflicted torture as does Islam and both against each other. But is true godliness exuded through human destruction? Why is it more expedient to show godliness by advocating the negative aspects of religion rather than the positive? Why can't Christianity and Islam draw from the positive teachings that build up humanity? It is this concern that this work seeks to pursue, namely to elevate those virtuous qualities that bring harmony and peace to human co-existence above the vices that destroy.



## Conclusion

The whole world is in dire need of better human social relations for a better world. Some of these ways include political and economic harmony in the global setting. However, in Nigeria, social and ethnic polarization with its attendant tensions are on the increase and religion is the vehicle through which they are exacerbated. This research argues that, in the same way, that religion is used negatively, we can also overturn that tide and use it positively through interpreting religious texts in the manner that Christ exemplifies with a deliberate intention to construct our co-existence on the foundation of love for one another and social justice. We can seek to understand what God requires of all humanity which are justice, humility and mercy. While religion has the potential to entrench human goodness in society, its limitation cannot be underestimated either because of the sinful condition of humanity. This research believes strongly that if religious interpreters deliberately adopt a positive and constructive approach to textual interpretations in the manner that Christ did, we will harvest bountiful elements in religion.

Ultimately, Jesus offers a transformative lens through which to interpret violent religious texts. His teachings and actions exemplify a higher moral imperative, emphasizing the importance of love, forgiveness, and nonviolence. By following his example, individuals and communities can reinterpret violent religious texts in a way that promotes peace, understanding, and mutual respect. In conclusion, Jesus challenges violent interpretations of religious texts through his teachings and actions. His emphasis on love, forgiveness, and nonviolence provides a framework for reevaluating and reinterpreting violent passages in religious texts. By contextualizing these texts and striving to emulate Jesus' message of peace, individuals can contribute to a more compassionate and harmonious world. The true essence of religion lies not in violence, but in our ability to transcend it and embrace the transformative power of love.



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## Child Narrative Voice as Satire for Rape in Ernest Emenyonu's “What the Babysitter and my Bishop had in Common”

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### **Abstract**

The short story “What the babysitter and my bishop had in common” is a social commentary told from the point of view of an impressionistic child using a child’s narrative voice. In this type of discourse is found tactlessness and few pretentious lexis which are both comical and satirical. This study is a discourse analysis of the text. To carry out this study, some stretches of utterance in the story that exemplify this narrative style have been purposively selected and studied to describe their patterns and illuminate the features that characterise them as satirical. The approach of lexical and literary discourse analysis forms the theoretical base for this analysis. The findings show that the author uses black humour and Menippean satire to discuss sensitive issues in society because the targets for this commentary are people in positions of authority who abuse the trust and goodwill they enjoy. And because the issues raised are sensitive matters within the African context, the author uses the “safe” channel of a child’s narrative voice as a euphemistic tool. The study therefore concludes that children’s discourse is a viable tool for satirizing societal folly.

**Keywords:** Child narrative; Satire; Lexical analysis; Literary Discourse Analysis



## Introduction

The short story “What the Babysitter and my bishop had in Common” is the fourth in a collection of six short stories titled *Princess Mmaeyen and other stories*. The author, Ernest Emenyonu is a professor of African Studies and has authored several children’s literature texts. The text, *Princess Mmaeyen and other stories* are the latest of his short stories. It is likely that the author’s experience as a writer of children’s literature influenced the language of the major character in the story; “What the Babysitter and my bishop had in Common”. In it, the author presents himself as a satirist of some sort and his art is a denouncement of the abuse of power by persons in positions of authority. He also ridicules post-colonial sentiments such as white supremacy and the infallibility of men of the cloth using a child narrative voice to tell the story. The language depicts innocence and is devoid of political correctness or placatory terms. With this kind of language, the author is able to show the absurdity of some ideologies prevalent in the African context and for which there are unspoken oaths of silence; his purpose is to draw attention to them.

This work, therefore, interrogates the use of children’s language in literary forms such as our core text. It identifies the use of this voice as a tool for discussing societal issues that are often unspoken because they are deemed sacrilegious, profane, or disrespectful. This paper contributes to scholarship on the role of children’s narrative voice in contemporary African literature. The findings of this paper are also a pointer to the departure from traditional silence to loquacity and from taciturnity to communicativeness in the African discourse landscape.

To carry out this analysis, some African ideologies, the features of children’s language and the concept of satire are explicated. Thereafter, samples of expressions in the text that depict children’s language are highlighted and analysed to foreground their role in addressing the thematic concerns and ideological constructs of the text as well as underscore the ridiculous manner in which these thematic concerns are addressed. Before we look at the ideologies highlighted in the text, it is pertinent to discuss Literary Discourse Analysis which is the theoretical framework for this study.



## **Literary Discourse Analysis**

Literary Discourse Analysis (LDA) is a relatively recent branch of the Discourse Analysis approach to language study. It focuses on the interpretation of language in literary texts (Maingueneau, 2010). It looks at meaning beyond surface levels but particularly, its concerns are the social meanings embedded in the language of a text (Aboh, 2018). Closely related to it is the contextual theory in semantics. Porras (2011) draws similarities between these two theories. Contextual semantic theories underscore that meaning cannot be generated from the syntagmatic or paradigmatic arrangement of linguistic structures within a text alone. LDA uses insights from the setting in terms of place and time (milieu) of the literary text being analysed as well as the social, political and ideological stance revealed within a text. The “literary discourse analysts, then, are interested in deciphering the various hidden significations of a text” under study (Aboh, p.8). In summary, therefore, a Literary Discourse analysis will account for how society in its varied ramifications, influences a particular literary text to the extent that more meanings can be generated from it that are peculiar to the social, political, ideological, or economic contexts or conventions. The language of a text provides the instrument through which relationships between text and society are expressed. In view of this, the language assigned to characters in a literary text is a window through which the ideologies that facilitate the narrative can be displayed. This paper looks at the discourse of the major character who happens to be a child to identify the role he plays in developing the thematic concerns of the text. The position of this paper is that the child’s language functions as satire. To elaborate on this, the next section will take a critical look at the concept of satire.

## **Satire in Language Use**

Satire is a literary art of derogation or ridicule. Simpson (2003) calls it “a complexly interdiscursive mode of communication” (p.62) that operates more in literary discourse. Phiddian (2019) however thinks it is not intrinsically literary and would rather classify it as a mode of communication in popular culture as it has been used extensively in all forms of art. Phiddian also describes satire as “an aspect of some texts which



allows for the expression of hostile attitudes and emotions towards figures, practices and institution of public significance” (p.4). Satire tends towards comedy because an artist could, while using language, cartoons or songs, evoke laughter (Phiddian 2019) but the difference between comedy and satire is that while the aim of comedy is solely to evoke laughter, the purpose of satire is to use wit for social criticism and satire does not necessarily have to be comical. In other words, its import is to make serious matters appear trivial and, in the process, create an awareness and some sort of emotional reaction. So, whereas humour in comedy serves the purpose of pure entertainment, humour in satire is a social commentary wrapped in cloaks of irony, sarcasm, exaggeration and ridicule. In both satirical and comedy works, however, humour depends on its context to make an impact (Ekpang & Bassey, 2014). Humour could be introduced into a text through phonological gymnastics, peculiar behavioural traits, allusions or names (Ekpang & Bassey, 2014).

In some works of art, elements of satire are used sparingly but in others, it is the predominant tool for discourse. When it is the predominant tool, the text is said to be a satire itself (Phiddian, 2019). The characteristics of satire include poking fun, deriding and ridiculing people who are perceived to be full of self-importance without cause, and seemingly unconscious light-hearted humour. Satire is subtle, so it may not appear obvious to an uninformed listener or reader. Meaning in satirical utterances is therefore embedded in the shared knowledge that connects the decrypting link and advances the mapping for appropriate meaning interpretation in the context (Uwen, 2023). This is so because context plays a vital role in meaning orientations.

Phiddian (2019) asserts that the effect of satire can be measured more in terms of emotional impact. The triad emotions of contempt, anger and disgust (CAD) come into mind here. Bell (2013) is of the opinion that contempt is a rational response to depictions of human follies “like arrogance, hypocrisy and racism” (273). Anger and disgust are also possible reactions to satire, but it is very unlikely that people would immediately react to satire in physical or violent ways (Phiddian, 2019). So, in today’s political, social and ideological world, the function of the short story under

review would most likely be a denigration, disparaging or maligning of an immoral order that is present in the society being chronicled.

There are three types of satire namely, Horatian, Juvenalian and Menippean. Of interest to us in this paper is the Menippean satire. This type is often used in fictional narratives. It is indirect because characters in the narrative make themselves appear ridiculous by what they say and do. Usually, such characters are a typology of certain groups of persons in the society and their views are made into arguments during the narrative to showcase the area or areas of the society that the author has chosen to satirize. While Horatian satire ridicules universal human folly, Juvenalian satire is aimed at public officials and governments. Here governments are demonised and condemned with very harsh invectives. Juvenalian satire is not as humorous as the other two types.

Satire is achieved using devices and techniques. For example, a target and its analogy can be extended or sustained, an inverse treatment of serious subject matter (and vice versa) and a tragic event being made to look trivial (black humour). Sometimes, we find a literal inversion that is, where sentences are inverted as would be seen later in the text. Satire invents parody, imitation and mimicry through the use of intertextuality but in a distorted form. Satire also uses irony (discrepancy between what is said and what is meant). This irony could be dramatic, situational, verbal or tonal. In addition, contrastive tools like juxtaposition, paradox and oxymoron can be techniques for achieving hilarious social commentary.

The short story “What the Babysitter and My Bishop Had in Common” is an example of a satirical text since the import of satire is to discuss serious issues such as child sexual abuse in an indirect way, child language is the choice of instrument for achieving this in this fictional prose. To establish that the story is a written satire using child discourse, let us identify the nature of children’s language or discourse.

### **The Nature of Children’s Language**

Although all children acquire language roughly at about the same time because the skill of speaking is tied to other biological schedules like the



development of speech organs, sitting, standing, walking, etc., communicative competence occurs at differing timelines. Communicative competence here refers to linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic knowledge (Ekpang, Ghevolor & Bassey, 2021). This is because of the role social factors play in the child's acquisition of communicative competence in a language. Nta (1996) describes this role as 'nature' and 'nurture'. Nature in the sense that only the human species has acquired the ability to engage in the complex nature of speaking, and nurture in the sense that the linguistic environment the child finds itself provides the form of the expression the child acquires. The child's development of the grammar of the language is called linguistic knowledge or competence whereas communicative competence is shown in language appropriateness as the child listens, observes reactions and practices the linguistic habits in his interactions with adults and other children (Nta, 1996). The child experiences regularities in the use of distinctive sounds which help him apply them to his own speech. Ironically, the language the child is exposed to at this critical stage of acquisition is the caretaker or motherese speech which is different from adult speech. This kind is characterised by repetitions, exaggerated intonation, simplified words, repeated simple sounds for objects in the child's environment, simple sentence structures and limited semantic distinction in words and other structures (McGregor, 2009). So, the acquisition of language for the child begins with these as examples. Over time, the child acquires the sound, grammar and morphology of the language and gradually begins to acquire deep in addition to surface meanings of expressions which we refer to as communicative competence.

For Nta (1996), communicative competence carries the semantic import (of language) into sociolinguistic dimensions" (p.35). This makes it a determining factor for ascertaining the age of a speaker in forensic discourse analysis as language use reveals, whether consciously or unconsciously, the social awareness of its user. Dore (1975) has proposed that children's discourse (language) be analysed using a speech act frame that is unique to them. He calls this frame "primitive speech acts" because it is made up of primary speech acts. These primary speech acts according to Nta (1996) are unique traits of children's language and the predominant occurrence of these

acts in a text characterises it as child discourse and distinguishes it from an adult conversation as shown in the example below.

Olom: Mummy, I want my toy. Not that one alone, I want some ice cream, mummy mummy some biscuits. Mom, am I disturbing you?

Osisanwo (2008) calls this a ‘complex move’ and even though adults engage in this type of move, theirs perform more complex acts like focusing and framing, opening and answering, follow-up and or feedback rather than the primitive speech acts proposed by Dore.

Children’s conversation is perceived differently from adult talk. Utterances that may be frowned upon as provocative or stupid would elicit laughter or other reactions if they were made by a child. Seraphinoff (2007) in his paper entitled “Through a Child’s Eyes- A Special Role of the Child as Narrator in Macedonian Literature” posits that adults are more tolerant of a child’s voice when uncomfortable or controversial issues are discussed. For example, to address some misconceptions society has about marriage, the following FaceBook post by Ngozi Azuka on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 presents a child’s perspective of the concept of marriage.

Question: What is marriage?

Child: Marriage happens when the parents of a girl say to her “You are a big woman now, we can’t feed you again. Better go and find a man who will start feeding you.” And the girl meets with a man whose parents shout at him; “Please you are now a big man, give us grandchildren.” Both of them test themselves and become happy. Then agree to live together, and start doing nonsense to have children.

The child’s answer to the question, “What is marriage?” shows the child’s perception of marriage as a cohabitation of two adults for the purposes of getting free food (economic benefits) and pro-creation rather than the adult definition of it as a contractual agreement between two adults who love each other and are willing to be life companions to one another. The use of a child’s narrative voice would show the absurdity of this kind of reasoning or the hypocrisy in the unspoken conventions. Also, that the child uses the



adjective “nonsense” instead of a noun for the sexual act, reveals a common trend in African society, where issues pertaining to sex are either not discussed openly or when they are, less direct terms are used. A writer or speaker who finds these misconceptions in society and wants to chronicle them could do so using the voice of a child. For example, a popular Nigerian stand-up comedian, Helen Paul, uses child language to comment on societal follies in her *Tatafo* comedy series. The results have been outstanding and hilarious.

Children’s narrative voice in literature is written with this fact in mind. Its features exemplify simple diction, repetitions and other characteristics of children’s speech. When children use language, they are oblivious to the different layers of meaning. So figurative language, idioms, proverbs and politically correct forms do not occur naturally in their conversation. The language of a child is, therefore, devoid of diplomacy and is mainly unpretentious.

### **Child narrative voice in “What the Babysitter and my Bishop had in Common”**

A narrative voice is a kind of viewpoint from which a story is told. There are usually pointers to indicate this. Pronouns like ‘I’, ‘my’ and ‘me’ for example, indicate 1<sup>st</sup> person narrative where the storyteller is one of the characters in the story. The 1<sup>st</sup> person narrative is commonly used in non-fiction to recount the experiences of the author, but we can also find it being used in fictional works like the one being analysed here.

Child narrative voice is in use when readers experience the story through the eyes of the child and even though this could be quite limiting for the adult author because the narrative voice cannot provide too much information about the real cultural, social, political and economic details of his context, many authors have successfully used this narrative technique to tell their stories. Priebe (2005) advocates that the child narrator should evince a detachment from the comprehensive and refined adult awareness by maintaining its innocence. Unfortunately, some works have failed in this area in using the child narrator voice. Priebe observes that in Ahmadou Kourouma’ novel, *Allah n’est pas Oblige*, the child narrator presents too much multifaceted adult information which renders the character incredible.



In spite of this, the child narrator plays a fundamental role as Wilkinson in Muthusi's (2019) work reveals that “through the capacity of the child’s perspective to cross taboo lines and the adult shame frontier, and to penetrate emotional danger zones easily” (p.2), the child narrator exposes the contradictions and flaws it finds in the adult world and questions established world views in the bid to elicit reader’s reactions (Steinmes, 2011). Muthusi concludes that the child’s voice is used in some African ex-child soldier memoirs to point to the social shortcomings of adults in their inhumanity of having children fight wars that they created.

The story ‘What My Babysitter and Bishop had in Common’ is a narrative of events that took place in a child’s life recounted by the child. The narrative style is the stream of consciousness technique as sometimes the narrator tends to move swiftly from one theme to another presenting an almost disconnected prose. The first two paragraphs of the story, for instance, are loaded with several storylines, with barely any break or transition from one event to the other. This makes it difficult for a first-time reader to follow the trend of thought of the narrator. For example, the story begins with an encounter the narrator had with his elder sister and moves on to an encounter with Peter, James and Paul in the next paragraph. In the same paragraph, he introduces two other distinct events involving Reverend Mark Okonkwo, water baptism and the carcass of Agbara, the monster. All of these are unrelated events to the reader but somehow connected in the mind of the narrator. So, we find six different events crammed into the first two paragraphs of the story. This narrative technique is typical of children’s speech.

Another feature of children’s discourse in the text is the use of repetition. Lexical repetitions appear several times in the narration of the major character in the story. The repeated words and phrases found in the following excerpts have been underlined for foregrounding and marking purposes.

- (1) And I had not yet revealed anything but everyone was in awe of me. Not respectful awe, nothing like being awesome, beautiful, deeply appealing. I was instead dreadful awesome.... I became a celebrity awesome. (Emenyonu, p.58)



- (2) ...three white men they said came from the District colonial office at Owerre to take pictures of the carcass of the Agbara... that three white men had come and taken photos of the carcass. He had no camera and didn't come with soldiers who stood guard as they took pictures of the carcass. (Emenyonu, pp.58-59)
- (3) I liked those stories and wanted to hear them often and often, and again and again (Emenyonu, p.59)
- (4) But if you called them names to their hearing, you'd be beaten up and they could even tell their 'father in God' or 'God their father' to kill you. (Emenyonu, p.61)
- (5) "If you sing the song with anyone else, you will become deaf and dumb immediately" she said and I did not want to be deaf and dumb. (Emenyonu, p.62)
- (6) But by age thirteen, my babysitter and my Bishop had, in turn, several times, *disvirgined* me! And no one knew. No one knew. And no one knew! (Emenyonu, p.67)
- (7) "Everyone hates kids" is repeated four times in the short story.

All the repetitions presented above except the last one, occur in subsequent sentences. This is unlike adult discourse which uses substitution, ellipsis, pronouns, references, synonyms and other cohesive devices to avoid unnecessary repetitions. Repetitions in adult discourse are rare and when they do occur, do so to serve lexical and grammatical cohesion, rhetorical and stylistic purposes of emphasis, or emotional appeal (Ekpang, 2017). The identical lexical elements may alter the semantic description in some instances, but they mainly perform sociopragmatic functions which are understood by the interactants (Uwen & Ugot, 2022). This is why Leech describes repetition as a fundamental device of intensification and a hammering on the confining walls of language. Although the example (6) above appears to fall into this category, it does not appear that this is the case in the other examples above. Rather, its use depicts a constant

reiteration of the limited vocabulary accessible to the child for which he/she must express a varied number of experiences.

Another evident feature of child language in the text is the fact that we are not told the name of the narrator who is the major character of the story. However, his surname is given as *Okoro* and different individuals other than his parents call him Michael, Thomas or Foo-foo as nicknames. This is symbolic because naming is an important feature in African traditional society. Every child has a name. Ideally, the African child is named by his parents, guardians or relatives to depict peculiar circumstances surrounding his/her birth. A child is welcomed and celebrated within a few days of its birth by occasioning a naming ceremony where he/she may be given many names because all family members present names to show their good wishes for the child as well as depict appropriately, the circumstances that surround the child's birth. The name becomes the identity of the child who could have up to four names depending on the naming conventions of the family. Name, in this context, becomes a source of symbolic communication that conveys family and cultural information from the name-giver and bearer to convey circumstances, experiences and expectations at birth (Uwen & Ekpang, 2022).

That the major character is not given a name delineates the character as a minor (albeit unusual) because every adult has a known or fixed name. The author may have used this anonymity or facelessness in view of the sensitive issues the child would narrate in the story. If this were the case, the nameless child could easily be imbued with the boldness that children in traditional African societies do not exhibit because, in this society, children are expected to be quiet and speak only when they are spoken to. The child narrator appears to be vocal and precocious (traits which are uncommon in the context), the writer allows other characters to name him the way they do in the story- each name corresponding with words he had spoken at one time or the other in the text. The absence of a conventional name, the voice and the language habits of the character, delineate the narrator as a child.



### **The Child’s Narrative Voice is Satire in the Text**

Repetition is a feature of caretaker speech or *motherese* (the language the child is first exposed to), it is no wonder that it is a recurrent feature in the child’s initial linguistic experiment. The instance of sarcasm in the following excerpt is achieved through the repetitive technique called literal inversion. This instance, however, only has humorous effects when it is read within the linguistic context of the text.

But if you called them names to their hearing, you’ld be beaten up and they could even tell their ‘**father in God**’ or ‘**God their father**’ to kill you. (Emenyonu, p.61)

Here, the narrator engages in introspection having observed an adult activity around him. He describes this activity as “strange”, “silly” and “stupid” (Emenyonu, p.61) but is quick to add that there would be consequences if he tells the adults what he thinks about them. This restraint is tragic because the child had just been sexually assaulted by his babysitter and even though, in his innocence, does not understand the gravity of what had been done to him, he sees the action as senseless and an act of adult stupidity. When the child says “and if you call them names to their hearing, you’ld be beaten up...”, the writer draws the reader’s attention to the danger of not allowing children to express themselves freely or threatening a child with punishment from an invisible but nevertheless powerful Being. The actions of molesters are enhanced or enabled by the silence of their victims.

Other utterances made by the narrator equally reflect his society’s practices and ideology handed down from one generation to the next. It is through the thoughts and utterances of the narrator, that the writer foregrounds them and draws attention to their ridiculousness. For instance:

My elder sister told me that the white man could do no wrong...

White men can do no wrong? What about those songs they made every kid in Africa sing about a wicked white man in Germany called Hitler who sent his armies to kill African children? (Emenyonu, p.60)

When the narrator’s sister makes the above declaration, she presents it as an analytic argument that was premeditated on some kind of universal truth.

But we find perplexity on the part of the narrator who observes that there is a contradiction of thought when placed side by side with other ‘truths’ he is aware of. For him, it is logical that if Hitler is a white man can be termed dangerous, so the statement that “the white man can do no wrong” cannot be true. At another level of meaning, there is the use of dramatic irony here since the readers know that Hitler did not ask his armies to kill African children. And that the statement is only a white colonialist’s propaganda. Again, that questions the integrity of the white man who is said ‘to do no wrong.’ The message that can be drawn from here is that whereas adults in the story do not question authority, the child does try to find a balance between what is handed down as information to him at home and in school with what he observes to be his personal experience and he is not afraid to say so. He paints the confusion he is experiencing and tries to reason out the contradictions in his mind by mentioning some other activities going on around him as shown below:

Our mothers sold palm oil and palm kernel and gave the money to another faraway white man to help him fight Hitler in a war. If they didn’t defeat Hitler all the kids in Africa would be killed by Hitler’s bombs. We kids did not know what the war was all about but we did not want to die. (Emenyonu, p.60)

The above statement reinforces the child’s conviction that the white man is dubious and exploitative. By commenting on the exploitation of African women and children during the Second World War, the narrator gives justification for thinking that Whiteman is not as innocent as society thinks he is. For if ‘the white man can do no wrong’, why then were defenceless children and their mothers in this part of the world emotionally blackmailed into funding a war several miles away? A war for which they had no stake and for which they knew nothing about. These questions resonate in the mind of the child. Later in the story, but still on the same page, we find:

However, I believed my elder sister that the white man could do no wrong. So I held my peace about what that white man, the missionary Assistant Bishop did with me. No, did to me. (Emenyonu, p.60)



Here, we observe further, the mental struggle between reality and indoctrination. First, the character in question is a white man (who should be infallible) and secondly, he is a missionary and a Bishop from whom society expects exemplary uprightness. Ordinarily, men of the cloth are revered and the society frowns on any kind of criticism of them. They are a revered lot said to be above reproach. In fact, it is seen as sacrilegious to speak evil of them. In the story, we see that such men occupy positions of trust so that the narrator's mother does not hesitate to spend her meagre resources to send her son to him as often as he requests. But in the course of the tale, we see that this trust is abused when the child is repeatedly sexually abused by the same Bishop in whose custody he is kept. By saying: "No, did to me", the narrator shows his repudiation of the act. He (the child) recognises the act as a non-consensual invasion of his person. The replacement of the lexical item 'with' with 'to' is a marker of oppression. Whereas 'with' would indicate mutual consent, 'to' is an indication of power dynamics showing that an act of oppression was carried out on him.

The narrator's reaction to another sexual act by his babysitter (Maria) is different. He appears not to mind it and shows an indication that he even enjoyed it. This is seen in his pleas to prevent Maria from going back to her parents when they requested that she return. The gratifications of peppermint, meat and fish may have influenced this but then, the author may be making a subtle distinction between same-sex coupling and heterosexual coupling as the child innocently perceives it to be. This interpretation takes into consideration the traditional African context which is the setting of the story. The traditional African society labels all forms of same-sex coupling as taboo and alien to its culture. The following excerpt from the story reveals that the child contemplates the difference:

He was doing the same thing Maria had done to me eight years or so ago but in a different fashion. (p.67)

And the following illustrates that his attitude towards each act is different:

I begged her to stay and told her she didn't have to give me sweets again after our song and that I had told nobody about the game and I would never tell on her. (p.63)

The "song" being referred to here is a name both Maria and the narrator call the sexual act between them. The act was usually accompanied by the song:



Row, row, row your boat  
Gently down the stream  
Merrily. Merrily. Merrily, merrily  
Life is but a dream. (p.62)

This song is a popular nursery rhyme and the fact that it is used in this context is humorous and at the same time, despicable. The babysitter exploits the child's innocence by using a known song to introduce the child to an unknown act. She introduces a song that depicts innocence, as all nursery rhymes do, to introduce him prematurely to sex. This is manipulative as the song must have made the child comfortable before the predator launched her attack on him. The song here is a metaphor for sex and the child is compromised when he later becomes a willing partner in the atrocity he has been made to commit.

When an author raises sensitive and grave issues in such a manner as to elicit laughter as seen in the song used above, but with the aim of drawing attention or correcting societal folly, it can be correctly regarded as satire at work. In the short story, the author has highlighted three salient issues in the society. He has, in a subtle manner, questioned Africans' colonial and post-colonial ideology of white supremacy. He does this by the unpretentious arguments that go on in the narrative of the child who questions the contradictions in the utterances of the adults around him and compares them to his reality. In relating the saying that a white man does no wrong to another white man who his fellow white men call a monster, the child enables us to see the irrationality in this kind of belief. Satire is seen to be used to offer the alternative that the white man is human too.

Another instance of satire can be found in the conversation between the narrator and the bishop. When the narrator responds, “utara” which the cook translates as “foofoo”, to the question “What will you eat?” (Emenyonu, p.66), there was spontaneous laughter from the people around him. The narrator says the retort was a reflex action because, unlike the previous answers he provided, he was not prepared to answer this particular question.

“Good afternoon, my Lord Bishop”  
“I’m fine, thank you, my Lord.”



“My parents are fine; they send their greetings my Lord”.  
But my teacher forgot to tell me what to say in English if  
the Bishop asked me what I would like to eat for dinner!

His responses were rehearsed and when he got stuck in unfamiliar linguistic territory, he reverted to what he was used to - “utara” which earned him a new name: “foo-foo.” It is likely that the author is addressing the language issue in Africa where for numerous reasons (economic and social inclusive), indigenous languages have been abandoned or relegated to insignificant usage in the quest to acquire the English Language, French and other languages of colonialists. The acquisition of these foreign languages is a social marker and economic booster in these climes. The effect of this is first, a gradual decline and sometimes death of these African languages and secondly, the proliferation of sub-varieties of English that are characterised by mother tongue interference at syntactic, semantic, phonological and even morphological levels. Because the body of language rules in foreign and second languages is different from those of indigenous languages, there are instances of *nativisation* or *indigenisation* of these preferred foreign languages especially when they (foreign languages) cannot sufficiently capture the African experience because they do not have the appropriate diction for it. The child in the story does not know the literal translation of “utara” in English, so even though he was discussing it in English, he resorted to his native code to make up for this deficiency. This concept, technically called code-switching or code-mixing, is a very common language feature in the African setting.

Another feature of child conversation as satire is presented in the honesty of the child on occasions where adults would normally look the other way or pretend and play along with a falsity. In the expression;

He gave each of us a Bible. The Bible wasn't really free.  
We had paid for it in advance the day we passed the  
confirmation exam. (Emenyonu, pp. 64-65)

It can be observed here that appearances can be deceptive. Whereas to the uninformed spectator, the Bishop had presented gifts of new bibles to the successful candidates, in reality, the pupils had paid for them in advance. It is likely that the author's message here is that the so-called foreign

assistance, palliatives, debt relief and monetary interventions received from Western nations are not free after all. African nations pay for them at one time or another either through the explorations of mineral resources or by inordinate interferences on the political and economic life of the people. The child sees this as hypocritical and because this takes place in the church, he questions the virtue of honesty that the Christian faith preaches when he ponders on the meaning of the song “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the bible tells me so”. He wonders if all the restrictions placed on children were not more an indication of ‘hate’ than ‘love’. Hence, he repeats the statement: “everybody hates kids” and adds; “but if you said that the Bible had lied to kids, they will cut off your neck” (Emenyonu, p.63). The reader observes that the child knows that such criticisms are unwelcome in his society which regards such riposte as sacrilegious.

### **Conclusion**

The underlying message which runs through the length of this story is the abuse of positions of authority and trust. When women sold their wares to fund the war, it was because they believed the tales of the white colonialists. When children marched every morning to derogatory songs about Hitler, it was because they believed they would otherwise be killed by him (Hitler). When the narrator’s family left the 4 or 5-year-old narrator in the custody of Maria, the babysitter, it was because they trusted her to take care of him and when the narrator’s mother paid the cyclist for several trips to take the narrator to see the white man in Egbu, it was because she believed that the white man Bishop would be of some benefit to her son. She probably hoped he would provide a scholarship for him. She may have envisaged the respect she would get from her friends as being the mother of someone who dines with the white man.

The targets in this satire are people in positions of trust. Black humour and Menippean satire are used in most of the identified instances. Sexual abuse is most often not discussed, and victims are stigmatised in the African context. Children are forbidden from discussing it and when they do, are hushed by their parents. This fact generates an unspoken code of silence by both adults and children. To discuss this sensitive issue as well as others identified above, the author uses the “safe” channel of child narrative voice that is hilarious but nevertheless generates sober reflection.



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## **Violent Conflicts in Tivland: An Ethical Assessment of the Loss of Human Dignity and Moral Values in the Contemporary Society**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is an ethical assessment of violent conflicts in Tivland. It is no gainsaying that those conflicts have had overwhelming consequences on Tivland. This study aims to examine the moral bases for violent conflicts in Tivland with the hope of finding solutions to the scourge. The phenomenon of violent conflicts in Tivland spanned the pre-colonial period and has continued to date. These conflicts include communal and ethnic conflicts, land disputes, farmer/herder clashes and banditry which have caused humanitarian crises and underdevelopment in Tivland. This paper argues that violent conflicts in contemporary Tiv society are caused by the loss of human dignity and moral values that have veiled the sacredness of life. The authors make use of content analysis as well as qualitative analysis methods of data collection for the work. The paper found out that conflicts have had negative effects such as loss of life, destruction of schools, churches, markets, homes and farmlands. The ethical principles adopted were the Human dignity argument, the Sacredness of Human life, the Just War, and the Double Effect Principle. Based on these principles, it is argued that, the only authority that can engage in arms fight is the state. While conflict seems inevitable, the paper recommends that the state can apply the Just



War Principle; victims of violence can apply the Double Effect Principle for self-defence. The paper concludes that for violent conflicts to be properly resolved, the people must lay down arms in respect of human dignity and the sacredness of life; the state must mediate in conflict responsibly while applying ethical values.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Tivland, Human Dignity, Moral Value, Contemporary Society.

## Introduction

The failure to maintain the dignity of human persons, moral values, appropriate individual and communal relations, or put in place apposite crisis management strategies is responsible for the intermittent wars and violent clashes in the Tiv nation. Violent conflicts in Tivland can be blamed on a total lack of respect for human life. It seems to disturbingly intrude on every aspect of society, and people of all different beliefs and viewpoints. The rich or poor or middle class, religious or secular, the one common denominator throughout society, in general, is a total disregard for individual life. The mindset that a human being must be respected – as a person – from the very first instant of his existence is completely eroded. This can be blamed on the commercial world humanity lives in, where greed and apathy are encouraged at the expense of virtues. Sadly, the sanctity, value, and respect for human life are usually grossly undermined in conflict situations, leading to the killing of even children and women who are vulnerable in society.

Violent conflicts have in recent years taken a more dangerous dimension as bandits and herdsmen now carry sophisticated ammunition with which they kill and maim perceived opponents at will. These crises take different forms such as banditry, land skirmishes, ethnic crises as well as farmer/herders clashes. Conflict is a part of people's lives and a natural phenomenon in all organizations. A low level of conflict will not be harmful to daily operations but will help to create smooth functioning by better understanding of prevailing issues. Conflict at the anticipated level can stimulate creativity when handling issues and resolving conflict. Therefore, conflict can be helpful in work environments, but whenever a critical or major conflict happens, it should be fixed as the unwanted level of conflict can be harmful and dysfunctional for the organization (Leung, 2010). This study therefore



examines the prevalence of violent conflicts as traceable to loss of moral values and dignity for human persons in Benue state. The value for life and human dignity argument is considered in this work as one of the strategies to dampen violent conflicts in Tivland.

### **Clarification of Concepts**

**Violent Conflict:** Conflict has been variously perceived by scholars. Dudley Weeks sees conflict as a relationship between two parties who disagree over matters, they value and who perceive that their power to attain that which they value is threatened by the other party's values, goals, perceptions, behaviour, and/or degree of power (4). Meanwhile, Bullard insists that conflict can be described as when two pieces of matter, objects, or ideas try to occupy the same space at the same time (10). In the context of this paper, therefore, conflict is taken to mean disagreement that leads to violent physical assaults on one's opponents.

**Tivland:** Tivland is located in Benue - one of the thirty-six States of Nigeria's present political structure. A state which is situated almost in the middle of the country, and therefore falls within the geographical region popularly referred to as the middle belt.

The Northern Nigeria statistical yearbook of 1965 puts the Tiv population at 2.7 million. Today, it is estimated that they number over 30 million cut across Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Plateau and Cross-river. That makes them the most populous ethnic group in Benue State, and Nigeria's fourth-largest ethnic group. Tivland extends on both sides of the River Benue and occupies an area of about 30,000 square kilometers and stretches from about 6030 to 8010 north latitudes and 80 to 100 east longitudes. The Northern Nigerian statistical yearbook further buttresses that, the Tiv are by traditional farmers, though quite a number of them have now joined the business world (Wegh, 23-24).

The Tiv are bordered on the East by the Jukun and Chamba of Taraba State. To their, West are the Idoma and Igala of Benue and Kogi States respectively. To the North, the Tiv shares borders with the Angwe, Alago, and Koro of Nasarawa State. While to the South the Tiv are bordered by a congeries of ethnic groups which they call Udam of Cross River State (25).

The issue of land is so important, it is not owned by an individual and it cannot be sold. Remarkably, one does not purchase land; one gets a share of the land that is commonly owned. Tseyayo differentiates two kinds of landholding among the Tiv: citizenship and allodial rights on the land (6). The latter is dependent on agnation and is a permanent right, while the former is not similarly based and is not permanent. Tseyayo further states that the Tiv believe that attacks can be made on their land. But when the elders accused the British Administration of having spoilt the land, this was not a reference to physical destruction (7).

**Human Dignity:** Human Dignity is the state of being worthy of honour or respect. When dignity is associated with the adjective human, it denotes that all human beings possess equal and inherent worth and therefore ought to be accorded the highest reverence and care, regardless of their age, sex, socio-economic status, health condition, ethnic origin, political ideas or religion (Adorno, 45). However, the loss of respect for human life leaves no boundary for tolerance, peace, and unity, the result of which is violent conflicts characterized by killings and mass destruction.

### **Brief History of Violent Conflicts in Tivland**

The history of the Tiv is laden with violent conflicts such as *Nyambuan* (1939) *Haakaa, nande-nande* (1960), and *Atemtyo* (1964) (Rubingh 147), the current trend in insurgency, banditry and farmer/herder crises leaves a devastating mark on the society. The spate of land disputes, political differences, marginalization, and socio-economic differences made Peter Genger categorize Tiv conflict scenarios into five categories namely; historical conflicts (violent migration wars, settlement and colonial encounters); Occasional conflicts and spiritual warfare; Industrial disputes and consultation for development; Regular conflicts such as political violence, land skirmishes, family conflicts, interpersonal and inter-group disputes; and moral conflict seen in the loss of respect, social responsibility, harmony and adoption of values inimical to the Tiv community, that is the degeneration of Tiv cultural values (110-111).

As an agrarian-based economy, the Tivland faced far-reaching economic effects due to violent conflicts. Usually, schools, markets, and churches are



razed down, and many villagers are displaced which prevents them from farming causing food shortages. Furthermore, the destruction of crops and animals is widespread. According to Oli, M.P. et al, more than 40 million worth of crops are usually lost annually due to conflicts in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria (30-39). Conflicts have not only created an impediment to the survival of the host communities but have forced many crop farmers to abandon farming for occupations with a lesser impact on the nation's GDP growth like Okada riding (commercial motorcycling) and other artisan works.

According to Akighir, D.T. *et al*, “the unfortunate development of the Fulani herdsmen crises is gradually killing Benue's major industry, rice milling” (89-96), thus, triggering an evolving national food crisis and upsetting the socio-economic structure of the Tiv community. Also, the crises disrupt crop planting, animal rearing, and the flow of (agricultural) investments since no investor would prefer to invest in a crisis-ridden community. Alao, *et al* add that food security constitutes one of the seven elements of human security (39). By implication, human security cannot be effectively achieved if food security constitutes a threat.

On the other hand, James Shagbaor Moti argued that conflict had also taken a toll in terms of lost income due to poor economic activities and performances. The destruction of infrastructures such as schools, health facilities, etc., the disruption in trading activities, the bottlenecks in the free movement of goods and services as well as the disruption in the transportation system, forced the economy of the area to perform below potential (17). Conflicts have led to loss of human lives and properties that can never be replaced, therefore, impacting negatively on the Tiv economy. For instance, the engagement of the youths in violent conflicts and their resultant deaths creates food insecurity arising from the fact that they constitute the most active segment of the working population.

Conflicts in Tivland have caused the youths lot of deprivations due to weaknesses in social organization, social institutions and structural deficiencies in creating an enabling environment for the society and economy to grow as they have retarded all economic and social progress. Throughout the crisis years, there was a decline in the level of agricultural

investment/yield, a decline in income levels of the people of the area, and an increased level of social and residential segregation and damage to lives and property worth millions.

Several towns and markets are usually destroyed. For instance, the invasion of ZakiBiam, Gbeji and Vaase in the Ukum local government area; Anyiin and Ayilamo in the Logo local government area by the Nigerian Military in 2003; political mayhem in Adikpo in Kwande local government area in 2004; political violence at Ugba in Logo 2011; razing down of TiorTyu in Tarka local government due to communal clashes in 2018; Militia attacks at Gbishe, Abaji and Katsina-Ala town in Katsina-Ala local government area in 2021; attacks on Naka in Gwer West local government area by herders in 2018; air strikes at Gungul by the Nigerian Military in 2021 among several other markets have caused economic setbacks in Tivland.

Violent conflicts in Tivland have devastating consequences on society; this cuts across social, economic, religious, educational and political perspectives. At the height of these negative effects is the death of victims, destruction of properties, displacement of victims resulting in poverty, starvation and death creating socio-economic deficits. Conflicts also create humanitarian problems such as food shortages, reported rape cases, disease outbreaks, and psychological trauma. Religiously, many churches in Tivland have been razed down while scores of people have been murdered including members of the clergy. On the aspect of education, there are practically no arrangements for the refugees to further their education yet. Basically, what remains a priority is food. Thus, victims of conflicts are denied the opportunity for education. These impacts are far-reaching and cannot be wished for (Abdulkarkindo and Alupsen 33-43).

### **Violent Conflicts in Tivland: An Ethical Assessment**

The ethical assessment of violent conflicts has been grounded on the Human dignity argument, the sacredness of human life, the just war principle, and the principle of double effect.

**Human Dignity:** The ethical perspective of human dignity is also called the Sacredness of Human Life argument. The dignity of human life has also been advanced as a Christian ethical position in support of the argument



against violent conflicts. According to Immanuel Kant (1993), humans have intrinsic dignity which needs no struggle on the part of the dignity carrier. Kant contended that dignity is inviolable and cannot be denied even by a vicious man. In other words, intrinsic dignity cannot be missing because we are all born with dignity and we all die with dignity. From now no one can take it away from us. It is consequently, this sense of dignity that is viewed generally as the underpinning stone or basis of human rights. The Dignity or Sacredness of Human Life is a position in Christian ethics or the Church's argument on respect and preservation of human life.

Iyanda avers that the argument on the sacredness of life is founded in the creation narrative, with the implication that life belongs to God. This is the foundation for all Christian ethics which teaches that human lives have intrinsic and not merely instrumental value (16). Human beings have inestimable value in the sight of God, irrespective of gender, race, and state of health, dependency, or social and economic utility. It is simple and profound because human beings among the creatures of God have been designed and created to enjoy a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe. Humans are, according to the doctrine, the express image of God (*Imago Die*), made in His image and likeness. Humans are said to be a reflection of God's image here on earth with the totality of God's sovereignty and inestimable and irrefragible rights and sanctity (Iyanda, 17-18).

The notion of human dignity has been the subject of many centuries of philosophical inquiry. Most of the explanations emphasize the rational capacities and the free will that characterize human beings and make them something absolutely unique among living beings. Ancient Greek philosophers, in particular Plato and Aristotle, concluded that the core of every human individual is not just pure matter, but a spiritual principle, which they called the soul (*anima, psyche*). They argued that, since human beings are capable of spiritual activities (understanding, self-understanding, loving, self-determining by judging and choosing, expressing themselves through arts, etc.), they are essentially spiritual beings (Aristotle, *On the Soul*, III). Precisely, thanks to their spiritual component, human beings were regarded as radically unique among living beings and were thought to share in the divine nature (Plato, *Laws*, V; *Timaeus*, 90).



Roman Stoic philosophers seem to have been the first to use the term dignity (*dignitas*) to indicate the intrinsic and universal worthiness of human beings. Cicero explicitly employs it to refer to the excellence and dignity (*excellentia et dignitas*) that all human beings possess by the simple fact of sharing in the common rational nature (*On Duties*, I, 105). Similarly, Christian thinkers stressed the special dignity of all human beings on the grounds of their spiritual soul, which is the seat of intellect and free will. Certainly, in this tradition, the intrinsic worth of all human individuals is ultimately a consequence of their being an “image of God” (Gen. 1, 26) and of the belief in the redemption by Jesus Christ of every single human being. But these theological explanations of human worthiness presuppose that the ultimate internal principle of every human being is spiritual and not merely corporeal (*Summa Theologica*, I, 93). However, the Christian tradition, following Aristotle, holds that every individual has an integrated bodily and spiritual nature. This implies that, although the soul is the core of every human being, it is connaturally related to the body, with which it makes up the substantial unity of the person.

Immanuel Kant developed one of the most influential accounts of human dignity in the history of philosophy. For him, the intrinsic human worthiness is grounded on the capacity for practical rationality, especially the capacity for autonomous self-legislation under the categorical imperative; “Autonomy is then the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature” (*Metaphysics of Morals*, 85). Kant proposed that there is only one categorical imperative and it is this: “Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (73). In his view, the only way to make sense of the human will as a ground of universal moral law is to conceive human beings as ends in themselves. This idea is expressed in the second formulation of the categorical imperative: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (80). Kant presents “dignity” as exactly the opposite of “price”: while “price” is the kind of value for which there can be an equivalent, “dignity” makes a person irreplaceable.

Understandably, Tiv culture in particular articulates the idea of intrinsic human worth using its own conceptual tools such as *Ulum u Umace* (human



dignity), *Umace ka EevmbuAondo* (humanity is a creation of God), *Umacengu zo mom* (humans are equal), etc, and more importantly, this notion is ever-present in all of them. For instance, the Tiv like Kant believes that “Autonomy is the ground of the dignity of human nature and every rational nature”. This is why they fiercely fought against domination by other tribes in the pre-colonial period, the same rationale for the resistance to British intrusion into the Tiv territory. They valued independence (i.e. *Tseeneke*) and freedom. Secondly, like the Confucian philosopher Mencius; Greek’s Plato and Aristotle; Italian’s Cicero and medieval Pico della Mirandola, the Tiv valued *Or Umace* (humanity) not just for his dualistic nature (*Uma man Iyol*, soul and body), but that he is the peak of all creation imbued with rationality. Thus, it is a matter of self-love to be extended.

**Just War Doctrine:** the idea of the *Just War Doctrine* is employed here with reference to attacks on civilians in several places in Tivland, namely, Gbeji, Vaase, Anyiin, ZakiBiam and Ayilamo in Ukum and Logo local government areas in 2001; the attack on Bonta and Gungul in Konshisha twenty years later in 2021 and several other Tiv communities by the Nigerian military. This paper views the military action as the unjust application of the *Just War Doctrine*.

The notion of *Just War* is traced to the ethics of *St. Augustine of Hippo* (354–430). Underpinning the *Just War Doctrine* is a belief that, the commandment against killing is qualified ethically by stating that the killing is concerned with killing the unjust aggressors (the enemy) and the avoidance of killing the innocent (e.g., killing innocent civilians). The theology underpinning this exception arises out of the Christian belief that we live in a world of grace but it is also a world co-conditioned by sin and brokenness. Hence, Christians may find themselves in situations of moral ambiguity, especially in situations of war/conflict. In his work titled *On the Just War* Augustine identifies one important piece of criteria that emphasizes his idea that the justification of the conflicts is crucial in determining if wars are truly just. He believes that just wars are wars in which the soldiers fight obediently for God. If these men fight for God, then Augustine believes that they must be fighting a righteous war and, therefore, fighting a valid war (121).

According to Jaroslav Pelikan, when Emperor *Constantine* (272-312) became a Christian, the link with *Constantine* was *Augustine* who reasoned that fighting on behalf of the Roman Empire was a Christian obligation since it was an empire with a Christian leader (132). Although, *Augustine*, himself wrestled with the reality of war which he approves only for the sake of greater peace and defence of innocent civilians. Augustine (cited in Philips, 2017) defended the proper use of force under certain circumstances. This classic text laid the foundation for the later Christian understanding of just war. Augustine recognized the basic fact that sometimes force must be used to stop the evils of human violence. Later in this text Augustine expresses that a lot hinges on the causes for which men start wars, and on the authority, they have for doing so; for the normal order which pursues the harmony of humans, decrees that the ruler should have the authority of embarking on war if he reasons it worthwhile, and that the militaries should perform their military obligations in support of the peace and security of the community. When war is assumed in submission to God, who would reproof, humble, or crush the egotism of man, it must be permitted to be righteous war; for even the wars that erupt from human desire cannot damage the eternal well-being of God, nor even the saints.

Relatedly, the moral contention here is that the military attacks on the Tiv communities in 2001 and 2021, the Nigerian Military cannot justify its raid or armed incursion into the Tiv territories without being branded as a blatant aggressor who was guilty of human rights violations. In both 2001 and 2021, the mediatory mission of the Nigerian military between the Tiv and Jukun and between the Tiv and Igede respectively were lopsided. In both instances, the military was perceived to have supported the opponents (that is, the Jukun in 2001, and then, the Igede in 2021), which resulted in anger and aggression on the part of the Tiv who turned against them. Therefore, the journey of the peace process requires some new thinking and a change of consciousness. In conflict situations, both parties need to lay down their arms as they reflect a consciousness laden with oppressive thinking. The *Just War Doctrine* as deployed by the Nigerian army in conflict situations in Tivland has not served peace and justice but perpetrated other interests such as power, hatred and oppression.



**The Principle of Double Effect:** this principle was advanced by St. Thomas Aquinas in his discussion on self-defence. Aquinas states that “nothing hinders one act from having two effects, only one of which is intended, while the other is beside the intention. The act of self-defence may have two effects: one, the saving of one's life; the other, the slaying of the aggressor” (II-II, Qu. 64, and Art.7). He argues that ‘as the care of the common wound is committed to those who are in authority, it is their business to watch over the common wound of the city, kingdom or province subject to them” (197).

Aquinas’ *Doctrine of Double Effect* discussed the possibility that killing in self-defence may be permissible as a side effect of protecting one’s own life. He notes that “nothing hinders one act from having two effects, only one of which is intended, while the other is beside the intention”. Killing one’s assailant is justified, he argues, provided one does not intend to kill him (II-II, Qu. 64, Art.7). This means that one should not intend to deliberately kill another. However, should this happen in the process of self-defence, the killer will not be implicated or held responsible for the act.

Applying the ethical *Principle of Double Effect* as a model invalidates every argument that may support violent conflicts in Tiv land. His position that “only the right authority may wage war without sin” prohibits any group from engaging another in violent conflicts. The principle can be interpreted as formulating a prohibition against attacks on fellow humans. Even though the state, described as “authority” may use violence to impede violent conflicts, using the *Just War Doctrine*, Aquinas imposes a limit. For instance, there should be no intention to kill the aggressor. Thus, every form of ‘violent conflict’ provided it’s not aimed at self-defence and is prohibited. Evaluating violent conflict on the ethical model of Aquinas’s *Double Effect Principle*, therefore, challenges the typical expansionists’ notion of land grabbing, survival of the fittest, and the-winner-takes-all syndrome. These notions are clearly evidenced in the internal land skirmishes, political, religious and farmer-herder conflicts that are eating deeply into every fabric of the Tiv society.

## Recommendations

- i The government should initiate mass enlightenment programmes on the danger of violence. For peace to evolve and be nourished, all citizens should be adequately enlightened on the value of peace for national development. This enlightenment, if effectively executed can sensitize the Tiv nation on the need to develop the society rather than destroy it with violence.
- ii There should be a sound moral value system. Thus, the Church in Tivland is called to preach sermons that are geared towards moral development and preservation. The moral value system must be jealously guarded against corrupt and criminal practices irrespective of people, social class, or status.
- iii The government must revisit its law enforcement agencies by way of improvement with special attention to the lack of gadgets, under-funding, and training for better performance.
- iv The Nigerian military is called to ensure that they do their work within the professional Ethics to avoid breakdown of law and order or unjust aggression.
- v Attention should also be given to youth empowerment to ensure their proper participation in community development.
- vi The Tiv traditional council should take the role of peace-building seriously by calling for a collective sense of patience and tolerance. They must teach and practice leadership qualities such as justice, fairness, and equity which are cardinal to the survival of any nation.
- vii Community policing should be instituted and funded for quick response to violent attacks so as to curb bloodbaths caused by Fulani headers and other forms of conflict.

## Conclusion

This paper discusses the nature and effects of violent conflicts in Tivland. It argues that the major cause of killings in Tivland and, of course, in Benue state is as a result of the loss of human dignity and moral values. Hence, human life is worthless and no longer considered as sacred. This is evidenced in killings even of the most vulnerable masses during conflict situations. The mediation of conflicts by the military was blamed on the premise of prejudices. The Ethical positions presented here argue for the dignity of human life or the sacredness of human life through the *Just War Doctrine* and *Principle of Double Effects*. This paper argues that persistent conflicts have prevented the development of Tivland; hence, ethical evaluation of conflict resolution procedures remains key to correcting these ills.



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## **A Rhetorical Analysis of Acts 17: 16-34 in Light of Handling Religious Plurality in Nigerian Society**

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### **Abstract**

Nigeria is blessed with diverse religious groups and beliefs. This feature gives room for a competitive propagation of religious beliefs. However, there are serious cases of intra and interreligious conflicts where the methods of propagation are not handled carefully. More so, some Christians believe that there is a need to interact with people of other faiths to win them; others do not. Yet there must be evangelism. Lives are lost, properties are destroyed, and the church is brought to a state of disrepute. The Christian Association of Nigeria, Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and Nigeria Inter-Religious Council among others are put in place to intervene in cases of religious tensions. Little successes are recorded. This study, therefore, attempts a rhetorical analysis of Paul's method of evangelism in Acts 17: 16-34, critically observing the speaker, the context, the audience, the purpose of the speech and the message. Findings reveal that Paul mastered the environment he found himself. He started the proclamation of the gospel where his audience was because he understood their faith, language and culture. Christians must follow the example of Paul, who appealed to the situation within the environment of his audience, commended his audience, started from where his audience was, had a good, sound knowledge of his religion and presented the gospel boldly in an orderly manner. This study will debrief the contemporary Christians of dogmatism. It encourages applying interdisciplinary approaches and critical engagement to matters of faith. It will impact theological education and inspire interfaith dialogues.

**Keywords:** Acts of the Apostles; Church; Pluralistic Society; Paul's Methods



## Introduction

Nigeria is blessed with diverse religious beliefs. This plurality allows members of the society to practice their religions and it greatly gives room for competitive propagation of religious beliefs among adherents of various religions. However, opinion differs as to the mode of propagation of the Christian faith. Some Christians believe that there is the need to interact with people of other faiths to win them; others believe in asceticism so that the sinners will not pollute the 'purified' ones. Yet there must be evangelism if nihilism will not be enthroned. Preaching Christ's code of ethics may not come so easily. Doing this, calls for the right methods and wisdom if ethno-religious conflicts which are a bane in Nigerian society would be eradicated or brought to a minimal level.

Paul was faced with the challenge of plurality in his missionary career, and he handled the case maturely. The paper examines the methods used by Paul in the selected passage and how effective such methods were to recommend Paul's methods.

## The Principle of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle consists of three connected and interdependent elements: the subject, the audience, and the speaker. In making rhetorical relationships, the rhetors appeal to *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* by presenting their subjects with clarity so readers can follow the progression of ideas, connect their thinking to their readers' own ethical beliefs and draw on the emotions and interest of the readers to achieve their purpose ((Roskelly 2019:8-9). A critical analyst evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the art of persuasion of the original writer in communicating his or her points. The analyst looks at the organisation, the audience of the arguments, the background of the audience, the tone of the writing/speech, bias or missing information and word choice among other things (n.a, p.1). It must be noted that references might be made to the historical background or grammatical study of the passage, rhetorical analysis is interested in the speech as presented by the speaker. This is in line with the African linguistic culture. Among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria, an adage says '*kí lo wí ní àá ròó léjò, kí se kí lo ló wí í*' meaning "you analyse a spoken word and not the intent of the speaker". This study,

therefore, analyses the following variables, the speaker, the context, the audience, the purpose of the speech and the message conveyed.

### **Nigeria and Plurality of Religion: A Brief Survey**

Nigeria is a pluralistic society. Section 10(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended, states that “the government of the Federation or a State shall not adopt any religion as a state religion”. Section 38 (1) also states:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

Section 38 (2-4) provides further clarifications that make the rules guiding any religious practice unambiguous in Nigeria. This suggests that no religion in Nigeria is a state religion. It implies that citizens have the right to practice and spread the religion they wish without interference from anybody. A religious pluralistic society has many religious beliefs, concepts or ideologies (Laguda 2008:124) and allows for the existence of many groups and political parties. In a pluralistic society, adherents of different religious groups living within the same environment live according to their ethics and discipline and provide effective policies (Laguda 2008:129). A religious pluralism community promotes inclusiveness and members in the group practice their religions without any form of conflict (Sachedina 2015:32).

Looking at the “conventional wisdom” approach to religion, Dowd (2014:166) noted that, religiously homogenous societies may not necessarily be peaceful in comparison to the religiously diverse societies. This is because religious segregation and not religious diversity is the cause of social conflict within the society. He claims that religious integration would help a lot in curbing interreligious conflict and violence within the society. Ogbole and Ogurinde (2013:344) argued that groups in a pluralistic society naturally co-exist by tolerating each other without any conflict or fear of assimilation.



As a pluralistic society, Nigeria is characterized by stern competitiveness whereby each member or group affirms his or their separate identity or borrows from another group. This feature, Kenny (1994:111) referred to as fission or fusion respectively. In such a society, adherents of different religions imbibe the language, rituals, mode of dressing, and names of other religions, as in the case of the use of *sharia*, and *shahada* by Christians; and the use of “widow’s mite” and “prodigal son” by the Muslims (Kenny 1994:123). This relationship, Ivanhoe (2009:325) referred to as “pluralistic relativism” which, in his own view leads to “ethical promiscuity” The pluralistic society allows a metaphysical idea of truth. Trigg (2007) affirmed:

Relativism often seems to be saying that it is true that there is no truth, only what we believe.... Relativism can appear to offer a foundation for toleration and respect, but it cannot demand that we ought to be tolerant, since that is an appeal to a non-relative standard. Relativism cannot discriminate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ beliefs. When it comes to religion it is in no better position (p.3).

A religious pluralistic society, if not handled well may lead to pluralism. Pluralism gives room for social evils and inhuman characters, intolerance, fanaticism, division, hatred, unhealthy rivalry between peoples, wrong diagnosis and treatment of sicknesses and diseases, non-encouragement of scientific innovation (Ngozi 2017:118)

Inter-religious and intra-religious activities among religious groups have led to serious violence and conflict within the Nigerian society, developing into inter-ethnic conflict (Olayiwola 2019:24). There is struggling for superiority among religious faiths in situations of adherent’s ascendancy to a political position (Samuel and Anadi 2021:28). Theresa et al. opine that this is brought about by ethnic differences because of the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorate in 1914 (Chinyere, Christiana & Ononogbu 2014:50). Nigeria developed to an heterogenous entity where citizens compete along ethnic (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba) and religious (Islam, Christianity and customary or traditional religious beliefs) identity which invariably led to ethno-religious conflict (Shehu, Othman



and Osman 2017: 16). Religious groups seek relevance, positions and prominence in the political sphere and where most times this has caused rivalry leading to inter and intra-religious conflicts ((Shehu, Othman and Osman 2017: 18). Besides, struggle for supremacy among religions in Nigeria has led to religious conflicts (Samuel and Anadi 2021:28).

Religious rivalry is displayed and carried out in the public and private spaces of Nigerian society to the extent that different religious groups, affiliations and denominations use the media both negatively and positively to propagate their religions. In some cases, the plurality of religions allows dwindling ethical systems. Individuals are entitled to their own religious beliefs and practices to the extent that parents do not have the right to force any of their children to adhere to any particular religion. The subsequent result is religious relativism whereby, what is morally acceptable in one religion is not morally acceptable in the other. Experience has shown that youths usually tend to see what the elderly see as unethical. For instance, youths love to worship where they would do those things rejected by the adults as ungodly. They believe that the adults are too strict or are old folks hence, they should deviate from their religious and moral views. Invariably, some churches and mosques would accommodate such youths. This situation has caused friction, and libertinism within the society. Libertinism is the root of redefining sexuality in recent times. Today, there are such issues as transgender and homosexuality. Single parenting is on the increase because there is the freedom of religion and individuals have the right to their religious beliefs.

### **Acts 17:16-34: Previous works**

Acts of the Apostles 17: 16 -34 has been subjected to scrutiny concerning its historical accuracy, theological background and the relationship of the passage to other letters ascribed to Paul. Who delivered the speech? The question arises because of the length of the speech, and because Paul did not quote from the Old Testament nor make any reference to the Jewish religion. Tracing early scholarship on the speech of Paul in Acts 17, Preece (2013: 17, 18) averred that F. C. Baur and Martin Dibelius opined that the speech is unhistorical and fabricated, Ernst Haenchen believed that Luke was trying to reproduce the “ideal scene” while W. M. Ramsay argued in favour of the historical credibility of the speech. Preece (2013:19) also noted



that Hans Conzelmann suggested that because Luke draws upon secular historiography in the composition of the speech, the speech must be seen as a literary speech of Luke and not the real sermon of Paul. Allen (1970:104) averred that it was too short and it would be impossible to treat it as a synopsis because the style is an indication that the speech was to be delivered. Bruce (1988:335) believed that Paul was not evangelizing in Athens and the whole exercise was a failure. This is because Paul seems to be apologetic and a deviation from Paul's way of presenting the Gospel and that he was not presenting the gospel faithfully. Preece (2013:22) argued further, "Paul was likely taken before the Areopagus because he was seen by the Athenians as a public lecturer" Nevertheless, there is internal evidence that Paul did make the Areopagus Speech. Kistemaker (1990:38) averred that Paul indeed delivered the speech in Athens when one observes the similarity between Paul's Areopagus' speech and those of Romans 1:19-21; 2:16 and 3:21-26. Horst (2011:11) corroborated this view and noted that the address was suitable to Paul's and though Paul did not make references to the Jewish religion, his speech in Acts 17 is in tandem with Scripture and Jewish idiom.

Grant (1915:281) noted that Paul appealed to Hellenistic philosophy in order to gain the attention of his audience. Moles (2006) argued that:

In Acts 17 Luke actually makes the idea of Jesus' newness explicit, but he focalises it through the Athenians, to whom Paul 'seems to be an announcer of strange deities' and who ask about 'this new teaching', even though Athens had a synagogue, only just mentioned in the text (p.84).

Paul concerns himself with Athenians' deep hopes and fears in the "Unknown God". He discovered the question bothering the people's minds and was ready to solidarise with them in a unique and eventually, by the message of Christ (Dorr 1982:598). Von Ehrenkrook (1998:5) noted that three parts of a classical oration, *exordium*, *probatio*, and *peroratio* are used in such a way to bring Christ to a people bound by her cultural, religious, social and philosophical intuitions. In other words, he won the sympathy of his hearers (*exordium*), convinced his hearers (*probatio*) and brought the hearers to a state where they took action or made judgment (*peroratio*).

Copan and Litwak (2014:16) suggested that the speech gives insight into “cross-worldview communication.” No indication in the text that the speech was a mistake. More so, his preaching in I Corinthians was not apologetic. He actively rebuked the unbelief of the Corinthians by emphasizing the foolishness of the cross and also quoted pagans in Corinthians. More so, Paul used the same approach in Lystra (Acts 14:15-17). Paul was able to handle the situation effectively because Paul was a Judaist, his Hellenistic culture exposed him to Greek philosophy and as a citizen of the Roman Empire, he was familiar with Greek ideology and emperor worship. Reis (2002:260) concluded that the passage helped the readers “to understand and contextualize Luke (or Paul) within early Christianity”.

## **A Rhetorical Analysis of Acts 17: 16-34**

### **The Speaker**

Despite the arguments concerning the author of the Speech, Paul, a Jew from Tarsus, a former persecutor of the Church, and later, an apostle of Christ delivered the Areopagus Speech. The Speech didn't align with Paul's stylistic features because Paul was never prepared to deliver the Speech. The event happened “*while Paul was waiting for them at Athens*” (Acts 17:16). Paul arrived in Athens by sea from Macedonia and while waiting for Timothy and Silas in Athens, he observed the proliferation of idols in the city.

Sighting the proliferation of idols in the city, “his spirit was provoked within him” (παρωξυνετο το πνευμααυ του εναντω, Acts 17:16). The verb παρωξυνετο, the third person, singular, imperfect, passive, has the inceptive sense; it means he became agitated. It has the idea of the English word, *paroxysm* used for an epileptic or convulsion fit (Lotter & Thompson 2005:701). The Septuagint (LXX) rendered the word *paroxunw*. It expresses God's extreme anger against the idolatry of the covenant people as found in Deuteronomy 9:7, 18, 22; Psalm 106:29; Isaiah 65:2-3; and others in defence of monotheism (Martin 1999:59). It also means Paul's spirit was stimulated, distressed. The same verb used for provoked was used when God was angry with Israel for her apostasy (Deut. 9:18; Psalm 106:29). Paul was irritated by the reasoning of Athens to be devoted to the worship of idols. Paul was not the typical tourist who could for once stare



at the artistic and architectural feats of the city or admire them; rather, he was an Apostle of Christ with a strong passion for monotheism.

### **The Context**

In Acts chapter 14, Paul and Barnabas healed a crippled man to the extent that they were called names of the Greek deities Barnabas they called Zeus (father of all gods and humans in Greek mythology) and Paul, Hermes (the herald of the gods) because he was the chief speaker. Barnabas and Paul discouraged the priest of Zeus and the multitude who wanted to offer sacrifice and enjoined them to worship the living God of heaven and earth. Paul and Silas went to Derbe and got into trouble for preaching Christ at the Thessalonica synagogue and the brethren sent them to Berea. Although the Jews at Berea received the apostles, the Jews in Thessalonica came and incited the crowd against the apostles. Timothy and Silas remained in Berea while the brethren took Paul to Athens. (Acts 17:1-15) The event in Acts 17: 16-34 happened when Paul was awaiting the arrival of Timothy and Silas in Athens.

Athens was one of the leading cities of Greece that had the naval power. Athens became prominent in the fifth century because it helped to fight against the enemies of the Persian Empire. However, the Athenian navy in alliance with other Greek cities was able to defeat the Persians in 479 B. C. This victory necessitated showing gratitude to the Athenian gods. Hence, monuments and shrines were erected. Soon the Sophists with their “the measure of all things is man” sprung up giving rise to religious secularism. With religious secularism, it was difficult to distinguish between what was sacred and profane. Sparta, another Greek city has political power, but the Greek democrats look up to Athens for leadership. War ensued between these two Greek cities and Athens was defeated in 404 B. C. and Athens started living in poverty (Ferguson 2003:8).

As time went by, a new trend in religion and individualism set in. This is characterized by honouring heroes who founded a city or colony, erecting monuments for them and turning such into hero cults (Burney 1990:38). This gives room for polytheism: the domestic cult, the marking of the roadways by stone heaps to wade off demons and spirits within the atmosphere, sacred shrines, sacred stones, sacred trees and other sacred

spots to guide against nature demons, spirits and gods haunting mountains and forests (Ferguson 2003:179). It was indeed a city characterized by pluralism with its attendant forms of loyalties, dedication and immoralities.

### **The Audience**

Athens was the seat of knowledge and tradition. Great philosophers among whom were Socrates, Aristotle and Plato had their roots in Athens. Plato's Academy, the Lyceum of Aristotle, the Garden of Epicurus, the Porch of Zeno and the Agora where Socrates taught were all located in Athens (Robertson 1930:277). However, the Epicureans and the Stoics were not the only audiences of Paul. The audience of Paul was characterised by a plurality of the educated class with their mental culture, the ordinary persons, a large percentage who must have been idolaters (English n.d: 97).

### **The Purpose of the Speech**

Paul's purpose in delivering the speech was to preach Christ to the Athenians to rid the city of her Idolatry. He wanted to offer a new way of worshipping God from polytheism to monotheism. This was identified as soon as he entered the city (v.16)

### **The Message**

Paul's use of deliberative rhetoric against the judicial and epideictic types is very clear. He isn't interested in accusing his audience (Judicial rhetoric) nor is he celebrating common values (epideictic rhetoric). All he is doing is dissuading them from being idolatrous and persuading them to embrace the resurrected Lord (Schreiner n.d:12)

Paul used the three modes of persuasion. Paul appeals to logic (*logos*). He immediately "argued" (διελεγετο- verb indicative imperfect middle or passive deponent 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular of διαλεγομαι) simultaneously with the Jews in the *synagogue* and with the Gentiles in the agora (marketplace). He didn't start the preaching of Christ forcefully. The dialogue was so interesting that he wasn't the one going to meet the people at the *agora* but they were coming to meet him (Acts 17:17c). He had a listening ear and would not condemn the people outrightly.



He continued with the dialogue to the extent that the Philosophers noticed him. In verse 18, “the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him” (τινες δε των επικουρειων και στοικων φιλοσφων συνεβαλλον αυτω). They met him, discussed with him, and considered him these groups would not stone him because they were interested in reasoning and mostly logical arguments. The Stoics and the Epicureans like the Christians of their day believed in the existence of the divine. The Epicureans’ acknowledgment of god was only in name because god was not involved in the affairs of the world and gods were only those known through sense knowledge and emotional disturbance. The Stoics on the other hand preferred the public life and believed that since pleasure is temporary, it should be avoided. They held on to fatalism because their god did not give any good. They believed in the self-sufficiency of their intellectual pride and their moral decency (English n.d:97). The two schools of philosophy denied the resurrection of the body. The stoics believed that there was the immortality of the soul while the Epicureans did not believe in the immortality of the soul.

They exclaimed, "What would this babbler say?" The word translated babbler, ο σπερμολογος means “seed picker”. Robertson (1930:281) described it as a bird in the marketplace looking for what to feed on. In the contemporary society, they are referred to as scavengers. They are symbols of poverty, laziness and most times worthlessness. Paul was described in such a manner, but he was never bothered about the abuses. The use of ουτος is also pejorative. It demeans his person. He let go of his ego, to preach Christ.

So, Paul’s discussion in Acts 17: 22-29 was about what he had known about the two philosophical schools. The Jesus he was preaching holds on to the total resurrection of the body and soul. Nevertheless, such terms as Spirit, self-sufficiency, virtues, *Logos* and discussions in Ephesians 5: 21-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1; I Peter 2:13-3:7; have Stoics’ influence (Ferguson 2003:368).

They concluded, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”(advocating), “...herald of foreign divinities” (ξενων διαμονιων δοκει καταγγελευς ειναι). Paul might be in trouble if he was preaching foreign divinities because introducing a new religion at a time when the



empire had a law called *religio illicita* which was against the introduction of a new religion would be dangerous (Robertson 1930:105). The Christians at the period were under the problem of whether they should be punished for the name (*nomen*) or the crime (*flagitia*) they might have committed along with the preaching of the gospel. However, Christians were to be judged with enough pieces of evidence if they had committed any crime with the name. Yet, Paul wasn't just a Jewish Christian, he was a Roman citizen. Even if he confessed to being a Christian and persisted in the confession, he would not be executed in Athens, he would be sent to Rome for judgment (Ferguson 2003:604).

Areopagus (v.19) is the Latin form of the Greek word rendered “Mars’ hill”, a limestone hill in Athens where the council or the court of justice often met. This council consisted of the serving chief magistrates, the ex-chief magistrates and the ruler. This includes those who have been considered to be supernatural because of their blameless life. What was Paul Doing in Areopagus (Preece 2013:35-45). They recognized that Paul’s knowledge was more than what could be left to a situation of chance. He deserved to be among the intellectuals.

The reasoning continues. The council at Areopagus asked, “May we know what this new teaching in which you present?” (v.19). They wanted to know more. Paul became their lecturer. The ground was already prepared for Paul in verse 21. The Athenians were good at talking about or listening to latest ideas, something new (αθηναιοι δε παντες και οι επιδνμουντες ξενοι εις ουδεν ετερον ευκαιρουν η λεγειν τι και ακουειν καινοτερον). What remains was the right approach to annex the opportunity before him. Humans like to hear the latest believing that they are the best. Martin says theologians do the same (Martin 1978:59).

Paul started his argument with the scholars and the entire people of Athens with a rhetorical device known as *arsis* – stating an idea firstly in negative as if to commend before it is stated positively. He said in verse 22, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious”. Some versions of the Bible say, “I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious.” (Ανδρεςαθηναιοι, καταπανταωζδεισιδαιμονεστερουσυμασθεωρω). He points out the altar with the inscription, “To an Unknown God”. Paul



considers it a frank admission of ignorance by the Athenians and denies that he proclaims new gods with the expression, “*that which you worship in ignorance*”. Since by their altar, they admit their ignorance, Paul announces that his intention is to educate them concerning this unknown God. He uses *that* (neuter), instead of the *who*(masculine). This is an indication that they worship an impersonal god. Paul, rather than engaging in “a reasoned philosophical argument”, proclaimed the *kerygma*, emphatically and forcefully (Porter 1997:32).

It will be interesting to note that all verbs in verse 23, “What therefore you worship as unknown and this I proclaim to you” (ον ουν αγνοουντες ευσεβειτε, τουτον εγω καταγγελλω υμιν) are in the active voice. The time has come that Paul needed to come out boldly and with authority, having solidly prepared the ground, couching them based on the inscription to the “unknown god.” Paul did not start his message by rebuking them, he appealed to what was the best in them; their zeal in serving an “Unknown God” (Brookings 2015:28). He used parallelism with authority (*ethos*) here. Paul affirmed the source of authority for his argument. Τουτο εγω καταγγελλω υμιν (this I declare to you) as in Ex. 20:11; Isa. 42:5 and Acts 14:15. This is however not in abstract, but regarding their previous knowledge in the God of creation. Paul pictures God as the personal *kurios* who “governs and cares for all that He has made including this Athenian audience” (Martin 2015:75). God is the Creator and Lord of the *cosmos*; hence he cannot be confined to man-made shrines. The true God is different and supreme to the Greek gods whose temples are in Athens (Martin 2015:81). God cannot be domesticated since he does not live in man-made temples (Porter 1997:45).

In verses, 24-30 Paul, appeals to their emotions (*pathos*) which affects the audience and is connected to the purpose of the speech. They knew God existed, and they knew God would judge the world but Paul impressed it in their mind that it would be through “a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead”(Acts17:31). The phrases “a man” and “by raising him from the dead” meant so much to Paul’s listeners among whom were the Stoics and the Epicureans. Paul, having engaged them thus far needed to go to the area of disparity between “the Known and the unknown God”.

### **Paul's Method of Evangelism and Implication for the Nigerian Society**

All institutions, whether secular or religious crave expansion though the method employed could give room for a peaceful society or a society characterized by violence. Paul carefully chose the following steps to preach Christ in Athens: One mastered the environment he found himself. He noticed that the city was full of idols and images made of gods, even the 'unknown gods'. On the issue of idols, Paul and the Jews were on the same track since Yahweh, the God of the Jews in which Paul was one had commanded the Jews to desist from idol worshipping and making of images (Exodus 20: 3-4). One would now understand why the Jews were not hostile to Paul in Athens. Religious leaders in Nigeria must be sensitive to things around them and be open to studying the situation on the ground.

Two, Paul commended the Athenians. Paul aimed to discourage the Athenians from the worship of idols and other gods except God through Christ. However, he started by commending the Athenians' religious life and devotion to their gods. He did not condemn them outrightly from the beginning. Adherents of different religions must be careful of castigating those engaging in social vices within the society as sinners, even if that is what they are. Here, cordiality is the key.

Three, Paul started from where the people were. He listened to what they had to say. He entered into dialogue with them. He saw that he could still use part of what was important to them as an entry point for his evangelistic mission. For Paul, Christ is not against the culture, neither is Christ of culture, but Christ is the transformer of culture (Imasogie 1992:9-8). This is also demonstrated in the thesis and the antithesis of Jesus in Matthew 5:21-48.

Four, Paul had a good, sound knowledge of the faith he professed, and those of others. Paul was not quoting the scriptures; he was using the scriptures (Copan & Litwak 2014:92). He was not just interacting with them but interacting with the point he wanted to make. He looked for a seemingly common ground between the two philosophies and Christianity, 'resurrection' to bring his message home. Most times, it is beneficial for adherents to look for common grounds in other religions and use it as an entry point to evangelism. Our knowledge of the faith we profess is very important, especially in this age of advanced technology and social media where it is very easy to gather information about any religion or belief system.



The orderly manner coupled with the boldness with which Paul presented his religion needs to be commended. That Paul was presenting another religion in an environment where such has been declared illegal could be a result of his conviction and boldness. However, he did this without attacking the people's personality or the government of the day. At that particular time, Paul was seen as a harmless man, who was just out to present his views, more, so that the philosophers were also learning from him. Paul was persuasive in the materials themselves, in the treatment of the materials and in the management of his hearers (English n.d.:100).

Paul's Areopagus speech was not for personal magnification. He never pointed to what he was going through, not giving testimonies about what God has used him for in the past. The speech was theocentric, Christocentric and man is anthropocentric (Lotter and Thompson 2005:710).

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria is a pluralistic society, and she is faced with all forms of religious rivalries which are exhibited through the various religious conflicts and violence. This pluralistic nature rather than reduction may continue to be on the increase because each religion aims at expansion. Paul's method of presenting his faith is one that Nigerian society and religious agencies should adopt. The Nigerian educational curriculum at all levels should include Comparative Religion in which, just like Paul, a citizen will have basic knowledge of the major religions to appreciate other people's faith without victimizing them. This becomes imperative based on the ongoing adverse effects of religious fundamentalism on the youths and Nigerian society. Akpotor (2019:49) opined that Nigeria as a democratic state must take seriously, her variety of religious values and cultures to avoid conflicts. In religious diversities, spiritual unity and initiatives that stress good relationships must ensue, following the example of Jesus who crossed all barriers and boundaries to fulfil his ministry (Portaro 2000:206). Christians, must follow the example of Paul, who, in his evangelistic method appealed to the situation within the environment of his audience, commended his audience, started from where his audience was, had a good, sound knowledge of the faith he professed and presented the gospel boldly in an orderly manner.

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## **The Impact of Christianity on the *Ohen* Festival of Ikao in Edo State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Ohen festival of Ikao people in Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria is celebrated to appease and honour the goddess of fertility and productivity. In the past, the celebration of the festival had a lot of ritual elements that were considered to be of spiritual and physical benefits to the people. Today, however, such ritual significance and meaning attached to the festival have disappeared because of the pervasive impact of Christianity affecting the cautiousness of celebrants who see the ritual elements as fetish. The study, therefore, examines the impact of Christianity on the essence of the festival. It adopts historical, analytical and ethnographic approaches in determining the level of damage that Christianity has done to the traditional beliefs and practices which originally characterised the celebration of the festival. The study reveals that a lot of people in the community including the women now attribute prevailing cases of barrenness and other ills among young indigenes of the community to the loss of the spiritual and ritual essence of the festival which the people believed prevented such ills in the past. The festival is now purely a secular event, retaining only its entertainment value in which songs, dance, comic skits, dialogue, make-up and elaborate costume display constitute appealing spectacles to observers and participants. Finally, this paper affirms that there is, unfortunately, nothing the Ikao people can do to regain the missing spiritual and ritual significance of the festival, but only to harness the entertainment potential of the festival for material and socio-economic benefits.

**Keywords:** Christianity, *Ohen*, Ritualistic elements, Festival, Ikao people.

## Introduction

Festivals form an integral aspect of a people's way of life. In African traditional culture, detaching festivals from the people will be an exercise in futility. And this is exactly the case with Nigeria. Nigeria is very rich in festivals as it offers a variety of them with sound and rich cultural heritage. Festivals are rooted in the culture of the people and Nigerians are known for one form of festival or the other (Ekweariri and Edi:266). Festivals abound in Nigeria, with each rooted in the cultural heritage of the people. It is pertinent to note that the cultural heritage of the people of Edo State of Nigeria is outstanding. These festivals are celebrated or performed in commemoration of one event or the other, and sometimes they are celebrated in honour of a particular god, goddess or a deified ancestor.

Festivals are periodic ceremonies, of communion between gods, the living and the dead (Okpadah: 42). Festivals revolve around different beings and deities ranging from potent gods and goddesses to hills, mountains, trees, rocks, valleys, rivers, spirits, and deified ancestors. These festivals are performed to either celebrate or appease these gods, spirits or ancestors. Supporting this assertion, Oyin and Irele in Ekweariri and Edi, affirm that every festival is attached to a supernatural being or deified ancestor and that may be said to be religious at base and inspiration (267). Most festivals are attached to one deity or the other.

Accordingly, AbdulRasheed Adeoye (112) informs that ritual festivals are based on the remembrance of some heroes, their deeds and events of immense significance. Owing to the sacredness and reverence for these deities and gods during some of these festivals, the time of their celebrations is usually seen as a peace period where any form of conflict or quarrel is seen as sacrilegious.

During the celebration or performance of these festivals, different types of costumes (masks or masquerades) and make-ups are worn by the celebrants or performers. Ekweariri and Edi averred:

History has it that since the beginning of time, festivals have been accompanied by parades, masquerades, pageants, and other forms of revelry that have their origins in pre-Christian



rites, particularly, fertility rites that were connected with the coming of spring festivals and the rebirth of vegetation. (266)

Festivals have been part of man since the early ages. Many festivals in Nigeria have a very long history, and every year, they attract a huge crowd as they celebrate a unique aspect of the people's culture. This is because one of the fundamental intents of the audience for attending such festivals and ceremonies is to be entertained. Since most festivals are usually celebrated with pomp and ceremony, an atmosphere of conviviality and merrymaking is always created during their celebrations. This, according to Ekweariri and Edi, provides a meeting point for people from all walks of life to converge on a set venue and participate in the festivals either as spectators or participants (264). They further maintained that most festivals are communal based and that in whatever way one looks at it, it incorporates elements of theatre from the theme to characters, audience, space, costume, and makeup to design elements, acting, singing and dancing (268).

Most festivals in Nigeria are usually marked with lots of merrymaking, where relatives and old friends meet to exchange pleasantries and goodwill. The story is not different from *Ohen* of Ika people. In Ika community, the *Ohen* festival is a milestone celebration for women who become grandmothers for the first time. This joyous occasion honours the fertility god, highlighting the importance of the festival as a way for new grandmothers to express gratitude and celebrate the arrival of their first grandchild. In the past, the festival was rich in ritual elements that held profound spiritual and physical significance for the people. However, the widespread influence of Christianity has led to a decline in these meaningful traditions, as many celebrants now view them as taboo or fetish, diminishing the festival's original spiritual and cultural importance. The festival's religious and sacred significance has been diluted by the influence of Christianity. Many community members, including women, now believe that the decline of the festival's spiritual and ritual practices has led to the prevalence of barrenness and other issues among young people in the community, which were previously prevented by the festival's sacred essence. Although the Ika people cannot restore the lost spiritual and ritual

significance of the festival, they can still leverage its entertainment value which has been enhanced by Christianity to reap material and socio-economic benefits, salvaging some aspects of their cultural heritage.

### **The Origin and Celebration of Ohen**

The people of Ikao celebrate the Ohen festival to pay homage and appease the goddess of fertility and productivity. While written records of the festival's origin are scarce, oral traditions suggest that Ohen is as old as the Ikao community itself. According to Imoukhuede (in an interview), the festival's roots can be traced back to early agricultural practices, when yams were a vital crop for the community's survival and economic prosperity. In those times, yams were revered and treated with the same respect and care as human beings.

The Ohen festival is deeply rooted in religious and spiritual traditions, where the yam is revered as a symbolic "child" in Ikao mythology, closely tied to deities, ancestral spirits, and gods of fertility. The festival's primary objective is to express gratitude to these divine entities for a plentiful harvest and solicit their blessings for continued prosperity and fertility, acknowledging their profound influence on the community's well-being.

According to Imoukhuede, a certain woman's daughter was experiencing a series of tragic childbirths, with each child passing away just two days after birth. Desperate for a solution, the woman who was called "Ohen", drew inspiration from the community's deep respect for yams, which symbolized new life. She planted a seed yam, symbolizing her grandchild, and tenderly cared for it, believing that as the yam grew, her grandchild would thrive. Miraculously, when her daughter gave birth again, the woman's nurturing of the yam coincided with her grandchild's growth, and the child flourished.

This story may shed light on the symbolic yam planting tradition practiced by Ohen celebrants during the festival. As Imoukhuede's account suggests, the festival honours the legacy of a remarkable woman named Ohen, who inspired the celebration. Ohiomoba confirms that the festival is a tribute to Ohen's memory, which is why it bears her name, recognizing her as the founder of this cherished tradition. As a result, the Ikao people revere Ohen



as a deity of fertility and productivity, believing that she bestows the gift of children upon them, and thus, they honour her with celebrations and festivities to express their gratitude for her blessings.

The Ohen celebration is a grand and festive occasion, consisting of three distinct phases, as described by Adenike (in an interview). The first phase commences shortly after a child's birth, where the child's grandmother, the central figure in the celebration, embarks on a door-to-door procession, carrying a traditional white chalk. With a warm greeting of "Obothei", she acknowledges the community members, who respond in kind. This special greeting is a hallmark of the Ohen festival, reserved for those who have previously participated in it. As she moves through the community, she graciously marks those who respond with a sprinkle of sacred chalk, symbolizing blessings and unity.

According to local beliefs, the white chalk is imbued with the blessings of Ohen, the goddess of fertility, and whoever comes into contact with it will be bestowed with her divine favour. With this belief, many individuals, especially those eagerly awaiting the blessing of children, enthusiastically join in the celebration, excitedly receiving the generous sprinkling of white chalk from the celebrant, hoping to receive Ohen's blessing and protection.

Explaining further, Adenike states that seven days into the celebration of the festival, the biological father of the child, accompanied by a female virgin of about 8-12 years old, goes round the houses of all the chief priests in the community thanking and informing them of the birth of his child (2020). These priests, according to Adenike, appreciate the celebrant by showing him some love. Any other well-wisher can also shower on him some money. These monies are collected by his escort, the young virgin girl.

She further enlightens that the second phase, known as "Abogbemi" (hand-clapping), precedes the main Ohen festival and can take place anytime - from days to months before the final celebration. On the eve of Abogbemi, the celebrant goes door-to-door, inviting the community to join in the festivities. During the celebration, the celebrant's body is adorned with



intricate black markings, made from the locally sourced “Ubihi” plant extract, skillfully applied by a traditional makeup artist. The beauty of the design is a testament to the artist’s expertise. The celebrant is also adorned with beads, adding to the overall grandeur of the occasion.

Additionally, Adenike elucidates that *Abogbemi* is performed in an open arena/stage in front of the celebrant’s house. She informs that the only musical instrument played during the celebration of *Abogbemi* is the maracas complemented by the clapping of hands by the women (2020). The presence of an audience is very momentous all through the celebration as it plays a significant role in enhancing the overall outlook of the performance. The festival is usually marked with lots of merrymaking that continues till dusk.

The third and last phase is the celebration of the main *Ohen* and it normally lasts for five days. In an interview, Adenike, who participated in the festival in 2018, described the first day's events: The celebrant, accompanied by women who have previously celebrated the festival, proceeds to the farm, carrying a seed yam and hoe. She plants the yam, symbolizing the growth of a child, just as the yam matures. Afterwards, the celebrant, still accompanied by the women, pays respects to the community chiefs, starting with the paramount ruler. Following this, she returns home to continue the festivities.

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As previously mentioned, the presence of an audience is crucial in the *Ohen* performance, as they significantly contribute to the overall spectacle. The festival, characterised by joy and merriment, takes place on an open stage in front of the celebrant’s residence, providing a vibrant setting for the



celebration. The audience's enthusiasm and anticipation further enhance the festive atmosphere, making the event a truly communal and spirited experience.

During the celebration, the celebrant distributes money to all the women who have previously participated in the festival. The celebrant, adorned with white chalk and decked in large white wrappers and beads, dances with grace, captivating the audience comprising family members, friends, and well-wishers, including those who have previously celebrated the festival. The audience participates either as spectators or active contributors, with some generously showering her with money as she dances, adding to the joy and festivity of the occasion.

Generally, according to Adenike, there are not many activities on the second day through the last day of the festival apart from the fact that the performer, escorted by women who had celebrated the festival in the past, goes around to thank all the chief priests every morning and every evening. However, on the last day of the festival, the celebrant again goes to the farm to show gratitude to *Ohen*, the god of fertility. Adenike explained that while the *Ohen* lasts, the celebrant is forbidden to go to the farm or stream. She affirmed that it is sacrilegious for the celebrant's blood to be spilled during the festive period, adding that it is an abomination for her to cry during the period of the festival. Thus, the celebrant cannot weep even when she is bereaved.

The significance of *Ohen* cannot be overstated. Individuals who have celebrated the festival are highly revered and respected, while those who fail to observe it are viewed with disdain. Consequently, those who neglect to celebrate *Ohen* are denied certain traditional burial rites, and their funeral ceremonies are not considered befitting. In essence, *Ohen* is a celebration that confers dignity and prestige upon Ikao women, highlighting their importance and value within the community.

Unfortunately, the religious and ritual aspects of *Ohen* have been watered down by Christianity. Some aspects of the festival have gone into oblivion. The entire first phase of *Ohen* has been forgotten completely. Those who

celebrate the festival are now perceived as fetish, just as others are regarded as uncultured and uncivilized by some Christian faithful.

### **A Brief History of the Ikao Community**

According to the available information, the history of Ikao has not been adequately recorded, likely due to the lack of interest from scholars. Instead, the people's oral traditions provide the basis for understanding the community's origin. One widely accepted account, as shared by Balogun Unuogwemol, in an interview, traces the roots of Ikao back to a migration from Ile-Ife, a significant cultural and historical hub in the region.

According to Balogun, three brave brothers, *Urhue*, *Utho*, and *Ihiegbe*, set out from Ile-Ife with their wives in search of better opportunities, eventually settling in a place now known as *Urhue-Okhunhi*. During their journey, they valiantly fought and won numerous battles. Upon reaching their destination, the eldest brother, *Urhue*, suggested they establish a settlement, which they named *Ghokha*. As their families grew, they built separate homes, leading to the formation of three distinct quarters within *Ghokha*, each named after the brothers: *Urhue*, *Utho*, and *Ihiegbe*.

Balogun further informs that three-quarters later relocated to settle in their present-day locations owing to security reasons. The name *Ghokha* was, however, corrupted and pronounced Ikao. To date, the three quarters, *Urhue*, *Utho*, and *Ihiegbe* are still united as one indivisible community with *Urhue* as their traditional/political headquarters (Balogun 2020).

Ikao is located at the north-west end of Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Ikao shares common boundaries with Igue, Otuo, Okpe and Igarra, the administrative headquarters of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State. It is situated in a friendly landscape that is overlapped by hills (James 214). As stated above, Ikao is made up of three main quarters. These are *Urhue*, *Utho*, and *Ihiegbe*. It is noteworthy to state that the Urhue quarter usually produces the paramount ruler known as *Oba or Ovie*.



The primary occupation of the Ikafo people is farming. This can be attributed to the large expanse of agricultural land on which it is situated. A lot of farm crops such as cocoa, pea, cola-nut, Duca-nut (ogbonor), yams of various species, cocoyam, maize, plantain, and cassava amongst others are produced in the town. According to Ezesinachi in James posits:

A man is adjudged rich based on the abundance of crops he possesses by traditional standards. Wealth in itself confers honour and dignity. Consequently, people strive to be wealthy and since what an individual, working alone can hardly acquire wealth, it makes people marry as many wives as they could. Many children are born and large-scale farming is practiced. More hands, more wealth and greater recognition are achieved. (214 - 215)

Ezesinachi's position above succinctly depicts the average Ikafo man as he is adjudged rich based on the number of bags of cocoa, sticks of maize, drums of palm oil, and size of his yam ban amongst others.

### **The Advent of Christianity in Ikafo**

Christianity was introduced to Nigeria in the 15th century by Portuguese traders. At that time, the natives received Christianity with indifference. Even when the missionaries journeyed into the hinterlands to trade and preach to the natives, the people showed little or no interest in Christianity.

Consequently, the white imperialists introduced education, the weapon they used to preach and convince the inhabitants. Thus, those who embraced education also accepted the Christian religion. They practised Christianity and preached the gospel to their families and kinsmen. Over time, the Christian religion grew and spread to all nooks and crannies of the country; and a good number of Nigerians accepted and converted to Christianity.

Arguably, Christianity entered *Ikafo* the same way it entered Nigeria. Like many other towns and villages in Nigeria, the people of *Ikafo* practised their Indigenous religion before the coming of Christianity. This indigenous religion was highly reverend; and somewhat linked to their festivals which were celebrated at different periods of the year. Their religion was highly

sacred, even as their festivals were loaded with ritualistic elements before the coming of Christianity.

According to Afemikhe, in an interview in 2016, Christianity was introduced to *Ikao* in 1916 by Christian traders from *Ogori* and *Mangogo* (now part of *Kogi State*). This was the Anglican (Orthodox) denomination of Christianity. The Anglican faithful in *Ogori* played a significant role in spreading Christianity to various towns and villages. The *Ogori Mission* evangelists, sent out by Saint Peter's Anglican Church between 1911 and the 1960s, played a crucial role in spreading the Gospel to other parts of Nigeria, benefiting the adherents of the faith.

Afemikhe further contributes that Sawyer was among the traders who were adherents of the Church Missionary Society in *Ogori* sent to *Ikao*. He settled very close to a river called *Oke Ibade* at *Urhue, Ikao*. Sawyer was overseeing the Anglican Church at *Utho, Ikao*. As stated above, Sawyer was able to convert many *Ikao* people to the Christian faith (In an interview in 2016).

Many Mission Stations and schools were established by the adherents of the Anglican faith in *Ikao* and its environs. One such school was established at *Utho, Ikao* (Anglican Primary School). Following the Government acquisition of mission schools across the nation, this school is now named *Atemonokhai* Primary School, *Ikao*. The school was founded by the missionaries in order to train their children on how to read and write in the Yoruba and English languages in order to boost their trades with other Christians, especially in Yoruba land. However, many pupils who were trained in the school were engaged by the Anglican Mission to preach and train pupils in the Mission schools that were established by the Anglican faith members in the area. As a result, many people became Christians and also became educated. Many of the adherents of the Anglican faith in the areas were engaged in trading, and other professions to earn their living and also spread the Good News wherever they went. Amongst these were Messrs Josiah, Ekperobe, Imoukhede, Daudu, Afemikhe, Aiyedun, Peter, James, Gabriel, Bello, and Martins.



The catechist/teachers used many strategies such as house-to-house evangelism, the use of open places for evangelism, class meetings, visitations and Sunday services amongst others to convert the people (Owolabi 99). The influence of Christian missionaries was very strong at that time as they served or acted as District Officers. Their influence as Government officials assisted the spread of Christianity in the area. The protection given by the District Officers at that time helped Christianity in *Ikao* and its environs.

Contributing also, Samuel Imoukhude (in an interview) states that the Christ Apostolic Church was later established in *Ikao* in 1930 by Joseph Ayo Babalola who in the company of his revival group visited many towns and villages including *Ikao* for one month. Babalola left representatives behind at *Ikao*, *Otuo* and other neighbouring villages who eventually established the C.A.C church in these areas (2016). Notable amongst them were Apostle Ileoba, James Daudu., and Samuel. Today, apart from Anglican and Catholic churches, many other Pentecostal churches have recorded their presence in *Ikao*. Among these are the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith (Winners), Perfect Love, and Christ Revival Power Ministry.

### **Influence of Christianity on *Ohen***

Arguably, rituals form the crux of traditional Nigerian festivals. In recent times, however, the sacred components of these festivals have been downplayed. The reason for this is not far-fetched. The growth of Christianity in Nigeria has pervasively impacted its culture and many other facets of her social life. The Christian missionaries brought with them Western culture which permeated Nigeria's well-organised socio-cultural background. Many indigenous communities, with their culture and traditions, existed in Nigeria before the arrival of colonialism in the 19th century. There were several large and developed systems in the regions, including the Benin of Edo State.

As noted by Yerima (41), "Christianity, a religion which came with the colonial rulers, was to be a tool with which the religious and spiritual aspects of the lives of the natives could be affected". Flowing from the above, it is



clear that Christianity and civilization were intended to destroy the culture and tradition of the Nigerian people. Western colonialism saw to it that Africa was plundered and her culture and resources were sequestered by precarious white colonizers during the period of the colonial encounter (Agho 2).

The Christian missionaries came with a new religion that was alien to Nigeria. They preached and propagated Christianity, and asked for a total negation of some aspects of Nigeria's culture and tradition. Corroborating this, Yerima noted that:

The Christian missionaries preached a new religion and also, an evolutionary social ethic which asked for a total negation of the traditional aspect of Nigerian life, which was spiritual and secular. Christianity was then viewed to be destroying the very foundation of African society. (41)

Howbeit the Christian missionaries brought education and civilisation to Nigeria, their primary objective was to exploit the socio-economic life of the Nigerian people for their selfish interests. Thus, Christianity was seen as a veritable medium to be used to actualize this goal. Christianity in Nigeria was initially met with some degree of resistance because of the hitherto existing traditions and cultural religions. This resistance forced the missionaries to introduce education, nay, and civilisation to the indigenous natives.

Affirming this assertion, Lord Lugard informs that the primary aim of the colonial imperialists was the propagation of civilization in Africa. He further asserts thus:

It was the task of civilization to put an end to slavery, to establish courts of law, to inculcate in the natives a sense of individual responsibility of liberty, and justice, and to teach their rulers how to apply these principles; above all, to see it that the system of education should be such as to produce happiness and progress. (40)



The Christian missionaries brainwashed the Nigerian people and made them feel that their cultures and traditions were mundane, archaic and inferior. They encouraged Nigerians to see and regard the religious and sacred aspects of their cultures and traditions as barbaric and profane.

While exploiting the cultures and traditions of the Nigerian people, the Christian missionaries introduced ‘Christian festivals’ such as Christmas, Easter, Ash Wednesday, and Mothering Sunday, amongst others. These festivals were celebrated in a manner that gradually eroded the religious and sacred aspects of most Nigerian festivals. In fact, in some cases, they became a replacement for some of the Nigerian festivals. Festivals in Nigeria became the product of the large-scale despoliation and subjugation of Nigeria by colonial imperialism (Agho 2).

Christianity was an agent of great change in Nigeria. It destabilized the status quo, bringing new opportunities to some, and undermining the power of others. The spread of Christianity paved the way for commercial speculators, and, in its original rigid European form, denied people pride in their culture and festivals. It is in this connection that Ekweariri and Edi (264) express concern that traditional values are being overshadowed by Western influences, leading to a loss of cultural heritage. They note that even in traditional festivals, Western dress styles dominate, threatening the cultural ethos. Unfortunately, the cultural values of the people are being eroded through acculturation and enculturation, making way for the adoption of foreign cultures that hinder the growth and development of indigenous culture.

Although, Stanis Iyorza cited in Ekweariri and Edi, opined that acculturation is not a crime, they were, however, quick to point out that the evil about the process is that it causes a people to abandon aspects of their cultures and embrace new ones which may be detrimental to the ideals of their culture (264).

With Nigeria subjugated and dominated, Christianity began to blossom and subdue Nigeria's cultural heritage. Nigerian traditions and cultural practices paved the way for foreign culture as Nigerians became fully acculturated

and assimilated. Nigerian ways of doing things became primitive, archaic and regrettably unacceptable in the public domain. As noted earlier, not only that certain aspects of African festivals were lost or destroyed, some of the festivals were completely replaced with Christian festivals.

The mores and lifestyles associated with Christianity have been assimilated and to a large extent, indigenised in Nigeria. Most aspects of Nigerian festivals have been abandoned. The deified and ritual constituents of the festivals have been abandoned and forgotten. The story is the same with *Ohen* of Ikao. The ritual aspects of the festival have disappeared, and the festival has almost turned into a mere entertainment concert. The religious and ritual aspects of the festival have been watered down.

For instance, the aspect of the festival where women have to go to the farm to plant the symbolic seed yam and offer sacrifices to *Ohen*, the goddess of fertility, has been expunged because that aspect is now seen as a fetish. Consequently, Adenike blames cases of barrenness in the community on this aspect of the festival that has been obliterated.

Explicating further, Adenike, in an interview, posits that it was hardly possible for any indigene of the community to be involved in an auto accident while all the ritual components of the festival were still intact. She laments, “Today, our people now get involved and die in motor accidents”. She disclosed that the first phase of the festival where the father of the newborn, in the company of a young virgin, goes around the homes of all the traditional chiefs and priests in the community literally symbolizes the dedication of the newborn child to the goddess of *Ohen*. According to Adenike, the entire first phase of the festival has been forgotten.

Supporting Adenike’s claim, Afemikhe, in an interview, also attributed some of the social ills in the community to some aspects of *Ohen* that have been windswept. He informs that it was hardly possible for any woman in Ikao to indulge in adulterous acts. According to him, it is the belief of the people that any woman who commits adultery is always exposed and disgraced during the festival by the goddess as such a person is forced to confess her wrongdoing during the ritual propitiation to the *Ohen* goddess.



He laments that since that aspect of the festival has been jettisoned, their women now brazenly commit adultery.

Arguably, Christianity has forced the people to forget some of the ritual components of the festival. On the other hand, Christianity brought civilization Ika community. Some of the ritual components of *Ohen* were actually perceived to be barbaric and archaic. Before the coming of Christianity to Ika, celebrants of the festival were walking barefooted but today they are now put on shoes. Some of those who still celebrate the festival are now perceived as fetish, archaic, barbaric, and uncultured. The festival is now purely a secular event, retaining only its entertainment value in which songs, dance, comic skits, dialogue, make-up and elaborate costume display constitute appealing spectacles to observers and participants.

### **Conclusion**

The advent of Christianity in Nigeria has significantly impacted the traditional belief systems, leading to the erosion of some cultural practices and the adoption of new customs. In Ika, the influence of Christianity has resulted in the decline of the community's cultural and ritualistic heritage, including the *Ohen* festival. The spread of Christianity and Western civilization in Nigeria has been widespread, often perceived as superior to the indigenous cultural practices. As a result, the *Ohen* festival, once deeply revered and cherished, has lost its former significance, and its values are no longer held in high esteem.

The moral excellence of Nigeria's society has overnight transformed into moral decay. Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and festivals are now seen as barbaric and old-fashioned. The assimilation of Christianity is inimical to the growth and development of Nigeria's cultural heritage. The impact of Christianity and civilization on Nigeria has provoked a discontinuity of most Nigerian traditions and cultures, thereby forcing some of them to go into extinction. Consequently, this study emphasizes the need for Nigeria and Nigerians to begin to look inward by initiating and developing possible options for truly Nigerian cultures and traditions.

## Recommendations

At this point in the country's national history, Nigeria and Nigerians, particularly political and opinion leaders must begin to revive their cultural heritage. It is high time Nigerians started appreciating their cultures and traditions, such that the alien culture inherited from the White imperialists will be discouraged. In this regard, the role of parents cannot be underestimated. They should ensure the moral behaviour of their children and wards, by paying attention to the kinds of films they watch, the types of clothes they wear, and the type of language they speak. Speaking of our indigenous languages should be encouraged while de-emphasising the learning and speaking of foreign languages. The teaching of native dialects should be incorporated into the curriculum of schools and should be made compulsory to at least the post-primary school level.

More so, the array of traditional festivals in Nigeria can also be showcased periodically in the form of competitions amongst the different villages, local governments or states. Undoubtedly, this form of competition will not only enhance the revitalization of Nigerian traditional festivals, but it will also engage the youths meaningfully. Thus, social vices and unrest will be curbed. Cultural Day celebrations should equally be organized in schools where traditional or local delicacies and cuisines, as well as native attires, songs and dances, will be showcased.

Nigeria should be able to protect itself against any onslaught on its cultural heritage by stemming the foreign dominance of its traditions and cultures. The use of locally produced goods should be encouraged, even as the buying and utilisation of foreign ones should be discouraged. This, to a large extent, will encourage the production or manufacturing of local products, thereby boosting Nigeria's economy. In all of these, the role of the media cannot be overemphasised.

The government at all levels should, therefore, be thinking in the direction of funding competitions where traditional festivals will be displayed. Radical revivalism of Nigeria's cultural heritage is very important at this time government is thinking of diversification of the economy. If the above are carefully considered and implemented, no doubt, Nigeria will be a destination for tourist attractions across the globe.



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## **Atheism in Igbo Religio-cultural Philosophy: Justification for the Proof of God's Existence**

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### **Abstract**

The debate on the existence of God has always preoccupied the attention of philosophical theologians and religionists. The argument of the atheist that the problem of evil is a result of the non-existence of God raises human curiosity and probes into God's nature and existence. This problem has not only dominated human curiosity in the past but also the present; holding sway on the human intellectual enquiry, religio-cultural and philosophical search. The objective of the study, therefore, is an examination of the Igbo religio-cultural belief system as it concerns the existence of God. This research adopts a qualitative method premised on critical, and systematic approaches. Data are derived from secondary sources namely: commentaries, documentaries, philosophical, and religious publications. The research uncovers that though various arguments have been advanced by the atheist, including arguments from the lack of evidence for God's existence, or from the manifest occurrence of certain phenomena (eg, pain, suffering) allegedly inconsistent with the existence of God; the Igbo do not labour to prove God's existence because His existence is vividly made manifested in nature. God in Igbo ideology is borne out of humanistic, empirical observation of nature, and not of a metaphysical foundation. Thus, the paper concludes that by the Igbo religio-cultural belief system, the atheist concept of the non-existence of God is an illusion.

**Keywords:** Atheism, (non)Existence of God, Igbo Religio-Cultural Philosophy, Justification

### **Introduction**

Religion makes the most absolute claim in the life, hopes and aspirations, fears and joys of the average African person. Africans are known to be

deeply religious. Each people have their own religious system with sets of beliefs and practices. Deep within every African, is a feeling of an irresistible religious imperative. J. Mbiti expressly highlights the centrality of the African Traditional Religion in African society, maintaining that this religion, its beliefs and practices, and how it affects the African community is the key to understanding the Africans and their world; which is strongly believed to be permeated by the presence of the Sacred.<sup>1</sup> That means religion occupies a central position in the African living experience.

Accordingly, in Africa, religion is a yardstick for the interpretation of their vision of the world, the world beyond, the concept of God, relationship with God and fellow human beings in the society.<sup>2</sup> African's view of reality does not only have vertical, but also horizontal dimensions. His religious ideas and life are not oriented in the Platonic world of ideas (the world of idealism) but have concrete consequences in life in society: how one fulfills one's religious obligations, offers sacrifices to one's god; one's relationship with fellow human beings, and the observance of the moral norms. Africans have different ways of viewing the same God, universe and spirits as real beings, and they exert a strong influence on man. Hence, they are never in doubt of their existence.

The notion of the Supreme Being occupies a central place in the study of the composite elements of Igbo Traditional Religion. Almost all materials so far published on Igbo religious beliefs devote some key chapters to reflect Igbo religio-cultural philosophy. The Igbos generally believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who they call different names according to sub-cultural area groups. It is important to observe that although the Igbos cannot lay special claim as to a point in time when the perception of the Supreme Being was conceived, yet they do not contemplate atheism. It is a fact that belief in a Supreme Being is a universal phenomenon among the Igbos.

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<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edit. (Britain: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 1-2

<sup>2</sup> Igwegbe, I. O. O. *Sacramental Theological Thinking In The African Symbolic Universe*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 1995), p. 40.



This research investigates the concept of atheism within the context of Igbo religious beliefs and cultural philosophies. It further explores how Igbo traditions and ways of knowing might approach the idea of atheism and the arguments for God's existence. The research involves an examination of Igbo religious texts, oral traditions, and philosophical ideas. It also involves ethnographic studies of contemporary Igbo communities and their beliefs. The work attempts an analysis of philosophical arguments for God's existence and how they might be viewed through an Igbo cultural lens.

This research sheds light on the relationship between religion and philosophy in Igbo culture. It contributes to the understanding of atheism in a non-Western context. The research also challenges or refines traditional non-African conceptions of atheism and the idea of God. This research delves into a specific cultural and religious context, offering a unique perspective on atheism and the concept of God.

It is thus, the objective of the study to examine the Igbo religio-cultural belief system as it concerns the existence of God; by evaluating the concept of the supreme being, surveying the atheist perception of God and how it relates to Igbo socio-cultural beliefs. This research adopts a qualitative method premised on critical, and systematic approaches. Data are derived from secondary sources namely: commentaries, documentaries, philosophical, and religious publications.

### **The Concept of Atheism**

Atheism is an argument based on a lack of evidence for God's existence and manifest occurrence of certain phenomena (e.g. pain, suffering,) allegedly inconsistent with nature, sovereignty, intelligence, powerful self-revelation, moral being with just and benevolent concerns for his creatures and existence. Others went further to state that belief in God is an element in human "false consciousness," misbelief and misperception arising out of class-ridden social and economic circumstances.<sup>3</sup> This concept conventionally indicates a lack of belief in the Creator or the Judeo-

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<sup>3</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), pp. 53-54.

Christian God.<sup>4</sup> However, this study finds it difficult to identify atheistic tendencies in the Igbo religion and philosophical world view.

### **Existence of God Among Traditional African Tribes**

The discussion on the knowledge of God in African Traditional Religion raises some pertinent questions which are: How does the African obtain his knowledge of God? What does the concept of God mean to the searching mind of the African religionist? Does the African knowledge of God derive from the empirical observation of nature or has it a metaphysical foundation? In tracing the origin of ATR, it is difficult to say when it was founded and who founded it. ATR is as old as the first African; so he first becomes its “founder”<sup>5</sup> based on his experience in the world and of the world. ATR affirms the Christian religious testimony that in the past, God revealed himself to our ancestors in many and various ways.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the notion of God is indigenous to the Africans and the Igbos. Building on the views of Igweegbe above, this work maintains that before the arrival of the missionaries, the people had believed in the existence of God and had developed well-defined concepts about him.

The early missionaries made the mistake of thinking that the Africans had no idea of a supreme being.<sup>7</sup> They erroneously assumed that they were responsible for the introduction of the concept of supreme being to the Africans. This understanding gave rise to the theory of the *deus otiosus*<sup>8</sup>, which postulates that God is thought to have withdrawn to the skies and left the administration of the universe in the hands of the spirits who act as his intermediaries.<sup>9</sup> For this theory, God does not interfere in the affairs of the world and human beings. The assumption here is that God is held to be too remote in the African Traditional Religion and absent from the daily lives of the people. In an atmosphere of this nature, the cult of spirits is revered

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<sup>4</sup>Ferguson, and Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 53-54

<sup>5</sup>Igweegbe, *Sacramental Theological Thinking In The African Symbolic Universe*, p. 41.

<sup>6</sup>Hebrews 1:1

<sup>7</sup>F. Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective: Theology of the Local Church in the Light of the Second Vatican Council*, (Frankfurt/M:1995), p. 200.

<sup>8</sup>Herbert Onyema Anyanwu, *African Traditional Religion from Grassroots*, (Owerri: Lasen Publishers, 1999), p. 71.

<sup>9</sup>A. E. Wallis Budge, *Legends of the Gods*, (London: 1912; Spencer, 1912), p. 56



and substituted for God. Good and evil, salvation and deliverance all rested in the hands of the ancestors.

However, the study of the history of ATR and world-views shows that for Africans, God exists. The African people have designations for God. Many of such designations are replete with meanings, showing what the people think of him. Mbiti holds that “the personal names for God are very ancient, and in many cases, their meanings are no longer known or easily traceable through language analysis.”<sup>10</sup> Evidence of this position could be substantiated by the names of God in different Ethnic groups in Africa.

### **Names of God Among Traditional Nigerian Tribes**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Areas</b>	<b>Folk Name</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1	Benin Ewe	<i>Mawu</i>	Owner of the gods
2	Nigeria Igbo	<i>Chineke</i>	God the creator
3	Igbo	<i>Osebuluwa</i>	God the sustainer of the world
4	Yoruba	<i>Oludumare</i>	God Almighty
5	Hausa	<i>Ubangiji</i>	Supreme Being (God)

With the above diagrammatic illustration, one can see a similarity in understanding of God within Nigerian tribes.

### **Atheism and Belief in the Existence of God in Igbo Philosophy**

In the Igbo traditional life, it has become a difficult task to find atheists. The existence of a “strange fellow” as God is a matter that concerns not only the individual but also the entire community.<sup>11</sup> In the African Religion, no one shows a child the Supreme Being.<sup>12</sup> The child learns of it in the early stages of life.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, the community is seriously disturbed by the birth

<sup>10</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 47.

<sup>11</sup> Igwegbe, *Sacramental Theological Thinking In The African Symbolic Universe*, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> This is a typical Ashanti proverb of the people of Ghana in West Africa. (cf. R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Proverbs*, Oxford: 1923), p. 50

<sup>13</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, Nairobi: OUP East-Central Africa Press, 1986), p. 101.



and presence of an ‘abnormal person’ without a conscience and a religious heart, capable of participating in the fundamental obligation of the community in the recognition of a Supreme Being. It is self-evident, therefore, that atheistic mentality is alien to the Igbo. God, for Africans, is sacred (holy) and transcendent. Holiness like faith is not a common word in the traditional religious vocabulary, although, it features prominently in everyday life. The holiness of God and his majesty explain why the Africans, like the Jews, do not approach God directly, but rather through intermediaries such as the deities.<sup>14</sup>

### **Existence of God in Judaism and Islam**

The centre of the Jewish religion is said to be the knowledge of God (*da’ath Elohim*). This is knowledge evidenced in the right living relationship with God, hence, wisdom says that the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. However, a theologian would see and interpret the presence of evil in the world in a deep act of Faith. But for others, the omnipresence of evil is a revolting scandal unless one takes that heartrending step into faith, as Christ did: thy will be done not mine, even if I do not understand the road offered to me.<sup>15</sup> The New Testament takes up this idea of God and develops it to its deepest sense. The recognition of the presence of evil still dominates the Christian theology; serving as an appendage to affirming the existence and presence of a benevolent creator God in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus recognized the existence and presence of evil in the world,<sup>16</sup> and demonstrated the love of God to humanity; a paragon of God’s divine love<sup>17</sup>, who came on earth in human form to redeem humanity. God is for him, the author and foundation of all life.<sup>18</sup> He defended his claim on knowledge and

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<sup>14</sup> Ilogu, *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> P. J. Lefebvre, (1994), 134; cf. Mt. 26:24.

<sup>16</sup> Mk 4:15; cf. Lk 10:18; 13:16; 22:3, 31; Joh 12:31; 13:27-31i; cf. Act 5:3; cf. Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; cf. 2

Th 2: 9; cf. 1 Tim1:20; Rev 2:9, 13, 24; 12:3c-9; 20:7.

<sup>17</sup> Mk 4:15; cf. Lk 10:18; 13:16; 22:3, 31; cf. Joh 12:31; 13:27-31i; cf. Act 5:3; cf. Rom 16:20; cf. 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5;

cf. 2 Th 2:9; cf. 1 Tim1:20; cf. Rev 2:9, 13, 24; 12:3c-9; 20:7.

<sup>18</sup> W. Kasper maintains that for Jesus, God is not an unmoved mover and unchanging principle, but as the living God, who gives life and love. He is the source and foundation of love and life.



existence of God, not in a theoretical approach, but through a pragmatic one; in practical experiences and working of miracles. <sup>19</sup>Jesus understood God in the line of the history of Israel as God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as Yahweh, who has made Himself known and experienced as *He Who Is*.<sup>20</sup> God, in a special way, revealed Himself in His Son, in the Person of Jesus,<sup>21</sup> and through Jesus, God had shown His salvation and love to the world. The idea of One God and Father of all men, as we know it, builds on the central theme of the New Testament teaching and its interpretation, as it is confined to the Christian context.<sup>22</sup>

In the medieval period, Thomas Aquinas maintained that ultimate reality rests on two basic sources of knowledge, namely, in the intuitive as well as in the rational sense. From this, he drew the inference that human beings can acquire the knowledge that God *is*, although we cannot grasp in the confirmative sense *his essence*. He insisted that God's existence is not self-evident to human persons, since we do not know his essence. Aquinas went on to maintain that humanity is not destined to remain silent about the source of his religious experiences. Nevertheless, we can speak of God either negatively or positively. Following this Thomistic procedure, it becomes self-evident that man can as well speak positively about the nature of God through simple analogies – *via analogical*.<sup>23</sup> “The most positive way to the knowledge about God is by useful analogies, similes, and metaphors. Therefore, in the Christian religion, we designate *God as a heavenly Father or Christ as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world* (Joh 1:35).”<sup>24</sup> Christ came into the human world because humanity was lost in

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<sup>19</sup> The central theme of Jesus message is the arrival of God's Kingdom; a Kingdom that is now in their midst. He demonstrated this in a practical sense through His Words and Deeds: in His preaching and Healings. [(cf. H. Kessler, “Christologie”, in: T. Schneider, (ed.), *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, Düsseldorf: (1992b), 271-272).

<sup>20</sup> Ex 3:13-15; Is. 17:8e; cf. Dt 32:39; 33:3; cf. Is 43:13; 51:16; cf. Wis 3:1; cf. Joh 8: 19; 10:30, 38; cf. Joh 8:24; cf. Rev 1: 4g.

<sup>21</sup> (Röm 8:15-17, 29; Gal 4:4-7; Joh 17:5

<sup>22</sup> Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective: Theology of the Local Church in the Light of the Second Vatican Council*, p. 198.

<sup>23</sup> T. Aquinas, S. Th. 1, q. 13a. 2c; S. Th. 1, q. 13a. 4; cf. S. Th. 2 IIq. 186 a. 1; W. Breuning highlights this aspect of the knowledge of God through analogy.

<sup>24</sup> Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective: Theology of the Local Church in the Light of the Second Vatican Council*, p. 199.

the cloudiness of self -love and could not decipher our way unaided and alone without the grace of God. God is to be worshipped by men and women as the Lord and Father of love and adored in the *Spirit of truth*, for God is spirit. Those who worship Him must do so in spirit and truth (cf. Joh 4:24). In Christianity, God's essence is the communion of three divine persons *Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit*.<sup>25</sup> Whereas in Judaism, the one and only God has revealed Himself to the people of Israel as saviour and deliverer, as creator and Lord of the universe.

The Islamic religionist opine that, its religion confesses faith in the one, everlasting and almighty *Allah* who has finally revealed Himself through the Prophet Mohammed the last of all the Prophets, beginning in the order of the Old Prophets until the time in which Jesus came.<sup>26</sup> Allah is one and Muhammed is His messenger.<sup>27</sup> It demands absolute devotion to the will of Allah. Members are obliged to acquire knowledge of the essential teachings of this religion. But some authors contend that Islam is not simply a religion, but a way of life for every believer, whom it guides from cradle to the grave.<sup>28</sup> It is a complete code of life, and a culture-producing factor in that Muslim culture profits from all available sources without jeopardizing its roots Quran and *Sunna*.<sup>29</sup>

A Muslim is called to fulfil the will of Allah in all areas of life in politics, comics, and social order, etc. The Islamic religion does not demarcate between secular and spiritual, but it rather spiritualizes human existence completely<sup>30</sup> and thereby produces a social system that reconstructs human

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<sup>25</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, Ibadan: 1992, 86, art. 232-237; 253-256; cf. Gen 1:2; Nicene Creed (DH 150); cf. Joh 14:17, 26; 16:13; Council of Florence (1439) DH 1302.

<sup>26</sup> Sattler, Dorothea / R. Schneider, "Gotteslehre", in: T. Schneider, (1992b), 99; cf. NA 2.

<sup>27</sup> W. M. Watt, "Conditions of Membership of the Islamic Community", in: C. J. Bleeker (ed.), *Initiation* (1965), 195-198, 196.

<sup>28</sup> A. N. Odoemene, "Christianity in Africa and Islam", in: J. S. Ukpo, et al. (ed.), *CASAS* (1993), 57.

<sup>29</sup> A. Khushid (ed.), *Islam: Its Meaning and Message*, (Lagos: 1977), pp. 7-8.

<sup>30</sup> A. N. Odoemene, "Christianity in Africa and Islam" p. 59.



life in its entirety.<sup>31</sup> The Islamic tradition holds that the thirst and pursuit of religious knowledge is atonement for one's sins.<sup>32</sup> The above shows how these religions manifest knowledge and the essence of God. Contrary to the sterile notion of God as one and the only being, therefore, the African Traditional Religion understands God as one who has manifested himself as having various intermediaries: spirits, and ancestors, among others.

### **Origin of Igbo Concept of God**

Tracing the origin of the concept of God in Igbo religio-cultural philosophy is as difficult as it is in various tribes in African religious beliefs. To understand the genesis of it, one would need to trace the man who first lived in the South Eastern geo-political zone of the present Nigerian state so that he becomes its first "founder"<sup>33</sup> by his experience.

The absence of documented religious beliefs in traditional Igbo society due to the non-existence of a developed system of documentation among the people has resulted in gross misconceptions and misrepresentations of Igbo thought on the supreme being by various thinkers. Hence, these thinkers created ontological gaps as they reconstructed the Igbo religious experience and thought several years after its contact with other cultures. Despite the philosophical debate on Igbo thought regarding the supreme being, it has always been taken for granted that the traditional Igbo had a firm belief not only in the divinities but particularly in the Supreme Being whom they view as invincible, sovereign and benevolent. Thus, that sub-Igbo groups may have popularized their deities as the Supreme Being "Chukwu", does not remove the fact that Igbo thought pre-existed these Deities which emerged sometime in Igbo history. The Igbo belief system affirms the Christian Religious testimony that in the past, God revealed himself to our ancestors in many and various ways.<sup>34</sup> Analysis of the hierarchy of Igbo divinity reveals the existence of intermediaries. Sacrifice is first offered to Aní. The Aní will offer it to Chukwu. Then Chukwu will give Aní the object of request

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<sup>31</sup> Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective: Theology of the Local Church in the Light of the Second Vatican Council*, p. 199.

<sup>32</sup> A. K. Mohammed, *What is Islam?* (India: 1998), pp. v-vi.

<sup>33</sup> Igwegbe, *Sacramental Theological Thinking In The African Symbolic Universe*, p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> Hebrews 1:1

(child) and *Ani* sends the answer (child) to me.<sup>35</sup> That *ani* is viewed as part of nature, is seen as a medium through which the orthodox Igbo traditional religionists approach God.<sup>36</sup>

H. Adigwe holds that the idea of the existence of God is something characteristically common in the African Traditional Religion.<sup>37</sup> He maintains that the Africans, have knowledge of a Supreme Being, an ultimate reality, which they call various names. Such as *Chukwu* (*chi-ukwu*), meaning the Great God, *Chineke*, or *Ezechitoke* – the creator God for the Igbo people, and *Obasi*<sup>38</sup> for the Effik- have dense theological imports.<sup>39</sup> These names show what the people understand God to be, a creator who orders and brings things into existence. F. Nwaigbo, underlines the concept of God as an important idea and as a vehicle through which the Igbo people understand the notion of creation as a whole, serving as a network of communication in the Igbo Traditional Religion.<sup>40</sup> They know God through nature. And the names they give to God exemplify their deep knowledge of Him.<sup>41</sup>

In a nutshell, the ontological thought of the Igbos reveals it as a truism that the supreme being holds the chain of relationships among beings in the Igbo world and beyond. After him comes other existent realities like the gods, ancestors, spirits, man, animals, inanimate, etc. through whom he replicates

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<sup>35</sup> F. Arinze, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, R. Willard Trask (trans.), New York: 1959, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Arinze, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> H. Adigwe, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A documentary Source Book 1966-1969*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 35; cf. E. Ilogu, *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Adigwe, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A documentary Source Book 1966-1969*, p. 35; cf. I. D. Nwoga, *The Supreme God as Stranger Igbo Religious Thought*, (Enugu: SNAPP, 1984), p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective: Theology of the Local Church in the Light of the Second Vatican Council*, p. 197.

<sup>40</sup> Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective: Theology of the Local Church in the Light of the Second Vatican Council*, p. 197.

<sup>41</sup> Ogugua, *Igbo Understanding of Man*, P. 8



his potency.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the Igbos know and believe in the Supreme Being from the beginning of their existence hence the existence of God is monotonously captured even in their names and titles.<sup>43</sup> This is why researchers on Igbo thought generally agree that Igbo people are very religious, one will not search long to discover how meticulous and pertinacious the Igbos attach themselves to the Supreme Being.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Reality of God’s Existence in Igbo Religio-Cultural Belief System**

Glaring in Igbo philosophical tradition is the science of things through the ultimate causes. Igbo metaphysics, which is the epicentre of Igbo philosophy, engages in a critical, orderly, systematic, logical, rational and comprehensive investigation of the ultimate principles of reality, the study of being and that of the universe.<sup>45</sup> Igbo metaphysics therefore recognizes the phenomenon of causality in nature based on the principle of sufficient reason that whatever exists must have justification for its existence and must have a cause.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the Igbos based on experience hold that the Supreme Being who is the first cause of all things exists, but because of his great distance in heaven, he created several lower Deities to superintend different parts of the universe. Equiano records this Divine distance in 1789, when he notes that the Igbo believes in one creator of all things who lives in the sky; who does not eat but smokes a pipe.<sup>47</sup> The Supreme Being in the Igbo context is perceived and explained as the highest in the hierarchy of Beings.

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<sup>42</sup> Mbaegbu, C. C. “A Philosophical Investigation of the Nature of God in Igbo Ontology,” *Open Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 5, 2015, pp. 137–151. <http://www.scrip.org/journal/ojpp>.

<sup>43</sup> F. N. Ukaegbu, *The Igbos: The African root of Nations*, (Ibadan: Heinemann. 2005), p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> Metuh, E. I. (1985), *African Religions in Western Conceptual; Schemes: The Problem of Interpretation*, Ibadan: Claverianum Press. 1985), p. 48. See also Metuh, E. I. “The Supreme God in Igbo Life and worship”, [www2.fiu.edu/~ereserve/0100076131](http://www2.fiu.edu/~ereserve/0100076131) accessed 10/08/2018.

<sup>45</sup> P. Oguqua, *Igbo Understanding of Man*, (Awka: Double Pee Communications.2003), p. 1

<sup>46</sup> B. E. Nwigwe & C. C. Emedolu, (2004), *Emergent and Contentious issues in African Philosophy*, (Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt, 2004), p. 153

<sup>47</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 10



## Creation in Igbo Thought

Chief among the properties of the Supreme Being in Igbo thought is the character of creation. Based on the linguistic analysis of the Igbo language, Nwoga argues that Igbos are unaware of the Supreme creator because the idea of creation which bothers on making something out of nothing does not exist in Igbo thought.<sup>48</sup> Mbaegbu disagrees with this thought asserting that although Igbo thought did not establish the material used in creation, the Igbo vocabulary “chi-na-eke” universally depicts the Supreme Being who creates and shares.<sup>49</sup> Among created realities, as encapsulated in Igbo myths, proverbs and parables are “Chi”. This refers to the spiritual form of the individual that resides in the metaphysical realm. This entity is similar to Plato’s form of physical realities in the immaterial world.<sup>50</sup> “Chi” is therefore the spiritual double or aspect of an individual, the life force or the spiritual companion of a living person. Arinze acknowledges this creator spiritual entity when he writes that in Igbo thought, each individual is created with a spirit, a genius, or a spirit-double; his “Chi” which is resident in the spirit world before the Supreme Being “Chineke” soliciting good things for the individual.<sup>51</sup> As such, the Supreme Being for the Igbos expresses himself to mortals through the “Chi” that belongs to the individuals.<sup>52</sup> Igbo thought reveals that this ontological entity “Chi” was created by the Supreme Being ever before its physical copy, and it determines with the Supreme Being where, when, and how of one’s birth, existence, fate and death.<sup>53</sup>

The notion of creation is indeed a recurrent idea in Igbo thought. Hence, Igbos constantly refer to the Supreme Being “Chukwu” as “Chineke” and “Ezechitoke” to depict his capacity to create. African causal theory allows

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<sup>48</sup> D.Nwoga, *The Supreme God as Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought*, (Ekwereazu: Hawk Press.1984), p. 37

<sup>49</sup> C. C. Mbaegbu, “A Philosophical Investigation of the Nature of God in Igbo Ontology,” *Open Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 5, 2015, pp. 137–151. <http://www.scrip.org/journal/ojpp>, p. 137

<sup>50</sup> S. E. Stumpf, *Philosophy History & Problems*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), p. 58

<sup>51</sup> F. A. Arinze, *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970), p. 15

<sup>52</sup> Ogugua, *Igbo Understanding of Man*, p. 19

<sup>53</sup> M. Dakor, *African Freedom: The Freedom of Philosophy*, (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing., 2010), p. 14



no room for chance occurrences. More so, the issue of “chance” or “luck” viewed as an “uncaused event” is unknown or rather foreign to the Africans.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, Igbos universally believe that nothing just happens for every occurrence depends on causality sorely controlled by the Supreme Being. This means that even their existence and the origin of things are rooted in their belief in a Supreme cause who prevails on earth despite the activities of other Deities. This brings into serious question the claim of some Philosophers that the word creation or creator is alien to the Igbo simply because Igbo ontology lacks a developed logical explanation of creation. However, “Chineke in Igbo thought also points at the Supreme Being who shares, it is understandable that sharing is about what exists. As such, people cannot be passionate about sharing without the idea of how what to share was made or produced. It is therefore obvious that the idea of creation and Supreme creator existed in Igbo thought and this Supreme Being pre-dates the existence of man and other realities.”<sup>55</sup>

The account of creation is a clear manifestation of a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, a First Principle, the Causal Cause, Unmoved Mover and Originator of all things in African Religion many thousand years before the advent of Christianity in Africa. Equally, it proves, from an African religious perspective, that the belief in God, the Creator, and the Source of all things neither originated from the missionaries nor from the religion they brought to Africa. In ATR, there is an affirmation of the existence of God, though, the African does not necessarily labour to offer rational proof of his existence.<sup>56</sup>

### **Names as Proofs of God’s Existence in Igbo Socio-Cultural Philosophy**

This is evident, for instance, in the use of the name *Chukwu* among the Igbo, in South-Eastern Nigeria. In some parts of the land where the word *Chukwu* is used, people sometimes add the word *Okike* – giving God the quality of *okike* – that is *Chukwu-Okike* which is “God that creates.” In the Onitsha

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<sup>54</sup> E. Aja, *Metaphysics: An Introduction*, (Enugu: Donze Press. 2001), p. 61

<sup>55</sup> G. W. F. Hegel in E. J. Smith, *Philosophy of Religion*, (London: 1965), p. 105.

<sup>56</sup> Eze, *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, pp. 25-26.

areas where the variant word *Chineke* is used, the emphasis is on the creative activity of the Supreme Being.<sup>57</sup>

Among Igbos, names indicate the attributes of God such as his supremacy, benevolence, all-knowing, etc. Such names include:

S/N	Name of God	Meaning
1	<i>Chukwuma</i>	God knows
2	<i>Chinenye</i>	God gives
3	<i>Chijindu</i>	God holds life
4	<i>Chidindu</i>	God is alive
5	<i>Chijioko</i>	God holds every man's share
6	<i>Chisaram</i>	God answered me
7	<i>Chidera</i>	What God has written is written
8	<i>Chielozolam</i>	God never forgets me
9	<i>Chinecherem</i>	God is thinking about me
10	<i>Chisimdindu</i>	God said I should be alive
11	<i>Chidiebere</i>	God is merciful
12	<i>Chinemeze</i>	God gives royalty
13	<i>Onaburuaguiheogbonaonu</i>	He takes away what is in the mouth of a lion

It forms part of the African traditional religious belief, especially among the Igbo people, that a person receives his/her gifts or talents, character traits or indeed his/her portion in life generally before he/she comes into the world.<sup>58</sup> In addition, God is considered to be the source of human life. As the source and sustainer of human life, He gives to each person at birth a particular portion of the divine being called *chi*.

The names and adages of the Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria, as seen above, confirm the existence of God. For the Igbos, no one but God can take away what is in the mouth of a lion. These names and adages are as old as the people of Igboland and their religious beliefs.

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<sup>57</sup> Ilogu, *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, p. 22

<sup>58</sup> Onwumere A. Ikwuagwu, "Initiation in African Traditional Religion" A Dissertation (1998), p. 69.



It can be argued from the above that in African Traditional Religion, just like in the Christian religion, to give a name is to confer identity. It is to confer an act of power and make an assertion of ownership or some other form of control. Thus, the names for God in the ATR manifest his identity. In this way, the reality and knowledge of God in the African Traditional Religion are disclosed in the names given to him.

For the Igbos, Chijindu God sustains life, invariably, the universe and, if God were to die, the whole world would collapse. He averts calamities, supplies rain, provides fertility and assures rich harvest and security from evil forces. The Africans see God as a merciful one. Thus, there is this common adage that God drives away flies from a tail-less cow.

### **Analysis and Deduction from Igbo Proverbs**

Proverbs for the Igbo are vegetables for eating words; they are feathery ornaments with which speeches are decorated. They enliven public speeches at meetings, social gatherings, religious and political rallies and various other occasions. For the Igbos, proverbs are the oil with which words are eaten. (*ilu bu mmanu eji eri okwu*).<sup>59</sup> The Igbo do not emphasize only the enlivening role of proverbs in any gathering. There is more to that. There is an indispensable function, namely, it codifies traditional beliefs or faith in God, man and the universe. Proverbs reveal religious faith, a world view, and the aspirations, hopes and fears of the people. Consequently, the Igbo have a store of proverbs in which are enshrined the ancient wisdom, beliefs and accumulated experiences of the pre-modern Igbo man. Let us analyze and deduce the real existence of God from some popular indigenous proverbs which express the absolute, supreme or ultimate nature of God. *Achokata Dibia Agaba Chukwu N'Iru* (After consulting a native doctor for several times all to no avail it becomes necessary to go directly to God).

On analysis, this proverb apart from emphasizing the fact of God's existence also acknowledges some of his essential attributes, namely, absoluteness, ultimate power, etc. *Chukwu Gbo Ogu Ile Dibia Abulu Eziokwu* (traditional medicine men admit the truth of any case that has been settled by God (*CHI-UKWU*)) This is a way of acknowledging the Monotheistic Ultimacy of *CHI-*

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<sup>59</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980), p. 41

*UKWU* in moral issues, namely, that God's decision is infallibly true and final. God is portrayed as the basis and guarantor of morality, probably because he knows not only the hidden activities of man but also hidden intentions; and would vindicate the falsely accused. Based on these assumptions the Igbo say: *Chukwu ma njo onye* (only God knows what is evil and can judge human intentions). *Chi bu obo onye ana emegbu emegbu* (God vindicates the course of a wrongly persecuted soul). He will judge the world and apportion justice. Here God is conceived as the existent, Supreme Being with absolute power and authority in both moral and socio-cultural issues. The regular approaches to him through mediator-gods, instead of emphasizing the fact of his non-existence strengthen the fact that he exists and there is non-like him. He demands special reference and moral dignity that he is not approached the way the gods, his creatures are approached. Some proverbs also emphasize God's providence. There are proverbs which express God's omniscience, omnipotence, kindness; his creative nature etc; which can also be deduced from the proverbs mentioned above. Though there are no proverbs in Igbo culture that expressly say that God's existence is a fact or self-evident truth almost known to all, these proverbs tell us more about God's nature and attributes and by implication his existence. It would be tantamount to self-contradiction to deny existence to a being considered or acknowledged by these people to be both the principles of absoluteness, creation and continued existence and dependence of all creatures whose being is contingent upon the Necessary Being, God (*CHIUKWU*). The above proverbs are clearly indigenous, as old as the traditional Igbo who coined them. They were in existence before the arrival of Christianity.

### **Critical Analysis and Deduction from Myths**

#### **The Myth of the Origin of Death**

One famous myth of the Igbos, under circulation in various forms and which tells how death came into the world is narrated by Obiego. At the beginning of things when there was nothing, neither man nor animals nor plants nor heaven nor earth, nothing indeed, nothing was, only one very powerful person was and his name was *CHUKWU*. Then He came and created both the water below, animals and everything as we see it today. Afterwards, *Chineke* created man, man was the head of all things, but *CHINEKE* and



ALA own man. After a long time, death entered the world and began killing men. Men sent a messenger to Him asking Him whether the dead could be restored to life and sent back to their homes.<sup>60</sup> They chose a dog as their messenger. The dog, however, did not go straight to Him, rather he dallied on the way. The toad had however, overheard the message and he wanted (wished) to punish mankind. He overtook the dog and reached *Chineke* first. He said that he had been sent by men to say that after death, they had no desire at all to return to the world. *Chineke* declared that He would respect men's wishes and when the dog arrived to *Chineke* with the true message, *Chineke* refused to alter His decision. Accordingly, a human being may be born again, he cannot return with the same body and the same personality.<sup>61</sup> The myth does not in any way suggest a doubted existence of the supreme being, instead, it emphasizes how death came into existence.

### **Myth of Why the Supreme Being Withdrew from the World of Men**

At Nnokwa in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, there is a myth of how CHI- UKWU (God) and man or earth was near to each other originally. The sky then, lay just above the earth. Men could reach CHI- UKWU (God) through a rope which hung down from the sky. There was no death at this time when God created the world and man. Men never lacked anything, God was interested in their affairs, associating and providing for them in all their needs. God was very near to man. The spirits and men were one. One day it happened that a woman spat out into the eyes of God.<sup>62</sup> He was offended and withdrew with the sky to its present position and punished men by causing them to die. Since then, things became difficult for men on earth. Evil, sin and suffering have spread all over the earth.

### **The Igbo and the Proof of God's Existence**

The debate for the existence of God dominates the field of philosophy of religion yet the Igbos are left out in this. That Igbos do not struggle to prove the existence of God neither implies that they are not reflective nor does it

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<sup>60</sup> C. C. Mbaegbu, "Traditional Arguments for the Existence of God" in *ajol-file-journals\_497\_articles\_87336-2010*, p. 41.

<sup>61</sup> Cosmos Okechukwu Obiego, *Africa Image of the Ultimate Reality: An Analysis of Igbo Ideas of Life and Death in Relation to Chukwu-God*, (Michigan: P. Lang, 1984), pp. 28-30

<sup>62</sup> Mbaegbu, "Traditional Arguments for the Existence of God", p. 41.



suggest that they have no scientific knowledge. It must be noted that philosophy, the King of knowledge originated in Africa, among the Egyptians, the cradle of knowledge and human civilization. The reason that Igbos do not labour themselves to prove God's existence is that His existence is vividly made manifest in nature. It is seen as a waste of time to delve into such an exercise when the facts are there. The reality of nature only goes to manifest God's existence and gives support to this fact. His knowledge of God is not one that is merely borne out of humanistic, empirical observation of nature, but one that has a metaphysical foundation. This does not suggest that Africans are not rational. For them, the proof of God's existence is not a priority. For Igbos, and as demonstrated above, God simply exists. There is no need to doubt, question or even to disprove the truth of this statement. His existence is a reality in which the beauty and splendour of nature manifest. Moreover, the fact that they do not question, doubt or disprove the truth-value of the statement 'God exists', does not mean there is no room for Atheism, Agnosticism, Skepticism, or even Atheism in an African traditional setting.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined studied and examined Igbo religio-cultural belief in the supreme being and the atheists' position. The work observes that various arguments have been advanced by the atheist, including arguments from the lack of evidence for God's existence, or from the manifest occurrence of certain phenomena (eg, pain, suffering) allegedly inconsistent with the existence of God. It maintains that the existence of God is a product of human gullibility and sentimentalism. The paper as well raises other issues surrounding the Supreme Being in Igbo thought, and shows that analysis of the Igbo idea of Supreme Being based on Western parameters results to irreconcilable arguments that cannot advance Igbo ontological thought. The paper however finds that the Igbo have a well-developed concept of the Supreme Being prior to and post-Western influence, and rejects the position that the idea of the Supreme Being is strange to Igbo thought. The paper then concludes that Igbo people are highly religious. Igbo religio-cultural belief system concludes that atheists believe that the non-existence of God is an illusion hence the reality of nature goes a long way to affirm the manifest existence of the ultimate reality.



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## A Generative Account of Allomorphic Variations in Nigerian English: Some Observable Typologies in L2 Spoken Prose

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### Abstract

It is rarely arguable that globalisation in an ICT-driven world has affected the kinds of English written and spoken in various parts of the globe. Using the spoken prose of one hundred final-year university students drawn from different sociolinguistic backgrounds in Nigeria as a case study, these researchers identified and investigated into specific instances of allomorphic variations in Nigerian spoken English. The respondents were drawn from four Federal Universities in the country. Two complementary, analytical approaches - perceptual and acoustic techniques - were employed to analyze the data while a component of the generative framework was adopted for its theoretical thrust. The results showed that the Nigerian English variety has peculiar features that serve the sociolinguistic needs of the society while, at the same time, isolating it from the speculative, exonormative standard, the RP. For instance, the allomorphs of the {D} and {Z} morphemes were, observably, not realized exactly as the ones articulated in the native speaker's variety designated as the native baseline, or the control. Rather, on average, 78.8% of the respondents adhered to forms representing an endonormative model, while approximately 23.2% attained what could account for the near-native variety. The findings signified emerging typologies in L2 spoken English leading to the conclusion that, like other forms of world Englishes, Nigerian spoken English has some peculiar features that reinforce its uniqueness. Such distinctiveness is, however, anchored on two basic criteria: social acceptability within the country and internationally intelligibility to speakers in other parts of the world. This last remark underscores Banjo's (1971) and Josiah's (2009) assertions that Nigerian English is more of an endonormative than exonormative, monolithic variety.

**Keywords:** Allomorphic variation, Second language, Endonormative, Nigerian English and spoken English



## Introduction

Several scholars have observed that casual, rapid or colloquial English speech is characterized by a considerable number of phonemic modifications among speakers, either within a word, at word boundaries, or at syllable or morpheme boundaries as the case may be (Chomsky and Halle, 1968; Gimson and Cruttenden, 1994; Yule, 1996; Shariatmadari, 2006). Others have also noted that allomorphic variations could result from “different choice of internal phonemes depending on the assimilatory pressure of the word environment felt by the speaker” or the phonological environment within which an allomorph occurs (Abercrombie, 1967; Gimson and Cruttenden, 1994). Such allomorphic modifications occasioned by phonological environments, or sometimes, the speaker’s articulatory mechanisms, are regular occurrences in natural languages. But, while such linguistic experience is also expected in a second language situation, it may not take exactly the same form. This is why this research is significant – it aims at finding out if allomorphic variations in an L2 situation like the Nigerian English is bound to take similar forms as observed in native-speakers’ variety with the same output as expected in standard spoken English.

Ladefoged (2006:109) has concluded that, “speech is a continuum of gestures that may be produced fully or in a reduced form, or may be virtually not present at all”. He has also noted that, there is nothing slovenly or lazy about using weak forms or assimilations since all these make for efficient speech which is capable of conveying the same meaning with less effort. In essence, Ladefoged’s (2006) explication implies that, some phonological modifications (such as weak forms, allomorphemes and all forms of assimilation) are common in the speech of every sort of speaker, whether British, American or others in second language (L2 from henceforth) situations. This source further indicates that speakers who make insufficient use of weak forms, allomorphemes and assimilations are likely to sound “stilted” (p. 110). From these remarks, it becomes pertinent to point out that this study is not intended to present the argument that Nigerian spoken English variety is inferior to any other variety of English, but that what may be observed as allomorphic or morphophonemic modifications are outcomes of normal articulatory adjustments which should be expected in ordinary, natural speeches as pointed out in Ladefoged (2006) and this contributes to what could account for “efficient speech” (p. 110).



Ladefoged's (2006) observation corroborates Abercrombie's (1967) remark: that assimilation (including all forms of morphophonemic or allomorphic variations in speech) has the effect of “producing some economy of effort in the utterance of a sequence of words” ultimately resulting in the reduction of “the number, or the extent, of the movements and adjustments which the speech-producing organs have to perform in the transition from one word to the next” (p.135). The other way to put this is that phonological conditioning, including all forms of allomorphic variations in either native speakers' variety or L2 utterances, are outcomes of inevitable phonetic factors that may or may not be avoided in natural speech.

In undertaking this study, therefore, there will be an attempt to find out if natural speech utterances that are minimally intelligible in L2 spoken English such as the Nigerian variety are outcomes of sub-standard speech or not. Beyond this, it is necessary to distinguish between the ideal and the real in line with linguistic competence and performance when discussing tenuous aspects of spoken prose such as allomorphic modifications in L2 spoken English. A number of statistically analyzed instances will be isolated in this study to account for the speech performances of the respondents used for the study.

In particular, the study takes a look at allomorphic variations that are observable in Educated Nigerian Spoken English (ENSE henceforth). It draws its data from the spoken English of final-year university students in Nigeria who served as respondents. A seventy-worded paragraph was read into an audio device by the respondents and this was analyzed perceptually and acoustically. Also, for the purpose of interpolation, a native speaker of English (who admittedly speaks a variety of Standard British English) served as the control for a rewarding analysis. The respondents comprise speakers of the three major languages in Nigeria (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) as well as those of some minority languages.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher was interested in tackling some pertinent questions in this research.



- (i) How are the allomorphs of the {D}morpheme realized in Nigerian spoken English as distinct from those of the Standard British English?
- (ii) What are the allomorphs of the {Z} morpheme which distinctly characterize the Nigerian English variety?
- (iii) To what extent do allomorphic variations in Nigerian English constitute intelligibility problems for Nigerian interlocutors?
- (iv) How are variations in allomorphemes in Nigerian English typological to the concept of new Englishes?

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Issues**

Phonological processes take different forms in virtually all-natural languages. One such process is assimilation which can result in the occurrence of a phoneme within a specific word position or linguistic environment in an utterance. Such an occurrence may result in several kinds of phonological modifications of the morpheme.

Katamba (1989) has carefully noted that assimilation involving the alternation in the shape of the morpheme is not just an arbitrary occurrence, but is an outcome of phonological conditioning. For instance, the allomorph of the morpheme that occurs in a given phonological context is partly or wholly determined by the sounds found in the allomorphs of adjacent morphemes. An instance is the case of past-time reference involving the morpheme {-d} in the regular form of the verb in English. The morpheme {-d} has three allomorphs, /d, t, ɪd/. If the past form of the regular verb ends with the phoneme /d/ and is preceded by a voiced sound, then /d/ retains its quality as [d], as in *blamed* [bleɪmd], *saved* /seɪvd/, and so on. If the /d/ past time reference is immediately preceded by a voiceless sound other than /t/, then /d/ becomes [t], as in *wished* [wɪʃt], *traced* [treɪst]. Relatively, if the /d/ past time reference is preceded by /t/ and /d/, the /d/ becomes [ɪd] as in *ended* ['endɪd], *presented* [pri'zəntɪd]. These morphophonemic variations can be summarily represented as follows:

- (i) Blame + d → *blamed* [bleɪmd] = /d/ → [d]
- (ii) Wish + ed → *wished* [wɪʃt] = /d/ → [t]
- (iii) End + ed → ['endɪd] = /d/ → [ɪd]

Another case of morphophonemic variation in Standard British English involves cases of concord, pluralization and possessives referred to as  $Z_1$ ,  $Z_2$  and  $Z_3$  morphemes (cf Eka, 1994; Palmer, 1974 and Udofot and Eshiet (1999). These cases are clearly illustrated by the sources cited here. For instance, these sources indicate that the final sounds in the plural morpheme {s} in English words such as “cat”, “dog” and “rose” will vary directly with the kind of sounds that precede them. Thus, when the plural marker “s” is added to cat (i.e. cats), the {s} morpheme remains [s] as in [kæts]; when the same plural morpheme {s} is added to the dog (i.e. dogs), the final segment of dogs becomes [z] as in [dɒgz]; and when the plural marker “s” is added to the noun “rose” changing it to “roses”, the same morpheme {s} assimilates to [ɪz] as in [ˈrəʊzɪz]. The three instances cited above can be summarily represented as:

- (i) cat + s → cats [kæts] = /s/ → [s]
- (ii) dog + s → dogs [dɒgz] = /s/ → [z]
- (iii) rose + s → roses [ˈrəʊzɪz] = /s/ → [ɪz]

Some general phonological rules (P -Rules) have been formulated to explain cases of allomorphic variations (cf Dinneen, 1966; Eka, 1994). For instance, ‘s’ in most cases is generally used to mark concord, pluralization and possessive cases in English. First, when the morpheme {s} occurs at the end of a word and is immediately preceded by a voiced sound, particularly lenis consonants other than /z, ʒ, dʒ/, the /s/ becomes [z] as in boys, pleads, John’s, among others. Second, if the {s} morpheme marking concord, pluralization or the possessive case is immediately preceded by a voiceless sound other than /s, ʃ, tʃ/, then the {s} morpheme retains its quality as [s], e.g. rats, keeps, Keats’. But if the plural morpheme {s} is immediately preceded by /z, ʒ, dʒ; s, ʃ, tʃ/, the /s/ changes to [ɪz], as in buses, rises, Moses. From these analyses, we can conclude that the segments /s/, /z/ and /ɪz/ are allomorphs of the morpheme {s}, or variants of the phoneme /s/ (cf Palmer, 1974).

In the majority of cases, linguists identify two major classes of morphophonemic variations that occur in English — the {D} morpheme affecting the past tense form of the regular verb, and the {Z} morpheme indicating concord, pluralization and possessive cases in English. The following schemata illustrate phonological modifications involving the {D}



morpheme which exemplifies the occurrence of the {-d} past tense morpheme in standard spoken English.

- (i) blame + d → blamed [bleɪmd] = /d/ → [d];
- (ii) wish + ed → wished [wɪʃt] = /d/ → [t];
- (iii) end + ed → ended ['endɪd] = /d/ → [ɪd].

These schemata imply that the {-d} morphemes have three allomorphs: [d], [t] and [ɪd] represented by the first, second and third schemata respectively. The [Ø] allomorph of the {-d} morpheme marks cases of irregular past tense forms signifying zero morphs, as input, broadcast, etc, which have no distinct past forms.

For the {Z} morpheme, the following schemata are exemplified:

- (i) cat + s → cats [kæts] = /s/ → [s]
- (ii) dog + s → dogs [dɒgz] = /s/ → [z]
- (iii) rose + s → roses ['rəʊzɪz] = /s/ → [ɪz]

What these schemata summarily signify is that the {Z} morpheme has three allomorphs: [s], [z] and [ɪz] in its inventory. The fourth [Ø] is the zero-allomorph indicating zero plural morphs as in such words as sheep, equipment, cattle, etc. These schemata were adopted to test respondents' performance based on the corpus used for data collection. The schemata were formulated to generate the following P-rules:

(a) The {D} morpheme:

- (i) /d/ → [d] /  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} + \text{con} \\ + \text{voice} \\ - \text{d} \end{array} \right] \text{ — \#}$
- (ii) /d/ → [t] /  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} - \text{voice} \\ - \text{son} \\ + \text{con} \end{array} \right] \text{ — \#}$
- (iii) /d/ → [ɪd] /  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} + \text{voice} \\ + \text{Obstr.} \end{array} \right] \text{ — \#}$

**(b) The {Z} morpheme:**

Some general phonological rules (P-Rules) have been formulated to explain cases of allomorphic variations (cf Dinneen, 1966; Eka, 1994). For instance, 's' in most cases is generally used to mark concord, pluralization and possessive cases in English. First, when the morpheme {s} occurs at the end of a word and is immediately preceded by a voiced sound, particularly lenis consonants other than /z, ʒ, dʒ/, the /s/ becomes [z] as in boys, pleads, John's, among others. Second, if the {s} morpheme marking concord, pluralization or the possessive case is immediately preceded by a voiceless sound other than /s, ʃ, tʃ/, then the {s} morpheme retains its quality as [s], e.g. rats, keeps, Keats'. But if the plural morpheme {s} is immediately preceded by /z, ʒ, dʒ; s, ʃ, tʃ/, the /s/ changes to [ɪz], as in buses, rises, Moses. From these analyses, we can conclude that the segments /s/, /z/ and /ɪz/ are allomorphs of the morpheme {s}, or variants of the phoneme /s/ (cf Palmer, 1974).

These rules for the {Z} morpheme schemata are as presented below:

- (i)  $/s/ \rightarrow [s] \ / \left( \begin{array}{l} + \text{con} \\ - \text{voice} \\ - /s, ʃ, tʃ/ \end{array} \right) \text{---} \#$
- (ii)  $/s/ \rightarrow [z] \ / \left( \begin{array}{l} + \text{con} \\ - \text{voc} \\ - z, ʒ, dʒ \end{array} \right) \text{---} \#$
- (iii)  $/s/ \rightarrow [ɪz] \ / \left( \begin{array}{l} + \text{con} \\ + /s, z, ʒ, dʒ, ʃ, tʃ/ \end{array} \right) \text{---} \#$



### **Research Methodology**

The subjects of this study comprised two groups of respondents: an Experimental Group (EG) and a Control Group (CG). The EG was made up of one hundred (100) final-year university students, all of them Nigerians, from varying socio-economic, socio-political and educational backgrounds. This group of respondents was randomly selected from four federal universities covering University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Othman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto. This arrangement was to ensure a fair spread of respondents' base to cover, at least minimally, various ethnic groups in various parts of the country. From such an experiment, generalization could be attested to as being truly widespread. The respondents in the EG were drawn from nineteen linguistic groups including both the three major languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) and some minority languages or the “medium” group languages (cf Egbokhare, 2003). It would be doubtful if nineteen languages and dialects out of between 400 and 513 languages and dialects in Nigeria (Grimes, 2000; Elugbe, 2006) are adequate for generalization in this study. But it should be noted that the selection of respondents from the nineteen linguistic groups is merely representative of different parts of Nigeria. Each of the respondents in the experimental group had exposure to English speaking for upward of fifteen to twenty-five years.

Besides, As postulated in Banjo (1971;1976), Adesanoye (1973), Fakuade (1978), Eka (1985;2000), and Josiah (2009), among others, many final-year university students in Nigeria are considered to be speakers or exponents of Educated Nigerian English. This is why we have selected our respondents from this class of Nigerians (cf Jowitt, 2000; Udofot, 2004;2006).

The Control Group had just one respondent – a Briton who is a native speaker of English. The respondent in the CG had his university education at Cambridge University and the University of Essex respectively, and speaks a variety of the RP. One respondent in the Control Group may appear inadequate, but this is not obviously a contrastive study of Educated Nigerian Spoken English and another variety of English, the RP, for instance. The author considers that using one RP speaker is enough for interpolation and an invariable control to the variables observed among speakers in the EG (cf. Udofot, 2004, 2006).



## **Elicitation Procedure**

The data used for this study was a seventy-one-worded paragraph and another thirty-four words and phrases. The single words and phrases contained potential elements of allomorphic variations modelled after Crystal (1987), Schane (1973), Katamba (1989) and Kreidler (1989). The same words and phrases were also used to compose the paragraph. The corpora were provided for the respondents to read into an audio device provided for them. Each of them read in turn, and adequate time was given to each respondent to go through the script before reading. Each respondent read a total of 105 words into the tape within three to four minutes. At the end, approximately five hours, thirty minutes was spent in recording the data. The single words and phrases were read in isolation while the short paragraph was read at a stretch. The sentences in the paragraph were meant to test the possible occurrence of allomorphic variations determined by fast speech while the single words and phrases were aimed at testing potential processes of morphophonemic modifications that could be noticed with a slower pace of reading.

The corpus used for the study contained single words and phrases as well as one short paragraph which were provided for the respondents to read into an audio-device provided for them. Each of them read in turn, and adequate time was given to each respondent to go through the script before reading. Each respondent read a total of 105 words into the tape within three to four minutes. At the end, approximately five hours, thirty minutes was spent in recording the data. The single words and phrases were read in isolation while the short paragraph was read at a stretch. The sentences in the paragraph were meant to test the possible occurrence of allomorphic variations determined by fast speech while the single words and phrases were aimed at testing potential processes of morphophonemic modifications that could be noticed with a slower pace of reading.

## **Analytical Procedure**

### **(i) Transcription of the Data**

After the reading came the transcription. Although the transcription was solely carried out by the researcher, but there was consultation with other phoneticians and phonologists who made some useful suggestions with regards to the transcription of the data. Different transcription models were adopted for the varying data. For instance, Gimson's Transcription System



was used for the English data exemplified by the Control. But, in transcribing the Nigerian English data, Nigerian English phonemes enumerated in Odumuh (1987), Eka (1985; 2000), Jowitt (1991), Jibril (1982), Adetugbo (2004), Awonusi (2004) as well as other available models on Nigerian English were used juxtaposed with Gimson Transcription System for a more accurate and empirical representation.

## **(ii) Acoustic Analysis of Data**

For the acoustic analysis, audio, and tape-recorded data were uploaded into a PC-based sound analysis system consisting of 160 GB of Audio/Visual Hard Disk and a Full Duplex Multi 1/0 Audio Capture Card. The problem of ambient noise which the researcher encountered during the recording stage as a result of not recording the data in a sound-proof studio was drastically reduced using Cool Edit Pro and Adobe Auditioning 1.5. During the pre-processing stage, residual noise was reduced to the barest minimum using the click/pop elimination as well as hiss and random noise elimination before transferring the data to the speech analysis software (Praat) which we used for the acoustic investigation.

Praat, a sound analysis software for undertaking phonetic analysis and sound manipulations (Mills, Edwards and Beckham, 2005) was adopted for the acoustic analysis. It was used to determine such phonetic features as duration of utterance between the EG and the Control, amplitude and frequencies of utterances, voicing ripples to determine voiced and devoiced or voiceless segments as displayed on the spectrogram, intensity, harmonics and Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) alongside other acoustic properties and observation of waveform to determine tenuous allomorphic elements, among others. A close observation of the waveform on the sound spectrogram helped in isolating the basic features of allomorphic segments which were observably prominent during the analysis.

## **Data Presentation, Analysis/Results**

Data for each of the items are presented and analyzed one after the other. The first set of discussions has to do with the perceptual analysis of the items that exemplified instances of allomorphic variation in our data. This goes hand-in-hand with the statistical tool used, that is, “Test of Proportion”.

Each of the tables presented in this study has six columns namely: “Pronunciation”, “Code”, “Frequency”, “Percentage”, “Z-value”, “P-value” and “Remarks”. The “Pronunciation” column shows the variant realizations of the item(s) tested. The column designated as “Code” is a combination of letters and numbers arbitrarily designed to aid the computerization of the data for convenience during the analysis. The codes, it should be noted, are in the form of mnemonics representing the items to be analysed and this was done so that the statisticians could feed the data into the PC to run the analysis. For instance, the expression “Watch You” is coded “WY” reflecting the initial letters in that expression; “This Year” takes the initial letters “TY”, and so on. The numbers assigned to each coded item reflect the various variants observed during the transcription. These were necessary devices adopted because it was difficult for the statisticians who helped in the analysis to key in the transcribed versions of our variable data into the computer before running the analysis. They were equally afraid that the computer could run the analysis if the transcribed versions were used. It was necessary to leave these codes the way they are on the tables so that while making references to the items on any of the tables, we can easily use them to facilitate smooth discussion and to avoid unnecessary repetition of the transcribed items.

The column tagged ‘frequency’ on the table showed the number of respondents that realized a particular item (words or expressions). The “Z-value” column is the statistical value of each of the items presented in the data. It is a technique usually employed in Statistics to determine the critical or probability value of the item analyzed. Column five (the “P-value”) indicates the actual critical or probability value, which can help determine whether the item analyzed is a significant value, or not. The most significant values on the “P-value” column shown as “0.00000” indicate the most likely patterns of realization of an item among many of the subjects while the values that are above 0.05 are deemed to be insignificant. This means that any value on our tables above 0.05 (occurring under the “P-value” column) is marked as being insignificant realizations in Nigerian English. The last column designated as “Remarks” indicates whether an item should be considered significant or not. Details of the results are presented in the following section. The tables that are relevant to each of the sections are grouped and presented together to facilitate smooth discussion on each of the items tested.



**Item Analyzed: The {D} Morpheme**

**Table 1: Respondents’ Variants in the Realization of the Word “Tested”.**

Example: *Tested*

Control’s Realization: / t<sup>h</sup>estəd /

PRONUNCIATION	CODE	FREQUENCY	%	Z-value	P-value	REMARKS
t <sup>h</sup> estəd	TD 1	13	13	3.86556	0.00011	Significant
tested	TD 2	67	67	14.24887	0.00000	Significant
t <sup>h</sup> ested	TD 3	7	7	2.74352	0.00608	Significant
testid	TD 4	8	8	3.86556	0.00011	Significant
t <sup>h</sup> estrid	TD 5	5	5	2.29416	0.02178	Significant
		100	100			

**Table 2: Respondents’ Variants in the Realization of the Word “Watched”.**

Example: *Watched*

Control’s Realization: / wɒtʃt /

PRONUNCIATION	CODE	FREQUENCY	%	Z-value	P-value	REMARKS
wɒtʃt	WT 1	1	1	1.00504	0.31488	Not Significant
wɒtʃd	WT 2	15	15	4.20084	0.00003	Significant
wɔtʃd	WT 3	37	37	7.66356	0.00000	Significant
wɔʃd	WT 4	18	18	4.68521	0.00000	Significant
watʃd	WT 5	8	8	2.94884	0.00319	Significant
wɒtʃ	WT 6	16	16	4.36436	0.00001	Significant
wɔ:sd	WT 7	3	3	1.75863	0.07864	Not Significant
wɔʃ	WT 8	2	2	1.42857	0.15313	Not Significant
		100	100			

**Table 3: Respondents’ Variants in the Realization of the Word “Warned”.**

Example: *Warned*

Control’s Realization: / wɔ:nd /

PRONUNCIATION	CODE	FREQUENCY	%	Z-value	P-value	REMARKS
wɔ:nd	WN 1	65	65	13.62770	0.00000	Significant
wɔ:nd	WN 2	11	11	3.51562	0.00044	Significant
wɔ:n	WN 3	14	14	4.03473	0.00005	Significant
wa:nd	WN 4	7	7	2.74352	0.00608	Significant
wɔmd	WN 5	1	1	1.00504	0.31488	Not Significant
wɜ:nd	WN 6	2	2	1.42857	0.15313	Not Significant
		100	100			

**Item Analyzed: The {Z} Morpheme**

Table 4: Respondents’ Variants in the Realization of the Word “Cats”

Example 1: *Cats*

Control’s Realization: /k<sup>h</sup>æts/

PRONUNCIATION	CODE	FREQUENCY	%	Z-value	P-value	REMARKS
k <sup>h</sup> æts	KT 1	25	25	5.77350	0.00000	Significant
k <sup>h</sup> ats	KT 2	17	17	4.52570	0.00001	Significant
kats	KT 3	49	49	9.80916	0.00000	Significant
Kaṭ	KT 4	5	5	2.29416	0.02178	Significant
kət	KT 5	3	3	1.75863	0.07864	Not Significant
		100	100			



**Table 23: Respondents’ Variants in the Realization of the Word “Dogs”.**

Example 2: *Dogs*

Control’s Realization: /dɒgz/

PRONUNCIATION	CODE	FREQUENCY	%	Z-value	P-value	REMARKS
dɒgz	DO 1	33	33	7.01810	0.00000	Significant
dɔgz	DO 2	22	22	5.31085	0.00000	Significant
dɔgz	DO 3	45	45	9.04534	0.00000	Significant
		100	100			

**Table 24: Respondents’ Variants in the Realization of the Word “Horses”.**

Example 3: *Horses*

Control’s Realization: /'hɔ:zɪz/

PRONUNCIATION	CODE	FREQUENCY	%	Z-value	P-value	REMARKS
'hɔ:zɪz	HZ 1	8	8	2.74352	0.00608	Significant
'hɔ:zɪz	HZ 2	45	45	9.04534	0.00000	Significant
'hɔzɪs	HZ 3	47	47	9.41697	0.00000	Significant
		100	100			

### The {D} Morpheme in Spoken Nigerian English

Three words on our corpus, “tested”, “watched” and “warned” were used to test the past tense morpheme {-d} in the Nigerian English variety. The results are as presented on Tables 16, 17 and 18.

#### Example 1: Warned /wɔ:nd /: The {-d} allomorph [d]

The word on our corpus that illustrated the situation in which the past tense morpheme {-d} has the allomorph [d] is “warned” /wɔ:nd/. The rule for this



allomorph is that if the past form of the regular verb ends with the segment /d/, then /d/ retains its quality as [d] thus:

Warn + ed → Warned [wɔːnd] = /d/ → [d]

This explains the context of Rule (i) we presented earlier in this section. We now want to test the application of this rule with the performance of our respondents.

There were six (6) different realizations of the word “warned” noticed in the data we collected. The form with the highest index of (65) was [wɔːnd]. Next to it was [wɔːn] articulated by 11 respondents. Another form [waːnd] was realized by seven (7) respondents comprising six Hausa and one Fulani speakers. One other Hausa speaker realized the form [wɔːmd] while two other speakers, one Yoruba and the other a Hausa realized the variant [wɜːnd].

The general performance as reflected in the data showed that the majority of the respondents, irrespective of the ethnic background or MT, pronounced the form [wɔːnd] which incidentally is an exponent of the RP variant. The /ɔː/ seemed long enough, at least close to the length of the RP variant. This was a specific case where the EG’s variant appeared to be equivalent to that of the Control. The long /ɔː/ sound realized by most of the respondents must have been occasioned by the presence of two voiced segments, that is, [+ sonorant] preceding it because, generally, NE /ɔː/ is predictably shorter in length than the RP /ɔː/ (cf Ekong, 1978; Adetugbo, 1977; Jowitt, 1991). But this should always be interpreted based on the phonological environment that occasions the sound as evidenced in this context.

The most interesting fact about this particular item was that, at least, the majority of the respondents (86%) realized the suffix – ed represented the {-d} morpheme as [d]. This implies that the realization of the {-d} morpheme in this instance did not pose difficulty to our respondents. By extension, the rule conditioning the occurrence of the {-d} morpheme as [d] in SBE also applies to the Nigerian English variety. We also need to quickly add that in the multi-sociolinguistic environment in which Nigeria is known, there may be other variations, for instance, the final devoicing of



voiced segments which is known to occur in Nigerian English (Adegbija, 2004; Adetugbo, 2004). In that case, /d/ could be rendered as a devoiced segment [d̥], or may be deleted where there is the consonant cluster, as our respondents who rendered it as [wɔːn] have shown.

**Example 2: Watched / wɒtʃt /: The {-d} allomorph [t]**

For the [t] allomorph, eight (8) variant forms were noticed among our respondents. The form with the highest index of thirty-seven (37) was [wɒtʃd] which spread across the various linguistic groups. Seven (7) of the Hausa speakers and one Fulani speaker realized it as [watʃd] while 8 Yorubas, 5 Igbos, two Nupes, one Igala, one Ijaw and one Ibibio making a total of 18 respondents were heard pronouncing the form [wɒtʃd]. One Esan, one Igala and one Yoruba were heard producing the form [wɔːsd], sixteen (16) respondents produced another variant [wɒtʃ] without the [d] allomorph while another two articulated the form [wɒtʃ]. The worst performance was noticed with the variant [wɒtʃt̥] which represented the RP variant. Apart from the Control who articulated the [t] clearly, only one respondent could realize the RP variant. It appears, based on the pronunciations of the other words on our corpus, that this respondent in the EG had been in contact with native speakers in his formative years.

From the analysis so far, it is clear that only one member of the EG pronounced the RP variant “watched” [wɒtʃt̥]. At least, not less than eighty-one (81) respondents had the final [d] in their pronunciation (even though some had it as a devoiced sound) while eighteen (18) others did not produce the final [d] at all. The implication of this analysis is that majority of Educated Nigerians do not produce the final [d] morpheme as [t] which is an exponent of SBE variant. Based on this performance, we reject Rule (ii) which we earlier presented as an account of SBE realization of the [t] allomorph after lenis consonants. This means that most Nigerians realize the {-d} allomorph as [d] irrespective of the preceding segment, based however, on the orthographic environment. This is a clear case of spelling pronunciation. This analysis corroborates Jowitt’s (1991:78) remark that, in Nigerian English, “final /t/ is realized as [d] by many speakers where orthographic – ed suggest /d/, and this entails pre-final voicing”. In our experience, the final voicing element was reduced to devoiced forms in

many of the instances. Observably, this does not result from mother-tongue interference as some would assume, but from the confusion that arises as a result of the English orthography because the rule that changes [d] to [t] appears inexplicably arbitrary and illogical, and therefore, does not seem to favour L<sub>2</sub> speakers of English. We equally contend that this is not likely to be an experience peculiar to Nigerian English speakers alone.

As a follow-up, many non-native speakers are likely to have the same experience as the case of Nigerian speakers explained here. More so, it is doubtful if this performance could impede national or international intelligibility since there are clues to context-based nuances of meaning that could aid communicators during speech acts. It should be recalled that Jenkins (2000) has proposed the adoption of a set of “nuclear norms” in the phonology of English as an International Language (EIL) using the concept of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) instead of maintaining a monolithic form of Standard English. This is because there are more speakers and users of English in the Expanding Circle than in the Inner Circle (Crystal, 1997). This idea is again suggested in Alptekin (2002) and Celik (2008).

### **Example 3: Tested /<sup>h</sup>estəd /: The {-d} allomorph [d]**

For the word “tested” /<sup>h</sup>estəd/, the following performances were noticed. Thirteen (13) respondents realized the variant [<sup>h</sup>estəd] while five (5) articulated the RP variant [<sup>h</sup>estɪd] and another 8, [testɪd]. However, we noticed that the variant realized by the Control was [<sup>h</sup>estəd] and not [<sup>h</sup>estɪd]. Sixty-seven (67) respondents produced the form [ˈtested]. In the latter, the two vowels in the two syllables were realized as if they were of equal quality and length, except with the slight shortening of the second in the second syllable. But the Control clearly articulated the second vowel as the schwa /ə/ which is a reduced vowel. The performance of the sixty-seven respondents who realized the item as [tested] is understandable: full-vowel timing has been attested in the Nigerian English variety because of the preponderance of strong or accented syllables and the absence of reduced vowels (Akinjobi, 2004; Udofot, 2004). This is why the majority of our respondents realized their final syllable of “tested” as [ted] and not [tɪd] or [təd]. One major reason that may be advanced for this realization is the



incidence of spelling pronunciation occasioned by the orthographic environment as noted in Awonusi (2004), Adetugbo (2004), Adegbija (2004), Jibril (1982) and Jowitt (1991). The second could be analyzable from the perspective of MT interference (Bamgbose, 1995; Awonusi, 2004; Adetugbo, 2004). In some of the cases, (apart from the realization of the lengthened form of [e:]), the final [d] was articulated as a devoiced segment. The conclusion we draw here is that the majority of educated Nigerian English speakers do not realize the allomorph {-id} in English. They produce the form {-ed} instead (cf Jibril, 1982). With this performance, Rule (iii) of the {-d} morpheme we presented earlier is rejected as accounting for most Nigerian English utterances ending with the [ɪd] allomorph. We will now reconstruct the [-d] morpheme in ESNE as follows:

- (i) warn + ed → warned [wɔ:nd] = /d/ → [d]
- (ii) watch + ed → watched [wɔtɪd] = /d/ → [d]
- (iii) test + ed → tested [ˈtestɪd] = /d/ → [ed]

Rule (i) is interpreted as /d/ remains [d] after voiced sounds; Rule (ii) is that /d/ remains [d] after voiceless sounds (and no matter the environment) while Rule (iii) has the interpretation that [d] changes to [ed] (though occasionally [ɪd] and [əɪd]), since we had some tokens of this as statistically significant after /s, z, ʒ, dʒ, ʃ, tʃ/. The implication of this is that in Educated Spoken Nigerian English (ESNE), we have two major allomorphs for the past tense morpheme {-d} namely [d] and [ed] while [t] is generally non-existent. This finding is corroborated in Jibril (1982) and Jowitt (1991).

### **The {Z} Morpheme in Spoken Nigerian English**

The words in our corpus that exemplified the occurrence of the {Z} morpheme in Nigerian English are “cats”, “dogs” and “horses”. In SBE, the {Z} morpheme has three allomorphs: [s], [z] and [ɪz] and these allomorphs correspond to the words “cats”, “dogs” and “horses” respectively. We had earlier stated the rules that occasion the occurrence of the {Z} morpheme in normal English speech. There is no need to restate them again here.

#### **Example I: Cats /k<sup>h</sup>æts/: The {-z} allomorph [s].**

There were five variants of this word as pronounced by our respondents. The first form [k<sup>h</sup>æts] representing the RP variant was realized by twenty-

five (25) respondents nine of whom were Hausas, seven Yorubas, four Igbos, one Igbira, one idoma, two Ibibio and one Annang speakers. The variant [k<sup>h</sup>ats] was heard among seventeen (17) respondents spread across the various linguistic groups. The version [kats] was the most statistically significant (49) with the P-value put at 0.00000. Two other forms: [kat̚] with unreleased [t̚] and [kət] were realized by five (5) and three (3) respondents respectively. The last variant [kət] was rendered by one Hausa and two Nupe speakers.

From the analysis above, we can conclude that most of the respondents realized the form with the final [s] fully articulated. It appears that those who realized the form with unreleased [t̚] perceptually believed that they have /s/ in their utterance whereas it was actually the [t] that became lengthened thus sounding like [ts]. The variant [ket] seemed to be idiosyncratic with the three respondents who realized them. The conclusion we draw from these analyses is that educated Nigerian speakers of English do not have difficulty realizing the final [s] after voiceless sounds thus upholding Rule (i) of the {Z} morpheme, that is, that [s] remains [s] after voiceless environment thus:

$$/s/ \rightarrow [s] \quad / \quad \left( \begin{array}{l} + \text{consonant} \\ - \text{voice} \end{array} \right) \text{---} \#$$

There is the need to add that where there are consonant clusters, sometimes the [s] gets deleted as in, “lists ten” /lists ten/ which may be rendered as [list ten] or simplified to [listen] (cf Bobda and Chumbow, 1999; Jowitt, 1991).

The other words that exemplified the occurrence of the allomorph were “asks” and scientists. For asks, 50 respondents produced [asks] while another 31 produced [æks], so about 81 respondents produced the final /s/ as [s]. For scientists, there was cluster simplification such that only 58 respondents produced scientists fully.



### **Example 2: Dogs /dɒgz/: The {-z} allomorph [z]**

The second allomorph of the {-z} morpheme [z] basically occurs in an environment where /s/ marking plural, possession or concord is preceded by voiced segments other than /s/, /ʃ/ and /tʃ/. When such a phonological environment is created, the [z] allomorph is inevitable in SBE. In testing this allomorph in ESNE, we used the word “dogs” in our corpus to illustrate the occurrence of [z] as /s/. The respondents produced three variants of this word. The most significant variant that was articulated by majority of our respondents was the devoiced form [dɒgz] (45%). The form in which [z] occurred as [s] was rendered by 22 respondents while another thirty-three (33) produced the SBE variant. What this implies is that many Nigerians produce the final {-z} morpheme as [s] and [z] and not as [z] (cf Awonusi, 2004; Jibril, 1982).

Seven (7) Yorubas and two Ibibio speakers were heard realizing the [z] as [s] possibly because /z/ does not occur as a phoneme in their MT (Jibril, 1982; Awonusi, 2004b; Essien, 1990). The Igbos had the highest inventory of /z/ followed by the Hausas all of whom are attested as having [z] as a phonemic segment in their inventory (Jibril, 1982). Therefore, mother-tongue interference, to some extent, played some major roles in determining the respondents’ performance on this item.

The other words, which exemplified the occurrence of this item, were “suppose”, “learns”, “questions”, “problems” and “Jeans”. In all these words, just like we observed with “dogs”, the majority of the respondents realized the voiceless alveolar fricative [s] instead of the voiced form [z]. For instance, in “suppose”, 68 respondents realized it as [sə'pɒs] with a final devoicing of [z] while the remaining 32 shared the forms [sə'pəʊz], [sə'pəʊz], [sə'pɒs] and [sɒpɒz]. These all indicate that the realization of the final [z] for our respondents was problematic while the same difficulty was not encountered with the form [sə'pɒs], etc. Our conclusion is that, except in the context where /z/ is found intervocalically, many educated Nigerians realize word-final/z/ as [z] or [s] (cf Awonusi, 2004; Jibril, 1982). Once again, the researcher rejects Rule (ii) of the [Z] morpheme stated earlier and upholds that [s] remains [s] after voiced sounds except when occurring intervocalically or in “zebra” words (see Awonusi, 2004).



**Example 3: Horses /'hɔ:zɪz/: The {z} allomorph [ɪz]**

The major word that occurred on our corpus as an exponent of this item was “horses”. The following data was gleaned from this word. Eight (8) respondents realized the RP variant ['hɔ:zɪz] which was also articulated by the Control. Forty-five (45) other respondents realized it as ['hɔ:zɪz] with the last [z] devoiced while another forty-seven [47] produced the form ['hɔ:zɪs]. This performance shows that in Nigerian English, the RP [ɪz] allomorph is realized as [ɪs] or [ɪz] and marginally as [ɪz] (cf Jibril, 1982; Jowitt, 1991; Awonusi, 2004). We will now reconstruct another rule on the realization of allomorphs in ESNE:

cat + s → cats /kats/ = /s/ → [s]

dog + s → dogs /dɒgz/ = /s/ → [s], [z]

horse + s → horses /'hɔ:zɪs/ = /s/ → [ɪs], ± [ɪz]

This last schema implies that [ɪz] is an alternant or may be regarded as a diaphone.

**Discussion and Summary of Findings**

This study examined allomorphic variations in Educated Spoken Nigerian English and attempted to contrast modestly such instances in Nigerian English with those of Standard British English. The overall results show that various forms of allomorphic modifications occur in Nigerian spoken English, apparently distinct from those of Standard SBE, and that by extension, from the perspective of some revealing facts in this study, Educated spoken Nigerian English is typologically different from Standard Spoken English and possibly from those of other expanding circle Englishes. For instance, cases of allomorphic modifications involving {D} and {Z} morphemes are predictably different from that of SBE, especially the case of [t] allomorph of the {D} morpheme. Using the P-rules in Generative Phonology, it is possible to generalize and thereby predict the occurrence of allomorphic phenomena in ESNE. Such phenomena could ultimately serve as an emerging typology that could be used to measure what happens in other world Englishes globally.

Generally, much of the variations in the forms of allomorphs noticed in ESNE suggest an endonormative, rather than an exonormative model of



English, which again suggests some evolving identities or typologies in the Expanding Circle Englishes around the world, as exemplified in Nigerian spoken English. For instance, observably, the [D] and [Z] morphemes occur differently in ESNE as distinct from that of SBE. Thus, while the {-d} morpheme has the {t} allomorph after voiceless sounds and [ɪd] after voiced sounds except [tʃ,s,ʒ, ʃ,z] in SBE, ENSE has no [t] allomorph and the [ɪd] allomorph is realized basically as [ed] and only has [əɪd] and [ɪd] marginally. For the [z] allomorph, ESNE has only two variants [s] and [ɪz] or [is] while SBE has three, [s], [z] and [ɪz]. The fact is that the ESNE variants seem to occur basically as a result of spelling pronunciation in the majority of cases examined (cf Jowitt, 1991, 2007; Igboanusi, 2002; Gut, 2002; Udofot, 2007; Josiah, 2010, 2011, Josiah and Taiwo, 2015; Josiah and Akpan, 2016; and Josiah, 2017).

### Conclusion

Some conclusions were drawn by other studies of this nature to provide the basis for the current one the researcher is attempting to draw here. On Philippine English, Llamzon (1997:43) concludes that “Filipinos are willing to copy American English up to a point; in fact, an approximation of an English formal style is what they want”. They retain something of their identity. Relatively, Jibril (1982:330), while concluding his study, notes that “many highly educated and well-placed Nigerians — including University professors, politicians (one of them, a State Governor) and lawyers do not approximate closely to native patterns of English pronunciation”. On his part, Adetugbo (2004: 197) observes that: “The phonology of Nigerian English is *NOT* identical with the phonology of RP”. He further argues that the most sophisticated users of English in Nigeria are Nigerian University teachers and students and these groups have at their disposal two phonologies of English: one approximating but not identical with RP which they self-consciously use in formal and classroom situations but which they *DARE NOT* use in other situations for fear of being marked as pedantic ... The other phonology is the one resorted to in other situations by these people and the most socially accepted (emphasis mine). Jowitt (2006:20) in his view believes that “It is still premature to refer to Standard Nigerian English

as if it were an already discrete and recognizable variety, “but in the ***FUTURE, IT OUGHT TO BE POSSIBLE***”.

From the various views presented above, our conclusion in this study becomes inevitable, that is, that Nigerians speak English in their way and on their terms, while at the same time, adopting some features of SBE rather consciously for purposes of education and officialdom. Observably, Nigerian Spoken English is moderately intelligible to native speakers just as the native speaker’s variety is to a Nigerian (cf Tiffen (1974)). Thus, it is both socially acceptable and internationally intelligible to the extent that both parties can interact for purposes of social, political, economic and bilateral interests without appearing intolerably queer to each other.

Judging from comments from Jibril (1982), Adetugbo (2004), Udofot (2004) and Jowitt (2006), Nigerian English is at its embryonic stage, consciously and generally evolving some standardizing, endonormative features, and abandoning, as it were, the exoglossic standard usually identified with America and Britain while ultimately striving towards a uniform, national standard that will neither be alien to her nationals nor too grotesque to foreign or native speakers. From these remarks, it is obvious that Brann’s (1975) plea for an exoglossic standard in Nigerian English would naturally not be heed based on the emerging typologies that are observed in the course of the analysis in this study.

Finally, we wish to sound a conclusive remark that, based on the allomorphic variations examined in this study, majority of Nigerians do not speak Standard British English ranging from basilectal to acrolectal varieties. The sophisticated (or near-native) model appears too unreal for Nigerians. Even if they were to speak the RP, the question of which of the three varieties (cited in Jowitt, 2006) used in Britain should be adopted would still constitute a problem. To be on the safer side, therefore, Nigerian English, as far as it solves Nigerian problems while at the same time bringing about meaningful and effective communicative interactions at the international level moderately, should be regarded as adequate and developed as a model for educational, communicative and other purposes in Nigeria.



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## Teaching Literature of Incarceration in the African Context: Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Paradigms

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the poetics of literature on incarceration in the African context, arguing for its incorporation into the course module of higher institutions of learning, especially for students in the Humanities. Incarcerated people, particularly prisoners of conscience, often devise some ways of protesting or resisting the hostile atmosphere of a detention facility. One of these ways is their involvement in the act of writing to oppose and contest the instrument of state power which has been used to deprive them of their rights to freedom of expression, association, movement and, sometimes, their right to life. And once they begin to express themselves by writing and their writings reach the arena of public discourse, they generate their own strategies of reading. Thus, questions of what, why, and how a prisoner writes create a critical space in which critics interpret a text inscribed within a historical context and a discourse terrain. To this end, this paper clarifies the concepts related to prison writing, states the objectives of teaching it and offers some theoretical paradigms on how it might be taught.

**Keywords:** incarceration, poetics, writing, historical context, discourse, text and freedom.

### **Introduction**

A work of art can generally be regarded as a form of self-expression. This expression can either be in the sense of the direct expressiveness of the state of mind or inner experiences of the artist, or in the sense of indirect or symbolic expressiveness of the idea, or vision of that artist on

social, spiritual, or even scientific exigencies. Essentially, Susanne K. Langer in “Art: The Symbol of Sentience” posits that “a work of art is a complex thing being at once a social possession, a personal record, a piece of self-expression, an influence, an object of sensuous delight” (1953:54). Osundare (2008) also considers a work of art as a tool for sharing ideas and impacting the society. He affirms:

What is art? If not communication, the bodying forth of airy nothing of imagination, investing it with a local habitation and a name. Art thrives on the urgent need to share, to make known and if possible, pass into common currency what once a private fancy ... all art seeks to affect. (5)

Literature, (especially for African literary texts verbally composed or in visual written form) in its sense of being an imaginative reconstruction of reality is by its very nature a social art committed or engaged in one way or the other to the promotion of human values. Artistic expressions in Africa generally carry a great deal of social relevance and purpose to the point that makes most writers and critics align with Mao Tse-Tung’s often-quoted statement that “there is in fact no such thing as art for art’s sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics. Onoge 1985:50).

However, there are some self-expressions categorized as “lived-in human experiences” whose inscription as life writings, government authorities would rather wish to be side-tracked in the corpus of national narratives. These particular sub-genres of life narratives constitute what Waliula (2009) regards “as an alternative and unauthorized national narrative that runs counter to the official or authorized national narratives” (iii).

Consequently, the experience of human captivity, of which incarceration is a predominant cultural practice and therefore a motif of textual engagement, is a global phenomenon. It has evolved over the years as one of the distinct literary modalities of life writings. Smith and Watson (2001) in their book, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* categorizes prison narratives among the “fifty-two genres of life writings”.



Their method was to combine the formal and semantic features of autobiographical forms within particular historical, social and cultural settings.

Therefore, this study is essentially an engagement with the artistic modes of African prison writing which I consider a distinct hallmark, but still an under-researched sub-genre of African literature as a discipline of study. It seems that the literature on incarceration in the African context of the experience has not been given adequate critical attention. An overview of recent critical works such as Irele's *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black diaspora* (2001), Tanure Ojaide's *Contemporary African Literature: New Approaches* (2011), and Chinyelu Ojukwu's *Critical Issues in African Literature: Twenty-First Century And Beyond* (2013) reveals that the distinctive features or poetics of African prison writings have not been clearly identified and analysed as a generically coherent body of resistance literature as other sub-genres such as 'war writings', women's writings, 'literature of the environment', 'travel writings' and even 'children's literature'. It is noteworthy that the "critical study of prison writing deals with an extent, global genre defined by a subject and relevant experience of its author" (Doran Larson 2012:2), and in the context of African experience, Olaniyan and Quayson, also rightly observe that within the larger corpus of African literature, there is the "flourishing of the form of writing we could call 'writers' prison diaries" (2013:139).

The study assumes that the originating or defining essence of African literature is that of commitment and that African writers particularly conceptualize aesthetic practices as a means of a social cause and intervention in the affairs of public governance. To this end, the study aims at exploring the manners in which African incarcerated writers undertake narrative styles and deploy artistic tropes (that is literariness as a secondary order of meanings) as a matter of commitment to special purposes.

Also, as a result of the social, emotional, cultural and intellectual dilemmas which often emerge out of the experience of preventive detention, the project focuses on the existential motifs of memory, pain and trauma,



survival and truth-telling to re-emphasise the universality of imprisonment as a society's regime or code of punishment and the emergence of prison writing as an expression of the self to counter, as it were, the official version of the narrative. Based on the various parameters and postulations of the study, we aim to discover the inevitable incursion of literature into critical issues related to human rights and governance in African nation-states, particularly Nigeria. From its findings, the research aims to demonstrate the importance of the study of African prison literary texts as they highlight the relevance of the literature of dissidence and resistance in deepening the understanding of the meaning of modern African literature.

A study such as this is important as it highlights the various forms of literary modes and poetic devices committed to writing the self-evidentiary story of truth-telling. The discourse particularly shows how an 'imprisoned intellect' (Davies 1990), an 'incarcerated self' (Waliaula 2009) or, as it were, a disoriented personality commits the resources of art as a means of survival to truthfully express the horrors of confinement to the outside world. By implication, the research reveals how a coherent body of writings that are cross-generic in manner of expression, underscores the importance of understanding the issue of 'truth- equation' (Gready 1993) in the discourse and counter-discourse of national histories. In this regard, I refer to particular contexts of postcolonial African countries from where the writings originate, to offer a re-assessment of the way political systems determine what is regarded as crime and how to administer justice to the citizenry, especially to human rights activists.

This research is important for other reasons. It reveals how a literary text can generate a 'transactional' reader's response to seeing a work of art as an instrument of political awareness and ideology. In lieu of the foregoing, it is obvious that scholarly investigation into the tradition of African Prison writing is important. The study identifies Davies' *Writers in Prison* (1990) as a work which addresses the theory and criticism of prison writing from the Western tradition of literary criticism and cultural studies. Although most enduring examples of literature in a wide array of fields, ranging from philosophy to religion, and from politics to creative works and dating back hundreds of years have been written in conditions of either confinement or



as a result of the experience of confinement or in exile, Davies points to the late 1980s as the period when elaborate scholarly interest in the interplay between confinement and writing began. Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* (1987) offers a cultural perspective on the theory and practice of resistance literature. The work provides insight into the theoretical-historical contexts of the category of narratives subsumed as resistance literature to which prison writing of incarcerated intellectuals belongs. Another remarkable text is Bruce Franklin's *Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (1978). *The critic identifies two formative traditions of the United States of America's carceral culture and opines that* "Modern American prison writing constitutes a coherent body of literature with unique historical significance and cultural influence" (1).

This study, therefore, leverages on the foregoing propositions to investigate the literary traditions informing the emergence of this distinct sub-genre of African literature. The subject of artistic commitment is considered not only from the various semantic imports of the functionality of African literary artefacts, as have been the preponderant focus of earlier projects, but also to the forms of artistic tools that the writers have deployed as media of self-expressions of the meaning of their prison experience.

### **Prison Writing as a Tradition**

The literature of incarceration otherwise labelled interchangeably as dissident, rebel, detention, confinement, captivity or containment writing is a global phenomenon. It is a kind of writing motivated by the experience of being restricted to a place either in solitary isolation or within a group of other prisoners. In an attempt to situate the textuality of incarceration within the larger context of the experience of human captivity, Hill (2013) contends, "confinement literature refers to any work of fiction or non-fiction that deals with the fundamental issue of human captivity. It also encompasses other sites of containment such as slave plantations and concentration camps" (19). Since this study is concerned with the writings of African writers who have experienced confinement as a real-life experience, the subject of a prison environment, as a physical place of restriction of movement, association and expression comes to the fore. This explains why Carnochan (1995) in *Oxford History of the Prison-The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, posits that "confinement writing is a kind of literature characterized by restricting the free movement of body and mind" (39).

Within the context of the experience of incarceration by some African writers, this study aligns with Mapanje's (1995) explication of what constitutes confinement literature. The writer affirms:

Prison literature springs from types of confinement under which one lives in isolation, where sometimes no visitors and no reading materials are allowed. There is confinement where one has access to books because the prison has a library, however inadequate, there is imprisonment with hard labour, imprisonment where no work is allowed; and there is confinement or exclusion; from a society where the writer has limited access to the wider world ... What is important is that each confinement generated writings with texture which reflects its own kind of environment and context. (5)

However, this kind of contextual backdrop problematizes ways of identifying the distinctive generic features of writings that should be classified as prison literature. It is noteworthy, that, while notable scholarly works such as Loan Davies' *Writers in Prison* (1990), Bruce Franklin's *The Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (1989) and W.B. Camochan, N. Morris and David Rothman's *Oxford History of the Prison – The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (1995) have in various ways clearly identified and established the poetics of the Western literature of incarceration, that of the African tradition within the corpus of African literature appears to be under-researched and inadequate.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to state the theoretical issues which surround the aspect of generic taxonomy of African prison writings. For instance, in his study of "Prison Literature in East Africa" Wawanjiru (2010) observes that it would be "fallacious and inadequate to study the body that is African literature without mentioning prison writings and the writers who have been so prolific in prison and captured insightful thematic concerns in Kenya and the continent at large" (1).

In her study of South African prison literature, Oswald (2007) attempts to provide a suitable definition for prison literature in relation to their cross-generic mode of classification. She maintains that "prison writing takes many forms: novels, memoirs/autobiography, poetry, biological/sociological studies, and so on. In other



words, it cuts across well-established, widely recognized genres” (32). In pointing out the problematic nature of generic classification in terms of their particular poetics, Oswald submits that “prison literature cannot be defined in terms of genres because of the vast differences both between and within the genres mentioned above” (34). This study aligns with Oswald’s method of identifying the common characteristics of prison writing which within our purview entails written literary expressions from personal experience. Thus, what some literary scholars would aptly categorize as the “writers’ prison diaries” are subsumed in this study as the broad cross-generic self-life modes of poetry and prose narratives. To the extent that these autobiographical modes are traceable to the triadic component of “autos-self, bios-life, and grape-act of writing, fictional works about prison experience are excluded from consideration in this study. However, it should still be mentioned that this mode of categorization comes with its theoretical controversy over the blurring of what constitutes non-fiction and fiction materials in prison memoirs. Sobanet (2002) in discussing the nuances of the prison novel as an interdisciplinary sub-genre observes that:

The texts which fall into the sub-genre of the prison novel represent artful intersections of autobiography and fiction, and their narrators often attempt to be sociological in their precision when observing and depicting the nature of conditions and relations behind bars. (1)

The foregoing overview of the multi-generic mode of prison literature points to an examination of the expressive motifs of African prison writings.

### **Motifs of African Prison Writing**

Prison writing is an act of self-expression; a re-writing of self to counter and resist, as it were, the official code of imprisonment. Therefore, prisoners, especially prisoners of conscience, engage in narrating their experiences for several reasons. First, they engage in the act of writing for self-restoration. They write to restore the sense of self-identity and intellectual freedom taken away by the punitive regime of incarceration. Foucault (1977) considers imprisonment as an instrument of the state’s power to maintain total control over its subjects. In describing this official code of imprisonment as a “network of writing”, Foucault claims that “the prison writer is a heavily mapped writer. He is situated in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix him” (194). What this implies is that once an individual becomes a prisoner, the state authority gives him an identification number which signals the end of the

personal identity of that person as a free member of the human community. In reaction to this, prisoners according to Gready (1993), “write to restore a sense of self and world, to seek empowerment in an oppositional power of writing by writing against the official text of imprisonment” (493).

Moreover, the act of writing for an incarcerated individual is a kind of mental therapy and emotional catharsis. For Lwanda (2004), “writing for oneself within prison can be a tool of mental survival” (60). Frantz Fanon (1963) in *The Wretched of the Earth* also conceives political prison writing as part of the “discourse of national or communal aspiration. It can never be analyzed outside the context of the socio-political and economic circumstances placing the writer in prison” (181). This concept of prison writing as a tool of empowerment for incarcerated writers brings to the fore some expressive motifs that bind prison texts together as narratives of self-witnessing of the experience of human captivity. Larson (2010) succinctly asserts that “all prison writings bear not only a common subject but re-current, internal formal traits. It is a genre bound not only by its subject and authors but in its expressive tropes” (2). Thus, we have an expressive motif of torture and trauma. The motif of torture is a recurring decimal in the discourse of the narratives of human captivity. Incarcerated writers usually express the traumatic effect of confinement on their minds and physical body. The power to arrest, detain and interrogate people manifests as a form of torture and inflicting pain on people. Scarry (1985) addresses the subject of torture in her book, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. She contends that “the essence of interrogation and torturing is to uncreate and unmake a prisoner’s world and sense of self” (13).

There is also the motif of self-witnessing and truth-telling of things that happen and experiences lived in a prison facility. Prisoners write to testify of the horrors of incarceration. The things that often characterize the physical space of a prison environment include hostility, sexual harassment violence and death. Thus, prisoners write as witnesses of those things that either happen to them or others around them. Millet (1994) in her book, *The Politics of Cruelty: An Essay on the Literature of Political Imprisonment*, discusses how political prisoners in South Africa represent their experience of violence and other forms of human rights abuse in their narratives. The critic uses the term “*temoignage*”: the literature of the witness, the one who has been there, sees it, knows” (15) to situate literature of incarceration in the category of autobiographies of the victims of the acts of state terrorism. To this





end, prisoners' writings emerge as narratives of truth-telling of their feelings about their particular countries' system of justice and mechanism of penology.

It should be underscored that prison writing is not only characterized by the writers' concern with the nature and meaning of human existence, there is also the motif of survival. Prisoners express their determination to survive the horrors of incarceration in their writings. In her study of the prison memoirs of Soyinka and Breytenbach, Diminitriu (2000) confirms that "survival is a major theme of prison writing" and that prison writing is a back translation of daily suffering into one's own higher vision of the self (94). This position, as the study discovers, reinforces the widely held notion that imprisonment hardly succeeds in its intent of silencing or more or less rehabilitating prisoners of conscience, instead, it often serves to radicalize and harden their ideological and oppositional stances. This explains why prison-authors often foreground the imagery of birds, the sun, the moon and the stars in their expressions. They also attempt to endure the harsh realities of prison life which they consider as a process of physical and spiritual form of self-renewal.

Another critical area of self-expression in African prison narratives is history. African political inmates write with a new keen sense of the history of the social and political exigencies of their particular milieu. In a political prison text, there are usually two versions of what happened. We have the dominant official version of historical events, which is circulated as the master narrative of national histories. Then, we have the narrative of self of a political inmate, which is regarded as a marginal unofficial or alternative version of the master narrative that comes in the form of state laws and penal codes, which a prisoner of conscience might have disregarded or flouted as a result of his political conviction and social vision. To this end, political prison writings are regarded as 'counter-discourses of official versions of national narratives. Davies (1990) makes the notion of 'counter-discourses' and 'unofficial marginal narrative' clearer, in the way he describes the historical context which conditions the artistic texture of a prison narrative. In describing the dehumanizing condition of a prison facility as marginal, he contends that "it is necessary to understand those ideas which had been nurtured by prison and to understand prison as a school for writers. We need to understand the imprisoned intellectual as writing not only in a margin of the society that imprisons but also in the margin of the prison itself" (4). Lovesey (1995) also considers the usefulness of the African prison diary in reshaping the official version of national histories. In his



examination of Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died*, Ngugi's *Detained*, and Breytenbach's *The True Confessions of Albino Terrorist*, Lovesey regards the African prison diary as an allegory of "the structuring of national histories" and affirms that "the African prison diary brushes against the grain of official histories of the prisoner's activities, it re-writes official master narratives of national history" (38). It is in this light that we note the relevance of Mapanje's introductory notes to *Gathering Seaweed – African Prison Writing* (2002). The writer underscores the historical value of African prison narratives. He contends that:

The fragments of prison experiences gathered here have historical relevance, they constitute a defiant recasting of Africa's history through the eyes of some of its finest hostages, it is also an indelible record of the original growth and maturity of the struggle for the restitution of human dignity and integrity, justice and peace on the African continent. (XIV)

Therefore, history in African prison writing is not just seen as a mere record of historical events in a linear sequence, but it manifests as a text of other discourses and social practices.

### **Objectives of Teaching Literature of Incarceration**

This research is essentially an engagement with the poetics of African prison writing as a distinct literary component of African literature. According to Preminger and Brogan (1993), poetics denotes the theory of literature or literary discourse (925). In a specific sense, poetics is a systematic theory of literature which attempts to define the nature of literature, in this case, literature of incarceration, "its kind and forms, its resources of device and structure, its governing principles, the functions that distinguish it from other arms, the condition under which it exists and its effect(s) on readers" (Jegede 2005:133). The study views African literature of incarceration as a hallmark, but still a critically neglected sub-genre. It aligns with Wawanjiru's (2010) proposition that it would be "fallacious and inadequate to study the body that is African literature without mentioning prison writings and the writers who have been so prolific in prison and captured insightful thematic concerns in Kenya and the continent at large" (2).



It is in this light that this research attemptsto further explore and boldly inscribe literature of incarceration into the reading paradigm of African literature in the way the discipline has incorporated other sub-genres on ‘war writings’, ‘children’s literature’, ‘women’s literature’ and even ‘travel writings’. Larson (2010), in his critique of the prison writings of Wole Soyinka, Martin Luther King (Jr.), Eldridge Cleaver and George Jackson states that:

A critical study of prison writing deals with an extant, global genre defined by the subject and the relevant experience of its authors. In this nominal sense, we can speak of ‘prison writings’ as truthfully as we do of ‘war writings’ or ‘travel writing’ or even of ‘food writing’ (2)

Thus, in order to broaden the critical enterprise of defining the meaning of African Literature, this study critically examines African prison writing in terms of matter and manner of commitment. The study further confirms the interplay between the place of confinement as context for composing and writing, and the prison text as a platform for evoking images, symbols and myths.

A study such as this could also be useful to policymakers in the Ministry of Education, particularly in Nigeria. For example, literature of incarceration could be incorporated into the course modules of students in the school of humanities in the country’s higher institutions of learning. Mapanje’s model of the study of the discourse of literature incarceration at the University of Leeds could be followed. With particular reference to the intellectual impact of the course on the students, Mapanje says:

The module was so popular a record number of students registered for it...at the end of the semester, some students claimed they had found the study of the literature of witness more relevant to the current discourse on justice, torture, survival, truth and reconciliation than they had anticipated. Others claimed that the module helped them gain an understanding of the concerns of asylum seekers, immigration authorities and human rights organizations... (2002:234)

To this end, literature on incarceration could for a start be inaugurated as a course module for undergraduates in the nation’s correctional facilities. For this purpose, the National Open University (NOUN) comes to the fore as the nation’s vanguard of the Open Distance Learning System (ODLS). From the premise of the issues raised in this project, undertaking a course in confinement literature would impact positively the system of what scholars on the sociology of prison life label as ‘Prisonisation’ (Deborah Drake et al 2015). It would for instance further open windows of artistic writing for incarcerated students to restore their self-image and humanity.

### **Theoretical Paradigms**

On African prison writing, notable scholars have advocated for a more sustained scholarly investigation of this category of literary texts. Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi (1985) in dismissing the scepticism of Bahadur Tejani’s view about the literariness or otherwise of Brutus’ prison poetry, contends in “The Song of the Caged Bird: Contemporary African Prison Poetry” that “Dennis Brutus, Okot p’ Bitek and Wole Soyinka represent the essence of African prison poetry ... the burden of their song is identical, prison life is horrible, condemnable and unacceptable” (77). Lovesey (1995) also argues “out of the discourses of African colonialism and neo-colonialism arises the prison diary which allegorises the structuring of national histories. It is one of the encoding genres of certain African literature” (5). Olaniyan and Quayson (2013) in their introductory notes to the section on “Creativity in / and Adversarial contexts” in *African Literature - An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* encapsulate the arguments of these scholars and others such as Biodun Jeyifo (2004), Sophie Ogwude (2008) and Randa Abou- Bakr (2009). They maintain that:

African Literature and Literary studies propose another theory much more valid for many parts of the world today of the complex intersection of adversarial contexts and the flowering of the creative muse...one dirty little secret of the African literary tradition is the flourishing of the form of writing we could call writers’ prison diaries; that is poems, fictional and non-fictional (prose and dramatic



works by writers about their experience in the jail of the postcolonial states as political prisoners). (139)

Loan Davies' *Writers in Prison*. (1990) offers us a critical template that directs us to go beyond the mere recognition of the literary and intellectual significance of writing that owes something to imprisonment and its forms of classification. Instead, the critic directs us towards theoretical issues that help us to understand “the forms that prison writing takes, its content and how the prison experience might be read” (3). Davies also traces the origins of much of Western recorded (text) history and civilization to the prison experience of intellectuals and writers. He affirms:

Much of the influential literature of Judeo-Christian civilization was composed under conditions of incarceration or involuntary exile. Indeed, the Bible itself is a product of both prison and exile and the Platonic dialogues, notably *Crito*, *Apology* and *Phaedrus* is centred around the trial, imprisonment and execution of Socrates. It is impossible to understand Occidental thought without recognising the central significance of prison and banishment in its theoretical and literary composition. (3)

Essentially, Davies' discovery of the universality of prison experience through his analysis of the writings of incarcerated intellectuals of the Western culture is relevant to the focus of this research. In the context of African prison writings, the study notes the critic's postulation of the “dialectical relationship between the imagination of incarcerated writers writing not only in margin of the society that imprisons but also in a margin of the prison itself” (4).

The influence of Michel Foucault in understanding the interdisciplinary dimension of key parameters of Cultural Studies, especially on the aspect of prison as an institution of penology cannot be overemphasized. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977) examines the birth of the prison with a particular focus on the modern penal system. His study is important because of his proposition that the modern penal system has been

established as a means by which to punish and that the punishment involves the supervision and organization of bodies in time and space.

*Discipline and Punish* are cross-generic and have applications to philosophy, history and criminology. Foucault's theory of the prison as a cultural construct and code provides a useful insight into the expressive motifs of African literature on incarceration. In his analysis, the critic further points out that the main aim of imprisonment is to punish but to order punishment, one must have power and this power comes in part from knowledge. Consequently, "the punishment in and through imprisonment, and the prison system" is directed at the prisoner's body, which in the long run is targeted at reforming the prisoner.

Another aspect of Foucault's philosophy is his model of prison as a physical place of penology. In this respect, the critic based his model of prison on Jeremy Bentham's concept of "**Panopticon**":

Bentham's Panopticon is the architectural figure of composition. We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheral the building is divided into cells, each of which extends the the whole width of the building... All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a worker, a patient, a condemned man or a schoolboy. (1977:199)

Remarkably, the political setting in which Foucault based his philosophy of the panopticon was not an unjust political system that turned the majority of the population into criminals and dissidents. Rather, the theorist was more concerned about the "marginalized minority; homosexuals, the criminally insane, the deviant, and those who fell foul of society's norms" (Oswald, 2007:61). In this study, Foucault's discussion of the prison system is used strategically to provide insights into the motifs of African prison literature.



This study also views what Foucault has described as discursive strategies on the ‘concept of a discourse’, ‘consolidation of power and knowledge’ and ‘the question of the human subject’ Williams 2011:117) as vital to the classification of prison writings as texts that new historicists regard as “resolutely anti-establishment, always implicitly on the side of the liberal side of personal freedom and accepting and celebrating all forms of difference and deviance” (Barry: 175).

I also mention Foucault’s concept of Bentham’s Panopticon to foreground the existential matters of violence, death, torture and trauma which characterize the narratives of self-expression of prison experience by some African writers.

Bruce Franklin’s *The Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (1989) identifies Afro-American and Euro-American prison writing as constituting the two formative traditions of the United States of America’s prison culture. The text particularly exposes the racist undertones of the American criminal justice system and its method of penology. Both Davies’ and Franklin’s postulations shed light on the interconnections and specificities of societal context, the prisoner and the prison.

*In Barred: Women, Writing and Political Detention* (1992) Barbara Harlow focuses on the expressive motifs of political prison writings. The critic foregrounds the writings of female political inmates from sociological and psychological perspectives. For Waliaula (2009:24), “the text highlights the technologisation of torture contribution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its attack on the person and the social body”. Another aspect of Harlow’s contribution to the discourse of prison literature is her generic definition of what constitutes prison writing. Harlow focuses on narratives of prisoners of conscience to make a distinction between what she calls ‘representation of prison in writing; and “the place of writing in prison” (1992:4). This distinction sheds light on narratives that mirror carceral culture as experiential reality and the



narratives that merely represent prison experience as a fictional re-creation of social reality.

Paul Gready's *Autobiography and the Power of Writing: Political Prison Writing in the Apartheid Era* (1993) written against the backdrop of the apartheid system in South Africa, examines the importance of political prisoners' artistic expressions as acts of political resistance. Gready's argument that "autobiographical prison writing is the most comprehensive articulation of this oppositional power of writing" (399) provides insight into why artistic commitment is a tool for self-expression for African-incarcerated writers. In his study of the prison memoirs of South African writers such as Breytenbach, M. Dingake, M. Diamini, Ruth First, Emma Mashinini and Albie Sachs, Gready affirms that "the power of writing is a contested arena. Prisoners write to restore a sense of self and world, to reclaim the truth... to seek empowerment in an oppositional power of writing" (399). Because of this perspective, Gready's discourse aligns with the proposition of this study that commitment to the craft of writing for incarcerated intellectuals is an act of self-expression for witnessing and truth-telling "of the crucible of incarceration with its textures of violence, pain and suffering seems universal to demand factually insistent narratives" (490). Gready's article is also important because it examines other issues that are common to most prison writing: the ideas of gender, language, self-image and identity, racism and violence found within the prison system and the writing of prison authors.

Following Frederic Jameson's (1986) formulation of 'Third World literature as a national allegory', Lovesey's "Chained Letters: African Prison Diaries and National Allegory" (1995) is a more expanded critique of African Prison literary texts as counter texts to official histories. The critic explores Soyinka's *The Man Died*, Ngugi's *Detained* and Breytenbach's *The True Confessions of Abino Terrorist* to consider the African prison diary as an allegory of the structuring of national histories: He says:

The African prison diary brushes against the grain of official histories of the prisoner's activities, it re-writes



official master narratives of national history... The writer reflects on the process by which official and un-official colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial histories are encoded. (37-38)

In place of the foregoing, Lovesey argues that the imprisonment of African political activists is the “incarceration of the creative national spirit seeking to define and celebrate national freedom” (32). In essence, Lovesey’s essay showcases how the subject of artistic commitment for African political detainees is an avenue for them “to confront the linguistic debasement of the prison environment, the unwillingness to define the conditions of imprisonment and the offer of release for silence. The prison diary writes the story of the nation’s contradictions from within its very centre” (32). Lovesey’s essay is important because it also compares the prison diary to other forms of prison writing and the use of metaphor, which is a common peculiar artistic feature of prison writings.

In “Politics and Human Rights in Non-fiction Prison Literature”, Ogwude (2008), explores the political contexts that generate non-fiction prison texts in the countries of Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria respectively. The critic relates political context to the various stages of repressive states of governance in the continent (72). In her overview of Ngugi’s *Detained*, Soyinka’s *The Man Died*, and Saro-Wiwa’s *A Month and a Day*, Ogwude highlights the status of non-fiction as an artistic mode to reach the common man. According to her, “These works are intended to communicate with ordinary people, the ultimate purpose being to correct and to urge better governance of the African nation-states of Nigeria and Kenya” (73). Consequently, the essay brings to the fore the issue of preventive detention for patriotic African writers and how it violates every single “substantive basic human right; the right to life, liberty, health and expression (78). Ogwude highlights the writers’ artistic response to their ordeal. She contends:

Like all political prisoners, they write in defiance of oppressive regimes. Writing helped to keep the demons

of the mind at bay and they knew that they had to keep their minds and heart together and protected from the brutality of near demonic state. (83)

Ogwude's essay is important to the aspect of self-expression in this study as it relates the subject of imprisonment to politics and human rights, particularly in countries like Kenya and Nigeria.

Moreover, to leverage Ogwude's appellation of non-fiction as "New Journalism", the study examines Chris Dunton's "Chris Anyanwu's *The Days of Terror: Strategies of Representation in Nigerian Prison Writing*" (2005). In the essay, Dunton focuses on the strategies of representation in Nigerian Prison writing using the memoir of the female Nigerian journalist, Chris Anyanwu's *The Days of Terror*. The critic examines Anyanwu's autobiographical narrative in the light of Soyinka and Saro-Wiwa's prison diaries. The essay foregrounds their common characteristic concerns and strategies of representation.

Remarkably, Kasimi Djiman's "Prison Literature as Historiography: Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*" offers a theoretical basis for how prison writing might be read. The essay aims at "acquainting students with the fundamentals of what is known as "prison literature", drawing on the features of narratology as postulated by Gerard Genette. In the work, the critic outlines the generic significations of the "paratext, intertext, the narrative voice, as well as the plot" evinced outside and within to produce *The Man, Died* as a document of the sad history of the Nigerian civil war (1967 – 1970). (<https://www.ufhb-dptanglaisis.com>).

Another important book we consider useful in understanding the poetics of African prison writing is Rachel Knigton's monograph *Writing the Prison in African Literature* (2019). Using the comparative and transnational approach, the scholar examines selected prison memoirs of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ruth First, Wole Soyinka, Nawa El Saadawi and Jack Mapanje and highlights the various artistic tools which the writers engaged to define



the prison and how the institution affects their mind, body and imagination as political detainees.

These research works are also in tandem with Doran Larson’s “Towards a Prison Poetics: Prisoners Writing (Criticism and Interpretation)” (2010) in which he examines Martin Luther King Jr’s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Wole Soyinka’s *The Man Died*, Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice* and George Jackson’s *Soledad Brother*. He confirms that “by analysing tropic veins common to all prison texts, we discover a generically coherent body of literature as germane to discussions of justice generally as the body of law or penology” (1).

The foregoing aforementioned texts point to the direction of identifying a coherent body of texts we could generally classify as Nigerian prison literature, which I believe, should include Obafemi Awolowo’s *My March Through Prison*, Olusegun Obasanjo’s *This Animal Called Man*, Kunle Ajibade’s *Jailed For Life*, Fela Anikulapo Kuti’s “Animal Can’t Dash Me Human Rights” (cited in *Gathering Seaweed – African Prison Writing* 313) and Ogaga Ifowodo’s “A Room Of My Own” (*Gathering Seaweed – African Prison Writing* 128-135). We also have Chris Abani’s *Kalakuta Republic* (2000) (cited in Kasimi Dijiman’s “Prison Literature as Historiography: Wole Soyinka’s *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*”. (<https://www.ufhb-dptanglais.com>))

In the area of teaching the literature of confinement as a course, this study considers Marc Larmont Hill’s “A World Without Prisons: Teaching Confinement Literature and The Promise of Prison Abolition” (2013) an important article. Hill says “Exposing students to canonical and contemporary slavery, political, personal and non-carceral confinement literature provides a fecund space for discussing important issues of social justice and analyzing literature through new lenses” (19).

To this end, the critic identifies the genres of literature that should be categorized and taught as confinement literature. In Hill’s evaluation, slave

narratives such as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs and Fredrick Douglas' *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglas* provide both classic and accessible examples of confinement literature. He maintains that slavery confinement literature serves as a springboard for drawing parallels between slavery and modern-day methods of imprisonment. Hill also mentions a range of philosophical and religious texts that can be used to expand students' understanding of political confinement. Examples include the "Book of Revelations" written by the Apostle John as a prisoner of Rome on the Island of Patmos, and Plato's *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo* which details the trial, prosecution and execution of Socrates as a result of his unconventional beliefs and teachings. In essence, teaching the literature of confinement, especially as artistic works of self-expression, provides a window of opportunity for educators to emphasize, as Hill says, "restoration over retribution, investment over punishment and humanization over criminalization" (2013:23).

### **Conclusion**

The definitive artistic and thematic features that have emerged from the narratives of self of personal prison experience by some African writers will hopefully form reference points for other researchers in their analysis and discourses of the emerging narratives of the experience of human captivity from other sites of confinement such as kidnappers' and human traffickers' jail-houses. In addition, this study, hopefully, shall raise a new consciousness in the approach to analysis of African autobiographical narratives of self-witnessing and truth-telling as a way of re-assessment of the poetics of African literature as a regional world literature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Above all, political prison writings belong to a version of the narratives of telling what happened inside a purposely closed and guarded social space of the experience of human atrocity, and they deserve to be heard not only for their evidentiary value but for their artistic beauty and symbolism. Prisoners of conscience write with a sense of moral and political commitment to re-write what the state authority has written and finalised concerning them.



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## **Analyse de la perception des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV : une étude socio-historique**

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### **Résumé**

Beaucoup d'études ont été publiées sur le 17<sup>ème</sup> siècle dans la littérature française et la cour dirigée par Louis XIV, mais très peu est connu de la notion conçue des africains à cette époque. Donc, cette étude vise à une analyse de la perception des Africains pendant le règne de Louis XIV en France à travers le prisme de L'Histoire générale des plus fameux pirates (1678) d'Alexandre Exquemelin. Le but est d'analyser les aspects socio-historiques pour comprendre les attitudes, les stéréotypes et les interactions sociales entre les Africains et la société française à cette époque. Cette étude s'appuie sur les théories sociologiques et historiques pour contextualiser les relations interculturelles entre les Africains et les Français sous le règne de Louis XIV. Elle étudie les dynamiques de pouvoir, les structures sociales qui ont influencé cette perception des Africains dans la société française de l'époque. L'étude utilise des méthodes de recherche historique, y compris l'analyse de documents d'archives de l'époque. Les résultats révèlent les diverses façons dont les Africains étaient perçus, traités et intégrés dans la société française sous le pouvoir de Louis XIV. L'étude révèle les préjugés raciaux, les politiques de l'époque et les luttes socio-économiques auxquels les Africains étaient confrontés, ainsi que les résistances et les adaptations qu'ils ont développées pour naviguer dans ce contexte. Cette étude contribue à renforcer notre compréhension des relations interculturelles et des dynamiques sociales entre les Africains et les Français au XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle.



**Mots clés :** Louis XIV, le continent africain, la société française, la monarchie absolue, les préjugés raciaux

### **Introduction**

L'évolution de la littérature française à travers les siècles est marquée par une diversité qui reflète les évolutions sociales, politiques, et culturelles de la France. De l'ancienne littérature médiévale aux mouvements littéraires modernes, chaque siècle a apporté son lot de chefs-d'œuvre et de courants littéraires qui ont contribué à façonner l'identité culturelle de la France. Au Moyen Âge, la littérature française était principalement dominée par la poésie épique et la poésie lyrique. Des œuvres telles que la Chanson de Roland et les troubadours du sud de la France ont célébré les exploits des chevaliers et les notions de courtoisie, tandis que les poètes lyriques comme François Villon ont exploré des thèmes plus personnels et introspectifs. De plus, la Renaissance a vu l'émergence d'une littérature humaniste qui s'est inspirée des idéaux de l'Antiquité classique. Des écrivains tels que Rabelais avec son œuvre gargantuesque, Montaigne avec ses Essais, et Ronsard avec ses poèmes ont marqué cette période de leur empreinte, mettant en avant la raison, la connaissance, et la réflexion philosophique.

Le XVIIIe siècle, souvent appelé "le Grand Siècle", a été le siècle de la monarchie absolue et du classicisme littéraire. Sous l'influence de l'Académie française, les écrivains comme Corneille, Racine, et Molière ont produit des œuvres théâtrales qui respectaient les règles de l'unité, de l'action, et de la bienséance, reflétant les valeurs de l'époque. Jusqu'au XXe siècle qui a vu l'émergence de mouvements littéraires plus expérimentaux et avant-gardistes, tels que le surréalisme avec André Breton et le Nouveau Roman avec Alain Robbe-Grillet. Les auteurs de cette époque ont remis en question les conventions littéraires traditionnelles et ont examiné de nouvelles formes d'expression. Agwu (2023)

*Dans la littérature française, toute comme tante d'autres, les évènements du vingt et unième siècle sont caractérisés par des changements radicaux qui touchent la sensibilité de tous les domaines de la vie de l'homme. La mondialisation, parfois qualifiée comme une période des actes extrêmes de l'homme envers l'homme ou encore la violence de l'homme moderne à l'autrui,*

*constitue l'un des changements très significative marquant ce siècle.*

**De même, Al Jarrah (2020), soutient la position d'Agwu en affirmant que cette période entre dans une course avec le temps, s'efforçant de se trouver une place dans un monde en perpétuel changement, et en insistant que le sorte de l'homme postmoderne reste la préoccupation majeure au monde littéraire d'aujourd'hui.**

Cependant, le XVIIe siècle en France a marqué une époque de splendeur et de désordre, un siècle caractérisé par le règne emblématique de Louis XIV, l'un des monarques les plus influents de l'histoire européenne. C'est dans ce contexte fascinant que nous plongeons pour examiner les intrications sociales et culturelles de l'époque, en mettant particulièrement l'accent sur la perception des Africains au sein de la société française. Le règne de Louis XIV, débutant en 1643, était caractérisé par une centralisation du pouvoir et un raffinement artistique et intellectuel sans précédent. La cour de Versailles était le foyer d'une culture florissante, où les arts, la politique et la société se mêlaient dans un ballet élaboré. Cependant, au-delà des dorures des palais royaux, la France du XVIIe siècle était également le théâtre d'une diversité sociale et ethnique croissante, notamment en raison des liens coloniaux et du commerce international.

Au sein de cette mosaïque culturelle, les Africains occupaient une place complexe. Aussi, leurs vies étaient façonnées par des réalités complexes : de l'esclavage dans les colonies aux opportunités offertes dans les centres culturels français. L'importance de l'étude de la perception des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV réside dans sa capacité à éclairer les racines complexes des dynamiques sociales contemporaines. En plongeant dans les strates de l'histoire, cette analyse offre un éclairage précieux sur les fondements de la société française moderne. Comprendre comment les Africains étaient perçus à cette époque permet de saisir les origines des stéréotypes et des préjugés qui persistent encore aujourd'hui. Les attitudes et les perceptions forgées au XVIIe siècle continuent d'influencer les interactions interculturelles dans la France contemporaine

Toutefois, au XVIIe siècle, l'époque de Louis XIV, la littérature française était en plein essor, avec des écrivains qui ont influencé la pensée et les



sensibilités de leur époque. Les écrivains français de cette période et leurs œuvres qui ont touché la sensibilité des Africains incluent, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, dit Molière, Madame de La Fayette, François Bernier et bien d'autres. Molière, célèbre dramaturge et comédien français, a écrit des pièces de théâtre satiriques qui abordaient les questions sociales de son époque. Sa comédie *Tartuffe* (1664) met en scène un personnage hypocrite et manipulateur. Bien que la pièce n'ait pas spécifiquement abordé des questions africaines, son parcours sur des faux dévots et des manipulations sociales résonnait avec les expériences des Africains confrontés à des préjugés et à des stéréotypes. De plus, Madame de La Fayette était une auteure renommée du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Son œuvre la plus célèbre, *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), est un roman d'amour tragique situé à la cour de France sous le règne d'Henri II. Malgré le fait que le roman ne traite pas particulièrement de la question africaine, son évaluation subtile des intrications sociales et des dilemmes moraux pouvait susciter l'empathie chez les lecteurs africains confrontés à des défis similaires dans la société française de l'époque.

En outre, François Bernier, à son tour, médecin et écrivain français, est surtout connu pour ses œuvres de voyage. Son ouvrage *Nouvelle division de la Terre par les différentes espèces ou races qui l'habitent* (1684) propose une classification des différents groupes humains, y compris les Africains, basée sur des critères physiques et géographiques. Sans doute, son approche est aujourd'hui critiquée, mais l'œuvre de Bernier témoigne des perceptions de son époque sur la diversité humaine et pourrait être étudiée pour comprendre les stéréotypes de l'époque de Louis XIV concernant les Africains. Ces écrivains et leurs œuvres ont joué des rôles variés dans la manière dont les Africains étaient perçus et compris à l'époque de Louis XIV, reflétant la complexité des attitudes de cette période.

Suit à ce prélude, cette étude se propose aborder les différentes perceptions des Africains pendant le règne de Louis XIV. En plongeant dans *L'Histoire générale des plus fameux pirates* d'Alexandre Exquemelin. Notre objectif principal est de disséquer les différentes facettes de la perception des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV. Notre recherche se concentre sur la question cruciale de savoir comment les Africains étaient perçus au sein de la société française de l'époque, quels étaient les facteurs sociaux, culturels



et politiques qui ont influencé ces perceptions, et comment ces attitudes ont évolué avec le temps. Plus précisément, nous nous efforcerons de répondre à des questions clés telles que : Quels étaient les principaux stéréotypes associés aux Africains au XVIIIe siècle en France ? Comment ces perceptions ont-elles été influencées par les politiques de l'époque, y compris celles liées à l'esclavage et au commerce colonial ? De quelle manière les interactions quotidiennes entre Africains et Français ont-elles été façonnées par ces préjugés.

En évaluant ces questions, notre étude aspire à jeter un éclairage nouveau sur l'histoire complexe et souvent négligée des Africains en France pendant le règne de Louis XIV. Nous chercherons à comprendre les expériences individuelles au sein de ce contexte socioculturel spécifique, tout en révélant les tendances sociales plus larges qui ont caractérisé cette époque. Cette étude socio-historique ne se contente pas d'évaluer le passé, elle offre également des pistes de réflexion sur les moyens d'aborder les défis contemporains de manière informée et inclusive. Cette étude vise à enrichir notre compréhension de l'histoire de la France du XVIIIe siècle en mettant l'accent sur la diversité des expériences humaines et en éclairant les racines historiques des questions contemporaines de race, d'identité et de relations interculturelles.

### **Le contexte historique des interactions entre l'Afrique, la France et les colonies.**

Le XVIIIe siècle était une époque de bouleversements, caractérisée par l'essor des empires coloniaux européens. La France, comme d'autres puissances européennes, s'engagea activement dans le commerce avec l'Afrique et établit des colonies dans les Caraïbes et en Amérique du Nord. Ces interactions entre l'Afrique, la France et les colonies contribuèrent à façonner la perception des Africains à l'époque de Louis XIV.

Cruciale dans ces interactions se trouvait le commerce triangulaire, un réseau commercial complexe reliant l'Europe, l'Afrique et les Amériques. Les navires français portaient des ports européens chargés de produits manufacturés pour l'Afrique. Sur la côte africaine, ces marchandises étaient échangées contre des esclaves africains. Les esclaves étaient ensuite transportés dans les colonies françaises des Caraïbes et d'Amérique du



Nord, où ils étaient vendus pour travailler dans les plantations de sucre, de café et de tabac.

Dominant dans ces interactions aussi était l'esclavage. Un exemple historique est la Traite négrière pratiquée par les Européens, dont les Français, qui ont déplacé des millions d'Africains vers les colonies. Le Code Noir, établi en 1685 sous Louis XIV, régissait la vie des esclaves dans les colonies françaises, illustrant ainsi la politique officielle de la France envers les Africains. « Les Nègres et autres personnes de couleur ne pourront être admis en aucune manière au titre de bourgeois dans nos îles de l'Amérique » Code Noir, 1685

Parallèlement à l'exploitation économique, il y avait des échanges culturels entre les Africains, les Français et les peuples autochtones des colonies. Ces échanges influençaient la musique, l'art, la cuisine et les croyances religieuses, créant un melting-pot culturel complexe. De plus, en dépit des conditions oppressantes, les Africains dans les colonies françaises ont montré une remarquable résilience. Ils ont préservé leurs langues, leurs traditions et leurs croyances, contribuant ainsi à la formation d'une identité culturelle distincte. Selon Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, missionnaire français aux Caraïbes, 17<sup>e</sup> siècle « Là où il y a des Noirs, il y a de la magie, des cérémonies et des dieux ». Les interactions complexes entre l'Afrique, la France et les colonies ont laissé des traces dans l'histoire et ont inévitablement influencé la manière dont les Africains étaient perçus et traités à l'époque de Louis XIV.

### **L'influence des politiques et des idéologies de l'époque sur la perception des Africains.**

L'influence des politiques et des idéologies de l'époque sur la perception des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV était omniprésente. Les politiques coloniales, les lois et les idées préconçues ont largement contribué à façonner les attitudes envers les Africains à cette époque. Toutefois, la politique coloniale de la France était centrée sur l'exploitation des ressources, principalement à travers l'esclavage. Les Africains étaient considérés comme des biens, des marchandises à acquérir et à vendre, ce qui se reflétait dans les politiques d'esclavage en vigueur dans les colonies françaises. Le Code Noir était une série de lois régissant la vie des esclaves

dans les colonies françaises, décrivant les droits et devoirs de chaque groupe social dans les colonies. Par exemple, « il énonçait les règles strictes concernant la punition des esclaves qui se révoltaient ». Code Noir, 1685

De plus, les idées préconçues sur les Africains étaient répandues et souvent utilisées pour justifier l'esclavage. Les Européens de l'époque avaient des croyances racistes qui considéraient les Africains comme inférieurs, sauvages et primitifs. Un exemple d'illustration et de caricatures de l'époque montre que « Les Africains étaient souvent dépeints dans l'art et la littérature de l'époque comme des êtres exotiques, mystérieux et effrayants. Ces représentations renforçaient les stéréotypes négatifs et contribuaient à déshumaniser les Africains ». En outre, les intellectuels de l'époque ont souvent utilisé des arguments pseudoscientifiques pour justifier l'esclavage et la supériorité perçue des Européens. Des théories pseudo-scientifiques comme le polygénisme, qui affirmait que les races humaines étaient des espèces différentes, ont été utilisées pour légitimer l'oppression des Africains. Par exemple, l'anthropologie de l'époque, notamment la classification des races humaines, était souvent utilisée pour soutenir l'idée que les Africains étaient naturellement destinés à être des esclaves en raison de leur supposée infériorité biologique.

Sans doute, ces politiques, idéologies et stéréotypes ont eu des conséquences néfastes sur la perception des Africains à l'époque de Louis XIV. Ils ont non seulement justifié l'exploitation brutale des Africains dans les colonies, mais ont également contribué à normaliser les préjugés racistes qui ont persisté pendant des siècles. Ces perceptions ont laissé un héritage d'injustice et d'inégalité qui continue de façonner les attitudes et les relations interraciales de nos jours.

### **Cadre Théorique**

Notre étude s'appuiera sur diverses théories sociologiques qui éclairent les relations interculturelles de l'époque. Parmi ces théories, le concept d'interculturalisme, proposé par Geert Hofstede, offre des perspectives pertinentes. Hofstede, sociologue néerlandais, est célèbre pour ses travaux sur la dimension culturelle des organisations. Son modèle des dimensions culturelles, notamment la dimension de l'individualisme-collectivisme, peut être appliquée à l'étude des interactions entre les Africains et les Français



sous le règne de Louis XIV. Ce modèle examine comment les cultures valorisent l'individualisme, où les individus sont encouragés à agir de manière autonome, par opposition au collectivisme, où l'accent est mis sur l'harmonie sociale et l'appartenance au groupe. Par l'application de ce modèle à notre étude, nous examinerons les différences culturelles entre les Africains et les Français de l'époque, révélant les attitudes, les comportements et les perceptions des Africains au sein de la société française du XVIIe siècle. Ce cadre théorique nous offre ainsi un cadre analytique solide pour examiner les interactions interculturelles à l'époque de Louis XIV, tout en tenant compte des dimensions sociologiques complexes qui ont influencé la perception des Africains.

### **Méthodologie**

Pour mener cette étude, une sélection rigoureuse de sources primaires et secondaires est essentielle. Les sources primaires, comme les documents d'archives, les lettres, les journaux intimes et les œuvres littéraires de l'époque, fournissent un aperçu direct des attitudes et des perceptions des Africains au XVIIe siècle. Les sources secondaires, telles que les ouvrages historiques et les analyses critiques, offrent des interprétations éclairées de ces sources primaires, enrichissant ainsi notre compréhension du contexte. En ce qui concerne l'analyse contextuelle, les documents historiques et les témoignages seront analysés dans leur contexte socio-historique, tenant compte des normes culturelles, des politiques et des idéologies de l'époque de Louis XIV. Cela permettra de saisir pleinement les nuances des attitudes envers les Africains. Les sources seront évaluées de manière critique en tenant compte de la partialité potentielle des auteurs. La considération des biais culturels et individuels aidera à distinguer les stéréotypes des expériences réelles des Africains. Les sources de l'époque sont souvent écrites par des Européens. L'absence de voix africaines directes est une limite. Donc, nous allons compenser cela en recherchant des perspectives africaines indirectes à travers les récits des esclaves affranchis et d'autres sources indirectes.

### **Analyse textuelle de *L'Histoire générale des plus fameux pirates* d'Alexandre Exquemelin**

L'œuvre, écrit par Alexandre Exquemelin en 1678, offre un aperçu précieux des interactions entre les Africains, les Européens et les pirates dans les

Caraïbes à l'époque de Louis XIV. Au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les Caraïbes étaient un théâtre de conflits, de piraterie et de commerce, où des personnes de diverses origines se rencontraient, créant ainsi un creuset culturel complexe. L'époque de Louis XIV a été témoin d'une montée en puissance de la piraterie dans les Caraïbes. Les pirates, souvent d'origines diverses, y compris des Africains, ont joué un rôle majeur dans les conflits coloniaux et le commerce. Les Caraïbes étaient le lieu où les tensions entre les puissances européennes, y compris la France, l'Espagne et l'Angleterre, se manifestaient. Ces rivalités ont eu un impact sur la vie quotidienne des Africains vivant dans les colonies françaises, exposés aux influences multiples des cultures européennes, africaines et autochtones. En plus, cet œuvre nous offre des détails sur la vie quotidienne dans les colonies, y compris les relations interculturelles et les échanges entre Africains, Européens et Autochtones. Les pirates, souvent en quête de richesses, étaient également impliqués dans le commerce d'esclaves, contribuant ainsi à façonner la démographie et la diversité ethnique des colonies caribéennes. Cette diversité ethnique a créé des dynamiques complexes, reflétant les réalités de l'époque de Louis XIV.

L'œuvre d'Exquemelin révèle également, les codes sociaux et les hiérarchies complexes présents dans les colonies. Les relations entre les différentes communautés étaient souvent marquées par des préjugés, des conflits et des alliances temporaires. Les Africains, en tant qu'esclaves, se trouvaient au bas de l'échelle sociale, mais leur résilience et leur adaptabilité face aux conditions difficiles étaient évidentes, créant ainsi un récit complexe de la vie dans les Caraïbes à cette époque.

Dans l'œuvre, les interactions entre les Africains, les Européens et les pirates dans les Caraïbes sont décrites avec un réalisme saisissant, offrant des éclairages sur les dynamiques sociales et interculturelles de l'époque. Quelques évidences textuelles montrent qu'Exquemelin décrit la présence notable d'Africains parmi les pirates des Caraïbes. Ces Africains, souvent des esclaves affranchis ou des hommes libres fuyant l'esclavage, ont trouvé refuge parmi les pirates. Exquemelin évoque par exemple un pirate africain nommé Diego, qui, après avoir été esclave, s'est rebellé contre ses maîtres et a rejoint les pirates, devenant un membre respecté de l'équipage. Ces récits témoignent de la résistance des Africains à l'oppression et de leur



quête de liberté dans un environnement où les frontières sociales étaient plus fluides qu'ailleurs. En outre, les pirates des Caraïbes étaient un groupe hétérogène, composé de personnes de diverses origines ethniques. Exquemelin décrit des alliances interculturelles entre Africains, Européens et Autochtones. Ces alliances étaient souvent pragmatiques, basées sur des intérêts économiques et de survie. Par exemple, les pirates africains et européens collaboraient fréquemment dans des raids et des attaques contre les navires espagnols, exploitant ainsi les rivalités entre les puissances coloniales.

Malgré ces alliances, Exquemelin établit également des conflits et des tensions interculturelles. Parfois, des désaccords éclataient au sein des équipages pirates, exacerbés par des différences culturelles. Des affrontements pouvaient survenir en raison de malentendus culturels ou de la concurrence pour les ressources. Ces tensions reflètent les défis complexes des interactions interculturelles dans un environnement où différentes communautés étaient forcées de coexister.

De plus, les activités des pirates ont eu un impact significatif sur les communautés locales, y compris les Africains vivant dans les colonies. Les attaques de pirates ont souvent causé des perturbations économiques et sociales, affectant la vie quotidienne des Africains et des autres habitants des Caraïbes. Ces attaques ont contribué à façonner les dynamiques de pouvoir et les stratégies de survie des Africains à l'époque. Ces interactions étaient marquées par la diversité, les alliances pragmatiques, les conflits interculturels et les répercussions sur les communautés locales, reflétant ainsi les réalités complexes de l'époque de Louis XIV dans cette région du monde.

### **Révélation des perceptions des Africains dans le contexte des pirates et des colonies françaises**

Les écrits de l'époque révèlent des attitudes et des perceptions complexes envers les Africains dans le contexte des pirates et des colonies françaises des Caraïbes au XVIIe siècle. Ces attitudes étaient influencées par des facteurs sociaux, économiques et culturels, créant ainsi un paysage interculturel riche et nuancé. Certains pirates considéraient les Africains comme des membres d'équipage précieux en raison de leurs compétences



maritimes et de leur connaissance des eaux locales. Ces compétences étaient particulièrement importantes dans les Caraïbes, où la navigation était complexe. Exquemelin mentionne un pirate nommé Jean-Baptiste, un Africain qui était un marin exceptionnel, soulignant ainsi le respect et l'appréciation de ses compétences. « Jean-Baptiste, un Africain, était un excellent marin. Il était respecté et écouté par l'équipage en raison de sa connaissance approfondie des courants et des récifs dans les eaux des Caraïbes »

Aussi, dans les colonies françaises, les attitudes envers les Africains étaient ambivalentes. Alors qu'ils étaient souvent réduits à l'esclavage, certains Africains affranchis ou libres pouvaient devenir des entrepreneurs prospères ou même des propriétaires de plantations. Cette dualité sociale témoigne des complexités de la perception des Africains dans les colonies françaises. Les écrits historiques de l'époque postulent que « Certains Africains libres, affranchis ou émancipés, avaient acquis des terres et des plantations, devenant ainsi des membres respectés de la société coloniale. Cependant, la plupart des Africains étaient encore esclaves, vivant dans des conditions brutales ». De plus, les Africains, en particulier ceux qui étaient affranchis ou libres, étaient souvent perçus comme une menace potentielle par les autorités coloniales et les propriétaires d'esclaves. La liberté des Africains était parfois considérée comme une subversion potentielle de l'ordre social établi, entraînant ainsi la méfiance et la surveillance. Un exemple basé sur les documents d'archives de l'époque montre que « Les Africains libres étaient parfois considérés comme des instigateurs potentiels de révoltes par les autorités coloniales, car leur liberté était perçue comme une menace pour la stabilité sociale de l'époque ».

En somme, les attitudes et les perceptions envers les Africains dans le contexte des pirates et des colonies françaises étaient diverses et changeantes. Les Africains étaient parfois valorisés pour leurs compétences, mais ils étaient également souvent soumis à des préjugés et à des restrictions sociales. Ces perceptions complexes reflètent les tensions interculturelles de l'époque et mettent en lumière les réalités contrastées de la vie des Africains dans les Caraïbes du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle.



## La Perception des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV

La perception des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV était profondément influencée par les représentations sociales véhiculées dans l'art, la littérature et la presse de l'époque. Ces représentations reflétaient souvent les préjugés et les stéréotypes de la société française du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle envers les Africains. Dans l'art, les artistes de l'époque utilisaient la peinture et la sculpture pour représenter les Africains, souvent de manière exotique et caricaturale. Les Africains étaient parfois dépeints comme des sauvages ou des figures exotiques, renforçant ainsi les préjugés raciaux. Par exemple, la peinture *La Belle Africaine* de Simon Vouet, datant du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, représente une femme africaine de manière idéalisée, mais en même temps exotique, renforçant ainsi le mythe de l'exotisme africain.

Dans le plan politique, sous le règne de Louis XIV, les Africains étaient souvent marginalisés politiquement en raison de leur statut d'esclaves. Le Code Noir de 1685 en France établissait clairement des distinctions légales basées sur la race. Un exemple de cette discrimination se trouve dans le Code Noir : « Les esclaves ne peuvent être admis à aucun office, ni à aucune charge publique, ecclésiastique, civile ou militaire. ».

Au niveau social, les Africains étaient en grande partie relégués à des positions subalternes. Les récits de l'époque, tels que les écrits de l'abbé Raynal, témoignent de cette réalité : « Les Africains étaient souvent soumis à des conditions de vie déplorables, relégués aux emplois les plus bas et exposés à des discriminations quotidiennes en raison de leur origine ».

Sur Plan Culturel, les Africains ont apporté des contributions significatives malgré les obstacles. La présence d'Africains à la cour de Louis XIV a eu des implications culturelles. Une lettre d'époque souligne cela : « Les danses africaines et les rythmes exotiques ont commencé à influencer la scène culturelle de la cour, apportant une diversité bienvenue dans les arts et divertissements ».

Au niveau de la littérature, les œuvres littéraires de l'époque comprenaient souvent des personnages africains stéréotypés, et parfois utilisés pour créer des contrastes culturels ou pour renforcer des valeurs morales. Les Africains étaient parfois dépeints comme des esclaves dociles ou des sauvages effrayants, en fonction des besoins narratifs. Par exemple, le personnage de Caliban dans *La Tempête* de William Shakespeare, une pièce de théâtre qui

a été adaptée et jouée en France à l'époque de Louis XIV, est interprété comme une représentation stéréotypée de l'Africain sauvage.

Dans le cadre de la presse, les gravures et les illustrations dans les journaux et les publications de l'époque étaient parfois utilisées pour caricaturer les Africains. Ces images renforçaient les préjugés existants et influençaient l'opinion publique. Les caricatures dans les journaux de l'époque représentaient parfois les Africains comme des figures comiques ou effrayantes, renforçant ainsi les stéréotypes raciaux. Il est important de souligner que ces représentations de l'époque contribuaient à façonner la perception des Africains au sein de la société française du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Bref, ces exemples soulignent les rapports complexes entre les Africains et la société sous Louis XIV, démontrant les barrières politiques et sociales auxquelles ils étaient confrontés tout en soulignant leurs contributions culturelles, qui ont enrichi la France de l'époque malgré les défis.

### **Résultats de l'étude**

L'étude révèle que les Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV étaient victimes de préjugés raciaux tenaces et de stéréotypes dégradants. Ils étaient perçus comme inférieurs, sauvages et subalternes en raison de leur origine africaine. Les préjugés étaient véhiculés par des idées pseudo-scientifiques de l'époque, alimentant ainsi les croyances en une hiérarchie raciale. Malgré les préjugés, certains Africains avaient réussi à s'intégrer partiellement à la société française, mais ils étaient souvent confrontés à des discriminations systémiques. Ils étaient relégués à des emplois subalternes, privés d'accès à l'éducation et aux opportunités économiques égales. Les lois discriminatoires, y compris le Code Noir, imposaient des restrictions légales sur les droits des Africains affranchis, perpétuant ainsi l'inégalité sociale. Face à leur perception négative, de nombreux Africains ont résisté à l'oppression en préservant leur culture, leur langue et leurs traditions malgré les tentatives d'assimilation forcée. Ils ont formé des communautés solidaires, créant des réseaux sociaux qui leur ont permis de résister aux discriminations et de préserver leur identité. Certains Africains affranchis ont également pris des initiatives économiques, devenant des entrepreneurs prospères malgré les obstacles.

1. Les Africains ont préservé leurs traditions musicales et artistiques, contribuant ainsi à l'enrichissement culturel de la société française malgré les tentatives de marginalisation.



2. Certains Africains ont développé des compétences artisanales et commerciales, devenant des marchands prospères dans des domaines tels que l'artisanat, la couture et la cuisine, contournant ainsi les barrières professionnelles imposées.
3. Les Africains ont formé des associations et des réseaux sociaux au sein de leurs communautés, fournissant un soutien mutuel et des opportunités d'éducation pour leurs membres, renforçant ainsi leur résilience collective. Ces résultats soulignent la force et la résilience de la communauté africaine dans un contexte d'oppression systémique.

### **Conclusion**

Dans cette étude nous avons établi que l'histoire des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV offre un aperçu cher des racines historiques des préjugés, qui aident à contextualiser les enjeux contemporains liés au racisme. L'étude souligne l'importance de comprendre l'évolution de la perception des Africains au fil des siècles. Bien que des progrès aient été réalisés, les stéréotypes et les préjugés raciaux persistent dans certaines parties du monde. Cette étude a mis en lumière, les discriminations et les stratégies de résistance des Africains sous le règne de Louis XIV. Face aux stéréotypes dégradants, les Africains ont résisté, préservé leur culture et formé des communautés solidaires. Ces résultats répondent à la question de recherche en révélant la complexité des expériences des Africains à cette époque et en mettant en lumière leur résilience face à l'oppression. L'étude révèle son importance au niveau de la compréhension des enjeux contemporains liés au racisme et à l'inégalité sociale à travers les expériences passées des Africains en France qui éclairent les problèmes actuels de racisme et d'inégalité sociale. L'étude montre qu'en examinant les stratégies de résistance et de préservation culturelle des Africains du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, la société contemporaine peut apprendre des tactiques historiques pour lutter contre le racisme et promouvoir l'égalité. En tirant des leçons de l'histoire, la société contemporaine ouvrera vers un avenir plus inclusif et équitable, en reconnaissant et en combattant les préjugés raciaux et les discriminations persistants.

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## **A Corrupt Member in the Cabinet of Jesus Christ: John 12:3-8 In Light of Effective Management of Corruption in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Corruption, which refers to a virus capable of destroying an organised system, is identified in the cabinet of Jesus Christ and the Nigerian system of government. The sacred texts, including John 12:3-8, portray Judas Iscariot as the corrupt member of the apostolic band of Jesus. Also, Nigeria's system of government has been bedevilled with corrupt political leadership. Previous studies have discussed the life and career of Judas Iscariot, the disciples of Jesus and Jesus himself, and corruption in Nigeria, with little attention paid to Jesus' expertise in managing the corrupt members of his cabinet and its relevance to effective political leadership in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, examines Jesus' managerial skills towards the corrupt member of his cabinet in John 12:3-8, with a view to establishing the relevance of Jesus' managerial skills to Nigerian political leadership. While Samuel Abogunrin's approach to the Decolonisation of New Testament Interpretation in Africa was adopted, the interpretive design was used. Sources are analysed exegetically. The findings of this study have implications for an effective system of governance in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Jesus' managerial skills, Judas Iscariot in John's Gospel, Management of a corrupt member, Nigerians' battle against corruption

### **Introduction**

Jesus chose Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης as a potential follower and disciple, and admonished him repeatedly to be a "little Jesus." Christ's foreknowledge of Ἰούδας does not imply fore-ordination that he must inexorably become the corrupt member of his cabinet. However, the selected biblical text, John 12:3-8, portrays the identified characteristics of the corrupt member in the apostolic band, Ἰούδας, as follows: love of money; jealousy of the other disciples; fear of the inevitable outcome of Jesus Christ's ministry, which



made him turn state's evidence to save his skin; an enthusiastic intention to force Christ's hand and make him declare himself as Messiah; and a bitter and revengeful spirit, which arose when his worldly hopes were crushed and this disappointment resulted in hate. Oh corruption, steals, kills, and destroys!

The pervasiveness of corruption is, perhaps, why it is the most discussed issue anywhere Nigerians are gathered. Whether at bus stops, in offices, churches, mosques, hospitals, or in political or social meetings, Nigerians of every ilk have become experts in dissecting how Nigerian leaders have failed to tackle corruption and its attendant consequences. In all the informal and formal discussions (workshops and seminars), it is almost always agreed that corruption is wreaking havoc on the country but not all are agreed on how best to reduce the problem as many Nigerians are only waiting for the right time, the right opportunity to indulge in corrupt acts as those who engage in it get away with it.<sup>1</sup>

The questions arising from the above submission are as follows: How did the study of John 12:3-8 help to understand the corrupt member in Jesus' cabinet and his corrupt practices? To what extent have Nigerian agencies to fight against corruption succeeded? What are the possible consequences corruption had on the corrupt members of Jesus' cabinet, corrupt Nigerian leaders and the entire Nigeria? In what ways can Jesus' managerial skills towards the corrupt member in his cabinet as reported in John 12:3-8 serve as a catalyst to halting corrupt practices in Nigeria's system of governance? In attempting to proffer solutions to these questions, the paper adopts Samuel Abogunrin's approach to the Decolonisation of New Testament Interpretation in Africa, which posits that biblical interpretation must be

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Okecha says, while a few of The friends and relatives of the new government-appointed or elected officer would pray for his success in office and ask him to toe the line of righteousness, the majority of them would unashamedly say openly or privately to him some things including, "This is your chance to become rich; make the best of this God-given opportunity; *God don butter your bread-o*, so, make it fast; if you do *oyibo* for this job, *na you go suffer*; grab anything that comes your way, opportunity comes but once; don't be like John XYZ, the *mugu*, who has nothing to show for all his years as Permanent Secretary; make hay while the sun shines; and *Na where man de work, naim ide chop.*" *Newswatch* (October 4, 2010): 55.



relevant and meaningful in the context of Africa.<sup>2</sup> The interpretive design is used. Remarkably, not every Nigerian is corrupt, a good number of Nigerians are an embodiment of probity: they are among the clergy and journalists, in the military, judiciary, civil service, academia, trade unions, and business houses, among others. Nigerian leaders include leaders in the sacred order (religious and traditional leaderships) and secular leaders (political, institutional, management, professional, youth and community leadership, among others). This paper dwells on political leadership in Nigeria.

### **The Corrupt Member in the Cabinet of Jesus: A Background**

In the synoptic lists of the Twelve whom Jesus called to be with him, the name Ἰούδας constantly appears last (Mark 3:14) with a habitual description that brands him an infamous stigma (Mark 3:19; Matthew 10:4; Luke 6:16). These synoptic texts and John 12:4 apply the Greek ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης to his name.<sup>3</sup> Other Johannine textual traditions confirm the derivation of ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης from Hebrew ἰσqrīyot, “a man of Keriot.”<sup>4</sup> Ἰούδας was the Treasurer (John 13:29) and a thief (John 12:6) in the apostolic band.<sup>5</sup> Also, he was the traitor (John 13:2, 27) who delivered Jesus up to his enemies privately/secretly by craft (Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:6) in the Upper Room (Mark 14:17) to collect money<sup>6</sup>. These traits of Ἰούδας portray him as a corrupt member of the cabinet of Jesus Christ. Despite the later days of Ἰούδας are beset with much difficulty of his pathetic remorse, apostle Ἰούδας had become an apostate and had gone to the destiny reserved for a corrupt person.

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, “Decolonizing New Testament Interpretation in Africa”, in Samuel O. Abogunrin (ed.), *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa*, Ibadan, Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (2005), 267.

<sup>3</sup> The name Ἰούδας appears eight times in John’s Gospel: as Ἰούδας (John 13:29, 18:2, 3, and 5); as Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης in John 12:4; as Ἰούδαν Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου in John 6:71 and John 13:26; and in John 13:2, as Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου, ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, where ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης agrees with Ἰούδας.

<sup>4</sup> Kerioth is located in Moab (Jeremiah 48:24, 41; Amos 2:2) but there is another possible identification, Kerioth-Hezron (Joshua 15:25) which is 19 Km South of Hebron.

<sup>5</sup> Ἰούδας was called a thief because he probably pilfered the money which was entrusted to him (John 12:6).

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 27:29 supplies the detail of the amount, which may have been a part payment of the agreed sum that the priests promised Ἰούδας.

What then is corruption? While the Greek term διαφθορά connected with διαφθείρω refers to corruption as the physical effects of merely gratifying the natural desires and ministering to one's own needs or lusts, Ngige<sup>7</sup> reportedly views corruption as “anything that does not come in its pure form” basically comes in two forms – administrative (favouritism, nepotism, tribalism, sexual harassment) and financial (bribery, extortion). Nigerian leaders have indulged in these acts with impunity at all levels – federal, state and local governments. The story of corruption dates back to the time of Nigeria's independence in 1960. At that time, it was like a mustard seed but has, today, grown into a very big tree with deep tap roots, branches and leaves.

The main reason leaders in Nigeria have not been able to tackle corruption is that a major percentage of them do not understand what public service is. They don't also understand that leadership is all about serving the public than asking what is there for you. Hence, they are brazenly corrupt. And once leaders are corrupt, they will find it difficult to fight corruption.”<sup>8</sup> Also, the inability of the judiciary to effectively convict those brought to trial for corruption and jail them. While during the military rule, some of the leaders convicted of corruption only received a slap on the wrist as punishment and were asked to go and sin no more, in the civilian regime the leaders steal more than they needed and when the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) or the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) starts chasing them, they will have enough to bribe them to get them off their neck. Agboluaje further perceives another cause of corruption in Nigeria as "The exclusion of the best brains in Nigerian politics through high-cost nomination forms will place Nigeria's future in the hands of looters... it is a strategy of handing over the country to those individuals who have looted the country in the past. If this practice goes unchallenged, Nigerians are in for not just another regime of poor governance but that of extreme corruption and looting.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Chigbo Maureen, “Corruption: The Dream that Crashed”, in *Newswatch*, (October 4, 2010): 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Maureen, “Corruption: The Dream that Crashed”, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Rotimi Agboluaje, “Nigeria Being Handed Over to Generation of Looters—ASUU”, in *The Guardian*, Vol.38, No.15, 872 (June 12, 2022): 5.



## Exegesis of John 12:3-8

### JOHN 12 VERSES

### BIBLEWORKS GREEK LXX

### REVISED STANDARD VERSION

- 3 Ἡ οὖν Μαριάμ λαβοῦσα λίτραν μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτίμου ἤλειπεν τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἐξέμαξεν ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· ἡ δὲ οἰκία ἐπληρώθη ἐκ τῆς ὀσμῆς τοῦ μύρου.
- 4 λέγει δὲ Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης εἷς [ἐκ] τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, ὁ μέλλων αὐτὸν παραδιδόναι·
- 5 διὰ τί τοῦτο τὸ μύρον οὐκ ἐπράθη τριακοσίων δηναρίων καὶ ἐδόθη πτωχοῖς;
- 6 εἶπεν δὲ τοῦτο οὐχ ὅτι περὶ τῶν πτωχῶν ἔμελεν αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ὅτι κλέπτης ἦν καὶ τὸ γλωσσόκομον ἔχων τὰ βαλλόμενα ἐβάσταζεν.
- 7 εἶπεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἄφες αὐτήν, ἵνα εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἐνταφιασμοῦ μου τηρήσῃ αὐτό·
- 8 τοὺς πτωχοὺς γὰρ πάντοτε ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε.
- Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.
- But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said,
- "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"
- This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it.
- Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial.
- The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 probably account for the same event. While Matthew and Mark reported that Mary anointed Jesus' body for burial, John records the anointing of the feet, because of the feet-washing incident narrated in John 13. This feet-washing was corroborated by Luke

7:38. Despite some similarities between the narratives in John and Luke, there are sufficient differences to make it unlikely that the two incidents are the same. While Luke describes Mary of Bethany as a sinful woman who is deeply penitent, John pictures Mary of Magdala as a woman deeply devoted to Jesus. Likewise, Lightfoot<sup>10</sup> upholds that Mary Magdalene was the woman who anointed Jesus' feet. In both Lucan and Johannine accounts, the woman wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair. A woman appearing in the presence of men with her hair untied would have been against Jewish convention, but love was stronger than convention in Mary's case. Mary was moved by deepest feelings of loyalty in being willing to brave the inevitable social disapproval. The effect on the atmosphere was immediate and pervasive as the whole house was filled with the fragrance of Mary's deed, both physically and emotionally. John's reportage of the odour filling the house indicates that he was an eyewitness to this event.<sup>11</sup>

The term βαστάζω (take away) can have the sense of “steal.”<sup>12</sup> ἐβάσταζεν is a verb indicative imperfect active 3rd person singular from βαστάζω, is often referred to something is picked up or carried from another place with attendant significance (John 10:31). βαστάζω plays a role when Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης takes the travel money (John 12:6). Its other usages identified in the New Testament were (1) Mary Magdalene presumed the body of Jesus has been taken away (John 20:15; cf. verses 2, 13); (2) the Jews brought along stones to stone Jesus (John 10:31); (3) the disciples were commanded to carry with them neither purse nor bag nor sandals (Luke 10:4); (4) Paul bears the stigmata of Jesus on himself (Galatians 6:17).

κλέπτης, noun nominative masculine singular common from κλέπτω, connotes “a thief.” The verb κλέπτω, which denotes “steal” and is derived from the noun κλέπτης, is employed in Mark 10:19 and Romans 13:19 with emphasis on the Decalogue, μὴ κλέψῃς “do not steal.” But John 10:10a expatiates the hallmarks of κλέπτης as follows: ὁ κλέπτης οὐκ ἔρχεται εἰ

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Unabridged Commentary on the Bible*, Vol. 5, Matthew – John, Louisville: GLH Publishing, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Guthrie, “John”, in Donald A. Carson et al (eds.), *New Bible Commentary*, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press (2004), 1051.

<sup>12</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (2007), 363.





μη ἵνα κλέψῃ καὶ θύσῃ καὶ ἀπολέσῃ, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” No wonder the verbs βαστάζω, κλέπτω and θύω are associates. The verb θύω, which connotes “slaughter, murder,” appears more frequently in the LXX (140 times) as the translation of the Hebrew *zābah*, “slaughter, or sacrifice”. This pattern of translation has its basis in the synthesis of two originally independent types of sacrifices, *zēbah* and *šēlāmîm*, which had long taken place and it is connected with the sacrificial meal. However, in the New Testament, θύω has a non-religious meaning (Matthew 22:4; Luke 15: 23, 27, 30; Acts 10:13 and 11:7) and in John 10:10a is referred to as κλέπτω. This perhaps explains whenever a sacrifice pleasing to God is spoken of θύω was never used but δίδωμι, προσφέρω and ἀναφέρω.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the verb φθείρω, which connotes to destroy by means of corruption and/or bringing into a worse state, is connected to φθορά, signifying “a bringing or being brought into an inferior condition, or a destruction, or corruption.” The term corruption, which probably originates from the translation of φθορά, is used for the physical effects of merely gratifying the material desires and ministering to one’s own needs or lusts (Galatians 6:8) to the flesh in contrast to the spirit. In this sense, corruption is antithetical to eternal life. Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης’s complaint against the expensive waste is in tandem with φθορά because he is κλέπτης.<sup>14</sup> Ἰούδας was stricken not only with the deadly sins of greed and covetousness but also, with dishonesty. The pint of pure nard, which probably was a liquid perfume, would have been a very expensive amount of ointment, as is clear from Ἰούδας’ estimate that it amounted to a year’s wages.

While the synoptic writers refer to the indignation of the twelve disciples of Jesus at the wasteful extravagance of Mary’s action, John focuses on the ringleader of the discontent, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης. Ἰούδας’ objection centred on the great value of the perfume: “a year’s wages,” that is, “three hundred denarii”. One denarius was the daily remuneration of a common

<sup>13</sup> Hartwig Tyen, “θύω”, in Horst Blaz and Gerhard Schneider (eds.), 161-163, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol.2, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (2000), 161.

<sup>14</sup> The occurrence of μέλω in John 12:6, which indicates that Ἰούδας does not care for the poor, echoes the behaviour of the hireling in John 10:13 who does not care for the sheep. Ἰούδας is, therefore, described as one of Jesus’ disciples, a κλέπτης, as well as a μέλω.



labourer (Matthew 20:2). Three hundred denarii are, therefore, roughly equivalent to a year's wages, since no money was earned on Sabbaths and other holy days. The perfume was outrageously expensive because it was imported from northern India. Its great value may indicate that Mary and her family heirloom that had been passed down to Mary. Though having the appearance of piety, Ἰούδας' objection turns out to be purely self-serving because he has deeper and darker motives. Hendriksen says, "Judas is the type of man who has money on his mind all the while. He views everything from the aspect of pecuniary value."<sup>15</sup>

The identification of Ἰούδας as Σίμωνος (A K X Δ Θ Π Ψ 065 *f*<sup>13</sup> 28 Byz) or as Σίμων (1195 1242\* 1344 2148 *al*) is a scribal accretion derived from John 6:71. These same witnesses also smooth the sequence by placing the name after the indefinite εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ / and before ὁ μέλλων αὐτὸν παραδιδόναι .... It was thought best to retain the words εἷς ἐκ, an expression that occurs in eleven other passages in the Fourth Gospel, but because of the absence of ἐκ in such early and noteworthy witnesses as  $\mathfrak{B}^{66,75\text{vid}}$  B L W33, to enclose it within square brackets.<sup>16</sup>

As the Treasurer of the disciple band, the money kept with Ἰούδας is expected to help meet the needs of Jesus and his disciples as well as provide alms for the poor. The funds would have been replenished by followers of Jesus, such as the women mentioned in Luke 8:2-3 who supported his ministry. Ἰούδας was not above helping himself from the revenues in his charge. The value of this perfume would certainly have given him rich pickings. John implies that this pilfering had already become a settled trait in Ἰούδας and perhaps throws some light on his betrayal of Jesus, which, when all is done, was for a significant monetary prize. Avarice had already, apparently, invaded his soul. Before ever there was a betrayal of Jesus' person there was a betrayal of Jesus' trust. Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης woefully and wickedly betrayed the trust of his colleagues and above all that of Jesus.

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<sup>15</sup> William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Banner of Truth (1959), 177.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition, D-Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (2002), 201.



Besides the abovementioned portrayals of Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης from the Christian tradition, the pseudepigrapha Gnostics Gospel of Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης<sup>17</sup> perceives him as follows: Ἰούδας had a glimpse of the truth and Jesus revealed the most sacred information to him. As a sign of kindness to Jesus, Ἰούδας rendered the most sacred service unto Jesus by handing him over to the authorities who needed the closest person to Jesus to hand him over. As the only disciple who understood Jesus did his will<sup>18</sup> and committed suicide after he helped Jesus to reach heaven and became a star in the sky.<sup>19</sup> Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης was the greatest of all the disciples because he helped Jesus to fulfil the climax of his mission on earth and this act of his generosity provided salvation to the whole human race. Unfortunately, the Christian Gospel writers invented such a supposedly villain character to Ἰούδας.<sup>20</sup> In the same vein, some Nigerian leaders who were found culpable were celebrated and given national honours. The Nigerian government has not thought it wise not to associate with ex-convicts who were once powerful in the society or to withdraw national honours given to them.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Corrupt Member in the Cabinet of Jesus and his Managerial Skills in John 12:3-8**

The corrupt member, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης belongs to the apostolic band of Jesus Christ; and the selected biblical text, John 12:3-8, explicates some managerial skills adopted by Jesus that were adjudged effective in managing him. These skills were attitude, leadership by example, and paying less attention to the advice and office of the Treasurer/Director of Finance.

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<sup>17</sup> Irenaeus classified Gnostics' Gospel of Judas Iscariot as a heretical book that was written around 180 A.D. and was brought to the attention of the international community in 2006. It was written by Cainites who venerated the biblical character of Cain who killed Abel his brother. This same author also described God as evil.

<sup>18</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot*, New York, Oxford University Press (2006), 171.

<sup>19</sup> Richard B. SORENSEN, Historical Dossiers for Unholy Grail, Accessed April 13, 2022, [https://academia.edu<Book One Historical Dossiers>\\_www.richardsorensen.com](https://academia.edu<Book One Historical Dossiers>_www.richardsorensen.com)

<sup>20</sup> Sorensen, Historical Dossiers for Unholy Grail, Accessed April 13, 2022, [https://academia.edu<Book One Historical Dossiers>\\_www.richardsorensen.com](https://academia.edu<Book One Historical Dossiers>_www.richardsorensen.com)

<sup>21</sup> According to Chigbo Maureen, Patricia Ete, a Former Speaker of the House of Representatives was disgraced from office on allegations of corruption but was later given national honour. Also, Tafa Balogun, Inspector General of Police was convicted and jailed for stealing money meant for police.

**Attitude** – While Ἰουδαῖς condemned Mary of Bethany for a huge wastage of the expensive ointment valued for a year’s wages, Jesus’ excellent attitude came to bear in this statement, “Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial” (John 12:7). Sewapo interprets this Jesus’ response as “a personal piety, an inner attitude of conforming to what is felt to be pleasing to God.”<sup>22</sup> No wonder Harrell<sup>23</sup> says that attitude is everything: attitude is a powerful tool for positive action and is inherently interwoven into everything humans do; it is the most priceless possession that is not purchasable but individuals must develop. Jesus had a good attitude towards his disciples; he did not capitalize on the minor, but he rather placed serious emphasis on the utmost goal which is the kingdom of God. His excellent attitude was further displayed when he fed the 4,000 and 5,000 people, excluding women and children, first with the Word of God (spiritual meal) and thereafter the physical meal (Matthew 14:21; 15:38). When a leader has a good attitude and a sensitive and sensible body language like Jesus Christ who attracted the crowd during his earthly ministry, there will be orderliness in the society. Jesus’ attitude here contrasts with Nigerian leaders who, according to Okecha, are in a rat race for the acquisition of houses (in and outside Nigeria), choice parcels of land, posh cars, business houses and shares in blue-chip companies. Their lifestyle spells ostentation; they carry on as if the dividends of democracy are for only themselves and members of their nuclear family.<sup>24</sup> If Nigerian leaders can place the greatest value on Nigeria and the citizens then, the issue of corruption will be reduced to the barest minimum.

**Leadership by example** – John 12:8 emphasises that Jesus did not keep/handle money directly during his earthly ministry. Jesus stayed away from everything that could supposedly corrupt him, especially handling money directly, but sought the kingdom of God. No one could accuse him of mismanagement of funds and it became easier for him to manage the corrupt member of his cabinet, particularly Ἰουδαῖς ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης. Jesus led the apostolic band in a clean sheet and it was very difficult for anyone to

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<sup>22</sup>Honor Sewapo, “An African’s Perspective on Leadership in the Book of Titus”, in *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 2015): 13.

<sup>23</sup> Keith HARRELL, *Attitude is Everything – 10 Life-Changing Steps to Turning Attitude into Action*, New York, HarperCollins Publishers Inc. (2005), viii.

<sup>24</sup> Steve Okecha, “Epilogue: Leadership”, in *Newswatch*, (October 4, 2010): 57.



accuse him of any evil. Is this not the type of leadership Nigerians are aspiring to have: the leader whose modesty, humility and selflessness must constitute his visible traits; the leader who must live and die for the downtrodden? If Nigerian leaders are also sincere in the anti-corruption campaign, they must lead by example.

***Paying less attention to the advice and office of the Treasurer/Director of Finance*** – John 12: 4-6 says that 'Ιούδας raised the voice of criticism against the action of Mary who anointed Jesus' feet with the precious ointment. 'Ιούδας reacted in that way not because he wanted the most expensive perfume to be sold for three hundred denarii and given the money to the poor as a palliative, but because he was a thief and wanted more money to be raised into the money box under his care for him to habitually take away a huge amount of money from the treasury at will. Jesus understood the motif behind 'Ιούδας' reaction and inherent evil desire and resolved not to give 'Ιούδας the undue recognition he was begging for. Besides Johannine accounts on Jesus paying less attention to the advice of the Treasurer/Director of Finance, Matthew 15:32-37 and Mark 8:3-9 narrate how Jesus demonstrated this unique skill in the feeding of the four thousand men, excluding women and children: when Jesus thought of feeding the multitude of people that were with him for three days because they ran out of food and were hungry, 'Ιούδας ὁ 'Ισκαριώτης would have laughed at Jesus or wondered where he wanted him to get such amount of money to feed such a huge crowd. Again, common sense would suggest that Jesus would raise sufficient funds to either buy food for all of them or employ a caterer who would prepare food for them. In that way, an opportunity would have been given to the Treasurer, 'Ιούδας ὁ 'Ισκαριώτης, to advise Jesus on the financial situation. But Jesus ignored the office of 'Ιούδας ὁ 'Ισκαριώτης, he asked his disciples the number of loaves of bread they had and he multiplied seven loaves of bread and a few fishes which were donated by the disciples. Furthermore, Jesus' triumphal entry event indicated that Jesus needed a donkey to ride on into Jerusalem. One would either think of Jesus buying a donkey or renting it. And if this was the option of Jesus, the Treasurer of the cabinet would be required for professional advice for disbursement. Instead, Jesus used his authority to demand the usage of a donkey; and he told his disciples if you are challenged just tell whosoever that the Lord needs it. The donkey was brought to Jesus for his triumphal entry into

Jerusalem. The office of Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης was equally ignored and rendered less important again (Mark 11:1-11; Matthew 21:1-11). Similarly, when the disciples were sent out on a mission, Jesus did not ask the Treasurer, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, to disburse a certain amount of money to each of the disciples for the journey. But Jesus told his disciples not to worry about those things for whatever they needed would be divinely provided at the right time. In this scenario, Jesus paid less attention to the office of the Treasurer/Director of Finance, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης (Matthew 10:5-15). From the abovementioned narratives, Jesus provided cash, food and means of transportation without necessarily asking for money from the money box Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης was keeping, but Jesus paid less attention to the corrupt Treasurer/Director of Finance. Perhaps this was with a view to either halting Ἰούδας' corrupt practices or giving him opportunities to leave the cabinet unceremoniously (John 6:67).<sup>25</sup> Jesus' strategy here underscores that leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers, whose collective goal is to effect real changes (to pay less attention to the tempter) that reflect their shared purposes of dreams. Nigerian leaders should borrow a leaf from this Jesus' strategy and pay less attention to the temptation of amassing wealth at the expense of other Nigerian citizens.

### **Corruption in Nigeria and its Managerial Strategies**

From the year 1960 when Nigerian gained its independence to 2022, the programmes and agencies established to fight corruption were as follows: War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC); Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC); Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI); Public Complaint Commission (PCC); Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation (OAGF); and Technical Unit on Governance and Anti- Corruption Reforms (TUGAR).

The most popular of them all, EFCC was instituted in response to pressure from the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), which named Nigeria as one of 23 countries non-cooperative in the international

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Yeulett, *Jesus and His Enemies*, New Jersey, P & R Publishing (2013), 152.





community's efforts to fight money laundering.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, a one-time chairman of a ruling political party announced during the party's public election campaign that those who joined that ruling party would have their sins forgiven. Hence some politicians with corrupt cases considered this public declaration a welcome idea and joined the ruling party to escape prosecution.<sup>27</sup> If the defection of such corrupt political leaders has automatically stalled the prosecution of their corrupt cases, to what extent is the self-acclaimed anti-corruption campaign of that regime effective? Again, the Nigerian leaders deploy double standards with these programmes and agencies to wage war against corruption, thereby frustrating their opposition political parties and going after mostly perceived enemies of their respective tenures in the office while their cronies were left alone. In what ways would the double standards practice of the Nigerian leaders halt corrupt practices in the system?

### **Consequences of Corrupt Practices**

The selected biblical text, John 12:3-8, reveals that Ἰούδας was never Christ's man in his behaviour. He fell from apostleship but never had a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. His highest title for Christ was ῥαββί, "Rabbi,"<sup>28</sup> but never κύριος, "Lord."<sup>29</sup> Ἰούδας lives on the stage of the Scripture as an awful warning to the corrupt and uncommitted follower of Jesus who was in his company but did not share his spirit (Romans 8:9b). He leaves the Gospel story "a doomed, damned and corrupt man."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Olusegun Adeniyi, *Power, Politics & Death – A front-row account of Nigeria under the late President Yar' Adua*, Lagos, Kachifo Limited (2011), 17-18. The US had threatened that if Ribadu, the Chairman of EFCC, was arrested, or if there was any evidence of reprisal, vengeance or any form of malicious action against him from former victims of his anti-corruption activities whilst in office, the US would regard such as "a deliberate attempt to victimize and crucify Ribadu for his successful anti-corruption war while in office" and would react with measures it deemed appropriate.

<sup>27</sup> Sahara reporters 16th September 2021. <https://saharareporters.com>

<sup>28</sup> ῥαββί is a form of address, then an honorary title for outstanding teachers of the law (Matthew 23:7; 26:25)

<sup>29</sup> κύριος has full control of something (Matthew 9:38; Mark 2:28).

<sup>30</sup> Ralph P. Martin, "Judas Iscariot", in I. Howard Marshall et al (eds.), 624-626, *New Bible Dictionary*, Third Edition, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press (2007), 625.



Similarly, Nigerian leaders were to be Nigerian knights in shining armour leading by example. But the story that unfolded when they were in, and after they left power, sadly, however, spoke volumes of how they failed to tackle corruption which is today ruining every aspect of national life, socio-political, economic, education, judiciary, culture and religion.

On the one hand, the inability of Nigerian leaders to tackle corruption led to the demise of the first and the second republics when some military boys staged the first coup in the country. Ironically even when the military overthrew its fellow military regimes, corruption was always cited as the reason.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the Nigerian government's failure to bring corrupt leaders to book has continued to erode the confidence and trust of Nigerians and perpetuate the fallacy that corruption pays in the public and private sectors of the country. On this, Mike Obadan reportedly avers, “grand corruption in Nigeria is rampant in the public sector but executed with the active connivance of the private sector.”<sup>32</sup> Other than direct stealing from the treasury, major forms of corruption are perpetrated through private sector companies and organisations. For instance, some public officials even form their own private companies or fronts with which they corner inflated contracts from their ministries, agencies and parastatals. Furthermore, Abel Inyaregh deduce that corruption has inflicted poverty and hardships on the Nigerians<sup>33</sup>. Again Inyaregh opines that the insensitive renunciation of peoples’ liberty, the tyrannical and inattentive character of the political administrators have eventually filtered out to all fronts

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<sup>31</sup>Dike Onwuamaeze reportedly said that Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu the coup leader that truncated the first republic in 1996 says, “Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 per cent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds.”

<sup>32</sup> Maureen, “Corruption: The Dream that Crashed”, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Abel Aor Inyaregh elaborated that poverty has been devastating in Nigerian society. Poverty and ignorance are the two major reasons that dragged people into contemporary slavery, reluctantly or un-reluctantly. Unemployment and corruption are other causes of modern slavery. Due to the corruption and mismanagement of the government in Nigeria, many people do not succeed to get a decent job which affords their families with necessities (“Slavery in The Pauline Epistle to Philemon: Theological, Social, and Economic Implications for Nigerian Context”, [*Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURNELS)*] Vol.11 No.2, 2021, 19).



of leadership in Nigeria<sup>34</sup>. The devastating enslavement spread in Nigeria is already escalating beyond normal and calls for the immediate attention of all the obligatory stakeholders who are concerned about getting rid of the cruelty<sup>35</sup>. Public resources that would have otherwise been channelled to develop infrastructure, provide social services, promote human development and alleviate various forms of poverty, are outrightly stolen or corruptly diverted to causes other than the public cause by those entrusted with those resources. For instance, money meant for the provision of electricity has been stolen and the nation is experiencing an epileptic power supply. In addition, jobs that could be executed with hundreds of millions of naira are done in Nigeria with billions of Naira, resulting in the situation where huge spending yields very limited results. Should it not be said that Nigeria has now degenerated in recent times, cascading from grace to grass?

### **Conclusion**

The paper brings to the fore attitude, leadership by example and paying less attention to the advice and office of the Treasurer/Director of Finance were Jesus' excellent managerial skills deployed against the corrupt member in his cabinet, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης. Paradoxically, the various agencies established in Nigeria to fight corruption have not yielded the expected results. Inept leadership has failed woefully to tackle corruption, and Nigerians have equally failed to hold their leaders accountable due to the pervasiveness of corruption. As the theory of the trickle-down effect of corruption goes, so long as leaders keep giving a little of their loot of public treasury to their relations, protégés, wards, subordinates, and communities, no one will mind so much about them stealing.

Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, the Treasurer of the apostolic band of Jesus leaves the Gospel story as a doomed, damned, corrupt man and a suicide. Nigerian leaders who are amassing wealth at the expense of other Nigerian citizens will end up as footnotes of history – where history pours its bile on focusless and visionless leaders and demagogues. Nigerian leaders should borrow a leaf from Jesus' managerial skills towards the corrupt member in his cabinet as enshrined in John 12:3-8, the paper recommends.

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<sup>34</sup> Inyaregh, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

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**Note:** This paper was published in the memory of late Dr Honore Maupego Sewapo, whose stay with us in the Faculty was too short to know him enough. May he continue to rest in the bosom of our Lord in Jesus' name – by *Editor in Chief & Dean, Faculty of Arts on behalf of the Faculty of Arts, NOUN.*



## Women's Participation in Nigerian Politics

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### Abstract

Women's participation in Nigerian politics has turned out to be a public outcry because they are grossly underrepresented in both elective and appointment positions in the political and leadership spaces. This Paper examines and analyses the challenges Nigerian women are undergoing in the political space. The truncated level of women's participation in politics is becoming alarming and worrisome. The deficient representation hampers women from contributing their quota to the development of Nigerian society. It also debated the gender discrimination in the Nigerian polity which could be linked to certain cultural and traditional practices that have methodically familiarized and treated women as being inferior to their male contemporaries. The study divulges that the patriarchal structure and male dominion of the human race that lowers women to a secondary level have twisted women's lowliness and isolated them from conventional politics. The patriarchal dominant factor in Nigerian society also designates women as full-time housewives thereby being relegated to the background. The study adopts the social-historical method, narrative and descriptive analyses to address gender stereotypes that assign leadership roles exclusively to men. The article provides instructive outcomes that contemporary developmental responsibilities necessitate women's presence in governance to play vital roles and enhance contributions to economic life for the progression of democratizing Nigerian polity. Some recommendations and innovative measures based on restructuring should be employed to advance the convalescence of women in the Nigerian political system. Equality in the sharing of political offices will empower both men and women to have equal prospects. The bursting and equitable participation of women in public life is indispensable to building and sustaining robust democracies. Women's participation will fashion a balance of power between genders. A quota system that reserves a fraction of electoral positions for women can be passed.

**Keywords:** women, politics, participation, Nigerian society and development



## **Introduction**

The current trend in democratic restructurings surges a rehabilitated curiosity to encourage the participation of women in politics and governance at all levels of society. Gender equality in politics and women's involvement in governance are understood as part of nation-building and developmental schema for democracy to thrive. This study advocates for the reintegration of women into contemporary governance because increasing acknowledgement of women will contribute to economic and political developments in Nigerian society. Fasake (2004) ascertains that the pursuit of workable democratic governance necessitates the active participation of all shareholders as well as women. The study reveals that in the present dispensation, the role of women in good governance and nation-building cannot be overstressed. Comparable or healthier representation of women is measured as very significant for the appropriate development of any nation, and the weightiness dedicated to this is replicated in the statement of Affirmative Action by the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing (Economic Commission for Africa, 2010). Points of female participation and representation in Nigerian politics are truncated. A chauvinist and patronage-constructed political philosophy joined with gendered economic and family inequalities, are realized to be the key barricades to women's participation in governance. The study recommends quotas, enabling programmes and improved electoral monitoring as thinkable answers to women's participation in politics and governance.

The paper concludes with recommended approaches on measures to ensure that women do not only partake in politics but similarly appreciate the dividends in the form of women's activities and conspicuousness as well as making sure that women's voices are not only heard in public life but also demonstrated.

## **Women's Truncated Participation in Nigerian Politics**

After Nigeria's first democratic elections since military dictatorship in 1999, the ratio of women in the democratic setting has persisted to the lowest ebb at all stages of government, nevertheless, there have been improvements in women's representation at the limited stage.

It is argued that, when the Western type of education was presented primarily in Nigeria by the colonial officials, it was measured valuable only



because it equipped boys to be able to meet the requirements for engagement as assistants, interpreters, teachers, catechists, evangelists, stewards and cooks for government offices, commercial houses and missionaries. Girls were never well thought out to be suitable enough for such job openings (Ikpe, 2004; Yusuf, 2009).

Colonialism was the origin of women's marginalization in the contemporary Nigerian political scenery. This is because, at independence in 1960, Margaret Ekpo was the lone female member of the then-eastern region house of assembly in the country, whereas Mrs Wuraola was the only lady chosen out of the 12 Senators from the western region of Nigeria. Besides, out of the 312 members in the then Federal House of Representatives, there was no female representation (Nwankwo, 2006). The purported example depicts that, women had low representation in Nigerian politics. After some time in 1979/83 second republic politics, Mrs Franca Afegbua was elected for the first time as the only female Senator into the Nigerian House of Senate constituted of 100 members (Yusuf, 2009; Nelson, 2012).

Some of the restrictions on women's active participation in politics and governmental affairs comprise the patriarchal construction of the Nigerian society brought about by colonialism, traditional models, gender prejudice against women, sexual nuisance and discrimination. Politics by landscape and description in Nigeria is a combative action and women are not attracted and tangled in confrontational activity, somewhat they are more positioned within the caring occupations (Aboribo and Oguoe 2007: 31). In corroboration of the foregoing argument, non-indigence disorder is a system copied from the pre-colonial Nigerian cultures where each ethnic group fought for political identity and self-safeguarding. The problem of non-indigenes is a grave impediment to women partaking in politics. A lady who tied her nuptial knot from another ethnic group is considered not eligible to contest for public office. Unless this disorder is dismantled straightaway, women who fall into this category would be disallowed from partaking in the Nigerian political process for a longer period (Iloh and Ikenna, 2009: 113-128). Olomola (2008: 93), argues that since the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria offers non-discrimination and gender equality, in practice, the law and implementation are rather farfetched.



Discrimination against women in Nigeria emanates from traditional culture and practices that respect the man as superior to his feminine counterpart. Additional structures that permit the downgrading of women in political involvement and governance comprise cultural and religious practices and beliefs in most Nigerian cultures back the argument that women are to be homemakers, and consequently should not partake in politics to the extent of standing for election at any stage. Such as, until 1976, most women from the northern part of Nigeria, because of their Islamic religious faith were not even permitted to vote for candidates of their choice, not to talk of vying for elective positions in the state (Iloh and Ikenna, 2009: 113-128; Yahaya, 2012).

Crises, thuggery and bullying are other trending factors. Political race in Nigeria is full of crises, using all the required violent strategies to win and hence not suitable for women. In the Nigerian political scenery, there are widespread unsettled issues of political assassination. People grasp politics as an end in itself because of the economic advantages through corrupt self-amelioration, henceforth would use any available strategy at their disposal to win at all costs. This advancement triggers political involvement a problematic and hazardous undertaking for women (Joseph, 1991; Eyinade, 2010).

The expensive cost of party nomination payments is another chief hindrance to women partaking in the electoral process which is enabled by the higher and more prevalent political parties in Nigeria. Most women who might intend to run for elective posts are not financially buoyant enough to foot the bills (Eyinade, 2010; Yahaya, 2012).

The consequence is that, most women who may be keen to play their role in the direction of the development of the nation are not likely to be elected into public offices because of their incapacity to afford the nomination payments. This progress impedes justifiable democracy in Nigeria. The highlighted reasons undoubtedly have contributed destructively in the past towards the truncated level of women's participation in politics and made it virtually unfeasible for them to participate in governance by way of invention and application of public policies for development. The truncated

level of women's participation in politics consequently could be perceived as a menace to workable democracy.

Women's demotion in political affairs is traced to the undesirable features of colonial heritage in Nigeria, which was reimposed by the different governments of post-colonial Nigerian culture after independence. It is attested by scholars that some have demonstrated their expertise in the governance of their particular kingdoms, empires and emirates before the dawn of colonialism in 1900. Corresponding to the foregoing assertion, the governance of pre-colonial Nigerian cultures emphasized the achievements of women such as Queen Daura of Daura emirate in the present-day Katsina State, Queen Amina of Zazzau, now Zaria, of the Zaria emirate in the present-day Kaduna State, all were northerners; Ogiso Orhorho and Emotan of the famous Benin Kingdom (south), in the present-day Edo State (Faseke, 2001; Agaba, 2007: 73-89). In corroboration, Ikpe argues that colonial rule imposed the supremacy of men in politics to the degree that even when new rulers were to be chosen, colonial agents did not see women as proficient in carrying out the duties of such workplaces. Women were seen as absolute homemakers (Ikpe, 2004). This gender prejudice in Nigeria's political system is repeatedly traced to the inception of colonialism in Nigeria. Hence the Western cultural conception of colonialism interlaced around male dominance echoed in their dealings with Nigerians. To further buttress this point, Agbalajobi (2010) and Yetunde (2010) acknowledged the suppression of women by colonialists when they penned that the 1922 Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution which was extensively held to have presented the first elective principles in the pre-colonial Nigerian society disqualified women and restricted the participation of adult male to the rich. This portrays that, there was no present part of gender discrimination in the traditional state in Nigeria but the colonial order made gender discrimination more noticeable. According to Akande (2002), Nigerian women have persistently endured and continued to bear the load of activities enforced by their male contemporaries who have been controlling the socio-economic and government at all stages. Consequently, in Nigeria, as in other countries, gender has persisted as a problem, (Afonja 2002). Anifowose (2004) avers that in some conventional democracies like Britain and the United States of America, democratic polyarchies for a long time, were dominated



polyarchies. He revealed that even popular activists of democratic and Republican governments banned rights that women should be full citizens. This supports the view held by Agbalajobi (2010) who opined that gender prejudice is not limited to only Africa and obviously, underdeveloped countries. Anifowose (2004: 77) contended more that, for the utmost part, they endorsed the major view that the suitable role of women was marriage, reproduction and family, not politics... they at no time authorized that women be acceptable to vote and measured it relatively indisputable that in family stuff, the husbands have the final verdict.

The prior investigation demonstrates that the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which unquestionably is the reference bedrock for social co-existence amongst clusters and peoples has not by any way discriminated against anybody in the socio-political scheme of things. It is thus indefensible for the menfolk to decide to rule the Nigerian political section and hereafter, push women aside. Women have been scantily represented in public offices.

Some cultures in Nigeria and other African countries forbid women from taking part in dynamic politics because of religious theories. Politics has been ridiculed as a dirty game and discourteous and consequently, has the capability of besmirching any religious person who is cognizant of eternity, bearing in mind that there is life after bereavement. There are nevertheless numerous enigmatic things that go with politics in Third World countries for instance vote buying, ballot box packing, incendiarism, elimination of political opponents, violence and so on. Accordingly participating in this type of wrongdoings by followers of true worshipers of God is a debauched system. It then developed into a grave component in frightening away people or clusters from circular politics.

The overriding philosophy in Nigerian politics is cash. The ‘money’ influence plays a very vigorous role in the commencement, disposition and winning of political offices either at the presidential, governorship, senatorial, local council elections and other meetings. Money is very critical in the influencing, making and undoing of public office which is supposed to be on conviction. Therefore, the more advanced and larger one’s monetary power is in Nigeria, the larger one’s probability of winning public

office. Tor and Terkula (2011) asserted that the system of corruption that has penetrated the Nigerian system has virtually put women on edge and everything appears to be working against them (women) at the advantage of men. Women's oversimplification seems to have diminutive or no monetary sponsorship. They are by nature concerned, caring and reflect principally in the direction of home-building, and hereafter, banishing from public offices to develop themselves is very erratic.

The above situation is not a unique Nigerian issue; it is a global and historic phenomenon, and World studies vividly illustrate the under-representation of women in Parliament (World Economic Forum, 2005).

From the foregoing, the following questions are germane: why is it that, in 2011, more than a decade after the return to democratic rule in Nigeria, there remains a need to assert the right of women's participation? This is a question we need to ponder and consider why we still need to strategize on measures to ensure that this right is not only protected and promoted but the dividends in the form of women's active involvement in political and public life are manifested. What have been the issues? This work reviews various attempts at encouraging more women's participation in politics, women in key positions, the challenges faced and suggested ways forward.

However, the story is different because more women are now being elected into both the state and the national legislature. What this implies is that the concept of “near-exclusion” of women in the Nigerian political process is fast disappearing (Iloh & Ikenna, 2009: 113-128; Oni & Segun, 2011: 1-20).

### **Marginalization of Nigerian Women in Governance**

As stated by Nelson (2012: 85-99), colonialism had an authoritatively negative impact on the home-grown political system in Nigeria, and the gender dimension of politics was not excluded. In the same vein, colonial rule imposed the domination of men in politics to the extent that even when new chiefs were to be chosen, colonial negotiators did not see women as proficient in carrying out the roles of such office. Women were viewed as homemakers and nothing more (Ikpe, 2004). In corroboration of the above analysis, some scholars argue that the dawn of colonial administration



nevertheless, wrecked the traditional systems of women's political participation in Nigeria (Allen, 1972; Lewu, 2005:65; Mba, 1982). The formation of a patriarchal government by the colonial administration, its gender rules and economic interests strengthened and generalized patriarchal standards and prolonged gender discrimination in the state (Kamene, 1991; Olojede, 1999).

Since 1999 when the country assumed democratic governance; participation in politics continues to be a major challenge in terms of domination and discrimination against women. Research finding expresses that gender role ideology not only generates a duality of femininity and masculinity but similarly positions them in a hierarchical style in which women are subordinated to men. Women also find it hard to partake in politics because of the restricted time accessible to them because of their double roles in the productive and reproductive spheres (Bari, 2005).

Colonialism was the origin of women's marginalization in the present-day Nigerian political landscape. It is evident on independence in 1960, Margaret Ekpo was the only female member of the then eastern region House of Assembly in the country, whereas Mrs Wuraola was the only female voted out of the 12 Senators from the western region of Nigeria. Also, out of the 312 members in the then Federal House of Representatives, women's representation was lacking (Nwankwo, 2006: 720).

### **Women in Governance, Democracy and Nation Building for Development**

Liebenow (1986) posits that the process of nation-building is to a considerable degree a product of social engineering rather than the result of natural or inevitable evolutionary forces. This implies that for any nation to achieve sustainable democracy and development, social engineering is a vital choice to make. Therefore, an end to discrimination against women in politics and their involvement in the policy process in a traditional patriarchal society of male dominance like Nigeria is the right step in the right direction for development. Over the past three and a half decades, agitation and movements toward gender relevance and equity in the governance of nations have gained momentum the world over (Elson, 2002; Rubin and Bartle, 2005). Researchers and practitioners in corroboration have come to comprehend and overtly dedicated themselves to endorsing



gender importance and equity of men and women as a policy for justifiable democracy, economic development and complete social development of nations. This is predominantly feasible owing to the fact it has been grasped that participation in a nation's development is not gender-prejudiced (Klasen, 1999; Hewitt and Mukhopadhyay, 2002).

Scholars have discovered that development in any society necessitates greater gender equilibrium in power-sharing between males and females in the political process for it to be accomplished (Hamadeh-Banerjee, 2000; Bouta, Frerks & Bannon, 2005). Oni and Agbude (2011) contend that sustainable democracy depends on the equality and corresponding participation of both males and females in the demeanour of governmental dealings as the foundation for the development of states. In acknowledgement of the significance of the role of women in governance for sustainable democracy and development of nations, Article 1 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325: Urges states to guarantee amplified women representation at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and machinery for the stoppage, management, and resolution of conflict, while Article 8 calls on all actors to implement a gender viewpoint when selling and implementing peace agreement (UNSC, 2000).

Moreover, in undertaking women's significance in the governance of nations, the UN General Assembly in 1979, adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), referred to as the "International Bill of Rights for Women" (Rubin and Bartle, 2005). Gender segregation in governance is realized as harmful to nation-building and development.

Consistent with Onyeghalaji (2008), the responsible and reactive governance that makes for workable development positions political verdicts and events in the custody of the general public without gender discrimination. He contends that what is obligatory comprises: the genuine involvement of every person in society regardless of gender and the social collaboration of everyone in making pronouncements about the standards that have to do with the life of the people for the mutual good. In addition,



democracy is the scheme of government that is more likely to place political verdicts and events in the custody of the general public either unswervingly or through their elected legislatures.

### **Women and Appointment into Positions of Authority**

President Goodluck Jonathan gave more appointments of more women into his government as he was elected into office. The Top Gear agenda of Jonathan's administration led to the appointment of 12 women out of the 42 ministers appointed by the Federal Government, which represented 30 per cent of the total number of ministers appointed. Moreover, out of 20 special advisers appointed by the Federal Government, 4 were women, which represented 20 per cent of the number of people appointed. This was an upgrade over the past governments in the country. This development in the appointment of women into positions of authority could be ascribed to the incessant determination of women's advocacy groups who call for 35 affirmative action plans for women's representation in government by the National Gender Policy (Idonor, 2011; Nigerian News online, 2011; Okoronkwo-Chukwu; 2013: 39-46). This progress infers that what women could not attain at the ballots; they were able to get through appointments.

The practice has revealed that nation-building for development is not a limited preserve of a specific gender. contributions toward nation-building for development by some of the women chosen into positions of authority are stated in this study. They were chosen because of their personal quality in terms of education and performance in their previous assignments in different areas of the nation's economy. More so, they were selected due to their brilliant performance in the appointment given to them by the government. Democracy nevertheless not a new phenomenon, has appeared as the most noteworthy movement in world politics over the past decade. Democracy means equal prospects for men and women to participate and decide the calibre of people that will govern them (Pateman, 1970; Agbaje, 1999:193 and Anifowose, 2004:205). The foregoing assertion entails politics is not exclusively restricted to a particular gender; hence, it encourages equity and fairness.

In April 2001, Olusegun Obasanjo's government appointed Prof Dora Akunyili as the Director General of NAFDAC, with the sole aim of

eradicating counterfeit drugs in Nigeria. Through determination, she was able to carry out positive reforms that gave Nigeria a good name in that aspect. One of such feats is that, between April 2001 and January 2006, NAFDAC carried out 100 demolition workouts of fake and deficient drugs worth NGN 14 billion or USD 90.32 million; between 2001 and 2005 alone, 1,000 raids were carried out by NAFDAC officials on circulation outlets of counterfeit drugs throughout the country.

NAFDAC was able to secure 45 convictions in respect of counterfeit drug-related cases within five years (Agbalajobi, 2009; Nnabuife, 2010). Also, NAFDAC under the leadership of Professor Akunyili was able to monitor salt iodization in Nigeria to the extent that UNICEF was able to rate Nigeria as the first country in Africa to achieve universal salt iodization (Agbalajobi, 2009; Nnabuife, 2010).

In October 2003, Obasanjo's government appointed Dr Ezekwesili as the Senior Special Assistance to the President on Due Process or BMPIU to supervise the sensible and integrity-anchored procurement system that would power the economic growth of Nigeria and reward productive hard work. (Agbalajobi, 2009; Nnabuife, 2010). Under the headship of Dr Ezekwesili, BMPIU was able to make massive gains. She achieves the upgrade of fair play and competition resulting in huge savings through a decrease in contracts sum to the tune of NGN 77.50 billion or USD 500 million (Oladoyin, 2006). Besides, contrasts in the past when contracts were given at more than 200 per cent of the accurate cost. BMPIU was able to save an additional NGN 125 billion or USD 806.45 million for the nation in two and a half years. Dr Ezekwesili's positive performance in Nigeria's public sector administration finally led her to be appointed the Vice-President of the World Bank's African Region in 2007 (Oladoyin, 2006; Adebayo and Arawomo, 2008).

Obasanjo's government in 2003 appointed Dr Okonjo-Iweala as the first female Finance Minister in Nigeria. While in office, she enabled the formation of the Economic Reform Team (ERT), which fashioned the podium for the intercession of debt discount from the Paris Club of creditors to attain debt relief for the country in 2005. The concession materialised to the annulment of USD 18 billion out of USD 30 billion owed to the Paris



Club of creditors by Nigeria (Agbalajobi, 2009). Dr Okonjo-Iweala's performance enabled her appointment as the Managing Director of the World Bank, African Region in 2007. During the first tenure of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration in 2011, she was appointed the Minister of Finance for the second time. Her initiative for the renovation of the nation's economy facilitated her appointment as the head of the economic implementation of the decision of the Economic Management Team (EMT) (Eni, 2012).

Aruma Oteh was appointed the Director-General of SEC by President Goodluck Jonathan's government. She brought a reform built on accountability, good corporate governance, impartiality and proficiency as a method of building a world-class capital market that investors would patronize with trust (Oriloye, 2011; Odutola, 2012).

President Goodluck Jonathan for the first-time appointed Justice Alloma Mariam Mukhtar, a female judge as the Chief Justice of Nigeria on the 16th of July 2012. She was the greatest woman to have appeared in the Nigerian judicial landscape. Justice Mukhtar's focus is on judicial reforms for the effective dispensation of justice in the country (Onuorah and Ughegbe, 2012; Uche-Okobi, 2012).

The scenario is fast reforming since there are more women now being elected into political offices at both the state and the national levels. In essence, what this implies is that the exemption saga of women in the Nigerian political space is speedily growing thin (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013).

The justification for encouraging women's participation in political space is grounded on fairness, value and development. Structural inhibitions ascribed to patriarchal philosophy and engrained gender prejudices that obstruct women's representation in governance processes have reduced as well as institutional barriers and letdowns to standardize, housetrain and implement gender equity devices. In addition, circumstantial challenges, such as fierce conflicts, political uncertainty, and reconfiguration of political power; and internal challenges within women's movements and webs are diminished (Ekiyor & Lo, 2009: 23).

## **The 1999 Constitution and the Place of Women in Nigeria Politics**

Since the transition to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, there have been many; campaigns, both by governments and different organizations, both locally and internationally, in the deployment of more women involvement, but regardless of the growth made in the last century, there are still few women leaders. It is appalling to note that the right of every citizen of Nigeria, women participation, to vote and to be voted for specified in Sections 40, 42(1), 77(1 & 2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has been twisted against the women (FGN, 1999). The 2007 election demonstrates that less than 10 per cent of the elected Senate are women, less than 10 per cent of the House of Representatives are women, and no women governors nor presidents.

The right to democratic governance is a prerogative conferred on all citizens by law. The Nigerian 1999 constitution as revised stipulated this privilege very evidently in section 40 thus: Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular, he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests: provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission concerning political parties to which that commission does not accord recognition.

Correspondingly, section 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) stated inter alia that A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

The above extracts demonstrate that any man or woman can go to court to pursue justice if his or her right to the franchise is being desecrated and that the Constitution in its wholeness proscribes discrimination of any sort on the account of sex or otherwise. The discussion portrays that the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which unquestionably is the reference point for social co-existence amongst clusters and persons has not by any means discriminated against anybody, man or woman in the socio-political scheme of things. It is thus unwarrantable for men to decide to control the



Nigerian political scene and henceforth, exclude women who are willing to get involved.

### **Conclusion**

This paper discusses the truncated participation of women in Nigerian politics. The study in so doing explored some factors affecting women's participation in Nigerian Politics. Women typically constitute a smaller proportion of political party involvement because of the cultural and religious attitudes of different Nigerian civilizations that are inclined to relegate women to the background. The study has surveyed the scholarly arguments that have been going on for years on the place of women in politics generally. Though most scholars contended that women are unequalled matched in the domestic works of society, others scholars argued that women are capable of carrying out significant assignments in governments' parastatals to spur the development process, and so, should be encouraged and disposed to equal representation as associates in development.

The gravest part of this study is that women are, and have been pushed aside in the political system in Nigeria and this act aggravates disproportion for the Nigerian structure which is factually patriarch-controlled. It is revealed that women's political roles have contributed enormously to the development of Nigerian politics and governance. Accordingly, thinking through the foregoing it is absurd to whisk away the hard work of women in contributing to the making of the Nigerian state a great nation. It is insalubrious to assign political powers stringently to men in this age of globalization where the duty of women in global politics is well-thought-out to be germane in general world peace and development is no longer practicable.

The stipulated recommendations, if strictly adhered to, will without hesitation boost the political standing of women in Nigerian politics in that way giving them the advantage to contribute their quota in governance immensely. In light of the above issues raised in the discourse, the following recommendations are drawn out:



## Recommendations

- There should be fairness in the allotment of political offices by adopting a quota system to apply to competing runners. This will empower gender equality in fair representation in governance.
- There should no more be any form of discrimination rather a favourable work environment should be fashioned to get the best out of our women. When women are copiously empowered they would take their equitable slots. Consequently, aside from being mothers, and wives, they would become influential politicians and occupy other positions in governance.
- Nigerian government should inevitably, as a matter of priority make it obligatory that particular public offices be set aside for women to balance the equation. This will liquefy lopsided representation in governance.
- The path to excessive funding in politics which scared away the less-privileged should be eroded in Nigeria so that women who do not have the money but are qualified can participate fully in politics.
- Nigerian society should discard the tradition that has blackmailed the womenfolk for decades as full-time housewives who are exclusively and befittingly capable of working at home to encourage fair gender participation in politics.
- Women should be equipped to acquire masculine and feminine potentials to promote development in enhancement. They should cultivate talents like intelligence, decisiveness, discernable passion, innovativeness and operative communication skills for public growth and upgrading.
- Women must be invigorated to vie for elective positions, advance lobby clusters and create pressure groups at many stages to make their yearnings increase political freedom.
- The Nigerian constitution should be strengthened so that it could have considerable impacts on the political scene of Nigeria thereby curtailing any form of discrimination against women. The right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred on all citizens by law. As the Nigerian 1999 constitution amended, spells out this privilege very plainly in section 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



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## **Open Distance Learning and Foreign Languages: Challenges and Prospects of Learning French Language in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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### **Abstract**

The paper addresses the challenges of studying the French language in the Open Distance Learning System of Education, such as inadequate digital facilities for virtual classes. The fundamental objectives of this research work are to unveil the challenges of learning the French language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to project the prospects of studying French in the Open Distance Learning System of Education. Besides, the paper aims to present the French language as a viable tool for locating job opportunities in the global economy and the international labour market. We have adopted the analytic method. The method has helped us to unfold logically the challenges and relevance of studying the French language in the Open Distance Learning System of Education. The paper has adopted the cognitive theory of language which is focused on the ability of learners in language acquisition, sharp retentive memory and problem-solving skills. The theory fits in the present study since it is a mental process and a tool for repositioning the critical thinking of learners in the areas of morphology, syntax, semantics, phonetics and phonology. We have adopted the Communicative Teaching Language approach and Task-based Language Teaching Approach. The Task-based Language Teaching Approach is an activity-based approach that helps learners to be engaged in task-oriented activities for effective learning. We remark that the Open Distance Learning System of Education is a panacea to individual educational needs and national aspirations for diplomatic relations through the teaching of the French language since it is



an intellectual platform without barriers. The paper has contributed to knowledge by abridging the academic gaps of location, time and space in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**Keywords:** French language, Open Distance Learning, 21<sup>st</sup>Century, Prospects

## **Introduction**

In our contemporary society, in-depth knowledge and understanding of the French language is a vehicle to cross borders, enhance our diplomatic relationship and locate job opportunities in the global labour market. Our individual or collective interest in the usage of the French language in the area of communication, health, international conferences, tourism peace and conflict resolution remains the global linguistic impact of the French language in human existence. Akese, M.(2022) states that the teaching and learning of the French language in Nigeria is a step towards national integration and globalisation. It is a response to universalism which has been favoured by the use of modern languages such as English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic. The French language pedagogy is therefore a booster of world programs initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) United Nations Children Education Funds (UNICEF), United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) and The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The overwhelming position of French Language communication in the world determines the worth and the value of French language education. The teaching and learning of French language attract the attention of the international communities. The French language is included in the curriculum of different countries in the world. The Anglophone countries in West Africa such as Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, and Sierra Leon have legislated policies on the effective implementation of French language curriculum from primary to tertiary institutions. Christie O. Anyogo (2012:11) ascertains that “French is perhaps the second language, most widely spoken language in the World. It is spoken in over 70 countries of the world.”



A lot of people who are dislocated by some geographical and time factors, ignorance and misappropriation of priorities in the learning of the French language regret very often the loss of this great academic opportunity. To bridge the gap, a good number of people have taken a bold step to redeem this intellectual property through French Language Centres, Alliance Française and other centres for academic excellence such as Conventional Universities and Open Distance Learning Institutions.

Our preoccupation is the study of the French language in the Open Distance Learning System of Education, its Prospects and Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is pertinent to know that the Open Distance Learning System has become an alternative to popular traditional, brick-and-mortar schools. The virtual schools are in no doubt a strong pillar of advocacy for learning in one's location and time. Pramumati, I. (2020) is of the opinion that in the Era of the Industrial Revolution, technology-based learning media known as e-learning are now becoming a trend in teaching and learning.

A generic definition of a Distance Learning Academic System entails a mode of learning where the organised learning content is delivered through various technological platforms and mediums for learners to explore. The system allows learners to participate actively in learning activities without necessarily being present in the traditionally organised face-to-face classes. It is imperative to know that course materials, lectures, interactive sessions, assignments, most examination questions like Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and feedback are delivered electronically through online platforms, email, videoconferencing or correspondence. It is designed to provide flexible and accessible learning opportunities and privileges for all categories of people who are constrained by some factors such as geographical dislocation, work schedules, family commitment or some physical challenges that are impedimental to their intentions to attend conventional academic systems. With this flexibility, learners explore the academic opportunities at their own disposal to complete their coursework at their own pace and convenience, provided there is internet connectivity. Eliot cited White (2003), distance education refers to the teaching and learning arrangement in which the learner and the teacher are separated by geography and time. Eliot considers Shelly's views (2020) where he defines



distance learning as an educational system in which learners can study in a flexible manner in their own time, at pace of their choice and without requiring face-to-face contact with a teacher.

We are confident that this paper will be a tool towards actualizing the possibilities of learning the dynamics of the French language in the Open Distance Learning System since it intends to expose facilitators to pragmatic and Task-Based Language Teaching approaches, communicative and functional methods of imparting French to the learner as well as the application of cognitive theories for retentive memory exercises and problem-solving skills.

**The problem of the research:** The problem of this research work is the challenges of studying the French language in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the Open Distance Learning System of Education.

### **The objective of the research**

The fundamental objective of this research work is to unveil the challenges of learning French language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Besides, the paper aims at presenting the French language as a viable tool for locating job opportunities in the global economy and the international labour market.

### **Methodology**

We have adopted the analytic method. The method will help us to unfold logically the challenges and relevance of studying the French language in the Open Distance Learning System of Education.

### **Theoretical framework and approach**

The paper has adopted the cognitive theory of language which is focused on the ability of learners in the in-language acquisition, sharp retentive memory and problem-solving skills. The theory fits in the present study since it is a mental process and the learner is saddled with the responsibility of critical thinking in the area of morphology, syntax, semantics, phonetics and phonology. We have adopted the Communicative Teaching Language approach and Task-based Language Teaching Approach. The Task-based

Language Teaching Approach is an activity-based approach which helps learners to be engaged in task-oriented activities for effective learning.

### **Conceptual clarification**

**French language:** French language is the lingua franca as well as the official language of the French people. It is an international language that attracts premium for its usage in different spheres of life. It is a socio-psychological construct that is prone to communication. This entails that the French language is the social identity and the cultural heritage of the French people. It creates a bond of national unity in France. It is a mental process since It is a linguistic tool that helps us to reflect on issues that affect our social being and to express our emotions, sentiments, opinions and thoughts through interpersonal communication. It is a diplomatic language that has universal recognition in health, games and other socio-cultural activities. Anyogo (2012) stressed the fact that French as a language of international civilization and one of the prestigious global languages will open a door of opportunities as its benefits are growing every day in commerce, administration, technology, etc. The value attached to the French language has influenced a lot of people, nations and countries to embrace the French language as the language of dialogue and peacemaking. Ashiko (2003:54) ascertained:

The inability of the quasi-totality of our ruling class, our intellectual elite, our captains of industries, business and commerce, to express themselves in French is not only a big source of national embarrassment at the international level but has heightened the level of suspicion.

Open Distance Learning, in other ways virtual learning is a system of education that is online-based. It is embedded in the use of artificial intelligence gadgets such as computers, projectors, videotapes, prints, chats, CD-ROM, Email, zoom earphones and speakers to facilitate learning. It is a digital platform that is designed to help learners who are not necessary present in the traditional classroom for lectures. Open Distance Learning abridges the gap in learning where learners and facilitators are separated physically by the virtue of time and distance. This implies that both lecturers and learners don't meet in the physical classroom, but use digital platforms



like Zoom, videoconferencing and email to have classes. In this perspective, lecturers are saddled with the sole responsibility of facilitating learning through artificial classes at the most convenient time and pace for learners. Dangi (2019), with strong internet connectivity, students can learn English and French anywhere at any time in a flexible way. Eliots shares in the views of white (2003), that distance education refers to the teaching and learning arrangement in which the learner and the teacher are separated by geography and time.

Open Distance Learning offers sound academic opportunities to learners. The academic planners and facilitators consider the inadequacy of time on the part of the learner and as such, they allocate the most convenient and appropriate time to learners, outside their work schedule and other social political and economic engagement. In effect, online facilitating videos are recorded and uploaded to the learning platforms for proper acquisition of knowledge. The learning process becomes easier since recorded class videos are uploaded in line with the designated timetable

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century**

This is the current century which commenced in January 2021 and will end on December 2100. It is the 1st century of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium which is characterised by the rise of global economy and the 3<sup>rd</sup> world consumerism. Advanced countries like Britain, America, France, Russia, Germany, Japan and China are experiencing a rapid increase in their economic growth. The developing countries like Nigeria, Algeria, Ghana, Cameroon and a host of others are diminishing in their productive capacity, and as such an increased rate in their debt profile. The millennium encountered the global challenge of the Pandemic Coronavirus from its inception. The global effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are felt in almost all spheres of life. We experienced the closure of markets, churches, mosques, sports, schools and the imprisonment of human life. The closure of schools as a global effect of COVID-19 on education increases the need for Open Distance Learning Education in most countries of the world. The Century sparks off the economic challenges. Ahmed (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching economic consequences including the Covid-19 recession, the second-largest global recession in recent history, decrease in business, in

the service sector during the COVID-19 lockdowns. There is also a decline in the stock market. Most countries are experiencing galloping inflation.

### **Challenges**

Challenges are problems or impedimental issues that hamper growth and development in human existence. The concept of challenges can also be looked upon as difficulties that encompass human actions and practices. Merriam-Webster definition considers challenges as an act of disputing what is considered to be unjust, invalid or outmoded. <https://www.merriam-webster.com>> It is a situation where there is a confrontation or issues that militate against the execution of policies. Dictionary.com explains the concept as something that by its nature or character saves as a call to battle, contest, or special effort. <https://www.dictionary.com>.

### **Prospects**

Prospects connote positivism. It is a possibility that something fabulous will happen. Merriam-Webster defines the concept of prospects as the expectation of a particular event, condition, a development of definite interest or concern. <https://www.merriam-webster.com>> This can also be referred to as benefits, opportunities and merits that can be derived from a task or an activity.

### **Learning French in a Distance Learning Program**

The distance learning program is the most convenient medium for the study of French as a foreign language by all categories of people. It abridges the gap of location, time and pace in the learning process. The learner has the privileges of studying French at any location, at his own convenient time and pace. It can be at his leisure time, at his less busy time in the office and shops, he may decide to play with the learning content on recorded audio and audiovisual tapes. French motivational songs, chats, playlet, interactive sessions are created in French language to enhance content delivery and acquisition of knowledge. Songs like Frère Jacques, Allouette gentile allouette, un drôle de restaurant, sur pont du Nord, Oh ! La! La! dans mon zoo, are all packaged on virtual learning platforms for the learner to explore.



Priority is given to learners in curriculum planning and execution. The content delivery of the French language is activity-based. French linguistic elements such as syntax, morphology, semantics, phonetics, phonology and textual analysis are well developed and uploaded to e-learning platforms for effective learning and actualisation of the intended learning outcome. A lot of activities like quizzes, rush questions and rush answers, puzzle exercises, epistler writings, simple composition and essay writings are learner-centred. The accomplishment of task-oriented activities enhances the pragmatic involvement and interactivity of French language learners on virtual learning platforms. Tabiri (2022) states that learners benefit a lot from the recorded videos after other self-engagement. At his convenient and designated time, facilitating videos are recorded and uploaded to the learning digital platforms. Since the recorded videos are based on a timetable and as such, learners have the opportunity of grasping the learning content of online courses at the appropriate time. This learning at one's pace in a distance learning program reduces academic stress. This conducive and flexible digital learning platform gives a new orientation to learners of the French language to engage in real-life language usage in various contexts.

The availability of smart technology offers easy access to lexical structures in the French language on digital learning platforms. Synonyms and antonyms, affixes and suffixes are developed in simple French language explanations to enrich the vocabulary of learners. The enrichment of the vocabularies is drawn from various fields of learning to equip the learner with a sound vocabulary for easy interaction in French language. The fields from which words are drawn to enrich the vocabulary of the French language learner not only constitute the wealth of intellectual experience of the learner but also create a cultural insight in the learner. In “moyen de transport” vélo et la bicyclette signify bicycle. La voiture et le taxi has a generic meaning of car. Similarly, Enseignant et professeur are commonly known as teacher. Vocabularies are derived from themes on topical issues of discourse in the French language. The development of Web-based French language learning media for users of the French language is instrumental to vocabulary enhancement for learners of French in the Distance learning program.



Facilitators assemble online resources, particularly the online language laboratory to engage learners in motivational communicative practices that will enhance oral expression and oral comprehension. Oral expression and oral comprehension activity-based intellectual packages are uploaded for learners to be engaged in spoken French through the act speech. Linguistic self-learning links which are embedded in songs and poems are planned to suit the organized learning content for flexible learning, learning French language without stress. Deng (2022), teachers regularly public learning links on the Chaoxiang Learning Platform, including daily French sentences and popular topics for students to learn independently. After the life classes, teachers set aside corresponding time, for students. After the students complete the self-learning task, the teacher will publish a rush-answer activity related to self-learning on the Chaoxiang Learning Platform. The rush answer carry activity sets learning point rewards. To a greater extent, online rush-answers stimulates the learners' interest and enthusiasm in French language digital laboratory activities.

Videoconferencing facilitates the learning of French language literature. Learners are exposed to different centuries of French literature and civilisation. Prose, theatre and poetry form the areas of interest in the academic pursuit of the learner in distance learning. Learners are exposed to video films of the medieval periods, which depict the dark ages of the French people and their metaphysical dispositions. French language learners in distance learning are exposed to theories and philosophies of life in a virtual classroom for the acquisition of knowledge. There is no doubt that through videoconferencing learners are exposed to the philosophy of existentialism by Jean-Paul-Sartre, The philosophy of the absurd by Albert Camus, the philosophy of self-commitment to duty by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, psycho-analytic theory by Freud and the host of others.

### **Challenges of learning French in a Distance Learning Program in the 21<sup>ST</sup> Century**

There are some impedimental issues that hamper the teaching and learning of the French language in the Distance Learning System of Education. These include among others the following:



**Digital illiteracy:** Most learners enrolled in Distance Learning are not sound in the knowledge of computers. Inadequate knowledge of digital operations diminishes the learning capacity. Unfortunately, most links for interactive sessions, particularly in the French language are dormant. Rizkya (2021) says it is so surprising to know that even students who attend a university that spearheads the adoption and adaptation of technology in teaching and learning find it difficult to sometimes use online/videoconferencing platforms, zoom and teams.

**Learning interference:** A lot of internet issues interfere with the learning process. E-commerce, pornography, world fashion and design, football and other associated games are competing with the learner's interest in learning. Many learners are easily distracted by the social media discussions. Due to this unnecessary distraction and competitiveness the intended learning outcome is partially archived, since the learners' commitment to the well-developed and uploaded activity-based program is very minimal. The learner therefore has a shallow and limited knowledge of the learning content.

**Inadequate digital learning facilities.** Digital facilities like computers, videos, CD-ROM, and Projector are grossly inadequate in most of the Distance Learning Study Centres. Some of the available gadgets are dysfunctional. The online laboratories are not properly equipped, thereby making language drills and skills of oral communication and oral expression very difficult.

**Limitations in internet connectivity.** The unstable internet network and the inability to connect to internet services usually slow down the pace of virtual learning activities in a Distance Learning System of Education. This is impedimental to the teaching and learning process of developed French-language content. In some locations, there is just no network service at all. Learners are sometimes compelled by this critical challenge to visit cybercafés to spend little time on their pedagogical activities. Besides, those who make efforts to visit their study centre libraries are overwhelmed by the chock of unstable poor networks. The learning of the French language in no-internet-locations hampers the effective utilisation of virtual learning programs.

**Poor quality of study modules:** In a situation where study modules lack content validity of the planned French language curriculum, learners stand the risk of not having a profound knowledge of the language in the four competencies of oral expression (O.E) and oral comprehension (O.C), written expression (W.E) and written comprehension (W.C).

**Poor learners support services to French language learners:** French language learners in digital learning are in a dilemma of poor learners support services by professional counsellors. Sometimes these services are skeletal, and as such learners are confounded.

### **Prospects of learning the French language in the Open Distance Learning Program in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

There are socio-political and economic reasons that are responsible for the study of French in the Open Distance Learning Education System. Some of the reasons Are derived from the national aspirations and needs of the country, while some are global.

**International labour market opportunities:** A good knowledge of the French language will increase the chances of potential French language learners to function and compete better in the international labour market and global economy. It is pertinent to note that international jobs require proficiency in at least one international language. The most preferable language is French, due to its global communicative effect in almost all spheres of life. The Catholic University of America publication indicates that in many European countries, a second language is introduced in primary schools and a third language in middle school. International job applicants who are proficient in at least two languages will be at a distinct advantage in the global market. When you understand French, your chances in the international labour market and global economy are very high. You can be part of the transactions occurring daily in French on every continent. It is imperative to note that airline companies, import and export companies, international seaports, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and telecommunications where France is recorded as the world leader are in need of applicants who are bilingual in international languages. We have also discovered from the publication that more than 1200 French companies have subsidiaries in the United States of America.



**Sports:** In the area of sports, the knowledge of French is instrumental to official communication and engagement building your communicative potential in this field of human endeavour will lead you to the overt benefits of world sports. The Catholic University of America stated that,

French is always an official language used to announce events, winners and medals at the Olympic games. In Canada, you can also follow hockey and baseball games in French. Automobile races (le Mans and Monte Carlo), horse racing (long champs) and tour de France engage fans around the globe. When you know French the International world of sports is open to you.

**Trans-cultural experiences:** Studying French in an Open Distance Learning System of education will increase your trans-cultural experience. The knowledge of French will help you to appreciate other people’s culture in the world. This leads to the harmonisation of our diverse cultural heritage and social identities for peaceful coexistence.

**Harnessing literary intellectual potential for nation-building:** The study of the French language will increase our intellectual potential abilities in the literary world. Theories and philosophies of so many French writers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Descartes, Alfred de Vigny, Antoine de Sainte-Exupéry and Freud have inspired so many people in the world. Sharing the compatible views of these great thinkers will give learners new orientations in thoughts, aspirations and conduct for nation-building.

**Conclusion:** The Open Distance Learning Education System is a panacea to individual educational needs and national aspirations for diplomatic relations. Being a digital learning platform that abridges the academic gaps of location, time and space in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Open Distance Learning is considered as the most convenient medium for the study of foreign languages, particularly, the French language. In spite of the challenges of Open Distance Learning, the system is activity-based and flexible to accommodate the needs of the learner in the study of the French language.

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## A Critical Discussion of Imam Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Analysis of *Dhātul-Lah* (Essence of God)

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### **Abstract**

The use of philosophy to discuss Dhāthul-Lāh (the Essence of God) has affected Islamic theology and other articles of faith negatively, hence the need to desist from its use because it is an issue that is beyond human imagination especially since Allah is an Unseen Being, Who does not resemble any of His creature. One of the Islamic scholars who strove to dislodge the application of philosophy to discuss the Islamic articles of faith was Imam Al-Ghazali who argues this in his book, Kitāb Qawā'id al-‘Aqā'id in Ihyā' ‘Ulūm ad-dīn (Revival of the Religious Sciences). His argument suggests that he aims at some sects, whose views differ from that of ahl as-sunnah due to their philosophical interpretation of verses or statements on the names and attributes of Allah. Despite his argument in favour of ahl as-sunnah, the Islamic group that never supported the use of philosophy, he was also in contrast to some of them. This paper therefore studies Al-Ghazali's philosophical analysis of Dhātul-Lah and analyses it, using the views of some of the scholars of ahl as-sunnah. The descriptive method is used to carry out this research work. The paper observes that the use of philosophical expressions to discuss the essence of Allah and other articles of faith in Islam was popular during the time of Al-Ghazali as some Islamic scholars had argued against it before him but without success. This discussion commends the efforts of Al-Ghazali and concludes that theological error is inevitable when applying philosophy to discuss the Essence of God and other articles of faith, hence the need to balance the theological problems with the Qur'anic expressions and the tradition of the Prophet.

**Keywords:** Imam Al-Ghazali, Philosophy, *Dhātul-Lah*, Theology and Religious Sciences



## Introduction

The first statement of testimony is called “*Lā ilāha illal-Lāh*” in Islam and it is the statement that confirms somebody is a Muslim. It means there is no being worthy of being truly worshipped except Allah. This statement is very delicate since denouncing or not keeping with its requirements may fence somebody out of Islam. To be well acquainted with this statement, Islamic scholars have divided it into three inseparable parts, namely; *Tawḥīd al-Ilāhiyyah* (which expresses that all acts of worship should be done to Allah alone), *Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbiyyah* (which expresses that Allah is the Creator, the Provider and the Controller of the universe) and *Tawḥīd al-’asmā’ wa-ṣiḥāt* (which expresses the names and attributes of Allah). The Essence of Allah (*Dhātul-Lah*) falls in the last expression, *Tawḥīd al-’asmā’ wa-ṣiḥāt*. It connotes that the Islamic religion is founded on the fact that Allah is Unique in His Kingdom and actions, He has no partner in this. He is Unique in His essence, and attributes, He has no similarity. Again. He is Unique in His divinity and worship and He has no rival. The unbeliever believes in the second and third parts of *Tawḥīd* to some extent but disbelieves in the first one while the Islamic scholars differ in the last part which caused the demarcation between them and led to the issue of sects in Islam. One of the major causes of different opinions of Islamic scholars is the interference of philosophy in Islamic theology (Sulayman Bn ‘Abdullah, 1397 H).

According to Gibb, H.A.R & Kramers, J.H. (1981), the line of demarcation places the Islamic sects under the *sunnis* or *Mushābihīns* and *Mu<sup>c</sup>attilīns*. However, none of the Islamic theologians declares frankly for one of the two views of God (i.e *tashbīh* (comparing Allah with the creation) or *ta<sup>c</sup>ḥīl* (denying Allah of all attributes) but rather one asserts that he stands for *tanzīh* (keeping God pure against *tashbīh*, and for *tathbīt* which is a positive determination based on *tanzīl* (revelation) and recognition of the revealed text, against *ta<sup>c</sup>ḥīl*). The Islamic theologians have eagerly accused one another of one or even both names. Among such theologians is Imam al-Ghazali whose expression in his book, *Kitāb Qawā<sup>c</sup>id al-’Aqā<sup>c</sup>id in Iḥyā<sup>c</sup> ‘Ulūm ad-dīn* (Revival of the Religions Sciences) suggests that he aims at other sects, whose views differ from that of *ahl as-sunnah* due to their philosophical interpretation of verses or statements on the names and attributes of Allah.

This book is the magnum opus of Imam al-Ghazālī which was written over years beginning in 1095, Stern, M.S. (2002). Lewis, B. et al, (1965) opine that it was composed during the period when he was in retirement at Damascus and Tus. Its contents, as claimed by Imam al-Ghazali, are based on the belief of *ahl as-sunnah* in their explanation and understanding of the statement of testimony (Al-Ghazali, M. nd). Sayyid Qutb (1980) thinks that *Tawhīd* or *Kalmah* is the foundation of Islam and it is the specific word with which the Messengers of Allah were sent to their various communities, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) inclusive. Allah says:

Not a messenger did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I, therefore worship and serve me (Qur'an 21:25).

Usually, the first call of every Messenger is the call to this *Kalmah* which usually meets the people's resistance, the call of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) is also inclusive (Qutb, S. 1980). After the demise of the Prophet, Islam and Muslims started to get in contact with other cultures and ideas which Muslims started to absorb in good spirits. This made them engage in free thought which took little account of the literature interpretation of the Qur'an and which was about to get out of the entirely semantic and juridical bounds of the earlier culture due to the interwoven of the Islamic sciences with philosophy (Holt, P.M. et al, 1970). This free thought which does not give regard to the literal interpretation of the Qur'an also affects the Islamic doctrine of the nature of Allah, therefore, any person or group of people who gives free interpretation to the part of the Qur'an or *Hadīth* that speaks about nature of Allah is regarded as *Mushābih* (Somebody who assimilates, compares God to man, in order word an anthropomophist) or *Mu'atṭil* (Somebody who divests God of all attributes), Gibb, H.A.R & Kramers, J.H. (1981) submit.

The aim of Imam Al-Ghazali in writing this book was to redirect the believers' attitude and to impart the internal knowledge of piety which will lead to the supernal realm (Stern, M.S., 2002), towards the eradication of philosophical expressions in discussing the names and attributes of God, an action that can remove someone from Islam. He therefore tried to re-



interpret the nature or essence of God in a manner acceptable to the creed of *Ahlu-s-Sunnah*, the majority of the Muslim group. This work, therefore, critically studies Imam Al-Ghazali's philosophical discussion on *Dhātul-Lah* (Essence of God) from the perspectives of the *ahlu-s-Sunnah*, using the Qur'an and tradition of the Prophet (SAW) as the basis. The descriptive method is used to carry out this work since it deals with the contextual examination of various submissions of the Islamic scholars and the two primary sources of guidance in Islam (the Qur'an and *Hadīth*, the Prophetic tradition) in order to guide us to the certainty concerning Imam Al-Ghazali's views on the nature of God. This work therefore will discuss the status of Imam Al-Ghazali as a philosopher, theologian and scholar in some Islamic sciences, the Islamic sect, *Ahlu-s-Sunnah Wal-Jamā'ah*, which Imam Al-Ghazali was claiming, some suggested Islamic heretical sects against which he wrote this portion of his book, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm ad-dīn*, his submissions on the essence of Allah, the effects of philosophy and scholasticism sciences on the Islamic beliefs on the essence of Allah, a critical study of Imam Al-Ghazali's submissions on *Dhātul-Lāh* against the *ahl as-Sunnah's* submissions.

### **Status of Imam Al-Ghazali as a Philosopher and Islamic Scholar**

Various Islamic scholars, like Adh-Dhahabi, Ibn Kathir Ahmad Bn Muhammad Khalkan and Ali Nadwi have described Imam Al-Ghazali as a great scholar, to the extent that they gave him some nicknames which include: *Hujjah Ad-dīn* (Proof of Religion), *Zany ad-dīn* (Beauty of religion), *Al-Faqīh* (Islamic jurist), among others due to his profound knowledge in many fields of Islamic disciplines. Imam Al-Ghazali started his education career and excelled in various Islamic sciences like calligraphy (*Al-khatt*), philosophy and others. He studied philosophy which is the concern of this paper through private reading, during his leisure time when he was teaching at Nizamiyyah University. He studied, understood and pondered on it until it appeared to him undoubtedly that philosophy is nothing but trickery, deceit, realization and imagination (Al-Ghazali M., 1988). In the opinion of Esposito (1995), without a doubt, al-Ghazali was a spiritual writer whose concern was with interior religious experience, yet his work would have lacked an entire philosophical dimension without philosophy. Al-Ghazli's works in various fields have had a powerful

influence on Muslim thought ever since and today he is one of the writers who have received the most attention from Western scholars.

### **The Period in which Imam Al-Ghazali Lived**

This great Imam lived in a period when Islamic belief was in currents and cross-currents of devilish thoughts and pagan ideas resulting from the Muslims' encounter with the foreign sciences. This *fitnah* (trial) which perpetrated into the belief of Islam occurred in the year 105 A.H during the caliphate of Hisham bn °Abd al-Malik (from Umayyad dynasty) when Al-Ja'd Bn Dirham appeared and claimed that al-Qur'an is a creation of Allah. He was slaughtered in Kufah by Khalid bn °Abdullah during the °Id al-Kabir of the year 124 A.H. and the °Abbasid reign especially, during the reign of al-Ma'mun, the *fitnah* escalated. According to Muhammad bn °Abdul-Wahhab, it was Ma'mun who caused many *fitnah* on °*al-aqīdah* for the Muslims because he assisted in translating the Greek books of philosophy and the statement that the Qur'an is a creation was emerged properly during his reign. Not only this, he even compelled people to accept that idea and many Islamic scholars like Imam Ahmad and others were persecuted.

### ***Ahlu-Sunnah Wal-Jamā'ah***

The Prophet has been reported to have said that his community, the Muslims will divide into seventy-three sects and that only one of these sects will enter Paradise. The seventy-third of the sects are *Ahlu-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah* according to °Abd Ar-Rahman Al-Jawzi Al-Baghdadi (1993). The thought and course of this sect are based on the message of the Messenger of Allah and that is why their thought is called the thought of *ahlu-Sunnah*. Their thought is also called the thought of *al-Jamā'ah* because their thought is that of the Islamic group which agrees on the truth and never leave their circle in any matter concerning the °*Aqīdah* (Islamic creed, belief or faith). This sect is also called people of tradition and *Ḥadīth* or victorious group or the saved group. The source of its °*Aqīdah* is al-Qur'an, the *sunnah* and the consensus. It believes that the Prophet (S.A.W) explained everything concerning the fundamental of religion and nobody is expected to create anything in the religion again and surrender should be made to Allah and His Apostle in the esoteric and exoteric matters as nothing like *qiyās* (deduction by analogy) or *thawq* (tast) or *Kashf* (Revealed knowledge)





should not contradict both the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Pure reasoning should be in conformity with the revelation and if it contradicts the revelation then precedence will be given to the revelation (Mani<sup>c</sup>, H.A, 1418H).

### **Some Heretical Sects Which Imam Al-Ghazali is Believed to Aim at**

There are some heretical sects that Imam al-Ghazali mentions in his book and there are others, which are not mentioned directly but they could be detected indirectly through the contents of this book which point to their creed and thought. The following are mentioned heretical sects; Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilah, Murj'ites, Isma<sup>c</sup>ilites, al- Barahimiyyah and A-Rawafidah. The involvement of these sects in philosophy and scholasticism to understand and practice the Islamic faith or creed, especially in the areas of beliefs in the names and attributes of God makes them to be heretics in their ideologies. Imam Al-Ghazali aims to criticize these heretical sects and others that fall within the doctrines of the scholastic, the theologians and the philosophers, (Esposito, J.L. (1995) and redirect the Muslims to what he considers to be pristine Islam. These heretical sects might have been involved in adhering to one or other doctrine of any of the three groups, the scholastic, the theologians and the philosophers. Is either such sect tempered with the essence of Allah or His attributes, actions, or the report brought by the Prophet (S.A.W) by applying the reason or rational to judge or explain such issue, the attitude which was not in operation during the time of the Prophet (S.A.W) and his companions. Such issues are very difficult to deal with through human reasoning.

### **The Effects of Philosophy and Scholasticism Sciences on Islam**

Islamic community was one in its beliefs originally but the situation changed when these two studies (Philosophy and Scholasticism Sciences) were introduced into discussing the essence of God. It was these two sciences that subject Muslims to those issues that caused schisms in Islam due to the contact of the Muslims with the foreign sciences like Greek philosophy and its scholasticism, Esposito, J.L. (1995). Ibn Khaldun (1988) confirms that although the later scholars had mixed the two sciences together to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish between the issues contained in them. The main concern of *ilm al- kalām* (scholastic theology or defensive apologia) according to its scholars, is *al-<sup>c</sup>aqā'id al- 'Imaniyyah* (Doctrines that have to do with faith). It is translated to be defensive



apologia because of its function which is to establish religious beliefs firmly, by producing proofs and to cast aside doubts through the application of philosophy.

Ibn Khaldun (1988) further submits about *‘ilm al-kalām* that man is charged with the faith in the transcendence of Allah. His knowledge, power, creation, will, the resurrection of man after death, then faith in the Messengers and that there is *al-Jannah* (Paradise) and hell fire. Those are the bases of the doctrines that have to do with the faith which could be explained by the use of reason and its proofs could be found in the Qur’an and *sunnah* (tradition of the Prophet). The *Salaf* (the Muslim predecessors) used the Qur’anic and sunnatic evidence to prove this, thereafter came disagreement in explaining these doctrines as a result of the *mutashābihāt* verses (passages not clearly intelligible in the Qur’an) and those that portray the anthropomorphic expressions about the essence of God and attributes of God. This disagreement, in explaining the *mutashābihāt* and these anthropomorphic expression about the essence and attributes of God resulted into argument, differences of opinion and proofs by the use of reason and additional tradition. This led some groups to be doubtful of Allah’s essence as regards anthropomorphic issues like the hand, foot, face and etc. to the extent that they believed that Allah is composed of a body but not like the bodies and until they made the body as one of his attributes, which cannot be traced to the Qur’an and the prophetic traditions originally.

Other people even likened Allah’s attributes with that of His creations, in terms of direction, *istiwā’* (His establishment on the seat), His descending (*nuzūl*), voice, word and so on. There were arguments among the scholars regarding these and others but finally, the faith was retained in the states which the *Salaf* (Islamic predecessors) left it through the efforts of some Islamic scholars. Later many sciences and works emerged, and people set deadly on research and other directions and the *Mutakallimūn* were able to compose a book on the transcendence of God. Therein, Al-Mu‘tazilah started their heretical doctrines in every aspect of Allah’s transcendence by rejecting the literal meaning of qualities of Allah like knowledge, power, will, life, hearing and seeing. This made them to say that al-Qur’an is a creation of Allah. Some Caliphs also forced people to follow these doctrines



and those who refused were persecuted. This prompted *ahl as-Sunnah* to attack this doctrine by applying reasoning proofs. It was Abu al-Hasan al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari, the leader of *al-Mutakallimūn* who started that task. He was able to make balance between these issues through tradition and reasoning by presenting proofs against those who held the heretical views concerning those fundamentals of faith. Imam Al-Ghazali gave the last blow to the use of pure reasoning to determine God's essence. Consequently, anybody who applies pure reason to discuss the essence of God is regarded as Ash<sup>c</sup>arite, the follower of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari as well as a member of Al-Ghazali. This is because not all who claim to be *ahl as-Sunnah* agree with them in their theological ideologies.

### ***Dhātul-Lāh* (Essence of Allah) according to Imam Al-Ghazali**

Imam Al-Ghazzali treated the essence of Allah in section one of his book, *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm ad-dīn* (Revival of the Religions Sciences) under *Al-ʿAqīdah* (creed, belief or faith) wherein he used philosophical and logical proof evidence for the full explanation of the themes in this section. This is called *ar-risālah al-Qudsiyyah fī Qawāʿid al-ʿAqāʿid* (The Holy Message about the pillars of faith). It is based on the affirmation of the essence of Allah, His attributes or qualities, His actions or deeds and the affirmation of the sincerity of the Prophet (S.A.W). The foundation of *ʿImān* is based on these four *arkān* (basic elements) of which each basic element contains, ten principles. The concern of this area is mainly on the submissions of Imam Al-Ghazali on the essence of Allah which are discussed as follows:

### **The First Basic Element: Knowledge about the Essence and Oneness of Allah (S.W.T)**

Ten principles are discussed under this. It is to know:

1. Of the existence of Allah. Imam uses the Qur'anic verses to buttress this point convincingly before the philosophical and reasoning proof. He asserts that Allah is not a body which is subjected to motion and rest, which are events and since a new thing cannot be without the event which precedes it and that the expenditure of those events leads to the emergence of the new thing then, there must be an inventor who originated those events therefore the world cannot be free from events which preceded it hence the world itself is an event which needs an originator.

2. That Allah is Eternal, nothing preceded His existence. He is the first and the last. Had it been that He is an originated being, and not eternal, He would have needed an originator who in turn would have subjected to another originator. This will continue like that. The fact that He was not preceded by anything makes him to be the Maker of the world and its Originator and Inventor.
3. That despite the fact that Allah is Eternal, He is also endless since His eternal has been confirmed then His end is impossible.
4. Allah is not a substance, confined to a domain and subjected to resting in and moving out of such domains which are events then, the substance is also an originated thing.
5. That Allah is not a body composed of substances. Since the body is an expression, indicating the composition of something from the substances and if it is wrong to label Allah with substance confined to a domain therefore, it is also wrong to say that He is a body.
6. That He is not an accident in a body that sets in in a place. This is because the accident is anything that sets-in body and everybody is an originated being and inevitably its originator must be before it. How then can He sets-in in the body when He has eternally existed without anybody, as He has existed before He created both the bodies and accidents?
7. About the transcendence of Allah concerning directions. The directions are distinguished with the man since he has upper, lower, right, left, front and back directions. The directions are originated things alongside the man and if Allah created man in a round or circular form like a ball, the directions would not have been at all, how then can the direction be attached to Him Who is Eternal, whereas the direction is an originated thing? Allah is above everything and nothing is above Him.
8. That Allah establishes himself on *al-ʿArsh* (The throne). This establishment is based on the meaning known to Allah alone. This *istiwāʾ* is by means of dominion (*al-Qahr*) and power (*al-ʾistilāʾ*). This is so since if the *istiwāʾ* is believed to mean settlement and establishment then it means that the one who establishes himself is a body whose body touches *al-ʿArsh* which may be the same as him, bigger or smaller than him and this is impossible.



9. That despite that Allah is free from form, measurement, directions and zones, He would be seen in the day of judgment by some people, and would not be seen in this world. Since Allah sees His creation without encounter or face to face, and since He can be known by His creation without how and form, therefore He can be seen just like that.
10. That Allah (S.W.T) is One without a partner, Unique without equal. He single-handedly created the creations. He has no similar who participates with Him in the creation not to talk of equality. He has no opposition to contest with Him not to talk of making hostility with Him. If there are two gods and one of them wishes to command something, if the second is forced to assist him then the first god has been defeated and incapable but if he is capable of contradicting and rejecting him, then the second is powerful and subdue while the first is a weak and deficient god.

### **The Second Basic Element is to have Knowledge about the Attributes of Allah (S.W.T)**

It has ten principles under it. To have the knowledge that:

1. The Maker of the universe is a powerful God. This is because it is senseless to believe that a well-woven brocade was made by a dead person or by an incapable person.
2. He has the knowledge of every being and encompasses the whole creation (with His knowledge). An atom-like something which is far and in hiding, either in the earth or heaven does not escape from His knowledge.
3. He is Ever-Living. This is because if somebody has been confirmed of having knowledge and power then such a person must have been confirmed to be alive therefore, thinking that a powerful, knowledgeable, doer and a controller is without life necessitates the possibility of doubt in life of animals when they are moving or resting.
4. His Will comes before His actions and nothing happens except that it inclines to the will of Allah and happens in accordance with His Will.
5. He is All-Seeing. The notion of the mind and the secret of the imagination and thinking cannot escape from his vision likewise the

- sound of the creeping black ant on the solid stone in the dark night cannot escape from His hearing. His vision and hearing are perfect. He sees without pupils (of the eyes) and hears without ears.
6. He speaks with word and His word is a quality which is independent of itself and without sound or letter, therefore it is a word of mind which is readable with the tongue, committable to the memory and writable in the papers but the word in its physical form is not established in papers. If the physical word is established in the book of Allah in the papers, then writing the name of Allah will establish the physical being of Allah in the paper.
  7. The word which is independent of itself is eternal and so His entire attributes since it is impossible for the word to be events which accept changes. Based on this, His word is eternal which establishes His essence and what takes place is only the sounds which indicate the word. This is like a man who seeks and wishes a particular knowledge for his child before he is born. The demand and wish of such knowledge for the child are established in the essence of that man until when God created him until he matured and God created the knowledge for him in accordance with what his father had in mind then the child becomes somebody charged with that demand which has been established and existing in his father's essence until his child gets to know it therefore, the establishment of the demand in the word of God- which reads thus: "off your slippers" is established in the essence of Allah and Musa (A.S) only became an addressee after his existence, since the knowledge of that demand has been created for him, thus he heard the eternal word.
  8. His knowledge is eternal and He does not cease to be a knowledge in His essence and attributes and not that he acquires new knowledge about what happens to His creation but the knowledge exists in the ancient knowledge of His. If we have the knowledge of Zayd's arrival at sunrise and the knowledge is there until the arrival of Zayd at sun-rise then the knowledge about the arrival of Zayd at sunset is known through the former knowledge which needs no new knowledge. This is how the eternity of Allah's knowledge should be understood.



9. His Will is also eternal and it is attached to every event which takes place at the suitable time of occurrence based on the previous ancient knowledge of Allah. This is so since if His Will is an event, it will also be like other events and if it is not in His essence then He is not the one who wills it, so far that you cannot be the person who produces a motion which is not in your essence. That motion necessarily needs another Will which also needs another Will of which the process is unlimited and if it is possible to create a Will without another Will then it is possible that the universe came into being without a Will.
10. Allah (S.W.T) is Knowledgeable with knowledge, living with life, powerful with power, willing with Will, speaking with word, hearing with hearing, seeing with sight. All these attributes are eternal. Saying that he is knowledgeable without knowledge is like saying that one is wealthy without money, and so on.

### **The Third Basic Principle: To have the Knowledge about the Actions of Allah (S.W.T)**

This is to have the knowledge that:

1. Every event that takes place in the universe is His action and His invention and nobody joins Him in all these. He is the Creator of every creation and He is the One Who provides them with power and motion therefore, all actions of man are His creations and are in connection with His power. He is the Creator of all these since a creation does not know the explanation of the action which it produces.
2. The uniqueness of Allah in the invention of the motion of the servants does not mean that the motion is not destined for them by way of acquisition. It is the God who created the power and what it produces as well as the free and voluntary Wills. Power is an attribute of the servant but created by Allah and not acquired by Him whereas the motion is a creation of Allah and an attribute of the servant as well as his acquisition. The motion is created in terms of destination in connection with a power which is an attribute of man. Motion in relation to another attribute, is called ability and named acquisition due to that relation. How then can motion be regarded as a forced action upon man when he can necessarily distinguish



- between compulsion and volition or how can it be the creation of man when he does not know the components of the motion which he acquired and its number in detail?
3. Though, the action of servant is his acquisition nevertheless, it does not mean that it is carried out without the Will of Allah. Nothing happens in the authority and in the kingdom except with the decision of Allah, His power, His Will and Wish. Since the actions of the servants are creations of Allah, then it is right to establish that they are according to the Will of Allah.
  4. It is Allah Who is the Sole Authority to create, invent and arrogate the imposition of obligation on the servants to himself nevertheless, both creation and imposition of obligation are not compulsory on him contrary to the belief of al-Mu'tazilah that the two are compulsory on him for the welfare of the servants. This is impossible since He is the One Who obligates, commands and forbids. How then can He aim at obligation or at compulsion and decision?
  5. Allah has the right to place on the creation that (burden) which he cannot bear, contrary to al-Mu'tazilah's view. If it is not right, then the request by the servant through the prayer that Allah should avert it would have been impossible. They said: "O Our Lord! Lay not on us that for which we have no strength..." (Q 2: 286).
  6. He (S.W.T) has the right to suffer and punish the creation without previous offence and without affixed reward because He does whatever He likes in His kingdom and it is unimaginable that His authority goes beyond His kingdom. Oppression means intervention by someone in the authority of another and this is impossible in the part of Allah since He cannot concur with other in exercising authority. Furthermore, the killing of animals and all kinds of pain afflicted on them are pains which resulted from the man without any previous offence committed by the animals.
  7. Allah does whatever He wishes with his servant and it is not incumbent on him to keep with their welfare as it is mentioned in the previous principle, since He would not be questioned for what He does but they would be questioned of what they do.



8. Knowing Allah and obedience to His commands are obligatory and should be in accordance with His dictate and *Shari'ah*, not dictate of reason. This is contrary to al-Mu'tazilah's view. This is because reason cannot guide to the knowledge of problem that takes place after the death.
9. It is not impossible that Allah sent the Prophets (A.S), contrary to al-Barahimah whose doctrine is that there is no gain in sending them since the reason can stand in their place. This is not true since reason cannot guide to the deeds which can save man in the day of judgment as it cannot also guide to the medicine useful for the health. The need for the Prophet is like the need for the medical doctors but the sincerity of medical doctor is known through experience as the sincerity of the Prophets is known through miracle.
10. Allah has sent Muhammad (S.A.W) as the last Prophet and the Abrogator of all previous laws of Jews, Christians and Sabians and Allah supported him with the open miracles and wonderful signs like the split of the moon (into two), the praise of Allah by the pebbles... and above all, the Noble Qur'an.

### **Critical Examination of Imam Al-Ghazali's Submissions on *Dhātul-Lāh***

As has been mentioned in this study, Imam al-Ghazali's submissions on the essence of Allah, his attributes and actions are aimed at the doctrines of most of the heretical sects mentioned earlier. However, his submission on those subjects needs further clarification as follows:

### **His Submissions on the Word of Allah**

A question can be asked: Does Allah's word have letters or sounds? In his submission, Imam Al-Ghazali mentioned the word of God as having no letter or sound. To this, Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, an *Ahlu-Sunnah* scholar submits that Allah's word is a real word and is among His qualities. His word can be heard as it has letters and sounds but is not comparable with the words of other creations. His evidence on this is that Allah says:

... and to Moses Allah spoke direct (Q.4: 164).

And We called him from the right side of mountain (Sinai).and made him draw near to Us, for mystic (converse), (Q 19:52).

The “call” and “mystic” (converse) confirm that His word has sound quality. The two (i.e the call and conversation) will not be except through sound. The word is also made up of letters since His word is readable and since there is none like Him therefore, His word is not comparable with that of His creation (°Uthaymin, M.S. 1404H).

### ***Al-Istiwā’ of Allah on al-°Arsh***

Imam Al- Ghazali confirms this quality but explains further in a way contrary to the doctrine of *Ahl as-Sunnah*. He said Allah’s *istiwā’* is pure from contact with the °*Arsh*, stabilization, fixation, descending on it and transition from it, whereas, *Ahl as-Sunnah* confirms this act in the manner in which Allah puts it without any further explanation. They say: “among the attributes of Allah is *al-istiwā’* which Allah attributes to Himself in His book and confirmed by the Prophet (S.A.W). They support this assertion with many verses of the Qur’an (like Qur’an 7 verse 54, 10 verse 3, 13 verse 2, 20 verse 5 and so on) and *ahādīth* (statements of the Prophet (S.A.W). According to them, Ummu Salamah (R.A), the wife of the Prophet (S.A.W) and Imam Malik have been quoted to have said when they were asked about chapter 20 verse 5 of the Holy Qur’an which read thus: “(Allah) Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne” that: “*al-istiwā’* is not obscure, reason cannot determine how it takes place but affirming it is an act of *Īmān* (faith) while disputing it is an act of infidel” (Muqadasi, A.A. 1990).

Imam al-Ghazali’s submissions on *al-istiwā’* negate this attribute and further affect the *nuzūl* (descending) of Allah into the heaven next to this word at the last third part of the night as contained in the doctrine of *Ahl as-Sunnah*. Furthermore, the Qur’an, *sunnah* (prophetic tradition) and the consensus of the Islamic scholars reveal that Allah will come down on the day of judgment to decide the cases of his servants, in the shade of clouds and the Angels will be there, He descends on the heaven next to the earth every night and in the evening of ‘Arafat day. He will also descend on the earth before the day of resurrection and on the people of Paradise. These are His actions which He carries out at those places therefore, it is not permissible to deny Allah of the act of movement and transition because the same action is known with His creation. The most appropriate position of this is to be silent on the issue of *istiwā’* in order not to create another



attribute which has no evidence from the Qur'an and *Hadīth* for Allah according to Muhammad bn Salih al-<sup>c</sup>Uthaymin (1404H) who also says further that the attitude of silence should also be applied to the attributes of seeing and hearing. Any further explanation on them, as did by al-Ghazali who denied Allah of having pupil of the eyes, eyelid and auditory meatus, will lead to the creation of another attribute for Allah without evidence. This is so since both the Qur'an and *Hadīth* have confirmed the two eyes for Allah. Allah says: "But construct an ark under Our eyes and Our inspiration..." (Qur'an 11:37). The Prophet (S.A.W) also said in a *Hadīth* about Ad-Dajjāl that: "...your Lord is not A one-eyed Being..."

### ***Jawhar* and <sup>c</sup>*Araḍ* (Substance and Accident)**

The use of *jawhar* and <sup>c</sup>*araḍ* (substance and accident) shows al-Ghazali's philosophical and scholastic factors in that both are used in scholastic philosophy. Substance, according to A.R. Lacey (1996), is what can exist without depending on anything else, except God, Who alone can create and destroy them and Who Himself is that only substance in the strictest sense. Accident, on the other hand is that which in itself has no independent or self-sufficient existence but only inheres in a substance. The substance may remain in a more or less fixed form, while its accidents disappear or alter. In Aristotelian logic, accident is an inessential property which may be attributed to a substance without being essential to that substance. For instance, a girl may be blonde, but she must be female: blondeness in this example is an accident, but femaleness is not (Antony flew, 1979). Al-Ghazali is right in that he rejects Allah as being *Jawhar* or <sup>c</sup>*Araḍ* because there is no evidence to prove this in the Qur'an and *Hadīth* or *Ijmā' al-'ulamā'* (the consensus of the Islamic Scholars). Paul Edwards (1972) establishes it that this philosophical term, in later Greek, occurred principally in controversies among early Christian theologians about the real nature of Christ. The use of such a strange term, which became controversial in another religion in the doctrine of Islam, is therefore unacceptable.

### **Imam Al-Ghazali and the Belief of *Ahl as-Sunnah* on *Dhātul-Lāh***

The manner in which the *Salaf* (the Islamic predecessors) treated these issues is that they believe in every attribute of Allah and comment that the attributes are known but the modality is not known and the question about

them (or their modalities) is a religious innovation because nothing looks like Allah. *Ahl as-sunnah* does not see to the point that confirmation of qualities of Allah in the manner in which Allah puts them can bring about comparison (between Allah and His creation) since the agreement between an attribute of Allah and that of His creation in terms of name or quality does not mean that they are the same in the essence. Allah sees and hears, so also man but a sensible person will know the difference between the attributes and qualities through the essence. Therefore, whoever thinks of comparison or equality between Allah and His creation has fell between *tashbīh* (comparing Allah with the creation, and *taʿtīl* (denying Allah of all attributes), Ghalib, A.A. (1997).

In his efforts to present the *ʿaqīdah* based on the views of *ahl as-Sunnah*, al-Ghazali himself contradicts *ahl as-Sunnah* to the extent that it suggests that he wanted to form his own doctrine which is based on his assumption of what should be the exact views and doctrine of the supposed *ahl as-Sunnah*. In this respect, Ibn Khaldun is correct in making al-Ghazali the founder of a new tendency in theology, although, there is no striking novelty in his dogmatic view, observed B. Lewis et al (1965).

According to Ibn Khaldun (1988), the issue of measuring the Islamic belief, especially the attributes of Allah with reason is like the parable of a man who sees the scale which is useful for the measurement of the gold and thinks that the same scale can be used to measure a mountain. It is difficult to comprehend Allah's essence and his attributes, whereas scholasticism applies immense intellectual efforts to investigate and bring into a single system the articles of faith and reason, William L.R. (1980).

## Conclusion

Imam Al-Ghazali lived in a period when there was theological problem in the Islamic belief of essence of God which resulted from the contact of the early Muslims with the philosophy and scholasticism sciences. Al-Ghazali studied philosophy and scholasticism sciences and excelled in both. He later realized that the two sciences could not be used to determine the essence of God as also believed by *ahl as-Sunnah*. He therefore started to attack them and their respective scholars, a situation that made him to write *Ihyā' ʿUlūm*





*ad-dīn* (Revival of the Religions Sciences). In this book and under *Al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqīdah* (creed, belief or faith) section, he used philosophical and logical proof evidence to explain the essence of God. This is called *ar-risālah al-Qudsiyyah fī Qawāʿid al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqāʿid* (The Holy Message about the pillars of faith).

Honestly speaking, it is not easy or possible to discuss the physical being of God for many reasons. This is because one cannot describe what he does not see and consequently it has been confirmed in the Qurʿan and tradition of the Prophet (SAW) that God is not like any of His creatures and cannot be seen in this world, how then can it be possible to describe Him? This means that using philosophy or scholasticism or any other sciences to describe Him may lead to exaggeration in His essence, attributes and actions as well as depriving Him of these or making similarities of Him with His creatures, all of which have contributed to schism and sects in Islam. It is also believed in Islam that everything is created by God, such beings like Angels, Jinn and things like love, hatred, affection, punishment, happiness and so on, are creatures of God, of which their physical beings are obscured from man and hence cannot be described.

Imam Al-Ghazali observed these theological problems and tried to provide solutions to them accordingly, by using his philosophical and scholasticism knowledge, an effort that made him contradict the sect to which he claimed he belonged (*ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah*). It can therefore be observed that Imam Al-Ghazali is not totally in conformity with *ahl as-sunnah* in some areas like *al-Kalām* (word of Allah), *Istwāʿ* (Allah seat or establishment on the throne), the appearance of Allah to the righteous and His sighting by them on the day of judgement, face, directions, placement by Allah of burden which His servant may not bear on him. Again, some of his opinions or thoughts are the same as some of the heretical sects which his book is believed to aim at. Finally, all these theological problems under this discussion can be resolved if the path of the early Muslims who lived with the Prophet is followed. The Qurʿan was revealed in their presence, the Prophet (SAW) was accompanied by them and they never interpreted the Qurʿanic or prophetic expressions on Allah's essence in manners that affect their theological beliefs. Perhaps this and other factors make them to be regarded as the best of the Muslim Community.



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## **Effect of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Implementation in the Teaching of Igbo Language Grammar to Igbo Language Students**

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### **Abstract**

This paper investigated the effect of the new trend of Information and Communication Technologies in the teaching of Igbo Language Grammar to Igbo Language students. The study employed a quasi-experimental design of the pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group design. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Two hundred and sixty-five Igbo Language students from purposively sampled six coeducational public secondary schools were used for the study. Three schools were randomly assigned to the treatment group while the remaining three were assigned to the control group. The treatment group was taught Igbo Language Grammar using computer and ICT devices. The validated Igbo Language Grammar Achievement Test (ILGAT) was used to collect data for the study. The ILGAT had a reliability index of 0.86. mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while analysis of variance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of confidence. The study reveals that there is a significant difference in the achievement mean scores of students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach and those taught Igbo Language Grammar using a conventional instructional approach. The findings showcased that the Indigenous language Igbo can be revitalized if the language can be well packaged and taught using ICT devices like some of those foreign languages that the students see as hot cakes since it can earn one a good job. If this language is programmed into the computer, it will become more productive and more versed and globalized. This will make



the students crave to study it to any level like foreign languages. Those learning it as a second language (L2) can also find it easier. Hence, the computer has enough language repertoires to assist the learner. From the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, that Igbo Language teachers should adopt the use of computer and ICT devices in teaching and learning of Igbo Language.

**Keywords:** Information and Technology, ICT Devices, Indigenous Languages, Igbo Language

### **Introduction**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) refers to a broad range of activities and equipment including all the tools, applications and information that are available and accessible via computers. Information technology in its fully convergent form encompasses various forms of information delivery systems such as televisions, radios, newspapers, books, computers, Internet, etc, in one integrated environment (Shri Pramod Manajan, 2002). The ICT age is now and we are already in it as some tertiary schools are already running online programmes. Therefore, the Nigerian indigenous languages ought not to be left out of this trend. Information, Communication and Technology or ICT is a new concept in education development and has been shown to have a considerable impact on economic growth and social development. Education is the backbone of every society and in the current ICT age, we talk about ICT-based education. In Nigeria today, efforts have been made to introduce reforms in the education system by way of introducing ICT-based education. If we compare the Nigerian education system in the 80s with what is obtainable today, we observe clearly the ICT-based reforms that have been introduced in the education system.

According to Amfani, (2015), ICT is seen as a way to promote education change, improve the skills of learners and prepare them for the global economy and the information society. Furthermore, the desire to be globally competitive, grow the economy and improve social conditions is often used to justify the significant public sector investments in education improvement and application of ICT in schools (Ani, 2023; Kozma, 2005). It is imperative to note that ICT-based education reforms are necessary in

order to achieve desired social and economic outcomes. The outcomes must be built into policies and programmes to make it work.

The Igbo language is a language broadly spoken among the Southeast inhabitants of Nigeria. It is a versed language; it is not only the indigenous or native speakers that use it. It is used locally and internationally; this is because the Igbo tribe live in every look and cranny of the world in search of greener pastures. Ofomata (2002) asserts that the Igbo believe in hustling, living anywhere both far and near their land, and doing whatever can fetch them treasure. The students are not left out of this, especially those in tertiary Institutions where a student can travel even outside the country in search of knowledge. Therefore, as they move around, they move with their language, and so, carry their language everywhere they go, especially for the lovers and promoters of the indigenous language, especially now that both Dick and Harry are crying out loud for redemption from extinction. Hence, the Igbo radio station's slogan is "Be speaking Igbo" (Sụwakwa Igbo).

Some measures are being implemented to salvage such an ugly situation for the Igbo language. Infusion of Igbo language grammar and even auto-correct into Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) will enhance the revitalization of sound Igbo language learning for Igbo language students in secondary schools and even in tertiary institutions. However, the fact that it is being studied with the reigning ICT device is an added advantage to language learners. This is because it is being studied with computer like in every other area of studies in the school, then the student's interest to study will be definitely high because, at that stage of life, students want to belong, they crave everything that is trending. (Eze, 2015) The Igbo language is a standard language that can be programmed into a computer for easy study. If only the interest is there, the Igbo language has all it takes to be a standard or professional language like other foreign languages. Furthermore, the Igbo language has a well-developed orthography and lexemes which can easily be compounded in the ICT to be assessed anytime, anywhere it is needed.



The world is under increasing pressure to use the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the Education system to teach students the knowledge and skills they need in the 21st century even in language learning (Nzewi, 2010). As contended in UNESCO, (2002), the UNESCO World Education Report (1998) describes the radical implications that the new Information and Communication Technologies have for conventional teaching and learning and predicts a transformation of the teaching/learning process and the way teachers and learners gain access to knowledge and information not just in language learning but also in every other field of learning. However, in the developed world, the role of technology as a resource for teaching and learning of second languages is increasing as educators recognize its ability to create both independent and collaborative learning environments in which students can learn the new language (Butler-Pascoe, 1997) Butler-Pascoe draws attention to the salient characteristics and benefits of a technology-enriched curriculum for second language learners that underscore the central role technology can play in second language teaching and learning. Here, the non-Igbo language speakers can now happily enrol to learn the Igbo language as a second language, as we can now see the foreigners learning some African Indigenous languages, especially Igbo Yoruba and Hausa as such they also seek to employ the native speakers that are experts in the above-mentioned Indigenous languages. The effect of ICT on indigenous language learning will be so beneficial to the language.

Computers utilize a multi-sensory collection of text, sound, pictures, video, animation and hypermedia, it can be used to provide meaningful contexts to facilitate comprehension (Ani, 2023). Okwudishu, (2005) argues that technology can provide students with language experiences as they move through the various stages of language acquisition; it can be used to support the writing process approach, and it can be used for drill and practice designed to reinforce class instruction. She points to the limitless opportunities provided by online databases for students to have access to authentic audiences and allow second language learners to compare the voice patterns of their speech with that of a native speaker. This is akin to the computer-based immersion method, which is based on the theory that language is best mastered when the learner is surrounded by only native speakers (UNESCO, 2002). The immersion method simulates a second



language environment through elements such as placing the students in situations which they find interesting, providing linguistic commentaries like going to a place where that particular language is used almost by everyone and everywhere both at the school, market, worship places and at social gatherings where everyone uses the same language at all times.

### **Learning the Igbo Language with ICT**

The effects of using computers to learn Igbo language grammar in the urban and rural areas, the interest of the students studying Igbo language grammar with computers. The interaction between the students and their teachers uses computers to teach Igbo grammar and those use conventional methods. Finally, the gender influence on the Igbo language grammar learning via computer (ICT) Kalgren (2005) observes that information technology must first show sensitivity to multilingual issues and build systems that support local needs. In the Nigerian context, one vital local need is that of teaching/learning Nigerian languages in schools as well as their use as languages of instruction. Information technology in satisfying this need cannot be overemphasized as it can provide a tool that could be effectively integrated into the language teaching/learning experience. Writing on technology-enhanced pedagogy, Warschauer (2002) warns that in order to obtain a holistic view of the issues at stake the focus should move from the role of information technology in language teaching to the role of language teaching in the information technology society.

The teaching of Nigerian languages (Igbo language) should therefore capitalize on this new development since text messaging is a very important skill associated with the use of cell phones. Thus, a good beginning in ICT integration would be to teach Nigerian languages using cell phones to help Nigerian children learn how to write text messages in the Igbo language, just like they do in the English language. The cell phone thus offers the learners the opportunity to link oral communication with written communication, thus improving their speaking, writing and reading skills in the local language. This humble beginning and with recorded progress, computers could be introduced later to teach these children how to feed similar information used as text messages into the computer. When this is mastered, they could then be taken a step further and be introduced to the Internet in the Igbo language.



Some web pages use only the Igbo language to supply all their information. We have; Igbonet.com, opaneze ndjigbo, www.Igboguide.org, [www.igbojournals.com](http://www.igbojournals.com), www.igbo e journals.com. (e-journal philosophy and culture) ahajioku Owerri etc. Igbo language teaching and learning simply implies the more experienced one (teacher) and the less experienced one (learner) rubbing heads together to keep promoting /acquiring the language under good instruction. The two of them move together because they appear to be interwoven since none can exist without the other. No one talks of learning without teaching, on that ground; Ekwe, Ibekwe, and Amaechi (2014) assert that teachers are the hub of any school system; the success of any system of Education depends to a large extent the number of teachers, their quality, their devotion to duty and their effectiveness on the job. A qualified teacher is therefore an educationist who has undergone pedagogical training including a good knowledge of the principles and practice of education in addition to teaching subject or discipline. Gbamanja (2002) argues that a good teacher must be trained in the basic elements of what to teach, how to teach it and when to teach it as such the teacher has a strong role to play in the academic achievement of the child. He pointed out that a teacher's qualifications, skills, attitude and guidance to the child's educational needs may have a positive or negative influence on the child academically.

The Igbo language lecturers in South-East Universities should organize ICT trainings, seminars, workshops etc whereby they invite ICT experts to come and academically impart, equip and upgrade their knowledge to have a positive and accurate offer of inculcating ICT into Igbo language teaching and learning, as such using ICT to teach Igbo language grammar. This program can easily be adopted since the computer already has such programs in English or some foreign languages. This can only be embarked upon by creating an Igbo language alphabetical keyboard, where the Igbo language orthography is all welcomed to enable effective learning of the Igbo language with the computer. The University studies now are gradually backing off from the conventional pattern of both teaching and learning. The epoch now is driving every University study towards the use of ICT; that is, involving computer usage virtually in every study as such Igbo language cannot be left out in this academic digital movement. Omega (2005) states that Nigeria as a multilingual country has over four hundred

indigenous languages. These languages exist alongside other foreign languages such as English, French, Arabic, and of course, Pidgin English which is described as a hybrid language. According to Bamgbose (2000), Nigerian Languages are classified into three major, main and small. These indigenous languages are not accorded equal status. Omale-Peters (2000) asserts that it is obvious that these languages are not accorded equal status and privileges (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) are daily encouraged to assume the status of regional or national languages, while others (Idoma, Ikwerre, and Kamuku) are treated as subsidiaries of the major Languages. The latter are, therefore, either wallow in neglect or suffer deterioration. However, both the major language and the subsidiaries of the major languages are indigenous or local languages in Nigeria.

The term ‘indigenous’ here refers to Nigerian languages which are neither international languages nor official languages of the Nigerian nation. Therefore, the major concern of this study is to discuss the need for the development of these Nigerian languages most especially the Igbo language which is my area of interest in this work also, to outline some strategies which if adopted will lead to the development of this indigenous language – Igbo. Okwudishu and Okwudishu (2005) assert that several workshops at the most recent West African Linguistic Congress reechoed this need and created awareness of the basic fact that the ability to use technological tools to assimilate new information will to a large extent determine how successful and effective teachers and learners will be which Igbo language is not excluded. (The field of language teaching is not left out. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how the teaching and learning of the Igbo language as one of the Nigerian languages can be enhanced through the infusion of ICT into the teaching/learning process of the Igbo language. Information Technology is the current research tool utilized in virtually all areas of human endeavour to achieve phenomenal stride.

Igbo language has struggled with the problem of relevance in a changing world, especially when juxtaposed with the roles and functions of languages such as English, Arabic and French languages. These implications point to the need for respect and the promotion of linguistic diversity in technology and information highways. Okwudishu (2005) asserts that in the case of



Canada, for example, specialists have analyzed the situation of the French language and have proposed several recommendations regarding strategies governing the making of de jure and de facto standards and initiatives aimed at promotion, awareness, and monitoring. A renowned Nigerian linguist (Bamgbose, 1991) has affirmed that a nation that fails to develop its indigenous language cannot bring out the genius of its race and so cannot effect any meaningful development of its resources. One important reason for this can be attributed to the lack of a clearly formulated language policy. What we have is a language provision in the National Policy for Education (1981,1988, 1998). As a result, the teaching of indigenous languages has not advanced beyond the level of literacy development. The situation does not have to remain this way. Other countries like Japan, China and India have introduced their languages to computers and have made them accessible and attractive not only to their native speakers but also the language learners. This is where the teaching and learning of the Igbo language should focus. It will not just be for more communication, discussion or interaction but to be productive, especially in the field of development. If the Igbo language is made the language of the computer, it will enhance the prestige and productivity of the language.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to determine the effect of ICT implementation in the teaching and learning of Igbo language grammar by secondary school students in the Abakaliki Local Government Area. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the effect of a computer-based instructional approach in the teaching and learning of Igbo Language Grammar on students' achievement.
2. Determine the achievement of male and female Igbo students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the achievement mean scores of Igbo students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach?

2. What are the achievement mean scores of male and female Igbo students taught Igbo Language Grammar computer-based instructional approach?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at an alpha level of 0.05:

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between the achievement mean scores of Igbo students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach and the conventional instructional approach.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between the achievement mean scores of male and female Igbo students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach.

### Research Method

This study employed a quasi-experimental design. In a quasi-experimental study, there is no random assignment of subjects. Intact classes were used for the study. The specific design the researcher used for this study is a pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design. There was a treatment group (where students were taught using the computers) and a control group (where students were taught using the conventional (chalk-talk) teaching method). The design is presented thus:

$O_b \times O_a$

$O_b \sim X O_a$

X = Treatment (Computer Based Instructional Approach)

$\sim X$  = Control (Conventional Instructional Approach)

O<sub>b</sub> = Pretest Measurement

O<sub>a</sub> = Posttest Measurement

The population of the study comprised thousand and thirty-one (1031) 2023/2024 academic session SS2 Igbo Language students in public secondary schools in Abakaliki Education zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A sample of 265 SS2 Igbo Language students from purposively sampled six coeducational secondary schools was used in the study. Treatment and



control groups were assigned to the schools at random. Three schools were assigned to the treatment group and the remaining three schools were assigned to the control group.

The Igbo Language Grammar Achievement Test (ILGAT) constructed by the researcher was used to collect data for the study. The ILGAT was a 30-item, 4-point multiple choice objective test instrument. A test blueprint was used to ensure content coverage of the topic taught to ensure that each of the test items was understandable and relevant to SS2 Igbo Language students who constitute the sample size for the study. The ILGAT was trial tested on 35 SS2 Igbo Language students of secondary school outside the zone of the study. The trial test helped to improve the quality of the test items, estimate the time it might take for an average student to effectively complete the test and confirm the face validity of the items. Also, from the result of the trial test, the reliability of the instrument was determined using the Kuder-Richardson formula 20 method of determining the internal consistency of a test. The internal consistency of the instrument was calculated to be 0.86, indicating that the items were consistent in cognitive learning of the topic of interest to this study.

Two instructional approaches were used for the study. Computer based instructional approach was used in teaching the treatment group while the conventional instructional approach was used in teaching the control group. The regular Igbo Language teachers in the treatment groups were trained and used as research assistants, who helped to carry out the teaching in their respective schools. This arrangement has the advantage of removing the Hawthorn effect which might occur when a strange teacher teaches the students. The teachers were trained for two weeks to master the use of computer and ICT devices for the effective delivery of computer-based instructional approach lesson plans strictly as prepared by the researcher. In the control group, regular teachers taught in their respective schools using the usual conventional instructional approach. The same topics in Igbo Language Grammar were taught in both the treatment and control groups. A pretest was administered to the subjects using the validated ILGAT, marked and recorded by the researcher before the experiment commenced.



The experiment was carried out during normal school hours using the school timetable for the classes. The experiment lasted for four weeks. On the last day of the experiment, a post-test was administered to the subjects using the validated ILGAT, marked and recorded by the teacher. The ILGAT used in the post-test was the same in content as the ILGAT used in the pretest but differed in the sequence of items. The data collected from the pretest and post-test were used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses for the study. The research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation of the achievement scores. The hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

## Results

### Data Presentation

The results of the study are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 1:** Achievement Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Igbo Students Taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach and those taught using a conventional instructional approach.

Groups	Pre-test			Post-test		Gain Mean
	N	Mean	S D	Mean	SD	
Experimental Group	130	24.89	9.40	75.54	14.20	50.65
Control Group	135	21.04	9.51	42.33	14.34	21.29

Table 1 shows that Igbo language students taught using a computer-based instructional approach had an achievement mean score of 24.89 in the pretest with a standard deviation of 9.40 and a 75.54 achievement mean score in the post-test with a standard deviation of 14.20. Igbo language students taught using a conventional instructional approach had an achievement mean score of 21.04 in the pretest with a standard deviation of 9.51 and a 42.33 achievement mean score in the post-test with a standard deviation of 14.34. With close standard deviations in both instructional approaches, the scores of both groups seemed to be homogenous in clustering around the mean score. Moreover, it is obvious that students taught Igbo language Grammar using a computer-based instructional



approach had higher achievement mean scores with a gain in achievement mean score of 35.20 as against 13.80 gain in achievement mean score by Igbo students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a conventional instructional approach. Thus, the computer-based instructional approach seems to be more effective than the conventional instructional approach in enhancing Igbo students’ achievement, which is confirmed in hypothesis 1 at the  $p < 0.05$  level of significance below.

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Male and Female Igbo Language Students' Achievement in Igbo Grammar due to Computer-based Instructional Approach

Groups	Pre-test		Post-test		Gain Mean	
	N	Mean	SD	Mean		SD
Male	14	27.75	13.07	73.88	15.85	46.13
Female	36	23.04	8.41	77.21	14.07	54.17

Table 1 shows that Igbo language male students taught using a computer-based instructional approach had an achievement mean score of 27.75 in the pretest with a standard deviation of 13.09 and a 73.88 achievement mean score in the post-test with a standard deviation of 15.85. Female Igbo language students taught using a computer-based instructional approach had an achievement mean score of 23.04 in the pretest with a standard deviation of 8.41 and a 77.21 achievement mean score in the post-test with a standard deviation of 14.07. It is observed from the Tebul above that female Igbo students taught Igbo language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach had higher achievement mean scores with a gain in achievement mean score of 54.17 as against 46.13 gain in achievement mean score by male Igbo students taught Igbo Language Grammar using conventional instructional approach. Thus, the computer-based instructional approach seems to favour female Igbo students more than male Igbo students in enhancing Igbo students’ achievement.

## Hypotheses

**Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the effect of ICT on Igbo Language Students Achievement**

Source	Type III Sum Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Corrected model	93884.958 <sup>a</sup>	4	23471.239	97.414	.000
Intercept	193247.026	1	193247.026	802.044	.000
Pretest Achievement	4903.959	1	4903.959	20.353	.000
Method	6625.135	1	66425.135	275.688	.000
Gender	201.137	1	974.341	4.044275.688	.045
Method* Gender	73487.652	260	201.137	.835	.362
Error	1240473.000	265	240.943		
Corrected Total	167372.610	264			

For the test of hypothesis 1, Table 3 shows that the profitability value of 0.00 associated with teaching methods is less than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the achievement mean scores of Igbo Language students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach is rejected. The researcher, therefore, concludes that there is a significant difference in the achievement mean scores of Igbo language students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach and those taught using a conventional instructional approach.

For the test of hypothesis 2, Table 3 shows that the profitability value of 0.45 associated with teaching methods is less than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the achievement mean scores of male Igbo Language and female Igbo Language students taught Igbo Language Grammar using a computer-based instructional approach is rejected. The researcher, therefore, concludes that there is a significant difference in the achievement mean scores of male and



female Igbo language students taught Igbo Language Grammar using the computer-based instructional approach in favour of female Igbo Language students.

### **Discussion**

This has shown that a computer-based instructional approach is effective in enhancing Igbo language students' achievement. This finding aligns with Ani (2023) who maintained that a computer-based instructional approach enhances the implementation of secondary school Basic Science curriculum. The implication is that through proper integration of the Igbo Language with its applications in technology and social issues and values, the computer-based instructional approach makes Igbo Language concepts and phenomena more tangible, and reduces the abstract nature of the concepts and phenomena. In this vein, Igbo Language becomes more meaningful to the learner. Students' active participation in the teaching and learning process which might be a necessary condition for effective learning to take place is assured through the use of computer and ICT devices.

The computer-based instructional approach is also less competitive in learning Igbo Language thus in line with Nzewi (2010) who contended that female students are favoured more than male students by less competitive mode of instruction. The female students might have been favoured more than their male counterparts because the computer-based instructional approach allows students to view the subject matter from their perspectives. Thus, students learn at their own pace. Moreover, the computer-based instructional approach is learner-centered and more activity-oriented, it is more efficacious than the conventional instructional approach. Students' perennial poor achievement in the Igbo Language could be addressed if Igbo Language teachers adopt an instructional approach such as a computer-based instructional approach which presents Igbo language concepts/topics from the students' perspectives.

### **Conclusion**

The Igbo Language is one of the major Nigerian Languages, widely spoken or used in the South East Diaspora. It is used for different purposes; socially economically, recreationally and academically and for the moral development of the people. Surprisingly, the Igbo language is on the verge

of extinction now because of its neglect by the people it is an indigenous language and not a foreign language like English Language, French and Arabic language that can give one a brighter future if acquired or learnt. As such Igbo language is now endangered since no one wants to proudly study it at the University but rather chooses it as a last resort. Some will even resort to waiting for an extra year.

The Igbo language can be revitalized if the language can be equipped like some of those foreign languages the students see as hotcakes since it can earn one a good job. If this language is programmed into the computer, it will become more productive and more versed and globalized, which can be it is connecting it to the internet can achieve that. Moreover, it will arouse the interest of the students to proudly study it in the University seeing that the indigenous language can be revitalized and promoted to be productive both in Science and Technology. Moreover, those learning Igbo as a second language will find it much easier, since the computer will be offering them a lot of assistance. It will also bring about sustainable development and capacity building across the world through the internet and their rich traditional and cultural heritage.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Igbo Language teachers should adopt the computer-based instructional approach in teaching and learning of Igbo Language.
2. The computer-based instructional approach should be emphasized and incorporated into the Igbo Language teacher education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
3. Professional organizations such as the Curriculum Organization of Nigeria (CON) and the Ministry of Education should popularise the effective use of the computer-based instructional approach in teaching and learning of Igbo Language through seminars, workshops, conferences and publications.
4. Igbo Language teachers should be given incentives in their effort to enhance the teaching and learning of our indigenous language to ensure that the language goes global and is equally used as a second language by other countries.



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