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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Journal of Gender and Sustainable Development Studies is a broad-based scholarly, blinded peer-reviewed, bi-annual journal published by the Directorate of Gender and Sustainable Development, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria. The journal seeks to bridge and integrate the intellectual, methodological, and substantive diversity of scholarship and establish the link between scholars and policy makers. It publishes empirical research, from a wide range of traditions that contributes to the development of knowledge across the broad field of gender and sustainable development studies which includes research, development, and practices which cuts across many fields. The journal is a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners working towards gender equality and sustainable development. It is available both in hard copy and online.

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

It is with great pride, intellectual anticipation and excitement that we present the maiden edition of the Journal of Gender, Development and Sustainability, a scholarly platform dedicated to advancing critical conversations on gender in contemporary society. This inaugural issue represents not merely the launch of a journal, but the beginning of an ongoing dialogue; one that recognizes gender as a vital lens through which we understand identity, power, opportunity, and social transformation.

Across disciplines from education and sociology to public health, science and technology, religion and culture, governance, and development, gender continues to shape lived experiences and structural realities. Influential scholars, over the years have challenged us to rethink gender as a social construct, emphasizing the intersection of gender, race, and class in systems of inequality. This realization, remind us that gender discourse is neither abstract nor peripheral; it is foundational to justice, inclusion, and sustainable development.

In the African context and particularly within rapidly evolving educational and socio-political landscapes, gender equity remains both a challenge and an opportunity. Persistent disparities in leadership representation, access to quality education, economic participation, and decision-making spaces demand rigorous research and context-sensitive interventions. At the same time, emerging movements advocating for youth engagement, inclusive leadership, and community-based empowerment signal a transformative shift.

This maiden edition brings together diverse voices and methodological approaches to interrogate pressing questions: How do gender norms influence educational attainment and professional advancement? What structural barriers continue to limit participation in governance and policy-making? How can institutions intentionally foster equity without compromising excellence? And in what ways can research inform policy and practice?

We are particularly committed to intersectional inquiry, recognizing that gender does not operate in isolation but interacts with culture, religion, science, socio-economic status, disability, public health and geography. The journal therefore welcomes empirical studies, theoretical analyses, policy reviews, and reflective essays that expand understanding and propose actionable pathways toward equity.

We envision that the Journal will be more than an academic archive; we see it as a catalyst for transformation, bridging research and practice, fostering dialogue across sectors, and inspiring policies that reflect fairness and inclusion. May this maiden edition ignite deeper scholarship, courageous conversations, and meaningful change in Gender and Sustainable Development in Africa and the world at large.

Welcome to the beginning of an important, exciting and rewarding journey.

Dr O.O Awe

For: Editorial Team

CONTACT:

Journal of Gender and Sustainable Development Studies,

Directorate of Gender and Sustainable Development;

Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

Ondo. Ondo State.

Mail: directoratofgenderafued@gmail.com



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IMPACT OF WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE ON SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN NIGERIA.

¹SENNUGA, Mabayoje Albert, ²ADEDAYO, Temitayo Gbeminiyi, ¹MOSURO, Opeyemi Olukayode; ¹OLUSANYA, Rahmon Obafemi & ¹BALOYE, Olubunmi Christainah

¹Department of Economics

Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology, Omu- Ajose,
Ogun State,

Email: albertsennuga@gmail.com, kayodemosuro2015@gmail.com, obafemiolusanya@gmail.com,
bunmiosibodu@gmail.com,

Tel: +2348077994637, +2348053410040, +2347030570621, +234807711147

²Department of Human Resources Management, University of Salford,
Greater Manchester, United Kingdom,

Email: adedayotemitayo78@gmail.com

Tel: +2348034917137

Abstract

Women's cooperatives have emerged as vital mechanisms for fostering sustainable economic development, particularly in marginalized communities. This study examines the assessment of rural women participation in cooperative society on sustainable economic growth. The study was carried out in Ijebu North Local Government Areas of Ogun State. The target population of the study comprises the entire rural women participating and not participating in cooperative society in Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State. A total of two hundred (200) rural women that participated in cooperative society and those that did not participated were selected for the study through simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for the data collection was developed by the researchers and was tagged "Assessment of Rural Women Participation in Cooperative Society on Sustainable Economic Growth Questionnaire (ARWPCSSEG)". The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha and the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.78 which testified the reliability level of the instrument. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed the existence of a significant difference in sustainable economic growth between rural women engaged in cooperative societies and those who are not in Ijebu North LGA. The study concluded that collaborative involvement of rural women in cooperative society markedly improves women's economic outcomes. The study recommended that focused community awareness efforts have to be implemented to motivate increased involvement of rural women in cooperative organizations.

Keywords: Women's cooperatives, sustainable development, economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, social empowerment



Introduction

The contemporary global economic framework demonstrates that women play an essential role in the affairs of nations, particularly in economic and national development, whether in the formal or informal sector, and in both urban and rural regions. The involvement of women in Nigeria's economic sphere is just one facet of their evolving societal responsibilities (Orisadare, 2019). Olonade et al (2021) highlights the evolving position of women in Nigeria by stating that women are central to most significant concerns in the international or global development agenda. Currently, matters pertaining to women are referred to by several terms, including women's issues, women's concerns, women in development, women in politics, and women in science and technology. Despite the diversity of terminologies, there is a universal consensus that international development plans must incorporate initiatives for the integration of women into the development and economic processes.

Women in Nigeria, especially in rural regions, are anticipated to engage actively in cooperative activities. Through engagement in cooperative activities, women might potentially alter some socio-economic conditions by generating chances for economic self-actualization, reshaping public perceptions of their position, and, most significantly, enhancing their general level of living (Akinwale, 2023). The contemporary global economy has expanded the role of women beyond childbearing and domestic management; they have become essential stakeholders in the economic and social progress of their families and communities (Gugan et al., 2024).

Nonetheless, the active involvement of women in cooperative endeavours may prove unsustainable without unobstructed access to pertinent, timely, and precise information, appropriately packaged and disseminated. The perceived deficiency in knowledge regarding cooperative opportunities available to rural women renders their participation in cooperative activities unsatisfactory (Bekena, 2015). To realise women's economic potential in cooperative activities and enhance their motivation to engage in such initiatives, information must be disseminated timely, appropriately, and in adequate quality and quantity (Bharti, 2021). The information context of rural women in Nigeria, considering factors such as illiteracy, inadequate communication infrastructure, and the prevalence of detrimental cultural practices, leads to the perception that these women lack sufficient knowledge regarding cooperative issues.



The contributions of rural women to homes and communities have enhanced both local and global economies. The involvement of rural women in cooperative societies has significantly enhanced revenue generation via diverse activities and rural livelihoods (Jabeen et al., 2020). Jabeen et al (2020) stated that numerous global studies have proven the significant importance of rural women in enhancing family economies and overall wellbeing. In Nigeria, rural women constitute 75 percent of agricultural work and are responsible for almost 90 percent of the country's food production (Uduji et al., 2019). Rural women participate in many types of cooperative enterprises which improves their access to shared production resources, leadership capabilities, and resilience (Prameshti, 2025; Wulandhari et al., 2024). It enhances their individual capabilities, market access, and economies of scale, hence facilitating income growth (Surya et al., 2021). Cooperative activities have consistently proven to be the most effective tool for rural development in nearly all developing nations.

The involvement of rural women in cooperative societies might be viewed as a strategy to enhance household well-being. Notwithstanding the significant advantages of cooperative societies, prevailing gender disparities hinder member engagement, particularly when these organisations are mostly governed and administered by males (Aju & Adeosun, 2021; Theeuwes et al., 2021). Dash et al (2020) and Bharti (2021) observed that women involved in cooperative organisations experience poverty, evidenced by hunger, inadequate nutrition, low income, and diminished quality of life.

Nevertheless, several women have been recorded as significant contributors in collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing their home welfare. This study aims to elucidate the factors influencing women's engagement in cooperative organisations and the implications of their membership on their families and society at large. The primary aim of the study was to evaluate the contributions of rural women's involvement in cooperative societies in Nigeria, specifically focussing on Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State as a case study. Specifically evaluated the livelihood activities of rural women and analysed the contributions resulting from their membership in cooperative societies.



Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study was the assessment of rural women participation in cooperative society on sustainable economic growth in Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The research aimed to:

1. Evaluate the degree to which rural women's involvement in cooperative societies fosters their sustainable economic development in the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State.
2. Analyse the disparities in economic empowerment between rural women engaged in cooperative societies and those who are not in the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Research Questions

The study used the following research questions:

1. What is the degree to which rural women's involvement in cooperative societies fosters their sustainable economic development in the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State?
2. What are the disparities in economic empowerment between rural women engaged in cooperative societies and those who are not in the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

To ascertain if there is a significant difference in the study, the following hypotheses of the study were tested at 0.05 significance level.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in mean sustainable economic growth scores between rural women who participate in cooperative societies and those who do not in Ijebu North LGA.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in mean economic empowerment scores between rural women who participate in cooperative societies and those who do not in Ijebu North LGA.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Cooperative Society

A cooperative is an association of individuals (specifically women) who voluntarily unite to accomplish a shared objective by establishing a democratically governed enterprise, contributing



equitably to the necessary capital, and accepting a fair distribution of the associated risks and benefits in which members actively engage. The core objective of a cooperative is the collective intention of its members, namely women, to amalgamate their efforts and resources to achieve shared advantages in addressing poverty and need sustainably (Suseno, G. P., & Nataliningsih, 2023). Consequently, cooperatives are often community-oriented, founded on democratic principles, adaptable, and encourage active engagement, rendering them very appropriate for economic growth. They are vital components for enhancing the living situations of individuals (Ribas et al., 2022).

Cooperative activities encompass all facets of involvement in a cooperative enterprise, including conception, planning, and administration, financing, and marketing. An individual is considered a participant in cooperative business if they actively engage in any or all of these activities. A woman is regarded as participating in cooperative activity if she contributes sustainably to the welfare and wellbeing of any cooperative enterprise (Rasaki et al., 2021). Participation in cooperative activities typically reflects a woman's choice, driven by her personal decision and involvement.

Women in Rural Development in Nigeria

Over the last thirty years, women have significantly engaged in community groups. During the 1960s and 1970s, community women championed the management of local services and the conservation of neighborhoods; in the 1980s, they were among the limited advocates for neighborhood preservation among regulated downtown development (Adusei, 2024; Bayers, 2019). Religious congregations, especially those established by women, have played a crucial role in rural development throughout this era, and this association has evidently contributed to bringing skilled women to the sector. Numerous rural development organizations originated in church basements, while national councils and local congregations have provided millions of cash, personnel, services, and continuous support (Saka, 2024). This spiritual dimension is typically included in contemporary social reform initiatives.

The faith-based legacy, emphasizing a comprehensive perspective on community revitalization, aligns with the approach adopted by many women. The readiness of faith-based grassroots organizations to embrace women in leadership roles provides a significant testing ground,



enabling numerous women to implement those insights and the resources of their organizations to enhance their communities (Hamidah et al., 2024)

For the past two decades, organizations with robust women's leadership have challenged the limited conception of rural development as only the creation of affordable housing and economic advancement. These groups have consistently characterized rural development challenges as those directly addressing the needs of women, children, and families, even in the lack of funding for such wider concerns. Foundations and governments have only lately begun to acknowledge the merit of the strategy (Bray, 2022). The present focus in public policy initiatives and foundation financing on comprehensive community initiative schemes (CCIS) underscores the enduring dedication of several women-led groups and the role of women as catalysts for social change. Women cultivate social capital via leadership, community engagement, and networking.

Women's leadership styles exist on a spectrum, spanning from an inclusive, communal, "feminist" approach to a more typical hierarchical form. Similar to prior gender-specific studies in various domains, female rural development leaders characterize themselves as open, consultative, and supportive of personnel both in the community and within their organizations. They are dedicated to participatory processes and internal democracy (Rola-Rubzen et al., 2023; Niewoehner-Green et al., 2019). Numerous women expressed a preference for consensus-building, which fosters a collaborative leadership style aimed at peacefully resolving issues.

Women prioritized social transformation as an objective. The aspiration to effect social change is fundamental to several women's rural development initiatives (Ali & Kamraju, 2023). The mission of women for change is expansive, seeking to transform lives, enhance personal engagement in local communities, and augment access to resources to elevate the quality of life within the community. According to Agarwal (2019), several people assess organizational performance based on community health and resident empowerment, alongside conventional, quantitative metrics. Women have established a framework of activities aimed at fostering an atmosphere conducive to community transformation. While not every women-led group provides a broad array of services, they are all distinguished by their knowledge of the interconnectedness of personal, social, and economic challenges impacting community inhabitants.



Needs for Rebuilding Cooperative Societies in Nigeria

Effective management necessitates continual examination of the environment. This is conducted to identify changes in the operating environment, hence determining suitable operational strategies for reaching targeted objectives (Al Najjar & Qandeel, 2025; Wu et al., 2019). Kang et al (2020) stated that reconstruction can be executed by an evaluation of the existing operating environment to ascertain the most suitable solutions for the future. At the start of contemporary cooperatives within the community, the government aimed to cultivate and support these entities to achieve self-reliance, self-development, and independence as it gradually divested ownership of the organizations. Despite decades of contemporary cooperation in Nigeria, the government continues to emphasize the fourth control of cooperative societies (Adekunle et al., 2021). The upshot is a continual reliance on government, leading to the deterioration of the self-help and self-responsibility ethos of cooperatives. The purported workplace cooperatives society, intended to provide intellectual insight on this topic, has been ineffective, mostly because to the legal structure. Reconstruction is essential to maintain the beneficial impact of cooperative societies on economic growth, particularly at the local government level (Osumba & Oboka, 2022). This will also provide the cooperative society with a strategic realignment to address the needs of its members at the local level and fulfill other economic development demands.

Theoretical Framework

The Empowerment Theory by Marc Zimmerman in 1995

The Empowerment Theory, introduced by Marc Zimmerman in 1995, offers a valuable framework for comprehending how people and communities gain more control over their lives, resources, and decisions. The theory fundamentally underscores empowerment as a process rather than a result, emphasizing how individuals acquire the skills, confidence, and opportunity essential for influencing their circumstances (Joseph, 2020). Zimmerman elucidates that empowerment transpires at psychological, organizational, and community tiers, including the enhancement of individuals' abilities to make educated decisions, access resources, and engage meaningfully in economic and social endeavors. This theoretical approach emphasizes that empowerment increases when individuals are afforded supporting settings, information, and chances for active participation.



The Empowerment Theory is pertinent to the current study as cooperative societies serve as mechanisms that augment the economic and financial capacities of rural women. Through collaborative engagement, women attain enhanced access to credit, financial literacy, savings instruments, and income-generating prospects (Eseza et al., 2025). These experiences enhance their confidence and autonomy in economic decision-making, illustrating the psychological aspect of empowerment. The theory elucidates why research participants indicated more economic independence and control over financial resources compared to non-participants. Through participation in collaborative endeavors, women cultivate the skills and autonomy required to oversee funds, navigate economic obstacles, and enhance their livelihoods. Consequently, the Empowerment Theory provides a robust conceptual framework for analyzing how collaborative engagement fosters sustained economic growth and improves the economic empowerment of rural women in Ijebu North LGA.

Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey approach. This design was selected because it guarantees the collection of factual information that accurately depicts the existent occurrences (Doyle et al., 2020). The research was conducted in the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State. Ijebu North is a Local Government Area situated in Ogun State, Nigeria. The headquarters are located in Ijebu Igbo at coordinates 6°57'N 4°00'E. The local government was founded in 1979 and is headquartered at Ijebu Igbo. It is bordered to the north by Oluyole Local Government of Oyo State, to the west by Ijebu East Local Government, to the south by Ijebu North East, Odogbolu, and Ijebu Ode Local Governments, and to the east by Ikenne Local Government. It accommodates Olabisi Onabanjo University (Annex campus). This region is inhabited by the Ijebus, residing in the principal cities of Ago-Iwoye, Oru, Awa, Ilaporu, among others. The town features various marketplaces, with Station Market being the most prominent. Numerous local residents participate in the timber industry, resulting in a proliferation of sawmills inside the town.

The study's target demographic was all rural women involved and those that were not involved in cooperative societies within the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State. The random selection method was utilized to pick 40% of the research population from ten cooperative societies and another 10% from those that were not in any cooperative society in the Ijebu North



Local Government Area of Ogun State. One hundred (200) rural women who engaged and those that did not engage in a cooperative society were recruited for the study. The researchers designed the instrument utilized for data collection. The "Rural Women Participation in Cooperative Society on Sustainable Economic Growth Questionnaire (RWPCSSEG)" questionnaire was used for the study and it comprises two primary parts. Section A comprises information pertaining to the personal background of the respondents. Section B has items designed to assess the participation of rural women in cooperative societies concerning sustainable economic growth. The part B contains two clusters with 10 positively skewed items in each of the clusters. The instruments were developed using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). The instrument went through face validation and the face validation was done by three experts in the field of education. The experts validated the instrument based on the structure, appropriateness, and suitability level of the instrument. A trial testing of the instrument was carried out in Odogbolu Local Government Area which was not in any way part of the main study. The test-retest method assessed the instrument's reliability, yielding an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.78 via the Cronbach Alpha methodology. This figure was deemed suitable for the investigation. The questionnaires were distributed to the rural women involved and those not involved in the cooperative society by all the authors of the study. All the 200 questionnaires were properly returned and the 200 were used for the data analysis which was done through the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. The study's data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test for the hypotheses. A mean score above 2.50 was considered agreed while those below 2.50 were considered disagreed. As for the hypotheses, any value below 0.05 was regarded as significant while any above was regarded as not significant.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the degree to which rural women's involvement in cooperative societies fosters their sustainable economic development in the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State?



Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Degree to which Rural Women's Involvement in Cooperative Societies Fosters their Sustainable Economic Development

N = 200 Participants, 100 & Non-Participants, 100

Items:	Women	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
Affiliation with cooperative groups has enhanced participant total income.	Participants	3.28	.68	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.37	.72	Agreed
Engagement in collaborative endeavours has enhanced participant access to financial resources.	Participants	3.41	.53	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.33	.70	Agreed
Cooperative societies assist members in cultivating improved savings practices.	Participants	3.27	.71	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.34	.70	Agreed
Collaborative training programs have enhanced participant business acumen.	Participants	3.09	.77	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.34	.63	Agreed
Engagement in cooperatives has augmented participant access to credit resources.	Participants	3.23	.60	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.18	.66	Agreed
Membership in a cooperative has enhanced participant financial planning capabilities.	Participants	2.90	.66	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.09	.64	Agreed
Cooperative societies offer participant the avenues for sustainable economic investment.	Participants	3.15	.64	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.34	.62	Agreed
Collaborative engagement has enhanced participant capacity to manage financial crises.	Participants	3.41	.60	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.40	.55	Agreed
Cooperatives provide members with information regarding sustainable economic	Participants	3.15	.73	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.31	.69	Agreed



practices.

Cooperatives help members diversify their sources of income.	Participants	3.21	.73	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.34	.70	Agreed
Cluster Mean	Participants	3.21	.67	Agreed
	Non-Participant	3.30	.67	Agreed

Key: N = Number of respondents; \bar{x} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Df = Degree of Freedom

Table 1 indicates that both participants and non-participants of cooperative societies recognise, to a significant extent, that engagement in cooperatives favourably influences the sustainable economic development of rural women in Ijebu North Local Government Area. All mean scores across the 10 questions above the decision threshold of 2.50, signifying overall consensus among respondents. Participants exhibited a cluster mean of 3.21, but non-participants had a somewhat elevated cluster mean of 3.30, indicating that even women outside the cooperative membership recognise the advantages of cooperatives for economic development.

Significant areas of influence encompass augmented access to financial resources, a fortified savings culture, heightened business acumen via cooperative training, and expanded access to credit facilities. Both parties concur that cooperatives facilitate revenue diversification and enhance financial resilience in times of crisis. While participants typically indicate direct advantages, non-participants consistently achieved marginally superior scores in certain areas, including business training, income diversification, and investment opportunities, potentially indicating their external perception of cooperatives as efficacious vehicles for empowerment.



Research Question 2: What are the disparities in economic empowerment between rural women engaged in cooperative societies and those who are not in the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Disparities in Economic Empowerment between Rural Women Engaged in Cooperative Societies and Those Who Are Not

S/N	Items	Women	\bar{x}	Remark
11	I possess authority over my personal money.	Participants	3.51	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.14	Disagreed
12	I am capable of making financial judgments independently.	Participants	3.20	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.32	Disagreed
13	I can autonomously fulfil home economic requirements.	Participants	3.51	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.24	Disagreed
14	I possess access to financial resources as required.	Participants	3.50	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.31	Disagreed
15	I possess greater economic confidence relative to other women in my town.	Participants	3.14	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.38	Disagreed
16	I possess chances to acquire income-generating knowledge.	Participants	3.10	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.38	Disagreed
17	I am capable of saving money consistently.	Participants	3.46	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.29	Disagreed
18	I possess financial information that facilitates empowerment.	Participants	3.56	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.26	Disagreed
19	I possess the ability to negotiate financial concerns proficiently.	Participants	3.40	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.26	Disagreed
20	I experience greater financial security than in prior years.	Participants	3.34	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.19	Disagreed
Cluster Mean		Participants	3.37	Agreed
		Non-Participant	1.31	Disagreed

N = 200 Participants, 100 & Non-Participants, 100 Key: N = Number of respondents; \bar{x} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Df = Degree of Freedom

Table 2 illustrates significant differences in economic empowerment between rural women engaged in cooperative societies and those who are not in Ijebu North Local Government Area. Participants consistently reported elevated mean scores across all 10 measures, signifying enhanced economic empowerment. Their mean values span from 3.10 to 3.56, with a cluster mean of 3.37, indicating consensus on all items. These ratings indicate that cooperative participation improves women's financial independence, decision-making abilities, savings habits, access to financial information, and overall economic confidence.

Conversely, non-participants had significantly lower mean scores, ranging from 1.14 to 1.38, with a cluster mean of 1.31, signifying disagreement on all items. This indicates that women not affiliated with cooperative organisations possess constrained financial power, diminished access to financial resources, inadequate savings capacity, and a lack of trust in financial management. Their reduced standard deviations indicate a consistent experience of economic hardship.

The significant disparity between the two groups indicates that cooperative societies are essential in empowering rural women by advancing financial literacy, increasing access to economic opportunities, and bolstering financial stability. The results confirm that cooperatives offer supporting frameworks that enhance revenue production, facilitate individual financial decisions, and bolster resilience against economic disruptions. The table indicates that cooperative involvement markedly improves economic empowerment relative to non-participation.

Ho: There is no significant difference in mean sustainable economic growth scores between rural women who participate in cooperative societies and those who do not in Ijebu North LGA.

Table 3: T-test Analysis of the Significant Difference in Mean Sustainable Economic Growth Scores between Rural Women Who Participate in Cooperative Societies and Those Who Do Not

Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig	Decision
Participants	100	3.21	0.67	198	-2.674	.008	S
Non-Participants	100	3.30	0.67				

S = Significant

The t-test result in Table 3 examines the existence of a significant difference in sustainable economic growth between rural women engaged in cooperative societies and those who are not in Ijebu North LGA. The participants achieved a mean score of 3.21, whilst non-participants attained a somewhat higher mean of 3.30, both exhibiting identical standard deviations of 0.67.

The computed t-value of -2.674, with 198 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.008,



signifies a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected due to the p-value being less than 0.05.

This indicates that collaborative involvement significantly influences sustainable economic growth among rural women. The notable disparity indicates that participation in cooperatives offers unique economic benefits, including enhanced access to financial resources, savings prospects, and business assistance, in contrast to non-participation.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in mean economic empowerment scores between rural women who participate in cooperative societies and those who do not in Ijebu North LGA.

Table 4: T-test Analysis of the Significant Difference in Mean Economic Empowerment Scores between Rural Women Who Participate in Cooperative Societies and Those Who Do Not

Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig	Decision
Participant	100	3.37	0.63	198	57.687	.000	S
Non-Participant	100	1.31	0.57				

S= Significant

Table 4 analyses the existence of a considerable disparity in the economic empowerment of rural women engaged in cooperative societies and those who are not in Ijebu North LGA. The results indicate a significant gap between the two groups. Participants achieved a mean economic empowerment score of 3.37, but non-participants registered a significantly lower mean of 1.31. This signifies that women participating in cooperatives get much greater levels of empowerment. The standard deviations (.63 and .57) indicate significant variability but do not diminish the substantial mean difference. The t-value of 57.687 and a significance level of $p = .000$ indicate that the difference is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is dismissed.



The findings indicate that cooperative societies significantly contribute to women's economic empowerment by strengthening financial decision-making, resource accessibility, savings capacity, and overall financial confidence. This affirms the transforming effect of cooperatives on the economic prosperity of rural women.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal significant support for the role of cooperative societies in enhancing the sustainable economic development of rural women in Ijebu North LGA. First, Table 1 clearly shows that both participants and non-participants agreed that cooperatives improve income, access to financial resources, savings behaviour, business skills, and financial resilience. These findings strongly align with Kehinde and Kehinde (2020), who found that AIPW indicated that cooperative membership and access to credit are anticipated to enhance the food security of rural families by around 1,888 and 1,899 kilocalories per person per day, respectively. Similarly, Eseza (2025) reported that cooperative membership significantly enhances rural women's entrepreneurial skills and financial planning abilities. Furthermore, the t-test analysis (Table 3) confirmed a significant difference in sustainable economic growth between participants and non-participants ($p = .008$), reinforcing that cooperative involvement contributes uniquely to women's economic advancement. This statistically substantiates earlier descriptive findings that cooperative societies help diversify income and strengthen women's economic security. Overall, the findings reaffirm cooperatives as key drivers of women's economic development while highlighting the need for deeper engagement to align perception with reality.

The study's findings reveal a significant discrepancy in economic empowerment between rural women engaged in cooperative societies and those who are not in Ijebu North LGA. Table 2 indicates that participants consistently reported elevated mean scores (3.10 - 3.56), with a cluster mean of 3.37, signifying robust consensus that cooperatives improve financial independence, decision-making capacity, savings behaviour, access to financial information, and overall economic confidence. The t-test result in Table 4 supports a statistically significant difference ($t = 57.687$; $p = .000$), indicating that cooperative members feel much more economic empowerment than non-members. Kyeyune and Ntayi (2025) robustly corroborates these findings, demonstrating that cooperative societies markedly boost women's financial literacy and access to credit facilities, hence fostering greater economic stability. Likewise, Chaudhary (2019) indicated that rural



women engaged in cooperative activities exhibit enhanced savings behaviour, improved financial negotiating skills, and more involvement in income-generating enterprises, all of which align with the findings of our study. Conversely, non-participants in this study had significantly lower mean scores (1.14–1.38), indicating constrained financial capacity, less resource availability, and diminished economic agency. The data confirm that cooperatives significantly enhance women's economic empowerment in rural communities.

Conclusion

This study investigated the function of cooperative societies in fostering sustainable economic development and enhancing economic empowerment among rural women in the Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State. The results consistently indicate that collaborative involvement markedly improves women's economic outcomes. Table 1 indicates that both members and non-participants recognise that cooperatives enhance income levels, access to financial resources, savings practices, business acumen, and overall financial resilience. While non-participants exhibited marginally elevated perception-based mean scores, participants said that they experienced the tangible advantages of cooperative participation.

The examination of gaps in economic empowerment indicated significant variations between the two groups. Cooperative members exhibited substantial financial independence, decision-making capacity, dedication to savings, and access to financial knowledge, as evidenced by their elevated mean scores and corroborated by significant t-test outcomes. Conversely, non-participants exhibited persistently poor empowerment metrics, underscoring the crucial function of cooperatives in enhancing economic agency.

The hypothesis tests offer further statistical validation. The rejection of both H_{01} and H_{02} signifies substantial disparities between participants and non-participants in sustainable economic growth and economic empowerment. The study suggests that cooperative societies are effective tools for enhancing the economic stability of rural women, bolstering financial capabilities, and fostering sustainable economic growth in the region examined.

Recommendations

Consequently, the below recommendations were proposed:

1. Given that cooperative participation markedly promotes sustainable economic growth and empowerment, focused community awareness efforts have to be implemented to motivate



increased involvement of rural women in cooperative organizations. Local leaders and cooperative executives should implement awareness programs emphasizing the economic advantages of participation.

2. Due to the substantial impact of cooperatives on women's access to financial resources, they should collaborate with microfinance institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governmental bodies to enhance the accessibility of cheap loan options. This will assist women in growing their enterprises and enhancing household well-being.
3. Given that participants indicated enhanced business acumen and financial literacy, cooperatives ought to offer more systematic training in entrepreneurship, financial management, record-keeping, and revenue diversification.
4. Findings indicate significant enhancements in savings behaviors among individuals. Cooperatives ought to formalize savings groups, implement digital savings platforms, and offer counsel on lucrative investment prospects to boost long-term financial stability.
5. Government entities, including the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, ought to furnish subsidies, grants, and legal assistance to rural cooperatives. Policies must prioritize the involvement of rural women in socioeconomic programs to mitigate inequality.

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Flexible Work Arrangements and Good Working Conditions as Predictors of Female Academic Staff Productivity in Public Universities in Ondo State, Nigeria.

ADESANYA Foluso Dolamu & AKOREDE Serifat Odumade

Department of Educational Management, Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

folutender@gmail.com, odumadeas@tasued.edu.ng

Abstract

Female academic staff productivity in Nigerian public universities is crucial for the overall success of higher institutions but is hindered by work-life balance and workplace conditions. This study examines the individual and joint effects of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and good working conditions on female academic staff productivity in Ondo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used, purposively sampling 274 female academics from Adeyemi Federal University of Education and the University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, from a population of 470. Data were collected using the Flexible Work Arrangements and Good Working Conditions Questionnaire-FWAGWCQ ($\alpha = 0.967$) and Female Academic Staff Productivity Questionnaire-FASP ($\alpha = 0.765$), with 239 responses (87.2% response rate). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyzed data at a .05 significance level. Productivity was average ($\bar{x} = 2.04$, $SD = 0.70$), with teaching ($\bar{x} = 1.54$) and administrative duties ($\bar{x} = 1.82$) lowest. Research productivity ($\bar{x} = 2.38$) shows moderate engagement. Community service ($\bar{x} = 2.40$) has a slightly higher mean, indicating active engagement. Good working conditions showed a moderate, significant correlation ($r = .30$, $p < .05$) and predicted productivity ($\beta = .29$, $p < .05$), while FWAs had no significant impact ($r = .045$, $p > .05$). The joint model was significant ($R^2 = .08$). Findings confirm working conditions drive productivity, with FWAs limited by infrastructural barriers. Based on the findings, recommendations include upgrading facilities (e.g., reliable internet, ergonomic offices), implementing targeted training for teaching and administrative skills, and developing technology-supported *FWA policies*.

Keywords: Flexible work arrangements, good working conditions, female academic staff, productivity, public universities, Ondo State.



Introduction

The productivity of female academic staff in Nigerian public universities is pivotal to advancing educational quality and institutional development, yet it is shaped by complex workplace and societal factors. Female academic staff in Nigerian public universities are critical to advancing educational quality and institutional growth, yet their productivity—spanning teaching, research, administrative duties, and community service—is hindered by systemic and societal challenges (Adegboyega, 2023). Gendered expectations, such as disproportionate domestic responsibilities, aggravate work-family conflict, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Ondo State (Akanji, 2020). Flexible work arrangements (FWAs), such as telecommuting and flexible scheduling, and good working conditions, including reliable infrastructure and supportive management, are increasingly recognized as strategies to enhance academic performance globally (Umukoro et al., 2020). In Nigeria, however, these interventions face unique challenges, including inadequate technological infrastructure, cultural norms prioritizing physical presence, and gender-based disparities in workload distribution (Ogunode & Ade, 2023).

Female academics, who often balance teaching, research, administrative duties, and community service with significant domestic responsibilities, are particularly affected by these constraints. The conceptual review synthesizes global and Nigerian research across four key areas: the role of FWAs in enhancing academic output, the impact of good working conditions on performance, the joint effect of the two variables on productivity and the influence of gender dynamics on productivity.

Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs), encompassing telecommuting, flexible scheduling, and compressed workweeks, purposively enhance employee productivity by allowing greater control over work timing and location (Umukoro et al., 2020). Globally, FWAs have been associated with improved job satisfaction, reduced stress, and higher performance, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors like academia (Allen et al., 2018). Leslie et al. (2019) found that flexible scheduling increased academic productivity by 15% among female faculty in the UK, attributing this to reduced work-family conflict. Similarly, a study in Australia showed that telecommuting enhanced research output by allowing academics to work during peak



productivity hours (Dockery & Bawa, 2018). These benefits stem from FWAs' ability to align work with personal responsibilities, particularly for women navigating caregiving roles (Akanji, 2020). However, in Nigeria, FWA adoption faces significant barriers, including unreliable internet, frequent power outages, and institutional resistance to non-traditional work arrangements (Jeremiah, 2021). Umukoro et al. (2020) noted that while FWAs improved engagement in Nigeria's corporate sector, their application in public universities is limited by rigid administrative policies and lack of technological infrastructure (Ogbogu, 2019). For instance, telecommuting is often infeasible due to inadequate digital platforms for remote teaching or research collaboration (Adegboyega, 2023).

Cultural norms emphasizing physical presence in workplaces further complicate FWA implementation, particularly in academia, where face-to-face teaching is prioritized (Eze & Ojo, 2022). Female academics, who disproportionately manage domestic responsibilities, may face exacerbated work-family conflicts without effective FWAs, leading to reduced productivity (Akanji, 2020). Moreover, the lack of institutional policies supporting flexible hours or compressed workweeks limits female academics' ability to balance teaching, research, administrative duties, and community service (Ogbogu, 2019). These contextual challenges highlight the need for this empirical study to assess FWAs' efficacy in Nigerian public universities, particularly for female academics navigating high job demands and gendered expectations.

Good Working Conditions

Good working conditions, defined as adequate physical infrastructure, supportive management, and timely compensation, are fundamental to employee productivity and well-being. In Nigerian public universities, dilapidated infrastructure—such as outdated laboratories, overcrowded lecture halls, and unreliable electricity—severely hampers academic output (Okebukola, 2018, Okolocha & Okeke, 2021). Adegboyega (2023) reported that 65% of Nigerian academics identified poor infrastructure as a primary barrier to research productivity, with female academics particularly affected due to limited access to safe and ergonomic workspaces. Supportive management, characterized by fair promotion policies, professional development opportunities, and responsive leadership, enhances motivation and engagement (Choi et al.,



2018). For instance, a study in South Africa found that supportive supervision increased academic job satisfaction by 20%, indirectly boosting productivity (Ngobeni & Makhubele, 2020).

In Nigeria, however, bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of management support often demotivate academics, particularly women facing gender-based career barriers (Ogbogu, 2019). Timely salary payments are critical, especially for female academics who may be primary caregivers, as financial stress from delayed salaries worsen work-family conflict (Akanji, 2020). Okebukola (2018) noted that salary delays of up to six months are common in Nigerian universities, reducing academic morale and output. Globally, supportive work environments reduce burnout and enhance performance, as confirmed by Bakker and Demerouti (2018), who found that resource-rich workplaces increased employee engagement by 25%. In Nigeria, systemic challenges, including irregular funding and poor maintenance of facilities, undermine working conditions, necessitating urgent interventions (Eze & Ojo, 2022). Female academics, who often juggle teaching, research, administrative duties, and domestic roles, are disproportionately impacted by these deficiencies, leading to lower productivity compared to male counterparts (Adegboyega, 2023). Addressing these issues requires investments in modern facilities alongside policies, ensuring timely compensation and supportive leadership.

Joint Relationship of Flexible Work Arrangements and Good Working Conditions on Productivity

The joint effect of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and good working conditions on employee productivity is a critical area of inquiry. The interplay of FWAs and good working conditions can amplify productivity by addressing work-family conflict and enabling task performance as these resources may interact to enhance performance. (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). FWAs, such as telecommuting and flexible scheduling, provide autonomy to manage work-life balance, while good working conditions, including reliable infrastructure and supportive management, create an enabling environment for task performance (Umukoro et al., 2020). Globally, studies suggest that combining these resources can amplify productivity by mitigating job demands like work-family conflict, particularly for female employees (Shockley & Allen, 2018). For instance, a study in the UK found that academics with access to both flexible



schedules and well-equipped workspaces reported 20% higher research output, as FWAs allowed time management while quality infrastructure supported efficient task completion (Knights & Richards, 2020). The JD-R model posits that such resource interactions foster a motivational process, enhancing engagement and reducing burnout (Demerouti et al., 2021). In Nigeria, however, the joint effect is underexplored due to systemic barriers. Inadequate technological infrastructure, such as unreliable internet, limits FWA effectiveness, as telecommuting requires robust digital platforms (Adegboyega, 2023). Similarly, poor working conditions, like outdated facilities or delayed salaries, may undermine the potential benefits of FWAs (Okebukola, 2018).

A study in South Africa found that combining FWAs with supportive management increased employee engagement by 15%, but only when infrastructure supported remote work (Van der Walt & Le Roux, 2022). In Nigerian universities, cultural norms prioritizing physical presence and bureaucratic resistance often prevent synergistic effects between FWAs and working conditions (Ogunode & Ade, 2023). Female academics, facing high job demands from teaching, research, administrative duties, and domestic roles, may benefit most from combined resources, yet contextual constraints limit implementation (Akanji, 2020). For example, Obeng and Okrah (2021) noted that Ghanaian academics with access to both flexible hours and modern facilities reported higher teaching effectiveness, but similar studies in Nigeria are scarce. Addressing these gaps requires policies that integrate FWAs with infrastructure improvements, such as reliable internet and ergonomic workspaces, to maximize productivity (Salami & Oyediran, 2021). This subsection emphasizes the need for this empirical research in Ondo State to validate the joint impact of these resources on female academic productivity, considering Nigeria's unique challenges.

Gender and Productivity in Academia

Female academics face unique challenges that hinder productivity, including work-family conflict, gender-based discrimination, and limited access to career advancement opportunities. In Nigeria, societal expectations place disproportionate domestic responsibilities on women, reducing time for research, teaching, administrative duties, and professional development (Ogbogu, 2019). Akanji (2020) found that female academics reported 30% higher work-family conflict than male counterparts, resulting in lower research output, with women publishing an



average of 0.5 fewer articles per year. Globally, gender disparities in academia are well-documented; Leslie et al. (2019) noted that women are underrepresented in senior academic roles, occupying only 25% of professorial positions in developed countries due to structural barriers. In Nigeria, these disparities are worsened by limited institutional support, such as lack of childcare facilities, maternity leave policies, or flexible work options (Adegboyega, 2023). Ogbogu (2019) reported that only 10% of Nigerian universities offer childcare services, forcing female academics to rely on informal support systems, which disrupts their work schedules. Gender-based discrimination, including biased promotion criteria and unequal access to research funding, further limits women's productivity (Eze & Ojo, 2022).

For instance, a study in West Africa found that women received 40% less research funding than men, constraining their ability to conduct high-impact studies (Ngobeni & Makhubele, 2020). The JD-R model suggests that resources like FWAs and good working conditions can mitigate these gendered demands, yet their implementation in Nigeria remains limited (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Jeremiah (2021) emphasized that without targeted interventions, female academics in Nigeria will continue to face productivity gaps. Strategies such as mentorship programs, gender-sensitive policies, and infrastructure improvements could address these barriers, but their effectiveness requires empirical validation (Akanji, 2020). This study contributes to this narrative by examining how FWAs and working conditions influence female academic productivity in Ondo State, offering discoveries into context-specific solutions for Nigeria's higher education sector. The study examines these relationships at Adeyemi Federal University of Education and the University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, to inform evidence-based policies.

Beyond its institutional relevance, this study aligns with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (United Nations, n.d). SDG 4 emphasizes the need for inclusive and equitable quality education, which depends heavily on the productivity and well-being of academic staff (United Nations, n.d). Female academics play a central role in teaching, research, and community engagement, and constraints that limit their productivity directly affect educational quality and student outcomes (Emeka et al., 2025). SDG 5 seeks to promote gender



equality and empower women, yet persistent workplace challenges such as poor working conditions, limited institutional support, and inadequate work-life balance mechanisms continue to disadvantage female academics in Nigerian public universities (Kanu et al., 2025). Addressing these challenges through improved working conditions and context-appropriate flexible work arrangements contributes to reducing structural gender inequalities in academic careers. In addition, SDG 8 highlights the importance of decent work environments that promote productivity and well-being (United Nations, n.d). By examining how workplace conditions and flexibility influence female academic staff productivity, this study provides evidence to support policies that foster fair, supportive, and productive work environments in higher education. As such, the study contributes to national and global efforts to strengthen university systems while enhancing gender equity and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Research Question

1. What is the level of productivity among female academic staff in public universities in Ondo State, in terms of teaching, research, administrative duties, and community service?

Research Hypotheses

1. H₀1: There is no significant relationship between flexible work arrangements and female academic staff productivity in public universities in Ondo State.
2. H₀2: There is no significant relationship between good working conditions and female academic staff productivity in public universities in Ondo State.
3. H₀3: There is no significant joint relationship of flexible work arrangements and good working conditions on female academic staff productivity in public universities in Ondo State.

Theoretical Framework

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model provides a robust framework for examining the relationship between flexible work arrangements, good working conditions, and female academic staff productivity in Nigerian public universities (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). The model posits that employee performance is shaped by two key factors: job demands and job resources. Job demands include physical, psychological, or organizational aspects requiring sustained effort, such as heavy workloads, time pressure, or work-family conflict, which can lead to stress or



burnout if excessive (Schaufeli, 2018). Job resources, in contrast, are elements that support goal achievement, mitigate demands, or foster growth, such as autonomy, supportive management, and adequate infrastructure (Demerouti et al., 2021). The JD-R model outlines two processes: a health-impairment process, where high demands reduce performance, and a motivational process, where resources enhance engagement and productivity. Resources can also buffer the negative effects of demands, promoting sustained performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

In relation to this study's title, the JD-R model is highly applicable to female academic staff in Ondo State's public universities. Female academics face significant job demands, including intensive teaching schedules, administrative responsibilities, and gendered domestic roles that intensify work-family conflict (Akanji, 2020). These demands challenge productivity across teaching, research, administrative duties, and community service. Job resources, such as FWAs (e.g., telecommuting, flexible schedules) and good working conditions (e.g., reliable internet, ergonomic workspaces, and timely salaries), are expected to alleviate these demands by providing flexibility and support, thereby enhancing productivity (Adegboyega, 2023). The JD-R model guides this examination by framing FWAs and working conditions as critical resources to counterbalance demands, informing the study's exploration of their impact on female academic productivity in Nigeria's peculiar higher education system.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was employed to quantify relationships between FWAs, working conditions, and productivity. The population comprised 470 female academic staff in Ondo State public universities. A purposive sample of 274 (total enumeration) was selected from Adeyemi Federal University of Education ($n = 181$) and the University of Medical Sciences, Ondo ($n = 93$), covering all female academics in these institutions. Two questionnaires were used:

1. **Flexible Work Arrangements and Good Working Conditions Questionnaire (FWAGWCQ):** A 20-item scale with two sections:
 - **Flexible Work Arrangements** (10 items): Measures availability and use of FWAs (e.g., telecommuting, flexible hours, compressed workweeks).



- **Good Working Conditions** (10 items): Assesses infrastructure, management support, and salary timeliness.

Responses used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Cronbach's alpha = .967. Adapted from Umukoro et al. (2020) and Okolocha and Okeke (2021).

2. **Female Academic Staff Productivity Questionnaire (FASPQ)**: A 12-item scale assessing teaching, research, administrative duties, and community service (3 items each). Responses used a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha = 0.765. Adapted from Okolocha and Okeke (2021). The rating scale consisted of: VH-Very High, H-High, AV-Average, L-Low and VL-Very Low. Questionnaires were administered in-person by trained assistants over four weeks, yielding 239 completed responses (87.2% response rate).

Data Analysis

- **Research Question:** Descriptive statistics (mean, SD, percentages) analyzed productivity levels.
- **Hypotheses:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) tested H₀₁ and H₀₂; multiple regression with an interaction term tested H₀₃ for the joint effect at a .05 significance level, using SPSS version 25.

Results

Research Question: What is the level of productivity among female academic staff in public universities in Ondo State?

Productivity was average (M = 2.04, SD = 0.70, 5-point scale), based on the established decision rule. Breakdown:

- Teaching: M = 1.54, SD = 0.60; 10% reported high output (4–5 courses/semester), with low performance in delivering lectures and submitting exam results on time.
- Research: M = 2.38, SD = 0.75; 15% had high output (2+ publications/year). Sub-details: obtaining research funding (M = 2.83), publishing in peer-reviewed journals (M = 2.31), writing scholarly texts (M = 2.03), indicating moderate engagement but lower traditional publication output.
- Administrative Duties: M = 1.82, SD = 0.65; 12% had high output, with low engagement in serving on university committees.



- Community Service: $M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.65$; 20% engaged significantly in professional associations and public service.
- Overall Productivity: $M = 2.04$, $SD = 0.70$; 12% high output.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Productivity

Dimension	Mean	SD	% High Output
Teaching	1.54	0.60	10%
Research	2.38	0.75	15%
Administrative Duties	1.82	0.65	12%
Community Service	2.40	0.65	20%
Overall Productivity	2.04	0.70	12%

Decision Rule: \bar{X} less than 1.0= very Low, 1.0-1.74= Low, 1.75-2.49=Average; 2.5 – 3.24 = High; 3.25 – 4.0 = Very High
Source: Researcher’s Field Survey (2024)

Table 1 presents the productivity levels of female academic staff in public universities in Ondo State across four categories: research, teaching, administration, and community service. The overall mean productivity score is 2.04, indicating that the productivity level of female academic staff is generally rated as average based on the established decision rule. Research productivity shows moderate engagement, with the highest score being in obtaining research funding ($\bar{x} = 2.83$), while writing scholarly texts and publishing in peer-reviewed journals is comparatively lower ($\bar{x} = 2.03$ and 2.31, respectively). This suggests that while female academic staff perform reasonably well in securing research funding, their output in traditional academic publications is relatively lower. In terms of teaching and administrative tasks, the results reveal lower productivity scores, with teaching having the lowest mean (1.54), particularly in areas like delivering lectures and submitting exam results on time. Administrative duties, such as serving on university committees, are also rated low ($\bar{x} = 1.82$), indicating that female academics may be

less engaged in non-research tasks. Community service has a slightly higher mean (2.40), highlighting more active participation in professional associations and public service. These results imply a need for strategies to improve female academic staff productivity, particularly in teaching and administrative responsibilities, to balance their overall contributions to their institutions.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between flexible work arrangements and female academic staff productivity in public universities in Ondo State.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis between flexible work arrangement and female academic staff level of productivity in public universities Ondo State.

		Productivity Flexible work Arrangement	
Productivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.489
	N	239	239
Flexible Work Arrangement	Pearson Correlation	.045	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.489	
	N	239	239

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2024)

Table 2 presents the relationship between flexible work arrangement and female academic staff level of productivity in public universities, Ondo state. From the above table, the result revealed non-significant, weak positive relationship between flexible work arrangement and female academic staff level of productivity ($r = .045$, $n = 239$, $p > .05$). This implies that flexible work arrangement does not significantly increase female academic staff level of productivity. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between flexible work arrangement of female academic staff and their level productivity in public universities Ondo State is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between good working conditions and female academic staff productivity in public universities in Ondo State.



Table 3: Correlation Analysis between good working conditions and female academic staff level of productivity in public universities Ondo State

	Productivity	Good Working Conditions	
Productivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.300**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	239	239
Good Working Conditions	Pearson Correlation	.300**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	239	239

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey (2024)

Table 3 presents the relationship between good working conditions and female academic staff level of productivity in public universities, Ondo state. The result revealed a significant, moderate positive relationship between flexible work arrangement and female academic staff level of productivity ($r = .300$, $n = 239$, $p < .05$). This implies that working condition gets improved, the higher the level of productivity of female academic staff. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between good working conditions of female academic staff and their level productivity is rejected and reinstated that there is a significant relationship between work-life balance and female academic staff level of productivity in public universities Ondo State.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis Results

Variable	r	P
Flexible Work Arrangements	.045	.470
Good Working Conditions	.30	.002

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant joint relationship of flexible work arrangements and good working conditions on female academic staff productivity in public universities in Ondo State.

Multiple regression with an interaction term assessed the joint effect of FWAs and working conditions on productivity. The model was significant ($F(3, 235) = 6.85, p < .001, R^2 = .08$), explaining 8% of variance. Working conditions were a significant predictor ($\beta = .29, p = .003$), but FWAs ($\beta = .04, p = .580$) and the interaction term ($\beta = .02, p = .720$) were not. The joint model's significance indicates that working conditions primarily drive productivity.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Flexible Work Arrangements	.04	0.05	0.56	.580
Good Working Conditions	.29	0.06	3.01	.003
FWA × Working Conditions	.02	0.04	0.36	.720
Note: $R^2 = .08, F(3, 235) = 6.85, p < .001$				

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2024)

Interpretation

The multiple regression analysis (Table 3) examines how flexible work arrangements (FWAs), good working conditions, and their interaction predict female academic staff productivity in Ondo State's public universities. The model is statistically significant ($F(3, 235) = 6.85, p < .001$), indicating that the predictors collectively influence productivity, though they explain only 8% of the variance ($R^2 = .08$), suggesting other factors also play a role. Good working conditions have a significant positive effect ($\beta = .29, p = .003$), meaning that better infrastructure, timely salaries, and supportive management are associated with higher productivity among female academics. In contrast, FWAs show no significant effect ($\beta = .04, p = .580$), implying that telecommuting or flexible schedules do not meaningfully contribute to productivity in this context. The interaction



term ($\beta = .02$, $p = .720$) is also non-significant, indicating that the combined effect of FWAs and working conditions does not enhance productivity beyond their individual contributions. These results suggest that, within the JD-R model, good working conditions act as a key resource for female academics, while FWAs may be limited by contextual barriers like inadequate technology or institutional policies.

Discussion

This study examined female academic staff productivity in public universities in Ondo State, focusing on productivity levels, the role of flexible work arrangements, the influence of good working conditions, and their joint effect. The discussion is presented in line with each research objective.

With respect to the first objective, the findings show that the overall productivity of female academic staff was average ($M = 2.04$), with particularly low scores in teaching ($M = 1.54$) and administrative duties ($M = 1.82$). This suggests that while female academics remain engaged in their roles, their performance is constrained in core institutional responsibilities. The low teaching and administrative productivity may be linked to heavy workloads, large class sizes, and limited institutional support, which are common features of Nigerian public universities (Okebukola, 2018). Administrative roles often add to existing teaching and research demands without corresponding incentives, which may discourage active participation. In contrast, community service recorded a relatively higher mean ($M = 2.40$), possibly reflecting societal and professional expectations placed on female academics to engage in outreach and service-related activities (Ogbogu, 2019). Research productivity was moderate ($M = 2.38$), with stronger performance in securing research funding but weaker outcomes in publishing scholarly outputs. This pattern aligns with prior studies that attribute low publication output to inadequate research infrastructure, limited access to journals, and time constraints arising from multiple role demands (Adegboyega, 2023).

The second objective examined the relationship between flexible work arrangements and female academic staff productivity. The findings revealed no significant relationship between flexible work arrangements and productivity ($r = .045$, $p > .05$). This result suggests that flexible work arrangements, as currently practised in the studied institutions, do not meaningfully enhance



productivity. This finding is consistent with Jeremiah (2021), who observed that flexible work policies in Nigerian public institutions are often poorly implemented and largely informal. Inadequate technological infrastructure, unreliable internet services, and institutional emphasis on physical presence limit the practical benefits of flexibility for academic staff. For female academics, who often face high domestic and caregiving responsibilities, the absence of structured and supported flexible work policies means that flexibility does not translate into improved performance. This contrasts with evidence from developed contexts, where flexible work arrangements are supported by strong digital systems and clear institutional policies (Allen et al., 2018).

The third objective focused on the relationship between good working conditions and productivity. The results showed a significant and moderate positive relationship between good working conditions and female academic staff productivity ($r = .30$, $\beta = .29$, $p < .05$). This indicates that improvements in infrastructure, management support, and timely salary payments are associated with higher productivity. This finding supports Okolocha and Okeke (2021), who reported that adequate working conditions enhance motivation, reduce stress, and promote better academic output. For female academics, supportive working environments may reduce the strain of balancing professional and domestic roles, enabling greater focus on teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. The result also aligns with the Job Demands-Resources model, which emphasises that access to job resources can buffer the negative effects of high job demands and enhance employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Regarding the fourth objective, the joint effect of flexible work arrangements and good working conditions on productivity was statistically significant, although only good working conditions emerged as a meaningful predictor. The interaction effect between flexible work arrangements and working conditions was not significant, indicating that flexible work arrangements did not strengthen the impact of working conditions on productivity. This suggests that without adequate infrastructure and institutional support, flexible work arrangements cannot amplify productivity gains. Similar findings have been reported in contexts where flexible work policies exist in principle but lack operational support (Akanji, 2020). The dominance of working conditions in



the joint model underscores the importance of addressing foundational workplace challenges before expecting flexibility-based interventions to be effective.

It is important to note that age and marital status were not included as control or moderating variables in this study. While age and marital status are recognised in the literature as factors that may influence work-family conflict and productivity among female academics, the focus of this study was on organizational factors, specifically flexible work arrangements and working conditions. As such, the findings do not account for differences in productivity based on age or marital status

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the discussion that followed:

The level of productivity of female academic staff of public universities in Ondo state was average which implies that they are able to meet basic academic responsibilities, but structural and workplace challenges limit their ability to achieve higher productivity. Good working conditions significantly predict female academic staff productivity in Ondo State, while FWAs lack impact. The joint effect, driven by working conditions, shows the need for infrastructure improvements to balance contributions across teaching, research, administrative duties, and community service.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Public universities should invest in modern facilities (e.g., reliable internet, ergonomic offices), develop FWA policies addressing technological and administrative barriers and ensure timely salary payments to reduce financial stress.
2. The universities should prioritize creating a supportive and inclusive work environment that minimizes gender-based violence and harassment. This includes providing adequate resources, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that female academic staff receive the necessary support.
3. Universities should invest in continuous professional development for female academic staff by offering workshops, mentoring programs, and access to conferences. This will help enhance their skills and capabilities, ultimately leading to increased productivity.



4. Female academic staff should develop time management and boundary-setting skills. Female academic staff should set clear boundaries between work and personal life. They should also develop resilience and coping strategies, manage workload and priorities, navigate departmental politics, seek support for mental health and focus on achievements and successes
5. Female academics should leverage on mentorship and networking by joining academic networks and organisations, attending networking events and conferences, participating in online forums and discussion groups, developing a professional online presence and engaging in peer mentoring. These will further enhance their productivity.
6. Policy makers should develop and enforce policies supporting work-life balance, allocate resources for education and workforce development programs and conduct regular reviews of labour law and policies
7. Institutions should implement training to enhance teaching and administrative productivity.

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RETHINKING SKILL ACQUISITION AMONG WOMEN FOR SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL BALANCE IN NIGERIA: A PARADIGM SHIFT TOWARDS LITERACY EDUCATION

Okemakinde, Sunday O. Ph.D. and Adediran, Richard A.

Department of Adult and Continuing Education,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo.

E-mail addresses: sunmankind2020@yahoo.com okemekindesunday@gmail.com and
adediranyinka@yahoo.com
08034660474 and 07069402268

Abstract

Literacy education is widely recognized as a fundamental foundation for meaningful and sustainable development, providing individuals with the specialized knowledge and skills required for economic, social, and environmental advancement. To address persistent gender disparities in skill acquisition often favouring men it is essential that literacy programmes be intentionally designed to empower women with competencies that promote sustainable global balance. This paper examines literacy education programmes and their role in fostering sustainable global balance, with particular attention to women's literacy for environmental, social, and economic sustainability. It further explores how women's skill acquisition through literacy education contributes to broader development outcomes. The paper concludes that literacy-driven skill acquisition enhances women's holistic empowerment across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, thereby supporting sustainable global balance. It recommends, among other measures, that women be encouraged to acquire diverse and market-relevant skills through literacy education in order to strengthen problem-solving abilities, promote mutual respect, and improve employability.

Keywords: Women, Literacy Education, Skill Acquisition and Sustainable Global Balance.



Introduction

Education as a basic human right has long been affirmed at the international level. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 established the principle that every individual is entitled to free and compulsory elementary education, setting a global moral and legal foundation for educational access. Since then, several international frameworks such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) have strengthened the commitment to universal education. These instruments collectively emphasize that equal access to quality education is essential for personal freedom, social mobility, global citizenship, and sustainable development. Globally, education is viewed not only as a right but also as a powerful tool for reducing poverty, promoting peace, advancing gender equality, and fostering economic growth. Countries around the world continue to invest in educational reforms and inclusive policies to ensure that marginalized populations, including women, children, minorities, and people with disabilities, are not excluded from this fundamental right (Olojede and Eziafa, 2021).

In the African context, the recognition of education as a basic human right aligns strongly with continental commitments and development priorities. Many African nations embed the right to education in their constitutions, drawing inspiration from global human rights frameworks. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) explicitly affirm every child's right to free and compulsory basic education. Regionally, initiatives such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25) stress the need for inclusive, equitable, and quality education as a driver of economic transformation and social stability.

As a member nation, Nigeria supports this declaration. It is noteworthy too that literacy is also the right of every human being in Nigeria. The Hamburg Declaration states under Resolution 11 that Literacy, broadly conceived as basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapid changing world, is a fundamental human right. The rationale for recognizing literacy as a right is the set of benefits it offers to individuals, families, communities and nations. The intrinsic human value of education- its ability to add meaning and value to everyone's life without discrimination (UNESCO, 2005). Ajayi (2023) quoting Ewhe & Kulu (2020) stated that education does not



merely enable individuals to attain their intellectual capacity to the fullest, it also helps them develop emotionally, morally, socially, culturally and physically. This implies that education is not limited to formal schooling but a lifelong process (including literacy education).

Literacy education is crucial for skill acquisition in Nigeria. According to Obi, Atu Abanye and Nnenna, (2021), it is the type of education programmes designed to prepare adults for acquiring skills for self-reliance work, individual development towards social, economic and professional competence. It enables individuals to access information, learn new skills, improve their livelihood. It allows for better understanding of instruction, and other resources needed for adult vocational training and job performance. This in turn leads to increase employability and economic independence (Akande & Aina, 2024). There is no doubt the fact that the societies are becoming aware of the fact that educating women is a strong weapon for social, economic and environmental development. This is to buttress the African philosophy expressed in an axiom which says that when you educate a man, you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman, you educate a nation. Skill acquisition through literacy programmes plays a crucial role in empowering women by providing them with relevant and marketable skills. It enhances their employability, income earning potential, and economic independence for global balance.

When discussing sustainable global balance, women should not be ignored, this is because, for a nation to develop, it is important to invest in the education of women. However, the National Bureau of statistics (2020) stated that women formed 50.8% of the entire population in Nigeria. It is noteworthy to state that majority of these women are illiterates, poverty ridden, and disadvantaged socially, economically and culturally. Illiteracy and limited acquisition of skills restrict women's economic opportunities, making them more vulnerable to exploitation, low paying jobs, and economic independence. It could also hamper their ability to provide for their family (Mmuozoba, 2023 Nwizu & Avoseh, 2023). This implies that, there are large disparities between the education that men and women receive in the country.

To buttress the above, the Central Bank of Nigeria (2000), stated that the gender gap in literacy rates at the rural level between boys and girls was 18.3 in favour of the boys overall. This indicates that there is a gender dimension to educational attainment in Nigeria. In line with this, Veriv Africa (2024), revealed that there is a significant gender disparity in the literacy rate in Nigeria. The male literacy is 79.89% and the female literacy rate is 65.3% for youth aged 15- 24



years. Corroborating the above, UNICEF, (2014), stated that in Nigeria, the statistics in ensuring women education is rated as the poorest in the world. This implies that many females do not have access to acquisition of skills through literacy education that fostering employment opportunities that supposed to equip them with essential competencies for self-sufficiency and economic stability due to certain cultural practices and there is no doubt the fact that the majority of Nigerian illiterates are women who generally are responsible for nurturing and raising children. This means that the children of these women are unlikely to benefit from motherly support for their children in the area of formal education.

Nwakwe, Faleye, Emunemu, & Adelore (2008) and Obi, Atu, & Nnenna, (2024), linked the imbalance in genders' skill acquisition in favour of men to the long-held belief in male superiority and female subordination coupled with the patriarchal practices which gave women no traditional rights to succession. To Nmadi (2000) the Nigerian society, like other developing countries globally, has been dotted with peculiar cultural practices that are potently hurtful to women's acquiring skills through literacy education such as: early/forced marriage, wife inheritance, widowhood practices and so on. In essence, women seem not to have won the battle against chauvinism and patriarchy that was predominantly the practice in the stone-age world and Africa in particular. Inequality in acquisition of skills through literacy education can often start with discriminatory attitude, practices, and unequal power relations between women and men within the family. The unequal division of labour and responsibilities within households also limits women's potential to find the time to attend literacy education programmes. Even in the twenty-first century, so many social and cultural taboos inhibit the process of women especially in the third world countries like some parts of Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean and Africa (Cornwell, 2005).

Oni (2006) stated that those gender stereotypes are evidence in modern society, just as they were in the traditional society. To her, men is still the pacesetter of things in the house, they are the captains of industries, just to mention but a few. Akande, Babalola & Aboderin, (2008), however, believes that an informed, fulfilled and educated woman is critical for the children of the 21st century. It is a way of providing tools for economic independence, enhancing self-esteem and assisting women in creating a better tomorrow for their families, with the aim of empowering women in the area of social, economic and environment for global balance. This



implies that many females do not have access to acquisition of skills through literacy education that fostering employment opportunities that supposed to equip them with essential competencies for self-sufficiency and economic stability due to certain cultural practices. There is therefore the need to improve women's standards in the area of skills acquisition through literacy education because it can equip women with necessary skills for combating immediate and future environmental, social and economic problems such as underdevelopment for global balance.

Literacy Education Programmes

Defining literacy in our changing world is not easy. Years ago, being literate meant being able to read, write and do simple calculation. Now, being literate means being able to read and write at a level to be successful in today's world and also being proficient in skills that would enable him or her knowing how to solve problems and take decisions (National Mass Education Commission)/UNICEF, 2010). This reveals that the power of literacy lies not only in the ability to read and write, but rather in an individual's ability to put those skills to work in shaping the course of his or her own life. With the insight that, genuine literacy education involves the 'reading the word and the world'. Effective participation of women and men in literacy programmes is needed to enable them survive and meet the challenges of the future (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2005). This is very important because it enables an individual to live meaningfully. Literacy programmes are necessary not only for preserving useful old values and knowledge, but more importantly for facilitating the creation of new social values and knowledge. It is necessary for the fostering of harmonious and peaceful living and the maintenance of a healthy environment, as well as in matter of gender.it could also bring about positive change in attitudes, and particularly so for adult member of the family.

Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potentials and to participate fully in their family and wider society (Peters, 2007). Women participation in literacy education can be viewed from the perspective of the benefits to be gained from the said programmes. Implicit in this penchant for getting involved is the notion of the relationship between self and society. There are three rational for women participation in literacy programme: First, merely knowing that women participation in literacy education promotes dignity and self-sufficiency within her. Secondly, it enables women to exhibit their energies and resources within the society. Finally, women participation in literacy



education provides source of special insight, information, knowledge and experience, which contribute to the soundness of community solutions.

The point emphasized above is that, literacy programmes is necessary for both genders due to the rapid changes taking place in contemporary society, such as changes in job skills, interpersonal relations, social standards and norms, science and technology and other domains. In addition, both genders need to learn in a more purposeful, systematic way throughout their lives. In essence, literacy education should be encouraged, fostered and improved as it focuses on the management of emerging life challenges for all people. It is therefore important that literacy programmes are designed to equip women learners with core competencies such as critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills and writing skills, among others to enable them contribute their own quota to their family in particular and the society in general (Akande, et al, 2024).

Sustainable Global Balance

Balance is the ability to remain steady when you are standing up, while global can be describe as something that happens in all parts of the world or affects all parts of the world. Global balance can therefore be defined in different ways, depending on the context. It may be global balance of a budget, balance a career, balance perfectly, balance the scale, careful balance, cash balance and so on. (Collins dictionary, 2025). In this context however, global balance refers to global gender balance in the area of access to skills acquisition through literacy education in Nigeria.

The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015) provide a framework for achieving a sustainable global balance, with the aim to achieve 'peace and prosperity for people and the planet' by 2030. it encompassing various environmental, social and economic sustainability. The Sustainable Development Goals are for a call for action by all countries (Nigeria inclusive). These goals aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that everyone has the chance to live a healthy and fulfilling life. Goal number 5, of SDGs centered on gender equality, which focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. It aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. Gender equality is relevant for discussion now because of the following: 1). It is fundamental human right. 2). Empowering women and girls. 3). It can boost economic growth. 4). Reduce poverty, and 5). Improve overall wellbeing.



Women Literacy Education for Environmental Sustainability

There is no doubt the fact that environmental problems have become a global issue in which Nigeria is not excluded. These challenges in the country include but not limited to the following: high proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, water pollution, air pollution, deforestation, overpopulation, poor hygiene and so on. This clearly depicts that environmental issue is not local but international concern. Environmental protection to Nwoye (2023), therefore, refers to deliberate and intention actions to safeguard and preserve the environment with the purpose of ensuring that activities which humans engage in for the survival does not compromise the ability of future generations to benefit from the environment.

Literacy Education among women for environmental Sustainability for Global Balance

It is therefore important to leverage on the ease provided by literacy education for women to promote sustainable environmental protection. The roles of literacy education for women cannot be overemphasized in environmental sustainability for Global Balance in Nigeria. Some of the roles according to Erinsakin & Awogoke (2016) and Okemakinde (2020) are as follows:

1. Developing and formation of right attitudes by women towards environmental protection: in most cases, women do interact ignorantly with the environment, where they live. For example, a person, who after smoking, drops the cigarette without quenching its light may not know the extent to which his/her action can go on the environment. Skill acquired through literacy education will enable her to develop, form, and cultivate right attitudes towards environment.
2. Awareness on the importance of conserving and protecting the environment: lack of awareness is a bane to environmental degradation and pollution. Women will be aware through literacy education, the importance of conserving and protecting her environment.
3. Giving knowledge on environmental degradation and its effects on economy: people and nations are very poor, because of poor economy occasioned by environmental degradation. Women would be able to know the effects of environmental degradation on the economy and by extension, break the circle of poverty with the exposure to literacy education.



In essence, literacy education provides women with opportunities to acquire the skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and commitment that are needed to protect and improve the environment. Reducing illiteracy rate among them could be highly effective in reducing the incidence of trafficking girls to borders or other countries; increase overall environmental awareness; and reducing the likelihood of terrorism.

Social Sustainability

The principle of social sustainability include: social equity and justice, diversity and inclusion, democratic participation and empowerment, livelihood security, and social wellbeing and quality of life. Social empowerment to Mmuozoba (2023), focusses on challenging social norms and gender roles, promoting gender equality, and ensuring women's participation and representation in decision-making. To her, it should address issues such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and harmful cultural practices. The social environment in Nigeria, according to Manthoto, Braimoh and Adeola (2000) is defined by certain variables that describe social categories, such as gender. This interferes with the equity and equality that is hoped for in learning situations. To him, the structure and educational models established are not based on the realities of Nigeria.

Literacy Education among women for Social Sustainability for Global Balance

Women with literacy education are therefore more likely to seek medical care, ensure their children are immunized, be better informed about their children's nutritional requirements and adopt improved sanitation practices. As a result, their infants and children have higher survival rates and tend to be healthier and better nourished. There is also, a greater likelihood of using child health-care technique; enhanced readiness to send children to school; cleaner homes and better child nutrition; and greater disposition to space families. Literate woman leads directly to better productive health in their future life, improve family health, as well as lower rates of child mortality and malnutrition (Okeke, 2021).

It involves transforming social institutions to enhance society's capacity to achieve its goals. It includes qualitative changes in how society organizes itself and conducts activities such as adopting more progressive attitudes, behaviours, and advance technologies (Obi, Atu Abanye and Nnenna, 2021). The learning processes are not dynamically adapted to these Nigerian realities through the normal process of socialization because education is seen as the creator of



hierarchies and a privileged class. This comes to play when critical decisions such as those concerning who should receive education in the family are being made in favour of men. The traditional ideology that surrounded the home and the family in Africa categorises women as housemakers in relation to domesticity and motherhood. They are mainly tied to the private world of the home, hidden and invisible. In patriarchal social relations, men appear on the domestic scene only rarely, and even then, they are still the superiors. (Habasonda, 2002) This is partly what has led to decrease enrolment among females in skills acquisition programmes through literacy programmes in the country.

Economic sustainability

According to World Bank (2002), economic empowerment involves increasing the assets and capabilities of individuals to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable the institutions that affects their lives. It focuses on increasing the economic wealth of individuals participated in the programme.

Literacy Education among women for Economic Sustainability for Global Balance

Among the economic effects of literacy on women were greater capacity to mobilize credit, greater willingness to use banks, and readiness to participate in and establish economic organizations. Economic empowerment of women refers to the ability of women to have access and control over economic resources, financial independence, employment opportunities and power to make economic decisions. Corroborating the above, Mmuozoba (2023), stated that economic empowerment for women involves efforts to reduce gender-based economic inequalities and create an environment where women can fully participate in and benefit from economic activities.

Educating women would be an important step in overcoming poverty. The idea of poverty reduction makes the right to literacy education to be a powerful tool in bringing about change in the lives of women. According to Nwizu & Avoseh, (2023), Poverty reduction is necessary in the sense that poverty itself has been universally affirmed as a key obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights, and it has a visible gender profile. Skill acquisition and empowerment programmes for women provides equal access to education. If education of women is ensured, the multiplier effect would be guarantee and it would lead to an improved national human capital



based with diverse skills that will engender national development that would bring about Global balance.

Acquisition of skills through Literacy Education by women and Sustainable Global Balance

Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling women to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potentials and to participate fully in their family and wider society. Women participation in literacy education can be viewed from the perspective of the benefits to be gained from the said programmes. Implicit in this penchant for getting involved is the notion of the relationship between self and society. There are three reasons for women participation in literacy programme: First, merely knowing that women participation in literacy education promotes dignity and self-sufficiency within her. Secondly, it enables women to exhibit their energies and resources within the society. In addition, women participation in literacy education provides source of special insight, information, knowledge and experience, which contribute to the soundness of community solutions as follows:

1. Literacy education expands the consciousness and horizon of women: it increases her power of thinking, enables her to improve her environment and society. Literacy can therefore serve as the appropriate tool as it can play the dual role of serving as agent of mass mobilization for self-development as well as public enlightenment.
2. Literacy helps the women to understand population education, social obligation and so on: literate women will appreciate the efforts of government in the control of overpopulation like family planning, eating balance diet, and so on.
3. Literacy helps to articulate the needs of women: it made women to be aware of their rights, to articulate their needs by playing significant roles in their society and the nation at large.
4. Literacy education enlightens the women: when women were literate, they become enlightened or informed and will synthesize them into supporting government development programmes.
5. Literacy education brings to women, a greater sense of personal dignity, additional skills in problem solving, and respect for others.



6. Fostering national development through literacy education: for a nation to develop, women must be liberated from negative traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices. It is also necessary for women to be literate to take their own destiny in their hands.

In essence, literacy education effects on women includes, release from fear of humiliation and powerlessness, readiness to influence family decisions, increased cooperation in socio-cultural organization, and new capacity for leadership. In essence she can voice her opinion, stand up for herself monetarily as well as emotionally in the society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the numerous advantages that can be derived from participating in skill acquisition through literacy education, which includes but not limited to: enhances survival strategies that enable women to survive the harsh conditions in which they live; empowerment of women to participate actively in society; reducing gender-based discrimination and violence, and creating supportive environment that encourage women participation in learning; enable women to realize their creative potential and what they can do individually and collectively transform themselves, their respective communities and the nation at large. Yet, there exist low level of women's participation in these laudable programmes which can be traced to chauvinism and patriarchal nature of our society. It is therefore important that literacy programmes are designed to equip women learners with skills acquisition that will bring about sustainable global balance. This paper therefore, established the fact that skill acquisition through literacy education contribute to holistic empowerment, encompassing economic, social and environmental for sustainable global balance for women. This is even necessary now where both women and men in the society are expected to contribute to the development of their families and the society at large.

The following are the recommendations advanced for further consideration towards the improvement of women participation in skills acquisition through literacy education for global balance in Nigeria:

1. Researchers and practitioners in the area of literacy education should continue to monitor policies, practices and all cultural gendered practices which have so much influence on women participation in skills acquisition through literacy programmes.



2. Women should be encouraged to acquire and become multi-skilled through literacy education that would translate to problem solving, respect for others and fit into labour markets.
3. In addition, Nigerian men should give adequate information on the importance of literacy education to their wives and also encourage and allow them to participate in the said programmes.
4. Above all, all hands must be on deck in the recognition of the fact that women's full participation in skill acquisition through literacy programmes is a pre-requisite to nation building.

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Beyond Stereotypes: Exploring Female Perpetrators of Domestic Violence. A Narrative Analysis of Sunny Alli's *Lagos Girls*

¹Akinrinlola Deborah Atinuke; ²Olaleye Oluwaseun Mercy PhD; ¹Ogazie Charles A. PhD;
³Akorede-Okeremi Ifeoluwa Odunayo & ⁴Olafusi Tosin Aanuoluwapo.

¹Dept. of Theatre and Creative Arts
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo
atinurinlola@gmail.com , charlesogazie01@gmail.com

²Dept. of Geography
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo
olaleyeom@afued.edu.ng

³Dept. of Early Childhood and Care Education
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo
ifeoluwaakorede@gmail.com

⁴Department of Yoruba
Adeyemi Federal University of Education
tolafusi15@gmail.com

Abstract

The study subverts traditional notions of domestic violence by examining the complex dynamics of women as perpetrators in marital conflict situations, as represented in the selected video film. Through a narrative analysis of this video film, this research reveals the ways in which women can exercise agency and perpetrate violence, challenging the dominant discourse that positions men as sole oppressors. By exploring the intersections of power, victimization, and agency, this study sheds light on the nuanced and multifaceted nature of domestic violence, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between men and women in situations of domestic conflict. Ultimately, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of domestic violence, one that acknowledges the complexity of human relationships and the various ways in which power can be exercised and abused. The study therefore recommends that a more nuanced understanding of domestic violence that acknowledges the agency and culpability of women in violent relationships be emphasised in further studies.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Women, Victimization, Film



Introduction

Domestic conflict refers to any form of disagreement, disputes or tensions that arise within a domestic setting. Domestic setting, in this regard refers to household or within a family structure. Various factors can be responsible for these forms of conflict, part of which are communication breakdown, differing values and expectations, financial stress and power struggle. Domestic conflict can result into emotional distress, relationship damage or physical health consequences. However, studies have shown that, more often than not, children are more grievously affected by domestic conflict than adults. It significantly affects them emotionally, psychologically and socially which hinders their level of development.

Holt, S., Buckner, and Kruczek (2008) and Mazza and Marano *et. al.* (2021) argue that domestic conflict can cause anxiety and stress in children due to the tension and conflict they are exposed to in the home. They further argue that domestic conflict can lead to fear and insecurity about the stability of the children's family, consequently, they struggle to regulate their emotions by battling with mood swing, irritability and withdrawal from peers. Aside this, Oluwajobi *et. al.* (2024), also discuss the psychological impact of domestic conflict on children. They argue that domestic conflict has the tendency to affect the children's self-esteem and confidence which is caused by the feeling of guilt or shame about the conflict they are exposed to. Furthermore, children's exposure to domestic conflict can equally affect their mental health, hence, leading to depression or anxiety disorder.

Human interactions, from the sociological perspective, according to Otite and Ogionwo (1976) prepare the grounds for conflicts which are described as a by-product of interactions. Conflicts in human relationships, in this wise, manifest in the form of disagreement, quarrel, clash, divergence, difference, inconsistency or argument which may occur between at least two individuals, a group or a community which is as a result of a breakdown of agreement. The conflict between at least two individuals may be prompted by proximity of being co-workers, immediate space neighbors at home or the market place, blood relatives, business associates or marriage partners. The conflicts that emanate between blood siblings or partners in marriage context come under what is described as domestic conflict.

The study examines the conflict between partners in marriage with special focus on the forms and effects of marital disagreements between man and woman in the context of marriage and its



representation in the selected Yoruba movie. The purpose of the study is to highlight the portrayal of conflict between husband and wife in the Nigerian movie. This particular type of conflict is described as marital conflict. In marital conflict, a spouse who sees himself or herself as being superior in the relationship intimidates or molest the other. It begins when one partner behaves in an unpleasant way with the conscious or unconscious intention of hurting the other. It could further be described as any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship (WHO 2014).

Marital conflict could be violent in nature where there is display of aggression, outright physical attacks that cause damage or wounds to the person of the 'less powerful' in the relationship. It could be non-violent where disagreements are discussed without oppressive utterances or actions from both partners in the marriage relationship. This is often described as the ideal relationship. Violence in marital conflict could be reciprocal, this implies that both partners are disposed to being violent, either of the partners could be the first to attack the other physically or non-reciprocal, which implies that one partner is violent while the other is the victim. Though Graham and Archer (2003) note that both men and women can control non-violent partners through violence, studies have shown that marital violence is directed on several occasions at women because of male physical strength and women's subordinated status in the society (Esere 2009, Solanke 2012, Alokun 2013). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) also observes that the societal definition of women as part of their husband's property contributes to their being open to male violence and reduces them to mere possessions and voiceless individuals whose rights can be disregarded.

Alizade *et. al.* (2025) reveals that women, apart from domestic conflict, are equally on the receiving end in politically motivated violence. This could be violence triggered locally or internationally, where several parties or groups are involved in acting out their disagreement through the use of violence. She submits that some violence could be motivated by poverty, inequality, or reactions to the exclusion of a particular section of the population from the power structure at home. She, therefore, opines that to deal with violent conflicts, cultural differences, power imbalances, values and beliefs should be taken into consideration. The interpretation given to conflict in relation to the state of a country may be used as the yardstick to measure the gravity of the effects of conflict between partners.



Though Abozaglo (2011) argues that conflict is normal and inevitable, the negative impact of conflict on the people involved in it cannot be over emphasized. It is believed that dialogue is the best form of resolving matters, but if partners involved choose the use of violence as the means of exercising power, as well as resolving conflict, it can spread and cause damage, loss, grief and human right abuse. There is no form of conflict that does not have negative effects on the people involved either directly or indirectly.

Marital conflict is inevitable since the question of individual preferences and choices naturally come up in the everyday life of living together. It, however, becomes an issue of importance when resolutions involve other parties especially when the issue of physical or psychological abuse and torture comes into it. Marital conflict is, therefore, one of the ways through which gender based violence is mostly directed at women because of their subordinated status in the society coupled with the fact that women in patriarchal societies are often regarded as a little better than children in reasoning and disposition. Since children are usually disciplined through corporal means to discourage them from further misdemeanor, some husbands are inclined to “discipline” their wives without any sign of remorse or guilt. Some scientific investigations which include population based studies have in recent times, supported the increase in the prevalence of partner violence and the death of women through this violence in many parts of the world, among them are Olaleye 2014:4-6 and Peitzmeier *et. al.* (2021).

Mukaro, Mafunde and Mzizi (2025) assert that marriage oppresses women and that the family breeds patriarchy. As a result of the fact that marriage laws favoured men to a great extent that the wife is, culturally supposed to be reduced to whatever the husband wishes to make out of her with or without the presence of marital conflict. To the feminists, happily married women are regarded as obsessive and disloyal. In her opinion, women’s involvement in housework burdens and reduces them to nagging wives.

Stiwanism - an African Variant of Feminism

The place and images of women who are frequently placed at disadvantaged positions had been a major discourse over the years. This is so because feminist critics, public analysts as well as academics like Ogunbola *et. al.* (2024), Ofori (2024) and Udoh (2025) have examined the subordinated positions of women in the society as exemplified in video films and popular music. The quest to discover the identity of women as well as their equality with the male folks had



been the major concern of the feminist critics. The study engages Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwanism (1994), which is a variant of womanism.

STIWA an acronym for Social Transformation including Women in Africa, is a theoretical framework developed by a Nigerian scholar and feminist – Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie. The theory addresses the specific challenges and realities faced by African women, while also acknowledging the diversity and complexity of African experiences. Ogundipe-Leslie advocates for the inclusion and intersection of women's experience which are conditioned by culture and colonialism. She also prioritizes an African-centered perspective, acknowledging the diversity and richness of African culture and experiences. STIWANISM advocates for a holistic approach to social transformation, addressing the interconnected issues of economic, social and cultural development. It further challenges the dominant Western feminist discourses, highlighting the need for more inclusive and contextualized approaches to feminism. Therefore, its emphasis on social transformation and inclusion can empower African women to take an active role in shaping their own lives and communities. The theory is relevant in this study because it explores the intersection of culture, gender and allocation of power. It questions the affirmation of gender roles, hence, challenging patriarchy while reclaiming the identity of the subjugated woman.

Indirect Oppression and the Effects of Victimization in Sunny Alli's *Lagos Girls*

Sunny Alli's *Lagos Girls*, directed by Abiodun Olanrewaju, represents a female controlled marital conflict as depicted between Omoyeni's parents and Adeniyi on the one hand, and between Omoyeni and Adeniyi on the other. The children who have the support of their mother, in order to victimize their father who is supposed to be the head of the family, do different unpalatable things to ensure that their father is frustrated and humiliated in the home.

Sunny Alli's *Lagos Girls* is a representation of marital conflict where the wife indirectly victimizes her husband. The use of 'indirect' in this article implies that though the conflict occurs between the couples, the mother and her children join forces to victimize the husband so as to reduce him to the position of the voiceless in the family.

The first scene in the film introduces the audience to the family of an averagely old couple with two grown up girls. The mother is shown eating a plate of food with varieties of meat while the father sits on the chair, looking hungry, while his meal is delayed. Eventually, the first child, Omoyeni, brings his food and drops it on the table as if it is meant for a dog. It is the opposite of



what their mother is served with. The food is placed right in the soup with only one piece of meat. This shocks their father and when he asks why, Omoyeni insults him with the claim that their mother is responsible for the provision of food in the family. The father washes his clothes himself and when Omoyeni's fiancé asks why, she says her father does not want anybody to assist him. To contradict this, her father asks her to help him fetch some water from a tap at a close distance, but she replies him with insult.

Adeniyi has been a victim in his relationship with some wrong girls. He believes that women are only interested in the money they can get from a man. Thus, he feels it is not necessary for him to trust any woman. Consequently, he decides to do his chores himself without requesting for assistance from his girlfriend until he eventually gets married, hoping that this resolution would protect his mental health from the effect of any eventual heartbreak. His mother pesters him to get married, but he laments that all his girl-friends fail in his assessment of them and they are only interested in his money. This highlights the societal stigmatization that women are bad and have the tendency to betray their partners' trust.

Maja's family is another family in the film that experiences marital conflict. Tawa, Maja's wife, is outside waiting for her husband- a bus driver- who comes back late. At the sight of his bus, she stands up and blocks the entrance to the house with her hand. She claims her husband often goes to other women whenever he has money to throw away. The following morning, Clara, one of Maja's neighbours is outside brushing her teeth when Maja comes outside to clean his bus. He fixes his gaze on Clara's cleavages as she brushes her teeth. He eventually has sex with her. Another neighbour Remi who sees the duo as they enter the toilet for the sexual act, informs Tawa. Apparently, his makes Tawa very aggressive. She confronts Clara and beats her up. As this is going on, Maja runs out of the compound. This emphasises the fact that female perpetrated violence is sometimes a result of their reaction to the act of infidelity by their husbands which plays out in the character of Maja and his involvement with the female neighbour.

Omoyeni buys a generator for the family, but prefers to switch it on only at the mother's request and refuses the father's request to leave it on. Omoyeni becomes so rude to her father and has the support of her mother. To control Omoyeni, the father uses the newspaper he is holding to beat her and she retaliates. This is a taboo in Yoruba land, it is believed that a child is not supposed to hit any of his parents, no matter the extent of his or her anger. The father expects his wife to



condemn Omoyeni's action. However, she claims the father is at fault to have hit his daughter first. Tofunmi, one of Omoyeni's friends, becomes concerned and ask why Omoyeni, her mother and her sister maltreat their father. She claims he is reaping what he sowed. As far as Omoyeni is concerned, their father ignored their financial needs when they were growing up and when their mother makes it known to them, she swears not to take care of him when she grows up. With this, she has the support of her mother because she single-handedly finances the needs of the children. Tofunmi who is still not satisfied with the excuse tells Omoyeni that the treatment is inappropriate.

Omoyeni eventually marries Adeniyi, has a son by him but neglects her marital responsibilities. Adeniyi gets home one night and meets his son on the chair. He complains that he has not eaten. When he asked of his mother's where about, he claims he has not seen her, nor has he eaten anything since he comes back from school. Adeniyi challenges his wife when she comes back, but she does not show any remorse. Adeniyi informs his mother about Omoyeni's misbehaviour and she ask him to inform Omoyeni to visit her. On getting home that night, he finds his wife with a group of friends drinking alcoholic wine in his sitting room. Though Omoyeni's friends greet him, he does not respond. He switches off the television from the socket and leaves the sitting room without uttering a word. This sends a signal to the guests whom, despite the fact that Omoyeni asks them to ignore her husband, leave immediately after he has entered.

Omoyeni sees her friends off and comes back to meet Adeniyi in the sitting room. Without showing any sign of remorse, she accuses her husband of being unfair to her guests. She shouts at him and threatens to embarrass his friends whenever they visit. She leaves the scene angrily without a single word from Adeniyi.

Omoyeni gets envious of Clara's new car. For the first time in the movie, she speaks like a sane woman when she makes the request for a car from her husband. She promises to change her attitude to that of an obedient wife if her request is granted. At Adeniyi's refusal, she loses her calm and threatens to buy the car if Adeniyi does not. Shortly after her request from her husband, she brings a car home and Adeniyi asks where she gets money to purchase the car. Adeniyi asks her to either return the car or to leave his house, not considering her child. She chooses to leave, on the ground that Adeniyi does not want her to be successful. She goes fully into prostitution and meets her water loo one day when blood starts coming out of her nose along with her other



friends after attending a party. She is taken to a herbalist after she has spent some time at the hospital without any improvement.

Ironically, her father is requested to bear a sacrifice to appease the gods for her healing. At first, the father, considering the treatment meted out on him earlier, refuses the paternity of the children. Eventually, he agrees to bear the sacrifice after the intervention of one of the elders in the family. While preparing to bear the sacrifice, it is revealed that his wife is responsible for his misfortune because he got a lady pregnant while the children were younger. It is also revealed that their mother lied to them that their father was never responsible for their upkeep. Omoyeni eventually dies and their father's business spring back after he embarks on atonement.

The film focuses on Omoyeni's parent's family as well as her own family. The type of marital conflict dramatized in the film can be described as psychological or emotional abuse, and this involves the intentional humiliation of a partner to make him feel bad. This is done to deliberately pull a person down and to make him feel unimportant or guilty. The use of derogatory name calling leaves the victim with deep scars on his or her emotions.

The movie shows that marital conflict does not need to be violent before causing pain on the emotions of the parties involved. The children's delay in serving the father who is supposed to be the head of the family, calls the audiences' attention to an unusual happening in the family. Alli does not limit the conflict to the couples, but involves the children in supporting their mother to humiliate their father, on the mother's instruction. The father is surprised that the mother supports his daughter's rude utterances which makes him stand up and keeps looking at them. In order to remind them of his position as the head of the family, he uses the newspaper he is holding to beat Omoyeni, but she hits him back. The act is more shocking as the father opens his mouth agape and touches his chest calling his wife's name as a means of confirming if his daughter is actually the one doing this.

The movie concludes by showing that Omoyeni's mother is responsible for her husband's misfortune because he once impregnated another woman; the main cause of the crisis. The father could not have been their father, therefore refusing to bear the sacrifice on Omoyeni's behalf even though he eventually wanted to do so. In the same vein, it is revealed that Omoyeni's mother lied to her daughters that, their father had never taken up any responsibility in the family which prompts the children's rebellious attitude towards him.



In conclusion, this study's exploration of female perpetrators of domestic violence in Sunny Alli's *Lagos Girls* challenges prevailing stereotypes and sheds light on the complexities of intimate partner violence. By examining the narratives and categorizations of female perpetrators, this study highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of domestic violence that acknowledges the agency and culpability of women in violent relationships. The findings reveal that female perpetrators of domestic violence are not homogenous group, but rather, individuals with diverse motivations, experiences and circumstances. Therefore, from the perspectives of Ogun-dipe-Leslie, the perpetration of domestic violence by women can be reduced through their empowerment, hence, providing a source of financial stability for the women which by extension, helps to challenge gendered power dynamics. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of moving beyond simplistic stereotypes and embracing a more contextualized understanding of domestic violence, one that recognizes the multifaceted nature of intimate partner violence and the need for inclusive and effective interventions. The study, hence, recommends that women should build resilience and confidence in both marital relationships and communal life.

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GENDER AS A CORRELATE OF HIV/AIDS PREVALENCE IN AFRICA

AWE O.O. PhD, ABUBAKAR, A.M. AND IBUKUNOLUWA M.R PhD

Department of Biology
Adeyemi Federal University of Education,
Ondo

aweoo@afued.edu.ng, abubakaram@afued.edu.ng, ibukunoluwamr@afued.edu.ng

Abstract

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa continues to pose a significant public health and socio-economic threat, with women and girls bearing a disproportionate burden of infection and impact. This paper explores the gendered nature of the epidemic by examining the socio-cultural, economic, and structural factors that increase female vulnerability to HIV. Adolescent girls and young women are especially at risk due to factors such as gender-based violence, early marriage, unequal power in relationships, limited access to education, and economic dependency. These issues are compounded by stigma and discrimination, which hinder access to testing, treatment, and support services. The study also analyzes epidemiological trends, highlighting current statistics and gender disparities in prevalence and treatment. Through a review of successful interventions such as the DREAMS initiative, SASA model, and Stepping Stones, the paper demonstrates how targeted, community-based programs can reduce new infections and empower women socially and economically. Despite advancements in treatment access and gender policy integration, major challenges remain. These include persistent patriarchal norms, inadequate enforcement of gender protections, underfunded programs, and lack of data-driven, intersectional responses. The paper offers policy recommendations focusing on gender mainstreaming, expanding access to comprehensive health services, investing in education and economic opportunities for women, and strengthening legal protections against gender-based violence. In conclusion, addressing HIV/AIDS in Africa through a gender-sensitive lens is critical not only for effective epidemic control but also for promoting gender equity and advancing sustainable development goals. A holistic, inclusive approach remains essential to ending the epidemic.

Keywords: HIV/AIDS, Gender, Policy Integration, Africa



Introduction

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a type of virus that attacks the human immune system, causing a decrease in CD4+ cell counts and immune function, which leads to AIDS and other life threatening opportunistic infections (Fisher et al., 2014). HIV/AIDS continue to pose significant public health challenges worldwide. Across different geographies, national boundaries, and even within individual provinces, the HIV epidemic has shown striking variation (De Cock et al., 2012). In 2023, approximately 39.9 million people worldwide were living with HIV. In the same year, 1.3 million individuals, became newly infected with the virus. Moreover, 630,000 people, lost their lives due to AIDS-related illnesses. Also, 30.7 million individuals were accessing antiretroviral therapy worldwide (UNAIDS, 2024).

The largest concentration of HIV-positive individuals in the world is found in Sub-Saharan Africa (GBD, 2015). Globally, women and girls of all ages accounted for 44% of all new HIV infections in 2023. In sub-Saharan Africa, this figure was even higher, with women and girls representing 62% of all new infections. Women in this region also constitute about 59% of the adult population living with HIV (WHO, 2011). Additionally, every week, approximately 4,000 adolescent girls and young women aged 15 to 24 became infected with HIV worldwide, with 3,100 of these infections occurring in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2023). Research from Sub-Saharan Africa indicates that sexual interactions between adolescent girls or young women and older men are a common way of HIV transmission. Furthermore, children born to HIV-positive mothers are at risk of contracting the virus if their mothers are not receiving effective treatment or are not being monitored (UNICEF, 2023).

The relationship between gender and HIV/AIDS in Africa has been the subject of considerable academic inquiry over the past two decades. Studies shows that gender inequalities play a significant role in both the transmission and management of HIV, with women and girls disproportionately affected by the epidemic (Magadi, 2013). This reality is especially evident in sub-Saharan Africa, where cultural norms, power dynamics, and socio-economic disadvantages converge to exacerbate female vulnerability to HIV. Adolescent girls and young women aged 15–24 are particularly at risk, facing infection rates more than double those of their male counterparts (UNESCO, 2013). This disparity cannot be explained by biology alone. Rather, it



reflects entrenched social and economic inequities that shape how different genders experience and respond to HIV risk. For instance, societal norms that condone male dominance in sexual relationships limit many women's ability to negotiate safe sex practices such as condom use (Mhungu *et al.*, 2022). Women who experience intimate partner violence are more likely to contract HIV, not only due to forced or unsafe sex but also because such violence can discourage them from accessing prevention, testing, or treatment services. There is a consistent link between exposure to violence and increased HIV risk among women. The fear of stigma and blame further compounds the issue, leading many women to delay or avoid seeking care altogether (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010).

Despite advancements in treatment access and gender policy integration, major challenges remain. These include persistent patriarchal norms, inadequate enforcement of gender protections, underfunded programs, and lack of data-driven, intersectional responses, hence this study which tends to explore the gendered nature of the epidemic by examining the socio-cultural, economic and structural factors that increase female vulnerability to HIV.

Significance of Gender Analysis in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Africa

Gender analysis is a critical tool in understanding the dynamics of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. It involves examining the differences in the roles, behaviors, opportunities, and needs of women and men, and how these differences influence vulnerability to HIV infection, access to healthcare services, and the overall impact of the disease. In the African context, where cultural, social, and economic factors are deeply intertwined with gender norms, such analysis is indispensable for developing effective and equitable HIV/AIDS interventions. Sub-Saharan Africa bears the highest burden of HIV/AIDS globally, with women and girls disproportionately affected (UNAIDS, 2023). Women constitute approximately 59% of adults living with HIV in the region, and young women aged 15–24 are more than twice as likely to be infected as their male counterparts. This disparity is not solely due to biological factors but is significantly influenced by gender-based, social and economic inequalities.

Impact of HIV/AIDS on Girls and Women in Africa

HIV/AIDS continues to have a profound and multifaceted impact on girls and women across Africa, affecting not only their health but also their social, economic, and psychological well-



being. Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, remains the epicenter of the epidemic, with women and girls disproportionately burdened by the virus. This imbalance is not only due to biological susceptibility but is deeply rooted in socio-cultural and structural inequalities that shape how women experience the epidemic and its consequences. Young women, especially those aged 15 to 24, are more than twice as likely to contract HIV compared to their male peers (UNAIDS, 2023). This vulnerability stems from a combination of factors such as gender-based violence, early marriage, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health education. Girls and young women often lack the agency to negotiate safer sex, especially in relationships characterized by unequal power dynamics.

Additionally, socio-economic dependency and lack of access to education increase their risk of engaging in transactional sex or remaining in abusive relationships, both of which significantly heighten the risk of HIV transmission (Hajizadeh *et al.*, 2014). Once infected, women face unique challenges in accessing care. In many cases, stigma and discrimination related to both HIV status and gender roles discourage women from seeking treatment. Fear of rejection, violence, or loss of financial support often keeps women from disclosing their HIV status or adhering to treatment regimens (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010). In patriarchal societies, women may also lack control over decisions related to healthcare, including when and how to access antiretroviral therapy (Logie *et al.*, 2021).

The economic impact of HIV/AIDS on women is also severe. Women living with HIV are often the primary caregivers for sick relatives, which limits their ability to work or attend school. This caregiving burden, coupled with HIV-related health complications, undermines women's productivity and deepens cycles of poverty, particularly in rural and low-income communities (Magadi, 2013). For young girls, the loss of parents to AIDS frequently results in school dropout, child-headed households, and early marriages, all of which perpetuate vulnerability to HIV. Psychologically, the diagnosis of HIV can lead to anxiety, depression, and social isolation for women and girls. Cultural stigma often frames HIV as a moral failure, and women are frequently blamed for introducing the virus into the household, even when they are not the source of infection. This stigmatization adds to the emotional toll of living with a chronic illness and further limits women's access to support systems (UNAIDS, 2023).



Despite these challenges, gender-responsive interventions have shown promising results. Programs that combine HIV prevention with education, economic empowerment, and gender-based violence prevention have improved outcomes for girls and women. Initiatives like the DREAMS partnership have demonstrated success in reducing new HIV infections among adolescent girls through multi-sectoral strategies that address both immediate health needs and underlying gender inequalities (Pettifor *et al.*, 2018).

Factors that contributed to the heightened vulnerability among women and girls in Africa

The socio-cultural landscape in sub-Saharan Africa plays a crucial role in shaping the experiences of women and girls in relation to HIV/AIDS. Various interrelated factors contribute to their heightened vulnerability, deeply rooted in traditional beliefs, norms and practices. These factors include the following;

Biological Factors

The biological determinants of HIV susceptibility among women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa constitute a complex interplay of physiological, immunological, and developmental factors that operate within broader socio-structural contexts. Biologically, women are more susceptible to HIV infection during heterosexual intercourse due to larger mucosal surface areas and higher viral concentrations in semen (Karim *et al.*, 2010). The vaginal vault provides approximately 130-150 cm² of mucosal surface area for potential viral exposure during intercourse, compared to the male urethra's 20 cm² (Hladik & McElrath, 2008). This expanded exposure zone increases the probability of viral entry, particularly when epithelial integrity is compromised.

Furthermore, the transformation zone of the cervix, where columnar epithelium meets squamous epithelium, is particularly susceptible to HIV infection due to its single-cell layer structure and high concentration of CD4⁺ T cells and dendritic cells (Pudney *et al.*, 2005). This zone is proportionally larger in younger women, creating what researchers term the "biological double jeopardy" of adolescence (Abdool Karim *et al.*, 2010). Also, In the contexts of forced or coercive sex, reported by 21% of women in East and Southern Africa (WHO, 2021) this trauma is significantly exacerbated, creating direct pathways for viral entry.



Gender-Based Violence

The syndemic relationship between gender-based violence (GBV) and HIV infection in sub-Saharan Africa represents one of the most pernicious manifestations of gendered health inequities. GBV operates as both causal pathway and structural determinant in HIV transmission dynamics, creating a "cycle of gendered risk" that systematically disadvantages women across biological, psychological and social dimensions (Heise, 2012). Women and girls often face physical, sexual, and emotional abuse which not only affects their mental health but also increases their risk of HIV infection. Survivors of GBV may be forced into sexual encounters without protection, exposing them to the virus. The trauma associated with such violence can also deter women from seeking testing and treatment, perpetuating the cycle of infection (WHO, 2011). High prevalence of GBV, including intimate partner violence and sexual assault, exacerbates women's risk of HIV infection. Studies indicate that women who experience GBV are more likely to engage in high-risk sexual behaviors and have limited access to HIV prevention and treatment services (PEPFAR, 2020).

Research consistently demonstrates the profound link between gender-based violence and heightened HIV risk among women in sub-Saharan Africa. A meta-analysis of 28 African cohorts revealed that women experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) face 55% greater odds of HIV seroconversion compared to their non-abused counterparts (Jewkes et al., 2019). Regional studies further reinforce this association, with Tanzanian data showing that HIV prevalence among abused women (12.4%) nearly doubles the rate observed in non-abused women (6.7%) (Stockman et al., 2013). South African epidemiological research provides additional evidence, demonstrating that forced sexual debut elevates lifetime HIV risk by 48%, underscoring the enduring consequences of early sexual violence (Dunkle et al., 2020).

Early Marriage and Childbearing

Early marriage is prevalent in many communities, often resulting in young girls being married off before they reach adulthood. This practice places them in relationships with older partners who may have a higher likelihood of being HIV-positive. Young brides often lack the power to negotiate safe sex, making them more vulnerable to infection. Additionally, early childbearing can lead to health complications, further decreasing a young woman's ability to access health



services (UNICEF, 2020).

Economic Factors

Economic hardship compels some women to engage in transactional sex or remain in relationships where they lack negotiating power for safe sex practices. This economic dependence increases their risk of HIV infection (Science Direct, 2020). Lower levels of education among women correlate with reduced awareness of HIV prevention methods and limited access to employment opportunities. This lack of empowerment perpetuates a cycle of vulnerability to HIV (BMC Public Health, 2016). Economic barriers, including the cost of healthcare services and transportation, limit women's access to HIV testing and treatment facilities. This inaccessibility contributes to delayed diagnoses and treatment initiation, adversely affecting health outcomes (AU, 2021).

Progress and Challenges in Addressing Gender Disparities in HIV/AIDS in Africa

Over the past two decades, considerable progress has been made in addressing gender disparities in the HIV/AIDS response across Africa. Various governments, non-governmental organizations, and international agencies have implemented gender-responsive interventions aimed at reducing the vulnerability of women and girls and ensuring equitable access to HIV prevention, treatment, and care. However, despite notable gains, persistent structural and cultural barriers continue to hinder progress.

One significant achievement is the expansion of Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), which has greatly improved the life expectancy and quality of life for women living with HIV. According to UNAIDS (2023), approximately 81% of HIV-positive women in sub-Saharan Africa are receiving ART, a higher percentage than their male counterparts. This disparity is partly due to the integration of HIV testing and treatment into maternal and child health services, particularly through prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programs. These initiatives have contributed to a decline in new infections among children and better health outcomes for mothers.

Another area of progress is the implementation of gender-transformative programs that tackle the root causes of gender inequality. Programs like DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered,



AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe) have shown promising results in reducing HIV incidence among adolescent girls and young women by combining biomedical, behavioral, and structural interventions (Pettifor *et al.*, 2018). These include access to sexual and reproductive health services, economic empowerment activities, and interventions to reduce gender-based violence.

Increased political and financial commitments have led to the development of gender-inclusive national strategic plans on HIV/AIDS. Many African countries have adopted frameworks that recognize the role of gender inequality in driving the epidemic and propose specific interventions to empower women and girls (AU, 2021). Regional bodies like the African Union have also issued advocacy briefs urging member states to mainstream gender in their HIV/AIDS responses.

Despite this progress, significant challenges remain. Patriarchal social norms and gender-based violence continue to undermine the effectiveness of HIV interventions. Women and girls often lack the autonomy to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Gender-based violence remains widespread, with studies showing that women who experience intimate partner violence are significantly more likely to contract HIV (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010). Fear of violence or rejection also prevents many women from disclosing their HIV status or seeking treatment. Economic inequality is another persistent barrier. Poverty and unemployment force some women into risky sexual relationships or transactional sex, increasing their vulnerability to HIV. Although empowerment programs exist, they often do not reach the most marginalized women—especially those in rural areas, those with disabilities, or those affected by conflict and displacement (Logie *et al.*, 2021).

Additionally, stigma and discrimination continue to be major obstacles. Women living with HIV often face judgment and exclusion from their families and communities, particularly when they are seen as violating traditional gender roles. This stigma can be more intense for adolescent girls and young women, especially when pregnancy and HIV status intersect (UNAIDS, 2023). There are also gaps in funding and program sustainability. Many gender-focused HIV initiatives depend heavily on donor funding and may lack long-term support from national budgets. This fragility affects the scalability and sustainability of programs, particularly in resource-limited settings.



Limited male engagement remains a challenge. While efforts have rightly focused on empowering women, there is a growing recognition that engaging men and boys is essential to transform harmful gender norms and reduce HIV risk for all (Higgins *et al.*, 2010). While Africa has made measurable strides in addressing gender disparities in the context of HIV/AIDS, enduring social, economic, and institutional challenges continue to limit progress. Sustainable success will require a more intersectional and integrated approach—one that empowers women and girls, addresses structural barriers, and engages all members of society in creating a more gender-equitable response to HIV.

Case Studies of Gender-Focused Interventions in HIV/AIDS in Africa

Across sub-Saharan Africa, numerous gender-focused interventions have been developed to address the unique vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls in the context of HIV/AIDS. These interventions aim to reduce infection rates, improve access to treatment, empower women economically and socially, and challenge harmful gender norms that fuel the epidemic. Several notable case studies illustrate how integrated, community-driven approaches can produce measurable impacts in the fight against HIV while addressing gender inequality.

- **Nigeria**

Current trends in HIV/AIDS treatment in Nigeria indicate a shift towards achieving epidemic control, with a focus on expanding antiretroviral therapy (ART) coverage and viral suppression among people living with HIV (PLHIV). The country is also working towards the global "95-95-95" targets, aiming for 95% of PLHIV to know their status, 95% of those diagnosed to be on ART, and 95% of those on ART to achieve viral suppression. (Archibong and Goshen, 2023).

- **The DREAMS Partnership (Eastern and Southern Africa)**

One of the most comprehensive gender-focused HIV prevention efforts is the DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe) Partnership, launched in 2015. Operating in countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, DREAMS targets adolescent girls and young women aged 15–24, a group disproportionately affected by HIV. The program combines biomedical, behavioral, and structural interventions, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), HIV testing, gender-based violence prevention, school retention, parenting support, and economic empowerment activities (Pettifor *et al.*, 2018).



Evaluations of DREAMS have shown promising results. In Kenya and South Africa, for example, communities implementing DREAMS reported a 25–40% reduction in new HIV diagnoses among adolescent girls and young women within three years of program rollout (Saul *et al.*, 2018). This outcome demonstrates the effectiveness of layered, multi-sectoral interventions in curbing new infections while simultaneously promoting gender equity.

- **SASA Community Mobilization Model (Uganda)**

Developed by Raising Voices, the SASA model is a community mobilization initiative aimed at reducing HIV risk by challenging power imbalances between men and women. The acronym SASA stands for four phases: Start, Awareness, Support, and Action. The program trains community activists to facilitate discussions on gender, violence, and HIV in everyday spaces such as churches, clinics, and homes.

A randomized controlled trial in Kampala found that SASA significantly reduced the incidence of intimate partner violence (IPV) and improved women's ability to negotiate condom use (Abramsky *et al.*, 2014). Importantly, it also shifted community attitudes towards gender norms and helped men better understand the health impacts of violence and inequality. The study highlighted the value of long-term, locally driven interventions that engage entire communities in transforming harmful social norms.

- **Shuga Edutainment Campaign (Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa)**

MTV's 'Shuga' is a multi-platform edutainment campaign designed to promote HIV awareness and gender equality among youth. The show tackles issues such as transactional sex, sexual consent, stigma, and testing in an accessible and youth-friendly way. Its broad reach across Africa through television, radio, and social media platforms has made it a powerful tool in influencing knowledge and behavior.

Impact evaluations indicate that exposure to Shuga significantly increased HIV testing and condom use among viewers, particularly young women (Banerjee *et al.*, 2019). The program's ability to challenge gender stereotypes and promote respectful, consensual relationships makes it a strong example of how media can be harnessed to promote public health and social change.



- **Stepping Stones (South Africa)**

Stepping Stones is a life-skills and gender empowerment intervention developed in South Africa and adapted across multiple African countries. The program uses participatory methods such as storytelling, drama, and peer education to promote critical reflection on gender roles, communication, and HIV risk.

Research has shown that participants in Stepping Stones were more likely to reduce risky sexual behaviors, report fewer incidents of IPV, and show increased gender-equitable attitudes (Jewkes *et al.*, 2008). While the intervention's effect on HIV incidence was modest, it successfully contributed to improved relationship dynamics and reduced violence, both of which are key social determinants of HIV vulnerability.

Conclusion

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa cannot be fully understood or effectively addressed without recognizing the profound impact of gender disparities. Women and girls, particularly adolescents and young women, continue to bear the greatest burden of the epidemic due to a confluence of biological, social, cultural, and economic factors. From unequal access to education and healthcare to gender-based violence and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, the systemic inequalities faced by women fuel their heightened vulnerability to HIV and hinder their ability to access life-saving services. While significant strides have been made such as the expansion of antiretroviral therapy, gender-sensitive interventions like DREAMS and SASA, and increasing policy recognition of gender as a critical determinant many challenges persist. These include persistent stigma, inadequate funding for gender-focused programs, weak enforcement of protective legislation, and the underrepresentation of marginalized groups in national HIV strategies.

Recommendations

Despite decades of global and regional efforts, gender disparities continue to shape the trajectory of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. Women and girls, particularly adolescents and young women remain disproportionately affected due to deeply embedded socio-cultural, economic, and structural inequalities. To effectively curb the epidemic, future policy and programmatic



efforts must adopt a gender-transformative approach that not only responds to women's needs but also actively challenges the systems that perpetuate their vulnerability. In other to address the Challenges of Gender Disparities in HIV/AIDS in Africa this paper outline the following recommendation;

- Governments and international bodies must institutionalize gender-responsive policies across all levels of HIV programming. This means integrating gender analysis into national HIV strategies, health budgets, and monitoring systems to ensure women's and girls' needs are prioritized (UNAIDS, 2023). Policies should be informed by disaggregated data to accurately track disparities and outcomes across gender and age groups.
- Given the strong link between GBV and HIV infection, policies must address violence as both a cause and consequence of the epidemic. Governments should strengthen legal protections against domestic and sexual violence, improve law enforcement accountability, and ensure survivors have access to medical, psychosocial, and legal support (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010). National HIV/AIDS plans should include GBV prevention components and partnerships with organizations specializing in women's rights.
- Policymakers must expand access to sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception, HIV testing, treatment, and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), especially for adolescent girls and marginalized women. These services should be youth-friendly, confidential, and free from stigma or discrimination (WHO, 2022). Integration of HIV services into maternal and child health platforms can also improve accessibility and uptake.
- Education is a powerful protective factor against HIV. Governments should prioritize policies that keep girls in school through scholarships, menstrual health programs, and protection from early marriage and pregnancy. Simultaneously, women's economic empowerment through vocational training, access to credit, and land rights can reduce dependency on risky relationships and increase autonomy in health decision-making (Hajizadeh *et al.*, 2014).
- Addressing gender disparities also requires engaging men and boys in HIV prevention, care, and the promotion of gender equality. Policies should support community-based initiatives that encourage positive masculinities, challenge harmful norms, and foster equitable relationships (Higgins *et al.*, 2010). Programs like SASA have demonstrated success in involving men as



allies in the fight against HIV and GBV.

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GENDER, MARRIAGE AND POPULATION DYNAMICS IN HAUSA SOCIETY: A STUDY ON KANO, KATSINA AND SOKOTO STATES AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Shuaibu, Abdulwaheed PhD & UBA Aliyu PhD
Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

Abstract

The research is concerned with gender roles, marriage and population dynamics among the Hausa people of Northern Nigeria with special focus on Kano, Katsina and Sokoto states. It suggests the impact of cultural and religious norms on reproductive behaviour, status of women as well as sustainable development in the areas. Due to the assumption of Gender Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), Demographic Transition Theory (Thompson, 1929), the research study adopted a qualitative approach whereby key informant interviewing, focus group discussions and documentary analysis is utilized. Community members including the older adults, religious leaders, women groups and public health authorities were sampled. The results demonstrated that males and females are expected to reproduce, marry at a young age, and perform domestic chores which support high population rates and restrict free will of women. Although the change in attitudes has been observed in some cities as a result of education and economic forces, a majority of the rural societies are traditionalists. The liabilities are poor health and educational systems, the tendency towards gender inequality, and the lack of utilization of family planning programs. There are though openings in the community-based interventions, faith-sensitive reproductive health programs and female education. In sum, the study finds that what we need is a culturally based but transformative approach that upholds Hausa norms and integrates gender equity and sustainable development. It advises to have wider policy discussions, grass root sensitization, and access to reproductive health services.

Keywords: Gender roles, Practices of marriage, Population growth, Sustainable development, The Hausa society



Introduction

Population growth is also one of the greatest issues facing sustainable development in the world (especially in sub-Saharan Africa). The Hausa society, which is the largest and most culturally cohesive ethnic group in the country of Nigeria, introduces a suitable environment to study the intersection of gender norms, marital practice, and population trends represented within the confines of the country. These factors bring significant consequences on the division of resources, reproductive health, and social stability in the long run (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019).

In Hausa culture, socially constructed gender roles exist on the foundation of well-established Islamic beliefs and conventions. As noted by Khalid (2018), women are the ones who have more responsibilities to take care of the home especially having babies and taking care of them whereas men have a superiority over housekeeping and reproductive choices. Such gender difference in chores does not only support patriarchal systems of order but also restricts women in their ability to take decisions on their reproduction like timing of contraception and how many children to have.

According to Adewoyin and Olayiwola (2020), the value attached to women in the Hausa culture strongly depends on their fertility, more specifically, their capacity to give birth to several children, ideally, male. They believe that such cultural expectations maintain high fertility and frustrate population management. In a similar study, Isiugo-Abanihe (1994), imparts the significance of men, their attitude, and preference as the key determinants of reproductive behavior in northern Nigeria whereby, the male authority in their marriage and sexual engagements continues to be predominant.

Marriage, mostly early and polygynous marriages, influence population dynamics a lot. NPC and ICF (2019) observed that Hausa-Fulani women marry under the age of 18 years, with over 45 percent of the women getting married under that age (NPC & ICF, 2019). The trend contributes greatly to extending the reproductive age of women, which leads to a significant number of children in the family. In an article of his study on the households of northern Nigeria, Smith (2007) draws some attention to the manner in which polygyny, both in the urban and rural Hausa society, influences better fertility by the use of co-wife rivalries where each competes to have a



childbearing status and favour.

Although such practices are founded in cultural and religious beliefs, these cultural orientations are now starting to be shifted by changing socio-economic patterns. According to Yahaya (2021), there are more and more young Hausa couples who postpone getting married and have fewer children due to economic realities and the shifting ideals of living in such urban hubs as Kano. Such changes are, however, progressive and tend to face opposition with conventional standards and senior people in the society.

It is important to comprehend the origins of gender roles and marital practices and their ability to affect population patterns within Hausa society to implement a competent culturally sensitive policy. This paper endeavours to trace these interconnections in order to find some of the ways that can be used to encourage gender, reproductive health and sustainable population growth that do not threaten the cultural heritage of the Hausas.

Definitions of Key Terms

In a bid to bring in academic clarity and contextual relevance to Hausa the society, this section defines, explains the key terms that drive the study; gender roles, marriage institutions, population dynamics, and sustainability.

Gender Roles

Gender roles are socially defined expectations, duties, and actions of individuals, which are dictated by specific gender, namely, sex. Not biologically, these roles are rather determined by culture, religion and the development of history. According to Khalid (2018), in Hausa society, gender roles are greatly determined by the Islamic doctrines and patriarchal cultures, in that women are supposed to be household caretakers, child bearers, and house helpers whereas men are expected to be breadwinners and household heads. The implications of such roles are great in the sense that it affects reproduction decisions and access to education and health by women with long-term implications for population control and social equality.

Marriage Institutions

Marriage institutions refer to the organized practices, laws as well as customs that govern marital relationships in a society. These involve the age of marriage, the choice of a spouse, dowry or bride price and family composition. Marriage among the Hausa is not only an individual bond, it is a social and religious requirement, and usually it is an affair that is orchestrated by the two



families and blessed through Islamic ceremonies (Smith, 2007). This institution has common features such as early marriage and polygyny. Such practices, as National Population Commission (NPC) and ICF (2019) emphasise, lead to high fertility rates and affect the generation of gender expectations that supports traditional roles and restrict female reproductive freedom.

Population Dynamics

Population dynamics are the patterns and processes by which populations experience change in terms of size, structure and distribution over time. The population trends depend on birth rates, death rates, migrations and fertility patterns. Within the framework of the Hausa communities, the population trends are determined through cultural tendencies on large families, early marriage and low use of contraceptives. Isiugo-Abanihe (1994) presents an opinion that fertility desires of men usually prevail at the household level without regard to the socio-economic capacity and the health of women. According to Yahaya (2021), a few of these trends are starting to be challenged among the urban Hausa youths with delayed marriage and small family size, although these changes are not widespread yet.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the process of ensuring that the present generation needs are met without interfering with the capacity of future generation to meet their needs too. It is both environmental, economic and social. When it comes to gender and population, sustainability involves the development of a system in which sound reproductive health, gender empowerment, and healthy family planning are contributing to sustainable social trends and environmental management (Adewoyin & Olayiwola, 2020). The sustainability in the Hausa society means that there should be a balance between the cultural values and modern day developmental objectives and the gender relations and marriage systems should not be the stumbling block towards better quality of living and appropriate ecological balance.

Rationale of the study

The main rationale for carrying out the proposed study is to understand the complex interconnection between gender roles, marriage institutions as well as population dynamics in the Hausa society, and the overall effect brought about by these three factors on attainment of a sustainable future. This will be achieved through comparison of the socio-cultural and religious



standards that influence gendered expectation on marriage and family practices to realize how it affects fertility behavior and population growth in Northern Nigeria.

In more detail, the study aims at:

- Examining the reproductive decision-making and autonomous womanhood in the Hausa society through the gender roles.
- Reviewing how early marriage and polygyny affected the structure and fertility patterns in a household.
- Exploring the extent to which the current population trends in the Hausa communities support or counter internationally and nationally set sustainability objectives.
- Determining the policy intervention opportunities that may be possible through a culturally sensitive approach to achieve gender equity and accountable family planning and a sustainable development.

In so doing, the research will help to open up the wider course of discussions regarding population control and sustainable development in Africa by placing the reality of the Hausa people at the center of the whole debate. The end combination is all about gaining knowledge that might add up culturally appropriate development of measures that can achieve equilibrium between a population growth and economic-related as well as social wellbeing.

Significance of the Study

The study is of great relevance since it provides a culturally based understanding of the gender roles and marriage practices in the Hausa society in relation to the trend in population and its effects on sustainable development. This population study introduces ethnic and cultural factors where most of the population studies in Nigeria take little or no attention of ethnic and cultural settings.

The results will help the scholars, policy makers and the development practitioners to develop culturally sensitive interventions which encourage gender equity, responsible family planning and long-term sustainability. This study further brings into view the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals which are relevant, especially in health, the gender, and population management.



Research questions

- In what ways can the gender roles/system in the Hausa society constrain women autonomy and reproductive freedom?
- How does marriage ritual (early marriages and polygyny) correlate with fertility pattern among Hausas?
- What do the trends of population in the Hausa society mean to the national and global sustainability goals?
- How are the changes associated with areas of education and urban exposure, and socio-economic condition affecting the traditional gender and matrimonial ideologies?
- Which gender and population control approaches can be applied to the Hausa society in a culturally sound way to support sustainable development?

Theoretical Framework

Gender and Development (GAD) Theory and Demographic Transition Theory form the basis upon which the research is to be conducted; however, these two theories provide great insights into examining the relationship among gender roles, marriage, and population dynamics in the Hausa section.

The Gender and Development (GAD) Theory, which was written in the 1980s by individuals, including Eva Rathgeber (1990), explicitly focuses on how gender is socially constructed and various aspects of inequalities between men and women must be eradicated. The theory extends the concentration on women to the understanding of the effect of forms of structure and power relations on gender experiences in the society. Within the Hausa society, GAD Theory assists in questioning the reproductive decisions and access to education or health care because of traditional expectations of women especially in marriage and family life.

The Demographic Transition Theory was first developed in 1945 by Frank W. Notestein and concerns itself with the explanation of population changes over the years as a society transits to having low rates of death and birth through industrialization, education, and better living standards among others. The theory can come in handy in regard to how certain variables such as



early marriage, polygyny and low levels of female education may lead to the maintenance of high fertility rates among the Hausa people, and how the socio-economic development may change all that in the future.

The combination of these theories can facilitate the analysis of the impact gendered cultural practices and demographic tendencies of the Hausa society have on the outcomes of sustainability.

Methodology

The research design that was adopted in observing this study was the qualitative research design because it was most appropriate to explore the cultural and social perspective of gender, marriage and the population in Hausa society. It enabled a better understanding of how the participants perceived these elements and what traditional practices they regarded as the essence of their culture.

Study Area

The selected communities of the Hausa people were interviewed in Northern Nigeria; that is, Kano, Katsina, or Sokoto States. The reasons why these regions were singled out is due to the fact that they uphold the traditional gender roles and marriage practices and the importance of such regions to pop-up dynamics and demographic trends.

Sampling and Population

The target members were the married men and women, community elders, religious leaders, health workers and educators. The study was based on a purposive sampling technique, where 30 - 40 participants were sampled to have diversity in terms of gender age and social status. This method helped to gather quite vivid and diverse ideas on gender roles and marriage expectations.

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to collect the data. Interviews were conducted as self-reports of respondents and FGDs as group beliefs and norms regarding marriage, fertility, and gender roles in the society.

Data Analysis

Data obtained were transcribed and content-thematic data analysis was performed. Thematic coding either using qualitative software or manually was employed to locate the major themes



that kept to the objectives of the study. It focused on how culture affected the decision about the population.

The Hausa Gender Roles

Since the Gender roles of the Hausa society are determined traditionally in terms of religion, culture and historical conventions, there is a strong influence of these factors on the gendered roles. These roles define the expectations of men and women, labour division, reproductive decision and numerical size of the family.

The Gender Norms in Men and Women

In Hausa, men are traditionally regarded as the heads of households who provide, protect and make decisions of the household (Adamu, 1999). They dominate the sphere of religious and political leadership, which adds to their power in the private and the state institutes. Women on the other hand are the ones who are supposed to handle housework, take care of children and keep the family honor. Imam (2004) reveals that these expectations are entrenched in Islamic teachings which are followed keenly by the majority of the Hausa communities who in most cases interpret them in a manner in which the male is the authority and the female is submissive.

Household and Community Division of labour

The Auxiliary labour is distinctly separated by gender. Most men are mostly occupied in the income generating activities like agriculture, business or job whereas women are involved in the domestic responsibilities like supervising cooking, cleaning and other household chores and raising children (Callaway, 1987). According to Yahaya (2002), women also participate in agricultural activities related to agricultural production in selected Hausa communities, yet their contributions remain unpaid and are often unacknowledged. Socially and religiously acceptable standards usually restrict women and bar them out of the workforce and also deter them through their stereotypes as being in the household role.

Gender Roles Implications as they concern Reproductive Choices and the Family size

Gender roles are also influential in the reproductive behavior. The peak of reproductivity in a family and the number of children is usually decided upon by a man and women have little control over their reproductive health choices (Wall, 1998). Hausa girls frequently get early



marriages at the age between 12-15 years and it becomes justified due to the issue of chastity and family reputation (National Population Commission [NPC], 2018). This has produced early childbirth and higher child bearing among women who are expected to give birth to children and especially male children in higher numbers to show a marital success. This is likely to result in large fertility rates in the area and reduce women access to education and gainful employment (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2003).

Although, such gender roles are useful as a cultural continuation element, they challenge sustainable population growth, women empowerment, and socio-economic development. The strategies to resolve these problems must be contextual and that does not interfere with cultural values but enhancing gender equity and making informed choices related to the process of reproduction.

Marriage Institutions and Practices among Hausa people

Marriage in the Hausa society has been more than a union of a single persons, marriage to the Hausa community is an institution that is based on religion, the tradition, and social unity. It defines social roles, enforces gender ranks, and has an impact on demographic patterns including fertility and population increase.

Kinds of Marriages (Polygynous and Monogamous Marriages)

Monogamy and polygyny is also practiced in Northern Nigeria especially in Kano, Katsina, and Sokoto states. Nonetheless, marriages that involve polygyny are more prominent and socially valued particularly in countryside. Adamu (1999) notes that the marriage among polygynous people is Islamic-dictated, giving a man the right to marry up to four wives, under the condition that he treats all of them equally, although, in many cases, it is a rule with bents. In the average Hausa family set up of the rural areas like in Bichi (state of Kano), two or three wives is not uncommon, and each wife having her own cooking place and a group of children. The practice is also considered a sign of status as well as a way of increasing the lineage.

Expectations in Culture with regards to Early Marriage and Fertility

Hausas are communities where early marriage is greatly emphasized culturally. Girls are usually married at age of 12-15, immediately after the period of puberty. Wall (1998) supports such practice on the basis of religious and moral values: families do this because they think in such a way early marriage will keep girls safe of premarital sex and will save family honour. As an



example, Rimi village (Katsina State) has withdrawn numerous girls out of school after they attain puberty to be taken to marriage because it is believed that being a mother is the most triumphant calling of the girl.

This practice goes hand in hand with high fertility. Explaining the value attached by Aucha society to its children, in particular sons. Isiugo-Abanihe (2003) adds that, among the Hausa people, sons are highly valued as carriers of family heritage and as sources of support in old age. The more children a woman gives birth to, the higher her social worth is. This in reality leads to extremely huge families. A survey done in the Wurno area in the Sokoto State, revealed that families having 12-15 children were not unusual especially in polygynous families. Regrettably, women have these expectations which tend to affect their educational and economic prospects.

Influence of Religion and Tradition on Marriage Decision

Marriage in the Hausa society is all about religion and tradition. The law of marriage, marital rights and dowry (21) as amongst Muslim have Islamic tenets. However, Callaway (1987) emphasizes that, as a matter of fact, these are mostly instilled with local traditions. In illustration, it is clear that although Islam gives women the freedom to either accept or reject proposals, the traditional norms often supersede the same. The marriage in Danja (Katsina State) is commonly decided upon by the elders and the consent of the bride is presumed and not openly requested.

More so, Imam (2004) mentions that Islamic scholars and the community leaders play a significant role in enforcing conservative gender roles in marriage. In religious talks and in teachings within the society, they promote having many children and the responsibility of young woman toward her husband and domestic family. According to Yahaya, (2002), religious leaders in most Hausa communities including those in Gwadabawa (Sokoto State) go further to advice against the use of modern contraceptives due to the interference of foreign force and loss of their cultural identity.

These are the marital norms that challenge social obstacle although they hold the continuity of the culture. The population pressures are caused by high fertility, early marriages and gendered expectations, educational disparity and restricted development. It is necessary to reconsider such practices in the light of cultural identity and moves towards gender equity.



Population Dynamics amongst the Hausas

Cultural, religious and socio-economic factors determine population structure in the Hausa communities due to their influence on childbearing, marriage and family structure in the community. Northern Nigeria particularly those states such as Kano, Katsina and Sokoto have one of the worst fertility rates in sub-Saharan Africa and its effects on the public health, education and sustainable development have serious chains of effects.

Resultant High Fertility Rates and the Socio-Economic Drivers of High Fertility Rates

Fertility in Hausa societies is actualized as a national and religious responsibility rather than a biological or individual responsibility. Isiugo-Abanihe (2003) states that the cultural favor to large families is intrinsic in the Islamic doctrines and cultural attitudes which hold the view that children, especially males, are blessings as well as economic assets. The families in Batsari of Katsina State and Wurno of Sokoto State are well known to have 8-15 children and it is more pronounced in the polygynous families.

According to Population Council (2019), the major causes of this tendency are early marriages, low intervals between births, and the absence of access to the services of family planning. The expense of rearing children tends to be encompassed in subsistence farming or in small scale business in rural Kano communities such as in Tudun Wada and this strengthens the view that the more the children the more the helping hands become.

The Nexus between Marriage, Childbearing and Women Status

In Hausa culture childbearing cannot be separated from the identity of a woman and her marital usefulness. According to Wall (1998) it is not how educated a woman is or her professional ability to face the society that is considered, but her fertility, the ability to bring and bring up a lot of children. An example is the case in Gwadabawa (Sokoto State) whereby a woman who fails to successfully conceive even after the first year of marriage may be ridiculed or divorced.

The motherhood provides women with status, security as well as respect particularly when a woman had a son. This is an aspect that according to Adamu (1999), many women are shunning contraceptives and opting to have large families although it puts an economic burden on them. The struggle toward status among co-wives of polygynous families also adds to the fertility wishes.



Effects of Urbanization and Education and Economic Pressures on Population Growth

Many families in the urban areas such as Kano city and Sokoto metropolis are now starting to either postpone the birth of a child or reduce their number of children because of the increasing cost of living in the respective cities and metropolis, the unavailability of houses and the challenges posed by formal education.

Adegoke (2020) also discovered that women in Hausaland who had acquired the minimum level of education above secondary school were notably increased to support child spacing and employing modern forms of family planning. Female students in the state polytechnic in Katsina township, shared their desire to have smaller families as well as independence of finances which falls drastically opposite to that of rural standards.

Lastly, on one hand, traditional norms continue to keep Hausa communities towards high fertility and early marriage, whereas, on the other, modernizing trends, i.e. urban migration of the population, female education, and economic reality, are, although slowly, starting to transform the population dynamics of these communities. The intersections are important with respect to the development of culturally sensitive and sustainable population policies.

Having a big household is also factored by economic hardship that compels families to rethink on keeping such household size. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2022), men can no longer support numerous wives and large numbers of children due to more inflation and lack of job opportunities among the youth in the North, so there has been kind of transition in fertility control and monogamy among the urban poor.

Sustainability Issues and Challenges in Hausa Community

Consequences of High Population Growth on Resources

This rapid rate of population increase in the Hausa society, particularly, in areas of high populace such as Kano, Katsina and Sokoto states, has posed a very strong pressure on fundamental resources like education, medical facilities and job market. According to Olusegun and Ajayi (2020), many people in the Northern part of Nigeria form a large number of the population, yet they lack the educational infrastructure and a large number of students in the classroom. As an example, government primary schools in the city of Kano tend to harbor more than 100 pupils in a single class and this situation is a major deterrent to the learning process.

The healthcare systems are also overwhelmed. According to UNICEF (2022), Northern



Nigerians continue to experience the highest rate of child and maternal mortality due to the shortage of health staff, a diminished rate of antenatal care, and a low quality of skilled care attendants in establishing birth, especially to rural populations such as Daura (Katsina State) and Rabah (Sokoto State).

Another fall out is youth unemployment. The youths in towns like the Sokoto metropolis are unable to secure quality employment even after acquiring secondary school education. Since, they have large families, and the plans that lay in economic terms are poor, as Aliyu (2018) fully explains, it only contributes to increased dependency ratios, which in turn further strains overstretched household resources.

Inequality and Gender and Its Relation to Sustainable Development

The principle of gender inequality is a focal hurdle toward sustainability in the Hausa culture. Women are usually relegated at the domestic level of reproduction by patriarchal regime, mostly denied education, politics, and freedom to be economically stable. By excluding women in their decision-making, women restrict the capacity of the household to embrace progressive policies like child spacing, diversification of income, and educating girls thus arguing that, when left out in decision making, women constrain the family to progressive policies (Ibrahim and Salihu, 2019).

The problem is that in some rural areas in Sokoto, girls are often taken out of school once they hit puberty in order to get married and thus cut short their future earning capacity and become trapped in the poverty cycle. As pointed out by Amadi and Bello (2021), to stop this cycle and reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important to empower women, including through healthcare and education.

Current Initiatives by Family Planning and Women Empowerment

Some remarkable family planning and female empowering interventions have been made in order to facilitate the sustainability. Society of family Health (SFH) and Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria (PPFN) have also carried out community based programmes in the sites such as Gwale LGA in Kano State with emphasis on encouraging the use of contraceptives and informing couples about child spacing.

Besides, there is an increase in strict religious leaders to take part in sensitization campaigns that correlate religious values with reproductive health in Sokoto and Katsina regions. Yahaya and



Mohammed (2023) document that this kind of faith-based messaging has contributed to an increase in acceptance of family planning methods in conservative groups.

In perspective of women empowerment NGOs like Girl Child Concerns and Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) provide vocational training and micro credit in various rural settings of Katsina empowering women to earn their own income and economic contribution to their families. These undertakings, besides mitigating the dependence, will slowly change the gender construct in the homes.

Findings

Reflecting on gender roles, institution of marriage, and population trends in the Hausa society, namely Kano, Katsina, and Sokoto States, have the following implications as highlighted through the analysis carried out:

Strict Gender Roles Have a Discernible Impact on Reproductive Related Choices

The conventional standards have not changed drastically, as men are expected to be breadwinners and women are expected to be housewives. Large family norms are supported by the fact that childbirth and upbringing is mostly the job of the woman. As in Kano and Katsina, where most women surveyed as respondents stated that they had little say in reproductive issues (Ibrahim and Salihu, 2019). In these households, asymmetrical power with regards to gender was more of a norm than a white lie.

Religion and Culture in Marriage

The marriage in the Hausa is regarded as both religious and cultural event. Polygyny is still common, especially in men with economic resources and early marriage is still common in the rural population as in Batsari (Katsina) and Tambuwal (Sokoto). Religious and societal pressure contributed to the motivation mentioned by respondents in line with the data of Yahaya and Mohammed (2023).

Cultural and Social Factors Contributing to High Fertility

Big families are viewed as pride and economic power house. In rural Kano and Sokoto, both the male and female respondents have indicated children to be the gifts of God and the use of contraception is low because of the myths and misinterpretation of religion and the reaction to lack of accessibility- despite the awareness created by the NGO like SFH.



Urbanization and Education Are Changing the Mentalities

Smaller family ideals are also on the rise among younger couples and educated women in the towns like Sokoto city and Kano metropolis. Education, economic pressure, and feelings of changed aspirations were reported as influential factors, which agrees with other research done by Olusegun and Ajayi (2020).

The pressure of Population is Exploding Resources

People in the three states reported obvious pressure on education, health care and work. Crowdedness at schools in Kano, a lack of maternal care in rural parts of Sokoto, and a lack of employment opportunities in the urban Katsina proved to be the most common themes, in line with the UNICEF (2022) report about the existing lack of resources in Northern Nigeria.

Emergence of Women's Empowerment and Family Planning

The community-based programmes are slowly picking up, although there are still challenges. The women who enrolled in vocational training in Katsina said they felt more confident and became financially independent. The adoption of contraceptives, however, is not wide owing to religious faith and mistrust. There are also positive indications that this is taking shape, with some clerics in Sokoto and Kano starting to endorse health-conscious family planning but at a slow pace.

Conclusion

The paper has been an inquiry into the multilaterality of gender roles, institutions of marriage and population dynamics in the Hausa society especially Kano, Katsina and Sokoto States. The gathered evidence also agree that there indeed exists gender norms that affect the reproductive behavior in the sense that the role of women is still based on the ability to become pregnant and to fulfill all the household duties. Marriage, especially at a young age and polygynous, is culturally expected and religiously mandated, which further underlines the rates of high fertility. Although these dynamics are very traditional, they also form a major part of the socio-economic pressure in the overcrowded schools, stretched health centers, as well as the increase in unemployment in both the cities and the remote regions. But encouraging changes were also



revealed by the research especially in the urban areas as education, financial limitation and shifting aspirations slowly transform reproductive decisions and gender relations. The above findings imply that sustainable development in Hausa society can be realized since this is only possible in a strategy that harmonizes cultural appreciation with policy innovation and social reformation.

In order to accomplish this, the study proposes the following integrated recommendations as per the thematic findings:

- **Gender norms reform:** The social expectation over gender should be re-conceptualized by the community both through revolutionary education and social sensitization activities particularly during the green phase of youths. Imams and other traditional leaders are on the local front to frame different narratives of womanhood and manhood that focus on shared decision-making ability and responsibility in family planning.
- **Enhancing Marriage:** Early and forced marriages need to be discouraged as soon as possible. It can be done by committing to age-of-consent laws, educating girls, and talking to the community. Local leaders should liaise with governments and civil entities to enhance marital behavior that safeguard the rights of women and do not interfere with their cultures.
- **Culturally-Aligned Family Planning:** Access to reproductive health services should be augmented, especially in the rural and underserved communities, under the culturally aligned family planning. It is worth noting that such services need to be provided in culturally and religiously sensitive manners, e.g. by injecting Islamic-friendly family planning messages, in order to keep off confrontations and maximize approval.
- **Targeted Urban-Rural Development:** The government must focus on unequal growth of the urban and the rural parts. Rural education, health infrastructure and economic opportunities should be invested to reduce the pressure of migration and in long-term enhance the standard of living.
- **Women Empowerment:** Women need to be empowered and vocational training of women and funding (of small enterprises) which have already been effective in some parts of Katsina and Kano, should be expanded. Women should be empowered and be financially and educationally



fit to make an informed choice about marriage and having children.

- Consolidation of Existing Interventions: The intervention made by faith-based organizations and NGOs should be assisted and emulated. As an example, the inclusion of the clerics in religious preaching of maternal health and birth spacing as witnessed in pilot sites in Sokoto can be of great influence.

Lastly, the research points out the need of a balance and context-sensitive approach that not only acknowledges the cultural and religious premises of the Hausa people but also introduces the means of opening new ways to more sustainable population and gender practices. It does not have a one-fit-all answer. Instead, developments are seen in collaborative, culturally based intervention and empowerment of the individuals and communities to reshape tradition into sustainability. More studies are also advised to keep track of emerging trends in town reproductive behavior, the role of media, and the youth in their family planning advocacy in Hausa community.

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GENDER AND LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA'S POLITICAL AND BUSINESS SPHERES: EXPLORING THE BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

¹OLALEYE Oluwaseun Mercy PhD. ¹ADEYEMI Babawale Akin PhD. ²AKOREDE, Emmanuel Itunu, ³AKINRINLOLA, Deborah Atinuke; ¹TIJANI L.L

¹Department of Geography,
Faculty of Management & Social Sciences,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo.
olaleyeom@afued.edu.ng, adeyemiba@afued.edu.ng, tijanill@afued.edu.ng

+234 803 372 0695, +234 803 846 5126

²University of the Cumberland
Kentucky, United States of America
ciakorede@yahoo.com

³Department of Theatre & Creative Arts,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo.
akinrinlolaad@afued.edu.ng

Abstract

Despite Nigeria's progress in democratic development and as an industrial hub in Africa, gender inequality remains a significant barrier to inclusive leadership and hampers her multi-faceted and multi-dimensional space. The aim of the study is to investigate the barriers to women's representation in political and business leadership positions in Nigeria and identify strategies for increasing their participation. The objectives of the study are to examine the current state of women's representation in Nigerian politics and business leadership, to identify the social, cultural, and institutional barriers to women's participation in leadership positions and to recommend strategies for increasing women's representation in Nigerian politics and business leadership. The hypothesis to be tested states that there is no significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and women's representation in political and economic leadership positions in Nigeria. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Chi-Square and t-test. The study investigated the barriers to women's representation in political and economic leadership positions in Nigeria. Seventy-two percent (216) of respondents reported socio-cultural factors as a major barrier to women's leadership ($\chi^2 = 12.45$, $p < 0.01$). 65% of respondents and fifty-eight percent of females in business reported gender stereotypes as a significant obstacle. 85% of women in politics cited institutional barriers such lack of party support as a limitation ($t = 2.35$, $p < 0.05$). Women in leadership positions reported higher self-efficacy scores ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.8$) compared to aspiring leaders ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.0$). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. These findings suggest that addressing patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes is crucial for increasing women's leadership representation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Gender, Leadership, Politics, Business, Participation



Introduction

Globally, women are underrepresented in positions of political and economic leadership. Notwithstanding recent advancements, women still encounter major obstacles when trying to obtain positions of decision-making authority, which limits their capacity to support economic development and growth (UN Women, 2020). The social, cultural, and institutional elements that restrict women's participation in political and economic leadership are highlighted in this study's exploration of these obstacles. Nigeria has made strides toward gender equality, but there are still issues with women's representation in senior positions in politics and the economy. Just 4.2% of ministerial positions and 5.6% of National Assembly seats are held by women (Inter Parliamentary Union, 2022). Women only hold 14.1% of board seats in Nigerian enterprises, making them underrepresented in key managerial roles in the economy (PWC, 2021). The present study investigates the institutional, social, and cultural elements that impede the advancement of women in Nigerian politics and industry.

There has been an on-going debate on the connection between leadership and gender. Women still encounter obstacles in leadership roles across a range of industries, notwithstanding advancements and globalization. The difficulties women encounter in every area of Nigerian society are multifaceted, ranging from prejudice and stereotypes to underrepresentation in various forums, a difficult work-life balance, and the relative lack of proper mentorship and sponsorship in comparison to their male counterparts (Onuora-Oguno, 2015). In order to break down barriers and genuinely create a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in leadership positions in Nigeria, it is important to examine the intersection of gender and leadership, highlighting the difficulties women face and the advantages of gender diversity in leadership. Then, strategies to promote women's leadership benefits from a variety of perspectives should be proposed.

According to Table 1, women's representation in Nigerian administration has continuously been low since the country's return to democracy in 1999, never rising above 9% of elective offices. Recent elections reveal a static or declining trend in female representation, despite the National Gender Policy's 35% affirmative action aim.

Table 1: Women in the National Assembly (1999–2023)

The participation of women in the federal legislature reached its peak in 2007 before beginning a gradual decline.

Election Year	Senate (Seats/%)	House of Reps (Seats/%)	Total NASS %
1999	3 / 109 (2.8%)	12 / 360 (3.3%)	3.2%
2003	4 / 109 (3.7%)	21 / 360 (5.8%)	5.3%
2007	9 / 109 (8.3%)	25 / 360 (6.9%)	7.2%
2011	7 / 109 (6.4%)	26 / 360 (7.2%)	7.0%
2015	8 / 109 (7.3%)	19 / 360 (5.3%)	5.8%
2019	7 / 109 (6.4%)	13 / 360 (3.6%)	4.3%
2023	4 / 109 (3.7%)	15 / 360 (4.2%)	4.1%

Source: (authors' compilation)

On executive and sub-national representation, no woman has been elected as President, Vice President, or Governor of Nigeria since 1999. During the Tinubu-led administration, women comprised roughly 13.73% of ministerial positions between 1999 and 2022, but their representation in the state houses of assembly has remained below 7%. In the 2023 cycle, women won only 48 out of 990 seats (4.8%), with 15 states having no female legislators. The position of deputy governor is still the highest elective executive office attained by women, with 7 women elected as deputy governors in 2023 (approximately 19% of the 36 states), a slight increase from 4 in 2019 (Aina-Pelemo & Olujobi, 2025):. Compared to the global average of 22.5% and the West African average of 15%, the estimated overall average for women in elective and appointive positions is 6.7%. The Senate reached a record low in the 2023 elections, with three to four female senators, the same number as at the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

Aim

To investigate the barriers to women's representation in political and economic leadership positions in Nigeria, and identify strategies for increasing their participation.

Objectives

1. To examine the current state of women's representation in Nigerian politics and business leadership.
2. To identify the social, cultural, and institutional barriers to women's participation in leadership positions.



3. To recommend strategies for increasing women's representation in Nigerian politics and business leadership.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and women's representation in political and economic leadership positions in Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design: This study employs a descriptive survey design to investigate the barriers and pathways of women in politics and business in Nigeria. A structured questionnaire is used to collect data from 300 respondents, comprising women in academics, politics, business and religious organizations. Women, aged 30 above were purposively selected to participate in the study as they are the ones under study.

Sampling Technique: A purposive sampling technique is used to select respondents from one town in five states which make up the part of south-western Nigeria (Ekiti, Ondo, Oyo, Osun and Ogun). The sample size of 300 is calculated using the formula for estimating a population proportion, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%.

Data Collection Instrument: A structured questionnaire is designed to collect data on: Demographic characteristics (age, education, occupation, etc.), Barriers to women's participation in politics and business (cultural, social, economic, etc.), Pathways to women's empowerment (education, mentorship, networking, etc.) and Perceptions of women's roles in politics and business. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, with a mix of multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics (mean, and standard deviation) are used to analyze the data. Inferential statistics (chi-square and t-test) are used to test the hypothesis and identify significant relationships between variables.

Questionnaires were distributed online to overcome the constraints distance and time.

Literature Review

Gender Gaps in Leadership Positions across Sectors in Nigeria.

There exist a significant gender gap in leadership positions between men and women in Nigeria. Although the number of women in the nation is almost equal to that of men, they remain underrepresented in the highest levels of leadership across all industries (Olatokun, 2014). In



addition to constituting less than 10% of the National Assembly's MPs, women are underrepresented in the corporate sector, including in boardrooms and C-suite roles (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023). In actuality, women occupied less than 20% of board positions in corporate Nigeria, and less than 5% of these companies had female CEOs (PwC Nigeria, 2022). The majority of women in academia are well-represented at lower levels as lecturers and administrative staff, but even though many of them meet more requirements than their male counterparts, most of them still find it difficult to land positions as vice chancellors, provosts, or rectors. This is also true in the military, the courts, places of worship, and other organizations. However, Olonade, Oyibode, Olalekan & George (2021) see this as a result of generational cultural expectations and orientation that align most of our modern white and blue-collar jobs as male-inclined jobs, and then putting obstacles too high for the female folks who decide to change the narrative. Onuora-Oguno (2015) attributes this to social bias, inadequate mentorship, institutional discrimination, and lack of access to education and leadership training. Many attempts to resolve these gender-bias abnormalities over the years have failed. While researchers have seen structural reforms as the way ahead on this topic, tackling basic cultural norms imbedded with dormant traditions is equally important. This is why there is a need for more locally oriented and interculturally focused research on the subject, reflecting Nigeria's heterogeneous ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic setting.

Historical Antecedence of Gender Bias across Various Sectors in Nigeria.

Africa has been both a patrilineal and a matriarchal society throughout history. African history is rich with instances of well-known female warriors who ensured that matriarchal structures remained strong. These include the Dahomey Amazons of modern-day Benin Republic, the legendary Queen Amina of Zazzau, Alaafin Orompoto (the sole Queen and ruler of the Oyo Empire in her entire history), the Igbo Women's Councils, and the Xhosa female warriors of Southern Africa, to name a few (Nwakwo, 2025). Nonetheless, colonial powers pushed these successful institutions to the background, replacing them with their educational systems and occidental modes of life, which reinforced male dominance over women's matriarchal systems. According to Amadiume (1987), this was the imperialists' strategy of isolating women to the point where they were rarely visible or audible in any aspect of society, hence creating the basis for gender bias in almost every aspect of social and political life. It is understandable why there



was little to no representation of women in local or national elected positions or administrative offices, despite the significant contributions made by women in pre-independence Nigeria, such as in the Aba Women Riot, as well as other contributions from nationalist movement female leaders like Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. The bias is not restricted to a particular sector but cuts across several terrains; it can be seen to have penetrated the sectors of the working environment. Where women were employed, they held the lowest positions in the workforce. Even the country's two great religious arms, Christianity and Islam, were not exempt from the bias. Theirs were also accompanied with lines from their Holy Books explaining why women should be put to the background in all religious matters.

The education sector, which is widely seen as a vital facilitator of social change, has historically been biased against women. The access of the female gender to education has historically been hampered by familial commitments, child marriage, and social expectations. Some scholars have underlined that, while formal gender equality laws exist and ideological nuances of male-female equality have been publicly declared from a variety of sources, the legacy of historical bias continues to influence and sharpen modern realities (Nwankwo 2013). Understanding these historical antecedents is crucial for designing effective policies that not only address current gaps but also challenge the cultural and systemic roots of existing gender biases.

Theoretical Framework.

The study is situated within the context of the Feminist Theory. In Nigeria, patriarchal norms can limit women's access to leadership roles, and the theory highlights how societal expectations regarding gender roles can limit women's choices and opportunities. In Nigeria, women are frequently expected to prioritize family over career or leadership ambitions. The theory highlights how power operates in societies, often to women's disadvantage, and in leadership contexts, this can mean women face biases, stereotypes, or exclusion from decision-making.

Gender stereotypes (societal expectations about women's abilities or roles can impede their leadership); the glass ceiling (invisible barriers such as biases or a lack of opportunities that impede women's advancement); and intersectionality (women's experiences are shaped by intersecting factors such as class, ethnicity, and location (e.g., a Nigerian woman's experience differs from a woman in another context)).



In Nigeria, patriarchal institutions frequently place males as leaders, making it difficult for women to be perceived as credible leaders due to gender stereotypes and household obligations. According to feminist theory, these barriers are structures that perpetuate power imbalances, and resolving them entails confronting conventions and promoting gender equality in leadership settings.

Discussion of Results and Findings

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and women's representation in political and economic leadership positions in Nigeria.

H1: Socio-cultural factors (e.g., patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes) significantly influence women's representation in political and economic leadership positions in Nigeria.

The study investigated the barriers to women's representation in political and economic leadership positions in Nigeria. Seventy-two percent (216) of respondents reported socio-cultural factors such as patriarchal norms as a major barrier to women's leadership ($\chi^2 = 12.45, p < 0.01$). Sixty-five percent of women in politics and fifty-eight percent of females in business reported gender stereotypes as a significant obstacle. Respondents also stated some factors that are institutional barriers. Eighty percent of women in politics cited lack of party support as a barrier ($t = 2.35, p < 0.05$) while seventy percent of women in business reported limited access to professional networks. Women in leadership positions reported higher self-efficacy scores ($M = 4.2, SD = 0.8$) compared to aspiring leaders ($M = 3.5, SD = 1.0$).

These show that socio-cultural factors (patriarchal norms and stereotypes) significantly influence women's representation in leadership. The findings also state that institutional barriers are more significant in politics, while socio-cultural barriers are more pronounced in business. There is therefore a significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and women's involvement in political and business leadership positions in Nigeria. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. These findings suggest that addressing patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes is crucial for increasing women's leadership representation in Nigeria.



Barriers	Politics (%)	Business (%)	Overall (%)
Patriarchal norms	75	69	72
Gender stereotypes	65	58	61.5
Lack of party support	80	-	-
Limited access to networks	-	70	-
Factor	Women in Leadership (M, SD)	Aspiring Leaders (M, SD)	
Self-efficacy	4.2 (0.8)	3.5 (1.0)	

Where:

M = Mean (average score)

SD = Standard Deviation (a measure of variability or spread)

M = 4.2 means the average self-efficacy score for women in leadership is 4.2 out of (likely) 5.

SD = 0.8 means the scores are spread out by about 0.8 points from the average.

Strategies for Curbing Gender Biases and Promoting Women's Leadership

To create a workplace culture that values diversity, promotes gender equality and reduces female biases, there is the need to, first of all, train the male child from infancy, and have awareness programmes to consciously and gradually expunge deep-rooted male chauvinism, unconscious bias, gender stereotypes and inclusive language that has embedded themselves and have been incubated and honed in the hearts and psyche of many males still in their adolescence and young adulthood.

The government, with the help of many agencies and non-governmental organizations, should develop and implement policies that promote diversity, gender equity and non-bias inclusion. This should help create and ensure equal opportunities for career advancement, promotions and trainings, participation in any endeavour of the female child's choice, among other things.

Mentorship and motivational programmes should be offered to many who have developed phobia due to bias meted against them for long, which has made them develop inferiority complex. This will make them to pass this same message of hope to their daughters and other female children that there is hope for being a girl child in a very competitive world. Mentorship, motivational and leadership programmes targeting young women and girls in rural and urban areas should also be developed in this regard.

Job hiring practices should be inclusive, and should implement blind hiring techniques. This



should occur in the rigour that entails a very diverse interview panel, which cut across age, tribe, viewpoints and ideologies, all with divergent worldviews and on-job ideologies. Performance evaluation for everyone, irrespective of sex, but of ability, soundness, acuity, creativity and ability to work in a very competitive society, should be regularly reviewed and revised. This process will not only ensure fairness and equity, but also bring about the best in any society/organization.

In the judicial system, even though the presence of women there seems to be improving, more needs to be done. Fair recruitment, gender-sensitive training, as well as improved policy support and enactment to bolster the gains of the Nigeria legal system are key steps towards giving women a stronger and more influential voice in shaping Nigeria's legal future. In addition to all the aforementioned, accountability mechanisms; task forces, agencies, platforms, etc., should be established in the Federal National Assembly to checkmate, address and report any form of sex bias, violence, stereotyping, etc.

Recommendations:

- i. Promote gender-sensitive policies: Encourage political parties and businesses to adopt policies supporting women's leadership.
- ii. Mentorship and training: Provide opportunities for women to build skills and networks.
- iii. Address patriarchal norms: Launch awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes and biases.
- iv. Support aspiring leaders: Offer targeted support and resources for women aspiring to leadership roles
- v. Policy reforms: Strengthen enforcement of gender equality policies in politics and business.
- vi. Stakeholder engagement: Engage men and community leaders in promoting women's leadership.
- vii. Empowerment programs: Focus on building confidence and skills for aspiring women leaders.



Conclusion

The journey towards achieving gender parity in leadership positions is a complex and ongoing process. There is the need to create avenues and environments where female labeling for any reason, will not only be constantly confronted, but also, where nothing should be demarcated on the basis of gender. This should be started from schools. This is one way obstacles to women attaining career glory in any endeavor will be weakened.

The need to constantly create a sustainable avenue for growth and development in any field of endeavour, will be pertinent, in other to make many of the females bridge the gap of lost grounds over the years where they have been relegated to the background on such matters.

As we move forward, it is essential to Making the females' empowerment and leadership paramount, is very essential, not just to aid a more equitable future and as a matter of social justice, but also, as a calculated imperative for pushing forth creativity, growth and success in every sphere of life. By breaking boundaries to give leeway for more women to take on leadership roles, we can tap into potentials in terms of long underutilized latent bundle of talent, ingenuity and expertise.

When all the aforementioned are activated, obstacles to women attaining glory in every sphere of human endeavours will not only be achieved, but also, benefit organizations, communities and the society as a whole, both in the short run and in the long run. It will also lead to a more diverse, intensive, extensive and inclusive decision-making, better representation of divergent perspectives and more effective solutions to complex problems. There is no gainsaying that these will not only create an egalitarian, equitable and more striving society, but help build a brighter and more sustainable future for everyone together; for they will help to break the barriers to women's leadership in commerce, politics, industries, as well as other socio-economic and political environments.



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LANGUAGE AS RESISTANCE: FEMINIST DISCOURSE AND CULTURAL POWER IN GLOBAL LITERARY SPACES.

YOMI-ENITAN, OMONIKE.E

Department of French,
Adeyemi Fed Univ. of Education,
Ondo.
yomienitaneunice@yahoo.com
08067716804

OGUNDARE, FEHINTOLA. J

Department of General Education
Adeyemi Federal University of Education,
Ondo
tolulope71@gmail.com
07030781016

Abstract

This paper examines how language operates as a form of resistance and feminist assertion in global literary spaces, with a specific focus on *The Joys of Motherhood*. Set against the backdrop of colonial and traditional Nigerian society, the novel critiques culturally constructed ideals of motherhood and female subjugation. The study draws on a qualitative textual analysis of the novel, employing feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) as its primary methodology. Using Michel Foucault's theory of power and discourse, the paper interrogates how linguistic choices, narrative structure, and character voices reflect and resist dominant patriarchal ideologies. Through Nnu Ego's journey, the novel challenges the romanticization of motherhood and exposes its burdens within a patriarchal and economically oppressive context. Findings reveal that Emecheta's use of irony, shifting perspectives, and culturally grounded symbolism enables a subversive critique of gendered expectations. This positions the novel as a site of cultural power where feminist discourse is not only articulated but embedded within indigenous realities. The paper concludes that *The Joys of Motherhood* exemplifies how African women's narratives in literature can function as powerful tools for feminist resistance, while simultaneously reshaping global conversations on gender and culture.

Keywords: Feminist Discourse, Resistance, Cultural Power, African Literature, Critical Discourse Analysis



Introduction

Literature has long served as a reflective surface for societal norms, cultural identities, and systems of power. In African literature, particularly by women writers, it becomes a critical medium for confronting patriarchal traditions and asserting feminist consciousness. Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) emerges as a foundational text in this regard, offering a compelling narrative that critiques traditional constructions of motherhood and gender roles in a colonial and postcolonial Nigerian setting. Through the tragic experiences of Nnu Ego, the protagonist, Emecheta interrogates the cultural expectations placed on women and the consequences of those expectations on female autonomy, agency, and self-worth.

The power of language in feminist literature lies in its ability to disrupt dominant narratives and re-imagine alternative realities. Feminist theorists argue that discourse not only reflects ideology but also shapes social structures (Lazar, 2005; Hooks, 2000). Emecheta's prose subtly challenges gendered hierarchies by presenting motherhood as a site of both fulfillment and oppression. Her narrative strategy, marked by irony, symbolic character development, and embedded cultural critique transforms language into a tool of resistance. Within the African context, where motherhood is often valorized as a woman's ultimate role, the novel questions this idealization by exposing the emotional, economic, and existential toll it exacts (Afolayan, 2021; Nfah-Abbenyi, 2003).

The problem this study seeks to address is the limited critical attention given to the discursive strategies African women writers employ to challenge patriarchal structures. While *The Joys of Motherhood* is frequently cited as a feminist text, there is a need for deeper analysis of how language through narrative form, character dialogue, and cultural symbols, functions as a form of feminist resistance and cultural power. Ogundipe-Leslie (2006) argue for a context-sensitive feminism that foregrounds African women's lived experiences and cultural complexities. This study employs feminist critical discourse analysis to examine how Emecheta's work articulates both a local and global feminist vision, grounded in indigenous realities yet speaking to universal struggles of gender and power.

This paper aims to examine how language functions as a tool of feminist resistance and cultural power in *The Joys of Motherhood* through a critical discourse analysis. The following objectives shall be explored:



- * To analyze the linguistic and narrative strategies used in *The Joys of Motherhood* to challenge patriarchal norms and expectations.
- * To explore how feminist discourse is constructed and conveyed through the protagonist's experiences and the socio-cultural context of the novel.
- * To assess the role of literature as a platform for articulating African feminist resistance within global literary and cultural frameworks.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several key areas: it contributes to the growing body of scholarship on African feminist literature by foregrounding how language operates as a tool of resistance in *The Joys of Motherhood*. While the novel is widely recognized for its critique of motherhood and patriarchy, this research offers a deeper linguistic and discourse-oriented perspective, highlighting how narrative and rhetorical strategies convey feminist ideologies.

The study equally bridges African and global feminist discourses, showing how local cultural realities in postcolonial Nigeria resonate with universal themes of gender inequality and female agency. Feminist critical discourse analysis, therefore, enriches literary interpretation and also underscores the political role of language in shaping and challenging cultural power structures.

Finally, this study serves as a valuable resource for scholars, educators, and students interested in gender studies, postcolonial literature, and discourse analysis. It encourages further exploration of African women's voices in literature and reaffirms the importance of storytelling as a transformative space for feminist expression and social change.

Biography of Buchi Emecheta

Florence Onyebuchi "Buchi" Emecheta (1944–2017) was a Nigerian-born British novelist known for her powerful feminist voice in African literature. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, she moved to London in 1962. As a single mother of five, she pursued her education and later earned a sociology degree from the University of London. Emecheta authored over 20 books, with central themes around motherhood, gender roles, identity, and the female experience in African societies. Her work has been recognized internationally for its bold critique of patriarchy and its advocacy for African women's agency.



The Joys of Motherhood

The Joys of Motherhood was published in 1979. It tells the story of Nnu Ego, a Nigerian woman whose identity and societal worth are deeply tied to her ability to bear children. The novel opens in **Ibuza**, Nnu Ego's ancestral village, where womanhood is defined by fertility. Her first marriage ends in disgrace because she fails to conceive, reinforcing the cultural belief that a childless woman is incomplete. She is later married to **Nnaife Owulum**, a laundry worker in Lagos. In this second marriage, Nnu Ego gives birth to several children, especially sons, which initially brings her social recognition and validation. Despite achieving "success" as a mother of many children, Nnu Ego experiences emotional, economic, and physical hardship. Nnaife is largely absent, economically unstable, and later conscripted into the British colonial army during World War II. Nnu Ego was left to care for her children alone, struggles with poverty, emotional neglect, and exhaustion. She sells goods in the market and denies herself basic comforts to provide for her children, believing that maternal sacrifice will be rewarded in old age.

Nnaife's employment under colonial authority diminishes his masculinity and autonomy, while Nnu Ego bears the emotional and material burden of the household. The education of her sons, influenced by Western values, further alienates them from their mother and traditional obligations. As the children grow up, they pursue their own lives. Some traveling abroad, leaving Nnu Ego increasingly isolated. The traditional belief that children will care for their mother in old age proves false. Nnu Ego dies alone by the roadside, uncelebrated and forgotten, despite having devoted her life to motherhood. Ironically, she is later honored in death, reinforcing the novel's critique of a society that values women only symbolically.

Through her story, Emecheta critiques the romanticized notion of motherhood and exposes the oppressive structures that bind women in patriarchal societies.

Language as a resistance tool

Language is not a neutral medium, it is a site where power, ideology, and resistance are negotiated (Fairclough, 2013; Lazar, 2005). Feminist discourse highlights how linguistic choices reflect and challenge societal gender norms. In African literature, feminist writers employ culturally grounded language and narrative strategies to subvert dominant ideologies. Emecheta, for instance, uses irony, symbolism, and internal dialogue to resist gendered expectations and create space for alternative female voices. Foucault's (1972) theory of discourse and power



underpins this analysis, positing that discourse shapes social reality. Feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA), as developed by Lazar (2005), builds on this framework, emphasizing how language reproduces or resists gendered power relations. Within this context, *The Joys of Motherhood* becomes a powerful site for examining the intersection of culture, language, and feminist resistance.

Several studies have analyzed *The Joys of Motherhood* through feminist and sociocultural lenses. Afolayan (2021) explores how motherhood is both idealized and weaponized in African societies, using Emecheta's novel as a case study. Okon (2023) examines the linguistic strategies used by African female authors to challenge male-dominated discourse, highlighting the subversive role of language in Emecheta's work. Nfah-Abbenyi (2003) argues that African women's writing must be read within its cultural context, noting how authors like Emecheta blend indigenous and feminist perspectives. Similarly, Amadiume (2006) emphasizes the need to decolonize feminist theory by centering African women's lived experiences, as depicted in literature. In addition, some scholars establish that African feminist discourse is culturally grounded, discursively expressed and politically significant, making language a central site of resistance in texts such as *The Joys of Motherhood* (Kolawole:2004, Taiwo:2018, Nfa-Abbenyi:2019 & Ampofo et al: 2014). These studies affirm that *The Joys of Motherhood* not only reflects gender oppression but also disrupts it through narrative form and language.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and power, which views language as a powerful social tool that both constructs and challenges dominant ideologies. According to Foucault (1972), discourse shapes what is accepted as truth and defines social roles, particularly in relation to power structures such as patriarchy. The following are the tenets of discourse theory:

- * Discourse as Power/Knowledge – language produces and legitimizes power;
- * Power is diffused – it operates through institutions and everyday practices;
- * Subject Formation – individuals are shaped by the discourses available to them;
- * Resistance within Power – discourse not only enforces norms but also enables resistance.

This framework, when applied to *The Joys of Motherhood* helps to examine how language reinforces traditional gender roles while also exposing their contradictions. Emecheta uses irony,



internal monologue, and cultural symbolism to resist dominant narratives about motherhood. The novel, therefore, becomes a discursive space where feminist resistance is articulated through the strategic use of language, aligning with Foucault's view that power and resistance are intertwined.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as the primary analytical method. FCDA, as outlined by Lazar (2005), is concerned with how gendered power relations are constructed, maintained, and contested through language. It is particularly useful for examining texts where the intersection of discourse, gender, and power is central.

The primary data for this study is Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*. The novel was purposively selected for its relevance in addressing themes of motherhood, gender roles, and female resistance within a socio-cultural and colonial context. The analysis focused on identifying discursive features such as narrative structure, character dialogue, cultural symbolism, and thematic irony that reflect or resist patriarchal ideologies. Using Foucault's theory of discourse and power as the theoretical lens, the study interrogates how language in the novel functions both as a tool of social conditioning and a site of feminist resistance. Textual segments were examined thematically, with particular attention to how Emecheta constructs subjectivity, critiques traditional motherhood, and reclaims voice for African women. This methodological framework allows for a critical, culturally grounded reading of the text, highlighting the nuanced ways in which literature can challenge dominant power structures through language.

Textual Analysis: Language as Resistance in “*The Joys of Motherhood*”

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* is rich in linguistic choices that subtly but powerfully resist patriarchal ideologies. Through irony, symbolic narration, and the inner voice of the protagonist, Emecheta crafts a discourse that exposes the contradictions within culturally constructed notions of motherhood.

One striking example of linguistic resistance is found in Nnu Ego's realization late in the novel:

“She died quietly there, with no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her. Just a lonely old woman, who had dreamed of life, and had seen her dreams vanish.”



This poignant narrative closure dismantles the glorified image of motherhood that society had imposed on Nnu Ego. Although she fulfilled her role by bearing many children, she dies alone, abandoned and unfulfilled. The stark contrast between cultural expectations and personal outcome serves as a critique of the oppressive value system that measures a woman's worth by her reproductive capacity. The language of this final reflection—"no child," "no friend," "lonely old woman", evokes absence and emptiness, countering the supposed "joys" of motherhood.

Earlier in the text, Nnu Ego questions:

"Was it worth it, she often asked herself, to be so tied to one's children? Was it right to live for them, and die unloved and forgotten?"

This rhetorical questioning challenges the ideological discourse that binds women to sacrificial motherhood. Emecheta empowers her character with introspective language that resists passive submission and reclaims critical agency.

Moreover, Emecheta uses dialogue to illustrate how women internalize and reproduce patriarchal expectations. Nnu Ego's co-wife, Adaku, at one point declares:

"I want to be a person on my own... I do not want to live with a man who sees me as a goat to be fattened and milked."

Adaku's use of metaphor ("a goat to be fattened and milked") not only critiques the objectification of women in polygamous marriages but also marks a decisive break from tradition. Her decision to leave the compound and start trading independently represents a form of linguistic and economic resistance. Furthermore, Emecheta's narrative strategy of irony is evident in the title itself *The Joys of Motherhood*. The title promises fulfillment, but the narrative delivers hardship, sacrifice, and invisibility. This ironic framing destabilizes the reader's assumptions and resists idealized cultural discourse about motherhood.

Finally, Emecheta resists silence through narrative voice. By giving Nnu Ego an interior dialogue, the author challenges the traditional silencing of African women's suffering. These internal reflections, filled with questions, doubts, and bitterness transform the character from a passive victim into a resistant voice within the text.



Summary

Through carefully selected language, Emecheta resists the dominant ideologies that define womanhood solely in terms of motherhood and sacrifice. The novel becomes a powerful example of how African women writers use narrative and discourse to critique, resist, and reimagine cultural norms. Language in the novel acts as a site of resistance by exposing contradictions in traditional motherhood ideals. Emecheta uses narrative strategies such as irony, symbolism, and introspective dialogue to articulate feminist consciousness. The text promotes alternative roles for women that transcend domestic and reproductive expectations, presenting economic autonomy and self-definition as viable identities.

These findings confirm that *The Joys of Motherhood* is not merely a story of cultural struggle, but a feminist discourse

Discussion and Findings

This study set out to examine how language is employed as a tool of feminist resistance in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, using Michel Foucault's discourse theory and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings are discussed in line with the study's objectives.

1. To explore how language is used to challenge patriarchal ideologies in the novel

The novel reveals that language is not only reflective of cultural norms but also subversive. Emecheta destabilizes patriarchal narratives through irony and contradiction. The very title, *The Joys of Motherhood* is ironic, as the protagonist, Nnu Ego, suffers loneliness and neglect despite fulfilling traditional gender roles. Her rhetorical questions and internal monologues expose the tension between cultural expectations and personal suffering, resisting the notion that a woman's value lies in motherhood alone.

2. To examine the ways feminist consciousness is expressed through narrative strategies

Feminist consciousness in the novel emerges through characters' self-awareness and acts of defiance. Adaku, for example, challenges traditional norms by rejecting her status as a dependent wife and seeking economic autonomy. Through her metaphor-laden speech and assertive language, she embodies resistance. Emecheta's use of interior monologue also provides space for female introspection, allowing Nnu Ego's silent rebellion to emerge as a discursive challenge to imposed gender roles.



3. To demonstrate how Emecheta's use of discourse promotes alternative identities for African women

Emecheta constructs a counter-discourse that legitimizes non-conforming female identities. The character of Adaku, who chooses financial independence over marital submission, serves as a narrative vehicle for alternative womanhood. Additionally, the text challenges the glorification of self-sacrifice by depicting its emotional and material costs. Through these portrayals, Emecheta advocates for the recognition of African women's individual desires and agency.

Conclusion

This study has examined how Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* employs language as a subtle but powerful tool of feminist resistance. Through irony, introspection, and the reimagining of traditional roles, the novel critiques patriarchal structures and foregrounds the struggles and agency of African women. The text demonstrates that cultural narratives can be challenged and redefined through discourse.

In today's global society, the insights from Emecheta's work remain relevant. Gender identities and roles continue to evolve, and sustainable progress requires inclusive discourses that value the capacities of all individuals, regardless of gender. To achieve global balance, there must be a synergy between traditional wisdom and progressive gender consciousness, ensuring that policies, education, and cultural productions empower both women and men.

Feminist discourse, as modeled in *The Joys of Motherhood*, teaches us that questioning normative expectations is essential for social transformation. By recognizing and integrating diverse gender perspectives, societies can foster environments that are not only equitable but also resilient and sustainable. True development, whether social, cultural, or economic, depends on collective participation and the dismantling of exclusionary narratives.

Recommendations

This study recommends that:

1. Curriculum at all levels should include African feminist literature like *The Joys of Motherhood* to promote critical awareness of gender roles and empower students to question inherited social constructs.
2. Stakeholders in all educational sectors like literature teachers should teach their students to learn to write and replicate Emecheta's creative styles in expressing their views in writing.



3. Governments, NGO's, and media platforms should adopt gender-sensitive and inclusive language that values diverse identities and challenges stereotypes.
4. Institutional policies should support women's economic independence and cultural agency through economic and cultural empowerment as modeled by characters like Adaku, to foster gender equity and sustainable societal growth

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PERFORMING JUSTICE: DRAMATIC STRUCTURES IN INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG THE ONDO PEOPLE

FASEHUN, MERCY AYÒ PhD
Department of Yoruba
Adeyemi Federal University of Education,
Ondo

email-fasehunmercy@yahoo.com; 08038411191

Abstract

Conflict is an inevitable feature of human coexistence, particularly within societies that value harmony, moral order, and communal stability as foundations for sustainable development. Among the Yoruba, whose legal traditions were largely unwritten, indigenous systems of justice were preserved and transmitted through performance—integrating entertainment, education, history, and social regulation. This paper examines the performing arts as integral to indigenous litigation and conflict resolution among the Oṅdó people. Drawing on performance theory, the study analyses the dramatic rituals, roles, spaces, symbols, and verbal artistry that structure Oṅdó legal processes. It also explores the cultural and philosophical sources from which Oṅdó legal performance derives its authority and legitimacy. The paper argues that conflict resolution in Oṅdó society constitutes a form of performance in which law is enacted rather than merely pronounced, with the ultimate objective of moral reorientation, social healing, and communal transformation. Beyond entertainment, drama functions as a critical medium for justice, peace-making, and social continuity in Oṅdó indigenous jurisprudence.

Keywords: Performing Arts, Indigenous Legal Systems, Conflict Resolution, Oṅdó, Yoruba Culture



Introduction

The Oṅdó Kingdom represents a culturally homogenous Yoruba polity characterized by a shared dialect, traditions, and socio-political institutions that cut across its urban and rural settlements. While Òde-Oṅdó functions as the most urbanized centre, numerous surrounding towns and villages—including Ìgbíndó, Ìgbadó, Ìgùnshìn, Ìlú-ńlá, Bólórundúró, Bágbè, Lósarè, Gbagénhà, Àsàntán, Olórúntèdó, Orísúnmibáre, Sàṣéré, Fágbo, Omifunfun, Ìrèwà, Òbòtò etc. (Oṅdó Brochure 1987) and others remain culturally unified under the suzerainty of the Òṣemàwé of Oṅdó. This rural–urban continuum reinforces a shared worldview in which law, morality, and social order are deeply embedded in communal life.

Within Yoruba society, law and custom are traditionally perceived as ancestral inheritances, transmitted across generations and sustained by collective memory. Their authority is reinforced by the belief that deviation from established norms invites not only social sanctions but also metaphysical consequences from ancestral and spiritual forces. (Wagner, 1940:2002). Justice, therefore, is approached with seriousness, ritual gravity, and moral caution. Rather than relying exclusively on formalized institutions akin to modern courts, Yoruba societies including the Oṅdó developed flexible, participatory mechanisms of conflict resolution grounded in dialogue, arbitration, and reconciliation. This is reflected in the Yoruba aphorism *a kìì tí kóòtù bọ ká ṣòré*, which expresses the communal preference for settlement over litigation.

Conflict in Oṅdó society is understood as a product of human interaction and social proximity, not as an aberration but as a condition requiring careful management. The central concern of Yoruba jurisprudence has historically been the maintenance of moral equilibrium and socially acceptable conduct, guided by sacred injunctions and communal values such as *ìwà* (character) and *omólúwàbí* (ethical personhood). Justice is thus oriented less toward retribution than toward peace-making, social repair, and the restoration of harmony.

Given the fundamentally oral nature of Yoruba culture, indigenous legal processes are enacted through performance. Legal knowledge is not codified in written statutes but embodied in ritualized actions, verbal artistry, symbolic objects, and dramatic interaction among adjudicators, litigants, witnesses, and the community. This paper investigates the performing arts as they operate within the indigenous legal systems of the Oṅdó people. Using performance theory as its



analytical framework, the study identifies and examines the dramatic elements embedded in Oñdó conflict resolution practices, arguing that law in this context is not merely administered but performed. Through this performative process, justice becomes a lived, communal experience aimed at moral instruction, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

Dispensation of Justice in Oñdó.

According to our resource person Pa Akínmúsayò Bánkólé aged 80, the entire system of administration of justice in years back – mostly from oral accounts – was predicated on the authority of the Òsemàwé of Oñdó. During war times in those days, justice was meted out, but recalcitrant criminals were either executed or sold into slavery. This is corroborated by (Omojéjé, 2017:151). There was and is a judicial procedure of hearing and deciding cases as well as dealing with serious offences. Since the Oñdó people had realized that administration of justice could no longer be in the hand of an individual and his immediate family alone and since value of judicial emphasis would not only be on retribution and reparation but in peace making; arbitration was solely the aim of peace making. In the past, life of the Yorùbá people is oral, hence, they make use of their oral literature in every aspect of their life. One can boldly say this is one of the social use of folklore in the society. A vital and unique nature of the Oñdó legal culture is its flexibility. It is so fluid and flexible that it is often susceptible to manipulation by such adjudicators who have the mastery of the verbal art. Such acquisition of knowledge of the oral legal data, enhances the whims and caprices of a witty and brave adjudicator, who knows the wherewithal of the indigenous law and the machinery of overplaying or underplaying the issues involved in the dispute. The concept of *Ìwà* (character) and *Omólúwàbí* (well-cultured person) are enshrined in Yorùbá philosophy of law. Reasonability of intention and action do not go unrecognized in Yorùbá legal culture. Parties to the dispute/conflict and their witnesses (where necessary) are always given sufficient time for hearing which is always speedy.

The machinery of justice during conflict and except where the security of the state was/is involved was/is in most cases, in the hands of the titled chiefs because of the nature of the political administration of Oñdó. Every titled chief had his own courtyard in his *Uli Oyè* where he adjudicated on issues such as marital rift, land squabbles, petty theft, money/debt matters, property matters, promiscuity matters, chieftaincy tussle, family conflict, conflict between



individuals, conflict within and across families, as well as between families and also between villages and street fighting. Intra-family conflicts were more amenable to management than inter-family and inter-village conflicts which required a more delicate or even diplomatic approach. These courts were by and large, informal and their function was purely that of arbitration for peaceful coexistence, hence the adage *Okùn Omiye le tẹ̀ sùgbón kì í já* (the cord that binds families together may bend but it does not break).

Administration of justice in Oñdó is based on people's custom and usage. Laws were not written down in a single document but it was considered a sacrilege for an individual to break such unwritten laws, especially where the penalty is severe on the culprit. Because of the fact that law never stood alone, traditional judicial administration in Oñdó promotes justice to a certain degree and the role of religion here went, in no small way, in promoting not only conformity but also in strengthening the sanctity of the laws. What we are stressing here is that religion used to foster the potency of law. Like other towns in traditional Yorùbáland, Oñdó had a strong belief in a number of deities which include the spirit of the departed ancestors such as *Eégún, Ifá, Ògún, Orò, Lúyarè, Balìfòn* and the *Àìò*. However, secret cults such as the *Ògbóni* and *Orò* play significant roles in handling serious criminal offences and in executing their own judgments. Cross-examination lubricates the engine of equitable justice and fair play. It is the process of adducing evidence and corroborating facts of the dispute in vogue and this is effectively done by the legal officials.

There is a culture of courtesy observable on occasions of conflict resolution which is regarded as legal etiquette. It is similar to procedural constitutionality or conventionality of adjudication in the various indigenous courts. According to (Oláṣba, 2008:90), Etiquette is a Yorùbá cultural matrix of development and symbolization of sociator. This legal etiquette is characterized by formalization of the principles and practice of indigenous laws. It is anchored on the demonstration of cultural values and dynamic projection of social symbiosis. Legal etiquette promotes and fosters morality and good mannerism at the various levels of adjudication. It facilitates orderliness and decorum in Oñdó courts. It also enables smooth setting of disputes with speedy dispatch thereby giving participants opportunity to attend to other meaningful activities. There are rules binding on everybody in the Oñdó indigenous courts. There should be silence and decorum so that people i.e. all participants could listen attentively and follow the



trends of argument and explanations of the disputants and the legal officials. Participants in the drama of adjudication must respect the opinion or view of the other person. Interruption is never allowed. Lateness to the indigenous courts is not allowed because it hinders the principles and procedure of the court.

It is worthy of note that the end of justice according to Akiwowo in (Àlàó, 2009:11-12) was to enhance the achievement of the five categories of inalienable social values that constituted the purpose and goal of human society. They are:

- (i) *Ire àìkú* (the value of good health till old age)
- (ii) *Ire owó* (financial security)
- (iii) *Ire ọkọ/aya* (the value of intimate companionship and love)
- (iv) *Ire ọmọ* (the value of parenthood); and
- (v) *Ire aborí ọtá* (the value of assured self-actualization).

Àlàó, 2009 submission which we share is that:

The Yorùbá believed that justice was all about using the agency of law at whatever level to ensure that human efforts to achieve these goals were not abridged. Law must then be administered to teach human beings the basic moral lessons in behaviour. As stated in one of the chapters of *Ifá, Òfún-sa,*

Òtóró! Ayé já.

Ògbàrà! Ayé là kanlẹ̀

Bí ayé bá ti ọwọ̀ ẹni bàjẹ̀

Àì mọ̀ iwà hù wa ni

Òtóró! The world has flown off its hook into space.

Ògbàrà! The earth is rent asunder to its core.

If the world becomes unlivable in our time

It is because we no longer know how to behave.

Performance Theory

According to Schechner (1998:30), ‘a performance is an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for another individual or group’. Goffman (1959) says further that performance is a “quality” that can occur in any situation rather than a fenced-off genre. This indicates that performance is an everyday life. According to Schechner, a performance is called



theatre of ritual because of where it is performed, by whom and under what circumstances. For any performance to be worthwhile, it must possess these basic qualities; a special ordering of time, a special value attached to objects, special performance places and rules. In performance activities however, time is adapted to the event. Levi-Strauss also opines that at all levels, drama include mechanisms for transformation which conflict resolution is set to achieve.

Social Solidarity Theory

Emile Durkheim, in his book, *The Division of Labour* explains the society in terms of social order and societal facts. According to Durkheim, individuals in a society are social actors who are restrained by social facts to stay in society. Social facts are functionalist in nature. They exist only if the society can derive utility or benefits from them. Extrapolating this theory to conflict resolution, as performing art, it is viewed as a dramatic social fact from which society derives some benefits.

The Place of Drama in Conflict Resolution

As submitted by (Onigu and Isaac 2004:IX), every society is bound to experience one form of conflict or the other but what makes a society an ideal polity is the extent to which the conflicting interests and needs are constructively managed so that violence does not threaten its continued existence. Conflict resolution mechanisms provide an avenue for interaction with the concerned parties, with the hope of reducing its scope, intensity and effects, (Anpe 2015:548). In general, conflict resolution provides the opportunity for the convener to interact with the parties concerned. The convener in this sense is the dramatic performance which should be followed by observation and discussion by both parties involved. Conflict resolution acts as a healing balm to the parties involved, no matter the form it takes because it provides the opportunity to explore alternative solutions in restoring normalcy.

According to Onigu and Isaac (2009:9), the essence of conflict resolution is that it “facilitates consensus-building, social bridge reconstructions, and the re-enactment of order in society”. Positively, conflict educates those involved on how the different individuals that make up the social units should be vanguards of reconciliation in their respective societies instead of breaking up societies. In this respect, the practical demonstration of the conflicting situations that give rise to crisis which can escalate into violence, will create an ideal forum for meaningful discussion that can lead to the resolution of real life conflict. Dramatic techniques in various kinds and



degrees are used to bring about peaceful-coexistence, peace-making and peace-keeping to facilitate mutualism which anchors on communalism. The aftermath of this is the cementation of solidarity for unity and consolidation of understanding and welfare for all and sundry in the society.

Indigenous Legal Systems as Performance

It is obvious that conflict resolution conjures drama and society as it plays itself out within a community. Without conflict, there is no drama. Drama deals directly with the socio-cultural aspects of a people in any given society. It is characterized by several elements which include shared language that symbolizes and categorizes events; shared way of perceiving and thinking about the world, agreed form of non-verbal communication; agreed moral and other values, and a system of religious and other allied beliefs. (Anpe, 2015:547). In this respect, the art of drama does not only mirror the life of a people but also suggests how to improve it. Drama can be aptly described as a dynamic and unitary means of entertainment, education, celebration, protest and discovery. These qualities obviously place drama in a vantage position in terms of conflict prevention and resolution. Horst and Birgitte (2005:94) corroborates the above submission that Drama is about the clashes and conflicts of personality, of values, of attitudes, of emotions, of interests both internal and environmental, of philosophy and ideology, of ethics and morals.

Echeruo (1971:30) emphasizes that drama, in its very manifestations, including its virtual manifestations, is very specifically communal in character. Conflict resolution takes the form of performance, which Goffman (1959) defines as “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any other participants”. Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic part of reference, we may refer to the litigants and the legal officials as characters, those who contribute to the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants. The various indigenous legal courts are regarded as the places of performance, while various objects used during conflict resolution process as properties.

The pre-established pattern of action which is the unfolded during conflict resolution or legal performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions may be referred to as plot. Due to the hierarchy personality and integrity of the adjudicators, costumes are used in different styles and degrees. Indigenous legal performance encompasses the total display of culture in different forms. Dialogue is also a major element of legal performance.



It has been observed that the Yorùbá legal system is rather performed than documented. Oḷáoba, (2008:5), corroborates this thus:

The knowledge of the legal heritage is kept in the mind and memory of the Yorùbá people who select at will and random (depending on the issues involved) for dramatization.

It is worthy of note that some aspects of Yorùbá (Oṅdó) festivals contain elements of legal culture performed along with them. Examples of these festivals include Òràmfẹ̀ festival in Oṅdó Kingdom, Agunlele festival in Itaji Kingdom in Èkìtì State. These festivals enhance morality and deterrence to committing offences. Music is used in these festivals for the purpose of correcting the societal ill, conflict management and enhance social change.

Performing Arts in Oṅdó Indigenous Legal Systems.

As observed earlier that conflict resolution could be seen as a performance. It is pertinent therefore, to identify and analyse the dramatic elements or the arts in the dispensation of justice or conflict resolution in the Oṅdó culture. A good performance takes place when there is a proper co-ordination of performers and other performance factors to effectively portray the characters and communicate its messages effectively.

Schencher (1971) is of the view that a good performance must have an interplay of all the elements of performance. The dramatic elements which make up the performing arts of the Oṅdó legal system include performers, audience, plot, performance space, costume, properties, Dialogue, and suspense.

Performers

Performers in the process of conflict resolution are regarded as the pillars of justice. They can also be referred to as actors and actresses. There cannot be drama without performers. These people are dedicated to perform particular roles. (Ògúndèjì, 2005:22-223). The entire system of administration of justice in those days was predicated on the authority of the Òṣemàwé of Oṅdó who was considered the owner of his kingdom. He was assisted by a college of chiefs of different grades. The Òṣemàwé was the ultimate source of resolution of disputes; hence all intractable disputes ultimately ended with him. In cases involving murder or death of a citizen or resident was the duty of the Òṣemàwé to decide on a suspect's culpability and pronounce punishment.



The Ìwàrèfà chiefs in turn had the kingdom divided among them for the purpose of superintending the affairs of land, resources and people inhabiting the areas over which they wielded influence. The Ìwàrèfà chief assists the Òṣemàwé including the Èkùlè, Èlégbé, and the Ìjámà. As pointed out earlier, justice dispensation and administration of peace revolved round the king and Òṣemàwé-in-council i.e. the Ìwàrèfà. The three arms of government – the executive, the legislative and judiciary were responsible for justice dispensation and administration of peace. The Òṣemàwé-in-council is the highest tribunal in Oṅdó before the advent of the British rule. The council deals with disputes between chiefs, between parties belonging to different wards and with cases appealed from lower courts. They also deal with criminal cases or what might be called indictable offences such as murder, treason, burglary, arson, unlawful wounding, manslaughter, incest, witchcraft and sorcery.

Next to the Òṣemàwé in council are the village heads appointed by the Òṣemàwé but answerable directly to the Ìwàrèfà in matters of accountability. They have the duty to maintain law and order in their respective domains. The quarter chiefs and elders in the community are not left out. Elders of high integrity are usually engaged to settle disputes amicably. Other actors or performers that could be identified are the Baálè (village head), Òbí (parents), aláṣòbí (members of the same blood), aláṣògbé (membership of compound who are not related by blood). Both parties involved in conflict are also regarded as performers in the drama of litigation. All the category of people mentioned above except the warring parties act as judges who must possess attributes of good character. They must be able to show deference where necessary and tell the truth even when powerful people's interests are affected. Witnesses are also regarded as performers. Traditional healers, diviners, herbalist, seers are not left out. Messengers/ court officials of the various courts are also performers.

Audience

During conflict resolution, interested community members and village committees exist to support and compliment the dispute resolution process. The parties may call their relatives during the hearings and their relatives participate in the dispute resolution process. Community members are always allowed to come and learn from other people's mistakes thereby serving as audience during disputes resolution. They are not to partake in the judicial process, but they are just observers. They can also applaud the judges and the warring parties when crisis or dispute



might have been settled amicably. They also appreciate what they watch during the process of conflict resolution because it reminds them of so many occurrences in the past.

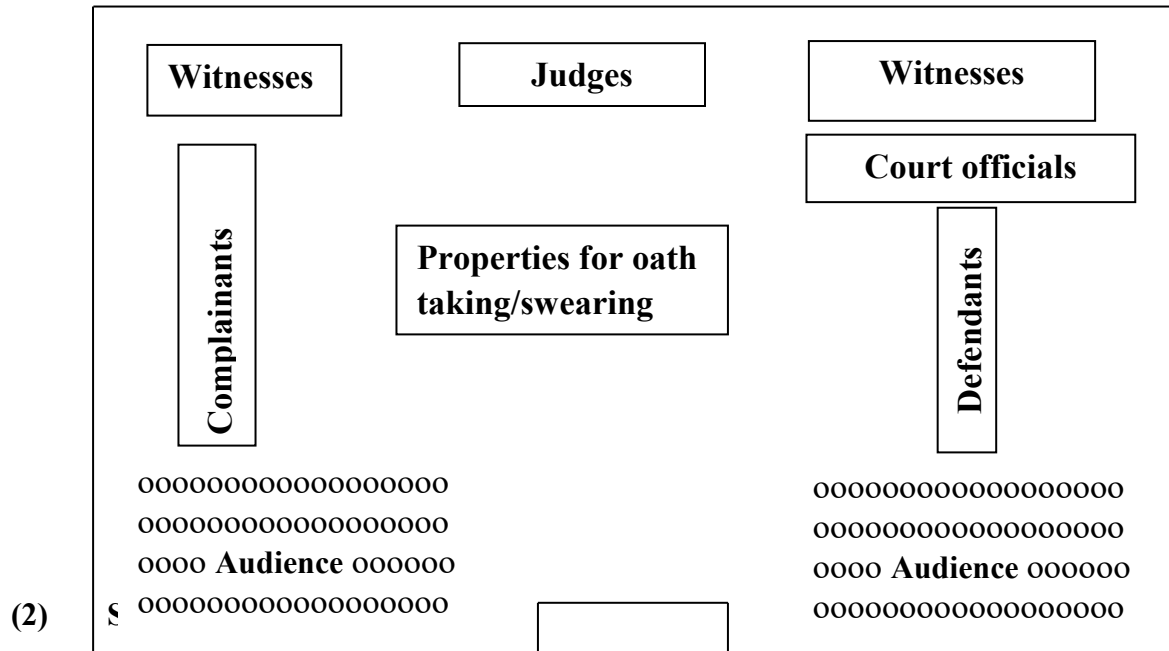
The performers refresh the memory and also draw the attention of the audience to salient issues in and around the society. The audience who is also aware of its environment understands and grasps the issues, ideas and thought expressed by the performers. According to Adeleke (1995:49-50), the relationship between the actors/actress and the audience is interactional. The audience can react in a positive way to the actors by giving an ovation if it is pleased. This is the nature of the audience/performers relationship in indigenous African performance.

Performance Space (Stage)

Performance space/arena is very important to drama. The places of performance could be likened to stages in contemporary drama. A stage is defined by (Derek Bowskill, 1976) as the area occupied exclusively by the select-elect of the drama. A stage can, therefore, be regarded as any place where performance can be displayed. In this paper, stages are likened to the different indigenous courts in Oñdó Kingdom. They include: the Òsemàwé's court, Lóbùn's court, Sàşéré's court, Lógbòşéré's court and Jomu's court.

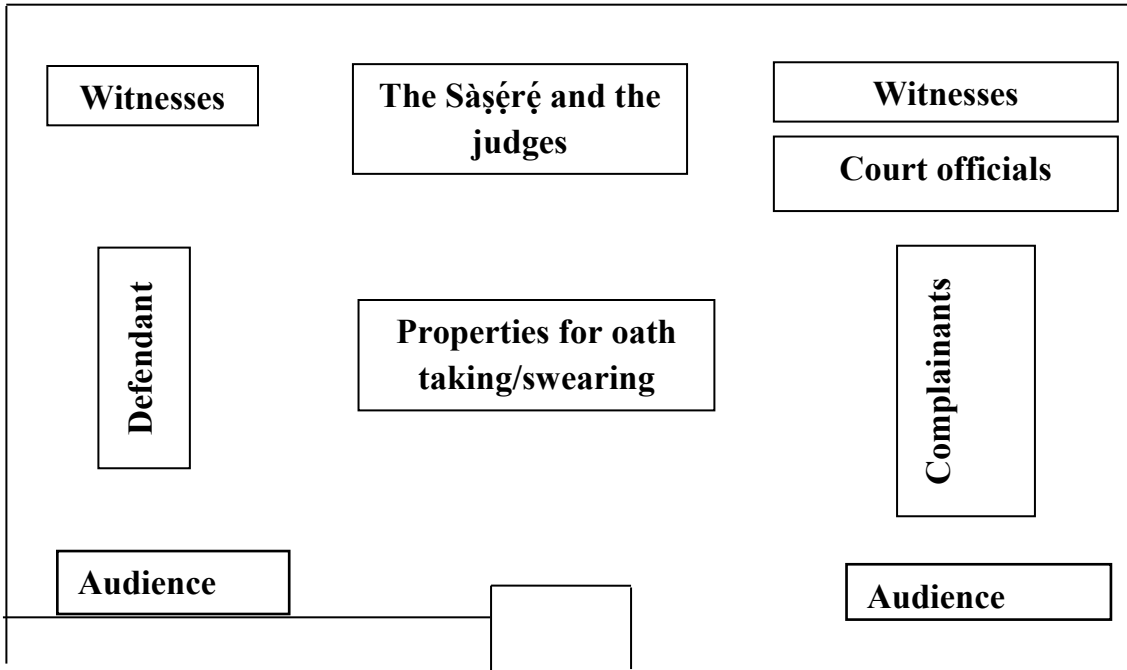
Lóbùn's Court

The Lóbùn is a female king in Oñdó kingdom. By virtue of her position, she operated a kind of tribunal that was principally meant for women and market related squabbles. The Lóbùn's tribunal, unlike that of the other high chiefs, was the court of first and last instances. Cases tried in her court cannot be appealed against. Her judgements were final and her pronouncement was accepted as the verdict of the goddess of wealth. The Lóbùn operated with a cabinet of female chiefs who supported her. The Lóbùn courts sit every market day. The court is located at Otaşòrà street, Odòjomu inside Lóbùn's palace. It is a faultily big hall with demarcations. The judges sit at the upper stage (podium), the complainants sit at the right side of the floor while the defendants sit at the left side of the floor. Witnesses sit very close to the judges. The audiences sit at the back of the hall.



The Lóbùn's Court

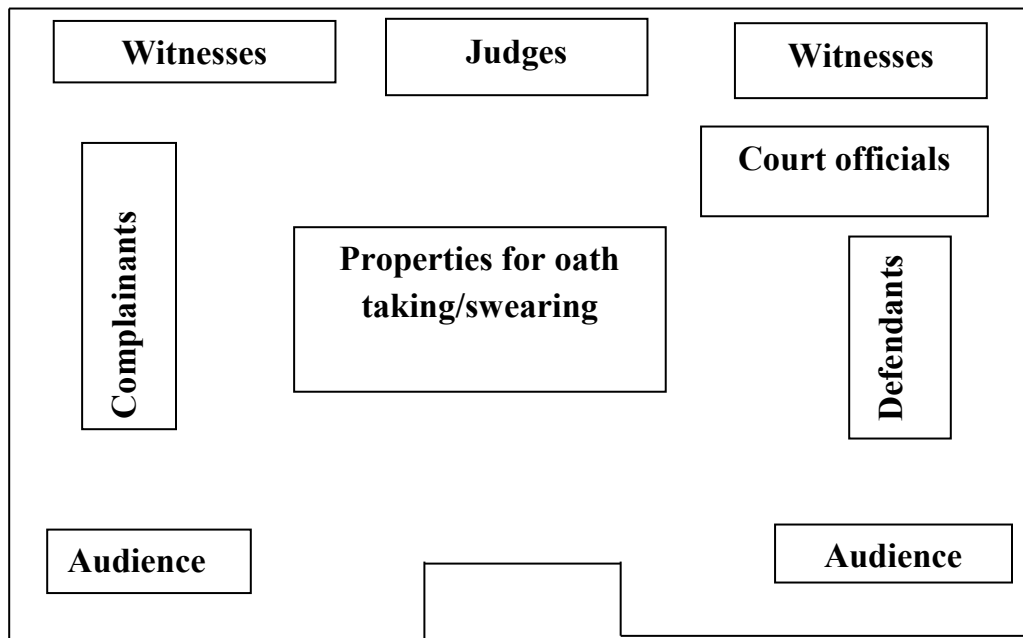
The Sàşéré was a high chief and a prominent member of the state council. He is next to the Òdunwò in hierarchy. He took care of the Odòtù quarter and had the Lógbòşéré as a collaborator. He also operated a special court that was meant for strangers and treated cases that were based on business related issues. Sàşéré's court is not a regular court, and in most cases, it is meant to support non-indigenes of the town. Cases involving non-indigenes were usually transferred to his court on request.



The Sàşéré's Court

(3) Lógbòşéré's Court

Lógbòşéré, by status, is the most senior of the chiefs and the head of Òtù chiefs. As such, he presided over a judicial court which heard all cases prior to their reaching the highest court, which was the Òşemàwé's court. Although, the Lógbòşéré's court was not a court per se, however, it was a review tribunal, which ensured that cases brought to the palace of the Òşemàwé was worthy to be presented to him, thus, this presupposes that cases which were not worthy of hearing by the Òşemàwé were treated by the Lógbòşéré. The Lógbòşéré's court is built in his title house (Ilé Oyè) compound. It is a hall or auditorium where people sit comfortably during conflict resolution. The judges sit on the podium, the complainant sit at the right side of the judges on the floor of the hall, the accused normally sit at the left side of the judges on the floor of the hall. There exists a demarcation between witnesses who sit very close to the judges and the audience. The audience sit on the floor of the Auditorium facing the judges (elders). A place is designed for both the complainant and the defendant to state their cases in turns.



The Lógbòṣéré's Court

Jomu's Court

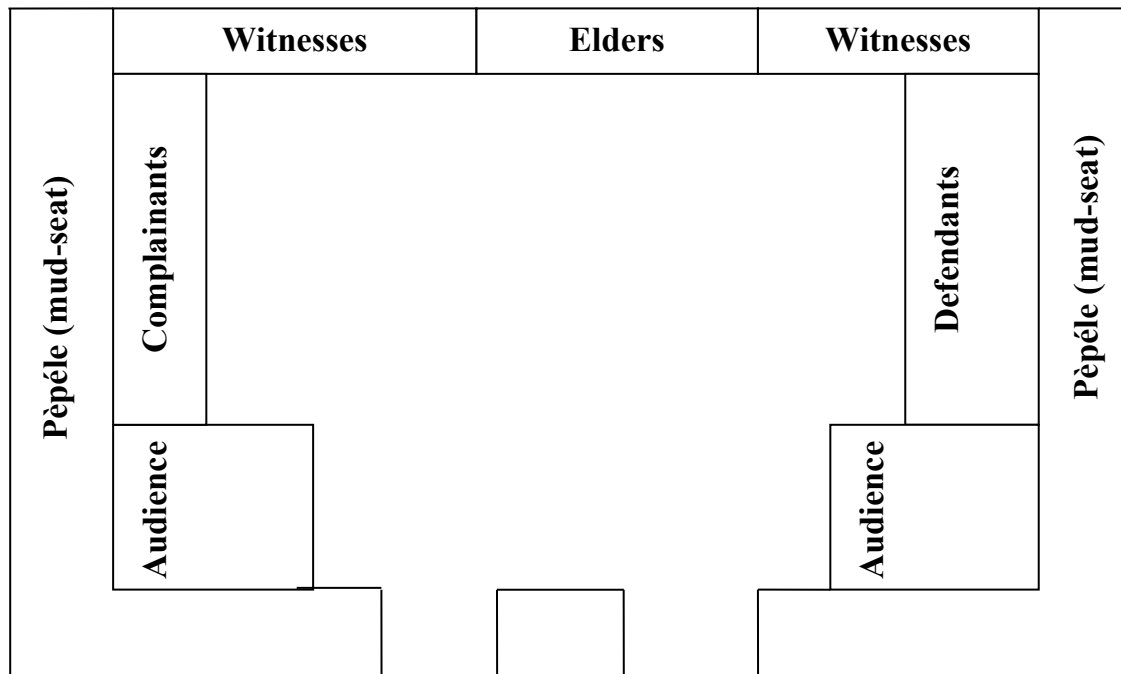
The Jomu's court had been established and was in full operation along with the Oba's court before the introduction of native court in Oñdó in 1915 (Omojéjé, 2017:159) These two courts were the major judicial institutions the colonial administrators met on ground when they arrived. In this court, Jomu was not the only court personnel involved in the process of justice dispensation, he had a panel of adjudicators and personnel. Members of the panel were chiefs under his authority. Traditionally, there were twelve chiefs under the Jomu, each of these chiefs was in charge of each street within the Jomu's quarter. But in judicial matters, the Lotu Jomu who was the prime minister of the Jomu's quarter, the Láyégbó was the administrative chief secretary. Kúlájolu and Legho were the four chiefs that made up the panel of adjudicators in the Jomu's court. The panel of arbitrators was usually of higher social status than the disputants. Members of the panel hold their position by virtue of their age, inherited status or influence within the community.

Ògún and Àìṛ Shrine: Oath-taking procedure is always the last resort when all other forms of dispute resolution had been exhausted. Ògún and Àìṛ were deified and held in awe hence they

were not taken for granted. Their shrines were located within the quarters of Jomu and Oba’s palace respectively. In the presence of elders and the audience, the parties concerned would be asked to take the oath at the shrines. Each party to the dispute would take a piece of kolanut, a cock or any other thing that might be prescribed. A condition is always attached to the oath-taking. For instance, any of the parties who died within a specified period or befell by a mysterious calamity would be deemed to have lied or that if the person who took the oath could survive after one year, such a person would be vindicated. In most cases, a person who knows that he was lying would decline to swear by the shrines because sanction would be between him and the spiritual forces.

Village Court

These courts were usually located/held in the house of the head of the village. The courts are mini-square that could occupy some people for meeting purposes. The seats there were actually made of mud (clay soil) and permanently attached to the building. It is called *Pèpèle* in Onó dialect. Some still exist in old chieftaincy houses till date. The sitting of the elders were usually open to interested members of the immediate community.



Village Courts



Properties

These are objects used by the performers during the process of adjudication to aid their actions and complement their performance. Examples of these in the art of indigenous conflict resolution in Oñdó are the *Igbá omi títù* (calabash filled with cold water), *Ùànkèkèkòn* (summon horsetail), *pákò àşę* (chewing stick of authority), *Òpá àşę* (the King's staff of office), *Obi àbàtà* (kolanut), a bottle of drink, *Òbò* (sassafras), *Àkùkò Adiyę* (cock), *irin* (iron implements) and *Agogo* (Iron Gong). The use of *Igbá omi títù* was a simple but dreaded process in those days which served as serious deterrence to dishonest people (Adégbèhìngbé 2013:147). Water from the calabash would be poured on the floor in small and calculated drops in the form of libation. Someone will be chewing the *pákò àşę* (chewing stick of authority) "Whenever water was poured on the floor, the man chewing the stick would spit on the water and say *àşę* (amen) to the curses or prayers that were being uttered by the people around or the person pouring the water in the calabash on the floor. Kolanut, cock, iron implements and drink are used to swear at the *Ògún* and *Àìò* shrines. *Ùànkèkèkòn* (summon horsetail) is used to deliver summons to any person who was charged to court or witnesses who had a role to play. The process is known as *Ukojòmò*. The king's staff of office is also used in this wise. They are usually feared because the repercussion of declining such summon was great, as it would be seen as an insult to the King and the *Jomu*. *Agogo* is used to maintain silence whenever there is noise and uproar in the courts.

Dialogue

The use of dialogue between two or more performers in the courts (stage) is a subtle means of communication and, or negotiation that can serve as a balm in conflict situations. The use of language here is very crucial. The judges must be able to employ language to plead and persuade the parties involved in conflict. Members of the audience can easily identify with the problems presented and contribute actively in finding fresh alternatives to solving them through discussions. These discussions usually provide opportunities for the participants and members of the audience to exchange useful ideas and suggestions that can lead to solving the problems raised. In a nutshell, discussing the problem raised with others, agreeing with others to do something about the problem and learning from other information the skills needed to solve such problems are seen as dialogue in this regard. During oath-taking procedure, the kind of dialogue that ensues between actors and audience are restricted dialogues in terms of questions and



answers or statement and response and responses to prayers and songs at different stages of performance during conflict resolution. It is only through effective dialogue that conflicts could be managed effectively. Hence, the Yorùbá proverb “*òrò rere a máa yọ obì lápò, òrò búburú a máa yọ idà lákò*’ Good words bring about peace and bad words bring about conflict.

Basically, there are three stages of dialogue for the settlement of conflict as noted by Adémowò (2015). The first stage is the stage for persuading parties to a conflict to bring their case to the “palavar”. The second stage has to do with the ‘speech or hearing’ stage where parties to the conflict confront each other. It is also, the stage when the elders will be given the opportunity to hear the full history of the conflict, known as the fear and concerns of the parties and the fundamental issues involved in the conflict. The last stage is one in which the elders, after hearing the facts of the conflict from both sides, take a decision and later drop their verdict.

Plot

This is the sequence and order of events in conflict resolution. The structural stage by-stage of conflict management are as follows: Expectant tension, Exposition, rising tension, emerging dramatic action, the crisis revealed, climax (the tension peaks, cathartic understanding, happy ending, open ending or compromise and reflection.

Suspense

Suspense in the art of litigation ensues at the point of delivering judgment by the elders or court officials. Both parties in conflict would be expecting a favourable judgment but the fact remains that there must definitely be a winner and a loser. There is also suspense on the part of the audience who does not know what will happen next and the outcome of the ongoing action.

Costume

The appearances of the performers make them different from the audience. Costumes also communicate to the audience in ways words cannot achieve. The king, chiefs and the elders are always in their *Aşọ Òfi* or *Agbádá* of different types and styles. They also wear beads of different types on their necks. The king holds his horsetail as props. The audience appear in their beautiful outing dresses of any kind and styles. It is not uncommon to find a culprit without a cap in the judgment hall. However, if anyone is invited to the palace, he or she must look good.



Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that conflict, while inevitable in human society, is culturally mediated and creatively managed within the indigenous legal systems of the Oñdó people. By examining the structures, rituals, and symbols of conflict resolution, the paper establishes that Oñdó jurisprudence operates fundamentally as performance. Legal proceedings are enacted through dramatized interactions involving adjudicators, litigants, witnesses, audiences, and sacred objects, all situated within culturally significant spaces. These performances do not merely resolve disputes; they educate, caution, reconcile, and reaffirm communal values.

The analysis reveals that drama occupies a central position in Oñdó indigenous litigation, serving as a medium through which law is made intelligible, authoritative, and morally persuasive. Through dialogue, costume, ritual objects, suspense, and symbolic action, conflict resolution becomes a collective process of meaning-making and social healing. In this sense, justice is not abstract or distant but visible, participatory, and deeply rooted in Yoruba cosmology and ethics.

Beyond entertainment, the performative nature of Oñdó legal systems underscores their broader cultural and developmental significance. By fostering peace, reinforcing moral conduct, and strengthening social solidarity, indigenous legal performance contributes to communal stability and sustainable development. The study thus affirms the relevance of indigenous African jurisprudence as a site of intellectual inquiry and suggests that future research could further explore comparative perspectives on performance, law, and conflict resolution across Yoruba and other African societies.

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AFRICA'S PLACE IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND A SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL BALANCE

¹OGUNBOYE, A.A; ²AKOREDE, E.I, ¹GBEMUDU, Victor; ¹OLATUNJI O.R

¹Department of Geography,

Faculty of Management & Social Sciences,

Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo.

ogunboyeabbey@gmail.com, ogbemsvickychi@yahoo.com

+234 806 514 4017 & +234 703 400 9261/+234 803 864 2632

&

²University of the Cumberland,

Kentucky, USA

eiakorede@gmail.com

Abstract

As the world rapidly adopts artificial intelligence, Africa's role in the technological revolution is becoming increasingly significant. Africa's diverse data landscape, youthful population, an increasing curious generation and a growing digital infrastructure, all present opportunities for developing AI solutions tailored towards local challenges. Using cogent examples, theoretical frameworks, literature reviews and policy analyses, this paper is tailored at periscoping Africa's innate potentials with this technological masterpiece as a great dais for harnessing and prioritizing her natural potentials in every sphere, while also accentuating capacity building, digital infrastructure development, inclusive innovation, research and development promotion, as well as well-orchestrated and fostered partnerships with global technology and industry giants. The study concludes with recommendations on ethical deployment of A.I and community-centered sustainability implementation strategies to create a better tomorrow for our generations to come.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI Ethics, Inclusive Innovation, Sustainable Global Balance



Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is quickly becoming a significant global game-changer in influencing innovation. There has become a revamping of how countries within international politics not only communicate, but how they, each, respond to complex natural and human problems over time in sectors like healthcare, agriculture, education, political, climate change, among other things. While global forerunners and leaders such as the United States, Japan, China and members of the European Union continue to dominate AI research and technological developments, Africa's growing involvement in the AI world is increasingly being recognized as important for fashioning out a more equitable and globally inclusive digital future (UNESCO, 2022).

Gwagwa et al. (2020a) point out that, although, Africa has enormous potential to create A.I applications that are inclusive and geared more to local needs, she currently contributes less than 1% to global A.I research, which is not good enough, especially where more percentage of her over 1.4 billion people, are young, making the continent an enticing hub for A.I marketing. This is why creative platforms like the AI Strategy and the AI for Development (AI4D) programme organized by the African Union are already laying robust foundations for digital splurge in the entire continent by narrowing digital divides and promoting how AI should be used to effectively tackle economic, social and environmental problems unique to the continent, on one hand, as well as harness economic, social and environmental gains, on another hand, with sustainability as their watchword.

However, the African continent still faces obstacles such as weak digital infrastructure, insufficient policy frameworks low levels of investment in AI research and education, lack of personnel with world-standard technical knowhow on the pros and cons of digital A.I operation, among other things. These challenges, Ndung'u et al. (2021) believe, could further marginalize the continent in global debates on A.I governance and ethical standards. It is therefore paramount that African voices and priorities should not only be acknowledged, but also, actively integrated into the global A.I discourse. With adequate support and strategic investments by the stakeholders and the various governments within the African continent, Africa's participation in A.I can bring about benefits that extend well beyond the continent itself.



Statement of Problem

Despite the enormous promise that A.I holds for global development, Africa lags behind in A.I research, innovation and governance. The contribution so far made to the entire world A.I research output is below 1%. This highlights much deeper structural issues like poor digital infrastructure, underfunding of science and technology, and a severe lack of qualified experts in the field (UNESCO, 2022; Gwagwa et al., 2020a), which can enormously be a hindrance to the continent achieving a sustainable and globally inclusive digital transformation it so desires in this A.I age. Coincidentally though, these pressing developmental issues that forms part of the hindrance faced by Africa, such as widespread poverty, food insecurity, health disparities, climate vulnerability, among other things, are things A.I can address if it were adapted to local contexts.

Unfortunately, the efficient application of A.I to address these problems is still hampered by the lack of robust legislative frameworks, data governance frameworks, as well as domestic innovation ecosystems. Thus, Africa runs the risk of being reduced to the status of a passive technology consumer who is reliant on outside solutions rather than making a significant contribution to the advancement of A.I worldwide if the aforementioned gaps are not filled. In addition to exacerbating already-existing global disparities, this gap jeopardizes Africa's hopes for a fair and inclusive digital future. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to critically examine how Africa can improve its standing in the global A.I ecosystem and make sure that the technology is in line with its development objectives and moral priorities.

Conceptual Framework

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Model.

This is a groundbreaking model that will help to illuminate the essence of new inventions, as well as the place of these novel inventions in global restructuring is adopted for the study. This model is relevant in explaining how novel inventions such as the A.I technology can aid the integration, sustainability, transparency and accountability of its usage to help create a more sustainable and balanced world. This model is analyzed as follows:

a) The People (Social), which emphasizes how any invention (Artificial Intelligence) has social value, portrays human rights and develops the community.



b) The Planet (Environmental), which emphasizes how any invention (Artificial Intelligence) helps to sustain our planet (environment) by conserving natural resources and mitigating climate change.

c) The Profit (Economic), which elaborates how any invention (Artificial Intelligence) has helped to accentuate the economic values of many aspects of our environments, while ensuring sustainability and social responsibility.

The aforementioned mini-analysis of the TBL shows it is a sustainability model that involves considering and harnessing our environmental, social and economic factors, to create a more balanced, performance based society, which future generations can emulate.

Review of Literature

A.I's Contribution to Africa's Economic Development for Global Sustainability

Around the world, artificial intelligence (AI) is quickly changing economies. In Africa, it has the special potential to promote inclusive growth and close the technological divide between the global Northern and Southern hemispheres. AI, according to experts, can help the continent overcome long-standing development obstacles, particularly in fields like agriculture, healthcare, education, and finance (Ndung'u et al., 2021). For instance, Zenvus in Nigeria and UjuziKilimo in Kenya provide small-scale farmers with weather and soil health data, increasing productivity and cutting waste (Tsan et al., 2019).

World Bank (2021) reiterated how platforms like “Tala & Branch” under FinTech, evaluate creditworthiness using mobile data, providing financial services to underprivileged groups, and also promoting entrepreneurial spirits. In like manner, Bello et al. (2025) point out how the Ghanaian and Rwandan governments utilize A.I in streamlining services in their countries, in order to reduce corruption and abuse of power. Gwagwa et al. (2020b) are of the belief that if African countries are to benefit from the advantages A.I has got to offer, their various governments need to invest in every aspect that will make them achieve wholesome A.I benefits, which includes investment in education, infrastructure, as well as ethical governance.

A.I and the Future of Healthcare in Africa for a Balanced Global System

In Africa, where medical resources are frequently overstretched, A.I has come in handy; revolutionizing how healthcare used to be dispensed. A.I usage can be fully utilized in bettering health services, making day-to-day utilities become improvised, creating automated routes in



giving intelligent alternate decisions in any situation, among a myriad of possibilities. For instance, Malawi's Baobab Health uses AI to manage patient data more efficiently, while m-Pharma in West Africa uses AI to forecast medicine demand and reduce stock shortages. During COVID-19, nations like South Africa and Kenya employed AI to track outbreaks and distribute medical resources (Nyoni & Bonga, 2021).

Additionally, remote communities now have access to mobile-based diagnosis and care thanks to AI tools like Ada-Health and Ubenwa (Manyazewal et al., 2021). Still, challenges like weak infrastructure, privacy concerns, and the lack of regulatory frameworks must be addressed for AI to truly uplift African healthcare (Gwagwa et al., 2020a).

1. Empowering African Education Systems with A.I for a Sustainable Global Impact

It is no longer news to hear that education systems in many sub-Saharan African countries have become overstretched due to astronomic increment in enrolments, without equivalent improvement and increase in educational materials and infrastructure. Classrooms have become overcrowded, limited materials are not only limited, there is very little access to it, especially in remote rural areas. This is where A.I can be of enormous and divergent help; where practical solutions to the myriad of these problems faced by sub-saharan Africa can easily become a thing in the past. In Kenya, for example, platforms such as m-Shule, have created adaptive ways of learning, using the SMS to personalize education for students without them having access to the internet, is done (Omulo & Wafula, 2020).

Afolabi et al. (2021) points how West African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, have been able to cash on the advantages that A.I can give; where many teachers have been assisted with creating questions for different cadres, grading them, class content delivery and tracking student progress, using A.I chatbots and tutoring systems, thus, helping these educators with the effective management of large class sizes. Education ministries in some West African countries like Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria and The Gambia have been aided with planning, by predicting learning and school dropout rates, or even identifying under-served areas, using A.I powered tools.

2. How A.I Supports Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in Africa

Humans, directly or indirectly, depend on agriculture. As a result, food security is both an African and a global concern. AI is already playing a lead and vital role in modernizing farming,



improving yields and managing climate risks in Africa. Tools such as Zenvus (Nigeria) and Agrix-Tech (Cameroon) use AI to monitor soil conditions, forecast weather conditions and identify pests, thereby, helping small farmers to make smarter decisions (C.T.A, 2019).

Droughts and floods have been predicted through the use of A.I powered satellite data (Tsan et al., 2019), helping farmers enormously to know what to do earlier within any farming season. A.I powered computers also help improve supply chains; ensuring the efficient distribution of food products to the markets, and thus, reducing post-harvest losses (Agyeman et al.2021).

3. The Use of A.I to Balance Growth and the Environment in Africa

African countries are working very hard to grow their economies, but these forms of growth often put pressure on each of their immediate environments. From the process of urbanization to those of industrialization, there is a real risk of damaging the ecosystems. A.I offers a smart way forward by helping African countries grow in ways that protect the planet. In agriculture, A.I not only helps in livestock farming, but also, in horticultural practices. Livestock farmers have used A.I-powered machines for analyzing pig production in Northern Nigerian farms, as well as monitor soils and guide irrigation. A.I has also aided in boosting crop production and yields, while also reducing waste (Chikodzi, 2021). A.I-induced satellite imagery also helps detect areas prone to pollution, desert encroachment, deforestation and soil erosion. It also helps suggest best practices to nip environmental disasters in the bud (Ogunleye & Azeta, 2023a). In off-grid rural areas, AI-driven micro-grids are helping communities manage their own energy use, drastically reducing energy waste and expanding energy access (Mensah et al., 2022a).

4. A.I and the Protection of African Natural Resources as a Way of Balancing the Planet

The importance of Africa's vast natural resources, which includes her solid minerals, wildlife, hydro abundance, forest reserves, among other things, goes beyond the continent's needs, but also for global ecological, conservational and sustainable relevance. The overuse and environmental damage of these assets puts the countries housing them in economic and environmental jeopardy. The protection of these rare assets is where A.I comes in handy. Ouma & Kinyua (2021) pointed out how satellite imagery, through the aid of A.I, can be used to spot illegal activities going on in areas where these natural resources exist, such as illegal mining, crude-oil bunkering, illegal wood logging, unnecessary bush burning, among other things. well



as (Ouma & Kinyua, 2021). AI has also been used to map flood-prone areas, detect land degradation, shrinking lakes, and detect best possible areas to start off direct relief efforts during cyclones in regions like Madagascar and the Sahel (Ouma & Kinyua, 2020). These make it easier for first responders to not only move more swiftly and wisely in planning and reaching those in need, but also track the impact such swift moves have made on social media and televised networks (UNDRR, 2022). After natural or human-induced disasters, A.I not only helps to evaluate damage done, but also, helps give reconstruction suggestions.

5. How A.I Can Help Shape Smarter, More Sustainable African Cities

Africa's cities are growing faster than ever, and by 2050, more than 60% of the continent's population is expected to live in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2020). While this shift offers opportunities for growth, it also brings major challenges such as overcrowded housing, traffic jams, pollution and overburdened public services. To keep up with this rapid urbanization in a sustainable way, cities need A.I powered smarter tools. Complex data have been known to be transformed into realistic and much easily understood forms for city planners with the help of A.I., thereby, helping them make better decisions. It can help these planners to make better city designs and predict future city growth areas through in-depth analyses of satellite images, traffic patterns, population trends and layouts of infrastructure (Wang & Li, 2022). This is very important, especially in African cities, where updated data is scarce, and informal settlements usually cause planning to develop based on certain observed environmental factors. The management of traffic in many overcrowded African cities is one of the most recognizable effects of A.I usage on the continent. Vehicular movements monitored by up-to-date real-time AI-powered systems, which control traffic lights, are being analyzed in cities like Cairo, Nairobi and Lagos to reduce traffic congestion (Adebayo et al., 2022). AI can also help design better public transport routes, making sure that even people in underserved neighborhoods have access to reliable and affordable mobility. AI is also a powerful ally in making cities greener and healthier.

The Use of A.I in Portraying Africanness for Her Sustainability in Every Aspect

There is the dire and unassuming need to make sure A.I and the advantages it bestows permeates every nook and cranny of the African denizen, while also reflecting the continents interests and accentuating her cultures and values. Even though A.I has enormous potential to advance



everything from governance to healthcare, many of the tools used in its various applications are imported and do not always fit local contexts (Mhlanga, 2022). AI needs to be rooted in African languages, traditions and social structures in order to promote significant development. Initiatives that use natural language processing, for example, are helping to provide healthcare and educational services in local dialects (Oyelade & Ezugwu, 2021). Similarly, policies that are more inclusive and sensitive to local needs can be shaped by AI tools created with community input. Additionally, the significance of ethical AI practices in the African context is becoming increasingly recognized. For instance, the African Union strongly emphasizes data sovereignty, responsible innovation, and international cooperation to stop digital exploitation (AU, 2020). Still, key challenges persist in this respect, and it includes the under-representation in A.I development, weak legal protections, as well as the lack of funding for local research on A.I issues.

Conclusion

Africa must give ethical, inclusive and locally based approaches top priority if it is to genuinely shape its place in the global A.I ecosystem and support sustainable global balance. The continent has enormous potential to take the lead in using A.I to address urgent issues in everything from infrastructure and healthcare to agriculture and education.

However, technology alone is not enough to realize these potentials. Africa needs to make investments in domestic A.I innovation, fortify its digital infrastructure, and then develop a new generation of highly qualified A.I professionals. African values should be reflected in policies that guarantee A.I systems are just, open, and responsible. Above all, communities need to be able to influence the technologies that impact their lives. When governed by equity and ethics, Africa's development can be boosted by A.I in ways that contributes to a more balanced and just global digital future.

Policy Recommendations

The following are recommended for a more robust role for Africa in the quest for a sustainable global balance in A.I usage:

a) A.I should be radically employed in agricultural sustainability; especially in food production and its sustainability. To complement this, policies should be created by government to support and invest in food production and its sustainability, agricultural education on A.I usage and A.I



agricultural infrastructures.

b) A.I should also be utilized in strategic planning, building and maintaining infrastructure to support a more robust, resilient and sustainable development path across the continent.

c) A.I should be utilized in very ethical ways to boost national development strategies in ways that are not just people-oriented, and area-focused, but also, context-sensitive. It should also ensure local leadership, data protection, transparency and collaboration across the different parastatals within a national economy. These can become possible when every stakeholder is involved, and investment is carried out on local capabilities.

d) When A.I is properly utilized in city planning, what we have becomes very sustainable urban development, with very smart, green and inclusive cities. Thus, this should entail adequate management of the environment- city wastes, traffic, pollution, infrastructural constructions, among other things.

e) In the utilization of A.I, our cultures and values should not be eroded. It should not only support community autonomy, but also, involve inclusive innovation and ethical governance, all aimed at ensuring good service for public good.

f) A.I should play a major part in helping African countries manage their natural resources properly, to ensure that the advantages these resources give are not only sustainable, but also, the environments these natural resources exist are also sustainable. All these will help balance environmental protection with economic growth of the continent.

g) A.I can also help save lives and property when it not only helps predict natural disasters in their very prone areas, but also analyze ahead what and how actions should take place when these disasters occur.



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A Gender-Based Assessment of Socio-cultural Violence in Buchi Emecheta's Novel - LA Dot.

AHMED TITILADE M.O. PhD

Department of French,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education,
Ondo.

Abstract

There is no gainsaying that African women have suffered and continue to suffer from societal subjugation, barbaric cultures and patriarchal hegemony. In this modern-day period, women still encounter systemic barriers like gender-based violence, sexism, and marginalisation in the area of politics and education. Thus, cultural practices deprived women the opportunities to achieve self-confidence and autonomy. Buchi Emecheta, through her novel, *La dot*, the translated version of (*The Bride Price*) defies and critiques the existing cultural norms and oppressive tradition that covertly or overtly jeopardise women's lives. This paper is an investigation of concepts like widowhood, bride price, forced marriage, gender, osu caste, cultural traditions and sexist tendencies in the novel of Buchi Emecheta's *La dot*. Various scholars have produced copious writings on Emecheta's "The bride price" using feminist theories but this article draws from cultural violence theory to elucidate gender-based violence in *La dot*. The methodology adopted is close reading approach, which tends to explore power intricacies expanding beyond fictional level. Therefore, *La dot* has been purposively chosen to portray the dynamic forces that turned against the protagonist from achieving her authentic self, which made her to pay the tragic price of love. Thus, our analysis has shown the emancipatory strategies through which women and girls can achieve autonomy and overcome oppressive cultural structures. Education is identified as one of the priorities and a pathway to independence as this will provide young girls and women with the intellectual tools to recognize their inherent values beyond being a financial asset but a chance to make them economically buoyant.

Keywords: Widowhood, Bride Price, Osu Caste, Sexism, Violence Theory



Introduction

Buchi Emecheta is a prolific Nigerian novelist who has always been in the fore front of women struggle. She authored over twenty books precisely on African societies. Buchi Emecheta's writing has been celebrated for her honest portrayal of complex social issues, inspiring many through her advocacy for women's rights and social justice. One of the preoccupations of any committed female writer is to speak for, and, to speak to others. Thus, a writer is considered a voice for the voiceless, a witness to the silenced, and someone who nurtures a community of the like-minded. Thus, Buchi Emecheta's writings deconstruct, expose, question, and argue against all unruly intersection of cultural taboos faced by women and marginalized group.

Buchi Emecheta, a prolific feminist writer uses her writing dexterity to defend women and girls, subvert barbaric cultures and disrupt hegemonic powers in her community. Despite Emecheta's feminist temperament and her commitment to women issues, she declined to be addressed as a feminist. This pronouncement is queried and affirmed in Oriaku's article (1996) "Buchi Emecheta: If not a feminist, then what?" Emecheta's response shocks some critics when she said: "I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know, I did not know by doing so I was going to be called a feminist, but if I am a feminist, then I am an African feminist with a small "f". In spite of her objection to the feminist tag, her writings continue to elicit and reflect feminist traits and values. Despite this declaration, people still viewed Buchi Emecheta as a feminist.

Adebayo, (1996), asserts that Emecheta, through her fictional writings "tear the veil of invisibility" (page 37). This is because she uses writing as the only liberating force against some issues that cannot be unveiled or divulged. Therefore, Emecheta leans on what D'Almeida says as cited in Ahmed (2019): Writing makes it possible to '*dire l'interdit.*' (speak the forbidden). Nawal El Sadawi (1994) is another writer who charged women to write. She declared "writing is like killing": because it takes a lot of courage. She posits further that: when you kill, you are killing injustices, killing a system that oppresses you, and sometimes, "it is better to kill the outside world than to kill yourself". (Ahmed, 2019). To buttress Nawal's assertion, a writer can reveal what someone thought to be a private phantasm as a collective thought. In so doing, literature grants sanity. Emecheta takes writing as a weapon to sanitise and deconstruct some of the dreadful and horrifying cultural norms that subdue women in their community.



The Conceptual Framework

Violence generally is defined by the World Health Organization (2002) as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”. Fisher (2011:4) conceptualizes violence to consist of all the attitudes, words, actions, structures and system which impede people from attaining their full possible human potential. Three types of violence are being identified in line of Fisher’s definition: physical violence, structural violence and psychological violence. Galtung (1969:171), categorised violence into direct and structural violence and later in 1990, she brings cultural violence to fore. The theory of cultural violence is originated from structural theory and as research evolved, the idea that a culture can condone violent acts advanced into culture of violence theory in this modern era.

The culture of violence theory revolves around the specific violent forms within a societal perspective. According to Galtung, (1990, 1996) cultural violence could be triggered by any aspect of culture: religion, value systems, norms, attitude or ideology. All these strengthen direct or indirect violence, personal violence and social injustice. Cultural violence can render them or justify them as normal in the society. In Buchi Emecheta's *La dot*, the culture of violence is obviously laid bare through the societal and personal experiences of the protagonist, Aku-nna, and other female characters. The novel explores how cultural norms and patriarchal structures perpetuate violence against women, and how it is justified and legitimized. Swan et al (2016) declared that “There are many factors which determine the persistence of violence among individuals and on a societal level. According to them, gender is the pertinent issue to understanding the culture of violence theory. This is because violence often has gendered dimensions and impacts. Thus, many forms of violence revolve around gender roles, gender norms and relations.

Summary of Buchi Emecheta’s *La dot*

Emecheta’s *La dot* is the translated version of *the bride price* (1976), other novels of Emecheta translated to French are: *The joy of motherhood* (*Les enfants sont une benediction*), *Second class citizen* (*Citoyen de seconde zone*). *La dot* is a compelling story based on the clash of tradition versus modernity. Women’s subjugation in a male dominated society is a persistent topic that



female writers attempt to placate in the traditional African setting. Themes of gender inequality, widowhood practice, tradition, and social change are also examined. The story recounts the life of Aku-nna, a young protagonist who navigates the pressures of her cultural community that placed importance on the bride price or bride wealth (a sum of money or quantity of goods given to a bride's family by that of the groom in some tribal societies). Buchi Emecheta uses *La dot* metaphorically and literally to depict women's submission to men. The text critiques and also condemns casteism (Oshu) and marriage in *La dot*, advocates for greater awareness or total eradication of some of the horrible cultures and traditions that impede the growth and development of women.

Manifestation of violence in the novel of Buchi Emecheta's *La dot*

As stated above, the preoccupation of most women authors is to satirise the cultural norms or tradition that hinders women's progress. Buchi Emecheta's *La dot* explores the dynamic forces of gender inequality within Igbo society. *La dot* critically examines how obnoxious traditional practices especially those related to widowhood practice and marriage support expectations that often marginalize women. The bride price which is deeply rooted in tradition marks the status and legitimacy for women within marriage. This cultural norm perpetuates gender inequality where, women are objectified or viewed as commodities to be sold.

Widowhood practice

Widowhood practices are deeply rooted in tradition and can deprive women from various rights such as: property rights, social participation and economic autonomy. Widowhood practices precisely in Igbo land often revolve around social seclusion, forced mourning rituals, and human rights violation. Copious scholars reveal that being a widow in some African communities is like a source of joy to the members of the husband's family. The belief is that the husband's family members will be enriched through the assets the deceased leaves behind. Family members always plan to ostracize the widow and if she proves adamant, the in-laws may kill her.

Remi Akujobi, (2009:2) in her article titled "Yesterday you were divorced, today I am a widow": An appraisal of widowhood practices and effects on the psyche of widows in Africa" writes on the act of dehumanization and oppressive conditions widows pass through in Africa.

Human greed which exists in African societies very much like others makes it possible for the easy exploitation of widows, the



urge to acquire material wealth, particularly what is considered “free” wealth controls the treatment of widows in society, all other activities, including levirate, may serve the same purpose. So, any mystification and rituals, superstitious practices are all geared toward the oppression of the widow more importantly for economic gains. In the same light, the dehumanization and humiliation the widow passes through in society is all a ploy to make her economically weak and voiceless.

The remarks of Umeh (2005) corroborates the observation of Akujobi when she declares that “Widows in parts of West Africa are often forced to go through traditional rites and rituals that deprive women of their dignity, health, and wealth.” For example, widows in Igbo land as observed by Umeh (2005) are isolated and confined to the family compound from two weeks to six months immediately after the death of a spouse. She describes their plight thus;

She is forced to dress in old, ragged clothes and is seated on the floor. The widow does not move out of the compound for the necessary Economic activities to sustain her and the children. During the mourning period, the widow is seen as unclean and sympathizers cannot shake hands with her. Instead, they leave gifts of money on the floor for her. After the official burial and funeral ceremonies are completed, the widow spends from three to twelve months at home, mourning for her husband. She depends on family and friends to help her during these difficult times and for economic survival.

The description of Umeh (2005) is not far-fetched from how Aku-nna describes the ordeal of her mother when her father Ézechiel Odia passes away.

Ma Blackie devait rester seule dans la case spéciale ; ce ne serait qu’après l’achèvement des mois de deuil qu’elle pourrait rendre visite aux gens chez eux. Elle ne devait jamais prendre de bain. Ni peigne ni ciseaux ne devaient toucher ses cheveux. Il lui fallait continuellement garder les mêmes vieilles loques couleur de



fumée. (La dot, p.105) [Ma Blackie was to remain alone in this special hut; not until the months of mourning were over could she visit people in their homes. She must never have a bath. No pair of scissors nor comb must touch her hair. She must wear continually the same old smoked rags.]

From this statement, it is noted that the condition of widows is so deplorable generally in Africa. Widows experience a lot of anguish from the society, the husband's family and from traditional beliefs. Should the husband die, the wife is labeled a witch, a fetishist or an adulterer.

Another cultural turbulence that manifests in the text is inheritance of the deceased wife. It is permissible in some African societies for a man to inherit his brother's wife. This is revealed in the conversation of Ogugua to Aku-nna:

-Nous serons comme des sœurs, surtout si ta mère choisit de venir avec mon père.

-Pourquoi est-ce que ma mère choisirait ton père ?

-tu as bientôt quatorze ans et tu ne connais pas encore les coutumes de notre peuple d'Ibuza ? mon père hérite ta mère, [...] comme il héritera de tout ce pour quoi ton père a travaillé. (La dot p.93-94) (We'll be like sisters – especially if your mother comes to live with my father'. 'Why should my mother live with your father?' [...] 'You're almost fourteen and you still don't know our customs! Your mother will become my father's wife. My father has inherited everything your father owned, and he has 'inherited' your mother too")

In view of this, it is deducible that a widow becomes a *béni oui-oui* (Yes-man) in the hands of the inheritor.

The Bride Price

The payment of bride price is actually a certain amount of money paid to his bride. This is a symbol of respect and appreciation for the bride's family but it could also suggest possession or commodification of women. Thus, Ibuza, a typical male-dominated society where the autonomy of the girl-child is limited, becomes a war to achieve authentic-self. Emecheta in her text, *La dot*



puts the message across that, young girls had to be on guard in Ibuza. This is because the patriarchal hegemony permits the young men to cut a piece of hair from a girl's head if he is unable to pay the bride price. Consequently, the girl automatically becomes the bride. This citation testifies to it.

À Ibuza, [...] un jeune sans argent pour payer une dot pouvait sortir en douce de la brousse et venir coupe une boucle sur la tête d'une fille de sorte qu'elle lui appartiendrait pour la vie et ne pourrait retourner chez ses parents [...]et aucun autre homme ne la toucherait jamais (La dot p.152). [In Ibuza, a man with no money to pay a bride price could hide behind the trees. He could jump out and cut a piece of hair from girl's head. If he did that, she belonged to him for life and could never go back to her parents' house, and no other man could have her.]

This tradition is considered a gender-based violence.

In Emecheta's *La dot*, Aku-nna is not even ripe for marriage before the father, Ezechiel starts anticipating a large sum of the bride price he will collect on Aku-nna when she gets married. Literally, Aku-nna symbolises wealth. "La richesse de son père". (*La dot* :13) [Her father's wealth] « [...] La seule consolation qu'il pouvait attendre de sa part, ce serait sa dot. » (*La dot*: 13) [the only compensation he could get is the bride price]. This citation affirms his thoughts "Elle allait faire un beau mariage, elle épouserait un homme riche...qui pourrait payer un dot élevée ». (*La dot*: 13) [She would have a good marriage, she would marry a rich man, who could pay a high bride price]. Ezechiel never thought of the drama of slavery, bondage and muteness of her daughter after the collection of the bride price.

After the death of Aku-nna's father, Ezechiel, the step father, Okonkwo Odia sees himself as the beneficiary of the bride price. This is manifested in the novel:

Aku-nna et Ogugua se marieront à peu près en même temps. Leurs dots me reviendront. Tu vois bien la tendance aujourd'hui : les filles instruites rapportent plus d'argent (La dot p. 110). [Aku-nna and Ogugua will get married at the same time. Their bride price



will come to me. You see the trend nowadays: educated girls bring much money]

Okonkwo's expectation of benefitting immensely from the marriages of educated girls accentuating the commodification of women in *La dot*. This hegemonic tendency could trigger emotional violence.

Forced Marriage

The psychological impact of being forced into a marriage against one's will is a form of violence. Aku-nna's emotional distress and attempts to escape from the trap, reveals the psychological toll of such practices. An arranged or forced marriage or marriage by abduction is a poignant issue that suppresses and oppresses women. Aku-nna is kidnapped the day the Christians, precisely the fifteen-year-old girls did a special dance. The scenario is described thus :

Dès pas lourds pénétrèrent dans la case et on entendit des voix inconnues, des voix d'hommes, [...] La voilà ! entendit-elle annoncer par une voix, allons-nous-en ! Elle ne pouvait pas hurler car elle avait la bouche couverte par une main brutale de fermier. Ses pensées étaient toutes agitées. Ça ne servait à rien de se débattre. Ils devaient être au moins douze, ces hommes qui couraient, et les hommes qui la portaient [...] qu'une espèce de vertige envahit Aku-nna. Quand elle arriva dans son nouveau foyer à Umueze, Aku-nna était une mariée une chiffé molle. (La dot, P. 185-186). [Then suddenly the oil lamps in the dancing hut all went off; there was sound of heavy feet. Strange voices, men's voices, were heard... 'Here she is!' cried a voice. 'Let's go!' Aku-nna tried to scream. But a rough hand covered her mouth and she was unable to make a sound. Suddenly Aku-nna realized what was happening. 'This is the end of all my dreams' she thought. 'They are kidnapping me.'

She could not get away. There were at least twelve men, running, carrying her along. She lost consciousness, and she was still unconscious when she arrived at her home. Thus, the aftermath



of forced marriage and kidnapping which includes: emotional trauma, loss of autonomy, physical abuse among the rest is apparent in the life of Aku-nna. Aku-nna is helpless and emotionally devastated. Aku-nna's mother could not help her because the tradition undermined her. The assertion of Okoboshi's mother towards Aku-nna showed that the kidnapping of a bride is just and not a taboo in Ibuza.

Ne te fais pas de souci. Nous allons envoyer un message à ta mère. Tu es en bonnes mains. Mon mari a décidé de t'obtenir pour notre garçon de cette façon-là, parce que nous avons appris et nous avons vu le rôle ce fils d'esclave voulait jouer dans ta vie. Aucune fille d'une famille aussi bonne que la tienne n'irait rêver d'épouser une esclave. Oh, non ! étonnèrent en chœur les autres femmes, ça ne fait pas jamais. (La dot p.197) [Okoboshi's mother greeted her warmly don't worry. We'll send a message to your mother. You're in good hands. My husband decided to kidnap you for our boy because of that slave, Chike. No girl from a good family like yours could possibility marry a slave. 'Oh no', repeated the other women. Never!]

Okoboshi's mother seems to forget that she too has a daughter that may be in Aku-nna's shoes one day. It is expected of her to shun the idea of kidnapping in order to prepare a better future for her daughter.

It is apparent in the text that Akunna at a tender age is denied direct experience of love to her heartthrob, Chike Ofulue. Chike is from the descendant of slave. Okoboshi is unsuited to her but if she proves stubborn, she could be sexually molested not only by Okoboshi, his friends will also join hands with him. This citation exemplifies this : « Sa nouvelle belle-sœur [...] l'averti qu'il ne fallait pas qu'elle essaie de faire des difficultés, parce qu'il suffisait qu'Okoboshi appelle à l'aide et tous ces hommes ivres entreraient et l'aideraient à lui tenir les jambes écartées de façon qu'il puisse la pénétrer sans problème. » (La dot, p.199) [Her sister in-law warned her that Okoboshi could force her to sleep with him, and if she was unwilling his friends could hold her down].



The emotional impact of being forced into a marriage against one's will is a form of violence. Emecheta's depiction of girls' kidnapping in *La dot*, underscores the need to challenge and question societal norms. In view of this, Emecheta authorized her protagonist, Akunna to lie when Okoboshi wants to rape her. The act of lying takes Akunna to heroic-selfhood. This lie is considered a subversive strategy. Akunna outwits Okoboshi that she has lost her virginity to Chike. This citation exemplifies :

Oui, il (Chike) a couché avec moi souvent, bien souvent. » (La dot, P.203) [He slept with me often, very often]. This disclosure gets Okoboshi infuriated, slapped her with all his strength and she was bleeding in the mouth]. Having accepted the defeat, Okoboshi pretends as if he was not interested in her. “Je n’étais emballé pour toi de tout façon. [...] Ainsi tu n’es pas vierge. [...] tu vas rester ma femme de nom, mais dans quelques mois, j’épouserai la fille de mon choix et devras être à ses ordres et aux ordres de toutes mes épouses à venir. Sors de mon lit, chienne publique » (La dot, p. 205) [Thus, you are not a virgin. You will remain my wife by name, soon, I shall marry a girl of my choice, and you will fetch and carry for her. Now get out of my bed, public dog] [He hit her once more. She fell onto the floor and lost consciousness.]

Emecheta's *La dot* highlights the societal structures that give men control over women's lives and bodies. This control is exercised through arranged marriages, expectations of obedience, and the threat of violence if women defy these norms. Akunna is a victim of physical, emotional and verbal violence. The derogatory expression “chienne publique, “la maitresse d’esclave,” “putaine” (*La dot* p.205-206 [public dog, the slave's concubine, prostitute] used to describe Akunna suggests sexism. These languages can be demeaning and dehumanizing not only to Akunna but toward women in general. Akunna's attempts to resist the forced marriage and pursue education are acts of resistance against the violence she experienced.

The only solution to Akunna's plight is escape. Despite the pleas to Okonwo Odia to accept the new bride price offered to him by Chike's father, he refused to give her daughter to the son of a slave. « *La dot* fut de nouveau offerte à Okonkwo, mais il refusa de nouveau de donner sa fille



a un esclave ». In view of this, Aku-nna elopes with Chike Ofolue to Ughelli. This is a disgrace on the part of Okonkwo Ochia. He is bent on taking revenge against Aku-nna. Okwonko makes a small doll in the exact image of Aku-nna in a bid to make her die a slow and painful death. Aku-nna eventually died during childbirth. A relationship that supposes to be a happy ever after becomes a thorn after ever.

The story of Aku-nna is a warning to all Ibuza's daughters. From the authorial voice,

Toutes les filles qui naquirent à Ibuza après la mort d'Aku-nna s'entendirent raconter son histoire, pour renforcer les anciens tabous du pays. Si une fille voulait vivre longtemps et voir les enfants de ses enfants, elle devait accepter le mari choisi pour elle par sa famille., et il fallait payer la dot. Si la dot n'était pas payée, elle ne survivrait jamais à la naissance de son premier enfant. (La dot: 246-7) [Every girl born in Ibuza after Akunna's death was told her story, to reinforce the old taboos of the land. If a girl wants to live long and see her children's children, she must accept the husband chosen for her by her people, and the bride price must be paid. If the bride price was not paid, she will not live to see her first child.]

Oshu Caste

Another manifestation of cultural turmoil in *La dot* is the depiction of Oshu caste in the Eastern community of Nigeria. Literature mirrors reality and in so doing, grants readers sanity or rationality. Buchi Emecheta, through the protagonists, Aku-nna and Chike Ofolue in *La dot*, create a new reality. Traditionally, oshus are described as the descendants of slave in Igboland and they are being relegated to the level of mediocre by diala class (Nwaubani, (2019). Nwaubani also asserts "oshu castes are considered pariahs". This is because they are regarded as outcasts who cannot socialize or blend with "normal people". They are restricted to living in shrines or marketplaces and face rejections when seeking relationships, be they romantic, marital, or friendship, outside their caste." This assertion is also corroborated by Tony Uchenna, (2010) in his article "Oshu caste in Igboland", with reference to Chinua Achebe's *No*



longer at ease says “*Oshus* are designated separate seats in churches.” Emeka Asinugo (2014) also confirmed this cruel behaviour “the *oshus*, seen as impure, are barred from breaking kola nut or offering prayers on behalf of individuals outside their caste due to the belief that they may bring calamity upon the society.” This social stratification which, some people considered “freeborn” and other as outcasts or slaves, coupled with ill-treatment, abuse and neglect, has forced many *oshus* to relocate to other countries. Despite the *oshus*’ education and professional roles, they are never welcomed into Igbo’s culture.

The *oshu* caste plays a significant role in *La dot* particularly in the context of Aku-nna’s relationship with Chike Ofolue, who is from the descendants of slaves. Their love is forbidden due to their different social status, reflecting the societal norms that prohibit the inter-caste relationships. Emecheta uses *La dot* to critique the *Oshu* caste system, denouncing the discriminatory tendencies. Oguagua’s words act as words of caution to Aku-nna when she insisted on marry Chike. [...] « Qu’une fille de bonne famille épouse le descendant d’un esclave, ce serait une abomination. » (*La dot*: 163 [No nice girl from a good family will marry the descendant of a slave. This will be an abomination]) Chike and Aku-nna are victims of patriarchal supremacy. This is because they could not control the tradition that dominates them.

Another cultural stigma that emanates from the text is when Akunna’s step brothers, Iloba and Osenekwu, heard the rumor that Chike is going out with Aku-nna, the trio feel insulted.

Le fils d’Ofolue? Tu veux dire Chike, le professeur ? Mais c’est un fils d’esclave, maman, il sait se tenir. [...] Elle ne s’intéressait pas à lui à ce point-là. S’écria Iloba, un gout de sel dans la bouche. Si s’était vrai, c’était la plus grande injure qui puisse frapper une famille comme la leur, qui n’avait jamais été souillée du sang d’un étranger, sans parler de celui de descendants d’esclaves. (La dot: 117) [The son of Ofole? You mean Chike, the school teacher? But he is the son of slaves, Mother, and he knows his place. She couldn’t be interested in him to that extent! Iloba cried, his mouth tasting salty. If this was true, it was the greatest insult that could befall a family like theirs which has never been tainted with the



blood of a foreigner to say nothing of that of the descendants of slaves]

This citation is an indicator of the animosity they have for oshu caste represented by Chike. From the authorial voice, no human should be considered a slave. As noted in the text, under the white man's law, nobody could own a person as a slave.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis, *La dot* emerges as a powerful narrative of cultural subjugation, exposing the tension between inherited traditions and the evolving consciousness of women within Igbo society. Emecheta's narrative problematises the rigid enforcement of this custom, revealing how its misuse becomes a mechanism of patriarchal control that undermines women's freedom and self-realization.

Similarly, the Oshu caste system, though deeply rooted in Igbo cultural history, is portrayed as a dehumanizing tradition whose continued practice fuels social exclusion, gendered suffering, and psychological violence. Through Aku-nna's tragic fate, Emecheta critiques the inflexibility of cultural norms that refuse reform in the face of modern realities.

Within this context of cultural subjugation, women's bodies and lives become the primary sites of conflict, where tradition and change collide most violently. Emecheta exposes how women are subjected to multiple forms of violence-verbal, physical, emotional, and psychological under the guise of cultural preservation. Ultimately, *La dot* advances a humanistic vision in which culture is not static but dynamic.

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ANALYSIS OF HUMAN-INDUCED LAND COVER DYNAMICS ANALYSIS IN URBAN ABEOKUTA USING REMOTE SENSING AND GIS

BAKARE Katherine Olayinka PhD & GBEMUDU Victor

**Department of Geography,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education,
Ondo.**

bakareko@afuedondo.edu.ng

Abstract

Land cover changes (LCCs) detection methods delve into the possibility of using different high and medium-resolution multispectral remote sensing spatial datasets and various land cover software to analyse land cover dynamics as a result of human activities. This study analysed the multiple changes that have occurred in the land cover types of the urban landscape of Abeokuta within the last thirty years using advanced change detection methods. Landsat TM, ETM, and ETM+ Imagery covering Abeokuta, (1988–2022) were obtained from Landsat Global Land-Use and Land Cover Facility and the European Space Agency. Land cover classification was performed using ArcGIS 10.8, six land cover types: Open Space (OS), Built-Up Area (BUA), Light Forest (LF), Dense Forest (DF), Agricultural Land (AL), and Water Bodies (WB) were identified. Land cover modeling tool was employed to calculate changes in land cover metric. Results showed that land cover types change significantly during the study period. F-value of 14.53 indicated significant differences in the mean values of various land cover types; there was a consistent increase in BUA (1988=14.6km² <1993=38.8km² <1998=42.1km² <2003=44.3km² <2008=62km² <2013=89.8km² <2018=109.3km² <2022=113.4km²) and a corresponding decrease in DF (1988=76.6km² >1993=66.8km² >1998=59.8km² >2003=59.0km² >2008=52.4km² >2013=48.8km² >2018=39.0km² >2022=17.4km²) over the study period. This is an indication of significant human-induced changes in land cover of Abeokuta as a result of making the environment more conducive for living.

Keywords: Human-induced, Land cover, urban area, Remote Sensing and GIS



Introduction

Land cover is referred to as materials on the Earth's surface that occurs naturally. Forests (thick and light), water bodies, open space, farmland, rangelands and built-up space (urban environment), are examples of land covers. Over time, changes that occur in land cover components are due to both human behaviour and natural proceedings (Fashae, et. al., 2022).

Land cover changes refer to the changes in the features of the Earth's surface, such as alterations in natural landscapes, land cover transformations, and urban areas' expansion. Human activities, natural events, and climate dynamics are the drivers of these identified changes. (Fashae, et. al., 2022; Fasona, et. al., 2014; Dalil, et. al., 2016; Mustapha, et. al., 2019).

Changes in the physical environment that have occurred due to the effects of human activities and human processes could be estimated by evaluating Land cover changes; with intensification in climate change and urbanisation processes, comprehending the influences of land cover dynamics on ecology, hydrology and climate systems is classified among the major challenges of the present time that needs solution (Fashae et. al., 2017; Fasona, et. al., 2014). The health, strength, functionality and biodiversity of an ecosystem can be evaluated by assessing the changes that have occurred in Land cover (Fasona, et. al., 2014; Fashae, et. al., 2020).

Furthermore, change in land cover has far-reaching effects on the ecological balance of an environment both locally and globally; it can induce temperature modifications, water cycles and soil characteristics alteration (Fashae, et. al., 2020; Fasona, et. al., 2014). Urbanisation is a process, it begins when more people move into urban areas (cities) from rural area and then there is population growth and urban expansion; modifications in land covers begin to take place as human make efforts to create a more conducive environment to live in.

Urbanisation is amongst the strongest drivers of land cover change. Urbanisation alters the natural habitats into impervious surfaces like roads, buildings and pavements as cities expand. Land cover changes, which is a prominent feature in urban areas subsequently alter the hydrological processes thereby increasing runoff which can in turn result in recurrent and extreme flood, one of the present day ecological concerns (Arnold & Gibbons, 1996). Additionally, Urbanisation can also lead to distortion in the ecosystem, which causes ecosystems destruction and/or fragmentation, thereby resulting in a reduction in biodiversity.



Land cover changes and subsequent increase in impervious surfaces in urban areas have profound influence on the relationship between rainfall and runoff, which causes increased surface runoff (Bai et al., 2010). These changes bring about increased peak flows and reduced time to peak, which can submerge functioning drainage systems and intensify flood risk. The transformation of natural land cover to urban settings alters the hydrological cycle by reducing the rate of infiltration and changing evapotranspiration rates (Pielke et al., 2007). Increased surface runoff and reduction in infiltration rate after sometimes can bring about increase in flood incidence and intensity especially in urban watersheds.

The upsurge in impervious surfaces in various urban areas, Abeokuta inclusive, as a result of city growth has altered rainfall-runoff patterns. Various scholars have established that urban centers experience increased peak flows and reduced time to peak in comparison to natural or rural landscapes (Ogundele and Jegede 2011). Overtime, there has been increase in surface runoff, decrease in ground water discharge and higher flood risks in Abeokuta as a result of modification in land cover types. These changes are intensified by the poor drainage system that struggles to cope with increased surface runoff when heavy rainfall episodes are experienced (Adebayo et al., 2022). The natural landscape of Abeokuta has undergone modifications and changes with the forests and farmlands evolving into urban landscapes. This change has substantial consequences on the ecosystem, water balance and weather patterns (Oyinloye and Kufoniya, 2011).

Land cover dynamics researches in Abeokuta underscore the decrease in vegetal cover, which have an influence on the biodiversity thereby causing soil erosion and reduction in soil fertility. The forces of land cover changes in an urban environment include but are not limited to population increase, agricultural expansion, urbanisation, economic growth, (construction, mining, industrialisation, and commerce), Climate change (Oyinloye and Kufoniya, 2011; Salami *et al.*, 2016; Adetunji and Oyeleye, 2013; Adeoye *et al.*, 2009). Land cover changes have a deep consequence on the ecosystem, for example, deforestation creates habitat disintegration, jeopardising biodiversity; likewise, urban expansion in form of tarred roads and constructions enhances the impacts of urban heat island thereby raising local temperature and constituting risk to the health of human (Salami *et al.*, 2016).

Studies on Land cover dynamics have impacts on the water cycle as it alters its infiltration rate, surface overflow, and groundwater recharge; playing a fundamental role in water resources



management. As Abeokuta continues to experience growth, understanding how land cover changes works is important for sustainable urban planning and management and putting operational policies in place in managing natural resources (Adetunji and Oyeleye, 2013). Researchers and policymakers can employ mechanisms such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing to track these land cover changes and appraise their effects, allowing them to make informed choices for the city's sustainable future.

Changes in land cover can occur on short-term, medium-term and long-term basis. Short-term changes are seasonal changes in vegetal cover like greening and browning of plants in reaction to rainfall or temperature changes. Medium-term changes comprise of urban growth, steady deforestation, and agricultural patterns shifting as a result of changes in socio-economic features or policy interventions. Long-term changes are usually multi-decade modifications like desertification, wanton deforestation, or glacier retreat caused by climate change that naturally develop over a few decades due to urban growth in many developing countries (Oyinloye and Kufoniyi, 2011); changes such as these usually have intense, long-term impacts on the ecosystem and climate (Turner *et al.*, 1994).

Aim

The aim of the paper is to analyse human-induced land cover changes in Abeokuta using remote sensing and GIS.

Objective

The objective of the study is to:

Identify and analyse the spatial and temporal changes in the different land cover types within Abeokuta from 1988 to 2022

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant variation in land cover types in Abeokuta from 1988 to 2022.

STUDY AREA

The study area Abeokuta, is located in southwestern Nigeria, located roughly between latitudes 7°6' and 7°15' North of the equator, and longitudes 3°16' and 3°35' East of the Greenwich Meridian (Figure 1). Abeokuta is bounded in North by Odeda town, Odeda Local Government Area; in the East by Osiele and some other smaller towns also in Odeda Local Government Area;



in the West by Owode and other surrounding towns near the border of Benin Republic in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area and in the South by Ewekoro and Ifo Local Government Areas. The land area covers an urban centre of about 879 km², making it a significant sub-section of the Lower Ogun Basin.

It experiences tropical climate characterised by distinct wet and dry seasons. The seasonal average of rainfall is high (1300 mm). Temperature is highest on the average in March at 30°C and lowest on the average in August at 24°C in the year. Humidity exceeds 80% usually as a result of consistent rainfall. The Geology of the area is characterised by the Nigeria *Basement complex rocks* characterised by Ancient Crystalline Rocks that are part of the Pre-Cambrian formation with six major lithologic units namely: Quartzite, Banded-gneiss, Biotite-gneiss, Biotite-Schist, Quartz-Biotite Schist and Pegmatite (Akinse & Gbadebo, 2016). The relief is characterised by undulating topography and rocky outcrops with elevations ranging from 50 to 200 metres above sea level (Bello *et al.*, 2009).

Abeokuta is dissected by several river systems, including tributaries of the Ogun River which include Rivers Ewekoro, Opeki, Erelu, Iwofin, Sokori, Owiwi, and Ajire amongst others.

The soils of the study are diverse and support various agricultural activities; soil types in the region range from lateritic soils to clay and alluvial soils near riverbanks. The vegetation of the study area is predominantly characterised by a mix of forested areas, savanna woodlands and open grassland formed by both nature and human activities.

According to the 2006 census, the population of Abeokuta and the surrounding area was 446,088 (National Population Commission, 2006). The current metro area population of Abeokuta in 2023 is estimated to be 571,000, at a rate of 2.51% increase from the 2022 population which was estimated as 557,000.

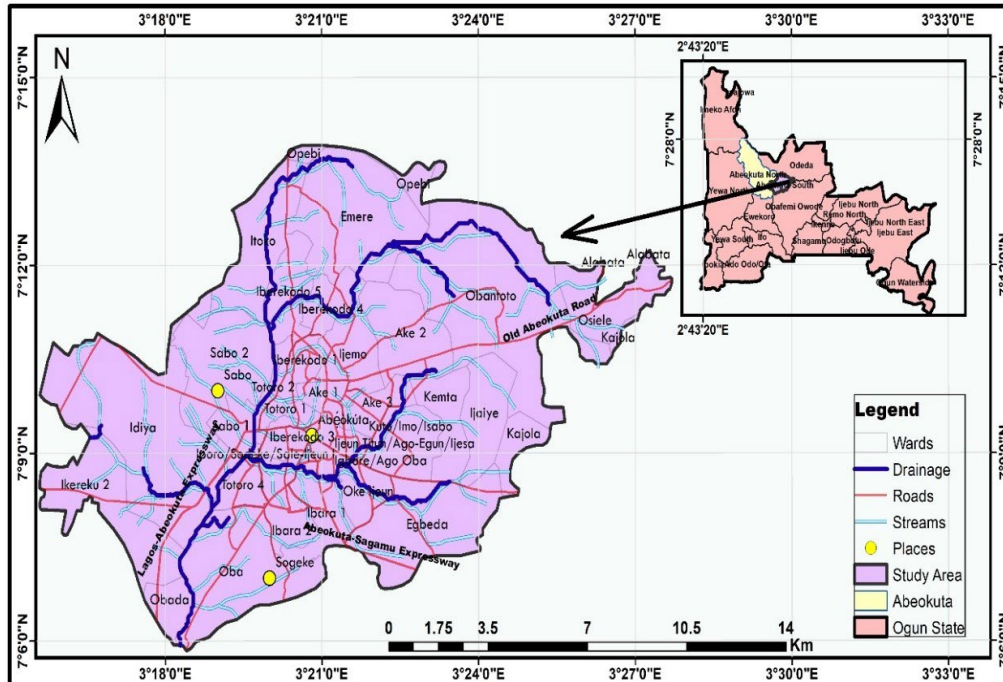


Figure 1. Map of Abeokuta the study area

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Data Used:

Landsat TM, ETM, and ETM+ imageries covering urban city of Abeokuta for 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018 and 2022 were gotten from Landsat Global Land-Use and Land Cover Facility, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and the European Space Agency (ESA). (<https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov>). The land cover classification was performed using Arc GIS 10.8. Land cover modeling tool was utilised to compute changes in land cover metric through Abeokuta town. The Landsat images used from 1988 to 2022 are:

Table 1. Landsat images used from 1988 to 2022

Landsat image TM for Abeokuta 1988	30m resolution, pan-sharpened to 15m
Landsat image ETM for Abeokuta 1993	30m resolution, pan-sharpened to 15m
Landsat image ETM for Abeokuta 1998	30m resolution, pan-sharpened to 15m
Landsat image ETM for Abeokuta 2003	30m resolution, pan-sharpened to 15m
Landsat image ETM+ for Abeokuta 2008	30m resolution, pan-sharpened to 15m
Landsat image ETM+ for Abeokuta 2013	30m resolution, pan-sharpened to 15m
Landsat image ETM+ for Abeokuta 2018	30m resolution, pan-sharpened to 15m
Landsat image ETM+ for Abeokuta 2022	30m resolution, pan-sharpened to 15m

The study made use of six land cover types, a land cover classification system was developed to enable consistent and reliable assessment. This classification system was employed in bringing about the classes of the land cover on the maps. Though, generalisation and reclassification was made to a number of land cover classes in the study area so that consistency can be achieved in the land cover classes for the study period. The study adapted these classification to work with: Built-Up Area, Open Space, Light Forest, Dense Forest, Agricultural land and Water bodies.

Source, Collection and Analysis of Data

Satellite imagery for the period of study was downloaded from online repositories, and specific bands or indices; the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) for land cover analysis, were derived from online source, <https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov>. The land cover classification was performed using remote sensing data and techniques of image processing. Supervised and unsupervised classification was applied to generate land cover maps (e.g. Built-Up Area, Open Space, Forest (light and dense), Farmland and Water bodies).



Spatial and temporal patterns of land cover were identified and the changes that have occurred were assessed using change detection methods, including post-classification comparison and land change modeller. The percentage and change in percentage of impervious surface (built-up area) at 5-year intervals were calculated using the land cover maps. Analysis of variance was employed in testing null hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Objective: Spatial and temporal pattern and analysis of different land cover types in Abeokuta from 1988 to 2022.

Table 1 provides an overview of land cover pattern in Abeokuta and Figure 2 depict the summary of coverage of land cover variation during the period of study (1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018 and 2022). The study area, totaling 174.5 square kilometres, is characterised by various land cover types, each occupying a distinct percentage of the entire area. In 1988 as shown in Table 1, dense forest emerges as the dominant land cover, encompassing a substantial 43.9% of the entire area. This specifies a noteworthy ecological presence and highlights the area's importance in terms of biodiversity as well as ecosystem services. Agricultural land, with a share of 30.8%, signifies the considerable human influence on the landscape, emphasising the region's agricultural significance. The presence of built-up areas and open spaces, constituting 8.4% and 4.5%, respectively, suggests urbanisation tendencies that may impact the natural environment in the long on. Additionally, 1993 exhibited a land cover pattern close to what we had in 1988 but with slight difference here and there, the largest land cover category was still Dense Forest, covering a substantial 38.3% of the total area although there was a decline in size compared to 1988; still reflecting the region's significant forested ecosystem. Agricultural land reduced from 30.8% to 30.0% of the area, highlighting the importance of, and increase in agriculture in the region. The Built-Up Area expanded to 22.2%, indicating gradual urban development in the study area. Light Forest and Open Space collectively represented 8.8%, demonstrating a balance between natural and semi-developed environments. Water bodies and constituted a relatively small portion at 0.7%.

Furthermore, by 1998, dominant land cover was still dense forest accounting for 34.3% of land mass, although it is declining compared to previous years. This is followed by Agricultural land covering 33.0% of the total area. Together, these two categories occupied 67.3% portion of the



landscape, reflecting an increase in the area's reliance on agriculture and the presence of gradually declining forested areas. Built-up areas constituted 24.1%, highlighting an upward trend in urban expansion in the study area; while light forests covered 6.9%, indicating a mix of partially wooded areas and grasses. Open space and water bodies collectively covered a minimal 1.8%, underlining the limited extent of both covers types. This composition suggests an equilibrium amid human settlement, agricultural activities, and the effort made in preservation of forested landscapes within the study area since 1998.

Moreover, by 2003, the dominant land cover category remained Dense Forest constituting 33.8%, closely followed by Built-Up Area covering 25.4% of the entire area. The substantial extent of Dense Forest by 2003 reflects probable efforts made in the preservation of the natural environment, indicative of potentially rich biodiversity. The Built-up Area coverage, on the other hand, represents increase in human settlements and infrastructural development. Agricultural land occupied 21.5% of the area, underlining the importance of agriculture in the region. Light Forest and Open Space collectively accounted for 18.5% of the land, suggesting a balance between partially vegetated areas and open, non-built spaces. Water bodies still constituted a relatively small percentage although it decrease from 0.9% in 1998 to 0.8%.

However, the predominant land cover category changed from dense forest to Built-Up Area in 2008, covering 62.0 square kilometres and constituting 35.5% of the total area. This suggests significant urban extension or more developed infrastructures within the region. Dense forests reduced to 30.0% with Agricultural land also decreasing to 15.6% of the total area. This indicates a balance between natural vegetation and agricultural activities, although a gradual decline in farming activities. Open Space, covering 16.6 square kilometres (9.5%), suggests areas with minimal human development, possibly designated for recreational purposes. Light Forest covering 14.8 square kilometres (8.5%), and Water Bodies at 1.4 square kilometres (0.8%), signify areas with varying degrees of vegetation cover and water features, contributing to the overall ecological diversity of Abeokuta. Additionally, the predominant land cover category in 2013 was still the Built-Up Area, covering 89.8 square kilometres, constituting 51.5% of the total area. This suggests a consistent increase in urbanisation and development in the region. Dense Forests dropped to 28.0% of the area, with a coverage of 48.8 square kilometres, indicating a



significant portion of the landscape being deforested when compared to 1988 and a smaller portion now left untouched as natural ecosystems. Open Spaces, spanning 18.2 square kilometres, represented 10.4% of the total area, indicating a relative balance between development and preserved spaces. Light Forests, Agricultural lands, and Water Bodies constituted 7.6%, 1.7%, and 0.8%, respectively, reflecting the coexistence of various land covers, including agricultural activities and natural features.

Likewise, the predominant land cover in 2018 remained built-up areas, encompassing 62.7% of the total area, underscoring the significant impact of human activities and infrastructure development. Meanwhile, open spaces constituted a minimal coverage reducing drastically from 10.4% in 2013 to 0.1%, emphasising further urbanisation processes. Light and dense forests covered 6.3% and 22.4%, respectively, this suggests efforts undertaken in maintaining green spaces and biodiversity. Agricultural land expanded again from 1.7% to 7.2% of the entire area, signifying probable improved interest in agricultural activities within the region. Water bodies covered 1.4%, reflecting the integration of aquatic ecosystems. Finally in 2022, the study area spanning 174.5 km² exhibited a predominantly urbanised landscape, with built-up areas covering majority at 65.0%.

This underscores the high level of development and human activities in the region. Conversely, natural environments decreased in size, with dense forests accounting for a meager 10.0% and light forests covering 7.6% of the entire area, indicating a minor section from the region remains forested. Agricultural activities were assumed to have increased again with agricultural land covering about 15.2% of the area, emphasising the continued importance and increased interest in farming within the region. Meanwhile, open spaces represented a minimal fraction at 0.8%, suggesting limited undeveloped areas. Water bodies remained consistent to area covered in 2018, constituting 1.4% of the total land area. Overall, while urbanisation which is human induced has left a dominant imprint in the study area, retains diverse land cover types, reflecting an imbalance between human development and natural ecosystems (Figure 2).

Land cover modifications in Abeokuta during the duration of study shows a drastic decrease in natural landscape and an incredible increase in built-up spaces, this coincides with the verdicts of Oyedele, *et al.*, 2023; Adebayo, *et al.*, 2019; Adebayo, *et al.*, 2024 also there was an upsurge in agricultural activities in urban areas as Awoniran, *et al.*, 2014); this dynamism indicated



significant influence of anthropogenic factors on natural environment, this is in accordance with Oyedele, *et al.*, 2023; Adebayo, *et al.*, 2019; Adebayo, *et al.*, 2024. Humans, in a bid to make their environment more conducive to live in, have encroached on the natural landscape so much to his own detriment leading to soil degradation and loss of biodiversity. These may eventually lead to flood vulnerability in Abeokuta (Awoniran, *et al.*, 2014)

Table 2. Spatial and temporal Pattern of Land cover types, 1988 to 2022

Category Year	Open Space		Built-up Area		Light Forest		Dense Forest		Agricultural land		Water Bodies	
	km ²	%	km ²	%	km ²	%	km ²	%	km ²	%	km ²	%
1988	7.8	4.4	14.6	8.4	20.3	11.6	76.6	43.9	53.8	30.8	1.4	0.8
1993	9.2	5.3	38.8	22.2	6.1	3.5	66.8	38.3	52.3	30.0	1.3	0.7
1988	1.6	0.9	42.0	24.1	12.0	6.8	59.8	34.3	57.6	33.0	1.5	0.9
2003	21.7	12.4	44.3	25.4	10.6	6.1	59.0	33.8	37.5	21.5	1.4	0.8
2008	16.7	9.6	62.0	35.5	14.8	8.5	52.4	30.0	27.3	15.6	1.4	0.8
2013	18.2	10.4	89.8	51.5	13.3	7.6	48.8	27.9	3.0	1.7	1.4	0.8
2018	0.1	0.1	109.3	62.7	11.0	6.3	39.0	22.4	12.5	7.2	2.5	1.4
2022	1.4	0.8	113.4	65.0	13.3	7.6	17.4	10.0	26.5	15.2	2.5	1.4
Total	174.5	100	174.5	100	174.5	100	174.5	100	174.5	100	174.5	100

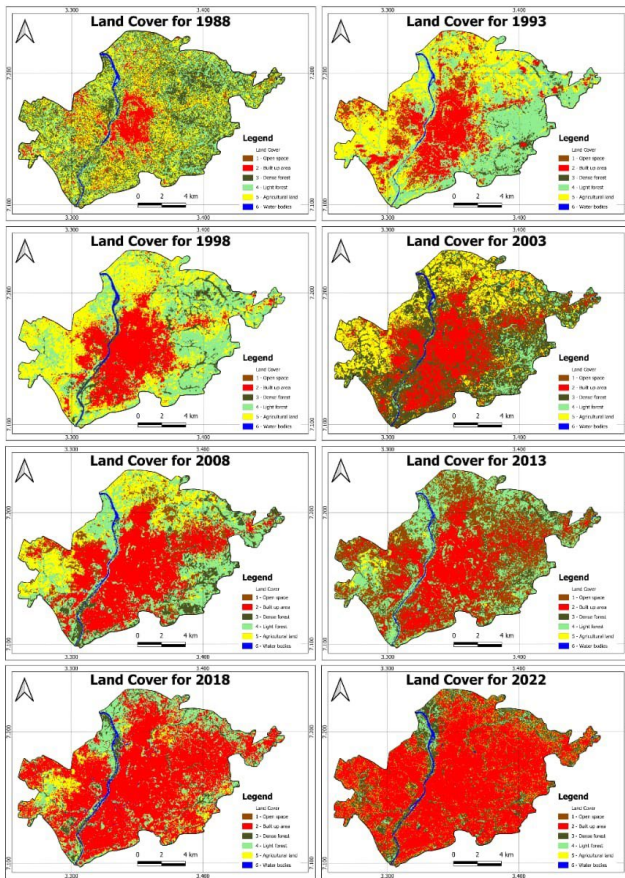


Figure 2. Land Cover Patterns from 1988 – 2022

Significant variation in Land cover patterns from 1988-2022.

The descriptive analysis of land cover patterns Abeokuta from 1988-2022 provides an all-inclusive summary of the six identified categories: Built-up Area, Open Space, Agricultural land, Water Bodies, Light Forest, and Dense Forest (Table 3). The mean values for these categories indicate the size of land cover over the specified time frame. For example, Built-Up Area has the highest mean value of 64.3 in the category, next to that is Dense Forest with a value of 52.5 and coming in the third position is Agricultural land with 33.8 as mean value. These results indicate that a notable portion of the area of study is attributed to having more of built-up areas, dense forests, and Agricultural lands. Conversely, Water Bodies has the lowest mean value of 1.7, signifying a comparatively minor extent of this land cover type.



Moreover, the range values give perceptions into the variability within each land cover category. For instance, the Built-Up Area category exhibits a wide range of 98.8, indicating substantial variability in urban development across the sub-section; following closely is the Dense Forest category that shows a range of 59.2, this also signifies an enormous change in the size of dense forest within the region. Standard deviation and variance additionally enumerate the spread of data points round the average, with higher values indicating larger inconsistency. The skewness and kurtosis values gave information as far as the shape and tail features of the distribution for each land cover category is concerned. In all, these descriptive figures provide valuable understanding into the variation, spatial arrangement, and features of different land cover patterns in Abeokuta, which can be a foundation for further planning, future study, and administration initiatives.

Table 3. Statistical parametres of Land cover patterns from 1988-2022

Open Space	Open Space	Built-up Area	Light Forest	Dense Forest	Agricultural land	Water Bodies
Mean	9.6	64.3	12.7	52.5	33.8	1.7
Standard Error	3.0	12.8	1.4	6.4	7.1	0.2
Standard Deviation	8.4	36.1	4.0	18.2	20.1	0.5
Sample Variance	70.8	1300.6	16.3	329.8	402.9	0.3
Kurtosis	-1.7	-1.4	1.9	1.2	-1.3	-0.1
Skewness	0.3	0.3	0.4	-0.9	-0.3	1.4
Range	21.6	98.8	14.2	59.2	54.6	1.2
Minimum	0.1	14.6	6.1	17.4	3.0	1.3
Maximum	21.7	113.4	20.3	76.6	57.6	2.5
Sum	76.7	514.3	101.4	419.8	270.5	13.4
Count	8	8	8	8	8	8

Tables 4a and 4b are presentation of the analysis of variance for the evaluation of significant variation in land cover types in Abeokuta from 1988-2022. The single factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) results presented in Table 4.18b examining land cover patterns in Abeokuta from 1988-2022 shows a statistically significant variation among the six different land cover categories: Built-Up Area, Agricultural land, Open Space, Water Bodies, Light Forest, and Dense Forest. The F-value of 14.53, is greater in value than the critical F-value of 2.44 at a

significance level of 0.05. Moreover, the p-value is 0.000 in relation to this F-test and that is less than the standard alpha level of 0.05. The presentation of these results infers that ‘there is no significant variation in land cover types within Abeokuta over the study period cannot be acceded; the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

ANOVA: Single Factor

Table 4a. Statistical summary of land cover patterns

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Open Space	8	76.7	9.59	70.81
Built-up Area	8	514.3	64.29	1300.65
Light Forest	8	101.4	12.68	16.32
Dense Forest	8	419.8	52.48	329.83
Agricultural land	8	270.5	33.81	402.89
Water Bodies	8	13.4	1.68	0.26

Table 4b. ANOVA Test

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	25675.25	5	5135.05	14.53	0.000	2.44
Within Groups	14845.31	42	353.46			
Total	40520.56	47				

Furthermore, when examining the variability within each group and between the groups, the between-group variation (SS = 25675.25) is substantially larger than the within-group variation (SS = 14845.31). This large discrepancy suggests that there are indeed notable differences in land cover patterns between the various categories, thereby rejecting the hypothesis of uniformity in land cover across the area of study. The differences observed among the land cover categories may have important consequences on ecological conservation, urban planning, and resource management in the region, warranting further investigation and targeted interventions to talk about the distinct problems and opportunities associated with each land cover type.

Modification in land cover categories in Abeokuta showed a drastic reduction in vegetation cover (dense and light forest) and an upsurge in built-up area and agricultural land overall for the



period of study. There are indications of indiscriminate land utilisation (Adebayo, *et al.*, 2019) and there is need to control land cover changes in form of urban growth and preserve natural landscape for sustainable development (Adeleke and Orimoogunje, 2016). A vigorous increase in farming activities was recorded around this time which has both progressive and destructive implications on the environment. The destructive impacts being soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, emission of greenhouse gases, and in effect climate alteration, and sometimes increased surface runoff depending on the types of crops. The positive aspects of agriculture are support of local economy, plants serve as carbon sink, biodiversity preservation, watershed protection and food security.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Rapid urbanisation and agricultural expansion have predominantly transformed natural landscapes into impermeable surfaces as a result of human-induced factors. This study evaluated changes in land cover pattern as driven majorly by human activities. The study reveals a pronounced trend of urbanisation, with the built-up area increasing significantly from 42.0 km² in 1998 to 115.5 km² by 2018, ultimately constituting 65.0% of the total area by 2022. This rapid urban growth happened at the expense of dense forests, which declined from 59.8 km² in 1998 to just 10.0 km² in 2022, reflecting a negative rate of change of -6.1% annually during the latter years.

The study shows land cover changes, from 1988 to 2022, where urbanisation and deforestation have increased impermeable surfaces, the findings indicate a significant enlargement in built-up areas, rising from 42.0 km² in 1998 to 115.5 km² in 2018, largely at the expense of dense forests.

As a result of the above findings, the study recommends implementation of urban planning strategies to control and manage rapid expansion in built-up areas to minimise environmental degradation; and also adopt sustainable land use practices that reduce impervious surfaces to maintain natural landscape as much as possible.



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THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF OKITIPUPA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

¹Martina Bosede AJIBEFUN & ²Durojaye Segun AKINYOMBO

¹Department of Social Studies and Civic Education,

²Department of Geography

Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo Nigeria

akinyombosegun@gmail.com, ORCID number 0009-0004-5592-7548,

boseajibefun44@gmail.com, ORCID number 0000-0001-7574-5910, 08169519967,

[07038263060](tel:07038263060)

Abstract

The place of women in the global world cannot be over emphasized either in politics, education, and agriculture even in community development and many others that cannot be mentioned in this research work that is why this paper examine and also explore the role of women in sustainable community development in Africa focusing on Okitipupa local government area of Ondo state using both qualitative and quantitative method. The population of the study comprises the women in the local government while 100 women were picked at random for the study. Although many challenges are very much a head of women like gender inequality, funds inadequacy ,limited human resources due to lack of education, the findings reveal that The findings review that the calculated $x^2=18.18 < 3.841 @ 0.005$ significant level the hypothesis was rejected because women are instrumental in sustainable actions, promoting local governance with their little education. The study conclude with recommendations among others; enhancing women's roles in development processes through inclusive governance, Women must be educated and the government must encourage the women by formulating good policies that will give them soft land to operate .

Keywords: Sustainable development, Community, Involvement, Gender



Introduction

Sustainability is a process where human needs and action are addressed in a point that is environmentally friendly and stable. It is the actions and behaviors that take into account the effects individual actions have on the global world and the society at large and towards future generation. Every human now conscious about their environment, which they can live not to cause harm to their neighbours and themselves and how they can be mindful of that actions many communities and societies around the globe have taken steps in practicing sustainable development which is one of the roots of sustainable community development which take into cognizance the issue of sustainable economically, socially and environmentally in the community.

Sustainable community can be defined as a community planned, built or modified to promote sustainable living. Sustainable communities tend to focus on environmental and economic sustainability, urban infrastructure, social equality and local governance. It addresses multiple needs, not just one at the exclusion of all others. It is a place where people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives feel welcome and safe, where every group has a seat at the decision-making table and where prosperity is shared. Sustainable communities make people feel belong, no matter what the situation may be. Every community is secured because of the understanding between the people, even they are believed in the security of the present and also the future. A sustainable community manages and monitors its human, natural and financial capital to meet current needs while assuring that adequate resources are ready for future born and unborn generation.

The recognition of the significance of the place and the role of women in the society is a current social pre-occupation. Whether in politics, economic, education or generally, women were portrayed as not being able to provide a fertile ground for academic debate in African society in terms of their limited roles in the past. As a result of this neglect, records had it that the history of African women and their contribution to sustainable community development were not taken into consideration, because the writing and studies of history were male-oriented by the Europeans who had patriarchal traditions Akinyombo (2012). In the African setting, the significance of women cannot be overemphasized as they contribute immensely to their community, women make the society to be sustainable because they are the soul of the functional



level in the society, women go to the bush to fetch firewood which they used in cooking food for their family, the firewood resulted to carbon monoxide that causes climate change in the world, but proper training of these women will allow them to know the impact of this in their environment so that they can make the environment they live to be sustainable.

Women are called agents of change for sustainable community development in the society, from the time immemorial women and girls have contributed immensely to the growth and development of communities in various dimensions; politically, socially and economically and environmentally (Yidau, et al, 2021) in Ifeoma F.U, Women as Agents of Positive Change for sustainable Community Development River state Journal of Education. Women involved in domestic economic through agriculture they farmed along their husbands by producing goods and services, they also participated in the production of oil palm and palm kernel; for sustainable livelihood (Ohaegbuchi, 2014, Nwankwo, 2010, Bawa, Donye & Nuhu, 2010).

Hence, African women in moving sustainable community development up involved in rural businesses especially in petty trading which involved around the African soil (Nwankwo & Okeke, 2017) Generally, women are the back bone of every society, because they provide human capital; in the form of labour to local industry and commerce through their natural reproduction, without women there would be no labour resources in communities around the world including Africa (Elmhirst & Resurrecion, 2012; United Nations, 2014). Actually, because of the hazard encounter by the women in the process of either fetching firewood, excavating clay from the ground made them to be manager in natural resources management, and major contributors to environmental conservation. Women play very authentic roles in protecting communities against issues like ozone layer depletion, environmental pollution as well as degradation portending adverse effect on environmental sustainability. Absolutely without mincing word, African women are regarded as uneducated, weaker sex, deprived and under privilege. The same study discussed the active involvement of women traditionally in farming and other related community development activities even though their contributions have remain largely unmentioned and underrated.

In Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo state, most of the projects embarked upon in the past in the rural communities excluded women from being participants, but due to the extensive education and orientation given to them, it has made them to be actively involved for sustainable



life in the community by driving positive change across various aspects like the environment, economy and the social well-being, they are the forefront of grassroots movements and actively involved in many projects that bring about sustainable community development. Empowerment of women in this area lead to more sustainable communities by promoting education, healthcare, and families and society at large.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the role of women in achieving the sustainable community development in the study area and the specific objectives are to:

- (i) examine the role of women in achieving sustainable development in the study area
- (ii) assess the challenges of that the women face in achieving the goal in the study area

Research Questions.

- (i)What are the roles play by the women in the study area to achieve the sustainable community in the study area?
- (ii)What are the challenges face by the women in achieving the sustainable community development in the study area?

Hypotheses of the Study.

- (i)There is no significant relationship between the role of the women and sustainable development in the study area.
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the challenges face by women in achieving sustainable development in the study are.

Methodology

Research design survey was used in this study, the design was appropriate for the study because it allows information to be obtained from a representative's sample of the population as they exist, the population of the study consisted of consisted of 100 women in the study area, the sample was carefully selected randomly across the length and breadth of the local government area which comprises 13political wards and 15 towns by using a random sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to get information from the respondents which includes section by section. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics then the hypotheses were tested using chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance



Discussion on Findings

The findings from the research work shows that women dominate major aspects like, domestic job, office job and others, it was discovered that the office of the women are not in the other room in the study areas, majority of the women are into agrarian work while other are helping their husband to do one thing or the other, it was also discovered that women in this area are not well educated, men are well educated than them, the leadership ladder for women are limited compare to the men in the local government. It was also discovered that this work will fill a lot of gap in the study of women in the study area, there are lots of work that have been done ,but this work will fill some gap which was left undone by other researchers

Socio-economic characteristic of the Respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Numbers	Percentage (%)
30 – 34	30	30
35 – 39	30	30
40 – 44	15	15
45 – 49	15	15
50 – 54	5	12
55 – 59	5	10
Total	100	100

From the table 1 above is the age distributions of the respondents range from 30 – 59 years. Age group 30 – 34 has thirty respondents with 30 percent. The respondents between ages of 35 – 39 has total number of 30 respondents with 30 percent. Follow by 40 – 44 ages with 15 percent. 44 – 49 ages of 15 respondents with 15 percent and ages 50 – 54 with 5 respondents with 5 percent and the last but not the least is 55 – 59 ages with total number of 5 respondents with 5 percent



Table 2: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Numbers	Percentage (%)
Single	40	40
Married	30	30
Divorced	20	20
Widow	10	10
Total	100	100

Table 2 shows the marital status of the respondents there are 100 total numbers of the respondents while single respondents have 40 (Forty) with 40percent and filled by the married with total number of 30 respondents with 30percent. Divorce is the third in the role with 20 respondents with 20 percent and the list is widow with total numbers of 10 (Ten) respondents into 10 percent.

Table 3: Education Level of Respondents

Educational Level	Number	Percentage
HND/University	30	30
NCE/OND	30	30
SSCE	20	20
Primary Six	20	20
Total	100	100



Table 3: shows the educational qualification of the respondent in the study area. HND/University graduate of are respondents are 30 (Thirty) with 30 percent followed by the OND/NCE holders with total number of 30 respondents and 30 percent and secondary school certificate holders are 20 in numbers with 20 percent and the least is primary six certificate holders with 20 percent, which shows that the respondents are relatively educated, because of the largest respondents which are the university graduates.

Analysis of the Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis1: There is no significant relationship between the educational status of the women and their role in achieving the sustainable community development.

Category	Yes	No	Total
Illiteracy	30	70	100
Literacy	60	40	100
Total	90	110	200

Chi-square Analysis of Educational Level

O ₁	E ₁	O ₁ - E ₁	(O ₁ - E ₁) ²	(O ₁ - E ₁) ² /E
30	45	-15	225	5
70	55	15	225	4.09
60	45	15	225	5
40	55	-15	225	4.09
200	200	0	1000	X ² = 18.18

Degree of freedom (R - I) (C - 1) = (2 - 1) (2) = 1



Level of significant = 0.05, $\chi^2 = 18.18$, table value = 3.841. We reject the hypothesis, since at the calculated value is greater than the table value which means the educational status of the women and their role is significantly influenced the place of women to achieve sustainable community development in the study area.

Chi-Square	18.18 ^a	1	0.05
Table value like hood Ratio	3.842	1	0.05
Valid cases	2		

Since Cal value is greater than table value $18.18 > 3.841$.

H₁: there is no significance relationship in the age of the respondents and their involvement in sustainable community development

Hypothesis 2-There is no significance difference in the challenges faced by women in respect to their place in sustainable community development

	Yes	No	Total
Glass ceiling	80	20	100
Religion	40	60	100
Total	120	80	200

O ₁	E ₁	O ₁ - E ₁	(O ₁ - E ₁) ²	(O ₁ - E ₁) ² /E
80	60	20	400	6.6
20	40	-20	400	10
60	60	0	0	6.6
40	40	0	0	10
200	200	0	800	(7.6)



Degree of freedom = 1, significant level = 0.05, table value = 3.841, Cal value = 7.6 the hypothesis is rejected since at the calculated value is greater than the table value which means the challenges faced by the women is significantly influenced the place of women in their activities to achieve sustainable community development in the study area.

	Cases	Missing		Total
Glass ceiling and Religion	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
	2	(%)	2	100%

	Value	df	Assumption
Chi-Square Cal	7.6 ^a	1	0.00
Table Value	3.841	1	0.00
Number of valid cases 2			

$$P < 0.050, x^2 = 7.6 \text{ } x^{2\text{tablevalue}} = 3.841$$

Conclusion

The place of African women in Sustainable community development is very important in the global world, this work shows the type of women. Before, the African women are fragile and uneducated in nature, but thanks to the civilized world, women are leaders and advocators of many causes, African women respect their husband as much as themselves, but they realized that the community they live must be sustainable for themselves and the future unborn children and there a lot of measure they put in place meanwhile, good things cannot stand without challenges. Glass ceiling is one of the hindrances all over the globe that educated women faced, which is the same in this study area. Religion, takes special aspect in affecting the development of women to achieve sustainable community development.



Recommendations:

- (i) Women must be educated to know what to do in order to achieve the sustainable community development
- (ii) Challenges that face women must be reduced to the barest minimum in order for the women to achieve the sustainable community development.
- (iii) Government must encourage the women by doing good policies that will favour them
- (iv) There must be a total support to the women like the 35% affirmative during former President Jonathan's era

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GENDER EQUALITY AND THE FUTURE OF WORK: TRANSFORMING VOCATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETAL BALANCE

¹Ajisafe Olufunke Oluyemisi & ²Salami, Vivian Akhere

¹Department of Entrepreneurship and Vocation,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education. Ondo
olufunkeajisafe014@gmail.com

²Department of Business Education,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education. Ondo

Abstract

The future of work is rapidly evolving, driven by technological advancement towards shifting workforce demographics and changing societal expectations. As the world strives for sustainable development and societal balance, promoting gender equality in vocational business education emerges as a critical factor. This paper explores the intersection of gender equality and future of work by highlighting the need to transform vocational business education to address the challenges and opportunities arising from these shifts in which the current state of gender equality in vocational business education and its implications for the future of work is examined. The paper also identifies key strategies for promoting inclusive and equitable education which includes, but not limited to: integrating gender-sensitive curricula; fostering inclusive learning environments and providing opportunities for women and under-represented groups in order to develop skills in high demand fields. The paper concluded that transforming vocational business education to prioritize gender equality is essential for creating a sustainable and balanced society, where individuals can thrive and contribute to the economy regardless of their gender, which would require a multifaceted approach involving policy makers, educators and industry stakeholders working together to promote gender equality and empower future generations of workers.

Keywords: Vocational Business education, Gender equality, future of work, sustainable development, societal balance



Introduction

The future of work is undergoing a unique transformation driven by global technological advancement, demographic shifts, and socio-economic transformations. Within this evolving landscape, the issue of gender equality has become increasingly significant in all disciplines and professions including business education. Vocational Business Education (VBE), which prepares learners for specific trades or professions, must adapt to foster inclusive learning environments and prepare all genders equitably for the challenges of tomorrow's workforce. Ensuring gender equality in VBE is essential not only for empowering individuals but also for achieving broader goals of sustainable societal balance and economic growth. Despite progress in recent decades, women continue to face continued significant barriers in accessing quality education and training, particularly in male-dominated fields. This perpetuates occupational segregation, limits career advancement opportunities and hinders economic growth. Vocational business education plays a vital role in preparing individuals for the workforce, equipping them with the skills and knowledge required to succeed in an increasingly complex and competitive job market. (Ewere 2014)

The economic advancement of a nation is heavily reliant on advancement in technology and the availability of skilled labour and technical personnel to drive the economy. Vocational Business Education plays a pivotal role in expediting a nation's industrial advancement. It offers a very effective method for cultivating a highly competent workforce that is needed by different sectors in a nation's economy. Technical and vocational education has been a crucial component of national development strategies and several civilizations due to its significant influence on productivity and economic advancement. (Ayeni & Olowe, 2015). VBE is effective when students, upon completing their studies are capable of becoming self-sufficient and financially independent. However, several capable and highly skilled individuals, who were unable to obtain profitable jobs, have continued to rely on their parents for financial support, perhaps as a result of various unrest and instability bedeviling the country. A turbulent condition refers to a duration characterized by several abrupt and unpredictable alterations. This may be due to their deficiency in the requisite vocational competencies required for Self-employment and for proficiently operating within the contemporary labour market. (Peter, 2014).



This paper therefore, tends to examine the role of VBE in sustainable societal balance; it argues that transforming VBE to prioritize gender equality is crucial for creating future of work that is equitable and sustainable for all. By highlighting the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for promoting gender equality in VBE. This paper aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the future of work and the role of VBE in shaping a more equitable society. This paper is also aimed at transforming VBE to prioritize equality for creating a sustainable and balanced society where individuals can thrive and contribute to the economy regardless of their gender.

Concept of Vocational Business Education

Vocational education is a specialized style of instruction aimed at equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed for various sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and commerce. (Ewere, 2014). Vocational training is designed to equip learners with the skills necessary for occupations that include hands-on or practical work. Vocational and Technical Education equips students with the necessary skills to function as productive members of a global society, enabling them to thrive in all aspects of life, education, and employment. Vocational and Technical education equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to enter the workforce and actively contribute to the progress of society (Ayeni & Olowe, 2015). Okorie (2021) asserts that vocational education can be conceived as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of educational process involving the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

The Nigerian National Policy on Education revised (NPE, 2022) stipulated aspects of vocational education as: an integral part of general education; a means of preparing for occupational fields and effective participation in the world of work; an aspect of lifelong learning and preparation for responsible citizenship and a method of facilitating poverty alleviation. Business education according to Ezenwafor and Onokpaunu (2017) is a branch of vocational education concerned with exposing its recipients to internal and external foundations and functioning of the workplace. Business education is a work-focused, skilled-based, result-oriented and technology-based educational programme. With the knowledge of business education, students are better informed and groomed with skills and understanding to cope with the unpredictable challenges of the business environment. Business education which is one of the courses taught in tertiary



institutions is focused on equipping its recipients with necessary skills meant for self-reliance. The aim/goal of business education is the production of manpower, which possesses the requisite knowledge, skill and attitude for harnessing other resources and bringing them together into a cooperative relationship yielding the goods and services demanded by the society for the satisfaction of their wants and needs. Godwin (2018), described business education as an aspect of total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services.

It is imperative for business education programme which is charged with the responsibility of unveiling the dynamics of the world of work to ensure that its recipients possess relevant digital skills needed for effective entry and efficient participation in economic development. Okeji et al (2020) in support of the above stated that, the value of any education programme could be determined by its ability to adequately prepare and equip individuals in such a manner that they could fit into specific jobs, become technologically relevant, internationally competitive and economically prosperous, if properly packaged and adequately delivered. The courses offered in the business education curriculum include accounting education, secretarial education/office management education, and marketing and entrepreneurship education. Vocational business education is a form of training that prepares individuals for self-employment opportunities in various fields such as starting a business, managing finances, organizing events and workshops, and engaging in retail and wholesale trade. It also involves promoting and advertising products and services for different establishments, establishing secretarial institutes to train individuals in secretarial and computer skills, providing training in office management and information technology, setting up business centers and offering consultancy services to organisations in areas such as recruitment, information systems management, and marketing of computer accessories and stationery. Oguejiofor, C. S. (2020)

However, the reliable medium through which the mission and vision of business education programmes can be achieved stems from effective review and implementation of its curriculum. In order to achieve this, there is need for the inculcation of gender balance in the business education curriculum. In business education, the involvement of women and girls in planning and implementing the curriculum should not be over emphasized.



Gender Equality

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2016); it means equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, and girls and boys. It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration. It simply means equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men, boys and girls. It connotes ensuring women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on their gender. The basic key aspects of gender equality include equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities for both men and women. Gender equality isn't just about fairness; it's the foundation for a thriving society. When everyone is empowered, regardless of gender, we unlock stronger economies, healthier communities, and a safer world. Gender equality empowers individuals to break free from harmful stereotypes and pursue their dreams, regardless of societal expectations. It fosters an environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued, and where diverse perspectives and talents contribute to innovation and progress. By embracing gender equality, we pave the way for a brighter future for generations to come. Hence, for the future of work to thrive; there is the need for the inclusion of women and gender equality in the curriculum of vocational business education to guarantee the much desired societal balance.

The Role of VBE in Promoting Gender Equality

Transforming VBE to support gender equality involves structural, pedagogical, and policy reforms which include:

- Curriculum reform: curricula must be revised to eliminate gender biases and to promote gender-neutral language, diverse role models, and inclusive content. Embedding gender studies within business education can enhance learners' awareness of workplace dynamics and discrimination (Unterhalter et al., 2020).
- Teacher training: educators need continuous professional development to address unconscious bias and employ inclusive teaching practices. Gender-sensitive training equips teachers to recognize and challenge stereotypes, thereby fostering a more equitable classroom environment (OECD, 2021).



- Career guidance and counseling: effective career counseling that encourages students to explore non-traditional career paths can break gender norms. Counseling practices must address societal expectations and equip students with the confidence to pursue diverse fields (UN Women, 2020).
- Institutional policies and governance: institutions must enforce gender-equal policies in recruitment, retention, and assessment. Transparent reporting mechanisms, equal pay, and support systems like mentorship and childcare services can reduce structural barriers for female learners and staff (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Challenges to Gender Equality in Vocational Business Education

Several factors contribute to the under-representation of women in certain sectors and leadership positions, many of which are rooted in vocational business education as stated below:

- Gender stereotypes and curriculum bias: traditional business curricula often reinforce gender stereotypes, implicitly or explicitly channeling students into roles deemed “appropriate” for their gender (Gatti et al., 2019). This limits women's exposure to diverse career pathways and hinders their aspirations.
- Lack of female role models and mentorship: the under-representation of women in leadership positions within businesses translates to a scarcity of female role models in vocational settings. This lack of mentorship perpetuates a cycle of under-representation (Eagly & Carli, 2007).
- Gendered expectations and bias in assessments: implicit biases in assessments and evaluation processes can disadvantage women, even when objective measures are used (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). This can lead to lower grades, fewer opportunities, and reduced confidence.
- Limited access to resources and networking: women often face barriers accessing resources, such as funding, networking opportunities, and professional development programs, compared to their male counterparts (OECD, 2015). Vocational institutions have a role in addressing this imbalance.

The Future of Work and Gender Dynamics towards Sustainable Societal Balance

The future of work, shaped by digitization, automation, and remote work, presents both challenges and opportunities for gender equality. On one hand, automation risks displacing women from routine administrative and service jobs; on the other, it opens avenues in tech and entrepreneurship (ILO, 2020). However, these benefits can only be realized if women have equal



access to digital skills training and leadership development. Moreover, the gig economy and platform-based work models offer flexibility, but often lack social protections, disproportionately affecting women due to unpaid care responsibilities (UNDP, 2022). Preparing learners for this new world requires integrating soft skills, digital literacy, and gender equity into vocational curricula. Hence, achieving sustainable societal balance through gender equality through VBE has implications far beyond the education sector as it contributes to economic growth by expanding the talent pool and improving productivity, social justice through fair access to opportunities and resources and to ensure environmental sustainability for women empowerment, thereby, leading to more women inclusive and sustainable communities (UN Women, 2019).

Transforming Vocational Business Education for Gender Equality

In addressing the challenges, several approaches are required which include the following;

- Holistic curriculum reform towards integrating gender-sensitive content across the curriculum is vital. This involves challenging gender stereotypes, showcasing successful women in business, and incorporating case studies reflecting diverse perspectives according to UNESCO (2017), incorporating learning modules on unconscious bias and inclusive leadership is very crucial towards transforming VBE with gender equality inclusion for sustainable societal balance.
- Pedagogical innovations towards adopting active learning strategies, collaborative projects, and inclusive teaching methods that can create a more equitable learning environment must be targeted and implemented. Boaler, (2016) posited that, there is need for the encouragement of participation from all students, regardless of gender which is imperative towards achieving the required learning goals and objectives.
- Mentorship and sponsorship programmes: establishing formal mentorship programs that pair female students with successful women in business can provide crucial guidance, support, and networking opportunities. Sponsorship programs, which involve active advocate for gender balance should be instituted across various strata of the Nigerian society for women inclusion to engender sustainable societal balance
- There should be greater involvement of women participatory in governance with increased women inclusion in decision-making agencies and bodies.



- There should be partnerships with industry to promote inclusive work environments and internships.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems that track gender-based outcomes and guide reforms (ADB, 2021) should be instituted.

Recommendations

1. Curriculum and Teaching: Gender equality can be achieved by integrating gender studies and future skill that is the inclusion of modules on gender equity, ethics, sustainability, digital fluency and entrepreneurial thinking
2. Establishing transparent policies addressing recruitment, progression and support service
3. Track gender-disaggregated outcomes to identify gaps and inform interventions
4. Financial aids and scholarships should target the underrepresented gender in business related vocational studies
5. Access to technology, maker spaces and online learning tools should be made available
6. Partnership with employers who are committed to gender inclusive hiring

Conclusion

Gender equality is not merely a policy goal but a prerequisite for building a resilient and inclusive future of work. Vocational business education must evolve to be gender-transformative, equipping all individuals with the skills and opportunities necessary for meaningful participation in the workforce. Through curriculum reform, institutional change, and policy innovation, VBE can serve as a powerful driver for a sustainable societal balance.

The future of work presents transformative opportunities and complex challenges for gender equality by reimagining VBE through a gender responsive lens, societies can foster more equitable labor markets and sustainable economic development. This requires concerted efforts across policy, curriculum design, institutional practices, and partnership with industry and communities. With intentional strategies and inclusive implementation, VBE can be a cornerstone of balanced equitable future of work.



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Reconceptualizing Gender and Parenting in Contemporary Societies: An Analytical Framework.

Dr. Rose Yangu Iordaah

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies

Benue State University, Makurdi

roseiordaah@gmail.com

+2348034850733

Abstract

This paper examines the ethical dimensions of gender roles, expectations, and identities within the context of parenting in today's world. Qualitative methodology is adopted for the study. Utilizing descriptive and ethical normativism, the paper argues that societal norms influence parental decisions and the ways in which parents navigate issues related to gender socialization, gender equality, and the rights of children to express their authentic selves. The paper emphasizes the importance of respecting children's autonomy and fostering environments that promote gender inclusivity, while also considering potential conflicts between traditional values and evolving social norms. Ethical principles such as autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice serve as foundational frameworks for analyzing contemporary parenting practices related to gender. The paper also explores the responsibilities of parents in guiding their children through gender-related challenges, including societal pressures, stereotypes, and discrimination. Furthermore, it considers the implications of policy and cultural differences across diverse communities, highlighting the need for balanced approaches that uphold individual dignity and promote social equity. Ultimately, this study aims to shed light on the moral responsibilities of parents and society in supporting healthy gender development, advocating for practices that respect diversity and foster inclusive, ethical parenting in an increasingly complex gender landscape.

Keywords: Gender, Parenting, Ethical, Perspective, Contemporary



Introduction

In contemporary society, the intersections of gender and parenting have become focal points of social, cultural, and ethical discourse. Traditional notions of gender roles where men are often viewed as breadwinners and women as primary caregivers are increasingly challenged by evolving perspectives that advocate for equality, diversity, and individual choice. As gender identities and expressions become more fluid and inclusive, the practices and expectations surrounding parenting are also undergoing significant transformation. These developments raise important ethical questions about the responsibilities, rights, and societal norms that shape parenting practices in today's world.

From an ethical standpoint, the discussion extends beyond mere roles to encompass issues of fairness, autonomy, and the well-being of children. How should society support diverse gender expressions among parents? What are the moral implications of parental roles that deviate from traditional expectations? Furthermore, the intersectionality of gender with other social identities such as race, class, and sexuality complicates the landscape, demanding a nuanced understanding of ethical responsibilities and social justice.

This study aims to explore how gender influences parenting practices and perceptions in contemporary society, with a focus on the ethical considerations that arise from these evolving norms. By critically examining societal attitudes, legal frameworks, and personal narratives, the study seeks to contribute to a more inclusive understanding of ethical parenting that respects individual differences and promotes the well-being of children. Ultimately, this inquiry underscores the importance of fostering a society where gender diversity is recognized and valued in the context of nurturing and raising the next generation.

Conceptual Discourse

This section clarifies certain concepts that might pose ambiguity in the course of investigation, thereby limiting readers' comprehension. Towards this, the concept of gender, parenting and ethics shall be defined for enhanced understanding.

The Concept of Gender

Gender is a fundamental aspect of human identity and social organization, encompassing the roles, behaviours, expectations, and norms that societies assign to individuals based on their perceived or assigned sex. Unlike biological sex, which refers to physical and genetic attributes,



gender is a social construct that varies across cultures and historical periods (Lorber, 2019). Understanding gender involves examining how societal norms shape individual identities and interactions, as well as recognizing the fluidity and diversity of gender expressions.

Historically, gender has been understood through a binary lens, dividing people into male and female categories each associated with specific traits and roles. For example, Western societies traditionally linked masculinity with traits such as strength and assertiveness, while femininity was associated with nurturing and submissiveness (Bem, 2017). This binary framework has often reinforced stereotypes and perpetuated inequalities, influencing everything from family dynamics to workplace hierarchies. However, contemporary scholarship increasingly critiques this binary perspective, emphasizing that gender is a spectrum rather than a fixed dichotomy (Butler, 2019).

Butler (2019) argues that gender is performative, meaning that it is enacted through repeated behaviours and social practices rather than being an innate quality. According to Butler, gender identity is constructed through language, actions, and social interactions, which means that individuals have the capacity to challenge and subvert traditional gender norms. This performative view underscores the idea that gender is fluid and subject to change, depending on cultural context and individual agency. Moreover, gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, sexuality, and ability, shaping individuals' experiences and opportunities in complex ways (Crenshaw, 2015). This intersectionality highlights that gender cannot be fully understood in isolation but must be examined within broader systems of power and inequality. For instance, the experiences of a Black woman may differ significantly from those of a white woman or a Black man, illustrating how multiple identities influence one's social positioning.

In recent decades, the recognition of non-binary, transgender, and genderqueer identities has challenged the traditional binary view of gender. These identities reflect a broader understanding that gender is not solely determined by biological sex but also involves personal identity and social recognition (Elliott, 2017). Legal and social movements advocating for gender rights have sought to normalize diverse gender expressions, promoting inclusivity and reducing stigma. Therefore, gender extends beyond biological differences to encompass a complex array of social, cultural, and psychological factors. It is a dynamic and fluid construct that shapes individual identities and societal structures.



The Concept of Parenting

Parenting involves the behaviours, practices, and responsibilities associated with raising and nurturing children. It is a fundamental social institution that shapes individuals' development, influences societal stability, and reflects cultural values. At its core, parenting encompasses providing emotional support, ensuring physical needs are met, guiding moral development, and fostering social skills (Chao, 2019). However, the understanding and expectations of parenting vary widely across different cultures, historical periods, and social contexts, making it a complex and dynamic concept.

Historically, parenting has been viewed primarily through the lens of biological relatedness, emphasizing the role of parents as primary caregivers responsible for their children's survival and socialization (Belsky, 2018). This traditional perspective underscores the importance of nurturing, discipline, and teaching societal norms. However, contemporary approaches recognize that parenting extends beyond biological ties, emphasizing the roles of social relationships, cultural norms, and individual agency in shaping parenting practices (Bornstein & Lamb, 2021). According to Baumrind (1971) parenting involves a range of dimensions, including emotional warmth, control, communication, and discipline strategies. Baumrind categorized parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, each with different implications for children's development. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and firm guidance, has been associated with positive developmental outcomes such as self-esteem, social competence, and academic achievement (Maccoby & Martin, 2018). Conversely, authoritarian and neglectful styles are linked to adverse effects, including behavioral problems and poor emotional regulation.

Beyond individual practices, parenting is also shaped by broader societal factors such as socioeconomic status, education, cultural expectations, and gender roles. Socioeconomic resources influence parents' ability to provide for their children's needs, access education, and participate in developmentally beneficial activities (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Cultural norms dictate specific parenting goals and methods; for example, collectivist societies often emphasize community and family cohesion, while individualist cultures prioritize independence and self-expression (Chao, 2019). Gender roles further influence parenting behaviours, with traditional expectations often assigning caregiving and nurturing duties disproportionately to women.



In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of diverse family structures and parenting arrangements, including single parenthood, same-sex parenting, and co-parenting, reflecting a more inclusive understanding of what constitutes effective parenting (Patterson, 2019). Additionally, modern parenting emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence, attachment, and fostering resilience in children, aligning with contemporary developmental psychology insights (Sroufe, 2005). Parenting is a complex, evolving construct that encompasses a range of behaviours, roles, and cultural norms aimed at promoting children's well-being and development. It is influenced by biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors, making it a key area of interest for researchers, policymakers, and families alike.

The Concept of Ethics

Ethics is concerned with questions about what is right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust. It provides a framework for individuals and societies to evaluate actions, intentions, and policies, guiding behaviour in a manner that promotes fairness, integrity, and respect for others. As a discipline, ethics intersects with various fields including philosophy, religion, law, and social sciences, reflecting its fundamental role in shaping human conduct and societal norms. According to Ross (2002), ethics involves the systematic examination of moral principles that govern human interactions. Ethics seeks to determine the virtues and character traits that constitute a good life. Aristotle's virtue ethics emphasizes the development of moral character and the pursuit of eudaimonia, often translated as human flourishing or well-being. This perspective underscores that ethical behavior is rooted in the cultivation of virtues such as courage, temperance, and justice, which guide individuals toward living ethically.

In the modern context, ethics is often discussed through various normative theories that prescribe how individuals ought to act. Deontological ethics, notably associated with Immanuel Kant, emphasizes duty and adherence to moral rules regardless of consequences. Kant (1993) argued that moral actions are those performed out of duty and guided by the categorical imperative; a universal principle that one should act only according to maxims that can be consistently willed as a universal law. Conversely, consequentialist theories, such as utilitarianism advanced by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, focus on the outcomes of actions, advocating for behaviors that maximize overall happiness or welfare (Mill, 2002).



Another influential perspective is virtue ethics, which centers on moral character rather than rules or consequences. This approach encourages individuals to develop virtues through habitual practice, fostering moral maturity and integrity (Hursthouse, 1999). These diverse frameworks exemplify the multifaceted nature of ethics, highlighting that moral reasoning can be context-dependent and influenced by cultural, religious, and personal values.

Ethics also plays a vital role in contemporary debates surrounding social justice, human rights, and professional conduct. Bioethics, for instance, grapples with moral dilemmas in medicine and healthcare, such as euthanasia, reproductive rights, and resource allocation (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013). Similarly, business ethics addresses issues like corporate responsibility, ethical leadership, and consumer rights, aiming to promote fairness and sustainability in economic activities (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2019). These fields demonstrate that ethics is not merely theoretical but has practical implications for policy-making and daily decision-making.

Furthermore, the development of ethics involves critical reflection and dialogue, recognizing that moral beliefs are often shaped by cultural contexts and social influences. As Appiah (2008) notes, ethical pluralism acknowledges that different societies may have conflicting moral standards, necessitating mutual understanding and respect. This perspective encourages an inclusive approach to ethics, fostering intercultural dialogue and ethical tolerance. Ethics constitutes the foundational framework guiding human behavior and societal interactions. Rooted in philosophical inquiry, it encompasses various normative theories and practical applications that address moral challenges in personal, social, and professional spheres.

Gender and Parenting in the 21st Century

The 21st century has heralded profound shifts in societal perceptions of gender and parenting, driven by ongoing social, cultural, and technological changes. These transformations challenge traditional gender roles, promote inclusivity, and reshape parental expectations and practices. Historically, societal norms established rigid gender roles, men as breadwinners and women as caregivers perpetuating stereotypes that limited individual freedoms and developmental opportunities (Oakley, 2017). However, in the 21st century, these norms are increasingly questioned and dismantled. Movements advocating for gender equality, alongside feminist and LGBTQ+ activism, have contributed to a more fluid understanding of gender roles.



Today, many parents actively challenge traditional stereotypes by encouraging their children to explore interests regardless of gender. For example, fathers are more involved in caregiving, and mothers pursue careers with less societal stigma (Cabrera et al., 2014). This shift is exemplified by the rise of stay-at-home dads and working mothers, reflecting a move toward shared parenting responsibilities. Such changes are driven by increased awareness of gender equality and a recognition of the importance of diverse gender expressions for individual well-being (Kane & Buzwell, 2021).

The redefinition of gender roles also influences parental expectations. Many parents now promote gender-neutral play and clothing, aiming to foster authenticity and reduce societal pressures (Gleeson & McNally, 2019). These practices contribute to healthier psychological development by allowing children to develop their identities free from restrictive stereotypes.

The 21st century has seen a significant rise in awareness and acceptance of gender diversity beyond the traditional binary framework. Transgender, non-binary, and genderqueer identities are increasingly recognized, leading to changes in parenting approaches and societal attitudes.

Parents of gender-diverse children face unique ethical and practical challenges. Supporting a child's gender identity involves affirming their self-expression, which sometimes conflict with societal norms or familial beliefs. Research indicates that affirming support enhances mental health outcomes for transgender youth, reducing risks of depression, anxiety, and suicidality (Budge et al., 2013). Conversely, denying or suppressing a child's gender identity can cause psychological harm.

Moreover, parental acceptance of gender diversity is associated with positive developmental outcomes, emphasizing the importance of cultivating inclusive environments (Olson et al., 2015). Schools, healthcare providers, and policymakers are increasingly recognizing these needs, fostering a more supportive landscape for gender-diverse families. The 21st century has witnessed diversification in family structures, including same-sex parent families, single-parent households, blended families, and co-parenting arrangements. These changes challenge traditional notions of family and raise ethical questions about parenting rights and child welfare.

Same-sex parenting, in particular, has gained legal recognition and social acceptance in many parts of the world. Studies demonstrate that children raised by LGBTQ+ parents fare just as well as those raised by heterosexual parents in terms of psychological health, social competence, and



academic achievement (Golombok et al., 2010). This evidence counters stereotypes that non-traditional family structures are inherently disadvantageous, promoting a more inclusive understanding of what constitutes a 'good' family. In addition, modern parenting emphasizes emotional intelligence, active involvement, and fostering independence. Technologies such as smartphones and social media influence parental practices, offering both opportunities and challenges. Parents now navigate issues related to digital safety, cyberbullying, and screen time, balancing technological engagement with healthy development (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010).

While progressive shifts promote inclusivity and equality, they also generate ethical debates. For instance, the question of how much parents should influence or direct a child's gender identity and expression remains contentious. Some argue that overly enforcing gender neutrality may undermine parental authority or cultural values, while others emphasize the child's right to authentic self-expression (Gleeson & McNally, 2019). Furthermore, societal acceptance varies globally, with some cultures maintaining conservative views on gender roles. Parents in such contexts face ethical dilemmas balancing cultural traditions with evolving social norms and children's rights (Nussbaum, 2000). Respect for cultural diversity must be weighed against universal human rights, fostering dialogue that promotes understanding and respect.

Challenges of Gender and Parenting in Today's World

The relationship between gender and parenting is complex and evolving, presenting a multitude of challenges in today's world. Traditional gender roles, while still influential, are increasingly being challenged, leading to new expectations and pressures for both parents. A persistent challenge is the unequal division of labour and childcare responsibilities between parents, often rooted in gender stereotypes. "Women are still disproportionately burdened with household tasks and childcare, even in dual-income households" (UN, 2023). This can lead to stress, burnout, and reduced work opportunities for women, hindering their professional and personal development.

Moreover, societal expectations surrounding parenting often reinforce traditional gender roles. Mothers are frequently expected to be nurturing and emotionally expressive, while fathers are often pressured to be the primary providers and disciplinarians (Lamb, 2004). These stereotypes limit the range of parenting styles and approaches available to both parents, potentially hindering their ability to raise well-rounded and independent children. In addition, gender bias manifest in various ways, including differential treatment of children based on their gender. For example,



boys might be encouraged to pursue careers in STEM fields, while girls are steered towards humanities or caregiving professions (Bem 2017). These biases can limit children's opportunities and hinder their personal development, ultimately impacting their choices and self-esteem.

Also, parents, especially mothers, often feel pressure to conform to specific gender norms in their parenting styles. This pressure can come from society, family, or even from within themselves (Chodorow, 1978). This leads to feelings of inadequacy or guilt if they deviate from the perceived ideal. According to National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) (2023), the challenges associated with gender and parenting also significantly impact the mental and emotional well-being of both parents. The unequal division of labour, societal expectations and gender bias can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression, especially for mothers.

Ethical Issues Associated with Gender and Parenting in today's World

The intersection of gender and parenting in contemporary society presents a complex landscape of ethical considerations. As societal norms evolve and debates surrounding gender identity, roles, and expectations become more prominent, several ethical issues emerge related to the rights of children, parental autonomy, societal influences, and cultural diversity. Traditional gender norms have historically shaped parenting practices, often reinforcing stereotypical roles, mothers as nurturers and caregivers, fathers as breadwinners and authority figures (Oakley, 2017). These norms raise ethical questions about the extent to which parents should impose societal gender expectations on their children versus supporting children's individual gender identities. Imposing rigid gender roles can constrain children's personal development and infringe on their autonomy, raising concerns about respect for children's rights to develop their authentic selves (Ungar, 2004).

The ethical debate centers on balancing cultural or societal norms with respect for children's emerging identities. For instance, some argue that parents have a moral obligation to challenge harmful stereotypes to promote gender equality and personal well-being (Kimmel, 2018). Conversely, others contend that parental authority and cultural traditions should be respected unless they cause significant harm. This tension underscores the importance of valuing children's rights to gender expression and the ethical responsibility of parents to foster an environment that supports individual authenticity.



Furthermore, advances in understanding gender as a spectrum rather than a binary have led to increased recognition of gender-diverse children, including transgender and non-binary individuals. Ethically, raising gender-diverse children raises questions about parental responsibilities and societal obligations. Parents face dilemmas about whether to support their child's gender identity, which conflict with societal expectations or cultural norms (Davis, 2018). Supporting gender-diverse children aligns with principles of respect, autonomy, and non-maleficence. It involves affirming children's identities, which significantly impact their mental health and well-being (Budge et al., 2013). However, critics argue that some cultural or religious frameworks may oppose such support, leading to conflicts between parental beliefs and ethical principles of supporting the child's well-being. This situation highlights the ethical duty of respecting children's autonomy while navigating cultural sensitivities.

Moreso, a core ethical issue in gender and parenting involves balancing parental rights with the best interests of the child. Parents generally have considerable authority over their children's upbringing, but this authority is ethically bounded by the child's rights and welfare (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013). When parents attempt to enforce gender roles or suppress a child's gender identity, questions arise about whether such actions serve the child's best interests or violate their rights to self-determination. For example, some parents may seek medical interventions for transgender youth, such as hormone therapy, raising ethical debates about consent, bodily autonomy, and the long-term implications of such interventions (Liao & Kuperberg, 2020). The ethical principle of beneficence supports actions that promote the child's well-being, but interventions must be carefully scrutinized to avoid harm and respect emerging autonomy.

Also, cultural diversity profoundly influences gender roles and parenting practices. Ethical issues emerge when cultural norms conflict with universal principles of human rights. For instance, in some societies, strict gender roles are deeply embedded, and challenging these norms may be met with social resistance or even persecution (Nussbaum, 2000). Ethical questions include whether it is morally permissible for parents to raise children in accordance with cultural traditions that may restrict gender equality or limit individual freedoms. Respect for cultural diversity must be balanced with the recognition of universal human rights, including gender equality. The ethical challenge lies in respecting cultural differences without endorsing oppressive practices, such as child marriage or gender-based violence, which violate children's



rights and dignity (Merry, 2006). This tension calls for a nuanced ethical approach that upholds universal human rights while being sensitive to cultural contexts.

The rights of LGBTQ+ individuals and families further complicate the ethical landscape of gender and parenting. Same-sex couples and transgender parents often face societal discrimination, which raises questions about equality, recognition, and the best interests of children raised in such families (Golombok, 2015). Ethical concerns include whether children raised by LGBTQ+ parents experience disadvantages or stigma, and whether societal discrimination infringes on their rights to family life. Studies indicate that children raised by LGBTQ+ parents fare comparably to those raised by heterosexual parents in terms of psychological health, social competence, and academic achievement (Golombok et al., 2010). Ethically, this supports the view that parental gender or sexual orientation should not determine the quality of parenting or the rights children enjoy. Discrimination against LGBTQ+ families violates principles of justice and equality and undermines the rights of children and parents to form supportive family units.

Moreover, society bears ethical responsibilities to create policies and social environments that support diverse family structures and promote gender equality. This includes ensuring access to comprehensive sex education, anti-discrimination laws, and healthcare services that respect gender diversity (UNICEF, 2020). Ethical policymaking must prioritize children's rights to safety, education, and self-expression, while respecting cultural differences. However, societal attitudes and policies often lag behind evolving understandings of gender, leading to ethical dilemmas about whether laws should enforce gender norms or protect individual freedoms. The challenge is to develop inclusive policies that uphold human rights, foster gender equality, and respect cultural diversity.

Recommendations

1. The government should formulate and execute policies that promote shared parenting and flexible work arrangements.
2. Media portrayals and cultural norms often perpetuate stereotypical gender roles, influencing expectations of parents.
3. Parents need access to education and support that acknowledges the complexities of gender roles and the diverse experiences of families.



4. Government and communities should make conscious efforts towards addressing economic disparities that often contribute to unequal parental responsibilities.
5. Families should endeavour to create a supportive environment for men to take on caregiving responsibilities.

Conclusion

Gender and parenting in today's world presents a deeply intertwined ethical issues that bothers on autonomy, cultural values, rights, and societal norms. This study submits that balancing respect for cultural traditions with the promotion of gender equality and individual self-determination remains a central challenge. Supporting gender-diverse children, respecting their autonomy, and promoting inclusive family practices are vital for fostering ethical parenting environments. Society and policymakers play crucial roles in ensuring that children's rights are protected while respecting diverse cultural identities. Ultimately, ethical parenting in contemporary society requires a commitment to dignity, respect, and justice for all children, regardless of gender

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Enhancing Gender Capacities for Equitable Development and Poverty Alleviation in the 21st Century

Ajani Tunde Olanrewaju

Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

ajanito@afued.edu.ng

08136066819

&

Akala Esther Tosin

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State

royaldiadem096@gmail.com

08150485456

Abstract

Gender capacity refers to the abilities, skills, opportunities and resources available to all genders particularly women and marginalized groups to participate fully in social, economic and political life. In the 21st century, the world continues to face challenges such as poverty, inequality, gender discrimination and unequal access to development opportunities and these issues hinder inclusive growth and sustainable development efforts across the globe.

This study aims to explore how strengthening gender capacities contributes to inclusive economic participation, improved decision-making and the reduction of poverty among vulnerable populations. It also examines the role of institutions which are governmental, religious, and community-based in supporting or restricting gender empowerment. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, drawing data from relevant academic literature, credible online sources and interviews with selected individuals across educational, religious and policy-making sectors.

Findings from the study will reveal that investing in gender capacity leads to broader social and economic benefits, including increased productivity, community resilience and more equitable access to resources. The research concludes that without intentional efforts to address gender disparities, poverty alleviation strategies remain incomplete and less effective. Strengthening gender capacity therefore emerges as a key pathway to realising sustainable and inclusive development goals in the 21st century.

Keywords: Gender capacity, Inclusive development, Poverty alleviation, Sustainable development



Introduction

The pursuit of equitable development and sustainable poverty reduction has emerged as a central objective in national and international development agendas. Although numerous strategies have been introduced to address socio economic disparities, inequalities in access to resources, decision making and opportunities remain widespread, particularly along gender lines. The unequal distribution of power and privileges between men and women continues to hinder efforts to build inclusive societies where all individuals can contribute meaningfully to national growth. Gender inequality presents not only a question of fairness but a fundamental challenge to social progress and economic stability. Imbalances in educational attainment, income levels, land ownership, political representation and access to health services create lasting disadvantages for women and girls, especially in rural and underserved communities. These patterns of marginalization are often supported by traditions, institutional practices and social expectations that limit women's autonomy and participation in public life.

Gender capacity building thus represents a practical and transformative approach to inclusive development. When women are supported through education, economic opportunities, legal protection and participation in leadership, they are better positioned to break cycles of poverty and drive positive change within their families and communities. As societies continue to face growing social and economic pressures including inflation, political uncertainty and shifting labour demands, investing in gender capacity offers a clear and effective pathway to resilience and shared prosperity.

Gender and Development: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Realities

The evolution of development discourse has been marked by a significant transformation in the way gender is understood and addressed within policy and practice. In the initial decades following decolonization, development strategies were primarily anchored in economic growth paradigms that largely overlooked gender as a meaningful analytical category. These strategies were often built on assumptions that treated the population as a homogeneous unit, thereby failing to account for the distinct needs, experiences and contributions of women. Such gender-blind approaches systematically marginalized women and concealed the underlying structural inequalities that restricted their access to education, economic resources and political participation.



By the 1970s and 1980s, feminist scholars, development practitioners and civil society actors began to critique these male-oriented models, arguing that they failed to reflect the diverse realities of women across different socio-economic contexts. This critique gave rise to the Women in Development perspective, which focused on the integration of women into existing development programmes through increased access to education, employment and training. While this marked a departure from earlier neglect, the approach was limited in its ability to confront the deeper power relations that underpinned gender inequality. Subsequently, a more analytical orientation emerged with the Gender and Development perspective, which broadened the scope from women-specific concerns to a comprehensive analysis of gender relations. This approach challenged the structural dynamics which are social, economic, political and cultural; that perpetuated inequality between men and women. It moved beyond the notion of integration and instead called for a transformation of development institutions and policies that had traditionally privileged male experiences. The shift represented a more holistic understanding of development, established in equity and justice rather than mere participation.

This conceptualisation was reflected in key international instruments, most notably the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995 by one hundred and eighty nine countries (United Nations, 1995). The document provided a detailed agenda for achieving gender equity across twelve critical areas, including health, education, violence and economic participation. It also called for the removal of legal and institutional barriers to women's advancement and encouraged governments to adopt proactive strategies for addressing gender-based disadvantages. The commitments made in Beijing have since influenced other global agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015.

Within this broader global context, gender is now recognised as a cross-cutting concern that intersects with every dimension of development, from poverty reduction and education to health systems and climate action. The Sustainable Development Goals reaffirm this by embedding gender-sensitive targets across various goals, with Goal Five dedicated explicitly to the elimination of discrimination, violence and inequality against women and girls. This global recognition reflects a shift from peripheral acknowledgement to central integration of gender in development planning.



In Nigeria, these international developments have informed national policy directions, albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness. As a signatory to the Beijing Declaration, Nigeria has expressed formal commitment to promoting gender equity and has taken steps to align its national development strategies with international standards. The creation of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, along with the introduction of the National Gender Policy in 2006, illustrates an institutional response to the imperative of gender mainstreaming. The policy prioritises women's empowerment and equitable participation in sectors such as health, education, agriculture and governance.

Nevertheless, the implementation of these commitments remains inconsistent. While measurable progress has been recorded in specific areas such as increasing school enrolment for girls and expanding access to microcredit for female entrepreneurs, significant structural challenges endure. Deep-seated cultural and religious norms, especially prevalent in northern regions, continue to restrict women's autonomy and participation in public life. Political underrepresentation remains a major concern, with women occupying less than ten percent of legislative positions in the National Assembly. Furthermore, issues such as gender-based violence, discriminatory inheritance laws and limited access to land and financial assets contribute to the persistence of inequality. The institutional mechanisms intended to support gender integration such as gender-responsive budgeting and planning are also unevenly applied across federal and state levels. These shortcomings often stem from inadequate technical capacity, insufficient funding and a lack of sustained political will. As a result, gender equity is frequently treated as an auxiliary issue rather than a fundamental pillar of national development. Civil society organisations and women's advocacy networks have played a central role in driving progress particularly through legal activism, policy advocacy and community-based interventions. Their efforts have been important in expanding public awareness and exerting pressure on government agencies to uphold commitments to gender equality. However, these gains are constrained by limited institutional support and the broader socio-political environment that still resists transformative change. The historical trajectory of gender in development illustrates a clear progression from neglect to partial integration and toward a more critical examination of power and exclusion; yet, the gap between normative commitments and practical outcomes remains substantial.



Overview of Gender Inequality in the 21st Century

Gender inequality remains a pressing global issue in the twenty first century, despite sustained efforts by international organisations, governments and civil society actors to promote inclusive development. In many parts of the world, women and girls continue to face pronounced disadvantages across multiple spheres of life, including politics, education, health and the economy. These disadvantages are not isolated occurrences but reflect structural barriers that inhibit full participation and equitable access to resources and opportunities. One of the most visible manifestations of gender inequality is the persistent underrepresentation of women in political leadership. In both democratic and non-democratic societies, women hold a smaller proportion of parliamentary seats, ministerial appointments and executive positions, often due to discriminatory political cultures, lack of institutional support, and unequal access to party structures. Economic disparities also remain evident, with women consistently earning lower wages than men for work of equal value and experiencing limited mobility within formal labour markets. These wage gaps are often amplified by the gendered division of unpaid care responsibilities and occupational segregation that confines women to lower paid sectors.

Poverty is another area where the gender gap is particularly stark. Women and girls are more likely to live in poverty, particularly in rural communities, informal settlements and post conflict societies. This vulnerability is often compounded by limited access to education, inadequate healthcare and exclusion from financial services. These conditions reduce women's chances of upward social mobility and reinforce generational cycles of deprivation. In conflict affected regions and conservative societies, such disparities are further intensified by cultural practices and social norms that restrict women's roles, limit their autonomy and legitimise systemic discrimination.

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2024) provides a comprehensive assessment of these ongoing challenges. According to the report, although some countries have made notable progress toward achieving gender parity, the overall pace remains slow and uneven. The report ranks countries based on four critical dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. The 2024 edition reveals that while educational gaps are closing in several regions, substantial disparities



persist in economic inclusion and political representation. It concludes that at the current rate of progress, full global gender parity will not be achieved for several decades.

Structural and cultural impediments continue to limit advancement. In countries where legal reforms have been enacted to promote equality, deep seated social attitudes and institutional inertia often hinder implementation. Gender equality is therefore not simply a legal or economic matter but one that requires sustained social transformation and targeted investments in institutional capacity. New and emerging global phenomena are creating further obstacles to gender equality like digital exclusion, for example, disproportionately affects women in developing regions where access to internet infrastructure, digital literacy and information technology remains limited.

Climate change also poses a gendered threat because women mostly bear the brunt of environmental degradation because of their roles in agriculture, water collection and household energy. When climate related disasters occur, women are often more vulnerable to displacement, loss of livelihood and health crises. Similarly, patterns of migration, whether driven by conflict, environmental stress, or economic need, often place women at higher risk of exploitation, trafficking, abuse and social marginalisation in host communities. Gender inequality in the twenty first century remains a global concern that transcends geographical, economic and political boundaries. While progress has been made, it has been neither fast nor far reaching enough to dismantle the complex systems that sustain inequality.

Conceptualising Gender Capacity and Its Relevance

Eger *et al.* (2018) observe that gender capacity refers to the knowledge, competencies, access and power that individuals possess or are able to acquire in order to influence decisions and benefit from development processes. Empowerment is a multidimensional concept that entails the active and equitable involvement of all genders in the political, social and economic structures of society and it encompasses the capacity of individuals to influence the decisions that affect their lives and to participate meaningfully in societal development. This understanding implies that empowerment goes beyond surface-level involvement, it requires the removal of barriers that inhibit the full inclusion of individuals based on gender. The authors argue that gender empowerment is particularly significant in contexts where patriarchal systems have



historically marginalised women and other gender minorities, limiting their access to resources, decision-making platforms and leadership opportunities.

Enhancing gender capacity involves creating enabling environments where marginalised groups can thrive, access opportunities and exercise their rights fully. According to Cornwall and Rivas (2015), societies can unlock a wider pool of human resources and build resilience against poverty and underdevelopment by enabling gender capacity. Gendered power imbalances often manifest in unequal access to education, employment, healthcare and political representation. Addressing these imbalances requires deliberate and sustained efforts to promote inclusive participation. Inclusive development, as argued by Kabeer (1999), is unattainable without the deliberate integration of gender perspectives into policy and practice. Kabeer posits that empowerment involves the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied. In particular, gender empowerment demands a critical examination of societal structures that reinforce dependency and exclusion. This involves facilitating access to resources, strengthening voices in decision-making processes and encouraging self-determination among all genders. The World Bank (2012) emphasises that gender empowerment is integral to poverty reduction and economic development. Empowering women and other underrepresented groups has been shown to improve health outcomes, increase household incomes and foster more inclusive governance systems.

Barriers to Enhancing Gender Capacity

Despite substantial global and national efforts to promote gender equity, numerous structural, cultural and institutional barriers continue to impede the development of gender capacity. These constraints are particularly evident in countries like Nigeria, where gender roles remain strongly defined by patriarchal norms and socio-religious expectations. One of the most enduring challenges is the cultural construction of women primarily as homemakers. This perception reinforces the belief that women's primary responsibility lies in managing the domestic sphere regardless of their qualifications or career aspirations. As a result, women often face implicit pressure to resign from formal employment or forego career progression in order to meet domestic obligations. Men, by contrast, are socially encouraged to pursue professional advancement without such limitations. This unequal expectation significantly contributes to the



underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, high-income professions, and decision-making positions.

Cultural and religious beliefs play a central role in shaping these dynamics. In many Nigerian communities, gender roles are highly influenced by traditional norms that assign public and productive roles to men while confining women to private and reproductive roles. In conservative Islamic settings such as among some northern Nigerian communities, women in niqab who observe strict veiling practices may be restricted from working in environments that require public visibility thereby reducing their access to diverse career opportunities. Societal norms in Nigeria continue to impose constraints on the types of jobs deemed acceptable for women.

Occupations perceived as physically demanding, high-risk or male-dominated such as mechanical engineering, commercial driving, law enforcement or political campaigning are often seen as inappropriate for women. Such perceptions not only discourage women from entering these fields but also influence employers' hiring practices, further entrenching occupational segregation. Azubuike, Eziaghighala and Umeh (2022), note that even within professional sectors like academia, politics and corporate leadership, women often encounter invisible ceilings that prevent upward mobility. Political commitment to gender equity, while expressed in policy documents is frequently undermined by weak implementation, insufficient funding and a lack of accountability mechanisms. Many gender-related policies remain under-resourced or symbolic in nature, failing to generate meaningful transformation in the lives of ordinary women.

Strategies for Strengthening Gender Capacity for Poverty Alleviation in the 21st Century

The imperative to strengthen gender capacity in the 21st century arises from the broader goal of achieving inclusive and sustainable poverty alleviation. The need to integrate gender-specific strategies into national and local policies has become more urgent as global development discourse increasingly acknowledges the multidimensional nature of poverty. In this context, a range of targeted approaches spanning education, economic inclusion, legal reform, leadership development and institutional transformation are imperative to advancing gender equity and economic inclusion.

Education remains the most fundamental strategy for enhancing gender capacity. Equal access to quality education for both girls and boys fosters the acquisition of skills, knowledge and



confidence necessary for leadership, innovation and civic participation. Evidence consistently shows that women possess the intellectual capacity to thrive academically and professionally. When given the opportunity, they often excel in both formal education and vocational training. The human brain, irrespective of gender, has the ability to process, analyse and innovate. Therefore, investing in the education of girls is not only a matter of rights but a recognition of their God-given intellectual potential. When society harnesses this potential, it cultivates a generation of women who can contribute meaningfully to national growth and social transformation.

In addition to basic and tertiary education, vocational training and adult learning programmes are essential for women who may have been excluded from schooling due to socio-cultural or economic barriers. These interventions equip women with practical skills that enhance employability, income generation and household stability. Moreover, expanding girl-child education reduces early marriage and fosters intergenerational benefits in health, education and economic wellbeing.

Economic empowerment is another essential pillar of gender capacity development. As economic pressures intensify in Nigeria with rising inflation, unstable income and high living costs, households increasingly rely on multiple streams of income to survive. Salaried workers often pursue side businesses while entrepreneurs seek formal employment to stabilise earnings. In such a context, limiting women's participation in the labour force places an undue burden on men and undermines household resilience. When women are allowed to explore their careers, engage in entrepreneurship or combine both, families benefit from a dual-income model that eases financial strain and fosters long-term economic security. A financially empowered woman is more likely to invest in the education, health and nutrition of her children, thereby strengthening community development.

Access to land, credit and entrepreneurial support services enables women to participate more meaningfully in productive economic sectors. As Adebayo and Dada (2020) highlight, women's exclusion from asset ownership and formal financial systems perpetuates poverty and dependency. Legal reforms guaranteeing women's property and inheritance rights, anti-discrimination laws and financial inclusion initiatives are essential to closing this gap. Leadership development and political participation also remain essential to gender



empowerment. Mentorship schemes, leadership training and affirmative action policies, such as gender quotas, create pathways for women to participate in decision-making across sectors. High-profile Nigerian women such as Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Dr. Dora Akunyili, Justice Ayotunde Phillips and Dr. Oby Ezekwesili have demonstrated that women can lead with competence, integrity and vision. Their successes underscore the need for intentional strategies that promote inclusive leadership.

At the institutional level, gender-responsive policies can be integrated across national and subnational development plans. The National Gender Policy (2006) provides a foundational legal and strategic document for this process. However, as Aina (2012) observes, institutional resistance and patriarchal structures often hinder the practical implementation of such policies. Religious and cultural institutions may reinforce traditional gender roles that limit women's participation in public life. Reorienting these institutions through sensitisation, stakeholder engagement and partnerships with civil society organisations is key to creating enabling environments for gender empowerment.

Transformational leadership traits such as empathy, inclusiveness and participatory decision-making are increasingly associated with women in governance. Gaytan and Hyde suggest that female leaders often bring collaborative approaches that are well-suited to the complexities of development in the 21st century. This further reinforces the rationale for institutional mechanisms that promote women's advancement into leadership roles across all levels of society. The Women for Health (W4H) programme in northern Nigeria expanded female access to healthcare training and employment which improve service delivery and increase women's economic agency (Health Partners International, 2021). Similarly, the Better Life Programme for Rural Women facilitated agricultural training and cooperative development and also enhances rural women's livelihoods and community welfare (Okeke, 2018).

Enhancing gender capacity is not simply a policy aspiration but a practical and necessary response to contemporary economic and social challenges. Women have the intellectual capacity, emotional intelligence, and resilience to excel across all domains of life. When given equal opportunity, they not only alleviate household poverty but also contribute to building a financially stable and prosperous society.



Conclusion

Enhancing gender capacities is not merely a development option but a necessity for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable poverty alleviation in the 21st century. As this paper has shown, gender disparities reflect in social, economic and institutional structures. Addressing these challenges requires a deliberate and coordinated effort to build the capacities of all genders, particularly those who have been historically marginalised. By investing in education, economic empowerment, institutional reform and cultural change, societies can unlock the full potential of their populations and create a more just and equitable world. Enhancing gender capacities is not just a social imperative but an economic necessity. It directly influences productivity, stability and intergenerational prosperity. Nigeria and other nations must commit to dismantling structural barriers and investing in gender equity to achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development.

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NEGOTIATING POWER THROUGH GENDERED DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

Nnamani Mercy Ijeoma

Department of Arts and Communication,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo
mercychanty@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates how language mediates gendered power relations and shapes inclusive communication across institutional and digital contexts. The aim is to investigate how gendered discourse shapes power dynamics and influences inclusive communication in formal and informal interactions. Specifically, the study analyzes linguistic strategies used by men and women, investigates patterns of conversational dominance and collaboration, and explores how discourse practices enable or constrain inclusion.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA), the research analyzes workplace meetings, political interviews, and online discussions, focusing on features such as interruptions, hedging, tag questions, and directive speech acts. Findings indicate that male speakers often employ assertive strategies associated with conversational dominance, especially in hierarchical settings, while female speakers tend to use collaborative and mitigating language. However, women adopt more assertive styles in egalitarian or women-led contexts, highlighting the flexibility of gendered discourse in relation to power structures. The study argues that inclusive communication depends not only on structural reforms but also on transforming everyday linguistic practices, thereby contributing to broader debates on language, power, and gender equity.

Key words: Language, Power, Gendered Discourse, Inclusive Communication.



Introduction

Language is central to the production and negotiation of social power. Beyond its communicative function, language operates as a mechanism of power that shapes how individuals position themselves and others within social interactions. In workplaces, political spaces, and digital environments, patterns of speaking, interruption, collaboration, and silence reveal underlying structures of authority and inequality. Among the most enduring of these inequalities are gendered power dynamics, which are often reproduced through everyday discourse. Understanding how language contributes to the construction and negotiation of gendered relations is therefore essential to promoting inclusive communication. Gender is increasingly understood as a social and discursive construct rather than a fixed biological category. Linguistic practices play a central role in shaping how gender identities are performed and interpreted across contexts. Social expectations frequently influence communicative behaviour, encouraging assertiveness and authority in male speakers while associating politeness, collaboration, and mitigation with female speakers. These expectations contribute to unequal evaluations of similar linguistic behaviours, reinforcing broader societal hierarchies. Language thus serves both as a mirror of social norms and as a site where such norms are challenged or transformed. The theoretical relationship between language and power has been extensively examined by thinkers such as Pierre Bourdieu, who conceptualizes language as symbolic capital, and Michel Foucault, who frames discourse as a mechanism through which power circulates and social realities are constituted. Building on these perspectives, gendered discourse can be understood as a dynamic arena in which authority is negotiated rather than fixed. Empirical observations across professional and political contexts suggest that speakers draw on linguistic strategies to claim, resist, or redistribute power, with outcomes shaped by institutional norms and audience expectations. The expansion of digital communication has further complicated these dynamics. Online spaces offer opportunities for wider participation and the amplification of diverse voices, yet they also reveal persistent gendered asymmetries in discourse, including harassment, silencing, and misrepresentation. At the same time, digital environments provide avenues for resistance, allowing individuals to challenge dominant linguistic norms and construct alternative discursive identities.



This study investigates how language shapes and reflects gendered power relations across workplace meetings, political interviews, and online discussions. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA), the research focuses on linguistic features such as interruptions, hedging, tag questions, and directive speech acts to examine how speakers negotiate dominance, collaboration, and resistance. Rather than treating male and female speech as inherently different, the study highlights the fluid and context-dependent nature of gendered language practices. By examining how power operates through discourse, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions on inclusive communication and the equitable sharing of discursive space. In doing so, it aligns with broader efforts to synergize diverse gender capacities and promote more respectful and collaborative interactions in professional, political, and digital spheres.

Statement of the Problem

Language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a mechanism through which social hierarchies, including gender relations, are constructed and maintained. Across workplaces, political spaces, and digital platforms, linguistic practices such as interruptions, hedging, and directive speech acts often reflect unequal participation and reinforce gender hierarchies. While women are commonly associated with collaborative and mitigating discourse, gendered communication patterns are socially constructed and shaped by cultural expectations rather than biology. As noted by Akorede and Olaleye (2008), cultural norms and patriarchal structures have historically influenced women's linguistic choices and limited their discursive freedom. Although recent studies suggest that women may adopt more assertive styles in egalitarian contexts, everyday discourse still mirrors broader social inequalities. Consequently, there is a need to critically examine how everyday discourse practices both reinforce and potentially transform patterns of inclusion and exclusion, as efforts toward gender equity may remain incomplete without attention to the linguistic processes through which power is negotiated.

Research Questions

1. How do men and women differ in their use of language in formal and informal social contexts such as workplace meetings, political interviews, and online discussions?



2. What linguistic strategies (e.g., interruptions, hedging, tag questions, directive speech acts) are most commonly associated with conversational dominance, collaboration, or resistance in gendered discourse?
3. How do power dynamics influence the linguistic behavior of speakers across different gender identities and social settings?
4. In what ways do female speakers adapt their language use in women-led or egalitarian environments compared to male-dominated settings?

Literature Review

The relationship between language, gender, and power has long been a central concern in sociolinguistics and discourse studies. Early studies by Robin Lakoff (1975), Deborah Tannen (1990), and Janet Holmes (1995) provided foundational models for understanding gendered communication. Lakoff argued that features such as hedging and tag questions reflected women's subordinate social position, while Tannen proposed that differences between report-oriented and rapport-oriented speech styles often lead to miscommunication and unequal interactional power. Holmes further demonstrated how women in leadership roles balance authority and politeness to negotiate perceptions of competence and femininity.

Later scholarship challenged essentialist interpretations. Deborah Cameron (2006) emphasized the influence of context and institutional power, while Baxter (2010) demonstrated how gendered discourse shapes leadership evaluation in organizational settings. In political communication, Kittilson and Fridkin (2008) identified the "double bind" faced by female politicians who must balance authority with social expectations of warmth. Studies by Coates (1996) and Tannen (1990) further contrasted cooperative speech styles often associated with women with competitive patterns linked to men, while arguing for equal recognition of diverse communication styles. Digital communication has introduced new dimensions to gendered discourse. Herring (2003) found that men often dominate computer-mediated interactions through longer contributions and more frequent interruptions. However, online environments also provide opportunities for marginalized voices to challenge dominant narratives and create alternative discursive spaces. Beyond gender differences, language itself functions as a powerful social tool for shaping identity, maintaining cultural norms, and negotiating relationships (Baker & Cornelson, 2018). Despite these contributions, significant gaps remain. Much of the existing



literature either focuses on isolated contexts (such as workplace, political, or digital communication) or emphasizes differences between male and female speech without sufficiently examining how these practices intersect across multiple communicative settings. Moreover, while inclusive communication is increasingly emphasized in contemporary scholarship, limited research connects gendered discourse directly to the processes through which inclusivity is constructed or constrained in everyday interaction. This study addresses these gaps by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis to examine how gendered discourse operates across institutional and digital contexts, and by focusing specifically on how linguistic practices both reproduce and challenge power relations in the pursuit of inclusive communication.

Theoretical Framework

A robust theoretical framework is essential for understanding the interplay between language, gender, and power. This study is grounded in two primary theoretical lenses: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA). Both frameworks are instrumental in uncovering how language functions not merely as a tool for communication but as a mechanism of power and identity construction. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly associated with scholars like Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak, offers a means of interrogating language use in relation to power and ideology. CDA posits that discourse is both socially constitutive and socially conditioned—that is, it helps to shape society while simultaneously being shaped by it. In this framework, language is not neutral; it is imbued with power relations that privilege certain voices while marginalizing others. CDA allows researchers to examine how discursive practices reflect broader structures of dominance, inequality, and social control. In the context of gendered discourse, CDA helps to highlight how masculine speech norms are often legitimized as 'standard' or 'rational', whereas feminine speech forms may be framed as emotional, weak, or inappropriate in formal settings. For example, when a male executive dominates a business meeting using assertive commands and interruptions, CDA would prompt the analyst to ask: 'Whose voice is being heard and legitimized, and whose is being silenced or marginalized?' This analytical approach reveals the ideological underpinnings of what may otherwise be seen as 'normal' communication behaviors. CDA is particularly valuable in uncovering the systemic and structural dimensions of linguistic power. Conversely,



Conversation Analysis (CA), which emerged from the sociological tradition of ethnomethodology, is more micro-analytical. It focuses on the detailed, moment-by-moment unfolding of conversation to understand how participants manage turn-taking, repair, topic control, and other conversational features. Pioneered by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, CA provides the tools for closely analyzing how gendered identities are performed and negotiated in real-time talk. Unlike CDA, which often situates discourse within larger social and political structures, CA remains grounded in the immediate interactional context. For instance, if in a mixed-gender discussion a female speaker attempts to express an idea but is interrupted by a male colleague, CA can reveal patterns such as recurrent interruptions, minimal responses, and the control of topic shifts. These seemingly mundane features of talk have significant implications for how power is enacted and contested. CA's emphasis on the structure and function of everyday speech allows for the detection of subtle yet powerful discursive strategies that contribute to gendered power imbalances. Combining CDA and CA provides a comprehensive analytical toolkit. While CDA enables the researcher to situate gendered language within historical, institutional, and ideological contexts, CA brings attention to the nuances of interpersonal communication and the dynamics of face-to-face interaction. Together, these frameworks allow for a layered analysis that captures both the macro and micro levels of discursive power. Furthermore, the study draws on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which posits that gender is not a fixed identity, but a set of behaviors and performances repeated over time through language, gestures, and other social acts. According to Butler, these performances solidify societal understandings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. In communication, these performances are enacted through choices in tone, vocabulary, and speech patterns. For example, a woman who adopts direct and assertive language in a leadership setting may be seen as violating traditional gender expectations, illustrating the performative nature of gendered language. This theoretical triangulation—integrating CDA, CA, and gender performativity theory enables the study to explore not only how gendered discourse is structured and sustained but also how it can be reshaped. It supports the broader objective of the research: to promote inclusive communication by identifying and disrupting the discursive practices that perpetuate gender inequality in both formal and informal contexts.

Methodology



This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the intricate relationship between language use and gendered power dynamics across various social and professional contexts. The objective is to uncover how men and women employ different linguistic strategies to assert, negotiate, or resist power in both formal and informal settings. It adopts a qualitative research approach, integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA) as the primary methods to provide a robust understanding of discourse and its role in reinforcing or challenging gendered power structures. The qualitative nature of this study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes understanding human experiences through the analysis of language as a social practice. By utilizing textual and discourse data from real-life communicative contexts, the research aims to describe and interpret the gendered patterns in discourse practices, focusing on power, dominance, collaboration, and resistance.

Methodological Framework

Two interrelated analytical tools are employed:

Analytical Tool	Description
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	Used to examine how language reflects, maintains, or challenges societal power structures, especially those related to gender. CDA helps deconstruct ideologies embedded in language that contribute to gender inequality or empowerment.



Conversation Analysis (CA)	Provides micro-level analysis of interactional sequences in real-time conversations. Focuses on turn-taking, interruptions, pauses, and conversational strategies that signal power relations or gendered communication patterns.
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Research Design

The research design is interpretive and exploratory in nature, seeking to understand the nuanced ways in which gender and power are enacted in discourse. By employing discourse-oriented frameworks, the study emphasizes the contextuality and complexity of everyday communication. Rather than attempting to generalize findings statistically, it aims to produce rich, situated understandings of gendered language practices in diverse settings.

Data Sources

The data for this study were collected from three key domains: workplace meetings, political interviews, and online discussion forums. These domains were chosen because they reflect varying degrees of formality, power asymmetry, and public visibility, thereby offering a comprehensive view of gendered discourse across contexts.

- 1. Workplace Meetings:** Audio recordings and transcriptions of mixed-gender professional meetings from educational and corporate institutions.
- 2. Political Interviews:** Publicly available transcripts and videos of televised political interviews featuring male and female politicians.
- 3. Online Discussions:** Posts and comment threads from social media platforms and public forums such as Reddit and Twitter, focusing on gender-related topics.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that the discourse samples reflected a range of gendered interactions and power structures. Particular attention was given to the inclusion of both male and female speakers, and efforts were made to incorporate voices from different socio-economic, professional, and cultural backgrounds.



Ethical Considerations

All data were either publicly accessible or collected with informed consent where necessary. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by removing or altering identifying information. The study adheres to ethical research guidelines concerning the use of discourse data, particularly in digital spaces.

Limitations

As a qualitative study, the findings are context-bound and may not be generalizable to all gendered interactions or cultural contexts. Furthermore, the reliance on secondary data in online and televised sources may limit the control over conversational variables such as setting, topic, and participant background. Nonetheless, the triangulated approach enhances the robustness and credibility of the analysis. In sum, this methodological framework provides a rich lens through which to examine the intersection of language, power, and gender. It allows for both macro-level exploration of discursive ideologies and micro-level insights into interactional practices, aligning with the study's goal of advancing inclusive communication.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analyzes the discourse data collected from three distinct communication settings: workplace meetings, political interviews, and online discussions. The analysis draws on both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA) to reveal how gendered discourse practices function in these environments and how power is enacted, negotiated, or resisted through language.

1. Workplace Meetings and Academic Environments

Across workplace meetings and academic environments, male participants more frequently controlled agenda setting, interrupted others, and employed directive speech acts, positioning themselves as authoritative speakers. Female participants, by contrast, often framed contributions through hedging and mitigating expressions, which functioned as strategies of relational management but also reduced perceived assertiveness within hierarchical structures. Importantly, data from women-led organizations revealed a shift toward more collaborative turn-taking and



confident directive language by female leaders, suggesting that institutional culture mediates the relationship between gender and discourse.

2. Political Interviews

Political interview data further highlighted asymmetries in both language use and interactional framing. Male politicians tended to employ declarative statements and certainty markers, whereas female politicians more often used modalized or cautious formulations. Interviewers frequently interrupted female politicians or redirected interaction toward personal issues, reinforcing masculine communicative norms as the default marker of authority. These findings align with scholarship on the gendered “double bind,” where women must negotiate competing expectations of competence and warmth.

3. Online Discussions

Online platforms such as Twitter and Reddit reflected both domination and resistance. Male users often adopted authoritative or aggressive styles, while female and non-binary users faced dismissive responses but also used counter-narratives and collective activism, exemplified by the Me Too movement.

4. Religious and Cultural Contexts

Religious, cultural, and multilingual contexts further illustrated how discourse reproduces social hierarchies. Directive language and culturally embedded expressions frequently reinforced patriarchal assumptions, while code-switching practices in contexts such as Nigeria demonstrated strategic negotiation of authority, solidarity, and professional identity. Taken together, the findings indicate that gendered discourse operates as a dynamic mechanism through which power is enacted and resisted. While recurring patterns of dominance persist, shifts across contexts reveal the transformative potential of discourse in fostering more inclusive communication practices.

Comparative Analysis

Across all three settings, consistent patterns emerged: men generally exercised greater discursive control, while women employed strategies to mitigate conflict or foster collaboration. Context influenced these patterns: in egalitarian or women-led spaces, traditional gendered norms were disrupted. CDA revealed how social ideologies about gender and authority shaped lexical



choices, syntax, and framing, while CA highlighted micro-level features such as interruptions, pauses, and turn-taking, showing how power operates in real time. These findings show that gendered discourse is flexible, context-dependent, and shaped by both structural and interactional forces, emphasizing the interplay between social norms and real-time conversational practices.

Visual Data Summary

Quantitative counts support qualitative patterns: men initiated 65% of meeting topics, female politicians were interrupted 1.8 times more than males, and 40% of female-authored social media posts received dismissive replies versus 12% for males. These findings show that language shapes visibility, authority, and exclusion. Importantly, in women-led or inclusive contexts, discursive norms shift, highlighting the transformative potential of intentional, inclusive communication practices.

Findings and Discussion

This study reveals how gendered discourse shapes and reflects power across workplaces, political arenas, online platforms, educational institutions, and religious settings.

1. Conversational Dominance and Interruptions

A consistent finding across the data is the prevalence of conversational dominance by male speakers in formal and hierarchical settings. Men consistently initiated topics, interrupted more frequently, and used directive language, consolidating authority in formal and hierarchical contexts. Female contributions were often hedged or mitigated, limiting perceived influence, though egalitarian or women-led spaces encouraged assertive female participation (Tannen, 1990).

2. Hedging and Politeness Strategies

The frequent use of hedging, tag questions, and politeness markers by female speakers was observed as a strategic accommodation to maintain harmony and avoid confrontation but was sometimes misread as lack of competence. Context determined whether these strategies reinforced or challenged gender norms.

3. Gendered Expectations and the Double Bind

The data also reflects the “double bind” faced by women in public discourse. Women adopting masculine traits risk being seen as aggressive, while feminine norms can undermine authority



(Butler, 1990). Online platforms offered both harassment and resistance, with hashtag activism (Me Too, He For She) reclaiming visibility.

4. Online Communication and Digital Discourse

Online spaces presented both harassment and opportunities for resistance. Hashtag activism (#MeToo, #He For She) exemplifies collective strategies to reclaim visibility and challenge dominant norms.

5. Cultural and Institutional Influences

Findings also point to the powerful role of culture and institutional norms in shaping gendered language use. In religious and traditional contexts, male authority is often embedded in linguistic conventions that reinforce hierarchy. Proverbs, prayers, and public speaking norms often position women as submissive or passive participants. However, shifts in these patterns—particularly among younger generations and progressive religious communities—indicate that language change is possible when power is redistributed.

Conclusion

This study examined how language, power, and gender interact across workplaces, political arenas, and online platforms. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA), it revealed that men often dominate formal discourse through assertive language, interruptions, and directives, while women employ hedging, tag questions, and cooperative strategies. These patterns are context-dependent: in egalitarian or women-led settings, women adopt more assertive forms, demonstrating the flexibility of gendered discourse. These findings emphasize that inclusive communication cannot be achieved by focusing solely on representation or policy reforms. It requires a conscious shift in everyday linguistic practices encouraging all participants to share discursive space equitably, acknowledge diverse speaking styles, and challenge stereotypical expectations. Language reform, therefore, is central to social change. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of fostering awareness about how power operates through language. Promoting inclusive communication involves recognizing and valuing diverse voices, dismantling linguistic barriers, and reshaping discursive norms that marginalize particular groups. In doing so, we take significant steps toward building more equitable, respectful, and collaborative societies across boardrooms, parliaments, classrooms, and digital spaces alike.



Recommendations

Based on the findings, several strategies can promote inclusive, gender-equitable communication:

1. **Gender-Sensitive Communication Training:** Institutions such as schools, workplaces, and political bodies should integrate gender-sensitive communication training into professional development programs. These trainings should cover unconscious bias, inclusive language, turn-taking dynamics, and interruptive behavior.

2. **Encouraging Reflective Language Use:** Individuals should be encouraged to reflect on their language habits and the power implications of their communication styles. Self-awareness can be developed through workshops, peer feedback, and reflective exercises.

3. **Institutional Language Policies:** Organizations should adopt formal language policies that promote inclusivity. This includes using gender-neutral job titles, discouraging sexist language, and ensuring that communication protocols (e.g., meeting facilitation) encourage equal participation.

4. **Inclusive Educational Curricula:** Curricula at all levels should address the role of language in constructing gender and power. Teaching students about gendered discourse can challenge stereotypes early and equip future professionals with tools for equity.

5. **Amplifying Marginalized Voices:** Media, educational institutions, and public platforms should prioritize and amplify voices that have historically been silenced or underrepresented. This can be done through editorial decisions, speaker invitations, and equitable representation in leadership roles.

6. **Digital Platform Accountability:** Social media companies should be held accountable for creating safe and inclusive digital spaces. Mechanisms to report abuse, enforce community guidelines, and support marginalized users are essential to counter online harassment and promote respectful discourse.



Further Research: There is a need for further interdisciplinary research that integrates sociolinguistics, gender studies, and media studies to track evolving patterns of gendered communication, especially in digital and multicultural contexts.

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Creative Dramatics and Listening Development: A Study of Pantomime and Poem Dramatization Effects on Pupils' Comprehensive And Discriminative Listening Skills.

¹Osemwegie, Mojisola Omowumi; ²Osemwegie, Osayomwanbor

¹Department of Theatre & Creative Arts,

²Department of Educational Management,

Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo.

mojisteve@gmail.com; osemwegieo@afued.edu.ng

08062953900, 08066189792

Abstract

Poor acquisition of listening skills has been lamented by stakeholders in the education system in recent years, especially at the primary school level. Evidence indicates that the origin of this problem can be traced to the early years of these children, especially during their nursery education. Though researchers observed that improving this scenario requires a learning and teaching process that can be achieved through creative dramatics technique, there is a dearth of studies on creative dramatic techniques and their relationship to listening skills, especially, in private nursery schools in Ondo State. It is against this background that the study investigates the impact of creative dramatic techniques (Pantomime and Dramatization of Poem) on listening (comprehensive listening and discriminative listening) skills among private nursery school's pupils in Ondo West Local Government, Ondo State. The study was conducted through the administration of questionnaires whose respondents are 105 purposively selected teachers across 53 private nursery schools in Ondo. The results showed that creative dramatic techniques and listening skills have a strong correlation ($R = 0.556$, $P < 0.05$), and that the dramatization of a poem ($\beta = 0.51$, $t = 9.998$; $P < 0.05$) contributes significantly to listening skills than pantomime ($\beta = 0.14$, $t = 4.238$; $P < 0.05$). It is therefore recommended that government and stakeholders implement training to improve teachers' knowledge of creative dramatics, particularly for nursery school teachers. In conclusion, adopting pantomime and dramatization of a poem in the teaching of nursery school pupils will stimulate their learning capacity and help them readily acquire the skills required to cultivate comprehensive and discriminative exercises.

Keywords: Creative Dramatics, Dramatization of Poem, Listening Skills, Pantomime.



Introduction

Fundamentally, quality nursery education serves as the bedrock upon which the successful acquisition of subsequent levels of education is sustained and promoted. The need for high-quality nursery education in Nigeria has never been greater than in this dispensation, in which both registered and unregistered nursery schools proliferate across cities. It is important to know that if the foundation is faulty, it will systematically and structurally affect the whole educational system. Regrettably, most nursery education in Nigeria is left to private individuals and groups whose primary objective is financial gain (Unuigbokhai & Jimah, 2011). In this scenario, where the administration of nursery education is left to private individuals with little or no government oversight, effective policy implementation is bound to fail.

Nursery education is the care, protection, stimulation, and learning provided to children aged 0-4 years in a crèche or nursery (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012). Those early years are the best opportunity for a child's brain to develop the connections it needs to become a healthy, capable, and successful adult. The connections needed for many important abilities, such as motivation, self-regulation, problem-solving, and communication, are formed in the early years. If not formed early in life, these essential brain connections are harder to establish later in life. Given these peculiarities and the importance of nursery education in Nigeria, Obiweluzor (2015) laments that there is no standard curriculum to guide teachers' activities; when the curriculum is improvised, teachers are neither trained nor qualified as early childhood care specialists.

Moreover, many private nursery schools in Nigeria are ill-equipped and substandard. It was also noted that many schools, in an effort to impress parents, exposed children to academic activities intended for older children (Salami, 2016). Despite the state of nursery education in Nigeria, the nation's socio-economic problems compelled parents to work regardless of their children's ages. Parents are aware that the physical, mental, and emotional development of their children is important at these stages; hence, compulsory enrolment of their children in nursery school. Although parents believe that quality child development can be achieved only in well-organized nursery schools with adequate facilities and a clean, hygienic environment, most nursery schools lack these qualities.



Regarding the quality of nursery education and the provision of essential facilities, Oyeyemi (2014) posits that there are exceptions from the general perceptions that most private schools are established, basically for the purpose of enriching the pockets of their owners. In Oyeyemi's (2014) opinion, there are few nursery schools established by some universities, colleges of education, companies, and a few rich individuals who are already financially stable and are only interested in giving back to their society through the establishment of standard private schools in order to encourage quality education. Domike and Odey (2012) observe that the curriculum of a typical nursery school owned by most private individuals includes alphabet, numbers, nursery rhymes, colouring, and story time, and, in some cases, rudiments of reading and arithmetic. Consequently, the emphasis of most nursery schools is on pupils' intellectual development rather than ensuring the development of the other domains. This position corroborates Domike and Odey (2012) assertion that once pupils can recite and memorize poems, verses, and passages, the school is adjudged a quality school.

From the above observations, it is evident that, for children to memorize and recite poems, rhymes, and passages, their listening skills must be developed. This position aligns with Pearson (2010) opinion that literacy for young children begins with speaking and listening to words and sentences. In another stance, Roskos, Tabors, and Lanhart (2009) affirm that oral language is the foundation of learning to read and write. This position highlights the important role played by spoken language in the development of literary skills, especially as it involves the art of speaking and writing. By extension, oral language forms the basis for the conversion of letters into sounds that generate words or sentences. Wilson (1997), therefore, concludes that children who do not develop strong listening and speaking skills will face lifelong consequences as a result of this deficit. This position, therefore highlights the critical role of listening and speaking skills in a child's overall development. One can therefore, argue that, this foundational language skill is an important instrument, not only for the children's academic success, but for the development of other domains like their social and emotional growth. Therefore, there is a pressing need for training in listening skills for young children today because a deficiency in these areas can lead to significant challenges in many aspects of their life.



Several studies have shown that listening involves more than the physical process of perceiving and modifying sound waves in the human ear. For instance, Gaines (2007) highlights the polygonal role that listening skills play in the children's cognitive and social development. Regardless of the gender of the children, listening exceeds passive activity, it is an active process that impacts how information is absorbed engaged and makes sense out of the world around us. Gaines (2007:74) avers that "listening not only facilitates communication but also develops learning, understanding, and cognitive skills". In the same vein, Selma and Nazli (2015) maintain that listening entails making choices from what is heard, organizing them, integrating what the speaker conveys with background knowledge, and structuring them mentally. However, in Feagin (1986) opinion, there appears to have been a deficiency in the development of listening skills from history. This concern was expressed as far back as Shakespeare's time when he remarked, "It is the disease of not listening That I am troubled withal" (King Henry IV, 1603; Feagin, 1986:1).

It is disheartening that the issue of poor acquisition of listening skills in nursery schools remains unresolved in Nigeria. To this end, researchers are seeking more creative approaches and implementing activities to improve students' listening at all levels of education.

Several studies have focused on the applicability of creative dramatics to improving students' listening skills. Unfortunately, various creative dramatic techniques have been empirically studied, but little or no research has examined the impact of pantomime and dramatization of poems on listening skills among nursery school pupils. Studies have found that pantomime can enhance listening among primary and secondary schools (Hartaty, 2018; Zdatev, Zywiczyrski & Wacewicz, 2020), whereas little or no empirical studies exist on the impact of pantomime and dramatization of poems on listening skills in nursery schools.

With this in mind, the present study investigates the impact of creative dramatics (Pantomime and the dramatization of poems) on listening (comprehension and discriminative listening) skills in nursery education in selected schools in Ondo West Local Government Area, Ondo State.

Statement of the problem

Researchers have observed that improving poor listening skills among pupils requires activities and a learning and teaching process that creative dramatics can achieve. It is disheartening to



know that the creative dramatics as a teaching method is sparingly used in nursery education in Nigeria. In fact, nursery schools that use creative dramatics focus solely on improvisation and role-play techniques. Moreover, there is a dearth of studies on the pantomime and dramatization of poems as a creative dramatic technique in relation to listening skills in nursery schools in Ondo State. Against this background, the study aims to investigate the impact of creative dramatic techniques (pantomime and dramatization of a poem) on listening skills (comprehensive and discriminative) in nursery schools in Ondo West Local Government Area, Ondo State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of creative dramatic techniques on listening skills in nursery schools in Ondo State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following purposes:

- a. To investigate the relationship between creative dramatics and listening skills among nursery school pupils in Ondo West Local Government, Ondo State.
- b. To examine the relative contribution of the dramatization of the poem and pantomime on listening skills among nursery school pupils in Ondo West Local Government State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between creative dramatics and listening skills among nursery school pupils.

Ho₂: There is no relative contribution of dramatization of the poem and pantomime to listening skills among pupils of the nursery school.

Significance of the Study

It is obvious that, in any system, including education, the dysfunction of a part will operationally affect the whole. Issues of students' deficiencies in listening and speaking skills at different levels of the education system have become a concern to all stakeholders. Thus, an investigation into the impact of creative dramatics on listening among nursery schools in Ondo State would be significant in the following ways:



First, this study will familiarize nursery school teachers with potential teaching methods to improve their pupils' listening.

Secondly, the proprietors and head teachers of nursery schools will find the study highly beneficial, as implementing the recommendations can create a new strategy and technique for improving the quality of teaching and learning in nursery classes.

Finally, the policy makers will also find the results of the study useful in the planning of Early Child Care and Development Education and the Basic Education's curriculum and syllabus in the state and nation at large.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design. This design was also suitable for this study because the sampled pupils had undergone the same learning experience in Nursery One. The population of the study consisted of all teachers of private nursery schools in Ondo West Local Government Area. To obtain a manageable sample that adequately represented the study, purposive sampling was used to select 105 teachers from 53 private nursery schools, based on accessibility, proximity, qualification, experience, and official registration. Data for the study were collected from a primary source. The instrument used to collect data is the Teacher Creative Dramatics Questionnaire (TCDQ), of which only 97 were completed and returned by teachers. Thus representing 92.38% rate of returns. The data collected was analysed using inferential statistics. Hypothesis 1 was tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC), while hypothesis 2 was tested with Regression at a 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Testing of the Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between creative dramatics and listening skills among nursery school pupils.

Table 1: Summary table of correlation analysis between creative dramatics and listening skills

	N	\bar{X}	SD	Correlation (R)	Sig
Creative Dramatics Techniques	97	28.443	2.91531	.556**	.000
Listening Skills	97	31.6804	4.07622		

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

The analysis of the relationship between creative dramatics and listening skills shows a strong correlation ($R = 0.556$). The P -value = 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level, indicates a significant association between creative dramatics and listening skills. Also, from the mean difference, it can be inferred that the mean value for creative dramatic techniques (28.443) is lower than that for listening skills (31.6804). This implies that creative dramatic techniques have a significant impact on the listening skills of nursery school pupils. In view of this, H_{01} was rejected.

H_{02} : Dramatisation of poems and pantomimes has no relative contribution to listening skills among pupils of nursery school.

Table 2: Relative Contribution of Dramatisation of Poem and Pantomime on Listening Skill

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.852	2.007		3.415	.001
¹ Dramatisation of a Poem	.510	.051	.660	9.998	.000
Pantomime	.135	.032	.280	4.238	.000

Coefficients^a

Table 2 shows the relative contributions of the independent variables to the dependent variable (listening skill). Dramatisation of poem ($\beta = 0.51$, $t = 9.998$; $P < 0.05$) and Pantomime ($\beta = 0.14$, $t = 4.238$; $P < 0.05$) contributed significantly to listening skill. This implies that the two independent variables contributed significantly to the dependent variable. Nevertheless, the results indicate that the poem's dramatization significantly improved nursery school pupils' listening skills.



Conclusion and Recommendations

Although teaching nursery pupils was not an easy task for any teacher, especially when considering the learning environment in the nursery schools, nevertheless, the results of this study have shown that adopting creative dramatics techniques in the classroom will have a remarkable impact on the development of comprehensive and discriminative skills of the pupils. When adopting creative dramatic techniques with pupils in nursery classes, several factors must be considered and challenges addressed. Although the study was considered objectively achieved, not all expectations associated with the rigidity of the activities were met. In addition, mastery of pantomime activities would, in turn, increase pupils' enthusiasm for solving complex tasks as they progress in their studies. Premised on the findings that dramatization of a poem would help improve the pupils' listening skills, as it contributed significantly. Therefore, it is recommended that the government and stakeholders implement training to enhance teachers' knowledge of creative dramatics, particularly for nursery school teachers.

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MATERNAL CARE AND TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AMONG THE YORÙBÁS FOR SAFE MOTHERHOOD.

¹OLAFUSI, TOSIN AANUOLUWAPO; ²FARINDE MUIBAT ABIOLA; ³LASISI,
ISIKA ABIOLA

^{1,2}Department of Yorùbá,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo.
tolafusi15@gmail.com, farindema@afued.edu.ng

³Department of Yorùbá,
Federal College of Education, Ehaamufu, Enugu.
lasisiisiaka93@gmail.com.

Abstract

Among the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria, maternal health is deeply shaped by traditional belief systems that govern perceptions and practices surrounding pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal care. This paper investigates how indigenous cultural values intersect with contemporary medical approaches to influence maternal outcomes. Relying on qualitative research methods including interviews with traditional birth attendants (TBAs), pregnant women, herbal practitioners, and healthcare professionals the study explores culturally rooted beliefs on conception, pregnancy taboos, spiritual interpretations of miscarriage, and ritualistic approaches to childbirth. The findings highlight that while many traditional practices offer emotional support and strengthen communal care for expectant mothers, others can hinder timely access to clinical interventions or promote the use of unverified remedies. The paper advocates for a culturally responsive healthcare model that integrates indigenous knowledge with biomedical care, fostering trust and cooperation between both systems. Recommendations include localized health education programs, the training of TBAs in essential obstetric skills, and the development of health policies that reflect cultural realities. This study enhances our understanding of how cultural frameworks, when effectively aligned with medical systems, can contribute to improved maternal health outcomes in Nigeria.

Keywords: Yoruba Culture, Maternal Health, Traditional Beliefs, Safe Motherhood, Indigenous Medicine, Healthcare Integration



Introduction

Maternal health remains a pressing public health issue in Nigeria, where cultural and religious beliefs significantly influence women's health-seeking behavior during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period. While numerous governmental and non-governmental interventions have been introduced to improve maternal health indices, maternal mortality rates remain alarmingly high in several parts of the country, particularly in rural areas where traditional belief systems dominate healthcare decision-making (World Health Organization, 2022). Among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria one of the most populous and culturally influential ethnic groups in the country maternal health is understood not merely as a biomedical concern but as a spiritual, social, and ancestral responsibility. Health is seen as a state of harmony between the physical body, the spiritual world, and the community. In this worldview, complications in pregnancy and childbirth are often attributed to spiritual causes such as broken taboos, ancestral displeasure, or witchcraft. As Oyèwùmí and Salami (2021) assert, “among the Yoruba, the body is a conduit of cosmic forces, and reproductive health is governed as much by moral conduct and spiritual balance as by physical wellbeing.”

This holistic view leads many Yoruba women to adopt a pluralistic approach to maternal care, combining traditional practices such as herbal medicine, spiritual consultation, and ritual observance with occasional visits to modern health facilities. Akinyemi and Omobowale (2022) note that “trust in traditional birth attendants remains high among Yoruba women, especially those in rural areas, due to shared cultural beliefs, emotional support, and accessibility.” However, this blending of care modalities sometimes leads to delays in seeking biomedical intervention during obstetric emergencies, thereby increasing maternal risks.

Compounding this challenge is the often rigid and impersonal nature of biomedical maternal care in Nigeria, which may not adequately accommodate local cultural realities. According to Adetunji and Fakoya (2023), “the failure of hospital systems to integrate culturally meaningful practices contributes to low utilization of antenatal and postnatal services among Yoruba women.” This disconnect between formal healthcare systems and indigenous belief structures continues to hinder the effectiveness of maternal health interventions in Yoruba-speaking communities.



The Yoruba concept of *ilera* (health) emphasizes a balance of mind, body, and spirit. Pregnancy and childbirth are not simply biological events but moments of heightened spiritual vulnerability and moral significance. As Adesanya and Oduyoye (2020) argue, “traditional Yoruba maternity care is embedded in metaphysical frameworks that recognize the agency of unseen forces, the role of destiny, and the power of ritual in safeguarding both mother and child.” These frameworks cannot be dismissed as primitive but must be acknowledged as essential components of culturally responsive maternal healthcare. This study therefore seeks to examine the role of Yoruba belief systems in shaping maternal health practices and their implications for safe motherhood in Nigeria. By analyzing the intersections of traditional beliefs and biomedical approaches, the paper aims to promote culturally respectful interventions that enhance maternal health outcomes. The study underscores the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge into public health discourse to ensure inclusive, respectful, and effective maternal care.

Theoretical Framework

To explore the interface between Yoruba belief systems and maternal health practices, two main theoretical models offer a relevant foundation: Medical Pluralism and the Health Belief Model (HBM). These frameworks are instrumental in analyzing how traditional beliefs and biomedical knowledge coexist, compete, or complement each other in Yoruba communities' approach to maternal care.

Medical Pluralism

Medical pluralism refers to the simultaneous use or availability of multiple health systems such as traditional, spiritual, and biomedical practices—within a given cultural context. Among the Yoruba, medical pluralism is not only common but culturally sanctioned. Traditional healers, spiritualists, and herbalists are often consulted alongside modern healthcare professionals. Kleinman (1980), who pioneered the concept, posits that “health systems are cultural systems in themselves, comprising both meaning and practice.” This perspective is particularly relevant to Yoruba maternal health, where illness and well-being are perceived within a socio-spiritual context, often requiring interventions beyond medical prescriptions.

Recent studies reinforce the relevance of this model in African contexts. As Olajide and Onabanjo (2023) note, “many Yoruba women construct their health-seeking behavior based on an inherited epistemology that gives legitimacy to both biomedical and indigenous medical



systems.” In practical terms, this means a pregnant woman may attend antenatal clinic while simultaneously consuming herbal concoctions or participating in spiritual cleansing rituals prescribed by a traditional birth attendant (Iya Abiye).

Ajayi and Odumakin (2020) further assert that “health choices among Yoruba women are driven by a pragmatic engagement with multiple healing systems, not necessarily as a rejection of modern medicine but as an extension of cultural reasoning.” This pluralistic behavior complicates policy implementation in maternal health, especially when biomedical personnel fail to recognize or respect these concurrent beliefs.

Health Belief Model (HBM)

The Health Belief Model (HBM) provides another useful lens to understand individual and collective decisions around maternal health. Developed in the 1950s and refined over time, HBM suggests that people’s engagement in health behaviors depends on their perceptions of:

Susceptibility to illness, Severity of the condition, Benefits of action, Barriers to action, Cues to action, and self-efficacy. Within Yoruba communities, these perceptions are culturally encoded. For instance, many women believe that miscarriage or obstructed labor may be due to spiritual transgressions rather than physiological complications. This belief system shapes their risk perception and may prompt them to seek spiritual remedies before—or instead of—clinical care. According to Adebayo and Salami (2022), “Yoruba women’s maternal choices are influenced not only by access to care but also by their belief in the efficacy of traditional rituals, prayers, and ancestral guidance.” Thus, perceived susceptibility and severity are often evaluated within a spiritual rather than clinical framework. Moreover, the barriers to accessing formal care such as language, cost, fear of disrespect, and cultural alienation reinforce reliance on indigenous alternatives. Oyeyemi and Fagbohun (2021) highlight that “perceived barriers like cultural insensitivity and the dismissal of traditional values by hospital staff discourage many women from using maternal health services early.”

Importantly, HBM helps public health practitioners appreciate the internal logic behind seemingly “irrational” health behaviors. When applied to Yoruba maternal health, the model underscores the importance of aligning interventions with culturally accepted beliefs to enhance uptake. Together, Medical Pluralism and the Health Belief Model illuminate the complex and dynamic ways Yoruba women interpret and navigate maternal health. The frameworks offer



complementary insights while Medical Pluralism explains the why behind co-existing health systems, the HBM helps explore the how of individual health choices. Understanding and integrating these perspectives are crucial for designing culturally competent maternal health policies in Yoruba communities.

Yoruba Cosmology and the Concept of Health

The Yoruba cosmological view of health is deeply spiritual, communal, and holistic. It sees life, illness, and healing as interconnected phenomena that cannot be understood in isolation from divine, ancestral, and environmental forces. In this worldview, maternal health is not simply a biological or clinical matter but a reflection of a woman's harmony with her Òrìṣà (deities), Èmí (spirit), Òrì (destiny), ancestors, and societal expectations.

Health as Harmony

The Yoruba define health (*ilera*) as a state of balanced existence—a spiritual and physical equilibrium between the body, mind, spirit, and cosmos. When this balance is disrupted, illness—including complications in pregnancy—is believed to occur. According to Falade and Adegoke (2022), “among the Yoruba, good health is seen not merely as the absence of illness but as the maintenance of spiritual and moral harmony with the universe.” Pregnancy, therefore, is a sacred state requiring spiritual vigilance. Yoruba women are advised to avoid taboos, maintain good standing with family and ancestors, and engage in spiritual consultations to avoid complications. Illness during pregnancy may be interpreted as punishment for moral lapses or as a result of spiritual attacks.

Ajibade and Ekanem (2021) affirm that “the Yoruba perception of maternal complications such as miscarriage, delayed labor, or stillbirth is often rooted in metaphysical causality, including witchcraft, broken taboos, or the anger of neglected ancestors.” Hence, spiritual appeasement and cleansing rituals are as important as medical checkups.

The Role of Òrìṣà and Ancestral Forces

Several deities are believed to govern fertility, childbirth, and maternal wellbeing in Yoruba cosmology. For example:

Yemoja is revered as the goddess of motherhood and protector of pregnant women and children.

Obatala, the deity of purity and order, is invoked for a safe and peaceful delivery.



Èṣù, often misunderstood as a trickster deity, is believed to control the pathways and may obstruct or facilitate childbirth depending on one's spiritual alignment.

Ogunrinu and Salawu (2023) stated that “pregnancy and childbirth among the Yoruba are deeply religious acts, often accompanied by sacrifices and prayers to the deities responsible for human reproduction.” These rituals include the offering of kola nuts, palm oil, or animals, and are usually conducted by Babaláwo (diviner) or Iya Abiye (traditional midwife). Also important is the concept of Ori, the individual's personal destiny. When a woman experiences repeated miscarriages or infant mortality, it may be attributed to her Ori inu (inner head) being misaligned. This belief influences her health decisions, encouraging her to seek spiritual realignment before pursuing clinical help.

Communal Health and Maternal Roles

Health in Yoruba cosmology is not individualistic. It is inherently communal. A woman's pregnancy is considered a communal event involving family members, neighbors, elders, and spiritual guides. The health of the mother is seen as indicative of the health of the entire lineage. As Ayantayo (2019) writes, “a pregnant woman is not only carrying a child but also carrying the future of the family; thus, every effort must be made to ensure that she is spiritually and physically protected.” This collective sense of responsibility shapes maternal health behavior. Pregnant women are advised to avoid quarrels, evil looks, and suspicious company, as these may negatively affect the fetus. The fetus is believed to be spiritually vulnerable, especially in the early and final months of pregnancy.

Implications for Maternal Health Practice

Understanding Yoruba cosmology is essential for health practitioners working in Yoruba communities. A dismissal of these beliefs may alienate patients or delay critical care. Conversely, a culturally respectful approach can foster trust and compliance. Olowu and Adeleke (2020) suggest that “health interventions that acknowledge the cultural logic behind Yoruba maternal beliefs are more likely to succeed in reducing maternal mortality and promoting hospital deliveries”. Healthcare providers must, therefore, adopt a dual approach: delivering biomedical care while also showing respect for indigenous knowledge systems. This could



involve partnerships with traditional birth attendants, acknowledgment of cultural rituals, or inclusion of family decision-makers in the maternal care process.

Yoruba cosmology offers a deeply spiritual framework for understanding maternal health. Rooted in concepts of balance, destiny, and divine influence, it shapes how women perceive pregnancy, seek care, and respond to complications. Integrating this cosmological understanding into public health efforts can bridge the cultural gap between traditional beliefs and modern maternal care practices.

Prenatal Practices in Yoruba Culture

Prenatal care among the Yoruba is fundamentally embedded in indigenous knowledge systems that interlace herbal medicine, spirituality, communal wisdom, and moral guidance. These customs, transmitted through oral traditions and practice, are regarded not only as preventive health measures but as culturally ordained protocols that ensure a successful gestation and safe delivery. Yoruba women undergo a wide range of rituals, dietary observances, and spiritual disciplines during pregnancy, all of which are believed to shield them and their unborn children from both physical and spiritual threats.

Herbal Remedies and Agbo (Traditional Concoctions)

One prominent feature of Yoruba prenatal care is the use of agbo—a decoction derived from a mixture of leaves, roots, and barks believed to have therapeutic and spiritual efficacy. These herbal brews are considered to fortify the womb, prevent miscarriage, ease labor, and detoxify the body. Typically administered by Iya Abiye (traditional midwives), elders, or herbalists, agbo remains a culturally trusted alternative to biomedical interventions.

Akinyemi and Isiugo-Abanihe (2021) observe that "about 74% of Yoruba women in semi-urban and rural areas reported using herbal remedies at some point during pregnancy, often in combination with hospital care." These concoctions are more readily accessible than formal health facilities, particularly in remote areas.

While health professionals warn about the risks of unregulated herbal treatments, Yoruba communities often imbue these herbal mixtures with spiritual symbolism. According to Ogun-dipe and Oyeleye (2023), "the agbo given to pregnant women are considered sacred potions infused not only with medicinal potency but also with protective spiritual properties."

Spiritual Protection and Ritual Practices



Pregnancy is perceived within Yoruba cosmology as a spiritually sensitive period that necessitates ritual protection. To this end, spiritual practices such as incantations, ritual baths (eṣẹ), and the use of protective charms are employed to safeguard mother and child. Items like ègún àbíyamo (ancestral charms) and àdùrà (prayers) are used to avert malevolent forces.

Expectant mothers may wear amulets or beads imbued with sacred substances meant to repel witchcraft, evil spirits, and other supernatural threats. Ayoola and Adefemi (2020) explain that "pregnancy among the Yoruba is a spiritually risky journey that requires the intervention of deities, ancestors, and ritual specialists for protection and success." Consultation with Ifá diviners often reveals the need for sacrifices or appeasements to deities like Yemoja (goddess of fertility) or Obatala to avert spiritual threats. These acts are not mere rituals but essential elements of maternal spiritual care in Yoruba belief.

Dietary Taboos and Behavioral Restrictions

Yoruba prenatal care also includes numerous food and behavioral taboos. Foods such as snails (thought to cause sluggishness), okra (believed to increase drooling), and sugarcane (associated with prolonged labor) are discouraged. These beliefs, although lacking scientific backing, are deeply ingrained and strictly observed. Moreover, pregnant women are advised to avoid quarrels, profanity, night travels, and gossip, especially against those suffering from deformities or infertility. These behaviors are thought to attract spiritual backlash, complicating childbirth. Salami and Adeyinka (2022) argue that "moral purity, emotional calm, and spiritual cleanliness are regarded as essential conditions for successful delivery among the Yoruba." Enforcement of these rules is usually carried out by older women or traditional midwives who ensure adherence.

Consultation with Iya Abiye (Traditional Birth Attendants)

Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), or Iya Abiye, play a crucial role in the prenatal journey. They are custodians of both medical and spiritual knowledge, offering herbal remedies, massages, nutritional counseling, and emotional support. Fapohunda and Oroboton (2021) write that "TBAs enjoy community trust and cultural alignment, offering care that is perceived as more emotionally supportive and spiritually grounded than clinical alternatives." Their services are generally more accessible and affordable than modern hospitals, especially for economically disadvantaged women. While many Yoruba women attend hospital antenatal clinics, they also



consult TBAs for culturally attuned care. This hybrid approach highlights the resilience and relevance of indigenous knowledge in contemporary maternal care.

Integration with Modern Prenatal Care

Despite the rising prominence of biomedical antenatal services, Yoruba women often practice medical pluralism—utilizing both traditional and modern healthcare. For many, spiritual and physical dimensions of pregnancy must be addressed concurrently. Ajayi and Bankole (2020) note that "many Yoruba women engage in parallel healthcare pathways, attending antenatal clinics for scanning and medical advice while maintaining faith in traditional rituals and home-based practices." This duality is not seen as contradictory but as complementary.

Health policymakers and practitioners face the challenge of reconciling these systems. Rather than dismissing traditional beliefs, collaborative models that involve TBAs, elders, and community leaders could enhance maternal outcomes and promote culturally respectful care. Yoruba prenatal practices represent a holistic framework in which physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being converge. These cultural traditions—including herbal therapies, ritual protection, dietary guidelines, and consultations with TBAs—continue to influence maternal behavior and health outcomes. Understanding and integrating these practices into national maternal health strategies will enhance cultural inclusiveness and improve service delivery.

Childbirth and Postnatal Beliefs in Yoruba Culture

Among the Yoruba, childbirth is not just a biological event but a deeply spiritual and social phenomenon. It marks a crucial transition not only for the woman but also for the family and community. Traditional beliefs surrounding labor, delivery, and the postnatal period are rooted in centuries-old cosmologies that emphasize spiritual protection, ritual observance, and community solidarity. These practices continue to shape maternal and neonatal care, especially in rural and peri-urban Yoruba communities.

Ritualized Childbirth Practices

Childbirth in Yoruba culture is often accompanied by ritualized practices and spiritual precautions. Many women prefer to deliver at home or in the care of a traditional birth attendant (TBA), especially in communities where TBAs are highly trusted and culturally aligned. According to Ogunmodede and Salawu (2023), "traditional childbirth among the Yoruba is



conducted in spiritually sanitized environments, with chants, prayers, and symbolic items used to guard the woman and child against malevolent spiritual forces.” The labor room is often cleansed with herbs and incantations, and certain individuals especially those believed to carry negative energies may be barred from entering the delivery space.

In cases where complications arise during labor, the situation may be interpreted as a spiritual attack or ancestral displeasure, requiring immediate appeasement or ritual correction. This belief influences how quickly a woman may be transferred to a hospital, often delaying critical care.

The Role of Iya Abiye during Delivery

The Iya Abiye, or traditional birth attendant, plays a pivotal role not just medically, but also spiritually and socially. She is considered both a caregiver and a spiritual guide who possesses ancestral knowledge about safe delivery, herbal medicine, and protective rituals. Fapohunda and Orobato (2021) affirm that “in many Yoruba communities, TBAs are seen as custodians of sacred knowledge about birth, passed down through generations of women.” During childbirth, the Iya Abiye uses herbal compresses, massages, warm water therapies, and invocations to aid labor progression and protect both mother and baby from harm.

Immediate Postnatal Rituals and Beliefs

Following childbirth, Yoruba traditions emphasize spiritual cleansing and protective rites. The newborn is believed to be highly vulnerable to spiritual dangers in the first days of life. As such, protective amulets, special herbal baths (eṣẹ), and prayers are performed to safeguard the baby and mother.

Naming ceremonies (ikómojáde) typically occur on the eighth day, during which the child is formally introduced to the world. Names often reflect the circumstances of the birth, spiritual meanings, or divine revelations. According to Adeyemi and Fagbenle (2022), “naming ceremonies in Yoruba culture serve not only as identity markers but also as spiritual alignments that ensure the child’s destiny is in harmony with the cosmos.” In the postnatal period, mothers are often placed under home-based confinement, during which they are nursed, massaged, and fed specially prepared foods believed to restore strength and increase milk production. This care is mostly administered by elder women in the family, especially the new mother’s own mother or mother-in-law.



Implications for Maternal Mental and Physical Health

While these traditional postnatal practices offer emotional and communal support, they can sometimes conflict with modern maternal health advice. Some forms of confinement or delayed medical intervention may pose risks if complications arise postpartum. Nevertheless, these practices are often cherished for their psychological benefits.

Eze et al. (2022) found that “women who undergo traditional postpartum care among the Yoruba report higher emotional satisfaction and family support compared to those who deliver in hospitals without traditional follow-up.” This underscores the need for healthcare systems to recognize and harmonize these beliefs with medical postpartum protocols.

Childbirth and postnatal care in Yoruba society are governed by elaborate spiritual and communal frameworks that prioritize the wellbeing of both mother and child. These practices—ranging from the rituals performed during labor to the postpartum confinement—are essential expressions of cultural identity, social bonding, and spiritual continuity. Public health strategies that acknowledge and integrate these practices stand a better chance of promoting safe motherhood in Yoruba communities.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Yoruba maternal health beliefs and practices are deeply embedded within a broader cosmological framework that intertwines spirituality, morality, communal responsibility, and embodied care. Pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period are not treated as isolated biological processes but as spiritually charged life transitions that require careful ritual management, moral discipline, and collective support. From prenatal herbal therapies (*agbo*) and dietary taboos to ritualized childbirth practices and reliance on traditional birth attendants (*Iya Abiye*), Yoruba maternal culture reflects a holistic understanding of health that integrates physical, emotional, and metaphysical well-being.

Scholars consistently emphasize that these practices persist not because of resistance to biomedical care, but because they offer cultural meaning, emotional reassurance, and spiritual security. As Ajayi and Bankole (2020) aptly observe, “Yoruba women do not necessarily reject modern medicine; rather, they seek completeness by combining biomedical care with indigenous systems that address spiritual vulnerability.” This medical pluralism highlights the inadequacy of maternal health models that rely solely on biomedical logic while disregarding cultural realities.



The role of traditional birth attendants is particularly significant. TBAs function not only as caregivers but also as spiritual mediators, counselors, and custodians of ancestral knowledge. Fapohunda and Orobato (2021) note that “the trust placed in TBAs is rooted in their cultural proximity to women’s lived experiences, something that institutional healthcare often struggles to replicate.” Their continued relevance underscores the importance of community-based maternal care systems, especially in underserved rural and peri-urban areas.

However, the paper also acknowledges the potential risks associated with some traditional practices, particularly when spiritual interpretations of childbirth complications delay timely medical intervention. Ogunmodede and Salawu (2023) caution that “the spiritual framing of obstetric emergencies can unintentionally prolong decision-making at moments when rapid biomedical response is critical.” This tension illustrates the need for culturally sensitive, yet medically sound, integration strategies rather than outright dismissal of indigenous beliefs.

Ultimately, the findings reinforce the argument that effective maternal health interventions in Yoruba communities must be culturally informed and dialogical. Olowu and Adeleke (2020) compellingly assert that “maternal health programs that respect cultural logic are not merely more ethical, but demonstrably more effective.” Integrating Yoruba cosmological understandings into public health policy through partnerships with TBAs, inclusion of family and elders in decision-making, and respectful engagement with spiritual practices can foster trust, improve service uptake, and reduce maternal and neonatal mortality.

In conclusion, Yoruba maternal health practices represent a resilient and adaptive knowledge system that continues to shape reproductive behavior in contemporary contexts. Recognizing and engaging this system does not undermine modern medicine; rather, it expands its reach and relevance. Bridging the gap between indigenous cosmology and biomedical care is not only a cultural imperative but a practical strategy for achieving equitable and sustainable maternal health outcomes in Yoruba communities and beyond.



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MUSIC, GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL BALANCE

Jacob O. Falusi, PhD & Ebenezer O. Ayeyemi, PhD

Department of Music, Faculty of Arts
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo
jacvour@yahoo.co.uk; ayayemioe@aceondo.edu.ng

Abstract

The focus of this paper is on “Music, Gender and Sustainable Global Balance”. The role of Music in our society and in the global world cannot be overemphasized due to its importance in the impartation of knowledge in learners without gender disparities. Besides, it helps the learners to acquire skills as a vocation for effective functioning and sustainability in society. Musical training and learning of music as a profession accommodates both genders right from the elementary or basic school and secondary through the tertiary levels of education. In our societies today in the global world, both the male and female genders are recognized as music artistes, teachers, composers, conductors, therapists, studio engineers etc. The article highlights the critical role music plays in shaping cultural attitudes and promoting social change. It further explains how music can be used as a powerful tool for challenging societal norms, promoting gender equality and fostering sustainable development. Through a critical analysis of existing literature and case studies, the article illustrates how music education could be used to empower the women and the girl child and also, promote a more equitable and sustainable world. However, certain problems which hamper proper musical training and creativity are highlighted, which include inadequate funding, lack of qualified personnel, and curriculum problems, amongst others. The paper also recommends as follow; engagement of qualified personnel, adequate funding by the government, NGO, PTA Committee, etc., provision of necessary facilities such as a well-equipped music laboratory, a conducive environment for learning, encouragement of both genders in music education, etc. This article aims to contribute to the global discourse on sustainable development, highlighting the potentials of music in achieving a more just and equitable world

Key Words: Music, Gender, Society, Environment, Sustainability, Global balance



Introduction

Music which is generally recognized as a universal language has the power to transcend borders, cultures and identities, playing an important role in shaping and promoting societal values, norms and global understanding. The World, all over, is generally referred to as a global village, and music, on the other hand, is recognized as an art, the language of the soul and the outlet of expressions of our feelings through tunes and multiple of tones (Nnamani, 2009; Falusi, 2021) that is, it is a common language without racial discrimination, which is well understood and practicable by all, by global languages and tribes. As the world strives for sustainable development and gender equality, music emerges as a potent tool for change. Among all the professions or vocations, “Music” is the most loved and sought for by older men and women, young adult and children in the society (Okafor, 2005) The role of music in our societies and in the global world is beyond mere exaggeration as it performs various functions for both the male and female genders among the Muslims, Christians and Traditional worshippers. The topic of this article explores the intersection of music, gender and sustainable global balance, highlighting how music can effect positive changes to obnoxious practices and established societal norms, empowering marginalized voices and fostering a more equitable world.

In concept, gender is the state of being male or female while gender inequality is a state of being unequal that is a state of disparity between the male and female gender. Inequality simply means a state of injustice. Gender inequality is a global phenomenon sequel to quite a number of factors which range from cultural, social and religious factors (Ajere, 2013). From this assertion, culturally, women or female genders are seen as home builders in the society and their major job is to take care of the home front which includes their husbands and children. In this regard, the society places them in the position where less tasking or menial jobs are reserved for them while better employment is reserved for the male category. Socially, the political class sees them as second class citizens who should be excluded from lucrative political offices. And in the religious circle, female genders are expected to be silence while discussing important matters. From all indications, the perception of some sections of the society before now tends to look down on the potentialities of women. By examining the complex relationships between music, gender and sustainable development, we can harness the transformative potential of music in promoting global unity, equality and peace.



Contextual Clarifications

Genders

The term gender describes masculinity and femininity, which shape the way men and women are perceived in society, the roles they are given, and the work they perform. Igube (2004) and Hornby (2010) define gender as the state of being male or female in relation to the social and cultural roles that are considered appropriate for men and women or for boys and girls. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours and expectation associated with the concept of being a male or a female or gender non-conforming identities. It also refers to the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being a woman and a man. Mangyvat (2006) Corroborates that gender is a specially constructed phenomenon that is brought about as the society ascribes different roles, duties, behaviours and mannerisms to the two sexes. From this assertion in characteristics, gender encompasses the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of individuals which can vary across cultures and time. It is different from biological sex, though the two are inseparable. Gender includes norms, behaviours, and relationships associated with being identified as a woman, man, girl, or boy. Furthermore, Singhs (2010) argues that gender refers to a socio-cultural construct that connotes the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in a particular society. Judging from the above opinions by different scholars both genders have indispensable roles to perform for societal growth and advancement

Moreover, Onyekwelu (2000) sees gender as the dichotomy of roles culturally imposed on the sexes. Gin (2011) observes that in the contemporary context, men and women's classification is a world where patriarchal values predominate; it is a world where there are general sets of beliefs that females' gender is inferior to the male gender. In this regard, the power of relationship attached to their ideology and belief accords the male gender more respect, power and concession over the female gender (women) in society. In corroboration, Anele (2008) is of the view that the social-cultural practices of the African societies play a role in the vantage of male domineering influence over their womenfolk. However, recent event in the society has proven that the male genders are not superior to their female genders. If given equal opportunity, the female gender seems to be more considerate and of better performance on important issues that affects the progress of the society due to their feminine nature as the mothers of the society



Music Roles in Sustaining Global Balance

Music is seen as vocal or instrumental sounds or both combined in such a way for aesthetic (beauty) production of form, harmony, and expression of emotions. It is also recognized as the written or printed signs representing vocal or instrumental sounds. Hornby (2010) defines music as an art of sound in time that expresses ideas and emotions in significant forms through the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony and colour. Music can significantly contribute to sustainable global balance in several ways. These include cultural exchange and understanding, social control and awareness, economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, Education and personal development. These highlights are further expatiated as follow;

Cultural Exchange and Understanding

The roles of music in human societies all over the world cannot be quantified. Odutola (2009). Sees music as an important element of every culture and an imperative medium through which human philosophies, emotions and agendas are conveyed. Since the earliest times, man has often expressed his or her feelings through music. According to Falusi (2021). Music is generally referred to as a humanly organized sound. And it is used to influence individual and group behaviours in different ways. In this regard, man tends to admire, appreciate and listen to music because of its effect on man's existential feelings as music often generates powerful emotions in man. Besides it promotes cultural understanding as music transcends linguistics that is, the language of the people and cultural barriers and as such promotes global unity and cooperation. In this regard, cross cultural understanding enhances and encourages the performance of music in all languages. And also promotes unity among people of different cultures. In the local community music serves as a unifying factor especially in settling quarrels among warring communities, Also, at the global stage, music festival brings people of various cultures together for unity and cooperation. Music also preserves the cultural heritage of the people by preserving the culture in the traditional setting and also promoting the cultural diversity of the people. as the older generation pass the social norms which are incorporated in their folk songs to their younger generation. Thus, the cultural heritage of the people are preserved.

Social Control and Awareness

Since the beginning of human civilization, music has been used as a device in the control of social behaviours where it has operated as much as to promote solidarity among the male and



female genders which include Adult men and women, Youth and children. Berghahn (1994) argues that music is acknowledged as a social control agent that regulates the lifestyles of people in the society and thus encourages the promotion of moral values. In social control, satirical songs are employed in curbing the social vices which negate the societal norms and cultures. These social vices include stealing, wicked acts, insubordination, witchcraft, immorality, bedwetting, etc. Satirical songs are meant to correct societal evils such as crime, corruption, bribery, robbery with violence, etc. Generally, it is termed songs for social control, which is a mechanism by which a society preserves its norms and value system (cultural heritage) from degradation and extinction. According to Okafor (2005);

Every community has things it lives by, cherished traditional norms and revered institutions and usually ensures that any member who violates them is severely punished. More than that, it establishes a preventive mechanism to warn of the consequences of forbidden words and deeds. This mechanism constitutes the societal social control (n.p.).

From the above assertion by Okafor, satirical songs are meant to inculcate good morals and correct societal evils. A typical example of Satirical (poem) song that teaches moral value include;

Song against stealing;

(1)English

Yoruba Interpretation

1. What is stealing to me

Kini ngo folese laye ti mowa

What is stealing to me

Kini ngo folese laye ti mowa

Instead of stealing I'd rather be a slave

Kaka kin jale ma kuku deru

What is stealing to me

Kini ngo folese laye ti mowa

2. He who steals will be prosecuted

Eni ba jale aa dele ejo

He who steals will be prosecuted

Eni ba jale aa dele ejo

The Judge will judge and jail him

Adajo a wa fewon si lese

He who steals will be prosecuted

Eni ba jale aa dele ejo

(Ayeyemi & Falusi. 2017)



This is one of the popular poems which are thought on morals especially at elementary or basic schools' education for both the male and female genders of basic school age. The above song's expression shows that stealing is evil and shameful. And it is not in any way good for a well cultured person. The first stanza begins with the expression "what is stealing to me and that it is better to be a servant rather than stealing. The second stanza of the poem expresses that theft lands someone in jail. The song is one of the Yoruba folk songs that discourage the act of stealing.

Furthermore Merriam (1964) explicates the purpose of music in man's life as emotional, expressionistic, aesthetic, enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical responses, enforcement of conformity to social norms, validation of social institutions and religious rituals, contribution to the continuity and stability of culture and contribution to societal integration. From the above assertion, the functions of music in human existence is clearly evident as it performs such roles as emotional, which refers to the way man thinks and feel about a concept and conviction. It is also expressionistic in the sense that our thoughts, ideas and feelings can be demonstrated or expressed through songs or instrumental performance.

Universally, music performs various functions. Falusi (2022) argues that; in Nigerian (African) societies, music performs roles which cut across both sacred and secular music. These general functions include ceremonies, festivals, sports, worship, folklore, therapy, pleasure and recreation, advertisement, satire etc.

The continent, Africa, is a society that places a high value on music, and as such, music occupies a pivotal place in the lives of both Genders in various events of the life cycle. Music is used extensively in social, religious, secular, and cultural functions etc. According to Okafor, (2005);

Next to the local language, traditional music is the most widely used medium of expression for all manner of occasions and at all times and periods of life.

Communities manipulate it to give voice and sound to their collective thoughts, actions, and even spirituality (p.88)

From Okafor's assertion on traditional music, it is quite obvious that music plays various dimensional roles in African societies. Music creates awareness by orientation agencies through songs and jingles on the radio television and other platforms in addressing global issues like



climate change, poverty, inequality among male and female genders, it also inspire actions by providing a platform through music festivals for marginalized communities to express themselves and advocate for their rights.

Cultural Identification and Preservation

Music is an important aspect of culture that various tribes especially the Yoruba values so much in their daily activities and life cycle events. Its effective use in the traditional setting serves as a medium for cultural identification and preservation. When the music of a particular society is performed, it reveals the culture of the society to the viewers for easy identification. Also, regular performance of the music of a place helps to preserve the cultural practices of that society. Thus, traditional music helps to preserve, project, perpetuate and transmit our music heritage and culture (Odunuga & Nnamani, 2005). Furthermore, Save the Music Foundation (2025) sees music education as a powerful tool that has great influence in shaping cultural manifestation and societal practices around the world for generations. It has the power to alter one's mood, change perceptions and inspire change either positively or negatively. In this regard the cultural practices that promote good morals must be encouraged in the education of the female and male gender in schools.

General Education: Music provides general education to learners. Its values in the education of a child and adult in the society cannot be quantified as it promotes citizenship, character development, team spirit, historical development and health benefits. Music plays a vital role in general education, enhancing cognitive abilities, fostering creativities, and promoting social-emotional development. It could be integrated into various subjects in schools especially at lower elementary, upper basic schools and senior secondary. It makes learning more engaging and enjoyable while also developing skills applicable to other academic areas. It also contributes to the general development of children (Sanjabadam, 2024), Music is one of the educational disciplines which is taught as school subjects. In primary and upper basic school, it is integrated with other arts such as fine art, dance, and drama or theatre in cultural and creative art (CCA) curriculum. In senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions it is offered as a subject on its own. It is not recognized as a core subject at junior secondary school certificate examination (JSSCE) due to its integrated nature with other related art subjects as applicable to CCA curriculum.



Music aids teaching in schools or facilitate instruction to pupils e.g. Nursery rhymes. It also helps pupils to memorize names of things like the continents of the world, rivers, letters of the alphabets, ABC..... 12 calendar months etc. Music education thus promotes global awareness, understanding and cooperation.

Economic Empowerment: Empowerment through music simply means the use of music in the enhancement of individual and collective well-being especially in contexts of social or personal challenges. It encompasses various approaches from music education equipping the learners with the knowledge of technical know- how in self-expression and confidence in musical practices and creativity to music therapy which addresses mental health and physical well-being. It also encourages community music initiatives that promote social inclusion and positive change. In African societies, music provide basis for skill acquisition and empowerment. It has a dual obligation to the society. The first obligation is to develop the talent of those who are musically gifted for their own benefits and of the society which they serve (Odunuga & Nnamani, 2005). Judging from the above assertion, we could observe that effective use of music in an African society is beneficial to both the performer (artiste) and the audience (i.e. the local community). Music has such a powerful and positive impact on pupil in elementary, student in secondary and tertiary levels as it brings out the best in each of the pupils and students' category and allowing them to shine. Examples of empowerment through music include giving voice to the voiceless, promoting mental health and well-being, socio-economic empowerment, social justice and activism etc. Music provides economic opportunities through income generation and job creation contributing to the growth of the economy and alleviating poverty among the people. Music also provides opportunity for Tourism and cultural exchange through music festivals and other global events that attract tourists that promotes cultural exchange and economic benefits to the citizens and the nation at large.

Problems that Impede Effective Functions of Music for Sustainable Global Balance

These problems include the following;

Gender Disparity: Gender disparity refers to unequal treatment or individual perceptions based on their gender, which leads to unfair treatment or systematic disadvantages for certain groups, especially the female gender. This disparity thus manifests in various aspects of life, which include health, education, economic opportunities, political representation and music, etc. The



society, especially in Nigeria (Africa), is replete with several cultural practices which tend to give preference for male superiority over the female gender. In this regard, Enemu (1999); Otumala and Ayuba (2018) rightly observed that Nigerian communities approve such practices as preference for male child, payment of bride price, female genital mutilation, negative attitude to women toward childlessness, giving away girls in marriage early and without their consent. Musically, gender disparity limits musical initiatives of the female gender, especially in taking leading roles in musical creativity and performance in schools, churches and in public functions. However, if they are allowed to take leading roles during performances they will be at their best for the benefit of the society. For instance, the best voice in singing is usually the soprano part, which is not in all cases and as such, using the female vocalist as song leader in social function will be more beneficial to the progress of such choral group except in situation where the singers or the choir members in such choral group are only male genders.

Poor Socio-Economic Background: Many, especially female genders are denied access to education especially in the field of music due to its financial implication that is, the resources that are involved in the purchase of music materials for effective learning, practices and creativities. Because, such genders are from poor home and their parents could not afford the sponsorship of their education. Thus, leading to unequal access to music education, resources and platforms particularly in marginalized communities

Inadequate funding: There is general lack and paucity of funds to enhance effective implementation of music programme through serious and a result oriented performance in schools, colleges, polytechnics, universities and other organizations that could cater for the education of both genders. Effective implementation of music in schools requires adequate funding in order to bring out the best in the learner through the efficiency of the teacher.

Lack of qualified Personnel: Many institutions today do not have qualified personnel or resource persons with current or up to date requisite experience in general musicianship. In this regard, many graduates who had finished a training course in music program either in conventional or privately owned institutions today cannot even sight sing and are deficient in the practical application aspect of the curriculum except in theory.

Problem of teaching aids: Lack of well-equipped library, instruction materials and musical instruments are part of the factors that impede the progress of performance in music for



sustainable global balance. Music are not learnt in abstract because, the gaining of knowledge and acquisition of skills in music education requires the use of real objects such as musical instruments e.g. piano, flute, trumpet and other instruments as instructional materials. Correspondingly, findings show a gross insufficiency and dearth of musical instruments and music in schools (Ogunrinade et al, 2019). Where these materials are not available as this practice is the regular occurrence in many elementary and secondary schools especially public institutions, the progress of performance will be hampered.

Lack of Policy Support: This involves insufficient policies and funding for music initiatives toward the promotion of sustainable global balance and equality. The apathetical behaviours of the heads of educational institutions and government which include Federal, state and local council toward music education is a major setback. Because, their failure in this regard had not given the implementation of music education in most of our schools and institutions necessary backings, encouragement and the required incentives for the training of students in music education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper had considered how the intersection between music and gender could enhance sustainable global balance. From findings the opinions of various researchers on similar subjects had been expressed, showing the disparity between male and female genders, in which the general opinions proved that society, especially in Africa, had not given the female gender fair treatment as expected. Further findings shows that proper music education can significantly contribute to sustainable global balance in several ways. These include cultural exchange and understanding, social control and awareness, economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, education and personal development. Also, the problems that impede the effective functioning of music as an instrument to correct this imbalance for a sustainable global balance have been highlighted which include gender disparity, poor socio-economic status of the parents, inadequate funding amongst others. In this regard, the paper recommends as follow;

The parents and societies are expected to treat children equally in such a way that they are given equal opportunity to explore in their chosen careers, especially in musical learning, practices and creativity. Both genders should be encouraged to reach the heights of their musical careers, as there is no superiority in the musical performance of each gender. It is generally observed that



students' behavioural attitude in learning begins from the preliminary stages of learning. In this regard, the classroom teacher should monitor the behavior of their students in order to ensure that both genders have equal access to the musical training that will engender their acquisition of necessary skills for their functionality in the musical world and in the society in which they are domiciled. The music teacher or the resource person should ensure that male genders (boys) and female genders (girls) are given equal opportunity to acquire the same musical exposure and experiences during the theory learning in the classroom and practical demonstration in the laboratory.

- The Government, on the other hand should assist children from homes whose parents have poor social-economic status by funding their education through the award of scholarship to indigent children, Government should engage qualified personnel for the implementation of music programmes in schools, which include the basic schools, secondary, and tertiary levels. Besides, a conducive environment for learning for both genders (boys and girls) should be created by the Government with the support of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO), Parents and teachers' associations' committee etc. by ensuring adequate funding, provision of necessary facilities such as well-furnished classroom, Instructional materials, well-equipped music laboratory for music practical, skills acquisition and for empowerment.

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DISCOURSE STRATEGIES AND THEIR LINGUISTIC REALISATION IN JAMES BLACK'S "WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER" AND ROBERT LOWRY'S "SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER"

Lanre-Atoyebi, K.O. PhD.

Department of English,
Adeyemi University of Education, Ondo.
omowumi.kehinde1972@gmail.com
08135666785

Abstract

Hymns have long served as a medium for expressing eschatological beliefs, shaping both communal worship and personal spiritual experience. Despite their prominence, few studies have examined how resurrection hymns employ discourse strategies to create mental imagery and personal engagement. This study addresses that gap by investigating James Black's "When the Roll is Called up yonder" and Robert Lowry's "Shall we Gather at the River," focusing on how discourse strategies are used to visualise heaven and personalise the believer's experience. The research aims to identify the linguistic devices that realise these strategies and to explore how they construct theological meaning and participant positioning. Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides the primary theoretical framework, enabling analysis of the social-cognitive and ideological functions of hymn texts. Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is used complementarily to examine the linguistic devices, which bring these strategies to life. A qualitative textual analysis is employed to integrate both approaches. Findings reveal discourse strategies such as visualisation, personalisation, structural inversion, modality and lexical authority, and repetition, and their linguistic realisation. The study concludes that discourse strategies, realised through linguistic devices, are central to the hymns' communicative and theological power. It is recommended that future research extend to a broader corpus to explore how language constructs religious experience across diverse hymn traditions.

Keywords: Discourse strategies, Critical Discourse Analysis, Linguistic devices, Visualisation, Personalisation



Introduction

Religious hymns constitute a distinctive form of discourse through which theological meanings, collective identities, and eschatological expectations are articulated and sustained. Although frequently approached as poetic or devotional compositions, hymns may also be examined as socially situated texts that participate in the construction and circulation of belief systems. Within discourse studies, language is understood not merely as a vehicle for expression but as a form of social practice that shapes cognition and reproduces ideological structures (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). From this perspective, hymnody offers a potentially productive site for investigating how linguistic choices contribute to the naturalisation of religious worldviews.

Nineteenth-century evangelical hymns, in particular, continue to occupy a prominent place in Christian worship traditions. Two enduring examples are “When the Roll is Called up yonder” (1893) by James Black and “Shall we Gather at the River?” (1864) by Robert Lowry. Both texts centre on themes of divine judgment, heavenly reunion, accountability, and communal redemption. Their continued circulation across denominational contexts suggests that their appeal extends beyond musical composition to the organisation of meaning within their lyrical structure. However, while theological and historical discussions of such hymns are relatively common, systematic discourse-oriented investigations of their linguistic construction remain comparatively limited.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the socio-cognitive approach associated with Teun A. van Dijk (1998, 2008), provides a useful framework for exploring how discourse may contribute to the reproduction of shared beliefs and group identities. Van Dijk (2008) argues that discourse mediates between social structures and mental representations, thereby influencing collective understanding. When applied to religious texts, this perspective enables an examination of how recurring linguistic patterns might participate in reinforcing doctrinal assumptions and communal alignment.

To complement this orientation, the study also draws on insights from M. A. K. Halliday’s functional model of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), which conceptualises grammar as a resource for meaning-making shaped by context and communicative purpose. Within this framework, linguistic features such as pronoun usage, modality, thematic arrangement, and syntactic configuration may be examined as motivated selections rather than purely stylistic



choices. Such features can potentially illuminate how interpersonal positioning, experiential representation, and textual organisation operate within hymn discourse.

Against this background, the present study investigates the discourse strategies that may be operative in “When the Roll is called up yonder” and “Shall we gather at the River?” and explores how such strategies are linguistically realised. Rather than presupposing specific outcomes, the study approaches the hymns as texts whose grammatical and lexical patterning can be systematically analysed to determine how meaning, identity, and theological orientation are constructed. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis with functional linguistic description, the research seeks to contribute to broader discussions on religious discourse and the role of language in sustaining systems of belief.

Religious Discourse and Its Relevance to Hymnody

Religious discourse refers to the use of language in ways that construct, express, and reinforce religious beliefs, values, and practices within specific communities (Barker, 2018). It encompasses both the structural features of language, such as metaphors, narratives, and rhetorical devices—and the social functions that language serves in religious contexts (Koteyko & Hunt, 2020). In the context of Christian hymnody, religious discourse functions not only to communicate theological truths but also to shape the spiritual experience of believers. Hymns, as a form of religious text, are rich sites for examining how linguistic choices both reflect and produce religious meaning (Meyer & Lundby, 2019).

The linguistic features of religious discourse often include collective pronouns, metaphorical language, and future-oriented expressions which together create a sense of shared identity and eschatological hope (Vine, 2021). For instance, in hymns like “When the Roll is Called up yonder” and “Shall we Gather at the River,” the recurring use of inclusive plurals (e.g., “we,” “us”) and metaphors of gathering and eternal life function to invoke a collective future-oriented spirituality. This aligns with broader patterns in Christian discourse that emphasise community, salvation, and ultimate reunion with the divine (Cameron, 2020).

Religious discourse also relies on intertextuality the way in which texts reference, echo, and build upon earlier texts and traditions. Christian hymns often draw on biblical metaphors of judgment, resurrection, and paradise (Miller, 2022). For example, the metaphor of a “roll” being called in “When the Roll is called up yonder” resonates with imagery found in Revelation concerning the



Book of Life, a motif familiar to congregants (Freeman, 2023). Similarly, the river motif in “Shall Gather at the River” evokes biblical symbolism of life-giving water, which functions rhetorically to reinforce communal expectations of restoration and eternal fellowship (Adeyemi & Olupona, 2024).

In terms of linguistic realisation, religious discourse in hymns exhibits formulaic and repetitive structures that facilitate memorability and communal participation. Repetition and parallelism, as found in both hymns, serve not only aesthetic purposes but also discursive ones, reinforcing core theological themes of hope and unity (Schmidt & Johnson, 2019). Furthermore, the declarative mood prevalent in such hymns asserts certainty and affirmation, characteristics that distinguish religious language from other discourse types (Myers, 2021).

Therefore, religious discourse provides a valuable framework for analysing the linguistic and discourse strategies found in Christian hymns. By understanding how language constructs shared beliefs and emotional resonance, scholars can better appreciate the role of hymns such as James Black’s “When the Roll is Called up yonder” and Robert Lowery’s “Shall we Gather at the River” in both communal worship and theological expression.

Statement of the Research Problem

Religious discourse has long attracted scholarly attention within linguistics, sociology, and discourse studies due to its central role in shaping belief systems and communal identities. Within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), religion has been examined as a domain in which language participates in the reproduction of ideology and authority structures. Fairclough (1995, 2003) conceptualises discourse as a form of social practice that both reflects and constructs social realities, demonstrating how institutional texts naturalise particular worldviews. Similarly, van Dijk (1998, 2008) emphasises the socio-cognitive dimension of discourse, arguing that repeated linguistic patterns contribute to the formation of shared mental models and ideological alignment. These contributions provide powerful theoretical foundations for analysing religious language as a site of ideological construction.

In parallel, scholarship informed by M. A. K. Halliday’s functional theory of language has shown how grammatical structures encode social meanings. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) demonstrate that linguistic choices are systematically related to context and communicative purpose. Applications of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFG) to religious texts particularly



sermons and biblical narratives have revealed how transitivity patterns, modality, and clause structure function to construct authority, obligation, and communal positioning. Such studies represent a significant strength in demonstrating the explanatory power of grammar in uncovering ideological meaning.

Beyond CDA and SFG, research in religious discourse has also drawn on rhetorical and pragmatic approaches. Crystal and Davy (1969), in their early stylistic exploration of English varieties, identified religious language as a distinctive register characterised by formulaicity and ritual repetition. More recently, Wodak and Meyer (2016) have underscored the importance of analysing discourse within its socio-historical context, a principle particularly relevant to nineteenth-century evangelical hymnody. These approaches enrich understanding of religious language by situating it within broader communicative traditions and institutional frameworks.

Despite these substantial contributions, hymn discourse remains comparatively underexamined within mainstream discourse-analytic scholarship. Much of the existing research on hymns has been conducted within musicology and theology, where attention is often directed toward doctrinal themes, biographical background, or liturgical development rather than detailed linguistic analysis. While such studies provide valuable historical and theological insight, they tend to treat hymn texts as repositories of belief rather than as structured discursive practices shaped by strategic linguistic selection.

Furthermore, within discourse studies, research has predominantly focused on sermons, political-religious speeches, and media representations of religion (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). These genres are overtly argumentative and institutionally regulated, making them visible sites of ideological negotiation. Hymns, however, differ in important respects. They are poetic, repetitive, and collectively performed across generations. Their memorability and ritual repetition may enhance their capacity to internalise doctrinal assumptions within communal consciousness. Yet the specific discourse strategies through which hymns achieve this effect have not been systematically examined using an integrated CDA–SFG framework.

Another limitation in prior scholarship concerns methodological separation. CDA offers robust tools for interrogating ideology and power relations (van Dijk, 2008), but it has occasionally been critiqued for insufficiently detailed grammatical analysis. Conversely, SFG provides a comprehensive linguistic model but does not inherently foreground ideological critique. Few



studies have brought these approaches into sustained dialogue when examining hymn texts. This methodological gap limits a full understanding of how macro-level ideological strategies are realised through micro-level linguistic structures.

Within this scholarly landscape, nineteenth-century evangelical hymns such as “When the Roll Is Called up Yonder” and “Shall We Gather at the River?” present a compelling case for further investigation. Although these hymns have been widely circulated and continue to shape devotional practice, their discourse strategies and linguistic realisations have not been comprehensively analysed from a critical-functional perspective. The absence of such analysis leaves unresolved questions concerning how personalisation, collectivisation, visualisation, futurity, and authority may be linguistically constructed and how these constructions potentially contribute to ideological consolidation within worship communities.

The research problem addressed in this study, therefore, lies in the insufficient exploration of hymnody as a site of strategic discourse construction and linguistic realisation. There remains a need for a systematic analysis that integrates Critical Discourse Analysis and functional linguistic description in order to illuminate how theological meaning and communal identity are discursively produced in hymn texts. By examining the selected hymns through this combined framework, the study seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of religious discourse and to address the identified gap in hymn-oriented discourse scholarship.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to investigate discourse strategies and their linguistic realisation in James Black’s “When the Roll is Called up yonder” and Robert Lowry’s “Shall we Gather at the River?” within a Critical Discourse Analysis framework complemented by Systemic Functional Linguistics. In pursuit of this aim, the study seeks to:

1. identify and analyse the discourse strategies employed in the selected hymns.
2. examine the linguistic devices through which these strategies are realised, with particular attention to grammatical and lexical patterning.
3. interpret how the identified discourse strategies contribute to the construction of theological meaning and communal identity within the hymns.



Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Dijk, 1998, 2008), which views discourse as a socially situated practice that shapes ideology and collective beliefs. It is complemented by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFG) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), which examines how grammatical and lexical choices realise meaning in context. Together, CDA and SFG provide an integrated approach to analyse how discourse strategies in the hymns construct theological meaning and communal identity.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, analysing two nineteenth-century evangelical hymns: “When the Roll is called up yonder” (James Black, 1893) and “Shall we gather at the River” (Robert Lowry, 1864) (Hymnary.org). The hymns were selected purposively for their enduring popularity and thematic focus on salvation and communal devotion. An integrated Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFG) framework guided the study, enabling identification of discourse strategies and examination of the grammatical and lexical devices through which they are realised (van Dijk, 1998, 2008; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Data analysis involved careful reading of the texts, extraction of relevant excerpts, and interpretation of how linguistic patterns contribute to theological meaning and communal identity.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the selected hymns was guided by the study’s objectives: identifying discourse strategies, examining their linguistic realisation, and interpreting their contribution to theological meaning and communal identity. The integration of CDA and SFG allowed the examination of both macro-level ideological patterns and micro-level linguistic features.

“When the Roll is Called up yonder” (James Black, 1893)

Visualisation Strategy

Visualisation Strategy is used to visualise, project, and create a mental picture of what will happen after death (the roll being called and gathering of the river). A dominant strategy in this hymn is visualisation which evokes a vivid image of heaven and reunion. For example:

When the roll is called up yonder,
I’ll be there



The locative phrase “up yonder” and the future tense modal verb “will” create a sense of spatial and temporal concreteness. The structural inversion, with the dependent clause preceding the main clause, emphasises the condition (“When the roll is called up yonder”) before asserting personal certainty (“I’ll be there”), highlighting the inevitability of divine judgement and reunion. Another example reinforces heavenly imagery:

On that bright and cloudless morning,
When the dead in Christ shall rise

The adjectives “bright” and “cloudless” create a sensory visualisation, while the temporal subordinate clause placed before the main clause establishes anticipation and dramatic emphasis.

Personalisation Strategy

The hymn frequently employs personalisation, realised through the first-person singular pronoun “I,” which foregrounds the individual believer’s perspective:

And when my name is found there,
I’ll be there

This pronoun situates the reader/listener as an active participant in the anticipated heavenly event, creating an interpersonal connection between text and believer.

Collectivisation Strategy

Although centred on the individual, the hymn also evokes collectivisation through implied communal participation. Repeated choruses suggest an inclusive “we” that shares the expectation of salvation. For instance:

We will meet our loved ones yonder,
In that home of joy and peace

The pronoun “we” and the collective context reinforce group identity, balancing personal anticipation with communal devotion.

Structural Inversion

Structural inversion is a notable device. By placing the dependent clause first, e.g.:

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound,
I will awake to meet my King.



The hymn foregrounds the temporal or conditional context before the main assertion. This emphasises certainty and theological significance, while enhancing rhythmic and mnemonic qualities.

“Shall We Gather at the River?” (Robert Lowry, 1864)

Visualisation Strategy

Lowry’s hymn employs visualisation strategy to create vivid spiritual imagery:

Shall we gather at the river?
Where bright angel feet have trod?

The adjectives “bright” and “angel” provide sensory cues, while the locative phrase situates the believer in a tangible heavenly landscape. Another example:

On the margin of the river,
Washing up its silver spray

The imagery of flowing water enhances the physical and symbolic representation of salvation, engaging both imagination and emotion.

Personalisation and Collectivisation Strategies

The first-person plural pronoun “we” appears repeatedly, e.g.:

Shall we gather at the river?
The beautiful, the beautiful river?

This invites communal participation while maintaining personal engagement. Similarly, in:

Yes, we’ll gather at the river,
That flows by the throne of God

The pronoun “we” reinforces the collective anticipation of spiritual reunion, blending individual devotion with group identity.

Modality and Authority Strategy

Subtle modality conveys divine authority and certainty. For example:

And He’ll bear us safely over,
Where the bright river flows.

The modal verb “will” expresses certainty, while the lexical choice “safely” implies divine protection. This conveys ideological reassurance and strengthens doctrinal authority.



Structural Inversion

Lowry occasionally uses structural inversion to foreground the temporal or conditional clause, as in:

Shall we gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river?

Here, the interrogative dependent clause precedes the main action, emphasizing communal reflection and inviting participation before commitment.

Comparative Interpretation

Across both hymns, several patterns are evident:

Visualisation uses sensory language and locative or temporal markers to make theological concepts tangible.

Personalisation (I) and collectivisation (we) balance individual devotion with shared religious identity.

Structural inversion foregrounds conditional or temporal contexts, enhancing emphasis, memorability, and rhythm.

Modality and lexical authority express certainty and divine legitimacy, supporting doctrinal assurance.

Repetition in choruses reinforces mnemonic retention and performative engagement.

The findings demonstrate that discourse strategies are systematically realised through grammatical, lexical, and syntactic devices. The integrated CDA–SFG approach allows interpretation of both ideological significance and linguistic manifestation, showing how these hymns construct theological meaning while fostering communal identity.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of “When the Roll is called up yonder” and “Shall We Gather at the River?” reveals that nineteenth-century evangelical hymns employ multiple discourse strategies to construct theological meaning and communal identity. Visualisation realised through vivid locative and descriptive language, aligns with prior research emphasising the role of imagery in religious discourse (Crystal & Davy, 1969; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). By creating tangible representations of heaven, these hymns engage the believer’s imagination, making abstract doctrinal concepts more concrete and emotionally compelling.



Personalisation and collectivisation were realised primarily through pronouns, with “I” foregrounding individual devotion and “we” reinforcing communal participation. This dual focus on individual and collective experience mirrors van Dijk’s (2008) notion of positive in-group representation and Halliday’s (2014) interpersonal metafunction, which situates participants in a network of social relations. The hymns thus function both as personal devotional tools and as instruments for reinforcing communal cohesion, bridging individual spirituality with group identity.

The use of structural inversion, where dependent clauses precede main clauses, emerged as a distinctive linguistic device. In lines such as “When the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there,” inversion foregrounds the conditional or temporal context, emphasising the inevitability of divine action before asserting personal commitment. This finding extends prior SFG-focused studies on religious texts, which often discuss transitivity and modality but rarely examine clause ordering as a deliberate discourse strategy. Structural inversion, combined with repetition, also enhances rhythm and memorability, key features for oral and congregational performance.

Modality and lexical authority markers were found to strengthen doctrinal certainty. In both hymns, future-tense modal verbs (“will”) and lexical cues (“safely,” “bright”) convey inevitability, divine legitimacy, and moral assurance. This aligns with previous CDA research showing that religious discourse often encodes ideology subtly through linguistic choices (van Dijk, 1998). The hymns’ modality functions not only to assure the believer but also to reinforce the authority of the theological message, illustrating the intersection of ideology and grammar.

Overall, these findings highlight the interdependence of discourse strategy and linguistic realisation. Visualisation, personalisation, collectivisation, structural inversion, and modality work in concert to produce texts that are cognitively engaging, emotionally resonant, and socially cohesive. Unlike previous hymnological studies that emphasised historical or doctrinal content (e.g., Crystal & Davy, 1969), this study demonstrates the systematic ways in which language structures both belief and communal identity, filling the gap identified in the literature regarding the linguistic mechanisms of hymn discourse.

In conclusion, the study confirms that integrating CDA with SFG provides a powerful analytical lens, capturing both ideological intent and linguistic form. It also suggests that hymn texts, often



overlooked in discourse research, are rich sites for exploring the intersection of language, ideology, and collective religious experience.

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OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF INTERFERENCE IN THE LEARNING OF FRENCH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

FABIYI EUNICE MODUPE PhD

Department of French
Adeyemi Federal University of Education,
Ondo
fabiyem@afued.edu.ng

Abstract

The learning of French in Nigeria is often shaped by the multilingual background of learners who already speak one indigenous language and English before encountering French in School. This linguistic diversity, while culturally enriching, creates conditions for language interference, where elements of previously acquired languages influence the acquisition of French. Such interference manifests in pronunciation errors, grammatical inconsistencies, lexical transfer, and inappropriate sentence structures. This paper examines the nature and sources of interference in the learning of French in Nigeria and explores practical strategies for minimizing its impacts. Drawing on classroom realities and prevailing language teaching practices, the study highlights the roles of teachers, learners and educational institutions in addressing these challenges. It argues that with targeted pedagogical approaches, increased exposure to authentic French input, and improved instructional support, interference can be transformed from a barrier into a manageable stage in second language development. Ultimately, overcoming interference is essential for improving communicative competence and strengthening Nigeria's engagement with the francophone world.

Keywords: Interference, French, Challenges, Learning



Introduction

Nigeria is a multilingual nation where most students grow up speaking at least one indigenous language alongside English, the official language of education and administration. Within this complex linguistic environment, French occupies a significant position as an important foreign language and a tool for regional and international communication. Nigeria shares borders with several francophone countries, making the study of French not only academically relevant but also strategically important for diplomacy, trade and cultural exchange.

Despite its importance, the teaching and learning of French in Nigeria face several challenges. One of the major challenges facing Nigeria French students in their bid to learn French is language interference. Learners often unconsciously transfer linguistic features from their mother tongue or from English into French. These transfers affect pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary usage and sentence construction. This is so because; each native language has trained its speakers to pay different kinds of attention to events and experiences when talking about them. This training is carried out in childhood and it is exceptionally resistant to restructuring in second language acquisition (Slobin 1996:89).

The theory of contacts and the theory of bilingualism explain the theoretical grounding for interference. Bilingualism is a situation whereby a person speaks or having command of more than one language: native and foreign. The two languages differ in the degree of command. According to Lekova (2010:230) bilingualism can be divided into two: correlative and subordinate bilingualism. In correlative bilingualism, both language system exist together in the individual's mind and are independent of one another. When individual has good command of the two languages there is no interference. In the case of subordinate bilingualism, the second language is not mastered to the degree the first language is. Her mother tongue dominates and influences the second language leading to interference. Communication between two language systems is the reason for the interference which is the object of Psycholinguistics and linguistic research.

This paper explores the concept of interference in the learning of French in Nigeria, identifies its major forms and causes, and proposes strategies for overcoming it. By examining both linguistic and pedagogical factors, the study seeks to contribute to improved French language instruction and to enhance learners' communicative competence. Addressing interference effectively will



not only improve academic performance but also strengthen Nigeria's capacity for regional integration and global participation. At this juncture, it is quite important to consider some definitions of interference.

Definitions of interference

Psycholinguistics describes interference as a negative transfer of language habits and skills from the mother tongue or from a foreign language to another foreign language. And from the linguistic point of view, interference is an interaction or a change in linguistics structures and structural elements. It is a deviation from linguistics norms in the spoken and written language.

Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics defines it as a "the influence of one linguistics system on another in either (a) the individual speaker (transfer) or (b) the speech community (borrowing language contact). In an individual, interference is seen as source of errors (error analysis, contrastive analysis), in a speech community, as a source of language change. For many linguists, the term "interference" has come to include the concept of analogy (as in a language internal interference).

Furthermore, the dictionary of Linguistic and Phonetics also defines interference as "a term used in sociolinguistics and foreign language learning to refer to the errors a speaker introduces into one language as a result of contact with another language : also called negative transfer.

From the above definitions we can deduce the fact that when two languages come in contact interference is inevitable.

According to Lakova (2010), there are two types of interference namely: **interlanguage {explicit}** and **intralanguage (implicit)**.

Interlanguage interference: In the **teaching** and learning of French as a second, third or fourth language in Nigeria's schools (primary, secondary or tertiary institutions), the most common mistakes occur in interlanguage interference. In this case, mistakes appear because of the negative transfer of habits from the native languages (sometimes from the first foreign language that is supposed to be in very good command) to the second language; in this instance, French.

Typical examples of interlanguage interference are:

* Je suis 18 ans instead of j'ai 18 ans.

* **Je mangé** instead of j'ai mangé

*Elle aime sa mari instead of elle aime son mari.



Intralinguistic Interference: This occurs when learners make mistakes under the influence of the already acquired language knowledge and establish habits in the foreign language. For instance:

J'ai allé à l'école instead of je suis allé à l'école

Elle a tombé dans la rue instead of elle est tombé dans la rue

These mistakes result from non-mastery properly the formation of past perfect tense in French.

Lakova (2010) adds interference is explicit when learners make mistakes in oral and written foreign language expressions transferring language habits from the native to the foreign language and thus they ignore the norms of foreign speech like the examples given above.

With implicit interference, learners do not make mistake because they avoid using grammatical and lexical difficulty constructing phrases without it. In this way there are no mistakes but the speech becomes simpler and poorer and it loses its expressive and idiomatic aspect. The object of implicit interference is lexical notions and grammatical forms which do not have an equivalent in the native language. Les pronoms adverbiaux `` **en** and **y**`` fall under the influence of the implicit interference.

The answer of the question: " Tu vas à la bibliothèque?" "instead of: "Non, **j'en reviens**" very often is: "Non, je reviens", "Veux-tu du café?" the answer the student will give is: "Non, merci, je ne veux pas" instead of: " **Non, merci, je n'en veux pas**"; or "Allez-vous au théâtre?", «Oui, je vais souvent» instead of «**Oui, j' y vais souvent**». Intralinguistic and implicit interference are more uncommon in comparison to interlanguage one. (See Lekova 2010).

Contrastive Analysis Theory

Contrastive Analysis Theory is a linguistic approach that explains second language learning difficulties by systematically comparing a learner's first language (L1) with the target language L2. The Theory proposes that many errors in second language acquisition result from transfer of habits from the mother tongue to the new language.

The theory was strongly developed by Robert Lado in his influential book "Linguistics across Cultures (1957). Lado argues that "those elements that are similar to the learner's native language will be simple, and those that are different will be difficult". The statement forms the central principle of Contrastive Analysis.

Contrastive Analysis rests on three main assumptions:



- Language habits transfer- the transfer of sounds, grammar, vocabulary and sentence structures from their first language into the target language.
- Similarities ease learning (positive transfer) - when languages share similar structures, learners learn faster.
- Differences cause difficulty (negative transfer/ interference) - when structures differ greatly, learners experience errors.

The Contrastive Analysis theory is relevant to the Nigerian Context because learners are often: bilingual or multilingual, they are exposed first to English structures and through systematic comparison of the languages acquired by the students, teachers can predict problem areas and design targeted instruction. This makes teaching more scientific and preventive rather than corrective.

By foregrounding this theory, the present paper argues that effective French instruction in Nigeria must integrate contrastive techniques to minimize interference and improve proficiency.

Types of Interference

The major areas of interference are: phonological interference, grammatical interference and lexical interference.

Phonetic interference mistakes

Phonetic interference affects the improper pronunciation of phonetic sounds in the second language caused by the existence of different phonetic structures from the point of view of the mother tongue or the first foreign language. Thus, for instance, Yoruba speakers learning French will produce these words thus:

“vrai” will be pronounced [frʒ]

élève [elʒf]

je [dʒe].

From the examples above, we can see the substitution of the sound [f] for [v].

There are a lot of cases of phonetic interference in non-observance of the rules for intonation of the French phrase, merging and accent.



(b) Grammatical interferences.

Grammatical interference concerns changes in the structure and the structural elements in the foreign language. It is caused by semantic and formal resemblances and distinctions between the native and the foreign language system. When the rules of combination of the target language are not followed there will be interference.

Il aide **son** mère instead of Il aide **sa** mère

Je n'ai pas **de** l'argent instead of Je n'ai pas **d'**argent.

Les filles sont **partis** instead of les filles sont **parties**.

Kola **vas** au marché instead of kola **va** au marché

Je ne mange pas **de la** viande” instead of “Je ne mange pas **de** viande”;

Il a **des** bons amis” instead of “Il a **de** bons amis”.

(c) Lexical interference: lexical interference has to do with the wrong use of words, narrowing or expansion of the word meaning, formation of non-existing lexical items using foreign suffixes. It is often said:

Que Dieu vous **blessé** instead of que Dieu vous **bénisse**.

Je voudrais **tourner** votre attention sur ce problem instead of Je voudrais **attirer** votre attention sur ce problème.

Il faut prendre **le medicine** instead of il faut prendre **le médicament**

J'ai l'habilité de faire le travail instead of j'ai **la capacité** de faire le travail.

Parfois les apprenants écrivent **envelope** instead of enveloppe, **literature** instead of littérature, **dinner** instead of diner etc.

Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis

Lakova (2010) opines `` the main approaches for the studying and overcoming of interference are the use of contrastive analysis and error analysis. `` According to him, the scientific juxtaposition of languages is one of the most rational approaches for improvement in foreign language teaching. Fries (1945:9) equally submits `` *the most efficient material are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.*



Lakov adds in some theoretical conceptions the subject of description are contrastive phenomena; in others - the set of distinctions between the grammars of the two languages. More scientifically sound is the statement that similarities, as well as differences between languages should be considered because only the reciprocal complement of the two provides an opportunity for complete language characterization. The juxtaposition of language systems occurs on the levels of system, norm and usage. (3)

A Distinctions on system level:

Absence of a category in one language which is present in the other language. For instance, nouns in French are either masculine gender or feminine gender but it is not like that in English and Yoruba. French has different articles to distinguish genders (le, la, les, un, une, des etc). For example:

le garçon (n.masculin)

La fille (n. feminine)

Les filles (Fem. Plural)

b. Differences on Norm level:

Languages differ not only in terms of existing categories, but with respect to the distinctive combination of language items. For instance it will be wrong in French to say the following:

* Le fille est belle. (la fille est belle)

* La garçon est beau. (le garçon est beau)

The masculine noun is preceded by (le) while the feminine noun is preceded by (la). The learner often find it difficult to associate correctly gender and noun because, the gender of a noun may not be detected from the meaning of the noun.

c. Juxtaposition on usage level:

The purpose is to choose the most appropriate form from those available which the language bearer will use. That is to say, usage mistakes in the usage create a “foreign accent” and reveal the foreign speaker. For example: ”Il est dans son cabinet” is used instead of ”Il est dans son bureau”; “ Je suis allé vivre dans un hotel instead of “Je suis allé loger dans un hôtel” ; The most likely interference on use level appears in the metaphorical use of words and grammatical forms. Contrastive analyses put forward the theoretical aspects of interference, and error analysis – its practical aspects. Error analysis in language teaching and learning according to Crystal (2008) is



a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics. Errors are assumed to reflect, in a systematic way, the level of competence achieved by a learner; they are contrasted with ‘mistakes’ which are PERFORMANCE limitations that a learner would be able to correct.

Juxtaposition states the similarities and differences between languages pointing to opportunities for a potential interference while the error analyses determines the real deviations from the Norm or usage in the spoken and written speech of a bilingual speaker in a particular context.

Scientific studies of interference include a combination of a theoretical aspect/contrastive analyses/ and a practical aspect (error analysis).For example:

1. Definite Articles

English	Yoruba	French
The	naa	le/la/les

English sentences:

The boy is dancing.

The woman is dancing.

The men are dancing.

The women are dancing.

Yoruba sentences:

Okunrin **naa** n jo (masculine singular)

Obinrin **naa** n jo (feminine singular)

Awon okunrin **naa** n jo (masculine plural)

Awon obinrin **naa** n jo (feminine plural)

French sentences :

Le garçon danse (m. sing.)

La femme danse (fem. Sing.)

Les garçons/les hommes dansent (m.plural)

Les femmes dansent (fem. Plural)



A close observation of the sentences above shows the distinction in the use of the definite article in the three languages. The article (**the**) used in the English sentences do not change at the level of gender and at the level of number. This can equally be seen in Yoruba sentences (**náà**) but not so with the sentences in French (**le, la, et les**).

(2) Verb

If we equally look at the verb (**jó**) in Yoruba language, the verb remains unchanged at the level of gender and number contrary to that of English and French. The auxiliary verb used in the English sentences changed at the level of number (**is** and **are**). The same thing is applicable to French sentences. The singular subject used singular verb (**danse**) while the plural subject used plural verb (**dansent**). We can also see from the sentences given above that, the mark of present tense in Yoruba is (**ń**) that of the English is (ing-I am dancing and that of French is (**e and ent**)). In English the verb remains unchanged from the first person singular to the third person plural while in French the verb varies (**danse** and **dansent**) from the first person singular to the third person plural.

Eng.	French	Yoruba
I am dancing	Je danse	Mo ń jó
You are dancing	Tu danses	O ń jó
He/She is dancing	Il / Elle danse	Ó ń jó
We are dancing	Nous dansons	A ń jó
They are dancing	Vous dansez	È ń jó
	Ils/Elles dansent	Wón ń jó

If the differences are not properly mastered by the learners, it can lead to linguistic errors phonetically, lexically and grammatically. So, the role of contrastive and error analysis at all levels of interference cannot be over emphasized.

Overcoming mistakes according to Lakova (2010) is carried out in two directions. They are providing against interference mistakes and corrective strategies in case mistakes are already a fact.



Preventive measures require:

- * Teachers to be in very good command of not only the foreign language but also of their mother tongue. Thus, they will be aware of the mother tongue interference and will take adequate measures;
- * When compiling course books or educational materials to consider the native language system peculiarities and to bear in mind the common mistakes in the particular foreign language learning;
- * the preparation of files of typical mistakes which the foreign language teachers should review before teaching or practicing the language material with his/her students;
- * The creation of a card file of mistakes according to the teaching stage and the type of speech activity: spoken or written.
- * The use of an appropriate progress evaluation strategy in teaching so that exercises are conducted in such a way as to avoid interference.

Corrective measures involve:

- * establishing a system with exercises for overcoming phonetic, lexical and grammatical interference mistakes;
- * Exercises with verbs which change their meaning in accordance with the preposition they are used with;
- * Exercises where nouns change according to Number and Gender;
- * Exercises with nouns having only singular form in the foreign language to which correspond plural nouns in the mother tongue and vice versa;
- * Exercises for translation

Finally, the place of acculturation in foreign language learning should not be handled with levity. Students should be allowed to travel to a country where the language is being used as their native language this will go a long way to assist the students to adequately master the language in question.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the problem of language interference in French will be on the increase if adequate measures are not put in place. In the teaching and learning of French language in Nigeria the instructors should know that the mother tongue of the learner and the first foreign language



learnt can be of help. The mother tongue has established the learners' language world and has acquainted students with the problems of language phenomena and therefore it is the mother tongue which will enable them to learn a new language. That is why teachers should know the systems of both languages very well without that good result cannot be expected.

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