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Contributors are, therefore, invited to submit reports of original research for consideration in *IL&LS*. Preference shall be given to the presentation of new theories, as well as data-based papers.

Instructions for Contributors

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- f) Oral Literature, Cultural Studies and the New Media
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- h) Medical Literature (representation of illnesses, diseases and therapeutics in literary texts)
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- j) Gender Discourse (with a focus on contemporary theories)
- k) Literature and Law (recreation of legal and judicial matters in literary texts)
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- m) Any other topic(s) reflecting language, literature and linguistics not mentioned.

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Language: This should be simple and communicative enough for the target audience (students at the tertiary level, scholars, and researchers). Illustrations should be devoid of religious, political, racial, or gender colourations except where the context demands. Contributors should explain technical words, where applicable.

Structure and Formatting: The Title should be a brief phrase describing the paper's contents. The title page should include the authors' full names and affiliations, as well as the name of the corresponding author, along with phone and e-mail information. Present addresses of authors should appear as a footnote.

Referencing: Contributions can be in MLA or APA, depending on the contributor's choice.

Abstract: This should not be more than 300 words with no more than 6 Keywords.

Introduction: This should provide a clear statement of the problem, the relevant literature on the subject, and the proposed approach or solution. It should be understandable to colleagues from a broad range of scientific disciplines.

The volume of an article: A chapter contribution should be between 3000 and 5000 words processed in MS Word format. All manuscript portions must be typed double-spaced, and all pages numbered starting from the title page.

Quotations: Quotations of more than three lines should be displayed and indented. Check that the page numbers of the source have been provided.

A list of non-standard abbreviations should be added. Generally, non-standard abbreviations should be used only when the full term is exceptionally long and often used. Each abbreviation should be spelt out and introduced in parentheses the first time it is used in the text.

Texts in Nigerian and other tonal languages should be tone-marked, and musical examples should be camera-ready. Except when necessary, photographs and heavy graphic works should be avoided.

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Managing Editor

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Gender Factors Responsible for Low Enrolment in Engineering and Nursing in Nigerian Universities: A Case Study of University of Ibadan, Ladoke Akintola University and Bowen University

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Abstract

This study explores gender-related factors influencing undergraduate students' experiences and course choices in the disciplines of Engineering and Nursing across three purposively selected Nigerian universities: the University of Ibadan (UI), Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), and Bowen University (BU), located in Oyo and Osun States. These institutions were chosen based on their historical significance and the early establishment of both Engineering and Nursing programs. In addition, the universities were selected based on their proximity to minimise security risks during data collection. The study examines gender factors responsible for the low enrolment rates in Engineering and Nursing programs in Nigerian universities, investigates their causes and effects, and proposes possible solutions and recommendations. The findings aim to promote gender balance in the two professions and assist both government and university authorities in formulating equitable educational policies. A qualitative research design was employed, involving 72 participants divided into two respondent groups. The first group comprised 48 final-year undergraduate students (500 Level), equally representing both genders and disciplines, who participated in In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). From each university, 16 students (eight per discipline, with gender balance) were interviewed. The second group consisted of 24 Key Informant Interview (KII) participants drawn from academic staff in strategic positions—one Reader (Sub-Dean) per discipline and three Senior Lecturers from each discipline per university—totalling eight key informants per institution. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) provided the theoretical framework, guiding the exploration of factors shaping students' academic and career choices. Data were analysed using content analysis techniques to uncover patterns and insights into gender dynamics within these traditionally gendered disciplines. The study offers a nuanced understanding of gendered academic trajectories in Nigerian higher education.

Keywords: Gender, Engineering, Nursing, University, Undergraduate Students

Introduction

The term that describes the revolving idea in this discourse is gender factors, which represent the common oversimplified, abstracted, and collective views of the characteristics and roles of men and women (Fiske & Stevens, 1998; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998). According to Adekunle (2025), gender is the indigenous and modern societal realities of males and females. Gender is a platform for conflict resolution (Adekunle, 2023; Adekunle, 2024). Gender is an approach against inequality between males and females (Adekunle, 2019; Adekunle, 2020; Adekunle, 2021; Adekunle, 2022). Gender determines societal values (Adekunle, 2004; Adekunle, 2009; Adekunle, 2014; Adekunle, 2027). These factors are often accepted from an early age and can decisively influence educational and professional pathways. In relation to Nigeria, these assumptions are cultural and tend to bias older societies in their perceived level of efficiency or usefulness.

Most of these factors result in self-selection, a phenomenon where people, especially students, make unconsciously rational decisions on the career paths to take depending on how masculine or feminine the options appear to be (Eccles, 2007; Musso et al., 2022). Additionally, more rigid institutional frameworks of gender factors also tend to bias curricula, mentorship, and access to education, professional networks, and available role models (McGuire et al., 2020). This suggests that, inasmuch as overt inequalities are levelled, informal cultural norms sustain biased divisions of labour by gender, even with the increased availability of education and work.

In order to rectify such imbalances, it is important to note the difference between gender equality and gender equity. As per the definition provided by the United Nations in 2006, gender equality implies equal enjoyment of rights within the context of access, roles, and opportunities, irrespective of gender. This includes access to services such as education, career opportunities, and leadership positions. However, as we pointed out previously, mere access does not guarantee success, especially in the presence of deep-rooted social inequalities within a society. This is the point where gender equity provides a more pragmatic and balanced approach. Gender equity gives recognition to the fact that there are different starting points and proposes measures to assist these people, such as affirmative action, the granting of some scholarships, mentorship programs, and more (UN Women, 2019).

For instance, in engineering, a STEM field with a pronounced gender gap, targeted gender-equity measures may encompass fostering a supportive atmosphere, active recruitment of women into leadership positions with teaching roles, and targeting female students academically (De Welde &

Stepnick, 2023). In nursing, where men make up the minority, equity-based interventions can also target the stigma placed on male caregivers. These would include campaigns aimed at redefining caregiving as a gender-neutral job role and proactively advertising to male students (Rosa & Clavero, 2022).

To conclude, for this study, gender is framed not only as a biological binary, but also as the social and cultural ascribed meanings that influence behaviour, identity, and opportunity. This understanding is pivotal to assessing all the ways in which gender-related phenomena, particularly stereotypes, social norms, and biases, affect students' interactions and subsequent career pathways in the context of the Nigerian higher education system. Understanding gender as performative and relational as well as institutional allows for a deeper scrutiny of the striking imbalance in the enrolment figures of engineering and nursing programs; male and female undergraduates in Nigeria are often reported to face (Gradín, 2021; Odeleye & Odeleye, 2022).

Based on the above observations, this study, therefore, critically examined gender factors responsible for low enrolment in engineering and nursing professions in Nigerian universities. The universities purposively selected are the University of Ibadan, Ladoke Akintola University and Bowen University. They were selected based on their historical significance and the early establishment of both the Engineering and Nursing programs. Besides, the universities were also selected based on proximity to avoid security challenges during data collection. The study examines the causes, effects and solutions and provides recommendations. This study will help to create gender balance in two professions and also assist both government and university authorities in shaping educational policies.

Overview of the Nigerian Educational System

Understanding the Nigerian Educational System and Its Gendered Implications

As stated earlier, an understanding of the Nigerian educational system is pertinent when examining factors such as why students navigate undergraduate program options using gendered lenses, especially why boys opt for engineering and girls choose nursing. It is important to note that in Nigeria, students' educational trajectories are not constructed only on the basis of academic performance or their individual interests, but are also situated within a socio-cultural policy framework which defines access, including expectations and outcomes. The gaps or mitigations in the disparity in educational opportunities across various genders and disciplines, such as

Engineering and Nursing, are significantly influenced by the educational system structure, policy system, and regional boundaries within Nigeria (Ekpeyong, 2023; Odeleye & Odeleye, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The Social Cognitive Career Theory

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett in 1987. The theory grew out of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. The theory proposes that career choice is influenced by the beliefs the individual develops and refines through vicarious learning. This is where a person learns something through observation and imitation of others. It is, therefore, connected with the present study, which sought to establish the relationship between gender stereotyping and career aspirations. Through vicarious learning processes, students may pick up the prejudices of their parents and other members of society. For example, pupils whose parents say certain careers are for men while others are for women may adopt such attitudes themselves.

The perceptions of a career may also be influenced by the beliefs the individual develops through social persuasion. Among the socio-cultural factors that influence career development is gender stereotyping. For example, many students may restrict their career choices to careers that are gender stereotyped (Eccles, 1994). Females and males make different choices because of their socialisation experiences and the ways social forces structure the opportunities available to them (Angwaomaodoko, 2023).

The above argument is also reinforced by John Holland's personality type theory developed in 1959 (Holland, 1997). Holland's theory rests on the assumptions that People can be categorised into one of the following career types: realistic, investigative, social, conventional, enterprising and artistic. Realistic people are physically strong and deal with problems in practical ways. They are best oriented towards practical careers such as farming, truck driving and construction. Investigative individuals are best suited for careers such as mathematics and sciences, or investigative occupations in which one can engage in one's preferred activities and competencies. Social individuals are likely to be best equipped to enter "people" oriented professions, such as teaching, social work, and counselling. Conventional people are individuals who show distaste for unstructured activities. They are best suited for jobs like subordinates, such as bank tellers, secretaries and file clerks. Enterprising individuals energise their verbal abilities towards leading others, dominating other people and persuading people on issues of products. They are best suited

to enter careers, such as sales, politics and management. Artistic individuals prefer to interact with their world through artistic expression, avoiding conventional and interpersonal situations. They are oriented towards such careers as art and writing.

According to Savickas and Lent (1994), it has been shown that females tend to score high in artistic, social and conventional occupations, while men are more likely to prefer realistic, investigative and enterprising occupations. According to Savickas and Lent (1994), Holland attributes this to our society that channels females into occupations that are perceived to be female-dominated.

Based on the observations above, the relevance of this theory was evident in the research findings that there is gender disparity in career aspirations of students, with the majority of male students channelling their aspirations towards careers that are perceived to be male-dominated and female students channelling theirs towards careers perceived to be female dominated, as shown in the analyses below:

Methodology

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed a qualitative research design using two primary methods of data collection:

1. In-Depth Interviews (IDIs): A total of 48 final-year undergraduate students (500 Level) participated in IDIs. From each of the three selected universities—University of Ibadan (UI), Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), and Bowen University (BU)—16 students were interviewed (eight from Engineering and eight from Nursing, with a gender balance).
2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): The study also engaged 24 academic staff members through KIIs. From each university, four key informants were selected: one Reader (Sub-Dean) from each discipline (Engineering and Nursing), and three Senior Lecturers from each discipline, making a total of eight key informants per university. The informants were purposively selected based on their years of professional and administrative experience.
3. Also, letters of introduction and permission for data collection were obtained from the authorities of the three purposively selected universities: University of Ibadan, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology and Bowen University. Besides, the universities were also selected based on proximity to avoid security challenges during data collection.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from both IDIs and KIIs were analysed using content analysis, a qualitative method that involves identifying patterns, themes, and meanings within the transcribed interviews. This approach enabled the researchers to interpret the underlying gender-related factors affecting students' course choices and experiences in Engineering and Nursing. The study was guided by the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which helped frame and interpret the findings in relation to students' academic and career decision-making processes.

Results and Discussion

Exploring the Socio-demographic Experiences of participants

The study focused on the gender related factors in engineering and nursing disciplines among undergraduates in three selected universities: University of Ibadan (UI), Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Ogbomosho (LAUTECH) and Bowen University, Iwo (BU), all in Oyo and Osun States in Nigeria. The appropriateness of the selected universities was established. This was done by ranking the levels of their founding dates and also having established engineering and nursing disciplines from inception. Out of all the federal universities in Nigeria, University of Ibadan is the first, while LAUTECH is also one of the first state universities and Bowen University, one of the first private universities in Nigeria, all with engineering and nursing disciplines, after which the first three were purposively selected for the study. Besides, the universities were also selected based on proximity to avoid security challenges during data collection.

The study utilised a total of 72 participants, which yielded two distinct groups of respondents. The first group consisted of 48 individuals who participated in In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). These group members were final year undergraduate students (500 Level), and both male and female participants were equitably drawn from the two disciplines being studied—engineering and nursing. Participants were recruited from all three universities included in the study, which are: The University of Ibadan, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), and Bowen University. Specifically, sixteen students (eight from each discipline with gender balance) were interviewed per university, leading to a total of 48 IDI respondents.

The second group was made up of 24 participants who were recruited through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). This group comprised of higher ranked university employees as they were holding strategic positions and ranks within the university's position system. From each of the universities, one (1) male or female sub-dean (who is designated as a Reader) per discipline

(Engineering and Nursing) was selected. In addition, three (3) senior lecturers from each of the two disciplines were also interviewed from each university. Thus, from each institution, there were four key informants, one Reader and three Senior Lecturers, which made 8 KII respondents per university and 24 in total.

In the IDI and KII groups, all participants belonged to the Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups, which ensured cultural representation pertinent to the study's scope in Oyo and Osun States, Nigeria.

The survey carried out on lecturers and students of engineering and nursing programs at Bowen University, LAUTECH, and the University of Ibadan has uncovered various gender-related factors that impact students' academic choices and progression. The first objective concentrated on understanding the causes of the observed gender enrolment disparity in undergraduate engineering and nursing programs during the 2015/2016 to 2021/2022 academic years in selected institutions within Oyo and Osun States, Nigeria. The findings in Table 4.1 illustrate the pattern of gender enrolment in undergraduate engineering and nursing courses. It illustrates the gender ratio, whether male to female, or female to male admissions, whereby in engineering there is predominance of male undergraduate students compared to females, while in nursing there is predominance of females over males. The results of this study confirmed that there are many reasons that influenced this gender enrolment disparity.

A respondent who happened to be the sub-dean in one of the universities explained that there is a plethora of factors responsible for the low number of female students showing interest in engineering courses. He stated that:

However, an academically oriented factor is the widespread conceptualisation of engineering courses being extremely difficult. This false observation about engineering has greatly affected the interests of female students as they drop in their numbers. Perhaps, if students in general are made to see engineering as being fun rather than overly complex, the number of female engineering students may increase.

(KII/Male/Sub-Dean/Engineering, University of Ibadan/August, 2023)

While another respondent revealed thus:

Over the years, the reason for having low enrollment in female students is that they see engineering as a male-dominated field, and they believe it

requires more power and effort to become an engineer.
(KII/Male/Lecturer/Engineering, Bowen University August, 2023)

Engineering as a Calling and Applied Science

Using the framework of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), it was established that career choices are profoundly shaped by sociocultural factors. The theory was seen to be particularly useful in understanding the underrepresentation trends in engineering and nursing. In the same vein, another respondent said that engineering is a calling, a discipline which is an applied science where subjects like chemistry, physics, and mathematics are applied to solve real-time problems to make life easy for human beings. He further said:

So as mentioned, the engineering requires students or candidates who want to read engineering must have requirements which are physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology, and that means that the candidate must have these subjects and must be well-grounded in them. If you see, right from the secondary school we know that most of the students who chose to read science subjects, because of poor orientation they have impression that when they read science subjects what they will have to do is to read medical related courses irrespective of whether they are good in that area or not and that is exactly what happen to enrolment in engineering.

The respondent added that:

Not only to female engineering people but to students generally, they have belief that they must go for medical related course, when they now choose at the entering point course, they apply through jamb, in those days if you read any science you can go to any field but not now, if you want to come to engineering, one must sit for jamb subjects which include physics, chemistry and mathematics, without mathematics you cannot come to engineering and that's why we have low enrolment of female into engineering.

(KII/Sub-Dean/Male/Engineering, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology September, 2023).

Technical Complexity as a Barrier

The study concluded that self-efficacy beliefs were most profoundly influenced by perceptions of technical difficulty. Female students seemed to have a hard time accepting their capabilities as engineers owing to the mathematical components of the discipline, while male nursing students appeared to have doubts about their caregiving abilities. These confidence gaps were attributed to having no early exposure and insufficient social reinforcement.

The study also concluded that self-efficacy gaps in nursing and engineering stemmed from academic and sporting expectations as forms of gendered gatekeeping. Participants reported that engineering called for both rigorous calculation and technical stamina, while nursing showed a requirement for emotional and physical hardiness. There appears to be no balance between high standards and easing pathways of some sort for females, which the researchers deemed essential to be put in place. These socio-cultural notions intersect with the level of bodily effort and mental exertion deemed appropriate in each field. Engineering was viewed both qualitatively and quantitatively as an excessively rigorous intellectual undertaking; faculty and students described the engineering programs as for students who were physically strong and mathematically capable. From a gender perspective, this position is quite unfortunate for women because they are, more often than not, socialised to feel that STEM fields are beyond their reach.

I think because engineering is mathematically based, it is assumed that men are smarter in technical areas like that than women. I think that is why we have more males than females in engineering”
(KII/Lecturer/Male/Engineering, Bowen University, August 2023)

Numerous lecturers observed that a lot of students tend not make it to the final year because they do not satisfy the course requirements due to insufficient prerequisite due to poor background.

I think because engineering is mathematically based, it is assumed that men are smarter in technical areas like that than women. I think that is why we have more males than females in engineering.” “Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry in the secondary group at the time in the Essex class, most students are actually weak in these three courses, which is the foundation of engineering. And it's like if we are building something on the foundation that is very weak, there is no way there will not be a problem. So that's the major reason when they start in the 100 level, it will be very good, but

because of that weak foundation. As that getting to the 200 level, 300 level, 400 level and then the level of, I mean, the level of complexity that courses is becoming high. They tend to have more problems, and that's where they tend to fall out **(KII, Lecturer/Male/Engineering, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, September 2023).**

On the other hand, nursing was described as emotionally and physically demanding. The degree of exhaustion and fatigue is attributed to the intensity of clinical rotations, ongoing patient care responsibilities, and prolonged periods of study. Some participants noted that students tend to take up nursing as a result of parental pressure, only to later realise that the emotional toll exacted by the profession greatly surpasses what they had anticipated, resulting in attrition.

“It is very interesting but stressful. There are a lot of presentations, assignments and so on, we do every semester.

“(IDI/Student/Female/Nursing, University of Ibadan August, 2023)

“My experience in the courses of studying Nursing is that nursing is a rigorous activity.” **(IDI/Student/Female/Nursing, Bowen University August, 2023).**

It's a caring profession, yes, and nurturing because you get to be with your patients, whether at home, whether in the community or other setting, so you get to be with your patients or with your clients, as the case may be most of the time in fact 24 seven because when one nurse comes another one takes over and like that. So, you spend more time with them, and because the female gender is known to be very caring by nature, we are seeing that. Well, looking at the history of nursing, actually, we see that some males were involved. But as time goes on, they were. I don't know if to say it's intentional that they just wipe out the male gender from that profession, so just to include the female, maybe because of the attributes, the attributes of females also and again, there are some procedures in nursing actually that will be that will seem dirty to males. Like a nurse is. A nurse is expected to give a bed bath to a patient, expected to dress wounds, feed, you know and do some other things, other procedures that may seem

dirty to a male or that a male may not feel comfortable with, like being in a paediatric ward. Now a baby is crying, and at the same time. You want to feed the baby, or you want to give drugs to the baby? Definitely, you need to calm that baby. Or let me give another example, like you want to give an injection to a baby. Of course, you have to look for a way that the baby will accept taking that injection. So, it's known that a female is more suited for that kind of procedure or that kind of role. And that has been one of the major factors responsible for having more females than males in the profession”

(KII/Lecturer/Female/Nursing, Bowen University August, 2023)

This factor was revealed to be a contributing reason as to why most females tend to veer away from the challenging mathematics and science subjects that constitute engineering. A larger proportion of males compared to females seems to excel in mathematics, and mathematics serves as the foundational language of engineering. That explains the prevalence of males in engineering positions as compared to females.

Another respondent thinks that engineering, especially civil and electrical are physically taxing and females are not built for stress, which is why we have more males in engineering, which many times is not true:

From time immemorial, engineering has been term to be a male dominated course probably because it is a physical course that you need to carry load, then do a lot of practical maybe electrical may not be physically tasking but civil engineering, building, and mechanical, all of those are physically tasking, so I think it is just socio economically assumed that women are not built for stress I think that is majorly why more males are expected to be here than females and which many times is not so.

(KII/Sub-Dean/Female/Engineering, Bowen University August, 2023)

The female sub dean of Engineering further explained that the number of females usually apply for engineering is very low compared to their male counterpart. She stated:

..... low number of female students are admitted because the number of female students who actually apply is lower than the number of male

students, and they are usually admitted, especially when qualified. I believe that the low number is based on the number of applications, it's not on our own side

(KII/Sub –Dean/Female/Engineering, Bowen University August, 2023).

Gendered Perceptions

Research findings showed that deeply held gender norms contour career aspirations. Engineering was uniformly regarded as a masculine field, and nursing as predominantly feminine. Such perceptions were considered sociocultural and had adverse effects on students' confidence to pursue nontraditional careers. It was documented that gender discrimination persists in Nigeria's education system. Focus group participants noted that children in 21st century Nigeria were still being led—or in some cases forced—to make career decisions in line with positionality aligned with binary gender norms. Researchers advocated for education to be a means for self-identification, not a means for enforcing rigid societal constructs. The degree to which parents and educators imposed these gendered norms was deemed to need urgent policy intervention.

As noted in the provided data, the adherence to narrower stereotypes based on gender was one salient issue. Students and the teaching staff hold the view that engineering is an area of study reserved for men as it demands considerable physical and mental effort, extensive technical skills, and a sharp intellect. Nursing is viewed, in contrast, as a woman's occupation that mostly concentrates on caring and nurturing. These viewpoints arise from the socio-cultural frameworks that have persisted historically. Many respondents talked about biases they faced from their families, teachers, and the media.

This type of primary socialisation greatly shaped their perceptions of what professions they should realistically consider. For example, both male and female students observed that girls were almost never offered sufficient encouragement to pursue STEM during their early years. This is supported by Eccles' (1994) expectation-value theory, and later UNESCO (2021) reported findings where both women argued that self-defence interests and self-efficacy stemmed from harshly gendered early experiences. The impact of the gender biases children is raised with has an enormous impact in terms of students' enrolment and divided interests, extending well beyond the metaphorical scope. The mention of “negative, masculine culture” in engineering was the most cited reason for lack of attraction to the field.

A lecturer at Bowen University noted that:

From time immemorial, engineering has been term to be a male dominated course probably because it is a physical course that you need to carry load, then do a lot of practical maybe electrical may not be physically tasking but civil, building, mechanical all of those are physically tasking, so I think it is just socio economically assumed that women are not built for stress I think that is majorly why more males are expected to be here than females and which is many times is not so.

(KII/Sub –Dean/Female/Engineering, Bowen University August, 2023)

The same can be said for the nursing profession, which still falls under traditional female occupations. This tends to block possible male entrants who, although skilled and empathetic, are underutilised due to caring roles. In this study, male nursing students cited social bias, judgment by their peers, and the lack of male role models as the primary reasons why they either were dissuaded from pursuing nursing or chose to leave the field after entering. This strengthens the claim that the nursing profession is still engulfed by gender stereotypical associations as being women’s job regardless of good competencies offered by men.

“Yes, for instance, as a man like me in nursing, people believe that nursing is basically for females, which is not true.” **(IDI/Student/male/ Nursing, University of Ibadan August, 2023)**

“Yes, most times, it is seen as an only-female profession. “

(IDI/Student/female/ Nursing, Bowen University August, 2023)

Likewise, another respondent sees nursing as a caring profession which is peculiar to girls and ladies, which may lead to a low number of males in nursing. He further stated:

Well, in my own opinion, why we have a low number of males is because the male is furious that nursing is a caring profession, and they see caring as the responsibility of girls or ladies, you know, naturally, they believe that it is ladies who care for people. And so many times we have, many males don't want to come because they feel that, as they know, you know, they will believe that males are not saying that. And that is if you look at nature, that is very true, females are tender. But males, you know, they are restless, and you know, sort of that.

She further remarked that:

But few people feel that, you know, nursing is meant for females, because they feel that it's a caring profession. And so, females are more caring, and they are more tender. There is a way they can, you know, touch you, or you feel, or you know, really, that is the way they can talk to you, which is not usually found in men, you know. And so, that's why we have most of the time linked this feminism with nursing. Okay, just because they feel that it's a key and females are more into caring professionals, more than males will do.

(KII/Sub-Dean/female/Nursing, University of Ibadan August, 2023)

Most individuals integrate gender stereotypes into the field of nursing, segregating occupations as male or female. This line of thought considers nursing as a woman's profession and employs the unfounded criterion that caring is exclusively a feminine trait. Nursing consists of caring for the sick. Within the context of family structures, in a traditional nuclear family with a husband and wife, it is the wife who undertakes the caregiving activities. From history, we all know that Florence Nightingale was the founder of nursing. People may view nursing through a lens. This explains why many people consider nursing a profession primarily for females.

Masibo, Kibusi, and Masika (2024), along with Tong (2023), regarded nursing as a profession fraught with challenges for men, given its perceived caregiving roles as dominated by women. One part of the socio-cultural explanation provided further sheds light, denying some of the unwholesome experiences male caregivers have, particularly when they attend to female patients, as professionally enforcing insurances inviting harassment of a sexual nature. The view of gender relations within the society of the sciences and technologies is embedded and shaped by families, classmates, friends, peers, and a host of other socio-cultural influences.

Also corroborated with Childs (2021), who emphasised the impact of gender perception on participation within computing technology disciplines in the United Kingdom, mentioning sense of belonging, personal relevance of the career, and general attitude of the gender towards technology as key determinants. In the context of Nigeria, within the sciences and technology fields, the demographic composition shows characteristics of captivity segregation of educational enrolment, which has not attained any meaningful equilibrium, as opportunities in employment remained predominant for males since the occupations stem from educational qualifications and rank (Onwuere, Grice, & Kuipers, 2014).

Culture and Religion

In another perspective, three respondents were of the view that seeing more females in Nursing than males is more of **a stereotype and more of a cultural background and from a religious point of view**. One of them, who happened to be a sub-dean, stated respectively thus:

You know, traditionally. Nurses have been viewed as a female profession. Nursing, Mother and the rest like that, even from a religious perspective, the first set of nurses are female, and unfortunately, I'm a male anyway. So, it makes it interesting, that does not mean there are no males in nursing, but we are few. When you talk of a percentage, maybe less than 10 or 5% globally or something.

He further stated:

But incidentally, when you talk of nursing leaders all over the world, they are more male than female. But so, I want to believe is the societal perspective that, is a feminine work is a woman that are more caring than a male. Gender stereotyping and they believe that, but the truth is that we have seen a lot of males who venture into nursing and have done great exploits for the profession, for themselves and for the nation. So, from my own, I think it is more of a stereotype and more of a cultural background and from a religious point of view.

(KII/Sub-Dean /Male/Nursing, Bowen University August, 2023)

The third respondent saw it as more of a culture, caring or motherhood, which is seen as an issue related to nursing. Stated thus:

Like you said, in my own opinion. So, I will say that one of the reasons is more of culture, because nursing is seen as caring. And caring has to do with motherhood, which is seen as an issue that relates to women. So, people believe that and it is seen by society as a female profession. So that if you see a man who is a nurse, they just look down on them. And ask, 'How can you be a nurse?' **(KII/Lecturer/Female/Nursing, University of Ibadan August, 2023)**

The explanation provided by the lecturers regarding the lack of female participants in the STEM courses offered at the University aligns with that of Thelwall, Bailey, Tobin, and Bradshaw's

(2019) study on gender equity in education in Nigeria. The authors pointed out sociocultural factors as determinants of school enrolment. These adverse stereotypes alongside deep-rooted cultural norms continued to undermine the disparity between male and female enrolment in STEM in favour of males in this region of the country (Najib et al. 2019).

Ego and Traditional Gender Expectations

The research outcomes have elucidated that expectation plays a critical role as a deterrent. It was noted that female engineering students expected to experience social exclusion and gender-based prejudice, while male nursing students expressed fears of their masculinity being ridiculed. Such apprehensions were recorded to prevent willing students from following their passions in non-traditional fields.

Darling-Hammond et al (2020) shared that educational learning all over the world has accelerated in modern times. The gender gap within academics appears to be narrowing, which has led to an increased population and access to education, but there remains an underrepresentation in certain specialised fields (Bailey, Tobin and Bradshaw, 2019). They noted that men historically have dominated in what are considered masculine subjects and careers, while women have been dominant in what are perceived to be feminine subjects and professions. Take, for instance, mathematics and its scientific counterparts—physics and chemistry—which are regarded as masculine disciplines, whereas the arts and most commercial subjects are labelled as feminine.

The previous respondent also mentioned the ego. He revealed that people feel that males should be doctors while females should be nurses:

You, a man, should always dominate. So, they feel that men should be doctors while women should be nurse so most of the men don't feel good applying to study nursing. In my university and even in other universities, their number has remained very low. If you, as a man, claim to be a Nurse, your fellow men and others will look down on you. They even would say, 'these have become like women. Even those who have an ego will do as if they're interested by making a mockery of them and say, 'I'm going into a female-dominated profession.'

(KII/lecturer/Male/ Nursing, University of Ibadan August, 2023).

While another respondent spoke on public opinion. He further said:

When you are talking about the number of males, you know it is due to public opinion. So many people think Nursing is for females. So, many parents will not even advise their children, their wards, to choose Nursing. They would rather advise them to choose Medicine rather than Nursing. Some of them who are in nursing actually opted out for Medicine but because they were not taken, they just found themselves in Nursing. Not many of them actually wanted to become nurses.
(KII/lecturer/Male/Nursing, University of Ibadan August, 2023).

Also, a respondent revealed thus:

Nursing throughout the world is known as a female program or female profession. Most of the time, people consider a man or a male that come into the nursing profession as a lazy person. Maybe the individual may not be capable of doing other work that are men oriented. You can always see that females are always more than males in the field. Also, when you see male in nursing, the community see them as doctors and even address them as doctors and so why if you are a female in the profession, they see you as a nurse and then most of our parents always determine the course their children would do, they dictate for their children and so parents normally choose nursing for their female children, attach nursing to female. Why do they attach other courses like engineering, Agriculture. Anything that deals with mathematics, they always attach it to the male individual
(KII/Lecturer/female/Nursing, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, August, 2023)

Socio-Economic factors

Research has shown that a variety of social factors impact one's professional choices. Family backgrounds, religious affiliations, and cultural traditions, for example, either promote or hinder the exploration of non-conventional professions. In Southwestern Nigeria, though, the informal and formal instructional communication from non-governmental organisations and educational institutions was found to reinforce narrow gender norms.

The research indicated there are notable socio-economic factors impacting career decisions. The high levels of youth unemployment in Nigeria, coupled with the widely observed “Japa” migration phenomenon, were cited as largely eclipsing the pursuit of one’s vocation. While the study recognised the economically rational basis behind such decisions, it also questioned whether education was empowering students, hence raising moral dilemmas.

In the past, engineering was regarded as prestigious and well-compensated, making it particularly appealing to male students due to their societal conditioning as future providers. As the interviews revealed, male students also favoured engineering due to the high social status and income that came with it. On the other hand, nursing was increasingly chosen by female students, not only due to the resonance of caring and service values but also practical. Considering the employment prospects available to nurses, both in Nigeria and internationally, several interviewees noted that the profession holds compelling advantages, particularly given current trends in the international migration of healthcare workers. This encapsulates the recent shifts in the global labour market, which indicate that jobs providing opportunities for emigration are increasingly available and desirable, regardless of the applicant's gender. Nevertheless, the enduring perception of the nursing profession as economically attractive is tempered by the persistent association of this field with women, which continues to deter male students.

Nobody wants to be a liability, nobody wants to marry a liability, and it is a general belief, and I think it is also correct, is easier for a nurse to get a job in Nigeria and even almost everywhere in the world than maybe some other field of study. So, this is one of the reasons why you see many people want their children is most like most times female. To go into nursing so that after graduation, they can say, because there is a gross increase rate of unemployment now, but when it comes to nursing, the rate is still very low. So, because of the economic value, apart from getting employment, the Worth of the employment when you compare with other professions is still better. So, these are the things that I think people look at that we want them to make a choice, that I want to be a nurse or something. And another thing is the green, as I said, like I talked about the other time, is the green light outside Nigeria about it. Everybody wants to jump out, so to speak. Many people do not; everybody really wants to jump out, so they see that one of

the easiest ways to go through the process and make it seamless and make it like guys to be a nurse. So, these are some socio-economic values and even in some families too

(KII/Sub-Dean/Male/Nursing, Bowen University August, 2023)

Role Models and Mentorship Structures

The absence of non-conventional role models was underscored as a significant challenge. Su et al. (2021) and Bandura (1997) were referenced to show how the absence of female engineers and male nurses perpetuates the visibility of rigid gender roles. The study pointed out the more inclusive representation is essential to counteract stereotypes. The documentation conducted highlighted the gaps in the support systems within institutions and the associated high dropout rates. It was highlighted that numerous capable students abandoned programs because of insurmountable obstacles. The report recommended more comprehensive counselling services, mental health care, and appropriate financial aid, all while preserving the academic rigour. Participants emphasised that employability, economic opportunities, and migration pathways profoundly influenced their choices. Nursing was often referred to as a “Japa” profession, suggesting comparatively simpler pathways to emigration, while engineering was perceived as securing social prestige and financial gain within Nigeria. As noted earlier, the influence of parents was quite evident; girls were often encouraged to pursue nursing because it had abundant job prospects, while boys were directed toward engineering due to societal expectations related to status and income. These findings complement Raghuram (2008) and Ekpeyong (2023), who have pointed out that the educational decisions of students in developing countries are increasingly influenced by economic rationality and migration. Enfield (2019) further argues that socio-economic conditions may also intersect with and exacerbate gendered occupational norms.

Engineering students who are female noticed the absence of female faculty and teaching staff, while male nursing students observed the absence of role models and professional networks. The absence of gender diversity among faculty and mentors reinforced the perception that such fields are more conducive to one gender. Some students received outreach strategies with defined goals, such as school visits and career presentations tailored to disadvantaged groups, but described these efforts as sporadic and insufficient. It is clear that the absence of appropriate gender-sensitive strategies, such as routine school visits, active mentoring, teaching, and counter-stereotypical addresses about women and girls, perpetuates the examined enrolment gaps. These gaps also stem

from the absence of institutional frameworks intended to actively contest these biases, which explains why so little progress has been made in changing stereotypes despite the existence of some awareness initiatives.

“I think female engineering role models should be promoted to inspire and mentor aspiring engineers.” **(IDI/Student/Male/Engineering, BOWEN University August, 2023)**

A key factor is the lack of mentors and role models for male and female students in nursing and engineering. The participants emphasised that representation goes beyond visibility. Professional stagnation was noted as a barrier to students’ professional imagination. Participants called for the active development of mentorship initiatives by universities and professional bodies. Students expressed sentiments related to social alienation and lack of identity-affirming figures. Female engineering students noted the lack of women in senior academic positions; male nursing students reported feeling stereotyped and uncomfortable. In addition, a lack of defined mentorship structures exacerbates the problem, leading to a lack of guidance and insufficient motivation. This aligns with Masters (2021) discussion about the influence of appropriate role models on students’ perceptions of their possibilities in STEM, as well as Imasogie et al. (2018), who advocated for targeted mentorship and outreach initiatives aimed at school children to broaden participation from underrepresented groups in higher education.

Traditional gender stereotypes may discourage ladies from pursuing STEM fields. Bias in educational and career guidance can also steer them away from engineering. Also, a shortage of female role models in engineering can make it less appealing to young people, when visibility of successful female engineers is crucial.

(KII/Lecturer/Male/Engineering, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology September, 2023)

I think female engineering role models should be promoted to inspire and mentor aspiring engineers. **(IDI/Student/Male/Engineering, Bowen University, August 2023)**

Institutional and Systemic Barriers

Finally, both disciplines remarked on barriers such as finances, inflexible sequence curricula, and leaving programs due to extraneous academic pressure. Self-imposed limitations were emphasised as a major factor where students perceived biological constraints. The research team explained how self-imposed restrictions have diminished Nigeria's talent pool and called for policy reforms to enable students to appreciate their potential capabilities.

The research concluded that systemic changes are needed to resolve disparities in enrolment. They identified inclusive pedagogical frameworks and gender-responsive career guidance as critical area shifts. It is striking that the study underscored the need for comprehensive institutional restructuring to mitigate the stereotype threats documented by Steele (1997) and Rosa and Clavero (2022), which negatively influence academic engagement and persistence.

Students in the engineering disciplines, particularly female students, remarked upon the absence of support provided to help students who were struggling, as well as the sheer volume of coursework. Nursing students talked about the stress of clinical training, as well as the significant stress associated with high-stakes testing, especially the 400-level licensure exams. Students from both sets of groups stressed the intersection of inadequate finances, the lack of appropriate scholarly and emotional scaffolding, and how these factors intensified the attrition or non-progression problem. These findings illustrate the ways socio-cultural realities shape, and in turn are shaped by, institutional policies that create profound barriers to educational access for students who gender-diversify their fields of study.

This illustrates that social roles and norms influence students' attitudes towards certain disciplines strongly. Many participants reported engineering to be a man's field because it demands physical endurance and technical know-how, while nursing is branded as a caring woman's discipline. Such perceptions arise from traditional gender splits and are a product of teachers, parents, and society as a whole. Ekpeyong (2023) adapts this idea in the context of Nigeria, asserting that gender expectations are deeply rooted within the culture, stereotypes, and biases regarding gender roles. These observations align with the research done by De Welde and Stepnick (2023) alongside UNESCO (2021) concerning the influence of cultural constructs on the education system and the professional pathways people pursue. All these expectations inevitably violate students' rights to freely select disciplines.

As a critical barrier, especially for the non-traditional participants, respondents highlighted the educational and physical requirements of the respective programs. Respondents characterised engineering as a field requiring significant mastery of mathematics and considerable intellectual effort, while nursing was viewed as a physically demanding field due to extensive caregiving and requiring considerable emotion, owing to long hours. Such concerns create unofficial barriers for students, particularly when students do not conform to prevailing gender norms associated with the field of study. Commonly accepted norms suggest male students lack the requisite emotional competencies to pursue nursing, while female students are perceived as incapable of mastering advanced engineering and mathematics. These reinforce the arguments put forth by Su et al. (2009) and Kim (2020), which contend that these perceptions certainly lower the gender diversity within higher education and within particular fields of work.

Lack of adequate financial resources to train the students for the lengthy final year training program required to certify an engineer.

(KII/Lecturer/Male/Engineering, University of Ibadan, September, 2023)

A different respondent stated that:

Early educational and outreach, financial aid, scholarship and awareness campaigns.

(KII/Lecturer/Male/Engineering, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology September, 2023)

One participant further remarked that:

In a school like ours, financial situation might be the reason, maybe when they started some students were able to pay but along the line they were unable to pay, so sometimes we have some students dropping or give suspension of study for one year and are not able to meet up with their mates but eventually they will do it but by the time they get to the final year it is not the same number of students that started in 100 level that will be in final class.

(KII/Lecturer/Male/Engineering, Bowen University August, 2023)

In conclusion

In the above excerpts, it was revealed that institutional and systemic barriers, lack of role models and mentorship structures, socio-economic factors, ego and traditional gender expectations, culture and religion, and gendered perceptions were gender factors that led individual students, both males and females, in the choice of their career in engineering and nursing professions in Nigerian universities.

Recommendations

Further studies should be conducted on these two professional bodies across different universities in the six geopolitical zones of the country to obtain more comprehensive findings. Counselling units should be established by the government and university authorities to guide students in their choice of careers. Both the government and university authorities should promote gender balance in the two professions through the implementation of strong educational policies.

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Unhomed: Existential Homelessness as Trauma in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* and Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

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Abstract

Contemporary Zimbabwean literature is increasingly migrant in content and outlook. This study analyses two novels by Zimbabwean migrant writers, Brian Chikwava and NoViolet Bulawayo, focusing on their portrayals of African migrants' experiences of homelessness, dislocation, and the complex struggles inherent in their desperate attempts to negotiate and transcend borders. Chikwava's *Harare North* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* are two representative novels that exemplify the traumatic imprints of migrancy on African postcolonial subjects, foregrounding how they grapple with fractured notions of home and the resultant crisis of belonging. The narratives are closely read, employing theoretical insights from Homi Bhabha's conception of unhomeliness and current research in postcolonial trauma studies. In the novels, characters are displaced by the Zimbabwean government's infamous Operation Murambatsvina, leading them to flee their "homeland" through safe and clandestine routes. In the diaspora, the characters are again displaced, having realised only belatedly that "Fortress Europe" selectively bestows its succours. The figure of "umgodoyi"—the stray dog that belongs to nowhere and no one—runs through both novels as a central metaphor, ultimately epitomising unhomeliness. The characters in the novels experience double displacement and lack acceptance and integration at "home" and abroad. Hence, homelessness functions not merely as a narrative backdrop but as both a catalyst and a repercussion of migration, positioning it as the central ontological traumatic stressor that precipitates the mental disorders experienced by characters in *Harare North* and *We Need New Names*.

Keywords: Homelessness, Unhomeliness, Trauma, African migrant fiction, Zimbabwean literature

Introduction

Bulawayo, the Zimbabwean city from which Elizabeth Zandile Tshele, whose pen name is NoViolet Bulawayo, hails, is described in Brian Chikwava's 2011 Wasafiri article titled *City Portrait: Bulawayo* as a highly multicultural city where one could hear five languages spoken on a bus ride, and a city that was born of migration. Migration dictates not just the content but the texture of contemporary Zimbabwean literature. Indeed, Zimbabwe, like many developing countries in Africa (notably Nigeria, Somalia, Libya, and Morocco), arguably deals more in the exportation of people than in any other "product". Contemporary Zimbabwean literature is

populated by squatters, refugees, migrants, and exiles. Migrant writers as diverse as Petina Gappah, Tendai Huchu, Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, Thamsanqa Ncube, and Emmanuel Sigauke recreate Zimbabwean characters' experiences of migration, return migration, exile, and transnationalism. Brian Chikwava and NoViolet Bulawayo are very prominent among Zimbabwean migrant writers who are crafting the tales of the Zimbabwean dispersion. Chikwava's *Harare North* was published in 2009, while Bulawayo's *We need new names* was published in 2013. Remarkably, both titles bear the names of prominent cities in the novelists' much-loved but dysfunctional nation.

A defining characteristic feature of the African migrant narrative is the representation of migrant characters' experiences in Africa, often choicelessness, joblessness, disillusionment and the hope of a greener pasture; the movement proper on ships, planes, trains and sometimes uncharted routes; the reconfiguration of the character's identity in the host country; and sometimes a physical or physiological return to the native land. Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail*, Alain Mabanckou's *Blue White Red*, Ali Farah's *Little Mother*, Teju Cole's *Open City*, Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*, Fatou Diome's *The Belly of the Atlantic*, Nneoma Azuah's *Edible Bones*, just like NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*, feature characters who migrate at all costs only to become disillusioned in Europe and America. This affirms McLeod's (2000) assertion that migrants often occupy a displaced position. King *et al* (2002) corroborate this when they assert that migration transcends "a mere interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but a wide mode of being in the world- migrancy" (King *et al*, 2002, p. xv). Within the framework of postcolonial trauma studies, migrant traumas then emerge not as isolated experiences but as structural conditions of diasporic existence, produced through disillusionment, displacement, disruptions, fractured subjectivities, identity crises, ruptures, and the persistent double consciousness that defines postcolonial modernity.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to examine Chikwava and Bulawayo's representations of African migrant subjects' traumatisation by their experiences of homelessness, displacement and estrangement resulting from their homeland's unhomeliness. NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* represent characters' experiences of displacement, dislocation, and unhomeliness as tropes to recreate the postcolonial realities that drive African subjects away from Africa, and their ultimate condition of precarity in the diaspora. In the Zimbabwe depicted across

the two novels, displacement, dislocation, and violence cut across age, class, and gender, shaping the lives of both young and old, rich and poor, men and women alike. Zimbabwe, like many African countries, has had its history dented by colonialism, civil conflicts, military oppression, and domestic violence. Characters in *We Need New Names*, as well as those in *Harare North*, are psychologically stressed by physical, social, psychological, and even political displacements resulting from political instability, economic depression, and volatile security within the nation. The depiction of characters' experiences of displacement, dislocation, and alienation finds ample representation in many postcolonial texts, since the "concepts of place and displacement demonstrate the very complex interaction of language, history, and environment in the experience of colonised people" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998, p. 177). While the colonial enterprise led to linguistic, political, spiritual, economic and social displacement on the African continent, the postcolonial era has witnessed greater displacement of citizens as a result of the abysmal leadership in many states in Africa.

Methodology

The study presents a critical analysis of Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* and Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. The analysis follows Homi Bhabha's conception of unhomeliness, his recast of what Freud captures as "unheimlich", which presents Freud's reflection of home as a space that can share features of the uncanny or the unhomely, where the home projects familiarity and strangeness, which arouses dread, terror, and estrangement (Tembo, 2017, p. 5). Freud's and Bhabha's subscription to "uncanny" as both psychological and postcolonial conditions, respectively, enable this study's foregrounding of the transformation of the Zimbabwean homely space to an unfamiliar, often repulsive space, which Bulawayo's characters would childishly but remarkably term a *kaka* nation (*kaka* being the Shona word for human excreta). Zimbabwe is captured as a *kaka* country where disillusionment, extreme poverty, and destitution push the citizens out in search of new names, new identities, and new realities. The word *kaka* in the children's estimation effectively captures the desecration of their once-loved nation and its gradual disintegration through the abuse of state power. The unmaking of the home, or the unhomeliness of the home, conceptualises the fragmentation, alienation, and unbelonging that beset configurations of home, nation, and identity. Bhabha's mapping of the loss of home to the uncanniness of feeling out of place constructs dislocation and dispossession as both an affect and an effect.

Zimbabwean migrant characters in the novels closely read are unhomed. They leave to live but fail to find a rooting in the host land. They live in the diaspora, but they are haunted by the legacies of a past that sits “uncomfortably out of joint, ambivalently ahead of their time and yet behind it too” (Cho, 2007, p. 19). Their home has ceased to be one, thanks to many of Mugabe’s policies, which assaulted the home spaces. Their home has become a site of violations and a threat to the physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of the characters. Hence, novels depict unhomeliness as a psychic condition. Since the characters’ inner worlds have become invaded by political and social collapse, as the “home” no longer shelters or succours them, their psyche is forced to absorb social catastrophe. For the characters, home becomes unsafe; the diaspora is not home either, so the psyche loses its anchoring ground, so to speak. In the texts, therefore, unhomeliness functions traumatically: it forces subjects to internalise the breakdown of the nation, the family, and the self, thereby producing psychic instability.

Essentially, in *Harare North* and *We Need New Names*, unhomeliness as conceived in this study, operates not merely as a metaphor for displacement but as a traumatic mechanism that actively shapes the characters’ psychological realities. So, drawing on Bhabha’s notion of the unhomely as the moment when the private sphere is invaded by the “violences” of the public world, both novels show how the breakdown of Zimbabwe’s political and social structures becomes internalised in the migrant character’s psyche. Chikwava’s narrator is seen as “carrying” the failed state within him, and his experiences of illegality, racism and precarity in London amplify his prior wounds, producing dissociation and a fractured identity. Similarly, Bulawayo depicts unhomeliness as beginning in childhood, where Paradise’s rubbles, hunger and vices imprint a condition of continuous trauma that migration to America does not resolve but reconfigures. Darling’s subsequent linguistic, cultural and social alienation, as the analysis would project, reveals a psyche struggling to manage contradictory worlds that can no longer be reconciled.

The study’s conception of trauma follows postcolonial trauma theorists’ acknowledgment of the particular social components and cultural contexts of the traumatic experience (Balaev, 2014, p. 3), especially postcolonial critics’ assertion of the possibilities for communal and collective traumatisation. Trauma is conceived of as a psychological wound occasioned by African subjects’ experiences of repeated, structural, and intergenerational experiences of violence and marginalisation and postcolonial disillusionment. The study subscribes to Stef Crap’s insistence that trauma in the postcolony is often gradual, cumulative, and structural. Postcolonial subjects are

traumatised not only by singular catastrophic events but ongoing repeated experiences of chronic hunger, homelessness, racism, failed nationalism, needless losses of lives and property and displacement from every social structure.

Chikwava's *Harare North* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* were purposively selected for their thematic preoccupation with Zimbabwean characters in limbo, characters who are principally traumatised by their sense of rootlessness, often arising from their homelessness, displacement, and dislocation. The two protagonists of the novels, a nameless character in *Harare North* and Darling in *We Need New Names* are displaced subjects who incessantly oscillate between dispersion and anchorage. Hence, the characters in the novel are traumatised not by a single event (in the Caruthian sense), but by ongoing everyday tragedies. Their experiences favour a shift from a conception of trauma as an event-based, individual experience of extraordinary suffering to a collective and continuous experience (as averred by such postcolonial trauma theorists as Stef Craps and Gert Buelens, 2008, p. 3; Stef Craps, 2013, p. 2); Irene Visser, 2015, p. 252) and others). Essentially, trauma theory is employed to engage the two novels' recreations of the psychological consequences of unhomeliness on characters for whom the home (employed in this study as both a physical space and the metaphor for intimacy, refuge, safety, security, connection, and belonging) has become altered and elusive. This is especially significant within the Zimbabwean context, since more people are displaced and forcefully relocated, with diverse psychologically traumatic effects on the people, arising from circumstances where homeliness is increasingly and desperately "conjured out of detritus and longing" (Samuelson, 2008, p. 131).

Homelessness, Unhomeliness and Border Politics in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* and Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

The late Robert Gabriel Mugabe, who ruled Zimbabwe for nearly four decades, is often depicted in the Zimbabwean literary imaginary as the sender of the bulldozer. His representation as the sender of the bulldozer in narratives by Christopher Mlalazi, Brian Chikwava, Noviolet Bulawayo, Eric Harrison, and others alludes to his infamous regime's Operation Murambatsvina. The Accelerated Land Reform and Resettlement Programme, also commonly referred to as the Fast Track Resettlement Programme, was initiated in 2000, while Operation Murambatsvina commenced in 2005. Within the decade of 2000-2010, Operation Murambatsvina, which translates to "drive out the rubbish" or "discard the filth" and the government's preferred translation, "restore order," resulted in the displacement of thousands of people. The victims of the operation termed it

“Operation Tsunami” because of the speed with which demolitions were carried out and the ferocity with which the bulldozers employed in the demolition consumed the people’s past and present treasures. Chikwava and Bulawayo employed Operation Murambatsvina as a narrative backdrop in *Harare North* and *We Need New Names* to underscore the traumatic realities of the ensuing crisis on their protagonists and other characters. Besides the demolitions that resulted in the displacement of thousands of people, the decade 2000-2010, often referred to as the Lost Decade (Sachikonye, 2012, p. 163), witnessed the devaluation of the currency and other economic crises. This resulted in the migration of thousands of Zimbabweans to South Africa, London and the United States of America. Driven to despair, Zimbabweans fled the erstwhile homeland because it had ceased to be home and had taken on a monstrous demeanour.

In fact, Operation Murambatsvina functions as a psychic wound in both novels. It shapes the narrators’ consciousness long after the physical destruction has occurred. Operation Murambatsvina acts as a shared traumatic origin point, generating displacement, insecurity, and unhomeliness. For Darling, for instance, Murambatsvina is beyond a political event; it is the foundation of her childhood environment. The operation is why Paradise, her shantytown, existed in the first place. It is the origin of her homelessness; it is what first fractures the young Darling’s sense of national belonging. Similarly, for Chikwava’s protagonist, Operation Murambatsvina persists as a psychic scar. This trauma of state-inflicted homelessness becomes a lifelong condition. This vividly demonstrates that unhomeliness resulting from systemic failures, homelessness and displacement does not end when borders are crossed. Its psychic and emotional consequences remain embedded in the migrant characters’ identities.

For the nameless protagonist-narrator in *Harare North*, a man in his twenties, a jobless son of a widow, it could be said that Zimbabwe literally evicted him, after a wasted time spent as a Green Bomber. Under Robert Mugabe, the Green Bombers recruited youths who attended the nation’s National Youth Service Programme, which began in 2001. The programme’s supposed aim was to train people in the acquisition of skills and patriotism. The programme, as depicted by the narrator’s story, was a prominent part of Mugabe’s government’s deception. The name, “green bombers”, comes from the colour of the youths’ uniforms. “Green Bombers” is largely a derogatory term; it refers to a common green bottle fly often captured among the Ndebele-speaking people as “impukane yothuvi”, meaning “feaces fly” (Siziba, 2017). The trainees are taught Mugabe’s version of history as written in a manual authored by Mugabe. As to the reason for

Chikwava's employment of an ex-Green Bomber as his protagonist, Mangena and Nyambi (2013) explicates that "green bombers" as depicted in *Harare North* was so represented to present a political commentary that would reinforce the despicability of the National Youth Service Programme since "green bomber" serves to signal the dirty tactics employed by the ruling party in "creating and maintaining hegemony" (p. 81).

The narrator, having tried and failed to secure gainful employment, embraced the opportunity to join the Green Bombers as his only chance at living a purposeful life. However, in the novel, the Green Bombers' primary tasks, according to the narrator, are to kill those they call the enemies of the ruling party, by giving plenty of "forgiveness", the narrator's term for murder and maiming. The narrator tells of a time when he was privileged to murder a member of the opposition party. Besides administering "forgiveness" to Mugabe's enemies, the Green Bombers organise forced disappearances and electoral violence. Essentially, the Green Bombers helped foment trouble and wreak havoc. The ironic twist, however, is that the youths who made up the youth militias for the ruling party were used, abused and then betrayed. The narrator's activities alongside those of other Mugabe thugs land him in Chikurubi Maximum Prison, where his psyche is irreparably damaged. He becomes especially traumatised by his incarceration, where he was raped and probably infected with HIV/AIDS:

I don't want to leave the country because I have not visit Mother in two years. But I have to go because me I know what Chikurubi Maximum Prison is like; I have been there before and it is full of them people that carry likkle horrors such as them sharpened bicycle spokes and they want you to donate your buttocks so they can give you Aids; if you refuse then bicycle spoke go through your stomach like it is made of toilet paper and you is bleeding inside all night and have no chance of making it to the morning. No one can want to go there again. Life is not fair me I know after they hold the spoke to my heart (Chikwava, 2009, p. 25).

It is solely because of his misery while in prison that he jumps bail and flees Zimbabwe. However, the narrator's time in prison already marred his outlook on life and shaped him irrevocably into a violent distributor of violence.

The narrator flees Zimbabwe on a visitor's visa because home for him has long ceased being one: there has been the transition from *heimlich* into *unheimlich*. The homeland now haunts. This aligns with Bhabha's conception of "the unhomely", as Tembo (2017, p. 5) expatiates is, not as a state of lacking a home, but rather "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place". Home, for the narrator and other characters, becomes a site of trauma. All the

homeland has to offer him is trouble and more trouble. The narrator relates how, everywhere, Zimbabweans are depressed and giving in to pressure. He tells of characters who, out of sheer frustration, embraced suicide. The narrator's uncle, Uncle Nhamo, committed suicide, while the narrator's mother also died of an overdose. Still within the narrator's family, Sekai's brother commits suicide. Sekai's brother's story is especially pathetic. He quarrels with Sekai over the latter's reluctance to send him money. Sekai tells him she does not care about his having HIV/AIDS, and that he could go ahead and jump off his balcony if he so wishes, and that was exactly what he did. Sekai's brother jumps from the eighth-floor balcony and dies. These representations underscore the spiritual, psychological, economic and sociocultural repercussions of the dispossession, dislocation and dissociation experienced by Zimbabweans during the Lost Decade.

For the narrator who flees to London rather than succumb to the pressure to end his life, his lot is hardly better. Right from Gatwick Airport, the narrator is shown his inferior status, as he is detained as soon as he lands at the Airport, where he spends eight days before his cousin's wife graciously comes to "claim" him. At his cousin's place, the narrator suffers rejection. The earlier part of *Harare North* depicts the narrator's amazement at the cold treatment he receives from his host family. Sekai, his cousin's wife, makes it clear by her conduct and words that he is not welcome into their space, so that "before the end of my first day, I already know that Sekai don't want me to stay with them" (p. 12). At Paul and Sekai's place, the narrator is treated like an unwanted package. When he gives Sekai the groundnut, he brings for her from Zimbabwe, she throws it into the bin, claiming it may contain some disease. Paul, his cousin does not talk to him because his wife disallows him from doing so. Out of loneliness, the narrator often sits in the toilet. As much as the narrator longs for a sense of belonging, he is deprived of it. Overcome by loneliness and a prevailing feeling of helplessness, he seeks solace in the fading memories of his mother. In his hallucination, he holds on to his mother who wraps her arms around and holds him tight.

The narrator's dream where he sees his mother offering him solace and warmth betrays a desire for her maternal care, on the one hand and a longing for a rooting, a sense of belonging in the diaspora, on the other hand. His dream affirms Sigmund Freud's assertion in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that dreams are largely the expressions of unfulfilled wishes and desires. In his dream-like reconstruction of his utmost desires, the images of his mother and his motherland become an entangled narrative:

Mother. Home. Early morning. She water bed of tomato plants at the back of house. By doorstep, there is she old shoes. Wet and red with mud... Mother. She wrap me up in she arms and hold tight. My small feet lock together, them small toes coil. I'm back in Mother's arms. 'Did you fall, my child?' I suck thumb and nod. Mother hold me to she bosom and rock me gentle. Then some funny long breast roll out down and swing past my face like pendulum. It come back; dark and dry, it hit my cheek. I miss it. It come back again; now I catch it. Outside, things is now quiet. Inside, breast is cold; the milk dry up long time ago (Chikwava, 2009, p. 20).

It is noteworthy that even in his dream, the narrator's hope is dashed, his efforts frustrated, and his toil unrewarded. The dream, strategically placed between when the narrator suffers rejection at Paul and Sekai's place and when he would seek help from Shingi, explicitly foreshadows the narrator's subsequent arduous but futile attempts at finding a home, a connection and a rooting in London.

Even after the narrator moves in with Shingi, a place that turns out to be a squat occupied by other hustling people, his standard of living hardly improves. The house itself is not much to write about. The house is distinct from other houses because of its grey brick; its two top windows that have red brick arch, and what the narrator describes as the window's big, sad eyes. If the outside of the house presents a hostile place, the inside of the squat is even more unhomely, what with its kitchen that smells of bad cooking, a sink filled with a heap of dirty dishes and the ceiling that grows mushrooms and other things. Added to the house's unfriendly "demeanour" are the menacing rules that stare the narrator in the face and stick to his brain. When time after time the narrator finds jobs only to lose them, the narrator is plagued with intrusive memories from his past. He constantly recalls his poor mother's dashed hopes and how she died of an overdose. He tells of how she was taken to the hospital in a wheelbarrow. He is dejected because he fails to perform *umbuyiso* for his mother, which is one of the two reasons he chose to work tirelessly in London. The other reason is that he needed some money to pay up his real and imagined debts. Chigwedere (2017) elucidates that *umbuyiso* is a Ndebele traditional ceremony that is normally conducted a year after the funeral of a loved one to welcome the spirit of the deceased back to the homestead. It is believed that the spirit of the dead person wanders in the wilderness in the meantime until *umbuyiso* is conducted. By incapacitating the narrator and denying him the means and the resources to perform *umbuyiso* for his late mother, the host society makes him guilty and vulnerable to *Ngozi* (an avenging spirit), believed among Zimbabweans to be capable of inflicting insanity and eventual death. The narrator's traumatic pangs at his failure to perform *umbuyiso* for his mother are further heightened

by the government's planned relocation of his mother's village people to another location because of the discovery of precious stones there.

The intrusive memories from the narrator's past confirm Hartman's (1995, p. 537) submission that trauma often comprises a two-part system: the first being the traumatic event, which is registered, not experienced, after which is the onset of the memory of the traumatic event, one which bypasses perception and consciousness, in a journey into the subconscious, where it falls directly to the psyche, from where intrusive memories emerge. The narrator's dismal realities – his inability to secure a long-term job further aggravates his sense of homelessness and helplessness. He works hard, but he often has nothing to show for the hard work he does. In the novel, migrants, especially illegal migrants are paid pittance for the work they do. At the end of a week's job, he earns so little because the company has put him on an emergency tax code that siphons most of the money. He is pained that in just a few days of working in Brixton, he is already helping to put so much Mars bars in Londoners' pockets. Before getting a job, the narrator had stumbled on a post on the internet on how immigrants slave only to enrich the natives. He had read that the "immigrant people's contribution to this country is equal to one Mars bar in every citizen's pocket every year" (Chikwava, 2009, p. 28). It is after he receives his wages that the truth of the assertion sinks in. In many places around the world, especially in Europe, migrants are welcome only for what they can do, often measured in terms of physical labour.

Saunders explicates in "Uncanny Presence: The Foreigner at the Gate of Globalization" (2001) that migrants, the "global foreigners" of this age, are often the labouring agents of globalisation, but they hardly share its benefits. They are often "perceived as material objects: they are the subjects of reification, their value assessed in terms of capacity for physical labour or embodied service, their presence confined to the body" (Saunders, 2001, p. 92). The characters in *Harare North* and *We Need New Names* belatedly realise that to the migrant, especially the illegal migrant is reserved excruciating labour:

You spend them weeks shifting mud with shovels and sweat beads come out of every pore in the body because you is putting out heaps of effort while your buttocks point to high heaven and migrant flesh start to stink around you as shirts and underpants get damp. Here you quickly know that the weight of your buttocks increase by the hour and come down only by night when you is sandwiched between blanket and mattress (Chikwava, 2009, p. 47).

And the jobs we worked, Jesus—Jesus—Jesus, the jobs we worked. Low-paying jobs. Backbreaking jobs. Jobs that gnawed at the bones of our dignity, devoured the meat, tongued the marrow. We took scalding irons and ironed our pride flat. We cleaned

toilets. We picked tobacco and fruit under the boiling sun until we hung our tongues and panted like lost hounds. We butchered animals, slit throats, drained blood. We worked with dangerous machines, holding our breath like crocodiles underwater, our minds on the money and never on our lives... We cut ourselves working on meat; we got skin diseases. We inhaled bad smells until our lungs thundered... We got sick but did not go to hospitals, could not go to hospitals. We swallowed every pain like a bitter pill, drank every fear like a love potion, and we worked and worked (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 163)

The narrator, Shingi, Farayi and even Aleck, all underpaid immigrants in *Harare North* and Darling, Bastard and Aunty Fostalina, immigrants in *We need new names*, provide the labour and surplus-value upon which world capitalism thrives (Foster, 2015).

The protagonist of *We Need New Names*, Darling, is amazed at the volume of work an immigrant does and how migrants are often largely deprived of their rights, when in fact, their often low-paid labour provides the cheap services and goods that the economy thrives upon. On getting to America, Darling realises that she must work. Darling is shocked, even though when she was still in Zimbabwe, Bastard had, in a childish yet factual manner, hinted that she would be expected to work for whatever she got in America. He predicts that she would work in a nursing home also, “cleaning *kaka* off some wrinkled old man who can’t do anything for himself” (Bulawayo 2013, p. 14), like he envisaged her aunt was doing. Bastard had sounded silly and jealous, but his words were a prefiguration of what Darling would experience in America. It is at the workplace that Darling discovers the truth about the American dream – that the American dream can often only be embraced by Americans and those who belong to the American society. Since neither Darling nor her aunt is a legal immigrant, they can only hope to eat the crumbs thrown from the centre to the margins.

From Darling’s experiences, an extradiegetic narrator underscores how the prices and sacrifices that the migrant characters paid to get into America at all costs were not worth it. He noted that since getting into America was “harder than crawling through the anus of a needle,” Zimbabweans “begged, despaired, lied, groveled, promised, charmed, bribed — anything to get us out of the country” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 159). For his passport and travel, a character like Tshaka Zulu “sold all of his father’s cows, against the old man’s wishes” while Perseverance, another character, had to take his sister Netsai out of school to migrate. For another, Nqo, he had to first work in the fields of Botswana for nine months to earn enough money to migrate. Nozipho, like Primrose and Sicelokuhle and Maidei, slept with the “fat black pig Banyile Khoza from the passport office”, just

for a chance to leave Zimbabwe: “Girls flat on their backs, Banyile between their legs, America on their minds” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 160). Pathetically, the characters have no place in America. All that awaits the migrants as presented by the narrator is work, the work which more often than not is cleaning, from cleaning of houses to hospitals, restaurants, cars, clothes and even people (Aviva, 2007).

Just like the nameless narrator in *Harare North* who migrates because he can no longer stay in Zimbabwe, Bulawayo’s characters also migrate because it has become almost impossible to stay back. The characters flee because their home has chased them to the shore. They flee because their home, no longer recognisable, has become the mouth of a shark and the barrel of a gun (Shire, 2011, p. 55). The characters flee because they have become strangers in and to their homeland. The narrator in *We Need New Names* relates the gory realities of homelessness and displacement as experienced by both children and adults. In the wake of the Operation Murambatsvina, Darling’s family members, like those of her friends, Chipo, Bastard, Sbho, Godknows and Stina, were forcefully uprooted from their homes and made to live in a shanty town ironically named Paradise. They all come to Paradise dismayed, disoriented and traumatised. The narrator speaks of children who are as baffled as their parents, who “held their children close to their chests and caressed their dusty, unkempt heads with hardened palms” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 53). The people’s “Paradise” is marked by hunger, violence, disease and pain. The demolition of their homes meant a disruption and a rupture in every aspect of their lives; their makeshift “home” was everything but a home.

Hunger pangs drive the children to Budapest. The children’s journey to Budapest, a liberatory displacement in Chidora (2017)’s estimation, affords them access to food and the dreams of living elsewhere. With the assurance of food, basically stolen fruits, the children can take on other quests. Bastard wants to leave Paradise and go to Johannesburg, Sbho dreams of living in one of the fine houses in Budapest, while Darling wants to go to America to live with Aunty Fostalina. Chipo does not disclose her dreams. Darling relates that Chipo has been rendered silent since she was impregnated; this is because trauma silences. In fact, the devastating, disrupting and destructive impact of trauma is such that, depending on the severity of the traumatic experience, it has the capacity to unleash the death drive (Todestrieb in Freudian usage), kill the pulsing of desire as well as language, and foster a disintegration of body, soul and spirit (LaCapra, 2001; Laub and Lee, 2003; Luckhurst, 2008). For eleven-year-old Chipo, impregnated by her grandfather, trauma has become her everyday reality. Chipo’s underage pregnancy, malnourished body and traumatised

soul bear witness to children's vulnerability in post-independence Zimbabwe. The narrator relates Chipo's pathetic experience to underline the fact that Darling's traumatising is not an exception or an oddity.

Darling is especially traumatised by her witnessing the demolition of her previous house; she never ceases to have nightmares:

Nobody knows that sometimes I do not sleep. I am the hare. Even if I want to sleep I cannot because if I sleep, the dream will come, and I don't want it to come. I am afraid of the bulldozers and those men and the police... I try to push it away and push it away but the dream keeps coming and coming like bees, like rain, like the graves at Heavenway (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 45).

Darling and other children suffer from repetition compulsion, the Freudian term for a re-enactment of the traumatic experience, which had been previously repressed, in an attempt to bind their energies and reach a state of balance or even entropy. At the same time, repetitive behaviour points to a desire to compensate for a deep-seated sense of lack (Cavallaro, 2002). Darling's memory of a previously witnessed traumatic event comes to haunt her night after night, and yet her circumstances do not favour a working-through or reparation. Hence, when given a pseudo choice, in a country game, Darling, all the children opt out of Zimbabwe. Years later, Chipo and Darling can leave Zimbabwe for real.

Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and Chikwava's *Harare North* recreate the experiences of Zimbabwean migrants living interstitial lives on the margins of society. Chikwava relates in an interview with Josh Jewell (2018) that his recreation of the experiences of Zimbabwean migrants in *Harare North* was borne out of his fascination with people who find themselves on the margins, people who have no control over the kind of spaces they live in and what the world throws at them. Chikwava's characters are actors in what Chambers (1994) presents as "The drama of the stranger":

To come from elsewhere, from "there" and not "here," and hence to be simultaneously "inside" and "outside" the situation at hand, is to live at the intersection of histories and memories, experiencing both their preliminary dispersal and their subsequent translation into new, more extensive, arrangements along emerging routes. It is simultaneously to encounter the languages of powerlessness and the potential intimations of heterotopic futures (Chambers, 1994, p. 14).

From the nameless narrator in *Harare North* to Darling and the extradiegetic narrator in *We Need New Names*, Chikwava and Bulawayo's characters dwell in an "in-between" space; they are suspended between where they are and where they long to be. McLeod (2000) affirms that the

migrant often occupies a displaced rootless position, since the migrant is usually never fully a part of the host land, nor can he safely be apart from it. The characters are strangers in a strange land. This is why Chikwava's protagonist, in a moment of helplessness while at Tim's Fish bar, relates that he feels like one pushed by waves, who has been washed off unto an unfamiliar place, and soon his fears that his life would "collect into one big shapeless thing and soon the whole thing slip off your grasp" (Chikwava, 2009, p. 86) became his reality.

Existential homelessness and helplessness plague the migrant characters in both novels. Almost all the characters depicted in the narratives find themselves in moments described by Bhabha (1994), thus:

In the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* - here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1).

Their "border lives" resulting from an attempt to make a home outside their homelands only yield more troubles. Invariably, for the migrant characters, as depicted in both novels, home is nowhere. Unfortunately, they are strangers in the homeland just as they are in the diaspora. Their homes evict them, and the diaspora does not accept them. They are foreigners in the sense that Saunders (2001) employs the word; they are unfamiliar, improper, incomprehensible and uncanny, always existing in binary opposition to and are ever being defined against the binary other. Hence, they suffer exclusion. They lack the very thing they yearn for: belonging. They flee Zimbabwe for "Fortress Europe", only to realise that their supposed "Fortress" is made up of crumbling walls.

The lack of belonging has an untold and diverse psychological traumatic impact on the characters. When Shingi in *Harare North* loses his job for the umpteenth time, he does not remain the same again. Shingi's endless joblessness eventually makes him lose his mind. Shingi begins to disappear and reappear without explanation. All of Shingi's attempts to find a sense of purpose in London are futile. The narrator speaks of London as a place where the migrant's identity is ever unstable: it is a place where "you can become labourer, sewage drain cleaner and then French president, being many people in one person" (Chikwava, 2009, p. 51) and yet be no one. Shingi's psychic collapse leads him to the mental backstreets when he gets stabbed on a rainy day. The narrator sees him soaked in his blood, but he himself is too helpless to help: "Around the corner, on them wet pavements of Harare North, Shingi is one untidy heap. Naked tramp has given him forgiveness..."

I feel helpless. I am useless. Everything is useless. I don't know what to do" (Chikwava, 2009, p. 160). The narrator is torn between staying back to help his childhood friend and benefactor and fleeing to safety, away from the police and an immigration system that would waste no time in sending him back to Zimbabwe, empty-handed.

At the end of *We Need New Names*, Darling equally feels displaced and disillusioned, having to watch events unfold helplessly and knowing fully well that neither she nor Aunt Fostalina can return to Zimbabwe. She sees the ashes of Tsaka Zulu, and she is lethargic. Through the character and characterisation of Tshaka Zulu, a retired mentally ill Zimbabwean culturalist, Bulawayo nuances the representation of migration as "a ruptured genealogy" (Polo Moji, 2015:9), that ruptures subjectivity and fosters multiple identity translations. Whenever Tshaka Zulu goes beyond control in his psychic displays, threatening people with the imaginary *assegai* that he claims is hidden somewhere inside his room, Aunt Fostalina is called upon to calm him down. This she does by speaking to him in Ndebele because when his craziness starts, the medicines hardly work, and he would usually refuse to communicate in English. Tshaka Zulu's displays, which Moji (2015) terms his elaborate "rituals of remembrance", essentially parade the "traumatic rupture caused by the colonial violence that many African countries have experienced" (Woods, 2007). Tshaka Zulu's physical, mental, cultural and spiritual lockdown are thus traceable to repressed traumatic memories of Zimbabwe's colonial history.

Remarkably, both novels end on the same note. At the end of *Harare North*, the narrator calls for an ambulance to carry Shingi, but he flees before the ambulance arrives. He fears that his illegal status would be used against him, and therein lies the trauma of an illegal existence. The narrator, Aleck, Farayi and Tsitsi are condemned to an illegal existence. Without their papers, they have no work permits, and without work permits, they can hardly better their standard of living. To live always afraid of the police is to live and wake up in fear, a fear that is as humiliating as it is disabling. As the narrative ends, the narrator is homeless and helpless once more. His plight, compared to when he landed in Harare North, is no better; in fact, it is worse. In the end, he leaves the empty house and becomes the metaphorical homeless dog:

I walk on the white line with suitcase on my head. Nothing can hit my head. I feeling like *umgodoyi* – the homeless dog that roam them villages scavenging until brave villager relieve it of its misery by hit its head with rock. *Umgodoyi have no home like the winds. That's why umgodoyi's soul is tear from his body in rough way* (Chikwava, 2009, p. 197, emphasis added)

On the final page of *We need new names*, Darling also tells of a wandering dog hit by the big Lobels lorry: “there was red on the road. Two gaping furrows where the tires had plowed into the earth. An unsounded yelp drowned in the hollow of a twisted throat ... Big, bared teeth. Crushed meat” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 192).

While only Chikwava explicitly uses the Shona term *umgodoyi*, Bulawayo’s narrative is saturated with the same imagery of disposability, scavenging, uprootedness, and rejection, making the stray dog a powerful shared metaphor of homelessness in both narratives. In the Shona cultural idiom, *umgodoyi* is a dog that has lost its homestead or owner. In both texts, *umgodoyi* is the quintessential image of abjection. It is excluded from kinship, protection, nourishment, and recognition, just as the migrant characters portrayed in both texts lack belonging and visibility. They have become migrants largely stripped of national protection (the characters can hardly any longer refer to Zimbabwe as home), postcolonial subjects dislocated by state violence and traumatised characters struggling to return to a coherent sense of self. In fact, Chikwava compresses the narrator’s entire psychological collapse into that figure of a stray, ownerless dog. Darling and her friends’ raid of guava trees in the affluent suburb of Budapest; their having to move from street to street in search of food, running from guards, and stealing food like street animals forced into foraging, ultimately marked them as “unclaimed lives”. Bulawayo’s equally tragic and violent ending lines underscore the existential futility of the migrant characters’ endless search for a home. It mirrors the migrants’ failed border-crossing.

Chikwava’s protagonist and Bulawayo’s Tsaka Zulu’s tragic end and their descent into insanity result from their failed border-crossing, a failure whose roots lie in their underprivileged and abject position (Toivanen, 2018:6). The characters are unable to rightly decode the cultural and material signifiers that bestow success on the immigrant. The nameless narrator of *Harare North*, for instance, becomes trapped in the mental backstreets of Brixton. He cannot move forward or go backwards, and so he walks half naked on Electric Avenue: “You are telling right foot to go in one direction, and he is telling left foot to go in another direction. You tell the right foot to go in one direction, and he is being traitor shoe-doctor and tell left foot to go in another direction” (Chikwava, 2009, p. 201). In a language that effectively captures migrant characters’ fractured identities, ruptured dreams, and wounded psyches, Chikwava recreates the miserable life of a nameless migrant character whose life is intertwined with other equally traumatised migrant

characters, to depict the illusory dividends of emigration and question the authenticity of globalisation's decentring of borders.

Similarly, Bulawayo dexterously represents the plight of lonely Zimbabweans, marked by dislocation, displacement, and disillusionment in the diaspora. The protagonist, representative of other Zimbabwean migrants, leaves Zimbabwe, but she really does not leave; she arrives in Michigan, but in fact, she really never arrives in America. She, like many migrant characters, is doubly displaced. Zimbabwe has ceased to be home for her, and America has refused to grant her integration. Like other illegal migrants and legal migrants sometimes, she only has the right to exist in the city, but not the right to the city. Immigrants largely lack the right to the city, even though as Purcell (2002, p. 102) explicates that in Lefebvre's conception, enfranchisement is for those who inhabit the city, since the right to the city revolves around the production of urban space, it is those who live in the city – who contribute to the body of urban lived experience and lived space – who can legitimately claim the right to the city. This is hardly the case with Darling and other migrants in *We Need New Names*, in spite of the fact that they contribute to the body of urban lived experience and lived space. They live out the routines of everyday life in the space of the city, but they cannot fully participate in and appropriate the city space; they inhabit the city but lack the right to it. To Fenster (2005), "the right to appropriate" encapsulates the right to a complete use of the urban space in their everyday lives and "the right to live in, play in, work in, represent, characterise and occupy urban space in a particular city" (Fenster, 2005, p. 219). It is those who belong to a place who have rights to its resources, and it is those who belong who can hope to have their dreams come true. Darling and others do not belong to the cities they inhabit. They are outsiders and strangers moving through strange places, living on the margins of society.

Conclusion

Both novels present homelessness as both a cause and a consequence of emigration. The characters in both novels flee Zimbabwe because the nation has been stripped of its homeliness, thanks to the ruling political class's maladministration and the miscarriages of globalisation. In both texts, the migrant character is initially envied and then pitied. Emigration is initially perceived as an escape, but it ultimately becomes a launchpad into a precarious existence. In embracing flight, the postcolonial subjects become the very "signs of a dislocated locality, mote in the eye of cosmopolitanism and possessor of that postcolonial identity which derives its legitimacy from the mastery of the culture of modern Europe" (Gikandi, 2010, p. 28). This is because by journeying

from Africa to London (in *Harare North*) or America (in *We Need New Names*), the migrant character transits from a position of mild powerlessness to abject powerlessness. The migrant character moves from the margins to the centre, where he is regarded as the Other, a category that comes with dire consequences. In the discrepancy between what the character has envisioned that the West would offer him and what became his experience lies the trauma of unhomeliness. Essentially, *Harare North* and *We Need New Names* bear witness to the traumatising consequences of migration by depicting migrant characters' journeys that are fraught with subalternity, marginality, and most importantly, existential homelessness: physical, psychic, national, cultural, and linguistic.

The texts then foreground the wounding impact of national collapse, state violence, deprivation and systemic neglect on individuals even long after they have physically departed its borders. In this way, both novels underscore how the failed state continues to haunt the migrant's psyche. Furthermore, the texts articulate postcolonial trauma as slow violence, social invisibility, unhomeliness and psychic disintegration. NoViolet Bulawayo and Brian Chikwava join other migrant African writers (examples include Chimamanda Adichie, Alain Mabanckou, Ali Farah, Chika Unigwe, and Fatou Diome) to represent the other side of the successful migration narrative; they paint a picture of less privileged forms of mobility. By representing Africans on the move as largely abject subjects desperately seeking anchorage elsewhere, but denied access, the novelists underscore the complex dimensions of the discourse of mobility, postcolonial trauma and globalisation within the African context. *Harare North* and *We Need New Names* both reveal how that migration does not resolve the fractures of *home* but extends and reconfigures them, leaving their protagonists suspended in a condition of enduring unhomeliness.

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Redemptive Violence and the Struggle for Justice in Postcolonial African Literature

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Abstract

Violence remains a persistent feature of human society and is frequently reflected in postcolonial African literature. Many African states contribute to this cycle and continue to sustain socioeconomic inequalities, oppression, and dehumanisation, hence normalising state violence. The postcolonial African state, with its claim to exclusive power over its citizens, operates under the belief that "the state is always right," although the law itself perpetuates violence. Existing studies on violence in African literature largely focus on colonial brutality, state repression, or the psychological impact of violence. However, scholarly attention has not sufficiently examined redemptive violence as an artistic and ideological strategy through which African writers re-imagine justice, resistance, and collective liberation. Grounded in Frantz Fanon's theory of revolutionary violence, this study analyses how selected African novelists employ narrative techniques and characterisation to reframe violence as a redemptive response to oppression. The analysis reveals that Redemptive Violence, though disruptive, ultimately seeks to restore justice and freedom. The study contends that redemptive violence is not an act of savagery but a justified response to systemic crimes against the oppressed. It further identifies colonialism and neo-colonialism, imprisonment, militarism, strike actions and armed rebellion as recurring motifs in framing redemptive violence in African literature, showing how violence can serve as a tool for resistance and eventual liberation from structural injustice and violence.

Keywords: *Injustice, liberation, Oppression, Perpetrator, Resistance, Revolutionary Violence*

Background to the study

Hamby (2017) suggests four principal elements that constitute violence. He states that it must be intentional, unwanted, nonessential, and harmful. Although definitions differ across disciplines, both the American Psychological Association (APA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) emphasise that violence encompasses physical, psychological, and even symbolic forms of harm. Generally speaking, violence extends beyond overt physical aggression to include psychological abuse, coercive control, threats, intimidation, and the destruction of property. In its wider sense,

violence denotes any act deliberately intended to inflict physical or psychological injury, thereby incorporating a wide range of harmful behaviours.

Violence, as a socio-historical phenomenon, has shaped human societies from ancient times to the present day, influencing the progress of political structures, social relations, and cultural identities. Michel (2024, p. 546) underscores its centrality to global politics, especially within the domains of international relations and systemic dehumanisation. The notion of sovereignty is particularly entangled with violence, given that the modern state's claim to authority is often underwritten by its monopoly over the legitimate use of force. As a result, political violence becomes an inherent feature of state power.

Vesco et al. (2025) further contend that violence, most especially war, can also function as a mechanism through which state authority is contested or destabilised. In the same vein, Duong (2020) argues that the relationship between politics and violence is enduring and structural, even in democratic states that employ both overt and subtle forms of violence to regulate, discipline, and control their populations.

These dynamics are especially pronounced in postcolonial African states, where the ideology that “*the state is always right*” is deeply rooted in colonial administrative legacies. Colonial governance structures, predicated on the principle of *might is right*, were designed to suppress dissent and consolidate the state's monopoly on violence. In contemporary African societies, the remnants of these formations persist in entrenched socio-economic inequalities, systemic oppression, and widespread human suffering.

This austere reality necessitates the exploration of alternative modes of social and political engagement capable of challenging and transforming these oppressive structures. As Duong (2020) suggests, such engagements can serve as avenues for individual and collective liberation from dystopian conditions. Within the context of this study, this alternative response is examined through the lens of Redemptive Violence (RV), a conceptual framework that interrogates the potential of violence to facilitate resistance, justice, and the reconfiguration of oppressive power relations.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the abundance of scholarly work on violence in African literature, most studies focus on its destructive, traumatic, or repressive dimensions, emphasising state brutality, colonial repression, or postcolonial dictatorship. What remains inadequately explored is how African

writers conceptualise violence as a redemptive, transformative, and justified response to systemic injustice. The ideological basis, literary representation, and socio-political implications of redemptive violence, particularly within Fanonian and Marxist frameworks, have not been fully examined, especially in relation to African narratives. This gap creates an incomplete understanding of how African literature negotiates the ethics of resistance and the liberation struggle. Therefore, a scholarly examination of redemptive violence as an artistic tool for reclaiming justice and dismantling oppressive structures is both timely and necessary.

Aim and significance of the study

The main aim of this study is to critically examine how postcolonial African novelists conceptualise and represent redemptive violence as a transformative and justified response to systemic oppression, drawing on Fanonian and Marxist theoretical frameworks. The study seeks to investigate how narrative strategies, character construction, and socio-political contexts shape literary portrayals of violence as a tool for reclaiming justice, restoring human dignity, and fostering collective liberation in postcolonial African societies.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the increasing discourse on violence, justice, and resistance in African literary scholarship. By foregrounding the notion of redemptive violence, this research shifts away from conventional interpretations that treat violence solely as a pathological or socially disruptive force. Instead, it highlights its potential as an instrument of political awakening and socio-cultural transformation within contexts marked by colonial legacies, neo-colonial governance, and established inequalities.

Furthermore, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how African writers engage with violence as both a philosophical and aesthetic class that exposes the contradictions of postcolonial governance while simultaneously offering visions of renewed social possibility. In doing this, the research deepens critical conversations on liberation struggles, human resilience, and the ethics of resistance, thereby offering valuable insights for scholars of literature, cultural studies, political theory, and postcolonial studies.

Finally, this study is significant because it repositions African literature as a vital site for theorising justice, agency, and collective emancipation. By examining redemptive violence as a literary and ideological construct, the research underscores the role of literature in shaping broader intellectual debates on the legitimacy of resistance and the quest for a more equitable social order.

Specific objectives

The Objectives of the paper are to:

- i. Interrogate the conceptual and ideological foundations of redemptive violence within Fanonian, Marxist, and postcolonial theoretical discourses.
- ii. Analyse how selected African novelists employ narrative techniques, motifs, and characterisation to frame violence as redemptive rather than merely destructive.
- iii. Examine the socio-political conditions, such as colonialism, neo-colonialism, militarism, class inequality, and economic exploitation that give rise to redemptive violence in African literary texts.
- iv. Explore the ways African writers depict collective resistance, class struggle, and revolutionary movements as instruments of reclaiming justice and subverting oppressive structures.

Research Questions

- i. What ideological and theoretical principles underpin the concept of redemptive violence in postcolonial African literature, particularly within Fanonian and Marxist traditions?
- ii. How do selected African novelists use narrative strategies and characterisation to represent violence as a redemptive and transformative force?
- iii. Which socio-political conditions and historical realities, such as colonial domination, class stratification, state repression, or economic exploitation, give rise to redemptive violence in the texts under study?
- iv. In what ways do African literary texts portray collective heroism, mass resistance, and revolutionary struggles as mechanisms for challenging and dismantling oppressive structures?

Frantz Fanon's Theory of Revolutionary Violence

Frantz Fanon's theory of revolutionary violence provides a foundational way for understanding how violence functions as a transformative and redemptive means within postcolonial African literature. Writing amidst anti-colonial struggles in Africa and the Caribbean, Fanon situates violence at the very core of the colonial encounter. Fanon (1963) argues that colonialism is "a systematised negation of the other" maintained through continuous force, military domination, economic exploitation, and psychological subjugation. Violence, therefore, is not incidental to

colonial rule. It is its defining structure; a growing force that governs social relations and produces the conditions of dispossession, humiliation, and dehumanisation experienced daily by the oppressed subject.

Fanon (1963) asserts that since colonial domination is inherently violent, decolonisation cannot occur through negotiation, appeals to morality, or social reform. The structure of 'decolonisation' therefore requires a radical and complete overturn of the colonial order. Revolutionary violence becomes the necessary mechanism through which the colonised regain agency, destroy oppressive structures, and reconstitute their humanity. This praxis is simultaneously material and symbolic. It dismantles the institutions of domination while also healing the psychological fractures induced by racial hierarchy and systemic humiliation. Within this transformative process, violence serves as a restorative act that enables the colonised to transition from passivity to self-determination.

Fanon is rather critical in his approach; he does not romanticise or glorify violence. He remains highly aware of its moral ambiguities and potential dangers, including the risk of reproducing new hierarchies or precipitating post-independence authoritarian regimes. Yet he insists that under conditions where all avenues for peaceful redress are systematically foreclosed, violence acquires a certain historical inevitability (Fanon, 1963; Rabaka, 2010). It becomes the only means through which the oppressed respond to the colonial system of oppression. Revolutionary violence is therefore a historically situated act of reclamation rather than wanton brutality.

Another central dimension of Fanon's theory is the emphasis on collective action. Decolonisation is, for Fanon, the work of the people. It is a mass movement that transforms sectioned individuals into a collective political consciousness. Gibson (2003) posits that through struggle, the colonised forge solidarity, develop political awareness, and reconstruct social identity. This collective orientation aligns Fanon with Marxist theories of class struggle, even as he extends Marxism by foregrounding race, cultural alienation, and the psychological dimensions of oppression. As scholars such as Rabaka (2010) observe, Fanon's synthesis of Marxist materialism with decolonial psychology provides a more expansive framework for understanding how both economic exploitation and racialised dehumanisation fuel revolutionary activity.

In applying Fanon's theory to postcolonial African literature, the concept of violence emerges not as a subjective act but as a historically grounded response to systemic lack. Literary depictions of uprisings, insurgency, or symbolic defiance often reflect the structural conditions that Fanon describes, namely, colonial legacies, neo-colonial governance, class stratification, or state

repression (Mbembe, 2001). Fanon's framework allows us a sophisticated but rather subtle reading that interprets such violence as a redemptive act through which characters reclaim dignity, challenge oppressive systems, and imagine new forms of collective possibility.

In the context of this study, Fanon's theory of revolutionary violence offers a robust intellectual scaffold for analysing redemptive violence in African fiction. It explains how acts of rebellion within literary narratives can be understood as restorative gestures aimed at recovering psychic wholeness and asserting social justice marked by historical brutality. Fanon's emphasis on psychological restoration, collective mobilisation, and the transformative potential of resistance provides a compelling lens through which this study examines how African writers grapple with the complex interplay between violence, justice, and liberation. Fanon's framework not only clarifies the ideological foundations of redemptive violence but also shapes a critical methodology capable of interrogating its ethical tensions and socio-political implications across diverse postcolonial texts.

Review of related literature

Redemptive Violence

The concept of Redemptive Violence (RV) has its historical roots in imperial cultures, where ancient kings and rulers believed that maintaining order required perpetual warfare and the violent suppression of their subjects. The idea of 'might is right' dominated the era then, with powerful figures using violence to control the masses. This early form of redemptive violence was a tool for maintaining the status quo, ensuring that the elite, the kings, aristocrats, and the emperors retained their hold on power. The people were indoctrinated to believe that peace could only be maintained through violence, and thus, violence became the state's primary method of governance. With time, the history of redemptive violence, according to Duong (2017).

Stretches back at least to the Wars of Religion, but the French Revolution adapted it into a vocabulary of extralegal popular agency. It would henceforth become a persistent feature of revolutionary politics across the ideological spectrum and in the 21st century (p. 786).

The state operates under the cover of the rule of law, to give the state absolute sovereignty without citizen agency, with "The early modern European theory of the state's monopoly on legitimate violence" acting under the pretence to "secured and maintained... peace... prosperity, and the security" for the citizens. (Vogler & Markell, 2003, p. 7).

However, the concept of redemptive violence has evolved, particularly in the context of African literature. Originally, it is an archetypal plot in literary theory, as articulated by Walter Wink in *The Powers That Be*. Redemptive violence was criticised for perpetuating oppressive power structures. However, Wink (1998) argued that violence is never redemptive, especially when it upholds unjust systems. Marxist literary theorists redefined the concept of redemptive violence, particularly in the context of apartheid South Africa. There are calls for redemptive violence to be used as a legitimate response by the oppressed against their oppressors in the context of apartheid, South Africa, thus positioning it as a tool for revolutionary transformation rather than a mechanism of oppression. Nwagbara (2011, p.118) noted that “During the apartheid years in South Africa, violence was used as a tool by the white minority for advancement of racial segregation, social inequality and class oppression” this led to the return violence from the black, as such, violence was used by the blacks to demand for justice, equality and fair treatment in South Africa. This returned violence, according to Fraser and Hutchings (2020, p.117), is necessary since it is “provoked” by the sense of immediate injustice in the innocent oppressed to correct the ugly situations. This reimagining of redemptive violence emphasises ‘collectivism’, where individuals act as part of a larger system seeking collective liberation. Beaumont (2020) points out that “redemptive violence here is understood as those systems of thought and action that see violence as an essential, necessary and redeemable” (p. 186).

However, the postcolonial African states often label some revolutionary individuals or groups of individuals as rebels, terrorists, or anarchists, particularly when their activities challenge the oppressive regimes (Celeb. 2017). These are individuals who fight for the freedom of their people against what they perceive as corrupt or sectional governments, embodying the characters frequently portrayed in African novels. Revolutionary writers like Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Festus Iyayi, Sembene Ousmane and other contemporary African writers write to resist certain oppressive structures in their novels. Aside from the revolutionary writers, African literary genres are typically protest literature in general. This explains why Agho (2020) observes about African writers that no matter how “diversified the contextual matters handled by the writers in the different genres of the literature, the defining character of pessimism or protest always triumphs whether or not the writers are critical realists or revolutionary writers” (p. 24). He argues further that writing in Africa is a social obligation to write down the societal values and challenge the ills of power “towards the redemption of the society” (p. 24). Hence, these revolutionary writers create characters that

resist oppression and struggle towards revolutionary change in their literature. These characters are often branded as anarchists due to their resistance to the status quo, but their struggles reflect a broader fight for freedom from internal or external oppression (Cederman et al, 2015).

According to Duong (2020, p. 1), violence was not a source or symptom of anarchy. It was its solution. Rather than something sublimated, as men escaped nature into society, violence saved society from dissolution. Redemptive violence, as depicted in African literature, is a response to the state's unjust violence. It is seen as a necessary tool for restructuring and reshaping the socio-economic and political life of a nation. While violence is inherently destructive, this study argues that redemptive violence, when used as a means to achieve collective freedom, is justifiable. It is not self-centred violence but rather a mechanism aimed at attaining social justice and liberation. This study examines how selected African writers portray RV in their works, positioning it as a positive force in the fight against oppression. It is believed that "the only way to overcome oppressive forces permanently is to get rid of them," perhaps through the use of violence and force. Hence, to be free from violence necessitates the use of violence in return (Miller, 2021, p. 61).

Marxism, though had its peak during the African revolutionary struggles of the 1970s through the early 1990s, informs the ideology of redemptive violence. Marxist philosophy critiques capitalist societies, which dehumanise and exploit the working class, creating class distinctions that lead to social unrest. Marx (1992) argued that revolution is inevitable in states where the proletariat is oppressed and dehumanised. This socialist revolution, which Marx envisioned as the only path to freedom for the working class, is akin to the concept of RV discussed in this study. Violence becomes redemptive when it is directed towards the collective good and aimed at overthrowing oppressive systems. Redemptive violence also questions the existing social order by articulating a revolutionary option. In societies where class distinctions fuel hostility and exploitation, RV is often the only viable response for the oppressed.

In societies where the proletariat faces tyranny, corruption, economic exploitation, and poverty, revolution becomes the only means of achieving justice. Violence becomes redemptive when it addresses collective problems and demands collective responsibility. (Agho, 2018) describes RV as "restorative violence," a force used by the oppressed to reclaim their humanity, drawing on Frantz Fanon's work on decolonisation.

Fanon argued that violence is sometimes necessary to break free from the psychological and physical chains of colonialism and oppression. Ngugi wa Thiong'o also justifies positive violence,

stating that violence used to change an intolerable social order is not savagery but a means of purifying humanity. (Fraser, 2017) Similarly, argues that class struggle is inevitable and necessary to dismantle systems that exploit the weak and the poor. RV embraces the concept of the “plurimental hero,” where multiple individuals unite to fight against a common enemy, rather than the “mono-mental hero,” which emphasises individual achievements. This shift in focus reflects the collective nature of RV, which seeks to liberate entire communities rather than just individual actors.

In African literature, RV challenges the capitalist structures that perpetuate inequality and oppression. The capitalist system, as Marx argued, dehumanises the working class and creates a cycle of exploitation that inevitably leads to social crises. RV, in this context, becomes a tool for dismantling capitalist structures and advocating for a more equitable social order. It is not just a response to individual oppression but a broader critique of societal systems that marginalise and exploit large segments of the population.

The characters in African novels are often revolutionary figures fighting against corrupt regimes, exploitative systems, and external or internal oppression. These figures, though labelled as anarchists or rebels by the state, represent the struggle for freedom and justice. The study examines how African novelists like Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Festus Iyayi, and Sembene Ousmane portray these revolutionary characters and the roles of the RV in their quests for liberation (Joseph, 2017).

Ultimately, RV is a form of violence that is justified when it seeks to overthrow oppressive regimes and achieve collective freedom. It is not motivated by selfish desires but by the need to address systemic injustices that affect entire populations. This study contends that RV, when used in this context, is a legitimate response to the violence perpetrated by the state. Through an analysis of African novels, this study explores how writers depict RV as a necessary tool for achieving social and political liberation, while also critiquing the oppressive systems that perpetuate violence against the masses (Hudis, 2012).

Hence, RV in African literature is framed as a revolutionary force that challenges the capitalist and oppressive systems which dominate postcolonial African states. It is a tool for achieving justice and liberation, particularly for the working class and marginalised populations who suffer under exploitative regimes. The concept of RV, as examined in this study, serves as a reminder that violence, though destructive, can be a powerful force for change when used to address collective injustices. This study critically analyses how African novelists portray RV, offering insights into

the broader implications of violence as a means of achieving freedom in postcolonial societies. Elliott (2013) argues that violent riots by the rabble are not irrational outbursts but represent a redemptive, autonomous political gesture against late capitalism. He views these riots as a fight for recognition, exposing systemic inequality, and theorises them as catalysts for transformative change within capitalist society. This aligns with Benjamin's (2007) divine violence and the concept of revolutionary violence. Like divine violence, redemptive violence does not aim to overthrow the political system; instead, it serves as a political tool through which the masses—the rabble—engage in collective action against the oppressive "state apparatus" that threatens their existence.

Exploring Redemptive Violence in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not Child*

There are four factors identified in this paper that characterise Redemptive Violence RV within the context of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not Child*. First is the concept of class distinction. The second is the concept that favours collective heroism as opposed to monolithic or messianic heroism. The third factor is the African experiences under capitalist colonial exploiters. The last one is the union resistance and armed struggle.

This study argues in the first place that RV is deeply rooted in class distinction using “Marxist Fanonism” or rather Fanon’s theory of revolutionary violence. By implication, the oppression and the exploitation of the lower-class majority by the upper class usually trigger a reaction which afterwards is often violent. *Weep Not Child* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a historical class struggle between the white capitalist and the exploited Kenyan peasants. Marxist Fanonism to Reiland Rubaka (2010) exposes the evil contribution of the capitalist economic system of imperialism towards the social and political life of African society. This form of economic system, Rubaka explains, ‘condemns’ many Africans to a perpetual subjugation and exploitation, leaving the African resources and manpower under the control of the capitalist. This capitalist economic system not only exploits African resources and labour, but also perpetually keeps the African society away from notable growth and development (p. 148).

The novel *Weep Not Child* centres on the class conflicts between the white landlord (Howland) and the black natives, represented by Ngotho and the family, who are kept perpetually in a poor condition and who are impoverished by the alienation they suffer at the hands of their landlords (the white settlers). Ngotho, for instance, is a poor peasant who suffers in silence for years and is forced to till the land of his ancestors for the gain of Mr Howland. Hence, he is alienated from his

production as a worker. This alienation is degrading, inhuman and a form of slavery perpetuated by the colonist against colonial Africa, which makes the victim resort to violent revolution. Mbah (2014) posits that “class struggle and revolutionary pressures are associated with class societies and class society includes struggle of class opposites in whatever forms or way” (p. 15). The community painted by Ngugi in *Weep Not Child*, for example, is indeed a class society, where a socioeconomic gap exists between the poor peasants and the rich landowners.

Look at Howlands. He is not employed by anybody. Yet he is very rich and happy. It's because he has land. Or look at Jacobo. He's like that because he has land... Boro has no land. He could not get employment. (wa Thiong'o, 1976:41)

The society in the novel is in layers such that the white settlers stay at the upper part of the economic ladder, and the few blacks who own land, like Nganga the carpenter, and especially Jacobo, find themselves in the middle class. Others, like Ngotho and family, find themselves at the lower section of the economic ladder. Land is used as a yardstick in the determination of an individual's wealth in that community. “Any man who has land was considered rich. If a man had plenty of money, many motor cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich.” (wa Thiong'o, 1976: 19). Of course, Ngotho and other members of his household have no land. Besides, Mr Howland, the white settler, turns Ngotho into a labourer with a low wage on the land of his ancestors. Class distinction also shows in the ways the Indian traders treat the black and the white customers. “And if you went to buy in a shop and a white man found you, the Indian would stop selling to you and, trembling all over, would begin to serve him.” (wa Thiong'o 1976, p. 7).

There is also the idea of separate amenities and the poor state of the black infrastructure. Fanon (1963) noticed that “the zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed” (p. 30). wa Thiong'o particularly describes where Kori works - Green Hotel. Kori is the son of Njeri, Ngotho's eldest wife. An African tea shop called Green Hotel. Green Hotel happens to be filthy, full of buzzing flies, while the stench of decay hung in the air like a heavy cloud. (wa Thiong'o, 1976, p. 22) wa Thiong'o paints a polarised Gikuyu community where the majority indigenous Africans are miserably poor and the white minorities are comfortably controlling the means of production, swimming in affluence and leisure on the sweat and labour of the former. The white man uses the black as a labourer on his farm and in his homestead. For instance, Howland's wife, Suzannah, has savants who tend to her and whom she often treats unfairly and sacks at will. “She beats and sacks servant after servant.” (wa Thiong'o,

1976, p. 31). Wa Thiong'o, in the novel, also explains that the houses lived in by the blacks and the whites are different. While the whites live in very exotic houses, the blacks live in shabby houses. wa Thiong'o describes the houses: "Mr Howland's house. It was huge and imposing. It was grander than the one that belonged to Mihaki's father." (wa Thiong'o, 1976, p. 36)

Agho Jude (2018) explores the class conflict that led to the rise of the "proletarian" novel in Africa. He uses Ngugi's novel for the purpose and concludes that it takes a radical solution, which is the use of mass revolt to attain the state of what he refers to as 'dictatorship of the proletariat class'.

Mbah (2014 therefore, argues that:

The basis of the struggle between the two classes is the control of the state so as to determine social policies, especially the authoritative allocation of values and scarce resources. While the oppressed class agitates for a new social order that ensures fairly equitable distribution of resources, the bourgeois class preoccupies itself with maintaining its class advantage, by extension, the structural inequality. Since the ruling class does not willingly surrender power (in other words, not prepared to commit class suicide), it has to be compelled to do so through intense struggle and/or violence. Such agitations and struggles result in class conflicts. This class struggle may lead to the overthrow of the ruling class or compel it to embark on reforms such as an increase in wages, welfare, bonuses, political liberties, democratic participation in industrial affairs, etc. (Bangura 1985:39 as quoted in Mbah, 2014: 16)

Ngugi creates in these novels characters among the impoverished members of the society who use collective energy and wage war against the oppressor to achieve the collective goal of freedom. This brings us to the second factor that characterises Redemptive Violence (RV), which is the concept that favours collective heroism as opposed to monolithic or messianic heroism. As such, the idea of a single hero or *messianism* is jettisoned in favour of collective heroism. In this situation, there is a unifying factor that brings the people together, even though it is often the initiation of a particular character who spurs the rest of the masses into action. One thing remains: the fact that they are altogether objects of oppression and have come to realise the need to form a formidable force to achieve the aim of removing their 'capitalist' oppressor. According to Fanon (1963), in this situation, "individualism is the first thing to disappear" (p. 37). To this end, it is often blurred to categorically point to a particular character as the hero in such a struggle for freedom. According to Agho (2018)

Apart from centering their plot on simple folks, usually peasants and members of the working class, they also democratise the concept of heroism by censoring messianic tendencies and favouring collective heroism. Such novels embody major revolutions usually orchestrated by the working class against the oppression of its members by the oppressor or bourgeois class and work towards the redemption of the victims of the oppression by granting them victory at the end of the struggle. (p. 3)

I argue in the second instance here that RV is a collective struggle towards a collective redemption of the oppressed. For instance, in Ngugi's *Weep Not Child*, almost all the characters who are oppressed in one form or another display their loyalty towards regaining the lost land. Besides, each suffers the aftermath of the struggle in a way. Ngotho, Njoroge's father, not only loses his job but is tortured to death. Njoroge's education suffers a setback aside from the fact that he is tortured for a crime he did not commit. Jomo loses the trial and is imprisoned. Kamau is imprisoned for life. Boro, who is the real leader of the Mau Mau movement, continues to live in the forest.

Like Njoroge, Ngotho is portrayed as the main hero of the novel. The story is woven around Njoroge for his prominent role in the novel. We can equally claim that the story is more about the life of Ngotho than even his son. Ngotho seems to be at the centre of the violence in the sense that the climax of violence in the novel found its source in Ngotho's challenge by his son. At that juncture, Ngugi shows him as the hero in the novel, as the front runner in the strike action, which later degenerates into physical violence. Besides, Ngotho is the first to be tortured for the murder of Jacobo. Thus, after the arrest of his other son (Kamu) in connection with the murder of Jacobo, Ngotho heroically:

Offer(s) his old tooth that had failed to bite deep into anything. But Ngotho could never tell where he had found the courage to walk into the D.O.'s office and admit that he had killed Jacobo. It was a confession that had shocked the whole village, and Ngotho had now for days been tortured in all manner of ways (wa Thiong'o, 1976, p. 119)

Mention is made of Dedan Kimathi, who is believed to have spurred his people to fight for freedom. His name was used as a threat to the white police and Jacobo. The whites are sent secret letters that bear the name of Dedan Kimathi. "You see, he had written a letter to the police station at Nyeri. "I, Dedan Kimathi, leader of the African Freedom Army, will come to visit you at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday" (wa Thiong'o, 1976, p. 68).

At another point in the novel, Jomo is also suggested as the messiah- the hero of the people of Kikuyu, who has come to deliver his people from the hands of the white oppressors. “There is a man sent from God whose name was Jomo. He was the black Moses empowered by God to tell the white Pharaoh, ‘Let my people go!’ (wa Thiong’o, 1976, p. 58). Ngugi compares Jomo in the novel with the Biblical Moses, who delivered the Israelites from the hands of Pharaoh. ‘Boro called him the black Moses in the Bible?’” (wa Thiong’o, 1976, p. 43). “He could still remember a meeting in the marketplace by K.A.U... K.A.U. is the society of black people who wanted Wiyathi and the return of the stolen land. The society also wanted bigger salaries for black people and the abolition of colour bar” (wa Thiong’o, 1976, p. 64). Here, Ngugi refers to Jomo Kenyatta as a leader who became a hero among the black people of Kenya for his struggle for the freedom of his people. The idea of the pluralistic hero was further reinforced and resolved with the argument that ensues among the students in the school, as posited by Ngugi, as to whether Kimathi or Jomo is the hero. The third factor I use in the explanation of RV is colonialism. Colonialism plays a vital role towards revolutionary movements in Africa. It can therefore be argued that colonialism spurred up reactions and ultimately violence, which is described in this paper as Redemptive Violence (RV) in Africans. It is therefore very important to note that colonialism no doubt played a unique role not only in planting violence in African society but also in legitimising it by encouraging the African elite to perpetrate, in the same vein, the violence used by their oppressor. In the novel, the British government, represented by the character of Howlands, for instance, takes over the land and uses the original African owners as labourers with very low wages in *Weep Not Child*. This is the case of Ngotho and his family. Ngotho, like other black Kenyans, are treated by the white settlers as a slave on their ancestral land. The unfortunate developments in the novel - the war, unemployment, strike action, the killings and the armed struggle- have their root in colonialism. Colonialism, therefore, comes with despair, which led to a series of frustrations and eventual violent revolution. Agho Jude (2018) explains that Ngugi wa Thiong’o in *Weep Not Child* concentrates on colonial Kenya, especially the emergency period before the dawn of the era of independence, and extends the class conflict barely hinted at in the novel. Mostly Boro and Kori, Ngotho’s sons, confront the colonial operatives and their African collaborators in the person of Jacobo over the vexed issues of land ownership and agitations over decolonisation. Howlands, the white landowner and later the District Colonial Officer in the novel, epitomises the brute force of colonialism. (wa Thiong’o, 1976, p. 4)

Weep Not Child, therefore, gives a fair historical account of colonial Kenya as well as the rift that resulted from the black revolt and the eventual militant struggle of the Gikuyi towards the redemption of the people from the colonial subjugation, oppression and enslavement. Ngugi's *Weep Not Child* proves to be a typical revolutionary novel that largely condemns the activities of the colonial government in Kenya to bring about decolonisation. He, therefore, castigates the colonial structure that suppresses the potential of characters like Ngotho, Njoroge, Boro, the Barber, Ngaga and others.

Colonialism itself is seen as violence against the colonised African society. It "provides a platform for Africans to collectively agitate for their rights; a precursor to the Mau Mau revolutionary group that ...later confronted colonialism and the colonial government in Kenya in pitched battles to bring about decolonisation" (Agho, 2018)

The fourth factor considered in the discussion of RV in the context of this research is the union resistance and armed struggle. This underlines the growth of violence in a higher momentum as seen further in *Weep Not Child*- the strike action is followed by the violent beating of Jacobo by Ngotho, and then the murder of Jacobo, and later the armed struggle, Mau Mau. Ngugi, for instance, created in *Weep Not Child* characters like Ngotho, Jomo and Boro. "Indeed, Ngugi seems to be suggestive of the idea that armed struggle needs to complement trade union resistance when he brings into the novel the revolutionary intervention of the Mau Mau uprising after the strike action by the workers to ask for increased salary fails to create the desired effect and reaction from the white settlers represented by Howlands.

War returnees regroup to form a band of guerrilla fighters set to confront the colonial operatives in pitched battles. This is an amplification of the Kiamu group in the earlier novel, which, as stated earlier, was precursory to the emergence of the Mau Mau revolutionary group. Boro personifies the soul of the people's revolt against colonialism in this novel. To show Ngugi's endorsement of the activities of the guerrilla fighters, the group at the end of the novel succeeds in exterminating the district colonial officer, Mr Howlands, as well as his African collaborator, Jacobo; thus, paving the way for the achievement of independence, which is shown in graphical details in the next novel, *A Grain of Wheat*. Ngugi's endorsement of violence as a viable means of attaining decolonisation, which is the fulcrum of the operations of the Mau Mau group in the novel, pays off ... (Mbah, 2014, p. 15)

Fanon (1963) believes that the colonial reign usually repressed the emotional sensitivity of the native for some time, but not for so long. He assumed that violence is kept on the surface of the skin of the native black, like an open wound, which causes irritation and violent reactions. Its similitude can also be likened to a time bomb ready to explode at the slightest provocation. Thus, the exploited peasant in the long run only finds out that his liberation and freedom depend on the use of all possible solutions at his disposal. And as such, his conscious mind is stirred by the subconscious reality of colonial violence. It is hence justified to say that colonial violence is confronted by greater violence since the oppressor is not ready to compromise his hegemony for peace. (p. 44-48).

Looking beyond the “Strike”: A paradigm towards Redemption in Ousmane Sembene’s God’s Bits of Wood

Scholars like Sikiru Ogundokun (2014), Adeniyi (2017) and others see the works of Sembene as typically revolutionary, singled out against the European capitalists. Ogundokun (2014) sees the oppressed in Sembene’s *God’s Bits of Wood* as well-organised and united; as such, they become the tool for “social transformation”, especially from the colonial imperialists (p. 72). He, therefore, sees all social, political and economic revolts in Sembene’s novels as symbols of revolutionary actions of the oppressed society against imperialist hegemony. Adeniyi Emanuel (2017) examines “the sordidness of classism, alienated labour, *commodification* or *thingification* of the underclass and other bourgeois tensions” in the text of Ousmane Sembene. He, however, underplays the use of revolution as the only way of ending the oppression of the lower class. Adeniyi, therefore, “advocates (for) economic revivalism through the exploration of the opportunities offered by the communal mode of production” (p. 55). He also considers the poetic ingenuity of Sembene and Ngugi, and comes to the conclusion that the two writers engage in “*intertextual dialogism*” or “*dialogic intertextuality*” as several tropes, imageries, signs and symbols were shared in their works.

However, and more importantly, this research corroborates the works of Ogundokun (2014) more than any other one as it relates to the concept of Redemptive Violence (RV) put forward by this research towards total freedom from the hands of the oppressor. The role of the woman cannot be underplayed in the struggle for freedom, as explored by Mooka (2016) and Jive Lubungu (2020). Sembene’s *God’s Bits of Wood* is a total demonstration of the accord of all and sundry, especially the oppressed (educated, illiterates, the old and the young) in their collective struggle against their

exploitation, rather than being considered as a struggle of womenfolk against the old order of being subordinates to men.

Here, Sembene Ousmane's *Gods Bits of Wood* is read beyond political ideology. The novel is examined using the paradigm of strike. In doing this, critical attention is paid to the concept of strike as an important trope towards redemption. Strike actions in this novel are recognised as a form of violence engendered specifically towards the freedom of the classless members of society, or in a more relative term, the oppressed, from the pangs of the capitalist oligarchy and the oppressors. Strike actions in this novel serve as a mechanism as well as a necessary tool in achieving freedom for the downtrodden, especially the working class in society.

Throughout the narrative, strike actions continue to be a recurring trope for a successful resistance towards the liberty of the societies in question. It is therefore imperative to discuss the composition of the strike as it appears in the novel. Hence, looking beyond the strike, the violence (riot and death) in the text is assumed to be an economic reaction more than a political reaction against the capitalist state. Among other things, the text emphasises class solidarity as a major component of a strike if successful resistance is to be achieved.

Here, there is the presentation of certain theoretical concepts in a bid to better understand the fundamental nature and functions of Redemptive Violence (RV) as an ideology towards economic and political emancipation of individuals in the state. As such, some concepts are proposed and are presented in this section as components of a successful strike. These components are likened to Masood Raja's (2011) "Anatomy of strike", which are "necessary preconditions for successful resistance in the neoliberal regime of high capital" (p. 424). Class solidarity, education or information, gender inclusion (gender reconfiguration), Rhetoric, and consultation are identified as concepts that characterised a successful strike as a tool for resistance towards redemption of the state as seen in Osman Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood*.

Ousmane Sembene, in *God's Bits of Wood*, suggests that class solidarity is a major component of a successful strike. Raja (2011) believes that reading Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood* as a solidarity *ideologeme* creates a powerful model of resistance against oppressive government. Throughout the narration, more people continue to join the strike, which starts from the city of Thies- "the riot had spread through all of Thies. Other men had come from the market to help the workers" (Sembene, 1962, p. 23).

The second component theorised in this research work for an effective strike towards successful resistance is gender inclusion or gender reconfiguration. Gender inclusion or gender reconfiguration is as important as class solidarity- if successful resistance would be achieved using the strike as a trope towards sustainable redemption. Adeniyi (2011) explains that the role of women cannot be overemphasised in the victory recorded in Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood*. He notes that "Beyond providing active support and serving as the intellectual force driving the strike, women in the novel...break the patriarchal barriers and sexist ordering of African society to become leaders and revolutionary voice" (62).

From the reading of Ousmane Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood*, rhetoric is theorised as another important and effective element of a successful strike towards vibrant and pro-active resistance, which, after all, yields a physical, social and economic transformation as well as total redemption as seen in the novel. Ousmane Sembene explores rhetoric as a vital ingredient in the hands of the striking workers (the peasants) as they struggle for justice and the dignity of their labour. Characters like Bakayoko, Ramatoulaye and others use rhetoric effectively through emotional appeals, collective identity and social responsibility of the ordinary working class – the peasants (219). For instance, during Diara's trial, Tiamako uses what can be referred to as 'rhetoric of emphasis' to remind other characters about the need to fight and free their colleagues who are being imprisoned by the colonial rulers for embarking on strikes. He says: "But let no one forget that while we are talking here, many of our comrades are in prisons" (p. 91). Proverb or figurative use of expression is another form of rhetoric used especially by the older characters, like Fa Keita and others in the novel.

Waiting for redemption: The trope of imprisonment in *Waiting for an Angel*

The trope of Imprisonment in *Waiting for an Angel* explores the theme of confinement, both physical and psychological, as a central element in the narrative. The characters face literal imprisonment, representing the oppressive political regime, while also grappling with metaphorical imprisonment, symbolising their social, mental, and emotional struggles. This trope highlights how the characters' desires for freedom, justice, and self-expression are stifled by external forces, reflecting the broader societal constraints within which they live. Ultimately, the trope of imprisonment underscores the characters' yearning for liberation and change. It portrays a pervasive atmosphere of surveillance and control where individuals are monitored and even intimidated by the security apparatuses. All these restrictions and limitations restrict and limit the

ability of individuals like Lomba, Kela, Joshua, James and others to freely organise, communicate or engage in any social, political or viable economic activities without the fear of being apprehended.

Agho and Atere (2020) observe that “The history of governance in Nigeria has shown that governance, either by military or civilian administration, is faced with deception and self-centeredness” (p. 12). There is also the general feeling of insecurity and restriction that characterised the military regime of General Sani Abacha. It was a situation where all citizens experience a continuous subjugation (Rapoport and Weinberg, 2020). Some were even killed. Ken Saro Wiwa, for instance, was killed; Dele Giwa was silenced, and Abiola was imprisoned. This feeling of being imprisoned is expressed by Kela when he laments that, “We are living under siege... They hold us cowed with guns... They do it by holding guns to our heads.

However, in the face of restriction and oppression, Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel* is a conscious call for resistance. Habila portrays characters who defiantly confronted political oppression and societal injustice, even though most of them paid dearly for it. Dele Giwa, the editor of the News Watch and Ken Saro Wiwa were killed, and Lomba was imprisoned. Resistance in *Waiting for an Angel* comes in various forms, which include: journalistic resistance, artistic resistance, political activism, etc. Journalistic resistance is the use of official news writing to expose the evils of a repressive government. Lomb, for instance, used his journalistic experience to uncover the truth despite the risks posed by the military regime through the narration. Lomba challenged the tyrannical rule. He covered a protest which led to his imprisonment.

Artistic resistance is the form of resistance that comes in the form of creative writing, such as poetry. Even in prison, Lomba’s creative writing gives voice to individuals like Superintendent Muftau, who uses Lomba’s poem to capture the heart of Janice, his love (Rapoport and Weinberg, 2022). Lomba’s poems serve as a reflection of his inner tumult and longing for freedom. In the prison, prisoners were not even allowed any freedom. As such, Lomba’s creative writing in the form of poetry in prison is a symbolic deviance against censorship.

Political activism is a normal form of resistance identified in Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel*. For instance, the students and others are involved in protests, civil disobedience, demonstrations and riots. All these are symbolic acts of deviance portrayed by Habila, which underscore Habila’s characters’ resistance against subjugation and restrictions of life (Pehrson et al, 2019). The protests

and demonstrations are sincere gestures towards ‘conspiracy’ or solidarity to challenge and question the military capitalist in Habila’s work.

The trope of imprisonment, therefore, is a powerful literary motif which portrays the harsh realities of military oppression. On the other hand, the trope of resistance celebrates the courage of individuals and the collective struggle for redemption and justice even in the face of death. Hence, the society awaits its freedom from corruption, nepotism, and tyranny (perhaps from the Angel of death) that will finally liberate them from the hands of oppressors or take away the oppressors from their midst (Panstars, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the persistent presence of violence in human society, particularly within the context of contemporary African literature. It reveals how African states, through socioeconomic inequalities, oppression, and dehumanisation, contribute to a cycle of violence. The research demonstrates that African novelists utilise RV as an alternative literary response to violence and political injustice. Redemptive violence, as depicted in African literature, is framed not as a barbaric or senseless act but as a legitimate response to confront systems of exploitation and injustice. The study shows how violence, while disruptive, is often a necessary means of seeking justice and freedom for the oppressed. By analysing key works, the study further identifies colonialism, neo-colonialism, imprisonment and strike actions as recurring motifs that shape the portrayal of redemptive violence. These themes are central in understanding how violence in African literature becomes a tool for resistance and eventual liberation from the oppressive structures of power.

Ultimately, this contributes to a broader understanding of redemptive violence in African literature, asserting that it is not an act of savagery, but a reclaiming of justice in the face of systemic crimes against marginalised populations.

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Ethics of Christian Giving and Its Inference in Selected Pentecostal Churches

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Abstract

When it comes to the issue of giving, some Christians tend to find their comfort zone in the New Testament because of tithing. Perhaps, we turn to Psalms or proverbs for protection and wisdom, forgetting that the scripture (the Old and New Testaments) was written through the inspiration of God. This research work aims to discover if Christians give to God in accordance with biblical injunctions, to change the motives and to orient Christians on how to give to God, the poor and the needy. Scholars have not done much on this discourse. The researcher adopted a qualitative research method, which involves a careful, diligent, objective and exhaustive research for solid information to develop a valid knowledge of the subject matter. Quantitative method was also used. The findings from the research reveal that giving to God and the needy is what is expected from a Christian to imbibe. The researcher therefore recommends that the ministers of God in all churches should make use of the money contributed by the members judiciously, and also, they should be accountable, they should use the money for the growth and advancement of the kingdom and not for their selfish motives. More so, the church should encourage the use of various media of giving, such as online payment, apps order than only the use of basket offerings during church services. Church founders should treat their resident pastors well by placing them on a good salary structure.

Keywords: *Ethics, Christian giving, Pentecostal Churches*

Introduction

Giving is an act of willingly and voluntarily providing or offering something to someone without expecting anything in return. The giving in the Old Testament and the New Testament was without compulsion, force, and not done reluctantly but with a good and cheerful heart. In Luke 21:1-4, the poor widow gave two mites she was left with as an offering, and Jesus counted it worthy above others who gave more than her. Offering. Also, the widow of Zarephath played a small but

important role in Elijah's story. Even when she had little, she considered the man of God first (1 Kings 17:7-16).

There is an ethical way of giving by a Christian to God and to people; giving to God and the people should not be done grudgingly or forcefully, but cheerfully. And the Heart of giving to God really matters in how God will bless the giver. As Christians, we tend to find our comfort Zone in the New Testament. Perhaps we turn to the psalms for comfort or to proverbs for wisdom, but we do not embrace the fullness of the scripture. It is always easy for us to ask God for a particular thing, but when it is time to give, some people start to grumble and complain. It has been observed that in some selected Pentecostal churches in Atiba Local Government Area in Oyo, the members don't give to God according to how God has blessed them. They are unfaithful in paying the tithe and offering.

Statement of the Problem

The act of giving is an important aspect of Christian worship, ethics and principles of living. It is essentially a central part of the Christian lifestyle that reflects the true essence of Christianity, heart of gratitude, reverence, obedience and submission unto God, love, kindness and a compassionate heart unto humanity, especially those that are in need. Giving in Christianity is a reflection of God's grace and His sacrificial giving of His begotten son as recorded in John 3:16. Despite the significant essence of giving in Christian faith and worship, it is observed that a whole lot of church goers who claim to be Christians still do not understand the actual essence of giving as they often display a misrepresentation of the true essence of giving that would be acceptable in the sight of God. While some fellows hypocritically give to show, some give grudgingly, and some give with expectation of what they hope to receive from God in return, hinged on the aspect of Malachi chapter 3 that emphasises the promise of God, but they de-emphasise the essence that it said that all the tithe should be brought, that there should be meat in the house of God. This also echoes the aspect of the gospel in the book of Luke 6:38, which goes thus: "Give and it will come back to you. Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." A whole lot of Christians hold onto this mindset, which implies that giving brings about a return in bountiful measure, pressed down and running over and not as an essential of submission unto God. All these motives of giving negate the real essence of sacrificial giving and the significant essence that God loves a cheerful giver who gives from the depth of his or her heart as a form of gratitude to God and as a sincere act of worship, love and a compassionate heart.

This research, therefore, fills the vacuum of the lack of proper biblical understanding of the principles and ethics of Christian giving in the minds of many believers and Christians. The research is thus geared at analysing the actual essence, significance and ethics of the different categories of giving recorded in the bible.

The Concept of Giving in Christianity

Giving refers to the act of voluntarily providing or offering something to someone without expecting anything in return. It involves the selfless act of sharing or contributing resources, such as time, effort, money or possessions, with the intention of benefitting another person, a group, or a cause. Giving can take various forms, including donating to charity, helping others in need, offering support or advice, volunteering, or engaging in acts of kindness and generosity. Giving in Christian settings is the act of raising resources (not only money) in order to fund the work of God and also to meet people's needs. Every religion makes an effort to raise funds for the sake of accomplishing set objectives. In most cases, money contributed by donors is used for the project, or to assist the basic needs of members or for evangelism. It is often driven by empathy, compassion, or a desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others. It is a selfless and altruistic action motivated by kindness, compassion, and empathy. Giving can come in many forms, such as donating money, goods, time, services, or even emotional support.

Warwick¹ defines charitable giving as the donation of money to an organisation that benefits others beyond one's own family. This implies that giving is what is done to other people in the society without considering what to receive in return for one's good deeds, for example, donating one's kidney to a relative. This form of giving goes beyond money; it can be one's time to be spent, etc. It is expected of a Christian to give without expecting anything in return from the receiver.

The essence of giving lies in the willingness to offer help, assistance, or resources to others in need or simply to make a positive impact on their lives. Giving is often associated with generosity, charity, and philanthropy. It is a fundamental aspect of human relationships and societal interactions, fostering empathy, compassion, and connection between individuals. Giving can lead to feelings of satisfaction, fulfilment, and joy for both the giver and the recipient. It can also strengthen bonds, build trust, and create a sense of community and interconnectedness. This implies that giving brings about friendship, a relationship which can last till eternity. A practical example is the life Jesus gave to mankind, and to date, the relationship between Jesus and the Christians remains steadfast.

More so, giving is a powerful and meaningful practice that contributes to creating a more caring and supportive world. It makes life easier for the less privileged and for the offspring God has given them. It allows us to express our values, empathy, and compassion towards others, fostering positive change and promoting well-being in both the giver and the broader community. The Bible says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressing down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measure unto you (Luke 6:38). A practical example is when one withholds a seed without planting it, germination of such fruit is not possible. When you eat all that you harvested from the farm, what will you plant for the coming year? God wants us to give for His glory and also to help His people.

Abel Damian², in a quote, once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." This highlights the importance of giving back and helping those in need as a way to not only make a positive impact on the world but also to find fulfilment and purpose in life. By giving to others, we can often find a deeper sense of connection and joy that enriches our own lives as well. I support this assertion because even the disciples of Jesus lost their lives during the propagation of the gospel to search for the lost sheep of Israel. Am not in support of this assertion of losing oneself because of others. Not everybody is appreciative, irrespective of your good deeds, one can only help or give and not to the extreme of losing one's life.

Christian giving goes beyond the immediate benefit to the recipient (The Receiver). Giving also has a transformative effect on the giver, deepening their faith, shaping their character, and drawing them closer to God. The Bible teaches that when we give, we are participating in God's work of redemption and restoration, bringing healing and hope to a broken world. Giving can have a ripple effect, inspiring others to generosity and creating a culture of compassion and generosity within the Christian community. When Christians give generously and sacrificially, they bear witness to the love of God and demonstrate the values of the Kingdom of God.

Voluntary Giving in the Old Testament

There are various voluntary offerings to God during the pre-Mosaic and the New Testament period. We have given that is subjected under the law and the one under grace in Christ.

Waltke³ holds that Torah, that is, the five books of Moses, especially the priestly legislation, has a rich and precise vocabulary to represent the sacraments offered to the Lord on an altar. He argues that each term denotes a physical object representing a spiritual truth upon which the worshipper

could feed spiritually in his approach to and communion with God. The most inclusive term for presentations to God on the altar is “offering”, from a root which means “to bring near.” The voluntary offerings included the burnt offering, fellowship offering, meal offering and freewill offering. These dedicatory offerings could be either an animal, such as a pigeon or turtledove, which is referred to as a burnt offering, or grains such as wheat or barley, which is also called a meal offering. The fellowship offering could be either (Leviticus 3). A libation offering accompanied burnt and fellowship offerings. The priest’s portion of the fellowship offering was symbolically “waved” before the Lord as His portion, and the so called the wave offering. Certain portions of it were given as a “contribution” from the offer to the priests, the so-called “heave offering”.

Waltke viewed sacrifice as a presentation on the altar, or a more technical term, as representing rituals in making a covenant. The slaughtering of an animal in the latter case symbolised a self-curse (that is, the one making a covenant would say words to the effect, “may it happen to me as it is happening to this animal I am killing”) and effected a sacrifice.

The Old Testament also speaks about the importance of giving with a cheerful heart, not out of compulsion or obligation. In the book of Deuteronomy, it is stated that God loves a cheerful giver and will bless those who give generously and willingly from their hearts. The Old Testament provides numerous examples and teachings on the importance of giving and generosity as a way to support God's work, help those in need, and reflect the loving and generous nature of God himself. It serves as a reminder for believers to give generously and sacrificially, trusting in God's faithfulness to bless and provide for those who give with a generous heart.

(i) The Offering of Cain and Abel

According to Strong⁴, the Hebrew word used for offering means (to apportion, i.e bestow; a donation, euphemistically, tribute; specifically, a sacrificial offering (usually bloodless and voluntary). The contention of MacArthur⁵ that one may infer that at an earlier time God had required that offerings be made can therefore not be supported. These were clearly freewill offerings.

The first offering that was recorded in the Bible was that of Cain and Abel, whereby God asked the two brothers to offer unto Him an offering from the work they were doing. Cain brought an offering of “the fruit of the soil” (Genesis 4:3), but these were unacceptable to God. The offering of Abel was acceptable, which was an animal sacrifice, but the reason for Abel's offering to be

accepted before God was the attitude he displayed (Hebrews 11:4). We are told that it was by faith that Abel “offered God a better sacrifice than that of Cain”. According to Gray⁶, this means that “faith in some previous revelation or promise of God touching the way a guilty sinner might approach Him. Such revelation was doubtless given in Genesis 3:21, which has been reserved for consideration for now.”

In the book of Genesis, Cain and Abel were the sons of Adam and Eve. They both made offerings to God, but God favoured Abel's offering of his best sheep while rejecting Cain's offering of his produce. This caused jealousy and anger in Cain, leading him to kill his brother Abel out of jealousy and resentment. This story is often interpreted as a warning against jealousy and the importance of sincerity and humility in one's offerings to God. In the biblical story of Cain and Abel, the two brothers were farmers and raised livestock. When they made their offerings to God, Abel presented the best of his flock, showing his willingness to give God his very best. Cain, on the other hand, offered some of his produce, but not necessarily his best or with the same level of sincerity and reverence.

The story of Cain and Abel serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of jealousy, anger, and the consequences that can arise from acting on these emotions. It also highlights the importance of sincerity, humility, and giving our best in our worship and offerings to God. In the biblical story of Cain and Abel, the two brothers were farmers and raised livestock. When they made their offerings to God, Abel presented the best of his flock, showing his willingness to give God his very best. Cain, on the other hand, offered some of his produce, but not necessarily his best or with the same level of sincerity and reverence.

God's rejection of Cain's offering left him feeling angry and resentful towards both Abel and God. Instead of reflecting on his own actions and trying to improve, Cain allowed these negative feelings to fester, which ultimately led him to commit the first murder in history.

The story of Cain and Abel serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of jealousy, anger, and the consequences that can arise from acting on these emotions. It also highlights the importance of sincerity, humility, and giving our best in our worship and offerings to God. Abel's attitude is further demonstrated by the fact that he brought an offering “from the firstborn of his flock”, whereas Cain merely brought some of the fruits of the soil (Genesis 4:3). Cain knew he had done something wrong and it was confirmed in Genesis 4:7, God told him if you have done what is right

will you not be acceptable and your offering? It is also recorded in 1 John 3:12: “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother.

(ii) Abraham’s offering

After the promises that God made with Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, he decided to build an altar for God in order to offer an offering to God (Genesis 12:7). Abraham built an altar which he had memorable spiritual experiences. The other thing he did was offering of tithe to the King of Salem (Melchizedek), the priest of God Most High, to whom he gave “a tenth of everything”

This act of faith and obedience by Abraham is seen as a powerful example of trust in God's will and is often interpreted as a foreshadowing of God offering his own son, Jesus, for the salvation of humanity. The story of Abraham's offering continues to be a source of inspiration and reflection for believers of various faiths. Abraham's offering is also seen as a demonstration of the concept of sacrifice and devotion in religious teachings. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, whom he loved dearly, showed his deep and unwavering faith in God and his willingness to obey divine commands, even when they appeared to go against human understanding.

Voluntary Giving in the New Testament

Example of Jesus Christ

Jesus’ attitude regarding the correct approach towards freewill offerings is typified by the account of the widow’s mite in Mark 12:41-44. According to Barclay¹¹, “the coin so called was a lepton, which literally means ‘a thin one’. It was the smallest of all coins and was worth one fortieth of one pence”. Her contribution, by any normal standard an insignificant amount; in Jesus' eyes, however, is an offering beyond ordinary measure. Jesus viewed this widow’s offering as actually greater than all the offerings made by the rich. Smith⁷ holds that it was Jesus' contention “that the value of the offering is best measured against the financial worth of the offer”. He contends that “the quality of an offering is best measured as a percentage of total assets”. This means that God's acceptance of one’s offering really depends on one’s income; the widow voluntarily gave all she had, whereas there are rich people who offer a little amount from what God had given them. We can refer to this act of giving as a self-denial, not minding what will become of her (a widow) and the children. The place of faith is view in this context, she gave the offering sacrificially and she hoped that God will supply her needs and that of her children according to Phillipians 4:19. This

sacrificial giving of this widow teaches that not only the rich can give, the poor or the needy can also give from the little God has given them, not necessary in monetary form it can also be in kind. In Matthew 25:37-40, Jesus teaches that those who feed the hungry, or give something to drink to the thirsty, or clothe the naked, or visit the sick and those imprisoned, are doing it for Him. Lewis says that “every stranger we feed or clothe is Christ.” “The phrase these brothers of mine” is very vital. Christ is referring to Christians, to those who are brethren. Romans 8:17 says, “now if we are children, then we are heirs- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings so that we may also share in his glory.” When giving, we should not be biased by segregating the unbelievers from those we want to give to. Considering the unbelievers in our giving life will bring them to Christ is also a means of winning souls for Him. But I will urge Christians to always consider the less privileged in the household of faith to live a better life (Matthew 7:5-6). This implies that before considering the poor who are unbelievers, consider the believers.

Ethics of Christian Giving

Ethics is a discipline that studies the moral life. It studies not only what is right and good to do, but also the character and values of a person and the standards to use for judging the rightness or wrongness of society’s policies.

J.K. Ayantayo⁸ viewed ethics as a systematic study of human actions and intention to determine their goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness, correctness or incorrectness and with attention given to how such course of action and intention being evaluated affects the person who performed the action or showed an intention in question, the person at which it is directed, and the society or the environment where the action is performed or the intention is muted. For instance, a person who slapped his or her colleague must have planned it before executing the action.

Georgia Harkness⁹ defines Christian ethics as a systematic study of the way of life exemplified and taught by Jesus, applied to the manifold problems and decisions of human existence. This means that Christian ethics encompasses the ways of life of Jesus Christ. The word “Christian” was used when they saw the disciples of Jesus Christ at Antioch, due to their dress, they were called Christians (little Christ). Also, Matson¹⁰ defines Christian ethics as a critical reflection on the moral decisions and actions of individuals, Christians and the Christian community (the church).

In addition, Christian ethics considers the role of the Church and Christian communities in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in the world. It encourages individuals to engage in acts of compassion and solidarity with the marginalised and oppressed, in line with the teachings of Jesus to love one's neighbours as oneself. Christian ethics also addresses contemporary moral issues such as environmental stewardship, social justice, human rights, and healthcare, seeking to provide ethical guidance and insights rooted in Christian faith and values.

The act of giving is a key that is highlighted, which constitutes a central part of the religious life for individual believers that enables them to live out their faith and become truly Christians. Lincoln¹¹ et al seeing it as a rational and economic transaction undertaken by believers in exchange for expected returns, such as afterlife –utility as well as personal fame and social reputation in this material world. This is rampant in most of our churches today, whereby they seek fame, for recognition in the church and the society they belong to. The Bible is not in support of this “Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:11-4).

Christian giving not only contributes to the making of individual sacred selves, but importantly, it also contributes to the construction of a sacred moral economy with God. Christian givers highlight the moral and spiritual equality between them and the recipients of their giving, as they are all children of God. Moreover, instead of seeing the recipients having a material need for receiving the giving, arguably, it is the Christian givers who have a greater spiritual need to do giving. We have Christian morality and Christian ethics in motivating and guiding believers to engage in giving and doing it in a Christian way. Under Christian ethics, giving is not seen and enacted as a self-fulfilment of the ego, but a realisation that one's self is part of God's moral order and is under constant divine moulding and guidance. At the same time, individual Christians can make their giving decision based on deep-rooted values such as economic rationality and effectiveness maximization of our modern secular world. Christian giving should be done in the church and outside the church. It is through interrogating and understanding the multifaceted and multi-layered expressions and meanings that the individual Christians adhered to and embraced in their act of giving that we could fully comprehend the quest for enacting their divine and secular duty as they seek to follow the Christian logic of giving and transform their mundane secular self into the sacred self.

Summary

Christian giving is a prominent aspect of Christian ethics and is rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ. The act of giving is seen as a way to demonstrate love, compassion, and generosity towards others, reflecting the selfless and sacrificial love that Christ exemplified during his time on Earth. However, the ethical considerations surrounding Christian giving are complex and multifaceted, requiring careful examination and reflection.

Christian giving is the issue of justice and equality. Christians are called to care for the poor, marginalised, and vulnerable in society, showing compassion and solidarity with those in need. This requires a commitment to social justice and a willingness to challenge systems of inequality and oppression that contribute to poverty and suffering. Christian giving should not only address immediate needs but also work towards systemic change that promotes greater equity and justice for all. The motivations behind Christian giving are also important ethical considerations. Giving should be done out of a genuine desire to serve others and glorify God, rather than seeking recognition, approval, or personal gain

Conclusion

In conclusion, Christian giving is a foundational aspect of the Christian faith that is rooted in values such as love, compassion, and generosity. The ethical principles that guide Christian giving include integrity, accountability, stewardship, and selflessness. By practising Christian giving, individuals not only fulfil their duty to help those in need, but also participate in the work of God and demonstrate their faith in action. However, the ethics of Christian giving can be complex and challenging, particularly in a world marked by inequality, poverty, and injustice. It is important for Christians to critically examine their giving practices and ensure that they are aligned with the values and teachings of their faith. This includes being mindful of where and how their resources are allocated, as well as being accountable for the impact of their giving.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, this dissertation provides a set of recommendations for ethical Christian giving as follows:

1. Christians should cultivate a spirit of generosity and show compassion to people in need in all aspects of their lives, not just financial giving.

2. Christians should give thoughtfully and intentionally, considering the needs of others and the impact of one's giving.
3. Christians should seek accountability and transparency in giving practices, ensuring that resources are used effectively and responsibly.
4. Christians should engage in ongoing reflection and education on the ethics of giving, seeking to grow in wisdom and discernment in their giving practices.

Ethical Issues on Christian Giving in Selected Pentecostal Churches in Atiba Local Government, Oyo.

Ethical Issues Questions

During the course of the study, there are different views from different churches concerning the way to give to God and the poor. The researcher asked the following questions to the pastors in some selected Pentecostal churches in Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo in order to know the right means of giving to God and the poor.

1. Why do we have to give to God?
2. How can we give to God?
3. Is there a reward for giving to God?
4. Is it necessary to give to the poor?
5. Did God compulsory tithe for believers?
6. Is the use of talent a means of giving to God?
7. Is it good to be coerced before giving to God?
8. Does spirituality influence one's life of giving?
9. How should a Christian give ethically?
10. How has the tithe strengthened one's faith?

These are the questions asked of the pastors, and answers were duly provided through the use of interviews and adequate answers were provided for a believer to know the ethical ways of giving.

The churches are:

1. The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Agape parish Oyo.
2. Christ Apostolic church, Oyo.
3. Living Faith Church, Ajegunle International, Oyo.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God

Pastor Michael Ajayi¹² assistant pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of God Agape parish, Oyo, said we give to God because He first gave His son to us for the redemption of our sins. In John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." He gave His son as a sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. We have to reciprocate this by giving our money, time, and talent to Him as a means of showing appreciation.

It is expected of us to give our totality to God, we should give our time, money, energy, and also our intellect. It is not only money we can give to God but also our time, properties and also our body.

There is a reward for giving to God, the Bible says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you...." It is expected that when we give, we will receive back in multiple fold. Giving is a command in which if we follow, we will receive back in hundred-fold from God. Some people withhold, yet still in abject poverty, and there is he who scattered, and they increase greatly.

The issue of tithing is raging on social media. Concerning tithing, there are different opinions from different denominations based on doctrine. On the issue of tithing, we should consider what God wants and not what pleases men. The issue of tithe is compulsory for all believers Malachi 3:10 "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse so that there will be food in my house " Not bringing tithe to the house of God does not mean that one is under curse because we are in the dispensation of grace (Jesus Christ) who have redeemed us from the curse of the law, but if truly we love God, we must give our 10% of our income to the one who provide. Giving tithe to God is essential for church growth. In the Redeemed Christian Church of God, tithing is part of the doctrine. The Bible says the poor will not cease in the land. The poor are the ones who cannot afford the basic needs of life. It is recorded in the Bible that we should take care of the poor. As a believer, it is mandatory to give to the poor. Also, it is necessary to give to the poor.

Talent is a means of giving to God because it is God who gave us talent, and it is expected of us to use it for His glory. Jesus taught about the parable of a man who gave talents to his servants. He gave 5 to one, he gave 2 to another and the last servant he gave 1. The servant with 5 talents traded with it and got 5 profit, the second servant traded with the 2 talents and had 2 profit, and the third servant went and hid the 1 talent given to him. When the master came, he was pleased with the two servants that traded with their talents but the one that hid his own, he called wasteful servant.

Ethically, as Christians, the Bible says when you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand did. Spreading the news of what we give God or the needy around is embarrassing, and it has no reward. Giving of the tithe has strengthened our faith. The Bible says bring you all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. One's income in a month is not sufficient to spend before the new month. So, to give God 10% out of the 100% requires faith. Giving God the 10% makes us depend solely on God for sustainability throughout the month. If 100% will not sustain us before the month ends, then 90% cannot be enough as well. If we give the 10% to God, He will sustain us.

Christ Apostolic Church

Pastor Ayanfemi Sola¹³ of Christ Apostolic Church Oyo, said we give to God because He first gave to us, everything we have comes from Him. And it is expected of us to give some back to Him to show gratitude. Also, we can give to God in a diver's way. These include our money, material things and time. We should give willingly to God and not grudgingly, because He gave His begotten son to us for our redemption from the power of sin.

Also, there is a reward the Bible says if you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly, and if you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully. The more you give unto God, the greater you will receive. God did not owe us anything; whatever you do unto God, you will surely have.

The Bible says we should do well to everyone, especially those of the household of faith. An example of Abraham is when he entertained the strangers that are passing by; he did the work of hospitality. Through this, God gave him Isaac even at his old age. It is necessary to give to the poor, the Bible says he that gives to the poor gives to God.

The issue of the tithe is based on doctrine. Tithe is compulsory by God, Habakkuk 3:8-12: "How did man rob God?" He said you are robbing me by not paying your tithe. The origin of the tithe started with Melchizedek and Abraham, whereby Abraham gave 10% of all he got from the battle and gave to the Melchizedek king of Salem 10% of all. Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house "To stay out of this curse we must pay our tithe. Tithe in our contemporary society is not based on farm produce alone, but also in the form of money. It is based on what an individual or a church member does for a living.

It is not good to be coerced before giving to God. The Bible records that God loves a cheerful giver. God did not want us to give grudgingly. Also, it is not good to be forced before giving to God; God is interested in a cheerful giver, someone who can give a freewill offering to Him.

Imposing giving to God on members does not attach God's blessing. Abraham gave a freewill hospitality to the strangers, and God gave him a great child even at his old age.

Living Faith Church

Pastor Abbas Sunday¹⁴ from Living Faith Church, Ajegunle International, said we give to God because He is the giver of all things. He first gave it to us. He said we should remember Him, honour Him with our substances. The word substance here can be money, time, talent, etc

The first thing we can offer to God is our life. Giving our substances to God without giving our lives to Him is a waste of our resources. The means of giving to God include the following: tithe, offering, sacrifices, and also giving to the poor (because whatever you give to man, you have done it for God. God also said we should not appear before Him empty-handed.

There is plenty of reward when we give to God, he will multiply what we have offered to him or the needy. There is time for everything on earth, the time to plant and the time to harvest. It is expected of every farmer to plant seed to harvest. The reward can be in the form of money, clothes, food, a car, etc., when we give to God. The psalmist says, "Blessed the Lord of my soul, and forget not all his benefits "The benefits here refer to the reward He gave to us.

God compulsory tithe for believers by saying bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse. Tithing here is for both believers and non- believers, and because of this, Jesus said to the Pharisees in the New Testament, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23).

The talent given to us by God should not be monetised but should be used freely for the growth of God. God gave us talent to be used for the advancement of the kingdom. For example, when someone is blessed with a good voice, it should be to the glory of God. Talent is a means of giving, but it must not take the place of giving our substances, time, money, etc.

Christians should give by not blowing their trumpet when we announce our act of giving; it has no reward from God. The more we give to God, the more our faith will be strengthened. Also, it takes submissiveness to pay tithe. Faith will tell the giver of the tithe that the 10% will come back in a hundredfold.

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Semiotic Analysis of Protest Cartoons in Selected Nigerian Newspapers

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Abstract

Protest cartoons, as an artistic and journalistic form, offer powerful insights into the socio-political realities of Nigeria. Through humour, satire, and symbolism, they capture the frustrations of ordinary citizens, critique governance, and galvanise collective resistance. This paper investigates the semiotic resources of protest cartoons in selected Nigerian newspapers, focusing on how visual codes, compositional structures, and multimodal resources convey layered meanings within the country's protest discourse. Drawing on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) Social Semiotic Approach, the study interrogates the role of cartoons as both social commentary and instruments of resistance. Five protest cartoons were purposively selected from The Punch, Business Day, and Daily Trust newspapers between 2020 and 2024, covering the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests. Findings reveal that Nigerian protest cartoons utilise symbolic imagery, caricature, textual anchorage, spatial arrangement, and culturally grounded metaphors to articulate corruption, poor governance, economic hardship, and citizens' resilience. By decoding these multimodal resources, the study situates cartoons as critical sites of protest in the media landscape, bridging elite discourse and popular struggles.

Keywords: *EndSARS, EndBadGovernance, Protest Cartoons, Nigerian Newspapers, Multimodality*

Introduction

Protest has long served as a means through which citizens resist unjust authority and demand accountability. Across civilisations, from ancient Egyptian workers' strikes to contemporary movements, protest has functioned both as political action and moral expression (Anderson, 2014).

In recent decades, protests have intensified globally, with citizens increasingly challenging state power (Klingemann, 1995). Scholars conceptualise protest variously as objection (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004), confrontation politics (Terchek, 1974), or a challenge to unjust authority (Anderson, 2014). This study adopts Terchek’s definition of protest as “public group activities utilising confrontation politics to apply stress on specific targets to influence public policy” because it captures both the organised and strategic nature of protest, aligning well with how protest cartoons operate as mediated, purposeful critiques of authority. Nigeria’s socio-political history is marked by a longstanding culture of protest from the 1929 Aba Women’s Riot to the “Ali Must Go” student movement of 1978, the #EndSARS demonstrations of 2020, and the nationwide #EndBadGovernance protests of 2024. Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, reinforcing protest as a legitimate democratic practice. Alongside street demonstrations, mediated forms of dissent such as political cartoons have become influential tools of critique, offering visual commentary that captures the public mood, exposes abuse of power, and mobilises civic consciousness.

Cartoons occupy a central place in Nigerian media culture. Beyond humour, they function as social critique, alternative reportage, and political intervention (Oyedeji, 2013; Harrower, 2010). They distil complex realities into accessible imagery through exaggeration, symbolism, and caricature. Scholars describe protest cartoons as instruments of resistance (Agberia, 2000), blends of art and activism (Olaniyan, 2004), journalistic tools that condense ideology (Connors, 2007), and visual encapsulations of public opinion (Ganiyu, 2014). These perspectives show that protest cartoons are not merely satirical illustrations but multimodal artefacts that participate actively in political discourse.

This study investigates how protest cartoons visually construct protest narratives in Nigerian newspapers. It contributes to scholarship by investigating how multimodal resources, namely images, captions, symbols, and spatial organisation, encode ideological meanings within protest contexts, thereby extending research beyond humour analysis, digital memes, or general political cartoons. The study demonstrates how visual language becomes a strategic resource for articulating public grievances and shaping socio-political interpretation.

Statement of the Problem

Several studies have been carried out on newspaper discourse in Nigeria. Ogunrinde and Adegboye (2024), for example, employ Halliday’s metafunctions of language to compare multimodal stylistic

features of selected cartoons, revealing unique semiotic styles across newspapers. However, their reliance on linguistic analysis privileges verbal elements over visual ones, limiting the interpretation of visual meaning. Ako and Ottoh (2011) use Peirce's triadic model to study cartoons in *The Punch* and *The Guardian*, showing that a single sign may function as symbolic, iconic, or indexical depending on context. Yet, this approach emphasises sign typology while neglecting multimodal interaction and broader contextual factors. Similarly, Adeoti (2023) analyses humour in political cartoons, highlighting pragmatic acts such as informing, castigating, and ridiculing corruption and misgovernance. While insightful, this study does not situate cartoons within protest discourse or link pragmatic acts to collective mobilisation. These studies, though significant, predominantly adopt mono-modal approaches, overlooking how protest cartoons combine visual, verbal, and compositional resources to convey socio-political critique. This gap is critical, as protest cartoons, unlike general political cartoons, express the immediacy, urgency, and collective sentiments of social movements. The present study addresses this gap by adopting Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Multimodal Discourse Analysis to examine the semiotic features of protest cartoons in selected Nigerian newspapers. It foregrounds visual resources, captions, semiotic signs, and symbolic representations to explore how these elements construct meaning, represent grievances, and communicate socio-political critique within the context of #EndSARS (2020) and EndBadGovernance (2024) protests.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study attempts to investigate the semiotic features of protest cartoons in selected Nigerian newspapers. The objectives of the study are to:

- i. To identify the semiotic resources in the protest cartoons in selected Nigerian newspapers; and
- ii. To analyse how these semiotic resources construct meaning within Nigeria's protest discourse.

Significance of the study

This study contributes to scholarship and practice by offering a nuanced understanding of how protest cartoons construct meaning through the interplay of visual and linguistic elements. By applying semiotic methods to selected Nigerian newspapers, this research extends research on language and visual communication, highlighting how satire, symbolism, and imagery operate as

powerful tools of socio-political discourse. For journalists and media practitioners, the study illuminates the role of cartoons beyond humour, showing how they educate, mobilise, and shape public awareness. Political analysts and policymakers gain a framework for interpreting the visual and textual cues that reflect and influence public opinion during periods of political contestation. Additionally, students and scholars in language, media, and political studies can benefit from the study's integrative approach, combining pragmatics, social semiotics, and collective action theory to analyse protest media.

The study's novelty lies in this interdisciplinary integration. Unlike prior research, which often examines protest cartoons from either a linguistic or visual perspective, this work combines these approaches to offer richer interpretative possibilities. By doing so, it advances methodological innovation, enhances the understanding of mediated protest, and demonstrates how cartoons function as vital instruments of civic engagement and socio-political critique in Nigeria.

Literature review on Protest Cartoons

Several studies have examined protest discourse across social, digital, and print media in Nigeria. Adeagbo (2025) explores multimodal resources such as colour, memes, short videos, and hashtags on TikTok and Facebook during the 2024 protests, showing how these modes amplify grievances and foster solidarity. While insightful, his study focuses almost exclusively on digital, user-generated content, overlooking traditional media forms such as editorial cartoons.

In a similar vein, Usman (2024) investigates editorial cartoons representing the #EndSARS protest, revealing how caricature, exaggeration, irony, and cultural allusions symbolically frame police excesses, government denial, and protesters' agency. Though this study foregrounds print media, it is limited to a single protest episode, leaving other socio-political movements unexplored.

Similarly, Okesola and Oyebo (2023) analyse #EndSARS protest memes using appraisal theory and visual grammar, demonstrating how multimodal features convey evaluative meanings and emotional responses. Their work complements Adeagbo (2025) by highlighting pragmatic and semiotic functions in digital protest artefacts but similarly neglects institutional media like newspapers.

Together, these studies underscore the importance of multimodality in representing protest, yet reveal a clear gap: while digital memes and single-event cartoons have been studied, there is limited research on how traditional newspapers deploy multimodal and semiotic resources across multiple protest episodes. The present study addresses this gap by analysing protest cartoons from

both #EndSARS (2020) and EndBadGovernance (2024), examining how visual, verbal, and symbolic resources construct dissent, critique governance, and represent public frustration across socio-political contexts.

Theoretical framework

Social semiotics, building on Hallidayan principles, examines how meaning is created through culturally shaped semiotic resources. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) reformulate Halliday's metafunctions into representational, interactive, and compositional meanings for the analysis of images. Representational meaning encompasses both narrative and conceptual structures. Narrative representations are dynamic and include processes such as actions, vectors, gestures, and interactions. In contrast, conceptual representations are more static, involving classification, symbolism, and attributes. Interactive meaning refers to how images engage viewers and is constructed through three key dimensions: contact (whether the image demands or offers interaction), social distance (ranging from intimate to impersonal), and attitude (reflecting degrees of involvement, power, or detachment). Compositional meaning, on the other hand, is realised through systems such as information value (e.g., left/right or top/bottom positioning), salience (achieved via elements like size, colour, and focus), and framing (which connects or separates components of the image). As Jewitt and Oyama (2001) further observe, images like language derive meaning from the interplay of their constituent elements; the meaning does not lie in individual parts, but in their integration within a coherent visual structure. Guided by this framework, the present study investigates the semiotic features of protest cartoons as visually communicated in selected Nigerian newspapers from the #EndSARS (2020) and #EndBadGovernance (2024) protests.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design suitable for exploring meaning-making in visual texts. The population comprises protest-themed editorial cartoons published between 2020 and 2024 in four national newspapers: Daily Trust, The Punch, Business Day, and Nigerian Tribune. These outlets were selected based on national reach, editorial influence, and consistent use of political cartoons during protest periods. From an initial corpus of 50 protest-related cartoons (25 from #EndSARS and 25 from #EndBadGovernance contexts), five were purposively selected for detailed analysis. Selection criteria included thematic relevance, clarity of protest framing,

presence of rich semiotic elements, and representativeness of major socio-political concerns. The analysis follows Kress and van Leeuwen's three metafunctions. Each cartoon is analysed through its visual structures of representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning in multimodal discourse analysis. Textual components such as captions, slogans, and labels are integrated into the analysis to account for multimodal interaction. The data are to be subjected to semiotic analysis, the selected sample of visual texts are laid out and sequentially numbered as (e.g., Datum 1, Datum 2 ... Datum 15) and so forth, for ease of reference.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Datum 1: HERE LIES SARS (Daily Trust, 15th October, 2020)



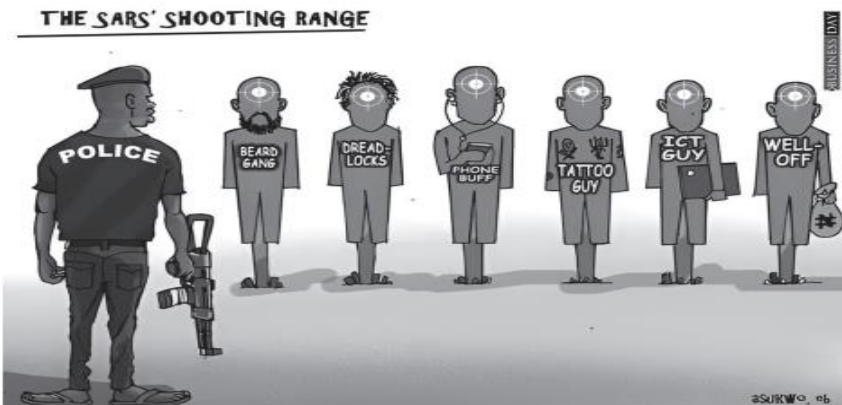
The cartoon depicts a young figure standing beside a tomb marked “HERE LIES SARS 1992–2020.” The grave, shovel, and epitaph serve as symbolic resources framing SARS as an institution deserving burial. The youth represent the collective body of Nigerian protesters performing a symbolic closure of state violence. The tomb functions as the goal of the represented action. The youth’s downward gaze constructs an offer rather than a demand, inviting viewers to witness communal grief. The slight low-angle presentation of the youth confers subtle agency and moral authority, positioning protesters as active agents of accountability. Dark tones evoke mourning, while the central placement of the tomb foregrounds the finality of SARS’s dissolution. The epitaph’s bold typography serves as an anchorage that reinforces the metaphor of institutional death. Framing is tight, focusing attention on the symbolic act of burial.

Datum 2: CNN DARES FG, RELEASES SECOND LEKKI SHOOTINGS VIDEO (Punch, 2nd November, 2020)



Two panels contrast the suppression of local press with the assertiveness of international media. In the first panel, a government figure labelled “FG” is gagging a journalist. In the second, “PRESS/CNN” works freely, indicating resistance to information control. The contrast in gazes, such as the fearful expressions in the first panel vs. firm focus in the second, positions viewers to recognise state repression and valorise truth-telling. The absence of eye contact in the CNN panel constructs objectivity and authority. Dark shading in panel one signifies coercion; brighter hues in panel two signify freedom and exposure. The black briefcase often symbolises official secrets, state power, or money to bribe the “press” to shut him up. The binary layout reinforces the ideological contrast between censorship and press independence. Labels serve as textual cues that anchor the socio-political context: the Lekki shootings controversy.

Datum 3: THE SARS SHOOTING RANGE (Business Day, 22nd October, 2020)



A police officer aims at targets representing Nigerian youths labelled “BEARD GANG,” “DREADLOCKS,” “ICT GUY,” “WELL-OFF,” etc. The metaphor of a shooting range critiques

police profiling and institutional violence. The policeman's direct vector toward the targets constructs a confrontation, positioning viewers as witnesses to unjust aggression. The police officer is represented as the enactor of a planned shoot; the targets are depicted with bull's-eyes centred on their heads. This is a symbolic 'shooting range' where civilians are targets by design. The youths, depicted as static targets, highlight vulnerability and lack of agency. Salience is created through the alignment of targets and the centred rifle vector. Colour contrast, such as the dark uniforms vs. bright youth representations, underscores ideological polarities between authority and victimhood. The title anchors the message, ensuring the metaphor is unambiguous.

Datum 4: ENDURE BAD GOVERNANCE (Business Day, 6th August, 2024)



A political leader marches with placards that paradoxically read “Endure Bad Governance” and “This Protest is Against All Protests.” His attire mimics youth culture, representing attempted populist identification. The leader’s confident posture contrasts with the crowd’s sceptical gaze, constructing a tension between performance and perception. Though his size and proximity suggest dominance, social distance is neutralised by the crowd’s sarcastic response, which strips away his legitimacy. *The president is a known activist who protests against autocratic governance, championing democracy and accountability, which makes the cartoon’s message especially ironic. By presenting Tinubu, a once pro-democracy activist, as a purveyor of endurance under bad governance, the cartoon offers a stark critique of political hypocrisy and elite betrayal.* The crowd’s speech bubble functions as a verbal counter-frame that exposes the leader’s insincerity. Foregrounding of the leader enhances his visual dominance, while the muted background prevents distraction. The juxtaposition of contradictory placards generates irony, and framing places the leader as the central but morally compromised figure.

hypocrisy, or resistance. Together, these patterns show that protest cartoons operate as alternative journalism, transforming visual humour into potent political commentary. They construct protest narratives, mobilise public sentiment, and record socio-political history from the perspective of dissent.

Conclusion

The study attempts a semiotic analysis of protest cartoons in 2020 and 2024 in selected Nigerian newspapers with insights from the Pragmatics Act theory to multimodal discourse approach. This study demonstrates that protest cartoons in Nigerian newspapers are powerful multimodal artefacts through which cartoonists articulate collective grievances, critique authority, and shape public discourse. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic model allowed a systematic exploration of how visual-verbal interactions encode meanings in Nigeria's protest contexts. The cartoons analysed depict protesters as agents of justice, expose state repression and manipulation, and represent protest itself as a negotiation between truth, power, and collective memory. They serve both journalistic and activist functions, informing, critiquing, and mobilising. By combining humour, symbolism, caricature, and textual anchorage, protest cartoons become accessible tools of civic education and political engagement. The study expands scholarship by linking protest episodes across 2020 and 2024, bridging traditional and contemporary forms of protest mediation, and demonstrating the interpretive richness of multimodal analysis in political communication. Future studies may broaden the corpus, compare digital and print protest imagery, or examine audience reception.

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Gender Politics and Patriarchal Subversion in Selected Nigerian Gynotexts

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Abstract

*Gender issues have gradually taken a central role in literary discourses over the past few decades. Although previous studies have examined women's oppression in African literature, little attention has been paid to the emerging trajectories of domestic patriarchy in recent Nigerian gynotexts. This study therefore examined the interplay of gender politics and patriarchal subversion in selected Nigerian gynotexts i.e. novels written by women and on women's experiences. Kate Miller's notion of Radical Feminism serves as the primary analytical framework. A qualitative approach is adopted in the textual analysis of *The Truth About Sadia* by Lola Akande and *Twisted Love* by Adetanwa Ibiro Odebiyi, essentially focusing on how female characters navigate cultural prescriptions, familial hierarchies, and emotional repression within patriarchal settings. Findings reveal that the protagonists of the novels, Sadia and Funmi, endure emotional suppression, identity conflict, and deep psychological strain as a result of entrenched family expectations and gender norms. The research explores and exposes the power structures that regulate women's lives and the approaches adopted by female characters in subverting the norms of patriarchy.*

Keywords: Gender politics, patriarchal subversion, radical feminism, Nigerian gynotexts.

Introduction

Gender politics and patriarchal subversion are rooted in feminist discourse. These concepts are social and ideological constructs that reflect the dominance, subjugation, or subordination of one gender by the other. The former, in particular, addresses the different ways in which gender influences and shapes power relations, policies, and societal norms. Invariably, it foregrounds the struggles and negotiations over gender roles, rights, and responsibilities within various socio-political and socio-economic contexts. Perlego (2023) reveals that "gender politics refers to how power dynamics, social norms, and institutions intersect with gender identity and expression." In

this study, gender politics are viewed through the lens of power dynamics, which involves the differential treatment of men and women, thereby impacting power relations, status, and authority. The antecedents to gender power dynamics are multifaceted and deeply rooted in historical, cultural, social, economic, and political contexts. Duflo (2012:14) asserts that “the historical roots of gender power dynamics are deeply embedded in the patriarchal structures of ancient civilisations”. Understanding this antecedent is essential for addressing contemporary gender inequalities and working towards greater gender complementarity. By examining the historical foundations, cultural norms, economic factors, political structures, socialisation processes, colonial and post-colonial influences, one gains a comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape the gender power tussle. Most societies have been characterised by systems where men hold primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property. Simone de Beauvoir (2011:7) submits that “those who made and compiled the laws, being men, favoured their own sex.” Gender politics is often portrayed in terms of societal roles and stereotypes, economic disparities, sexual and reproductive rights biases, gender-based violence, sexual and political biases, among others.

The above assertion underscores the notion that gender politics is rooted in patriarchy - a system of male domination and oppression of women through its social, political and economic institutions. This aligns with Kamarae’s (1992:3) submission that “in the past two decades, patriarchy has been recreated to analyse the origins and conditions of men’s oppression of women”. In a similar vein, Igbuzor (2012) views patriarchy as a social construct in which men hold authority over women, children, and property. Patriarchy is a term used to signify the concept that male dominance is a universal organising principle in all societies (Payne and Jessica 2010: 523). It constitutes a systemic structure that perpetuates women's economic dependence, exposes them to various forms of violence, restricts their roles predominantly to domestic spheres, and limits their involvement in decision-making. Carole Pateman (1988:12) observes that, "the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection”. Patriarchal ideologists often exaggerate the biological distinctions between men and women, asserting that men have the masculine, dominant, and therefore inherently occupy roles characterised by masculinity, dominance, and superiority. In contrast, women are relegated to subordinate roles. Therefore, any system that operationalises an order that accords men undue advantage over women is considered patriarchal.

Akinsete (2022:37) avers that “the representation of women in African literature has been largely pessimistic and disparaging” as prevalent in several African novels “such as Nawal El Saadawi’s (1975) *Woman at point zero*, Buchi Emecheta’s (1979) *The joys of motherhood*, Mariama Bâ’s (1979) *So long a letter*, and Chimamanda Adichie’s (2004) *Purple Hibiscus*”. He argues that just as witnessed among child characters in contemporary African novels (Akinsete, 2023:504), women characters are usually portrayed as victims of social injustice, oppression, violence, sexual abuse and environmental degradation. Therefore, literature in its dual capacity, as a mirror of society and a catalyst for change, remains a vital field for understanding and confronting gender power dynamics. It reflects and critiques the dogmatic social norms against women, and offers a distinctive perspective through which the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures can be examined. Akinsete (2022:37), however, submits that "African literature frequently explores these interactions to critique how family and gender structures maintain patriarchal norms, often positioning women within subordinate roles".

Within African prose, the intersection of gender dynamics and patriarchal subversion reveals that female gender challenge restrictive social norms through unity and self-assertion. Characters in works like Nawal El Saadawi’s *Woman at Point Zero* and Mariama Bâ’s *So Long a Letter* navigate complex family structures that both constrain and motivate them to assert autonomy (Bâ, 1979; Saadawi, 1975). This theme is critically examined in novels like *Oil Cemetery*, where Nwoye uses the character of Rita to symbolise the agency of women within oppressive family and social contexts, depicting her growth as she assumes responsibility within her community (Nwoye, 2015:49). Such works depict gender roles as evolving constructs, reflective of the broader social shifts within African societies, and suggest that family dynamics, while often steeped in tradition, are also spaces of resistance and transformation (Akinsete, 2022:39; Oyěwùmí, 1997). Therefore, this study seeks to examine gender politics and patriarchal subversion in selected contemporary Nigerian gynotexts.

Engaging Feminism as a Theoretical Framework

Feminism encompasses a diverse range of ideologies, movements and theories aimed at advocating for women’s rights and gender equality. It challenges the patriarchal structures that enforce gender-based discrimination and seeks to dismantle the systems that marginalise women (hooks, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). According to bell hooks, feminism is “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression”, emphasising the need for inclusive and intersectional approaches to

address various forms of oppression (hooks, 2000). First coined in 1837 by the French philosopher Charles Fourier, the concept primarily focused on advocating for women's rights and equality. (Jaggar, 1983:21) Over time, it has evolved into a diverse global movement, aiming to dismantle intersecting systems of oppression like patriarchy, sexism, classism and so on (hooks, 2000: 4)

The feminist movement can broadly be divided into four historical waves. The first wave emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries focused on legal rights, particularly women's suffrage. The second wave, which gained momentum in the 1960s, addressed broader social issues, such as reproductive rights, workplace discrimination and sexual freedom (Jaggar, 1983). The third wave, beginning in the 1990s sought to address the perceived shortcomings of the second wave by embracing the plurality of experiences and identities, promoting diversity within the feminist movement (Crenshaw, 1991; Butler, 1990). The last wave, kick-started in the early 21st Century, is a political feminist movement driven largely by digital activism and protest on societal deformities on women, such as sexual harassment, body autonomy, assault and so on.

Feminism has different meanings and interpretations, and diverse feminists define this theory based on their social, political, cultural and religious worldviews. Feminist thought has evolved into various strands, each focusing on different aspects of gender inequality. For instance, liberal feminism advocates for equal opportunities under the law and emphasises reform within existing structures (hooks, 2000). Socialist and Marxist feminism focus on class oppression and the ways economic factors contribute to women's subordination, emphasising the use of capitalism in perpetuating gender inequality (Willis, 1984:44; Jaggar, 1983). Intersectional feminism highlights how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, and other social categories to shape diverse lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1991: 1251). Transactional and postcolonial feminists address issues of gendered racial capitalism, imperialism, and environmental activism, reflecting struggles beyond Western contexts (Monhanty, 2003; Davis, 1981).

Radical feminism is particularly pertinent to this study, which argues the view that the family is a fundamental institution of patriarchy, where male dominance is maintained and reinforced through traditional gender roles. (Willis, 1984). The proponents, such as Kate Millet, Catharine MacKinnon, and Andrea Dworkin, contend that patriarchal systems are deeply embedded in social, economic and cultural structures, asserting that true gender equality can be achieved by dismantling these systems (Tong, 2009). Her seminal work, entitled *Sexual Politics* (1970) forms the foundation for the concept of radical feminism. This type of feminism identifies patriarchy as

a pervasive system of oppression that permeates all aspects of society, particularly through the family unit (Tong, 2009). Radical feminists argue that traditional family structures perpetuate male dominance by reinforcing conventional gender roles that confine women to subordinate positions. Women are often considered weak and unproductive, and are confined to the homestead in their traditional functions as wives and mothers (Akinsete, 2022:42). This confinement limits their autonomy and dictates their behaviour.

Millet's ideology on radical feminism describes how the selected gynotexts, Lola Akande's *The Truth About Sadia* and Adetanwa Odebiyi's *Twisted Love*, showcase the entrenched patriarchal norms that dictate family dynamics and gender roles. Akinsete and Ojo (2021) submit to calling attention to societal regeneration through literary works of Nigerian authors. Based on this perspective, this study reveals how these texts reflect the struggles of female characters against patriarchal constraints while advocating for social change regarding women's rights and empowerment in Nigeria.

Patriarchy and Gender Politics in *The Truth About Sadia*

Family plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's identity, especially in societies where traditional values and hierarchies dictate relationships. In *The Truth About Sadia*, the family structure establishes a rigid order that prioritises male authority and limits female agency, a dynamic that aligns with radical feminist arguments that the family operates as a foundational institution of patriarchy. Sadia's experiences within her family illustrate how these structures reinforce control, dictate expectations, and suppress individual aspirations. From childhood, Sadia's place in the family is defined by obligation rather than choice, reflecting a systemic erasure of female autonomy. Her elder brother, Akin, assumes authority over her future, a role that stems from their father's expectations. In a moment of reflection, their father reminds Akin of his responsibility: "you are my only son, and your responsibility is enormous. My desire is to educate all three of you... but look at me. See what I am reduced to" (p. 17). This passing of patriarchal power from father to son reinforces the intergenerational continuity of male dominance, a pattern radical feminists identify as core to women's subordination within familial systems.

This dynamic becomes even more apparent in Akin's resentment towards Sadia's education. While their elder sister, Atinuke, remains uneducated and follows the expected path of early marriage, Sadia pursues higher learning, an act Akin perceives as a threat. His frustration is not simply about missed opportunities, but rather it is about maintaining hierarchy. In his eyes, education is a source

of power, and Sadia's pursuit of it challenges the symbolic order that privileges male authority, a conflict that also speaks to Freudian notions of rivalry and suppressed desire to dominate.

Now he knew why he ought to have privileged higher education over a bank job... If there was anyone who deserved a university education among his siblings, it was he, not his kid sister ...part of it was to nudge her into a teaching career... he knew teachers were poorly paid. There was almost no chance of achieving financial success as one (p. 18,20).

By allowing Sadia access, he fears that she may surpass him. Akin's control extends beyond her education to her career and personal life. He deliberately steers her away from law, guiding her instead toward teaching, a profession he deems financially limiting. This redirection aligns with radical feminist concerns about the systemic restriction of women's economic empowerment as a means of sustaining male dominance. His interference ensures that Sadia's future remains within his control, preventing her from achieving full independence.

Akin's treatment of Sadia stands in stark contrast to his relationship with Atinuke, who conforms to traditional expectations. Atinuke's early marriage and financial dependency on Akin make her more acceptable within the family's structure. "Atinuke, that is Sadia's immediate elder sister, remained uneducated but got married to a fairly educated man" (p. 19). Her passivity affirms the patriarchal ideal of the compliant woman, reinforcing the notion that women who do not disrupt male authority are rewarded with protection and approval. Because she does not challenge societal norms, she is not seen as a threat, unlike Sadia, who constantly resists imposed limitations. This contrast is evident in a conversation between Akin and Atinuke, where he asserts his control over Sadia: "Tell me, why aren't you like her?" (p.232). This exchange underscores the different expectations placed on women based on their willingness to conform. Atinuke's compliance earns her a place of favour and protection, while Sadia's resistance leads to resentment and conflict.

Conflict within the family unit is central to *The Truth About Sadia*, shaping not only the protagonist's experiences but also reinforcing broader themes of power, control, and resistance. The novel highlights the tensions that arise from patriarchal dominance, sibling rivalry, and parental influence, all of which determine the course of Sadia's life. While Akin's dominance over Sadia is explicit, their father also plays a subtle but crucial role in shaping the dynamics of their family. By entrusting Akin with the responsibility of caring for his younger sisters, their father unknowingly places Sadia under her brother's lifelong authority. His words reflect the burden of traditional male responsibility, which in turn fuels Akin's belief that he has the right to dictate

Sadia's future: "You are my only son, and your responsibility is enormous." (p.17). Even though their father intended to provide support and structure, his decision ultimately led to Akin's unchecked control, making it difficult for Sadia to establish true independence.

The most significant familial conflict in the novel exists between Sadia and her elder brother, Akin. His resentment toward her is deeply rooted in the belief that her education and potential success threaten his authority. Unlike Atinuke, who remains dependent on him, Sadia's ambition makes her difficult to control. His thoughts reveal his intention to suppress her success, "He more or less owned her. For purposes of self-preservation, it was only fair that he took all precautions towards ensuring Sadia wouldn't have a chance to outshine him in life (p.20). Akin sees himself as the head of the family, and by extension, the one who determines how far Sadia can go in life. His actions, forcing her into teaching instead of law, attempting to control her marriage choices, and later punishing her for seeking independence, demonstrate how familial control is not just about care but about maintaining dominance. When Sadia informs Akin that she has enrolled in a master's program, his reaction is filled with anger and betrayal:

Wasn't it you who came here the other time begging me to forgive your infractions? And to think I actually thought you'd learned your lessons? Look at you, look what you've done. You couldn't even wait a while before showing your characteristic obstinacy again. (p. 264).

This moment encapsulates the core of their conflict. Akin believes that Sadia must always seek his approval for her life decisions. When she defies his expectations, he sees it as an act of rebellion rather than personal growth. Such a reaction reveals a deep internalisation of patriarchal norms, where control over female autonomy is seen as both a right and a symbol of masculine stability. Akin's wounded ego responds not to Sadia's independence, but to the collapse of the symbolic order that places him above her.

Similarly, Sadia's marital struggles are mirrored in Mofeoluwa's own family, where patterns of gendered conflict emerge. His relationship with his elder brother, Aremo, mirrors the same tension seen between Sadia and Akin. In the novel, Aremo, Mofe's elder brother, embodies the traditional patriarchal figure who enjoys the privileges of male dominance without fulfilling the responsibilities that such a role demands. Despite being the head of his household, Aremo is portrayed as idle and unmotivated, choosing to live off his late father's rental property and his hardworking wife's earnings. Auntie Bumi, his wife, juggles a full-time nursing job with petty trading just to sustain the family's needs. Yet, rather than acknowledging her sacrifice, Aremo

maintains a dismissive, authoritarian attitude toward her, treating her with the same patriarchal entitlement expected of a sole provider.

This inversion of responsibility reflects radical feminist concerns about structural male privilege: even when women take on the burden of survival, men retain control, protected by cultural expectations rather than merit. His failure to assume the expected financial and emotional responsibility as a husband and father not only strained his marriage but also unsettled his younger brother, Mofe, who found it morally unacceptable that a man would watch his wife struggle alone while demanding obedience and respect. Mofe's decision to confront Aremo about his irresponsibility leads to serious consequences, revealing how family conflict is often shaped by power struggles between siblings. Mofe recalls the moment he challenged his brother

I decided to talk to him. I told him, point blank, that he needed to rise to his responsibilities... I told him everybody would have their own families eventually and would not be able to combine their responsibilities with his own. He was livid. He said I had disrespected him. (p. 196).

This passage highlights a recurring theme in the novel: younger siblings who challenge authority figures are met with hostility, resentment, and punishment. Just as Akin resents Sadia's success, Aremo resents Mofe's attempt to hold him accountable. As a result, Aremo retaliates by introducing Mofe to substance abuse, mirroring how familial conflict has long-term consequences on individual lives. This act of sabotage underscores how family structures, rather than nurturing growth, often reinforce dependency and destruction.

In *The Truth About Sadia*, the intersection of family dynamics and gender roles is most vividly illustrated through the experiences of three central women: Auntie Bumi, Atinuke, and Sadia. Although each of them navigates patriarchal structures differently, their stories collectively highlight recurring themes of subjugation, endurance, and sacrifice. Their varied responses to financial dependence, marital expectations, and male authority reveal how women are positioned along a spectrum between total conformity and subtle resistance within the framework of patriarchal family life. This contrast reinforces the radical feminist view that even within the same cultural and domestic system, women internalise and respond to male dominance in complex and often painful ways.

Auntie Bumi is portrayed as a provider who remains subjugated. Her experience exposes a striking paradox in gender roles. Despite being the primary provider in her marriage, she remains subjugated by her husband, Aremo. This reversal of economic dependence challenges the

assumption that financial power equates to autonomy, particularly for women in patriarchal societies. Unlike traditional setups where men financially support their households, Auntie Bumi works tirelessly to sustain her family. Yet, her financial contributions do not translate into authority or respect. Instead, Aremo continues to assert dominance over her, reinforcing the idea that a woman's role is to submit regardless of her economic relevance. Mofe recounts how his elder brother, Aremo, depended entirely on his wife but still controlled her

Auntie Bumi was a nurse; she was very hardworking Brother Aremo was a Grade 2 teacher of old... Although his profession meant he earned less than his wife he was also lazy. He was without initiative and lacked the drive that a married man with three children ought to have in order to provide for his family. (p. 196).

Despite Auntie Bumi's ability to sustain the household, Aremo remains the head of the family. His lack of financial contribution does not diminish his authority. This suggests that gender roles are not just about economic power but about cultural conditioning. When Mofe advises him to take responsibility, Aremo interprets it as an attack on his masculinity rather than constructive criticism (p. 196). This leads to severe consequences, as he later retaliates by introducing Mofe to substance abuse, a move that reflects how male pride and gender expectations drive destructive decisions within families. Furthermore, Auntie Bumi's reaction to Sadia's marital troubles further reinforces the idea that women must endure in silence. When Sadia seeks her advice about Mofe's behaviour, Auntie Bumi dismisses her concerns, "Men are like that. You guide them and they run from your grasp. You try to plan everything and nothing happens in the way that you expected." (p. 29). This response reflects internalised gender norms. Auntie Bumi, despite her struggles, has accepted that men will always exercise authority, and women must simply learn to cope.

Similarly, Atinuke is projected as a woman who fully conforms to traditional gender roles. Her life serves as a direct contrast to Sadia's resistance. Unlike Sadia, who seeks education and self-sufficiency, Atinuke follows the traditional path of marriage, dependence, and submission. The novel describes her as uneducated but married to a "fairly educated man," (p.19), positioning her as a conventional example of what society expects from women. Atinuke's financial dependence on Akin ensures that she never poses a threat to his authority. Unlike Sadia, whose ambitions make her a target of Akin's control, Atinuke remains passive and compliant, making her more acceptable within the family structure (p. 232). Akin's preference for obedient women reflects the deep-rooted belief that female submission is a virtue. Atinuke's decision to accept financial dependence shields

her from the kind of mistreatment Sadia faces. However, this comes at the cost of her autonomy, as she remains trapped in a cycle of economic reliance and limited choices.

Sadia, unlike Auntie Bumi and Atinuke, actively challenges the gender roles imposed on her. She seeks education, financial stability, and autonomy, yet finds herself trapped by the same patriarchal expectations that confined the other women in her family. A defining moment of Sadia's struggle comes when she realises that marriage, rather than providing liberation, has placed her in another form of subjugation. Despite being deceived by Mofe, she convinces herself that marriage is her ultimate refuge "for the first time in my life, I had a home I could truly call my own." (p. 27). This reflects the societal conditioning that pushes women to equate stability with marriage, even when the reality of that marriage is far from ideal. Eventually, her internal struggle becomes evident when she makes the ultimate sacrifice for her marriage: "I'd live for our son. If you can stay focused and with your family, I shall be your furniture, I shall be the carpet under your feet." (p. 133). This moment significantly demonstrates how even a woman who resists societal norms can still succumb to the pressure of endurance.

Altogether, the lives of Auntie Bumi, Atinuke, and Sadia collectively reveal the different ways women experience and respond to gender roles within family structures. Auntie Bumi, despite being a provider, remains submissive. Atinuke, by fully embracing traditional roles, ensures male protection but sacrifices her autonomy. Sadia, the one who resists, ultimately suffers the most criticism and emotional turmoil. This explains why Charles Akinsete (2022) submits that "women characters are usually portrayed as victims of social injustice, oppression, violence, sexual abuse and environmental degradation. Such representation of women must be interpreted against the continued marginalisation of women in Africa (37). Through these contrasting characters, *The Truth About Sadia* highlights the inescapable pressure on women to conform to patriarchal expectations, demonstrating how family dynamics reinforce submission, endurance, and sacrifice as the defining virtues of womanhood.

Subverting Patriarchy: Resistance And Self-Assertion in *The Truth About Sadia*

Sadia's characterisation from the beginning exhibits a subtle defiance that sets her apart from other women around her. Unlike Atinuke, who is moulded by her brother and aligns herself with patriarchal expectations, Sadia radiates a promising aura even from childhood; a sense of strength and individuality that Akin, her elder brother, found threatening. "He detested it and wanted to smash it" (p.83). This early inclination toward resistance foreshadowed her later choices. Although

she was subjected to emotional manipulation, societal pressure, and spiritual interference orchestrated by her brother to deter her from marriage, Sadia persisted. Her resilience was neither loud nor confrontational; it was internal, steady, and ultimately transformative.

Sadia's transition into marital life (p.21) marks her first breakthrough against Akin's overbearing control; the very act of getting married defied his wishes and marked a significant personal victory. However, that marriage was anything but idyllic. Mofe, the man she married, concealed truths, battled substance abuse, and grew increasingly violent. Despite these trials, Sadia stayed, driven partly by social expectations that idealised female endurance. Her husband's deterioration into mental instability eventually became a threat to both her and their son, compelling her to leave the home for safety (p.102). In time, Sadia began rebuilding her life. She moved from squatting with a friend to renting her own modest one-room apartment, which she cherished "This was just a one-room apartment with practically nothing, but it felt like paradise. It was hers. She had paid for it. She had her own key" (p.121).

Despite the loneliness that trailed her years of separation, she remained resolute, even rejecting romantic advances "I made up my mind after Mofe's death never to be involved with a man again" (p.258). These choices were not signs of weakness, but declarations of autonomy. She focused her energy on raising her son, furthering her education, and reclaiming her sense of self. The closing chapters of the novel present a woman who, though alone, stands accomplished and fulfilled. Her son, Sesan, matured into a successful, responsible man "She led a quiet, exemplary life... She devoted herself entirely to him" (p.296). Sadia's life may have been marked by pain and loss, but her journey is ultimately one of strength and survival. Against the backdrop of familial betrayal, societal judgment, and patriarchal pressures, she emerged not unscarred, but undefeated. Her resistance is evident in every choice she made to live, to heal, and to persist on her own terms.

Basically, *The Truth About Sadia* presents a multifaceted portrayal of gender politics in the home and a fight for freedom in a patriarchal Nigerian society. The novel illustrates how traditional family structures marked by the authoritative control of male figures such as Akin shape the identity and limit the autonomy of women like Sadia. Through the experiences of Sadia, Auntie Bumi, and Atinuke, the narrative exposes the deep-seated expectations imposed on women, where obedience and endurance are valued over personal ambition and self-actualisation. Sadia's internal struggle is compounded by conflicting pressures from both her family and society. Her desire for independence and personal fulfilment is constantly undermined by the legacy of male dominance

whether through the deliberate truncation of her education and career choices or through the emotional manipulation that reinforces her dependency. Similarly, the pressures within her marriage force her to reconcile love with sacrifice, highlighting the emotional cost of adhering to traditional gender roles.

Patriarchy and Gender Politics: Structures of Marginalisation, Subservience and Subjugation in *Twisted Love*

Parental influence plays a fundamental role in shaping the identities and futures of Funmi and Ronke in *Twisted Love*. Their father, Mr Adeoti, though unconsciously, serves as the primary enforcer of patriarchal norms within the household, instilling traditional values that define gender roles and reinforce family hierarchy. His role reflects the internalisation of patriarchal ideology, where male authority is regulated and rarely questioned within the family structure. His expectations for his daughters, particularly in terms of education, marriage, and subservience, dictate their lives in ways that shape their aspirations, limitations, and conflicts. This positions Mr Adeoti as both a symbolic and literal representative of societal control over female agency. Through his actions and ideology, *Twisted Love* highlights how patriarchal family structures function as a microcosm of larger societal expectations placed on women.

One of the earliest depictions of gender-based conditioning occurs when the girls travel with their parents to Bauchi, where they encounter young girls selling *fura de nunu*. Curious about why these girls were not in school, Funmi and Ronke ask their father for an explanation. He responds by reinforcing a cultural belief that education for women is largely unnecessary in the Northern part of Nigeria; his casual acceptance of this belief underscores how deeply rooted gender bias becomes naturalised through generational discourse, shaping the girls' understanding of their roles long before they begin to question them.

Female education was frowned upon in many parts of the North because it was believed that educating a girl would not only make it difficult for her to get a husband, but even if she did get married it was perceived as a wasteful investment by her family (p.20).

This moment is pivotal in showing how societal structures, often enforced through parental figures, directly contribute to the suppression of female independence. Mr Adeoti's response unconsciously normalises the idea that a woman's value lies in her marital prospects rather than in her intellectual or career pursuits. By framing limited ambition as cultural wisdom, he perpetuates a gendered worldview in which women's potential is consciously stifled and unconsciously

inherited. Although Funmi and Ronke are being raised in a relatively educated home, their exposure to these ideas at an early age shapes their perception of gender roles, subtly reinforcing limitations on what they should or should not aspire to.

In addition to enforcing patriarchal norms, Mr Adeoti exhibits authoritarian control over his household, often resorting to violence to assert dominance. His physical abuse of his wife serves as an early lesson for Funmi and Ronke about the power imbalance in marriage. When their mother reveals that she was beaten for questioning his late nights, Ronke reacts with anger: “Was it right for him to beat Mommy like he beats us?” (p. 10). Ronke’s defiant questioning starkly contrasts with Funmi’s reaction, which reveals the internalisation of patriarchal ideology: “Mommy, did you shout at him as if you had the right to question him?” (p. 11). Here, we see the divergence in how each girl processes violence. Ronke is resisting the symbolic order that privileges the father, while Funmi’s response reflects a superego already shaped by submission. Their mother’s resigned response further cements the expectation that women must endure suffering in marriage, normalising emotional and physical sacrifice as essential to womanhood

Forget that I spoke to you about your daddy. He is only being a man Men lord it over their wives in the culture and get away with it. I hope you learn from this. You never comment about your husband's movements if you want peace (p. 11).

This exchange is significant in demonstrating how patriarchal conditioning begins in childhood, with mothers passing down submissive behaviour to their daughters. The fact that Funmi is quick to defend her father while Ronke questions his actions highlight how women either conform to or resist gender expectations based on their personalities and upbringing. Such early differentiation in response reflects the initial stages of gendered identity formation, where young girls adopt societal cues on what is acceptable female behaviour, either absorbing or rejecting them based on perceived authority.

Mr Adeoti’s influence extends beyond his daughters’ perception of gender roles; it also affects their educational experiences and self-worth. While Funmi excels academically, her achievements do not shield her from gendered expectations. When she enters university, she quickly realises the systemic barriers placed before women. The gender disparity is made evident in the number of residential halls allocated to male versus female students:

There were five presidential halls for males and only two for females. This was understandable because only very few

women were making it to the university level at that time due to lack of societal support (p.55).

This structural imbalance reflects the larger social reality that women are not given the same access to education as men, further reinforcing the idea that their primary roles should revolve around domestic life rather than intellectual pursuit. Here, the symbolic order of the university mirrors the broader patriarchal structure, reminding Funmi that even in spaces of progress, the system remains tilted towards male dominance.

Furthermore, patriarchal attitudes persist in Funmi's personal relationships. When she meets Kunle in university, his initial assumption about her academic background reveals his gender bias: "You must be in one of the science departments," he remarked, assuming that a female student could not be studying medicine (p. 60). His reaction reflects how gendered stereotypes pervade all aspects of society, with women constantly needing to prove themselves in male-dominated fields. Funmi's smug response in revealing that she is also a medical student shows her defiance of societal norms, but it also sets the stage for future conflicts where her intelligence and ambition will be seen as a threat rather than an asset. This marks the beginning of a deeper psycho-social tension where women's success destabilises the traditional gender dynamic and triggers resistance in men accustomed to dominance.

Through these instances, *Twisted Love* portrays how parental and societal structures transmit patriarchal values that shape a woman's identity, aspirations, and struggles. Funmi and Ronke grow up absorbing contrasting lessons, one of compliance, and the other of rebellion, yet both paths are deeply affected by their father's expectations and their mother's submission. This underscores the radical feminist argument that the family is the first site of gendered indoctrination, where identity and value are assigned based on adherence to roles defined by male control. These early lessons continue to influence women's experiences in marriage, career, and personal agency. Furthermore, societal expectations play a crucial role in shaping the lives of female characters in the novel. Women are expected to be submissive, prioritise their husbands and families above personal ambitions, and endure marital hardships without complaint. The novel critiques how patriarchal norms limit women's autonomy, showing how female characters navigate these pressures in different ways. While Funmi and Ronke are the primary focus of the novel, other female characters, including their mother, Mama Ekiti, Stella, and Bisi, also illustrate the varying responses to gendered expectations. These women navigate societal norms in different ways, some

conforming, some resisting, and others trapped in the cycle of endurance. This section explores how these female characters reinforce or challenge patriarchal values and how their experiences shed light on the complex relationship between family structures and gender roles.

From an early age, Funmi internalises societal ideals about what it means to be a good woman. When she enters the university, she encounters gender-based assumptions that undermine her intelligence and abilities. When she introduces herself to Kunle, his immediate response is dismissive: “You must be in one of the science departments” (p. 60). This assumption reveals a deep-seated belief that certain academic fields, particularly medicine, are not for women. Kunle’s condescending remark underscores how women are often underestimated in professional spaces, a pattern that continues in Funmi’s life even after she excels in her career. This moment reflects a broader symbolic structure in which male superiority in intellectual spaces is assumed, while women must continually prove their worth.

Despite her professional success, Funmi remains bound by traditional gender expectations in her marriage. She takes on the role of the devoted wife, prioritising Kunle’s needs and sacrificing her own desires for the sake of maintaining a happy home. However, her reality is far from the fairy tale she envisioned. Kunle begins cheating on her openly, developing relationships with various women while she remains at home, heavily pregnant (p. 97). This captures a common societal double standard: while men are free to explore extramarital affairs, women are expected to remain faithful and dedicated to their marriage regardless of mistreatment. This double bind reflects the patriarchal bargain women are forced into: emotional endurance in exchange for the illusion of stability.

In addition, Funmi is also pressured by her in-laws to endure Kunle’s infidelity rather than leave the marriage. When she discovers his affair, Mama Ekiti, Kunle’s mother, advises her to stay: “Mama Ekiti took Funmi into her room and appealed to her to give Kunle another chance” (p. 111). By persuading Funmi to endure the humiliation, Mama Ekiti reinforces the patriarchal notion that a woman’s duty is to keep her marriage intact at all costs. This intergenerational reinforcement of silence and endurance reveals how gender oppression is recycled and disguised as tradition. The expectation that a woman must tolerate suffering in silence is a recurring theme in *Twisted Love*, as Funmi’s mother had previously given similar advice about never questioning a husband’s whereabouts (p. 11). These generational lessons illustrate how societal norms are perpetuated within families, passing restrictive gender roles from one generation to the next. The ideology of

not 'questioning a man' manifests in Funmi's marriage after experiencing abuse and betrayal; Funmi struggles to detach herself from Kunle emotionally. When he becomes physically abusive, slapping her for questioning his whereabouts, she is stunned but does not leave. This paralysis speaks to the psychoanalytic reality of emotional repression: the internalised fear of failure, shame, and rejection overrides the instinct for self-preservation

On one occasion, when she demanded an explanation on the smell of female perfume on his shirt, he slapped her. Things had never degenerated to this level before. Don't you ever question me about my movements again. Do you want to control my life? (p.145).

This moment highlights the deep psychological conditioning that prevents many women from walking away from toxic marriages. Funmi came to the realisation and questions herself, "would she have to experience the belt at this stage of her life?" (p.145). Funmi's endurance mirrors the reality of many women who remain in unhealthy relationships due to societal pressure, fear of judgment, and the belief that they must fight to "save" their marriage. While Funmi submits to traditional gender roles, Ronke takes a different path. Resentful of being constantly compared to her successful sister, she finds her own way of asserting control through seduction and destruction. Unlike Funmi, who believes in love and commitment, Ronke sees relationships as opportunities to exert power. Ronke's defining moment of rebellion comes when she deliberately introduces her friend Dolapo to Kunle, knowing it will contribute to the collapse of her sister's marriage. This action is not driven by a desire for love but by deep-seated envy and resentment. Ronke's betrayal is a culmination of years of sibling rivalry fuelled by parental favouritism and societal pressure. Her actions reflect a psychological response shaped by longstanding exclusion and emotional neglect, where sabotage becomes a form of reclaiming power.

However, both sisters remain trapped within the structures that dictate a woman's role in relation to men. Funmi's resilience in her marriage highlights how societal conditioning prevents women from walking away from toxic relationships. When she realises Kunle is unfaithful, she seeks help from his parents rather than making an independent decision, "Kunle's parents encouraged Funmi to stay calm. They assured her that he would soon come back to his senses. There was nothing else they could do" (p. 153). This moment illustrates how family structures reinforce the idea that a woman's duty is to endure, even at the cost of her emotional well-being. Funmi internalises this belief, choosing to focus on her children and career rather than confronting her marital problems directly. Ronke, on the other hand, refuses to submit to traditional roles, but her actions are not

rooted in empowerment. Instead, she seeks validation through competition with Funmi, culminating in her seduction of Kunle. Her decision to engage in an affair with her sister's husband is less about love and more about proving dominance "He told her several times that she was better than her sister in bed. Ronke wished she could get this across to her sister who thought she was best in everything" (p. 196). Ronke's actions demonstrate how internalised misogyny can drive women to turn against each other rather than challenge the societal structures that oppress them. Moreover, Funmi and Ronke's mother, Mrs Adeoti, plays a significant role in shaping their understanding of gender roles. Despite experiencing domestic abuse, she upholds the belief that women must be submissive to their husbands. When the girls confront her about their father's violence, she dismisses their concerns

Girls forget that I spoke to you about your daddy. He is only being a man. Men lord it over their wives in our culture and get away with it. I hope you learn from this. You never comment about your husband's movement if you want peace (p.11).

This response reflects a generational cycle where women are taught to accept male dominance as a fact of life. Mrs Adeoti's words echo the internalised logic of patriarchy, in which male authority is naturalized and female subjugation is moralised as endurance. By normalising domestic violence, she conditions her daughters to tolerate mistreatment in their own relationships. This kind of maternal transmission serves as a mechanism through which patriarchal ideology reproduces itself, embedding itself into the psyche before resistance can even form. Funmi internalises this lesson, enduring Kunle's emotional and physical abuse, while Ronke, despite rejecting traditional roles, still operates within a framework that centres her worth around male validation. In both cases, the mother's belief system becomes a blueprint for how each daughter negotiates gendered power, either through submission or subversive rivalry.

Mama Ekiti, Kunle's mother, represents another pillar of patriarchal reinforcement. Although she is objective in judgment and chastises her son for his infidelity (p. 106), she urges Funmi to remain committed to the marriage: "Mama Ekiti took Funmi into her own room and appealed to her to give Kunle another chance" (p. 111). Her words reflect the societal expectation that women must preserve their marriages at all costs. Even when acknowledging a man's fault, the burden of restoration is still placed on the woman, revealing how deeply entrenched patriarchal norms shift accountability away from men. The notion that a woman must "see beyond" her husband's faults, rather than challenge them, is a recurring theme in *Twisted Love*. This expectation functions as a

psychological constraint, where endurance is coded as virtue, and protest as failure. Even when Kunle's actions escalate into physical abuse, Funmi is encouraged to endure rather than seek independence, illustrating how emotional repression and social conditioning work together to silence women's suffering in the name of family honour. Similarly, Funmi's friends Stella and Bisi's experiences further illustrate the pervasive influence of patriarchal family structures. Both women face professional limitations imposed by their husbands, reinforcing the idea that a woman's success must be secondary to a man's. Stella, once an ambitious and intelligent woman, finds her career ambitions stifled by her husband's insecurity

It is just that some men cannot see a future where there would be 2 professors in the home, he actually told me so and compelled me to stay in the polytechnic, where the limit one can attain is the post of senior principal lecturer (p. 169).

Her husband's fear of being overshadowed leads him to restrict her professional growth, ensuring that she remains beneath him in status. This fear reflects a gendered anxiety where the husband's identity is bound to superiority, and any disruption threatens the fragile balance of power within the domestic order. Similarly, Bisi faces controlling behaviour from her husband, who imposes strict rules on her career

It is a problem with African men. They want to have total control over their women. Some even go as far as to control what she wears and insist that she must not wear any make up whereas the ones they flirt with outside wear heavy make-up...He neither encouraged me nor supported my progress in any way, it was as if he wanted me stuck on the same spot. He gave me house rules...I was not to bring home any office work or paper in progress (p. 171).

Subverting Patriarchy: Resistance And Self-Assertion in *Twisted Love*

Funmi's journey in *Twisted Love* does not end in despair. Rather, it evolves into a profound process of healing and self-reinvention. The years of emotional neglect, betrayal, and repression gradually give way to a period of awakening, one initiated by an unexpected encounter that shifts her perspective. After meeting a woman who had gone through similar marital challenges yet appeared happy, composed, and thriving, Funmi is struck by the possibility that survival need not be silent or joyless. This moment becomes a catalyst for change, marking a clear departure from self-pity to self-empowerment. Psychologically, this signals a move from emotional paralysis to agency, a reclaiming of her self-concept beyond the role of the wounded wife.

That was a turning point for Funmi. She changed her car and gave the Volkswagen to her assistant in the parks and gardens project. She changed her wardrobe, hairstyle, and her looks... She even chastised herself for all the suffering she had gone through in the past. How could I have tied my happiness to a man who was no longer interested in me? she kept on asking herself again and again. (p.156)

This transformation is deeply symbolic. Her shift in appearance, attitude, and priorities is more than a lifestyle change; it represents a redefinition of selfhood. No longer seeking validation from a disinterested spouse, she begins to reconnect with her own desires, ambitions, and self-worth. From a feminist lens, this marks a critical turning point where a woman shifts from internalising subjugation to active resistance. Funmi's professional growth mirrors her internal shift. Her landscaping and gardens business, once a source of side income, becomes a channel for emotional restoration and financial independence. The act of gardening becomes metaphorical—she is no longer surviving but cultivating. The joy that returns to her household, especially with her children, reflects the far-reaching effects of a woman's emotional liberation. A pivotal moment at the mall, where she encounters Kunle and simultaneously receives news of her academic promotion, underscores the full circle of her transformation

Ha ha, Dr. Ojo, the woman I have been wanting to see all morning. Congratulations! We took your case this morning at the appointment and promotions committee meeting and you are now an associate professor. Well done! your CV is very impressive and the assessors comments were also very good...She was happy, and most especially that Kunle heard the news first-hand. (p.157)

This moment marks a significant reversal of roles. Kunle, once the emotional and psychological centre of her life, now becomes an external spectator. This public recognition operates as a form of reparation: a moment of restored self-worth that neutralises past humiliation and affirms her reconstituted identity. Funmi does not gloat or seek revenge; her power lies in having moved beyond the need for either. Her reinvention is further emphasised through her renewed relationship with her children, her deliberate redirection of energy toward meaningful work, and her rejection of past self-blame. She no longer defines herself through sacrifice but through self-creation, a refusal to let suffering dictate the rest of her story.

Ultimately, *Twisted Love* portrays resilience not as an easy triumph over adversity, but as a hard-won transformation born out of years of silent endurance, emotional conflict, and eventual self-clarity. Funmi's evolution from submission to self-assertion reflects the complex reality of many

women navigating patriarchal structures. Through a feminist and psychoanalytic lens, her story reveals that autonomy is not given but reclaimed and often at great emotional cost. Her final chapter is not just about breaking free from a man, but about breaking free from the idea that a woman's identity must always orbit around him.

Conclusion

This study extends on the interplay of gender politics in literature while examining how power structures regulate the lives of female characters. It further foregrounds the reactionary approaches adopted by these characters in subverting patriarchal norms. The selected gynotexts, *The Truth About Sadia* and *Twisted Love*, portray women's subjugated experiences in patriarchal Nigerian society. There is the revelation of oppressive structures with vivid illustrations of the emotional and psychological consequences of living within patriarchal society. Also, there is an open-ended question about the possibility of true emancipation within a system that conditions women to compete for the sparse rewards of patriarchal recognition. This duality of resilience and subversion of power, which are salient aspects of the theory of radical feminism, provokes further interrogation of how re-imagined familial and societal structures might foster not just survival but genuine female emancipation and empowerment. This no doubt aligns with the ongoing discourse on the role of literature in critiquing, and potentially reshaping societal views on women's roles and self-recognition in male-dominated African settings.

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Literary Aesthetics and Postmodern Representations in Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky* and Tunde Olusunle's *A Medley Of Echoes*

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Abstract

*With the advent of the 21st century, Nigerian poetry has continued to illustrate exclusive aesthetic representations, complemented by postmodern ideology, that reflect both artistic innovation and social realities. While several studies focus on significant literary and syntactic transformations in contemporary Nigerian poetry, little attention is paid to the negotiation of postmodern realities of the 21st century with new aesthetic techniques in Nigerian poetry. This study, therefore, examines the literary aesthetics and postmodern representations in selected Nigerian poems published in the twenty-first century, with a focus on Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky* and Tunde Olusunle's *A Medley of Echoes*. This paper adopts Russian Formalism which provides a rich foundation for the examination of literary aesthetics and ideology in contemporary Nigerian poetry, complemented by relevant postmodern techniques. The selected poems were subjected to qualitative methodology. Through critical analysis of the usage of fractured syntax, imagery, and free verse, this study underscores the psycho-social fractures caused by systematic failures, oppression, and corruption. It further evaluates the use of postmodern techniques such as lingual hybridity, intertextuality, and visual experimentation to represent the interface between colonial linguistic hierarchies and indigenous epistemologies. The findings reveal that contemporary Nigerian poetry embodies the nature of duality in its assertion of aesthetic autonomy while simultaneously functioning as an ideological discourse of resistance.*

Keywords: *Literary Aesthetics, Twenty-first Century Nigerian Poetry, Formalism, Postmodernism*

Introduction

Contemporary Nigerian poetry is inextricably linked to the evolution of African oral tradition in which poetry, chant, and song constituted the primary modes of cultural transmission, memory, and communal identity formation. In precolonial Nigeria, poetic forms such as praise poetry, dirges, incantations, and epics functioned not only as entertainment but also as instruments of

moral instruction. While Charles Akinsete (2022:39) states that Nigerian poetry indeed has become a significant avenue for literary expression, Ojaide (2003:7) had argued that "Nigeria's poetry history is founded extensively on the oral culture of the nation, even before the introduction of written literature in the country by colonialism. Josephat Odey and Patrick Ogar (2021) argue that "The poetry of this era is woven in oral performance and could be said to be highly functional, because it is close to the daily and social life of the people". The advent of colonial rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reshaped the trajectory of Nigerian poetry, instigating a shift from the extant oral form to the written form. With the introduction of Western education, writing became a new expressive mode, which provoked a revolutionary move that displaced indigenous oral form (Gikandi, 2015).

The pioneer Nigerian poets adopted the written poetic form, but they started experimenting with English verse structures while superimposing their indigenous motifs and contents. Their poetry, however, reflected a melange of colonial modernity and Nigerian cultural heritage. This resulted in imitation and innovation in both poetic form and content. Donatus Nwoga (1994: 121-22), notes that the "pioneer poets are enlightened Nigerians who use their wealth of experience to fight common enemies: colonisation and poor opinion that the rest of the world appears to have about the ability of the black man" One major impulse of pioneer poets was the desire to portray African life, values and customs to refute centuries of vilification, denigration and misrepresentation by the Europeans (Josephat Odey and Patrick Ogar, 2021). Some of the notable pioneer poets include: Dennis Osadebay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Michael Dei-Anang, etc.

With the emergence of voices like Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara, Michael Echuero, Okogbule Wonodi and J. P. Clark-Bekederemo in the 1950s and 1960s, Nigerian poetry entered a period widely regarded as the "golden age." These poets project themselves and Nigerian poetry to the world by blending Western modernist techniques with African mythopoeic sensibilities. For instance, in a review by Nicholas Dolan (2024), it is averred that Okigbo's *Labyrinths* (1971) exhibits a modernist lyricism richly influenced by T. S. Eliot, yet remains deeply rooted in Igbo myth and Catholic symbolism. The poets of this period began to withdraw from the public stage and turn to focus on personal concerns and inner reflections. Similarly, Akinsete (2020) confirms that "diverse literary forms (including cultural expressions such as music, sculpture, dance, painting, dressing and of course literature) that were produced in the twentieth century in Africa were heavily influenced by the fusion of Euro-Afrocentric experiences which

dominated the black continent from the mid-twentieth century" (242). To a large extent, these poets were variously described as poets who engaged in writing obscure poetry. Ideologically, their poems did not reflect the painful realities of society. This explains why writers like Chinweizu et al aver that those poets failed Nigerians in several ways:

There is a failure of craft in the works of the euro-modernist Ibadan Nsukka school of Nigerian poetry. Despite the high praise heaped upon it from all sides, most of the practitioners display glaring faults, e.g. old fashioned, craggy, unmusical language; obscure and inaccessible diction, a plethora of imported imagery; a divorce from African traditions, tempered only by a lifeless attempt at revivalism (165).

The post-independence period ushered Nigerian poetry into the modern era when poets began to broaden their scope in both content and style (Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2016). Ideologists like T.C Nwosu, Ezenwa Ohaeto, Ossie Enekwe, Odia Ofeimun, Niyi Osundare, Femi Fatoba, Tanure Ojaide and Chimalum Nwankwo became the main voices behind modern Nigerian poetry. The thematic concerns of these poets were hinged on social ills such as corruption, dictatorship, poor leadership, environmental degradation, electoral malpractices and civil war. Emmanuel Obiechina (1971) holds that "...faced with the new realities of power and politics in Africa (Nigeria), writers have had to reappraise their roles in the society. The pre-occupation with the past had to give way to concerns with pressing problems of the present" (122). Poets like Odia Ofeimun, Tanure Ojaide, and Niyi Osundare shifted the tenor of Nigerian poetry from obscurity to a more accessible, social mode. Osundare in particular insisted on the democratisation of poetry, arguing that "poetry is not the esoteric preserve of a few elite readers but a song woven for the ears of the community" (Osundare, 1984). His collection, "Songs of the Marketplace" (1983), projects this aesthetic shift, promoting oral performance, collective identity, and political engagement.

With the advent of the 21st century, however, Nigerian poetry experienced a remarkable transformation, reflecting both local and global cultural realities. This new phase aligns with the rise of postmodernism in world literature. Postmodern poetry is generally characterised by a scepticism towards grand narratives, playful reinvention of form, and an embrace of fragmentation, intertextuality, parody, and pastiche. Unlike the solemnity of modernist poetry, postmodern poets often play with language. They bend, disrupt, or even mock conventional forms. For instance, a poem may juxtapose free verse with fragmented prose, or interweave classical references with pop culture. Linda Hutcheon describes postmodernism as "an ideology of irony" that combines critique

with complicity, destabilising authority while revelling in plurality (Hutcheon, 2002). Akinsete (2023) argues that the complexities of the modern era serve as a main catalyst in the evolution of postmodern African culture.

Nigerian poets in the quarter part of the twentieth century have been largely described as “Young poets”, “New poets”, and “Younger poets”. Niyi Osundare calls them “CNN generation of writers”, while Odia Ofeimun refers to them “as the clap trap generation of writers” (Josephat Odey and Patrick Ogar, 2021; Inyabri, 2006: 68). Some of these contemporary postmodern poets include Peter Onwudinjo, Joe Ushie, Remi Raji, Charles Akinsete, Adimora-Ezeigbo, Femi Oyebode, Cecilia Kato, Olu Oguibe, Afam Akeh, Sophia Obi, Charles Ihuoma, Isaac Shuaibu, Hope Eghagha and Obari Gomba, Toyin Adewale, Ogechi Ironmatu, Isidore Diala, Uche Nduka, Onokome Okome, Usman Shehu, Chin Ce, Kemi Atanda, Kayode Aderinokun, among others.

In Nigerian poetry, the 21st century postmodern ideology resonates strongly with the lived experiences of post-colonialism, globalisation, trauma and diasporic dislocation. Josephat Odey and Patrick Ogar (2021) observe that “the writers of this generation are Marxist oriented” (163). With Marxist ideology, these poets leave an indelible revolutionary imprint on the minds of the masses. They use poetry as a creative means of advocacy and criticism. Their revolutionary fervour has persisted, as the younger generation of Nigerian poets continues their crusade for liberation from the constraints of capitalism. They position themselves as crusaders, critics, and agents of emancipation. Accordingly, Nigerian postmodern poetry frequently grapples with themes of trauma, globalisation, gender, diaspora, politics and other social realities. This aligns with Adebisi-Adelabu and Esamagu’s assertion that “one of the defining signifiers of third-generation Nigerian poetry is that it is characterised by a great deal of anger, frustration, cynicism, disillusionment, and pessimism; yet flashes of optimism are not an unusual feature of the poetry” (Adebisi-Adelabu and Esamagu 2020:10).

The adoption of poetry in social media and the rise of digital publishing platforms have further diversified the voices shaping this poetry. Poets such as Charles Akinsete, Amatoritsero Ede, Lola Shoneyin, Jumoke Verissimo, and Efe Paul Azino exemplify the polyphonic nature of Nigerian postmodern poetics in their poems. Their works incorporate diverse influences ranging from Afrobeat rhythms and hip-hop idioms to Yoruba mythology and European modernism. For instance, Akinsete’s *Chants of Restless Ants* modernises protest poetry by urging resistance on

'fiery pages of social media', merging Yoruba oral defiance with digital activism (Akinsete 2020: 36).

Aesthetically, the Postmodern Nigerian poetry revels in disjointed syntax, hybridised language, and intermediality. Chielozona Eze (2006) observes that “the new Nigerian poetry thrives on an ironic consciousness, locating beauty in dissonance and coherence in contradiction” (87). In other words, the aesthetics of the 21st-century Nigerian poem often embodies paradox, multiplicity, and irony rather than unity or harmony. This postmodern sensibility also entails a redefinition of the relationship between aesthetics and ideology. Terry Eagleton reminds us that “the aesthetic is not neutral, but a central ideological formation” (Eagleton, 1990: 24). Thus, the aesthetic strategies in Nigerian poetry are themselves ideological gestures. Furthermore, the development of form and content in Nigerian poetry has been deeply influenced by the rise of performance poetry and spoken-word culture in the 21st century.

Akinsete (2016) argues that literary texts are somewhat indebted to their inherent structure or form, which ultimately determines the quality of interpretation and criticism. Therefore, the study of aesthetics and postmodern ideology in 21st century Nigerian poetry seeks to bring to the fore, not only formal innovations but also broader cultural and ideological preoccupations. It further highlights how Nigerian poets deploy the tools of postmodern poetics not as mere stylistic features but as strategies for articulating the complex social realities. It is in this synthesis of aesthetics and ideology that Nigerian postmodern poetry derives its distinctiveness and relevance. The aesthetics of Nigerian poetry in the 21st century is inseparable from postmodern ideological waves, and together they showcase how art continually reinvents itself in response to the shifting literary culture.

The *mélange* of aesthetics and postmodern ideology in 21st century Nigerian poetry is, however, made possible through the adoption of the Formalist approach. Formalism, also known as Russian Formalism in its development, is regarded as a breakthrough in literary criticism (Steiner, 2016). As a literary theory, Formalism began in the early twentieth century, especially in Russia, in the 1910s and 1920s, and aimed to replace the focus of literary criticism with the features of a piece of literature considered in themselves, rather than with extrinsic considerations. Formalist critics developed the idea that literature is a unique and independent type of art, regulated by the internal laws (Davis and Womack, 2018). In its basic form, the idea behind the formalist theory is that literature exists when it is literary, and so it is known as literariness (Eyers, 2017). These formal

devices that convey this literariness are the rhythm, syntax, imagery, metaphor, defamiliarisation and structure of the narrative. The theory proposes that these factors are not just surface or appendages to a text but core to meaning and the ideal value of a text.

Therefore, literature was no longer taken as the result of emotion, biography or ideology, but as a system of devices arranged to create specific aesthetic effects. Through this, formalism was seen as a radical departure from the styles of criticism prevalent at that time, most of which were impressionistic and biographical (Gorkmez and Beyoglu, 2022). Formalism has not been free of detractors. Its extreme attention to literary form has attracted critics questioning an ahistorical and apolitical interpretation of literature according to the theory (Castle, 2013). Context, ideology, and social role are bracketed, and this poses a threat to formalist criticism because it reduces it to a linguistic puzzle with no relevance to the world out of which it emerges. Formalism, therefore, serves as a reminder that literature has its logic, and this cannot be explained entirely within the framework of historical, political, and psychological explanations. On that note, the contribution of formalist theory is in maintaining the literature's uniqueness, although it is in the process of interacting with other forms of analysis. Whether as an approach in itself or as an aspect of a larger critical theory, Formalism still defines how we read, interpret, and appreciate literature to some extent.

The Aesthetics of Experimental Poetic Form in Stephen Kekeghe *Rumbling Sky*

Rumbling Sky demonstrates Kekeghe's skilful deployment of aesthetics in postmodern poetry. Conspicuously, Kekeghe uses fragmentation and disjointed syntax to present the distorted mind of the oppressed people with a shattered psyche in the collection. Most of his poems are devoid of punctuation. As such, the reader only attempts to intermingle the non-punctuated, breathless poems to bring them to a state of displacement perceptible to the oppressed. For instance, in "*Hovering Horror*," the opening lines—"We are in the hollow belly of the murky sky, floating on wings of the wind bearing anguish on our shoulders... / A cemetery of dumb ghosts and callous caretakers shrouded by darkness punctuated by the owl's songs..." line 1-8 are rendered without full stops. This, however, creates a feeling of claustrophobia which develops into a continuous flow of despair.

This technique intensifies in "*Streams of Sorrow*," where the lines "*They throw bombs at us / as toddlers do with playthings; / the thick smoke, rising / to the darkening canopy / of the scary sky...*" Therefore, the enjambment in lines 1-5 is used to create an effect of violence, which is unstoppable

and incessant. The disjointed structure also appears in "*Black Bloods*," where phrases like "*When they agonised Ogoni, crude became Wiwa's blood, our tragic treasure, conveyed in bullions of black bloods*" (lines 16-19) omit logical transitions, reflecting the chaotic aftermath of state-sponsored brutality. Similarly, "*This Boom*" fractures narrative coherence with abrupt shifts: "*In this wilting mangrove, / gas flares freeze your breath, / darken your lungs and livers / and crude, crawls into your waters...*" (lines 1-4). In this case, the disrupted syntax mirrors the upheaval experienced by the people of the Niger Delta, where oil exploitation displaces communities and strips them of both their land and their identity.

Kekeghe's strategic use of anaphora and repetition transforms his poetry into a kind of liturgical resistance, where recurring phrases accumulate ritual power with each repetition. The seven-fold incantation of "*They are the haramers*" across (lines 8, 14, 20, 26, 32) creates a judicial cadence that seems to put oppressive forces on trial before some cosmic court of justice. This phrase simultaneously functions as a cultural reference, appropriating the Islamic concept of "*haram*" (forbidden) for secular condemnation, and as a hypnotic device that induces psychological immersion in the trauma narrative.

The poet's manipulation of semantic recursion is particularly deft - with each repetition of the haramer refrain, the accusation mutates and deepens: from physical violence ("*with bloodied fingers*") to cultural theft ("*that stole our moon*") to generational destruction ("*that smoke our budding twig*"). This gradual disclosure that takes the form of a repetition is a perfect reflection of how systemic oppression spreads to various spheres of human life. The collection's leitmotif of "*blood*" in "*Black Bloods*" undergoes a remarkable alchemical transformation through strategic repetition. Beginning with the relatively concrete "*oily lakes*" (line 3), the imagery evolves through "*Wiwa's blood*" (line 17) to the more abstract "*dark bloods of slain paupers*" (line 21) before culminating in the devastating "*watery blood of scrawny children*" (line 37). Each repetition of the blood metaphor makes the realisation of its symbolism stronger, building an arch between a natural resource, a source of life, and a source of generational torment.

Kekeghe extends this method of repetition to the structural level of the collection, forming constellations through the recurrent use of industrial imagery (gas flares, pipelines), animal imagery (vultures, hawks), and planetary imagery (a dead moon, a sorrowful sun). These iterative motifs create a complex web of correlations to design the system of systemic oppression in Nigeria. In "*Burden of Being*," Kekeghe deploys repetitive cadence to embed profound effect with phrases

like "*surfaces and recedes, surfaces and recedes*" (line 113), mimicking the tidal nature of oppression that periodically overwhelms and then retreats from consciousness. The refrain of "*moans and words*" (line 165) initially suggests the reduction of revolutionary potential to cyclical futility, but is ultimately subverted through the very act of poetic testimony. The poem itself becomes proof that words can transcend moans, that art can transform suffering into resistance. This paradoxical use of repetition to both demonstrate and overcome oppression's cyclical nature showcases Kekeghe's sophisticated understanding of form as a political weapon.

Kekeghe's deployment of stream-of-consciousness narration serves as a powerful formal device that mirrors the psychological disarray of oppressed communities. This style repudiates traditional forms of narrative representation to convey thoughts and pictures in a chaotic, raw stream, as the thoughts and images overwhelm the victim of systemic violence. In "*Hovering Horror*," the opening lines—"*We are in the hollow belly of the murky sky, floating on wings of the wind bearing anguish on our shoulders... / A cemetery of dumb ghosts and callous caretakers shrouded by darkness punctuated by the owl's songs...*" (lines 1-8) eschew logical transitions, creating a sensory barrage that immerses the reader in the poem's nightmarish reality.

The technique becomes even more pronounced in "*Streams of Sorrow*," where the relentless repetition of "*They are the haramers*" (lines 8, 14, 20, 26, 32) creates a hypnotic, incantatory rhythm that mirrors the cyclical nature of oppression. Each new indictment—"*with bloodied fingers*," "that stole our moon," "*that smoke our budding twig*"—builds upon the last without pause, simulating how trauma compounds in the collective consciousness. The absence of stanzas breaks in those sections compels the reader to read the poems as the oppressed live their lives – without pauses for relief and without the comfort of clear or “pure” resolutions. This narrative style reaches its apex in "*Burden of Being*," where the speaker's internal monologue shifts abruptly from personal reflection ("*There is this burden of being that rests on your shuddering shoulders*") to societal critique ("*The high, busy in mind, sap the physical energies of the low*"), lines 75-76. These rapid changes reflect a disjointed mind of the person trying to balance their personal survival and communal destruction. The poem's concluding lines—"*You now scheme to enchain your faithful fans / of the years of sore rewards*" (lines 162-163)—demonstrate how stream-of-consciousness can reveal uncomfortable truths about complicity and betrayal in oppressed communities.

Kekeghe's adoption of free verse is not just for style, but also as a radical political statement, employing form to expose the chaotic operations of institutional oppression. The collection's refusal to use regular metrical patterns and rhyme systems is a formal rebellion against literary conventions that attempt to impose artificial order on the disordered realities of marginalised lives. The poems' breathless, uninterrupted stretches create a suffocating textual landscape that perfectly reflects the unending nature of institutional violence. This is the most compelling manifestation of the collection's structural resistance. The first lines of "*Hovering Horror*" show how good Kekeghe is at this kind of writing: "*We are in the hollow belly of the murky sky, floating on wings of the wind bearing anguish on our shoulders... / A cemetery of dumb ghosts and callous caretakers shrouded by darkness punctuated by the owl's songs.*" (1–8). The poet uses a number of creative ways to create a claustrophobic textual vortex here. By leaving out normal punctuation, the poem generates a constant, overwhelming flow of imagery that keeps the reader's attention on the painful material. Strategic enjambment, which breaks lines in the middle of a thought ("*floating on wings of the wind bearing anguish / on our shoulders...*") lines 2–4, gives a strong impression of psychological fragmentation that is similar to how institutional violence breaks up coherent worldviews. At the same time, the quick buildup of conflicting imagery ("*hollow belly,*" line 1; "*dumb ghosts,*" line 5; "*owl's songs,*" line 8) is like what victims of oppression go through when they have too much to take in.

Figurative and Symbolic Aesthetics in Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky*

"In poetry, symbolism remains one of the effective ways in which literary language is deployed in a given text and meaning is inventively achieved" (Akinsete, 2016). Kekeghe's use of grotesque symbols and imageries serve as a visceral indictment of systemic violence, pushing readers to confront uncomfortable realities through disturbing, exaggerated depictions. In "*This Boom*," the lines "gas flares freeze your breath, / darken your lungs and livers" (lines 2-3) transform environmental pollution into a bodily violation, with industrial byproducts literally infiltrating human organs. Such a biological analogy brings some abstract ideas, such as environmental harm, into reality. The poem escalates this technique with surreal, bodily grotesquerie: "*menstruating pipes in / your dregs of drowning homes*" (lines 32-33). Here, industrial infrastructure is given reproductive functions, suggesting both violation (the pipes "*menstruate*" pollution into homes) and perversion of nature (the pipes replace human fertility with toxic discharge). This picture

confronts the reader with the realisation that capitalist exploitation distorts nature and human physiology.

"*Streams of Sorrow*" employs similar tactics with its depiction of religious hypocrisy: "*They are the haramers / that defend an impotent god / in the dark cloud / behind the dead moon*" (lines 26-29). The sexualised metaphor ("*impotent god*") reduces divine authority to failed masculinity, while the celestial imagery ("*dead moon*") inverts traditional symbols of hope. This grimy spiritual scene reflects the corruption of institutions that are supposed to be virtuous and without subjugation. The most disturbing grotesqueries appear in "*Black Bloods*," where oil becomes animate and gothic: "*The dark blood of our earth bloom wealth in private pockets of Abuja gods*" (line 9-11). In this metamorphosis, the transformation of a natural resource into a circulating fluid, and ultimately into a corrupted currency, becomes starkly apparent. This reveals how extractive economies transmute life into a commodity. The poem's closing image—"watery blood of scrawny children and wrinkled youths litter our cringing creeks" (lines 37-39)—collapses generations into a single grotesque tableau, showing how violence perpetuates across time.

Kekeghe deploys paradoxical and oxymoronic expressions to capture the extent of hypocrisy in our contemporary society. In "*Hovering Horror*," the phrase "*democrat's costumes*" (line 12) unmasks political theatre, where leaders don the guise of democracy while ruling as "*daring dictators*." Similarly, "*triumphant CEOs*" (line 33) juxtaposes corporate success with moral bankruptcy, critiquing capitalism's ruthless triumphalism. "*Burden of Being*" is rife with existential paradoxes: "*You are high as a successful man should be / but low as the unsuccessful are jinxed to be*" (lines 130-131). In this case, physical success is tantamount to spiritual poverty, causing the absurdity of success in a degraded system. The oxymoron "*reward of Success!*" (line 124) further mocks the hollowness of societal benchmarks, while "*community of Marx*" versus "*society of opulence*" (lines 143-145) contrasts idealism with soulless materialism. Even nature is set in a form of a paradox. In "*Streams of Sorrow*," the "*sad sun*" (line 16) replaces the moon, inverting celestial symbols of hope and casting light not to illuminate, but to expose the weight of despair.

With the use of personification, Kekeghe injects life to natural environment and industrial forces, making them effective agents of suffering. In "*This Boom*," crude oil is depicted as a predatory invader: "*crude, crawls into your waters, / meanders into your lands, / to choke your fishes / and kill your crops*" (lines 4-7). This personification eliminates the boundary between a natural disaster

and an act of human sabotage. such that ecological devastation is being transformed into a willed, mindful behaviour. Similarly, gas flares are given malicious agency: "*gas flares freeze your breath, / darken your lungs and livers*" (lines 2-3), portraying industrialisation as a living, suffocating force. The poem "*Streams of Sorrow*" extends this technique to abstract concepts, describing oppressors as "*hovering vultures / on cold carcass*" (lines 12-13) and religion as an "impotent god / in the dark cloud" (lines 27-28). Even the sky is personified as a consumptive entity: "*Before the sky swallows our sun*" (lines 51), suggesting an all-encompassing systematic oppression. In "*Black Bloods*," oil becomes "*Wiwa's blood*" (line 17), equating natural resources with spilt life, while "menstruating pipes".

Postmodern Ideology and Poetics of Resistance in Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky*

Thematically, Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky* reflects the social ills that cripple the development of the people and the nation, 'Nigeria', at large. The anthology unravels the hypocrisy of religion, dehumanisation, and the psychological trauma of survival in oppressive environments. One of the major ideological concerns of Kekeghe in *Rumbling Sky* is the political and economic oppression of Nigerians, which is evident in the unfair exploitation of the masses by corrupt leaders. Kekeghe does not portray politicians and corporate elites in a very pleasant light; rather, politicians are metaphorically referred to as vultures and hawks, and corporate elites are thieves, more often than not, enjoying at the expense of the poor. In "*This Boom*", he writes: "*In that Villa of power, / your Executhieves / and Legislathieves / gather to share / your darkening blood...*" (lines 9-12). The "*Villa of power*" line 8 likely references Nigeria's Aso Rock Presidential Villa, symbolising corruption in government. The phrase "*darkening blood*" is a double signifier: it refers to both literal bloodshed and embezzlement of national treasures.

Environmental degradation through oil spillage, especially in the Niger Delta, is ruthlessly denounced in the collection. Kekeghe describes the land as being injured and polluted by gas flares, oil spillage, and industrial waste that choke both nature and human existence. In "*This Boom*", he describes: "*gas flares freeze your breath, / darken your lungs and livers / and crude, crawls into your waters...*" (lines 2-4). The personification of crude oil ("*crawls*") makes it seem like a living, malevolent entity, invading and corrupting everything it touches. The poem later highlights the effect of this devastation on human life; "*Do they see the kwashiorkor children / staring blankly at flaring gas / and menstruating pipes in / your dregs of drowning homes?*" (lines 29-32). The

"*kwashiorkor children*" (suffering from malnutrition) and "menstruating pipes" (a grotesque image of leaking oil) underscore the dehumanising effects of environmental ruin.

Kekeghe's criticism of religious hypocrisy in *Rumbling Sky* is one of the harshest criticisms of spiritual manipulation in modern African literature. The recurrent use of the term "*haramers*" (line 8, 14, 20, 26, 32) to describe oppressors does important ideological work by using Islamic language (from "*haram*," which means "*forbidden*") to denounce those who use faith as a weapon while breaking its most sacred rules. This linguistic method shows how power takes over religious language, as the poet says, "*defend an impotent god / in the dark cloud / behind the dead moon*" (lines 26–29). Kekeghe's theological criticism works on many levels that are very harmful: it makes the divine weak ("*impotent god*"), hides the truth ("*dark cloud*"), and kills hope ("*dead moon*"). The collection carefully explains how spiritual degradation works. Religious leaders look like predators with "*defaced religious faces*" (line 10), and their moral authority is seen to be a fake act. The strange picture of "bloodied fingers" holding religious clothing shows the cruelty behind religious pretension. Kekeghe focuses on how the prosperity gospel distorts faith, revealing how religious leaders become "*marketers of cruelty*" (line 44) who sell salvation while "*becloud[ing] communal love*." The poet calls this "altar of poli-religion" (line 34), which is a scary new word that shows faith as an exploitative scheme.

Most importantly, Kekeghe reflect how religion is instrumentalised to secure the consent of the oppressed. The poet's rhetorical inquiries, "*Why do the haramers cultivate woes on their evangelical paths?*" (lines 49–50), show how religious stories make injustice seem normal. The dead moon symbolises not only failed spirituality but also the active extinguishing of celestial direction that could lead to freedom. Kekeghe's critique is different because it acknowledges religion's dual nature. It shows how religion may be used as a weapon of destruction, but also keeps moments of real spirituality, such as looking for "*the half-moon in the sky / to light up our world*" (lines 40–41). This complicated view avoids simple atheism and instead calls for religious organisations to fulfil their prophetic function instead of serving power. The consequence is a harsh theological critique that nonetheless cares about spiritual redemption that is free of hypocrisy.

The book decries the destruction of aboriginal cultures in the course of industrial development and state terror. "*Black Bloods*" references historical atrocities like "*Odi ruin*" (line 20) and "*Ogoni*" (line 16), where communities were crushed for resisting oil imperialism. The line "*When Sapele*

raised a song of equity in the belly of her flowstation, / boots of mad military shattered her brain and might" (lines 30-31) metaphorically links cultural expression (song) to violent suppression, framing resistance as a mortal wound. The poem "This Boom" ties environmental ruin to cultural death: "*In this your mangrove / of mangled corpses, / the hovering vultures / see the gains, not the pains*" (lines 33-36). In this case, the mangrove, a tree that signifies the ecological and cultural sustenance, is transformed into a graveyard where vultures (corporations/ governments) profit from the decay. "*Hovering Horror*" extends this to spiritual alienation, depicting a "*cavern of crazy demons where ballots are burnt by yoked youths*" (lines 22-23). The burning of ballots signifies the destruction of democratic hope, while "*yoked youths*" evokes generational enslavement to systemic decay.

Kekeghe's work criticises the false promises of progress and modernity, especially in Nigeria after colonisation. The "*boom*" in "*This Boom*" is ironic because it refers to economic prosperity that only benefits the rich and destroys communities: "*In this wilting mangrove, / gas flares freeze your breath, / darken your lungs and livers*" (lines 1-3). The withering mangrove, which has always been a source of food, becomes a symbol of stunted growth, as industrial "progress" practically chokes the people. The poem uses cynical wordplay to show the truth about Nigeria's petro-state: "*your Executhieves / and Legislathieves / gather to share / your darkening blood*" (lines 9-12). These new words ("*Executhieves*," "*Legislathieves*") blur the lines between Nigerian leaders and stealing, implying that state institutions are just legal criminal organisations. The phrase "*darkening blood*" (line 21) stands for both real violence (like the Odi massacre mentioned in "*Black Bloods*") and economic extraction, which sees national riches as blood money taken from residents. "*Hovering Horror*" takes this criticism to the political stage: "*We are in a camp of chameleons of confusing colours / like daring dictators in democrat's costumes*" (lines 9-10). The chameleon images show how politicians act like democrats while ruling like autocrats, hiding their ruthless repression behind "costumes." "*Streams of Sorrow*" goes into further detail on this duplicity. In it, religious leaders "*defend an impotent god*" (line 27), which is a blasphemous reversal that shows how faith can be used to enslave people.

Rumbling Sky is quite dark, but there are times when it shows defiance and resistance. The last lines of "*Hovering Horror*"—"And seek the half-moon in the sky / to light up our world..." (lines 40-41)—bring back cosmic images from previous misery. The "*half-moon*" stands for broken but lasting hope, with its partial light fighting against the "darkening canopy" of oppression. "*Black*

Bloods" portrays resistance movements in the past, from Ogoni activism ("*When they agonized Ogoni, crude became Wiwa's blood*") lines 16–17 to heal's insurgency ("*in the heat of MEND's mission to mend withered wallets*") lines 35–36. These references ground the poems in real-life battles, turning the book into a literary record of resistance in the Niger Delta. The most complex opposition comes out in "*Burden of Being*," where the speaker grapples with their own complicity: "*You now scheme to enchain your faithful fans / of the years of sore rewards*" (lines 162–163). This self-blame shows how tyranny may even change the people it hurts, but the poem's sheer presence as a kind of testimony is a form of resistance.

The Aesthetics of Experimental Poetic Form in Tunde Olusunle's *A Medley of Echoes*

The innovative poetic techniques of Tunde Olusunle are analysed with many references to their intensification through structural experimentation, linguistic hybridity, rhythm, and imagery. The deconstruction of his play with form fragmentation, visual spacing, and use of multilingualism reveals how Olusunle uses the page as a more performative space. His combination of Yoruba with Pidgin English, as well as Queen's English play over colonial hierarchies of language, whereas his rhythmic and intertextual levels call forth carnal oral culture. Using vivid images and tonal transitions, he presents the postcolonial city of dissonance, the memory, and identity. As a conclusion to this analysis, it is possible to point to the way Olusunle has used formal ingenuity to bring about those complexities that his poetry aims to describe.

With the help of structural experimentation and visual form, Tunde Olusunle enhances thematic resonance. His poems go beyond strict lineation and presentation and turn the page itself into a location of visual and emotional interaction. The line spacing, fragmentation, typography and spatial orientation are clearly more than just style on the part of Olusunle, but it acts as a semiotic device that reflects, elaborates and performs the complications of whatever he is writing upon. This combination of form and visual form with content poetic requires that the audience rebuild, make sense of, and invest in the texture and tone of each of the poems. Defying not only the content of the words but also the terrain of the visual words, his poems encourage the reader to traverse through a kind of visual continuity where each spatial disruption, fragment, is filled with symbolic and emotional meanings. Olusunle has demonstrated this style with some notable emphasis on segmentation in the poem titled Ibadan, which is created to echo the structure of a sprawling city of the same name. The lines "Your, m, o, e, b, i, o, d mass" (before line 1) are deliberately fragmented, forcing the reader to reconstruct the word "mass" letter by letter. This visual

discontinuity not only creates an impairment of the speed of readership but also represents the chaotic and patchwork character of the Ibadan urban structure. The urban sprawl, as projected by the poet has outgrown its seams in an uncontrolled, almost natural expansion. Deconstructing the word, Olusunle resembles the chaotic and incoherent nature of the city; the one in which readers cannot help but feel the fragmentation of the city itself and the social system. This fragmented structure parallels the poem's assertion that the city "bursts at its seamless seams" (line 12), a powerful image that captures the overwhelming pressure and urban entropy that characterise postcolonial cityscapes.

One of the notable things about the poetic style of Tunde Olusunle is the use of dynamic diction with linguistic hybridity. He adopts a mixture of English, Yoruba and Nigerian Pidgin in his poetry, which creates an impression of the multilingual situation in Nigeria and of the multifaceted character of its postcolonial identity. Such a careful combination of languages not only enforces the cultural specifics of his works, but it also makes his poetic texts become multivocal, in-depth, and free of the possibility of linguistic homogenisation. Including native languages inside English-dominated poetic forms and structures, Olusunle takes back poetic space into African linguistic cultures and enacts a postcolonial literary sovereignty that admires local idioms, expressions, and views of the world.

In the poem *Ibadan*, Olusunle exemplifies this hybridity through the use of Yoruba praise names, particularly in the lines: "*Omo ajoro sun/ Omo afi igbin fori mu*" (lines 2-3). These sayings are taken out of Yoruba oral poetry, popularly referred to as *oriki*, which is engraved in the cultural history and memory of the Yoruba people. Drawing upon them in a mainly English poem, however, Olusunle locates the text in a familiar cultural context, hailing the native culture of *Ibadan*. The phrase "*Omo afi igbin fori mu*" (line 3) (child who crowns the head with a snail) is rich in metaphor and symbolic reverence, indicative of Yoruba poetic expression. The ancestral knowledge systems are honoured by such inclusions and carried into prospect through the authority and cadence of performance by voice. In addition, there is the intentional clash between English and Yoruba in one stanza, which forms a dialogic tension, a kind of language play of postcolonial identity of modern Nigerian cities, which are already a place of cultural collision, negotiation, and synthesis. Similarly, in *Hollow Echoes*, Olusunle integrates a Yoruba proverb to deepen the thematic scope of the poem: "*Ogun omode / Ko le se'ere / Fun ogun odun.*" (lines 79-81). Translated loosely as "Twenty children cannot remain playmates for twenty years," this proverb

conveys the ephemeral nature of human relationships and the inevitability of change. The choice to maintain the original Yoruba wording instead of providing a direct translation in the text of the poem is a way to maintain the rhythmic and cultural wholesomeness of the proverb. Simultaneously, it makes the reader (and perhaps, the non-Yoruba reader in particular) reconsider his or her own linguistic deficiency and admit the cultural peculiarity of the poetic addresser. The experience of loss, distance, and maturity, which the proverb universalises, shows that indigenous languages are able to convey deep and philosophical thoughts that cross geographical borders. Alliteration, repetition and assonance are employed in the rhythmic cadences of the poems, which lend them a musical quality that heightens their emotional impact. In *Istanbul*, the poet employs liquid consonants and sibilance to mimic the sea's movement: "*Blue-faced, shimmering/ in supple waves/ beneath the summer skies*" (lines 3-5). The soft "s" and "w" sounds evoke the gentle lapping of water, immersing the reader in the sensory experience. Conversely, *Half Mast* uses staccato rhythm to mirror the abruptness of tragedy: "*Abuja, Kano ..., Kaduna ..., Kabong ...*" (lines 14-17). The ellipses and incomplete listing are echoed by the theme of unexpected death of incomplete life as an eyewitness to air tragedies. The rhythmic pattern employed by Olusunle conveys the emotion, where the sound is intensified in terms of the theme. The musicality of the poems retains them in the mind of the reader after reading. The poems are reminiscent of the Yoruba oral tradition, using proverbs, incantations and rhythmic repetitions to give the impression of a performance poetry. This orality intercepts the written and the spoken, which situates the work in the African storytelling tradition. *Hollow Echoes* integrates Yoruba dirge motifs: "*Ha! / Ile nje eniyan/ Okun kun o mo eni owo,/ Iku o mo eni ire*" (lines 72-75). The exclamatory "Ha!" and proverbial lament ("Death is no respecter of the good") invoke funerary chants. Similarly, *Ibadan* mimics praise-singing (oriki) with its litany of place-names: "*Grovels from Apata to Alakia / Moniya to Molete, Ojoo to Oje / Omi Adio to Idi Ayunre*" (lines 6-8). The beat counting is a reflection of the Yoruba geography of speech. Taking the page as a performative space, Olusunle embeds oral aesthetics in his poetry thus making sure that it sounds sonically and culturally.

Postmodern Ideology in Tunde Olusunle's *A Medley of Echoes*

Among the most recurrent ideologies in the collection are nostalgia and loss, which recur as emotional motifs shaping both the themes and the tone of the poems. The theme of nostalgia is persistent throughout *A Medley of Echoes*, especially in such poems as *Hollow Echoes* and *Half Mast*. These compositions are contemplative of both individual and casual loss, on missing former

comrades and crying over time. Olu Obafemi *Hollow Echoes* is a sad tribute to lost friends and intellectual companionship. The speaker describes the pain of walking through "*unfeeling corridors*" and "*indifferent alleys*" (lines 7-8), where once there was "the genial laughter / Of kindred spirits" (lines 10-11). The metaphor of "a shrapnel / Searing through your being" (p. 5) gives the acute stinging pain of loss. The poem nostalgically recalls moments of "*boisterous banter / and egregious bonhomie*" (lines 21-22) in places like the Faculty and Staff Club, where "*frozen lagers and / Frothy palm wine*" (lines 29-30) fuelled intellectual exchanges. The catalogue of the lost personalities--*David Cook, Sam Adewoye, Zulu Sofola*, etc. (lines 53-55) is also a form of a memorial, and it emphasises life impermanence. The repetition of place names creates a sombre rhythm, while phrases like "forlorn mausoleums and cenotaphs" (line 38) evoke a nation in perpetual mourning. The poem critiques the performative nature of grief, where "*tributes pour in tumbling torrents*" (line 45), but meaningful change remains elusive. These poems concentrate on both personal and national mourning and show how the loss affects memory and identity.

Socio-political ills and disillusionment are not excluded in the work of Olusunle. *Ritual* and parts of *Half Mast* reveal corruption, bureaucracy and flaws of governance. The cyclical aspect of political theatrics is satirised in *Ritual*. The poem opens with: "Midweek again / And billowing robes and Hilfiger suits, / Porsche watches and suede shoes" (lines 1-3), mocking the opulence of Nigeria's political elite. The reference to "*Aso Rock*" as a "*hallowed shrine*" (line 5), where "*supra-mortals wield the key / Of mortality and immortality*" (lines 6-7), underscores the disconnect between leaders and the populace. The poem further critiques budget padding and embezzlement: "*Titration billions of barrels / And mega-litres of our lifeblood / With phoney-figures and bloated budgets*" (lines 22-24). The idea of terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram and IPOB is mentioned (p. 13), highlighting the consequences of systemic neglect, where "*no propitiation / To appease the gods / Of creeping hunger*" (lines 29-31) is offered. Olusunle creates an atmosphere of rot in the political system through biting irony and imagery, with the plea being that people should be held locally.

In addition to the direct elegies within the volume, Olusunle creates a highly intricate poetics of grief which questions the workings of personal and social memory in the context of loss. The theme can be found not only in the subject matter but also in the structure and the rhythm of poems. The poem *Hollow Echoes* employs a remarkable auditory metaphor where grief becomes sound - "*that echoing hum/Swooning in your eardrums/ Like the buzz/Of a thousand bees*" (lines 15-17).

The synesthetic image produces sensory loss of heart and mind. The poet further develops this through spatial metaphors of emptiness - "unfeeling corridors" and "indifferent alleys" (lines 7-8) - that map emotional desolation onto physical architecture. In *Half Mast*, Olusunle innovates with the catalogue form, listing Nigerian cities ("*Abuja/Kano.../Kaduna.../Kabong...*" the lines 14-16) in the effort to establish a geographic memorial. Purposeful application of ellipses following every toponym indicates a lack of finality in the process of mourning as well as eternity in tragedy. The poem's structural innovation appears in its shift from specific names to abstract concepts - "*the tearful deluge/ Of national pain*" (lines 43-44) - mirroring how personal grief becomes collective trauma. Olusunle's mourning poems transcend conventional elegy by making grief a structural principle. The poems don't just describe loss; they perform it through their very architecture, creating what we might term an "elegy of form."

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the relationship between form and content in the poetry of Stephen Kekeghe and Tunde Olusunle is inseparable, with structural choices serving crucial ideological purposes. The broken syntax and gruesome descriptions used by Kekeghe, including the use of the word menstruating pipes and the darkening blood, have a graphic presentation of the dehumanising ecological impact of oil exploitation and political vampirism. His irritant opposition to the regular metre, to punctuation signs, reflects the breaking up of society, and paradoxes such as democrat costumes reveal social hypocrisy. On a thematic level, *Rumbling Sky* serves as an elegy of environmental and cultural loss, but the fact that the text was written as a form of protest in itself provides hope of resistance. In contrast, Olusunle reclaims indigenous aesthetics through multilingual expression and visual experimentation. Poems such as "Ibadan" and "Ritual" capture the chaos of urban decay and bureaucratic dysfunction, while Yoruba proverbs and dirge-like tones root his critique in cultural memory. His tonal range – lyrical, nostalgic, and a bitter satire – points to the double-sided postcolonial cities as a place of degradation and survival. The adopted collections break the Eurocentric literary expectations and assert African poetic sovereignty. The structure of Kekeghe poetry reflects the desperation of rebellion, whereas Olusunle's poetry represents the multidimensional nature of identity and memory. For both poets, form is not a mere embellishment but the very medium through which meaning is generated, compelling readers to confront the crises described. Finally, this research affirms the power of Nigerian poetry to break the silence and demand accountability through its structures and postmodern ideology.

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Grammatical Variation and Feature Checking in Yoruba: A Minimalist Account

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Abstract

Variation refers to the systemic differences in language use that occur across speakers, contexts and time, reflecting the dynamic and adaptive nature of human language. In Yoruba, this phenomenon has become significant due to contact with English, Arabic and socio-cultural influences. While the previous studies have largely examined phonological and sociolinguistic variation, grammatical variation-particularly from syntactic standpoint-remains underexplored. This study, therefore, focuses on identifying and analysing grammatical variation in Yoruba using the framework of the Minimalist program (MP) with the view to identifying forms of grammatical variation and determining their linguistic motivation. Data were drawn from the Yoruba TV show 'Masoyinbo' and natural conversation involving two speakers for the two groups aged (20-35 and 45-70). The study examines three core areas common among the speakers of Yoruba: prepositional variation (fún/lówó alternation), lexical-positional alternation (Lola/lagbara alternation) and lexical-semantic alternation (gbó/mò alternation). These were analysed based on feature valuation, lexical insertion and interpretive effects at the conceptual-intentional interface. The findings reveal that grammatical variation in Yoruba is conditioned by feature compatibility, optional lexical insertion and interpretive flexibility rather than random alternation. The study concludes that such variation reflects interaction between syntactic structure and sociocultural factors such as age, religion and language competence, underscoring the Yoruba evolving grammatical system.

Linguistics Variation

Linguistic variation is a universal feature of human language, reflecting differences in how speakers use forms across age groups, social classes, levels of competence, and sociolinguistic environments. Scholars have long investigated this phenomenon to understand why speakers choose one structure over another and how such choices contribute to language change. Chomsky (1965), as cited in Honeybone (2011), notes that much variation is shaped by non-linguistic factors,

while Labov and Herzog (cited in Chambers, 2002) emphasise that although not all variability leads to change, all change begins with variability.

Variation occurs at all levels of language—phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics—and may manifest as differences in pronunciation, lexical preference, or structural selection. These patterns reveal that speakers do not use grammar uniformly but negotiate meaning and structure based on context, intention, and social factors. Understanding variation, therefore, provides insight into how languages evolve and how speakers conceptualise and express meaning within their linguistic system.

Variation can be categorised into two main types: linguistic variation and sociolinguistic variation (Gomez, 2021). Linguistic variation refers to differences in grammar, pronunciation, word choice, and morphology that occur without a change in meaning, whereas sociolinguistic variation is influenced by factors such as social class, age, and religion. While both areas are significant, this study focuses on grammatical variation, which represents the intersection of syntax and sociolinguistics.

Over time, scholars have used terms such as socio-syntax, syntactic variation, morphosyntactic variation, and grammatical variation. Despite differences in terminology, all describe the relationship between society, grammar, and language. Numerous studies have explored variation across languages, but no universal pattern has been established. Grammatical variation primarily concerns the integration of syntactic theory with linguistic variability to explain constructions within conversations and speech communities.

Grammatical variation, as explained by Moore (2023), involves understanding why speakers use language the way they do by examining their learning experiences and how they adapt that knowledge in communication. Moore argues that grammatical choices communicate more than structural differences; they also convey information about when a person is speaking, their preferences, stance, and attitudes toward interlocutors. This perspective highlights that grammatical variation is not merely linguistic alternation but also a social and cognitive process through which speakers express identity, alignment, and intent.

Examples of Grammatical Variation in English

Consider the following variations in English word order:

- 1 Betty took off her coat and gave him it.

- 2 Betty took her coat off and gave him it.
- 3 Betty took her coat off and gave it him.
- 4 Betty took off her coat and gave it to him.
- 5 Betty off her coat and gave it to him. (Honeybone,2011:1-2)

Variations 1–3 are common in north-west England and the English East Midlands, while 4 and 5 are more typical in Nigerian English. These examples demonstrate how sociolinguistic environments influence grammatical forms. Pronunciation may vary across these structures, and even when meaning is constant, differences in word order reflect distinct grammatical preferences. For instance, “gave him it” follows a typical subject-object sequence, “gave it him” is dialectal and nonstandard in formal English, and “gave it to him” is widely accepted due to the preposition clarifying the indirect object.

Adger and Smith (2005) provide further evidence of morphosyntactic variation in English, focusing on the alternation of *was/were* and the absence of *do* in negative declaratives from Buckie, Scotland:

- 6 Buckie boats were a’ bonny graint.
“Buckie boats were all nicely grained”
- 7 The mothers was roaring at ye comin’ in.
“The mothers were shouting at you to come”
- 8 They were still like partying hard.
“They were still partying hard” (Adger and Smith,2005:156)

The alternation between *was* and *were* depends on the subject: second person singular (*you*), first person plural (*we*), existential *there*, and plural noun phrases. However, with the third-person plural *they*, only *were* is grammatical. Within the Minimalist Program, this variation arises from differences in morphological features, which must align with the subject.

Burnett et al. (2018) analyse negative concord in English, a phenomenon absent in Standard English, highlighting historical shifts in negative polarity items (e.g., replacing *any* with *no* in constructions involving the verb *be*). Obeka (2016) identifies systematic variations in Nigerian

English, such as article omissions, noun misclassifications, and preposition misuse. While often considered errors relative to Standard English, these forms represent structured variation shaped by mother tongue influence, demonstrating the importance of recognising linguistic norms within sociocultural contexts.

Despite extensive research on English, studies of variation in African languages remain limited. Speakers and researchers often interpret variation as errors or markers of low competence. Yet, languages are dynamic, shaped by geography, education, social background, and religion. As a result, every language naturally exhibits variation within its speech community over time.

Yoruba Grammar

Yoruba, spoken by millions in Nigeria and the Diaspora, exhibits a rich morphological, phonological, and syntactic system characteristic of African languages. Its grammar has been extensively studied, from Crowther (1852) to contemporary analyses by Ajiboye (2005) and Oye Taiwo (2013). Crowther's pioneering work documented word formation processes, showing how verbs, nouns, and compounds are derived through prefixation, reduplication, and vowel alternation. For example, the verb *ṣe* ('to do') generates forms such as *ilẹṣe* ('a state of sin') and *alailẹṣe* ('one who has no sin'), illustrating derivational processes in Yoruba.

Bamgbose (1966) expanded this foundation using native speaker data, analysing phonology, morphology, syntax, and verb aspects. He highlighted Yoruba's tonal system, verb tenses, aspectual distinctions (*Mo ti jeun* vs. *Mo n jeun*), and sentence structures, distinguishing simple, complex, and compound constructions. Bamgbose applied structural and transformational approaches, demonstrating how element positions, sequences, and relational connections shape grammatical patterns.

Awobuluyi (1978) further refined the analysis by classifying words based on meaning, syntactic behaviour, and function, proposing six parts of speech for Yoruba. He examined nouns, pronouns, qualifiers, verbs, modifiers, and sentence introducers, emphasising the central role of verbs in sentence construction. Serial verbs, echoing verbs, and complex verbs illustrate the dynamic interplay of lexical and syntactic structure. He also detailed the function of conjunctions and disjunctions (*ati, pẹ́lú, òun, àbí, sùgbón*) in linking sentence elements. While Awobuluyi's work reflects standard Yoruba, earlier analyses often relied on English-based classification systems.

Together, these studies demonstrate that Yoruba grammar is both highly structured and flexible, accommodating derivation, compounding, and syntactic variation. They highlight the interaction

between lexical semantics, syntactic behaviour, and speaker intuition, providing a foundation for understanding both historical and contemporary grammatical patterns, including variation, within Yoruba speech communities.

Variation Within Yoruba

Variation in Yoruba has been an area of concern for linguists who aim to document how the language evolves. Scholars such as Crowther (1852), Bamgbose (1966), and Awobuluyi (1978) have laid a strong foundation for Yoruba grammar, providing a clear framework for understanding its structures, rules, and patterns. As language is naturally subject to change, scholars have observed notable shifts in Yoruba vocabulary and grammar due to contact with English, Arabic, and other languages.

Adebayo (2020, 2023) identified several changes in Yoruba words, including new derivations and morphosyntactic developments, particularly in second- and third-person plural forms.

9	English	Output in Yoruba	Gloss
	a. bread	búṛẹ̀ḍi	bread'
	b. blade	bílẹ̀ẹ̀ḍi	blade
10	Arabic	Output in Yoruba	Gloss
	a. fitna	fitínà	temptation
	b naas	neṛésì	mankind (Adebayo, 2023, p. 252)

These examples show how new lexical items have entered Yoruba grammar through borrowing and adaptation. Many of these derivations are the result of English and Arabic influence, especially through Islam, which facilitated the integration of foreign words into Yoruba. In his 2020 study, Adebayo also identified orthographic changes in the writing of second- and third-person plural pronouns, comparing Pre-Yoruba and Crowther's Yoruba with contemporary usage, highlighting the phonological changes over time.

Stage 1 (Pre-Yoruba):	Nominative Accusative/	Genitive (AG)
	*Èṅyin	*ṅyin
	*Àṅwọ̀n	*ṅwọ̀n

Stage 2 (Pre-Yoruba):	*Èṅyin	*ṅyin
	*Àṅwọṅ/ṅwọṅ	*ṅwọṅ
Stage 3 (Crowther Yoruba):	Èṅyin	ṅyin
	Àwọṅ/nwọṅ	wọṅ
Stage 4 (Contemporary Yoruba):	Ẹyin	yin
	Àwọṅ/wọṅ	wọṅ (Adebayo, 2023, p. 252)

His analysis shows that the alveolar nasal has been gradually deleted from these forms over time, reflecting a diachronic shift from Pre-Yoruba to modern Yoruba.

Atologbe (2020) examined variation between Standard Yoruba and the Igbomina dialect in Kwara State. His study compared Standard Yoruba with three Igbomina dialects (Irepodun, Ifelodun, and Isin) using the *Ibadan 400 Word List* and personal interviews. Employing the comparative method, he identified similarities and differences across the dialects, noting that while most verbs remained consistent, some lexical items varied. His findings revealed high levels of mutual intelligibility among the dialects, with scores ranging between **77.4%** and **98.9%**. This shows that although there are lexical and phonological differences between Standard Yoruba and Igbomina, a strong degree of variation still exists within the broader Yoruba language continuum.

Although research on Yoruba variation exists, the number of studies remains relatively small. Previous works have applied frameworks such as the Minimalist Program and Transformational Grammar. For instance, Adger accounted for English variation in Buckie using the Minimalist approach, while Adebayo employed Transformational Grammar in his analysis. However, it is observed that there is little research on Variation in Yoruba sentence structures using the minimalist framework. The question then arises: how can grammatical variation within Yoruba sentences be explained in terms of syntactic operations and feature interaction? The gap highlights the need to examine Yoruba variation not just as surface-level, lexical or phonological differences, but as a reflection of deeper syntactic and interpretative mechanisms while addressing the grammaticality of this variation and possible factors. Addressing this question is central to understanding the reason for the interaction of sociolinguistic factors and speaker choices of construction to produce variation within Yoruba grammar.

The study adopts the Minimalist Program (MP) as its theoretical framework to explain grammatical variation in Yoruba. Developed by Chomsky (1995), the MP views grammar as an economical system in which syntactic structures are generated with the simplest and most efficient operations, following the Economy Principle. Within this framework, lexical items carry specific features—such as person, number, tense, or prepositional selection—that must be checked and matched during sentence derivation. Key operations include Merge, which combines elements into hierarchical structures; Agree, which ensures feature compatibility between heads and phrases; Feature Checking, which confirms that uninterpretable features on a lexical item are valued against interpretable ones; and Transfer, which maps the derivation onto the Phonetic Form (PF) for pronunciation and the Logical Form (LF) for semantic interpretation.

The MP is beneficial for understanding variation in language because it allows linguists to model how different forms emerge from the interaction of lexical features, structural positions, and interpretive requirements. It emphasises that variation is not arbitrary but systematically constrained by feature compatibility and syntactic licensing, offering a formal account of why some constructions are grammatical while others are not. This framework provides a clear lens through which to examine the structural possibilities of Yoruba grammar and the underlying principles governing variation.

This study investigates grammatical variation in Yoruba through a combination of naturally occurring data and constructed elicitation materials. Data were sourced from the Masoyinbo Interview archive, from which 10-minute excerpts were randomly extracted for six Yoruba speakers. These speakers were divided into two age-defined groups: younger speakers (20–35 years) and older speakers (45–70 years). The selection reflects an interest in generational differences, particularly how exposure to English, Arabic, and media-driven Yoruba influences younger speakers' grammatical competence, compared to older speakers who generally demonstrate higher stability in usage due to reduced external linguistic influence.

Although detailed sociolinguistic profiles of the interviewees were unavailable, all speakers were native Yoruba speakers living in predominantly Yoruba-speaking communities, using the language in daily communication. This provides reasonable linguistic homogeneity and allows the study to focus on syntactic and semantic variation rather than broad sociolinguistic divergence.

The data consist of two types: (i) verbatim transcriptions from the interviews and informal conversations, which provide naturally occurring constructions, and (ii) impressionistically

constructed minimal pairs based on native-speaker intuition. The constructed data were necessary where interview recordings did not produce paired constructions needed to test subtle grammatical contrasts. This dual approach strengthens the empirical grounding by ensuring that naturally occurring usage is complemented by diagnostic examples capable of revealing underlying grammatical distinctions.

The 10-minute sample per speaker is judged adequate for this study because the analysis focuses on specific grammatical phenomena—particularly prepositional alternation (*fún/lówó*), verb meaning shifts (*mò/gbó*), and lexicalised expressions (*lólá/lágbára*)—which occur frequently in Yoruba discourse. The goal is not to document an entire idiolect but to capture enough tokens to identify patterns of variation and test grammatical hypotheses.

Overall, the methodology combines generational comparison, corpus-based observation, and theoretical elicitation, providing a solid empirical foundation for analysing how syntactic features, lexical choice, and sociolinguistic factors interact to shape contemporary Yoruba grammar. The study assumes that variation occurs across generations and seeks to determine whether the type and degree of variation differ between these age groups, as well as the possible causes. The younger were selected because, although they are native-speaker their grammatical proficiency may be reduced due to the exposure to Arabic, English, or sociolinguistic influences such as the media and urban peer group codes. The older speakers, by contrast, are presumed to exhibit higher proficiency and more stable grammatical patterns, partly due to their reduced exposure to these external influences and the generational distance between them and the younger speakers.

Variation In Prepositional Selection: *fún/lówó* Alternation

Prepositions in Yoruba indicate the relationship between the subject and other elements in a sentence, especially those expressing place, direction, time, purpose, or possession. They are often realised as particles or derived locative nouns.

12 Adúpe fólórun (extracted from Eniola Ajao interview on Masoyinbo)

A dupe folorun

3sg Thank you **fun**+olorun

we Thank you PREP +God

Thanks to God.

13 A dúpẹ lówó Ọlórún (adupe lowo olorun eledumare (extracted from one of the Masoyinbo interview)

A dupe **lowo** olorun (eledumare)

3sg Thank you PREP+ hand God(creator)

Thanks to God. (our creator)

Syntactically, the derivation of *Adúpẹ fún Ọlórún* can be represented as:

[vP [v Adúpẹ] [PP fún Ọlórún]]

In this structure, the verb *A dúpẹ* selects a PP complement headed by *fún*. The preposition *fún* assigns a Goal/Benefactive theta role to its complement (*Ọlórún*). The semantic interpretation, “thank for the sake of/for God,” reflects this benefactive role.

Adúpẹ lówó Ọlórún:

[vP [v Adúpẹ] [PP lówó Ọlórún]]

Here, the verb *Adúpẹ* selects a PP headed by *lówó*. The preposition *lówó* introduces a **Source/Agentive** role, meaning “from the hand of.” Semantically, the structure conveys “thank (from/to) God.” Both constructions are grammatically acceptable and express the same general meaning, “thank God.” However, *fún* and *lówó* differ both semantically and structurally. Their interchangeability is limited to specific verbs like *A dúpẹ* (“to thank”); where both goal and source roles can coexist in the same conceptual frame. In most other contexts, they cannot replace each other without changing meaning or causing ungrammaticality.

14a. Mo ra a fún Bólá

‘I bought it for bola’

b. Mo ra a lówó Bólá

‘I bought it from Bola’ (constructed examples)

In (14a), the action is benefactive—the item is bought for Bola. In (14b), *Bola* becomes the source or seller. The substitution alters the meaning and violates the selectional restrictions of the verb *ra* (“to buy”). This shows that not all verbs permit alternation between these two prepositions. In this

case, *dúpé* is a verb that allows such alternation. This flexibility can be explained through the internal structure of *A dúpé*, which itself is a compound and clause-like form consisting of a subject and predicate: *A* (subject pronoun) + *dúpé* (predicate ‘thank’). Morphologically, *dúpé* originates from *dá* + *opé* (“create + thanks”), a verb–complement compound that has become lexicalised in Yoruba. Similarly, *lówó* derives from *ní* + *owó* (“at/with hand”), functioning as a prepositional compound meaning “by the hand of” or “from.” Because *A dúpé* contains its own subject agreement and already expresses a full propositional meaning, it behaves as a fixed verbal idiom rather than a simple verb. This structural independence allows it to combine with either *fún* or *lówó* while retaining grammaticality and a coherent meaning.

Within the Minimalist Program, this variation arises from feature checking between the predicate head and the prepositional head, rather than from separate syntactic rules. In the derivation, the verb *Adúpé* functions as a higher head (v) and acts as a probe carrying an uninterpretable prepositional feature [uP]. The preposition (*fún* or *lówó*) serves as a goal with an interpretable feature [iP]. Through a head-to-head agreement, *Adúpé* checks and values its [uP] feature against the preposition’s [iP] feature. When the features match, the derivation is grammatical. In the case of (14b), however, the derivation crashes at the Logical Form (LF) level because it violates the verb’s selectional requirements (i.e it does not have the and *Adúpé* can be classified as a controlled flexibility grounded in feature compatibility rather than free substitution.

It was further observed that this construction appears more common among certain groups, particularly speakers influenced by Islamic expressions. This study assumes that the alternation between *fún* and *lówó* may be due to Arabic influence on Yoruba through Islam. In Arabic, appreciation or gratitude is commonly expressed as “*Alhamdulillah.*”

15	Al	+	hamdu(u)	+	li	+	Allah
	The	+	praise	+	prep	+	God
	The	+	praise	+	to	+	God

All praise to God/all praise is due to God.

16	الله	الحمد
	Lillah	alhamdu

To allah the praise (extracted from Google online)

The influence of Arabic expressions on Yoruba speakers has likely contributed to the alternation between *fún* and *lówó* in similar constructions, preserving the same semantic meaning. This phenomenon may therefore be seen as a direct translation or structural adaptation from Arabic into Yoruba grammar.

From both semantic and grammatical perspectives, *A dúpe fún Olórún* and *A dúpe lówó Olórún* do not convey the same intention, even though both express gratitude and are often used in similar cultural or religious contexts. Each construction reflects a different conceptualization of the act of thanksgiving depending on how the speaker perceives the relationship between the subject and the object of gratitude. While speakers often treat the two as interchangeable in casual use, a closer grammatical analysis suggests that *A dúpe lówó Olórún* is more consistent with the syntactic and semantic patterns of Yoruba

17 A dúpe lówó Feranmi

‘We are grateful to Feranmi’

b A dúpe fun Feranmi

‘We are grateful for Feranmi’ (constructed sentences)

In these examples, only (17a) is considered natural and contextually appropriate in Yoruba, since gratitude is directed toward an agent or benefactor—someone to whom thanks is owed—not for their existence but for their action. This implies that the preposition *lówó* is used to mark the source or initiator of a benefactive act, whereas *fún* is generally used to mark purpose or benefit. This distinction shows that Yoruba restricts the alternation between *fún* and *lówó* based on argument selection and semantic compatibility. However, in fixed or religious expressions such as *A dúpe fún Olórún* and *A dúpe lówó Olórún*, both forms are accepted because speakers perceive them as functionally equivalent ways of expressing thanksgiving to God. The variation here thus results from pragmatic reanalysis and sociolinguistic factors rather than strict syntactic equivalence, showing how meaning, context, and grammatical structure interact to shape expression in Yoruba.

Variation In Lexical Choice and Position: Lola/lagbara alternation

17 owó ti n gbé kúrò níbí, **lólá** elédúà (extracted from Saheed Osupa interview)

Owó tí ñ gbé kúrò níbí **lólá** elédùà
 Money tense 1sg verb verb prep+ here prep+wealth Creator
 By God's grace, I will leave here with the money.

b owó ti ñ gbé kúrò níbí, **lágbara** elédúà (extracted from Masoyinbo interview)

Owó tí ñ gbé kúrò níbí **lágbara** elédùà
 Money 1sg tense verb verb prep+ here prep+power creator
 By the benevolence of God, I will leave here with the money.

18 **lagbara** Ọlórún, mi o ni tu iro mi nibi

Lagbara olorun mi o ni tu iro mi nibi
 PREP+power God 1SG 2SG FOC lose wrapper 2SG here
 By God's grace, I won't untie my wrapper here today.

b. **lola** olorun,mi o ni tu iro mi nibi

lola olorun mi o ni tu iro mi nibi
 PREP+wealth God 1SG 2SG FOC lose wrapper 2SG here
 By the benevolence of God, I won't untie my wrapper here today

Both expressions in (17a–b) and (18a–b) are grammatically acceptable and convey the same meaning. The elements *lólá* ('by grace/wealth') and *lágbara* ('by power/strength') can occur in different positions within the clause and may also be interchanged without affecting the meaning. This illustrates positional freedom and lexical interchangeability, which are key forms of grammatical variation in Yoruba. Both forms are acceptable and widely used.

From a Minimalist perspective, these expressions function as adjuncts within the sentence because they do not affect the core argument structure but rather modify the entire clause. Structurally, they attach at the CP level, regardless of position. Unlike prepositions, which are directly selected by the verb and participate in feature checking, adjuncts do not engage in such strict syntactic operations. Their contribution lies mainly at the semantic level.

Adjuncts are considered optional merge elements added after the core arguments of a sentence have been built. Therefore, they do not bear uninterpretable features that require checking. Their positional flexibility stems from this independence—no movement or feature conflict occurs, allowing the derivation to converge at both PF (Phonetic Form) and LF (Logical Form) while satisfying the economy principle through minimal structural complexity.

Semantically, *lólá* and *lágbara* express similar meanings and assign an instrumental theta role ('by means of / through God's grace or power'). Since their interpretable features align, both are compatible within the same syntactic environment. This supports the claim that Yoruba grammar permits adjunct mobility and lexical alternation when no uninterpretable feature checking is involved.

The observed variation also reflects religious influence over time. Among Christians, *lágbara* ('by the power of God') is commonly used to acknowledge divine strength or presence. Among Muslims, *lólá* ('by the grace or benevolence of God') aligns with expressions of divine mercy. Thus, the alternation reflects not only grammatical flexibility but also sociolinguistic variation shaped by religious background. In purely traditional Yoruba usage, similar meanings might be expressed through alternative constructions rather than through these specific lexical items.

Lexical Variation: *gbó/mò* Alternation

The alternation between *mò* and *gbó* in Yoruba reveals a subtle but significant case of lexical and semantic variation that also manifests syntactically within the framework of the Minimalist Program (MP). Traditionally, *mò* selects a complement expressing knowledge or awareness, while *gbó* selects one denoting auditory perception. Thus, in derivation, the verb *gbó* assigns a [+perceptual] feature, whereas *mò* assigns a [+cognitive] feature.

19 Kì í ɕe bẹ̀ẹ̀ náà la **gbó** Yoruba

Kíí ɕe bẹ̀ẹ̀ náà la gbó Yoruba

NHAM To do like FOC to hear Yoruba

It is not like I understand Yoruba that much

20 kíí ɕe bẹ̀ẹ̀ ní mo **mò** Yorùbá tó

Kíí ɕe bẹ̀ẹ̀ ní mo mò Yoruba tó

NHAM to do like FOC 1SG to know Yoruba EMP

It is not like I understand Yoruba that much

We observe that some speakers interchange these two verbs to express the same meaning— ‘to know Yoruba.’ Although *mò* and *gbó* have distinct lexical features, some speakers, particularly younger ones, use them interchangeably. This overlap suggests that both verbs can occupy the vP position in derivation, triggering feature valuation and checking.

Within the Minimalist framework, this type of variation can be analysed as feature competition and optional lexical insertion, dependent on the speaker’s competence in the language. At the Logical Form (LF) interface, the choice between *mò* and *gbó* does not alter the structural representation but instead affects interpretation at the Conceptual–Intentional (C-I) interface. In other words, the derivation remains structurally identical, but the semantic output differs slightly, shifting between ‘to hear’ and ‘to know.’

Therefore, this alternation is syntactically conditioned by the availability of two lexical heads capable of checking equivalent semantic features. The phenomenon reflects grammatical variation driven by ongoing lexical reanalysis, whereby *gbó* has extended beyond its original perceptual domain to assume cognitive functions, while *mò* occasionally overlaps into perceptual contexts.

Conclusion

The analysis of grammatical variation in Yoruba reveals that the phenomenon extends beyond surface lexical choices into deeper syntactic and interpretive domains. The study demonstrates that Yoruba permits limited prepositional interchangeability only when the interpretive features of the prepositions are contextually compatible. This restriction shows that variation is not arbitrary but conditioned by feature selection and syntactic licensing within the grammar. For instance, in the *Adúpé fún Ọlórún* and *Adúpé lówó Ọlórún* alternation, the difference goes beyond mere substitution; it reflects how speakers conceptualise the act of thanksgiving. While both expressions communicate gratitude, their grammaticality and semantic appropriateness depend on how the speaker encodes agency and benefaction. The verb *Adúpé*, a compound of *da* ‘make’ and *ọpé* ‘thanks,’ naturally aligns with *lówó* (‘from the hand of’) to express the notion of gratitude derived from an agent. However, under Arabic influence, *fún* (‘for/to’) has emerged as an alternative preposition due to translation equivalence with *Alhamdulillah* (‘praise be to God’).

This interaction between expression and intention reveals that grammatical variation in Yoruba often mirrors speakers' conceptual, religious, and social orientations rather than syntactic error. Similarly, alternations such as *lólá/lágbára* and *mò/gbò* demonstrate both free and restricted variation, highlighting the language's dynamic capacity for reinterpretation. Within the Minimalist framework, these variations are best explained through feature valuation and checking processes, where lexical items such as *mò*, *gbò*, *fún*, and *lówó* enter derivation with interpretable semantic features that shape meaning at the Conceptual–Intentional interface.

Ultimately, the study argues that grammatical variation in Yoruba is not merely evidence of linguistic change or dialectal divergence but a reflection of how syntactic economy interacts with sociolinguistic factors such as religion, age, and speaker competence. The findings reveal an ongoing process of lexical and structural reanalysis in Yoruba, where speakers—consciously or unconsciously—adapt grammatical forms to align with contemporary expression and interpretation. This reinforces the view that variation is a natural and systematic component of Yoruba grammar, shaped by both internal linguistic mechanisms and external influences.

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Interrogating Gender Experiences in Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu*

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Abstract

This article examines the different gender experiences portrayed in Jennifer Makumbi's Kintu through interrogating gender role contestation, issues related to gender and marriage, hegemonic masculinity in marriage, and gender stereotypes in leadership. By applying masculinity and feminist theories, this paper investigates men's efforts to conform to societal and cultural expectations, as well as instances of female oppression and subjugation. Findings reveal resolute upholding of traditional gender roles, the sacredness of the marriage institution, subtle oppression of women in marriage and the persistence of gender stereotypes in leadership against women. These persist despite changes in global spheres of marriage, leadership, and culture. This paper concludes that patriarchy subtly facilitates dominance, gender inequality, and unpalatable experiences of the female gender.

Keywords: *Female, Gender, Male, Experiences, Patriarchy*

Introduction

The concept of gender has long been a subject of inquiry, debate, and developing understanding within scholarly and academic circles. The phenomenon has garnered significant attention across academic disciplines due to its intricate interplay with culture, society, and individual identity, and has undergone significant transformation over the years, shaping discourse in fields ranging from sociology and anthropology to psychology and gender studies. It is recognised that the idea and exploration of gender transcend the simple binary notions of masculinity and femininity, encompassing a range of identities, roles, and behaviours that are socially constructed and culturally contingent (Kirby, 2014). To understand the concept and meaning of gender, it is necessary to examine existing and emerging definitions, explanations, and narratives.

According to its glossary of terms and concepts, UNICEF (2017, p. 2) offers an insightful assertion on gender as “A social and cultural construct, which distinguishes differences in the attributes of men and women, girls and boys”, and accordingly refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women. Gender-based roles and other attributes, therefore, change over time and vary with different cultural contexts. The concept of gender includes the expectations held about the

characteristics, aptitudes, and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). In a similar vein, gender is referred to as the socially constructed and culturally defined roles, responsibilities, attributes, and entitlements assigned to people based on their sex assigned at birth in a certain setting, along with the power relations between and among the assigned groups. Blackstone (2003) avers that the social construction of gender entails that certain qualities attributed to individuals by people and societies are consequent upon their sex. The definition and expectations of gender, and sanctions for not adhering to these expectations, vary across cultures and over time, and often intersect with other factors such as race, ethnicity, class, caste, age, sexual orientation, and nationality (Johns Hopkins University, 2017). As a social construct, gender varies across different societies and can change over time. Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities.

More so, the World Health Organisation conceptualises gender as the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, as well as relationships with each other. Accordingly, gender encompasses diverse roles; thus, these consist of the expectations and behaviours associated with individuals based on their perceived gender. Townsend et al. (2024) define gender roles as “divisions of household labour, job segregation and gender differences in status and authority” (p.1614). Blackstone (2003) examines gender roles as “the roles that men and women are expected to occupy based on their sex” (p. 337). These emanate from interactions between people and their environment. Notably, they determine the behavior considered suitable for each sex. (p. 336). Townsend et al. (2024) discovered that with the change of mindset about changeable gender roles, women feel relieved to meet with expected tasks at home. A fixed gender role mindset conceals women’s potential to exhibit the feeling of being able to achieve all. Apparently, a fixed gender role mindset spells out increased work for women alone. The authors propose a growth gender role mindset for both men and women, as a fixed gender role mindset impedes women’s progress in their work, resulting in family conflict (Townsend et al. 2024, p.1628). Moreover, as part of the gender discourse is gender stereotypes, according to Okunrobo (2020), “Gender stereotype is the attribution of character traits, behaviours and social roles to men and women in society” (p. 116). This exists in different domains of human society, in academics, Schmader et al. (2024) reveal that emphasising the importance of gender while administering a

math test leads to lower test performance among women who approve of the stereotype, while for those who reject it, such has no effect.

In Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu*, Muneeni et al. (2020) opine that the method of having women from different generations is employed. This technique reveals women's transition from the position of victims to conquerors. Additionally, the novel reflects a collaboration by women authors in contemporary times to reconstruct and reinvent the image of women misrepresented by male writers. Similarly, Kwanya (2022) argues that Makumbi positions women as co-creators to depict an additional representative gender relationship; this conflicts with the popular notion in African stories of creation that men are originators of the world. Further, Raji and Aluko (2024) focus on women in their research; they explore the culture of silence and stigma on female victims of rape in *Kintu*. The scholars aver that "The motif of secrecy pervades the novel, highlighting the culture of silence and stigma surrounding sexual abuse" (p.12).

Following these rallying thoughts, this paper therefore fills the gap in scholarship to investigate both female and male gender experiences in Makumbi's *Kintu*, with a focus on the contestation of gender roles, gender and marriage, hegemonic masculinity in marriage, and gender stereotypes in leadership.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Literary Theory

Feminism emerged as a reaction to the oppression and subjugation suffered by women. The feminist criticism developed during the second wave of feminism in Europe and America. It challenged the discrimination against women's franchise and participation in Western cultures (Childs & Fowler, 2006) in aspects such as politics, education and equality in the workplace. Notably, the feminist school of thought played a pivotal role in critiquing and challenging traditional gender roles. From liberal feminism to radical feminism and beyond, feminist perspectives highlight how gender roles perpetuate inequality and advocate for gender equity. They scrutinise the power dynamics embedded in societal norms and strive for a more inclusive understanding of gender that transcends limiting roles (Enloe, 2014). Feminist proponents have significantly contributed to the comprehension of gender by highlighting its connection to power dynamics and oppression. Accordingly, feminist theories highlight how gender inequality is perpetuated and call for social and political change. Therefore, Childs and Fowler (2006) assert

that “Feminist criticism which adopts such a position scrutinises its texts for fissures and cracks and signs of heterogeneity, re-examining ‘the masculine imaginary, to interpret how it has reduced us to silence, to mutism...to find a possible space for the feminine imaginary” (p.87). Feminist literary theory seeks to uncover female oppression and subjugation in literary texts. It further aims to achieve liberation and emancipation for women.

Masculinity Theory

The development of masculinities was motivated by the women’s movement and problems associated with gender (Connell, 2015). According to Connell (2015), masculinity refers to “the pattern or configuration of social practices linked to the position of men in the gender order, and socially distinguished from practices linked to the position of women” (p. 40). Adegbite (2012) notes that “masculinity is a cluster of norms, values and behavioural patterns explicit and implicit expectations of how men are expected to act and present themselves to other men and women” (p.122). Masculinity is socially and culturally constructed. There exist different patterns of masculinity, and these are constructed differently in historical periods and societies (Connell, 2015). Some are revered while some are despised. Globally, there are some conventional patterns of attaining masculinity, such as fatherhood, the workplace, and sports. Notably, masculinity transcends the issues of men and extends to “what makes a real man? What do men want? And of course it addresses the question: Are all men the same?” (Jegade, 2012, p. 109). Interestingly, masculinity focuses not on men alone but equally involves women who have masculine characteristics. Through behaviours exhibited by people, masculinities are portrayed; thus, it is not actualised in bodily positions or in static personalities (Connell, 2015).

Gender Experiences in Makumbi’s *Kintu*

Makumbi’s *Kintu* reveals certain behaviours of both males and females. It explores varied experiences of the genders, and these are discussed under the following themes:

Contestation of Gender Roles

The story of Kanani Kintu reveals a man bedevilled by rigidity; thus, he retains aspects of the Ugandan culture that acknowledge cooking as a female gender role. He chooses to conform to his culture rather than help his wife cook delicious meals. He says: “In our culture, the kitchen, especially the cooking stones, are taboo to the man of the house... As boys, if you wander too often into the kitchen doubt is cast over you” (p. 170). This portrays a misconception in Ugandan

tradition and further projects cooking activities as unmanly. Also, it positions women as people designated for culinary activities. Kanani's actions reflect a rigid mentality that discards change despite having witnessed Europeans who helped their wives prepare meals. He refuses to embrace change, nonetheless having seen the changing of gender roles through the Europeans his mother served. Rather, he believes that his wife's inability to prepare delicious meals is his cross to bear (p. 170). Obviously, he misunderstands how gender roles should ideally work and lacks the knowledge that preconceived gender roles can be swapped for efficiency. Suffice it to say that Kanani chooses to carry an unnecessary burden. Apparently, he is a graphical representation of a man who believes that a woman is domiciled in the kitchen.

Consequently, Kanani's rigidity in gender roles disposes him to eating meals described as horrible meals, prepared by Faisi, his wife. His supper is described thus: "the rice on his plate was boiled, soggy and white ... (p.170). Also, "Whatever Faisi cooked, she drowned: vegetables, Irish potatoes, even matooke. She never steamed food traditionally in banana leaves" (p.170). The above excerpt is explicit that Faisi lacks cooking skills. Ironically, "Kanani missed his mother's cooking... His mother was a housekeeper for a missionary, Mr Lane, who lived on the western slopes of Namirembe Hill" (p. 171). He would have taught his wife the cooking skills he learnt from his mother, but the reverse turns out to be the experience because he decides to hold tenaciously to the erroneous cultural norm. Accordingly, Kanani is a product of his society; he refuses to embrace change with the realities of the 21st century. The masculinity theory prescribes ways of becoming a man, standards, and expectations of a man in a specific cultural milieu (Adegbite, 2012). Masculinity is a social and cultural construct; hence, societies and cultures stipulate their standards. Obviously, masculinity projects the behaviours that men should exhibit. Drawing from this, Kanani, through his decisions and actions, adheres to the stipulations placed on him by his society and culture. Surprisingly, Kanani belongs to a religious sect known as the awakened that has jettisoned "most of the Ugandan culture, yet aspects of traditional manhood persisted" (p. 170). To him, cooking demeans a man and, at such, is unmanly. Therefore, he represents a man who fails to accept that times have changed and thus certain unfavourable facets of culture must also be adjusted.

Gender and Marriage

Gender and marriage motifs are explored in the novel. The murder of Kamu resonates with the gender experiences in Uganda, such that a woman, on one hand, is not a wife without conventional

procedures being in place. On the other hand, a man who fails to follow the societal marriage pattern is not expected to take responsibility if the woman he lives with dies. Thus, Kamu's woman, notwithstanding living with him, is not reckoned as his wife. This reveals support for marriage as an institution by both genders in Ugandan society. Kamu's woman, living with him and rendering duties expected of a wife, nevertheless fails to qualify her as one. The writer says of it: "There was a knock. Kamu's woman woke up and climbed over him to get the door. She picked a kanga off the floor and wrapped it around her naked body. Sucking her teeth at being disturbed so early in the morning, she walked to the door with the annoyance of a proper wife whose husband was at home" (p. XV). Further, she perceives herself to be Kamu's wife "because she had moved in with him two years earlier and he had not once thrown her out. Every night after work, he came home to her, brought shopping, ate her cooking... When she visited her parents, Kamu gave her money so she did not go empty-handed. That was more than many certified wives got" (p. XV).

Undoubtedly, Kamu's woman enjoys the benefits of a wife but lacks the certification because Kamu fails to do the needful in accordance with societal and cultural values. He fails to marry her in the manner wives are married. This experience portrays clear approval and adherence to cultural rites in contracting marriage. Moreover, it is deduced that cohabitation does not validate a marriage contract but rather the adherence to and fulfilment of cultural demands. Suffice to say that Kamu's woman being unnamed in the novel is a narrative technique employed by the author to foreground the sacredness of the marriage institution and to project her as a non-conformist to the guidelines of the institution. Additionally, Kamu's woman uncovers the significance of having a child for a man. She says: "A child was far more secure than waddling down the aisle with a wedding ring and piece of paper" (p. XV). She laments that despite all her supposed wife duties; Kamu is reluctant to release his seed during intercourse. Suffice to say that Kamu's woman, being aware of her society's ethos, wishes that events would turn for the better. Her thoughts are captured thus: "Nonetheless, she would bide her time: condoms have been known to rip. Besides, sex with a condom is like sucking a sweet in its wrapper; Kamu would one day give it up" (XV). This incident apparently reflects emotional abuse suffered by the woman through Kamu hence, feminist literary theory aims to combat such treatment against women.

Hegemonic Masculinity in Marriage

Hegemonic masculinity is an ideology that approves the global subordination of women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell opines that it is the culturally dominant form of masculinity in

a society. Suffice to say that it is the manifestation of the combined opportunity men possess over women. In the novel, Isaac displays hegemonic masculine behaviours; a descendant of Kintu, he transmits HIV to his wife Nnayiga, having contracted the virus through his philandering lifestyle, but conceals it from her. Consequently, Nnayiga becomes infected and dies after a year. Therefore, Kaaya Isaac's colleague blames him for such a pretentious lifestyle. Undoubtedly, Isaac is the epitome of a silent oppressor, and he succeeds in sending his wife to an early grave, yet he feels no remorse. He narrates the ordeal of his wife's death without regret. He says:

She was sickly around Christmas 2002, but we did not take it seriously.
Then in January last year, she started to freeze and shiver, I am cold, I am freezing, especially at night. Slipping into bed with her, I swear, was like getting in bed with a corpse. From then on, the disease accelerated- night sweats, fevers, fatigue, a funny rash on the left arm, sometimes her mind went and her feet hurt. She suffered from this, that and everything.
Then her weight dropped. Before we knew it she had lost her hair.
Then her feet hurt so much, I put her in a wheelchair Nnayiga hopped into the coffin- Kidney failure (p. 228).

Furthermore, Isaac is advised to go for medical checks to ascertain his medical status. Which he reluctantly agrees to after heavy persuasion from Kaaya. This incident equally shows the attitude often displayed by some men in issues of health. Isaac's character relates to that of Baba Segi, in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, who sees no reason to submit himself for medical screening following Bolanle's inability to conceive. Suffice to say that this attitude is perceived to be masculine, but in reality, it is indicative of subjugation and oppression of the feminine gender.

Gender Stereotypes in Leadership

Culturally, patriarchy upholds the preeminence and dominance over women in the sphere of leadership in this Ugandan society. Bweeza is denied the position of an elder at the clan's meeting despite being a representative. Further, her efforts to usurp Kanani's position similarly prove abortive, being a woman. Whereas Kanani displays passivity in his responsibility as an elder. This depicts gender stereotypes fuelled by the domination of the male over the female gender. Nevertheless, a man, Miisi, makes efforts to have her Bweeza installed as an elder of the clan. This

equally fails and is captured thus: “Miisi had told her that he would sooner forget custom and install her as the elder, but the rest of the elders had refused: No, no, no, that’s not done, it does not work!” (p. 350). This attitude of the elders stems from the traditional stance of gender roles that men are supposed to be leaders (Blackstone 2003). The foregoing shows the power of culture in enforcing some practices which may be detrimental to the recipients. Surprisingly, even when a woman has distinguished herself and ought to be given a position occupied by a passive man, such is denied, with allegiance paid to customs/cultures. This incident vividly demonstrates the oppression and subjugation of women, which feminism seeks to address.

Conclusion

This study has interrogated gender experiences in Jennifer Makumbi’s *Kintu* employing the feminist and masculinity theories. The experiences of male and female genders in this cultural milieu, respectively, indicate men’s conformity to the societal expectations of what makes a man and women's oppression/domination by men. Further, it reveals that culturally patriarchy implicitly and explicitly impacts a society and even more in spheres of marriage, leadership, and power. In this regard, instances and cases of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination take on a ‘normality outlook’. This paper concludes that patriarchy subtly facilitates dominance, gender inequality, and unpalatable experiences of the female gender.

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Influence of Media Literacy Education on Critical Thinking Skills of Selected Nigerian Undergraduates in Oyo town

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of media literacy education on the critical thinking skills of selected Nigerian undergraduate students in Oyo Town. In an era characterised by rapid information flows and pervasive digital media, undergraduate learners are frequently exposed to diverse sources of news, advertisements, and user-generated content. This research seeks to determine whether structured media literacy instruction enhances students' ability to analyse, evaluate, and synthesise information, discern credible sources, identify biases, and construct well-reasoned arguments. Survey Research methods design was employed, and the findings of this study affirm that media literacy education is a valuable educational intervention with the capacity to significantly enhance critical thinking among Nigerian undergraduates. Students who have been exposed to media literacy programmes are better equipped to navigate the complexities of media messages, evaluate information sources, and make informed judgments. The study, therefore, contributes to understanding how media literacy pedagogy can strengthen critical thinking among Nigerian undergraduates and offers practical implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and policy development in Oyo town. Recommendations include integrating iterative, contextually relevant media literacy modules across disciplines, fostering collaborative critique sessions, and ensuring equitable access to digital tools. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and the role of institutional support in sustaining critical thinking gains through media literacy education.

Keywords: *Media Literacy, Critical Thinking, Undergraduate Student, Curriculum, Intervention, Information Literacy.*

Introduction

In the contemporary digital age, young people are bombarded with an overwhelming amount of information through various media platforms, including television, social media, online news, and digital entertainment. These media play a pivotal role in shaping the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of youth, thereby influencing their opinions on crucial social, political, economic and cultural issues. As a result, the ability to engage with and assess the messages conveyed through these platforms has become increasingly vital. Media literacy is the ability to access, decode, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts. Media Literacy consists of the

knowledge, the attitudes, and the ability needed to know when and what information is needed; where and how to obtain that information; how to evaluate it and organise it once it is found; and how to use it in an ethical way. Media literacy is among the basic skills that individuals need to possess in the Twenty-First century. The unprecedented advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and the fact that these technologies have been located in the centre of people's lives, require defining and managing the necessary skills to efficiently use them. Particularly in the current century, people are being bombarded with information through these media, and protecting oneself from this bombardment has gained significant attention. Taking the fact that media messages are constructed into account, the vital importance of the case becomes evident because media culture is normally invisible and it is internalised unwittingly. Therefore, these developments in the media culture require individuals in the new century to acquire skills to use information efficiently, analyse information, address it from various perspectives, and use technologies and media tools that enable the communication of information.

A media-literate individual is an efficient media user and has an essential perspective in the interaction with media. For decades, schools, libraries, and other educational institutions have aimed to foster young people's skills, competencies, and knowledge around news and media, through various media literacy programmes and pedagogical approaches (Mihailidis, 2012). However, being news literate is becoming increasingly demanding in the current media environment. First, it encompasses knowing how to deal with a growing supply and variety of content that is only partially produced by professional journalists (Broersma, 2018). Second, social media timelines mix previously clearly demarcated genres of information, blurring the concept of "news" and what it means to be up-to-date (Edgerly and Vraga, 2020). Third, the increase in available platforms, devices, and access points for news also requires additional technological skills to use all the various tools that may now be part of users' media repertoires. Media literacy education is an essential tool for equipping individuals, particularly young people, with the skills to navigate this complex media environment. By promoting the ability to analyse and evaluate media content, media literacy education fosters informed decision-making, enhances critical thinking, and empowers youth to engage in responsible citizenship.

This study aims to investigate the impact of media literacy education on the critical thinking abilities of Nigerian youth, specifically focusing on students of Ajayi Crowther University (ACU) in Oyo, Nigeria. The research explores the role of media literacy programmes in helping students

develop the capacity to question, analyse, and interpret the media content they encounter daily. The study also examines whether participation in such programmes translates into improved critical thinking skills, which are essential for making informed choices and participating effectively in a democratic society.

Statement of the problem

The media landscape today is increasingly characterised by the prevalence of misinformation, media manipulation, sensationalism, and biased narratives. With the advent of social media platforms and the ease of digital content sharing, young people are exposed to both credible and unreliable information, often without the skills necessary to distinguish between them. This situation is of particular concern in Nigeria, where a lack of media literacy education has led to widespread misinformation, which can shape public opinion and societal attitudes negatively. The Nigerian youths, in particular, are dangerously exposed to the negative impacts of uncritical media consumption, as they often lack the necessary tools to assess and question the media they engage with.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of media literacy in fostering critical thinking, there seems to be a noticeable gap in empirical research regarding the effectiveness of media literacy education in improving critical thinking skills among Nigerian undergraduate students. While some studies have explored media literacy in Western contexts, very little research has been conducted on how media literacy education influences and impacts critical thinking abilities within Nigerian higher educational institutions. Moreover, the implementation of media literacy programmes in some Nigerian universities remains limited, and the few existing programmes have not been adequately evaluated for their impact on students' cognitive skills, particularly critical thinking.

This research seeks to fill this gap by investigating the influence of media literacy education on the development of critical thinking skills among Nigerian students using Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, as a study. By exploring the relationship between exposure to media literacy programmes and students' ability to analyse media messages, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the role of media literacy in enhancing the critical thinking abilities of Nigerian youths. This research is crucial for understanding the potential of media literacy education in addressing the challenges posed by misinformation and media bias, which can ultimately empower young people to make informed decisions in an increasingly complex media environment.

Media Literacy Education and Critical Thinking

Media Literacy Education (MLE) is an essential educational approach that provides individuals with the necessary skills to access, analyse, evaluate, and create media across various platforms and forms (Levinson, 2018). In a world increasingly dominated by digital media, it has become critical for young people to engage with media messages actively. Rather than being passive consumers of information, students must be trained to evaluate the credibility, bias, and intentions behind the media they consume. Central to media literacy education is the notion that it is not enough to simply absorb media content; students must assess, interpret, and question the messages being conveyed to them. In the context of Nigerian youth, media literacy is an essential tool to help them navigate the complex and often misleading media landscape. The relationship between media literacy and critical thinking is well-documented in educational literature. In conclusion, media literacy education serves as a foundation for developing critical thinking skills among Nigerian youth, particularly at Ajayi Crowther University. Through exposure to media literacy programmes, students learn to analyse, evaluate, and create media content, which in turn enhances their overall cognitive skills. By fostering critical engagement with media messages, media literacy education empowers students to navigate the complexities of the media environment, make informed decisions, and contribute to the creation of a more informed and participatory society.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research focuses on the application of Critical Thinking Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory to understand the impact of media literacy education on critical thinking skills among Nigerian youth, specifically students at Ajayi Crowther University (ACU), Oyo. Both Critical Thinking Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of media literacy education on critical thinking skills. Critical Thinking Theory focuses on the cognitive development of students, helping them cultivate skills that empower them to engage with media content analytically and reflectively. By fostering the ability to question, analyse, and evaluate media messages, media literacy education improves students' critical thinking and cognitive abilities. On the other hand, Uses and Gratifications Theory complements this by examining the motives behind students' media consumption and how media literacy education influences the types of media they choose to engage with. The integration of both theories suggests that media literacy education not only sharpens students' critical thinking

skills but also shapes their media consumption habits, encouraging them to seek out content that fulfils intellectual and informational needs while fostering independent thought.

These two theoretical approaches guide the analysis of how media literacy education impacts students' ability to think critically about media messages and their overall media consumption habits. By combining both theories, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how media literacy programmes at Ajayi Crowther University enhance students' cognitive abilities and influence their engagement with media in a meaningful way.

Methodology

Survey research design will be adopted for this study to examine the impact of media literacy education on the critical thinking skills of Nigerian youth, specifically at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo. According to Creswell (2014), survey research design involves collecting quantitative information from a sample population to generalise findings. This method is appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of quantifiable data from a large number of respondents, enabling the researcher to identify patterns, trends, and relationships between media literacy education and critical thinking skills. The population for this study consists of undergraduate students at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria. According to the university's official website and records (Ajayi Crowther University, 2024), the total student population is approximately 3,500 undergraduates. These students represent a diverse range of faculties and academic disciplines, making them a suitable population for examining the impact of media literacy education on the development of critical thinking skills.

The sample size for this study will be 346 respondents, calculated using Taro Yamane's formula.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table One: Respondents' Level of Awareness of Media Literacy

Are Nigerian Undergraduates aware of Media Literacy?

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Awareness of Media Literacy	Yes	352	88.3%
		No	47	11.7%
		Total	399	100

Table 4.2 provides insights into the respondents' awareness, perception, and experiences related to media literacy. The data reveal that a significant majority of the respondents, 88.3 per cent, are aware of media literacy, while only 11.7 per cent are not. This high level of awareness sets a strong foundation for the rest of the findings. The results indicate a **high level of awareness of media literacy** among students of Ajayi Crowther University. This suggests that media literacy concepts are relatively well recognized within students of Ajayi Crowther University.

Table Two: Respondent’s belief about the Medium of Awareness of Media Literacy
If Yes, through which medium are Nigerian Undergraduates aware of Media Literacy?

Q. No.	Question	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
2	Medium of Awareness	Lecturer	89	22.3%
		Social media	197	49.4%
		Radio	74	18.6%
		Television	39	9.7%
		Total	399	100

The sources through which students of Ajayi Crowther University became aware of media literacy vary, with social media emerging as the most influential medium, accounting for 49.4 per cent. Lecturers also play a notable role at 22.3 per cent, followed by radio at 18.6 per cent and television at 9.7 per cent. This suggests that digital platforms, especially social media, are the primary drivers of media literacy awareness among the students of Ajayi Crowther University, although academic and traditional media also contribute meaningfully.

Table Three: Respondents' Perception of Media Literacy
What is your perception of media literacy?

Q. No.	Question	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
3	Perception of Media Literacy	Very Useful	147	36.8%
		Useful	216	54.2%
		Not Useful	20	5.0%

		Undecided	16	4.0%
		Total	399	100

Building on this awareness, the perception of media literacy is largely positive. Over half of the respondents (54.2 per cent) consider media literacy useful, and an additional 36.8 per cent see it as very useful. Only a small fraction (5.0 per cent) finds it not useful, with 4.0 per cent undecided

Table Four: Respondent’s belief about Media Literacy Education helping students in critical thinking about Media Usage

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
4	Helps Critical Thinking	Strongly Agree	213	53.4%
		Agree	160	40.2%
		Disagree	20	5.0%
		Strongly Disagree	6	1.4%
		Total	399	100

This generally favourable view is further supported by the belief that media literacy enhances critical thinking. More than half (53.4 per cent) strongly agree with this statement, and 40.2 per cent agree, indicating that respondents associate media literacy with improved cognitive skills.

Table Five: Respondent’s belief about the benefits of Critical Thinking Skills

Which aspects of critical Thinking Skills benefits more from Media Literacy?

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
5	Benefitting CT Skill	Analytic	52	13.1%
		Evaluative	156	39.1%
		Inductive	169	42.3%
		Deductive	22	5.5%
		Total	399	100

In identifying the specific critical thinking skills enhanced by media literacy, inductive reasoning (42.3 per cent) and evaluative skills (39.1 per cent) are the most frequently cited. Analytical skills follow at 13.1 per cent, and deductive reasoning is mentioned by 5.5 per cent. These responses

suggest that media literacy encourages broader reasoning patterns and thoughtful evaluation of Information among students of Ajayi Crowther University

Table Six: Respondent’s belief about the effectiveness of Media Literacy Education on Students Performance

Rate the Effectiveness of Media Literacy Education on students' performance?

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
	Effectiveness on Performance	Very Effective	217	54.5%
		Effective	145	36.4%
		Not Effective	20	5.0%
		Not Sure	17	4.1%
		Total	399	100

When asked about its impact on academic performance, 54.5 per cent of respondents believe media literacy is very effective, while 36.4 per cent find it effective. A minor segment views it as not effective (5.0 per cent) or is unsure (4.1 per cent). This reinforces the notion that media literacy is not only relevant but also contributes positively to students’ academic outcomes. Furthermore, respondents recognise media literacy’s role in distinguishing between facts and opinions. The results also indicate that a strong majority of respondents perceive media literacy as positively influencing performance. Overall, these findings suggest that media literacy is widely regarded as an effective factor in improving performance among the respondents.

Table Seven: Respondent’s belief about distinguishing Fact/Opinion in the Media
Media Literacy assists to students to differentiate between facts and opinions in the Media?

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
6	Distinguishing Fact/Opinion	Strongly Agree	209	52.5%
		Agree	155	38.8%
		Disagree	24	6.0%
		Strongly Disagree	11	2.7%
		Total	399	100

A combined total of 91.3 percent agrees or strongly agree that it enhances this ability, which is crucial in today’s information-heavy environment. The findings show that a substantial majority of respondents who are students of Ajayi Crowther University demonstrate confidence in their ability to distinguish between fact and opinion. A combined **91.3%** of participants either *strongly agree* or *agree* with the statement, indicating strong critical evaluation skills related to media content. In contrast, only **8.7%** of respondents expressed disagreement, suggesting that a relatively small portion of the sample may struggle with differentiating factual information from opinion. Overall, the results reflect a high level of media literacy in this specific competency among students of Ajayi Crowther University

Table Eight: Respondent’s belief about Media Literacy education providing students with the ability to identify Fake News

Does Media Literacy education provide students with the ability to identify fake news in the Media?

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
7	Ability to Identify Fake News	Yes	333	83.4%
		No	66	16.6%
		Total	399	100

Similarly, 83.4 per cent affirm that media literacy helps them identify fake news, a key benefit in the era of misinformation. The data presented in Table 4.2.8, titled "Ability to Spot Fake News, provides valuable insights into public perception regarding this issue. The table categorises responses into two groups: those who believe they can identify fake news ("Yes") and those who do not ("No"). The findings reveal that a substantial majority of respondents—83.4% (333 out of 399)—are confident in their ability to spot fake news. This high percentage suggests a widespread belief among individuals that they possess the critical thinking skills or media literacy required to discern misinformation. However, the remaining 16.6% (66 respondents) who answered "No" indicate a notable segment of the population that remains uncertain or lacks confidence in this regard. This dichotomy raises important questions. While the majority's confidence is encouraging, it is essential to consider whether this self-assessment aligns with actual ability. Research has

shown that overconfidence in detecting fake news can sometimes lead to the inadvertent sharing of misinformation. Conversely, the minority who acknowledge their limitations may be more cautious, highlighting the need for targeted educational initiatives to bridge this gap. While the data reflects a generally optimistic outlook, it underscores the importance of continuous efforts to enhance media literacy. Empowering individuals with the tools to critically evaluate information is crucial in combating the pervasive threat of fake news.

Table Nine: Respondents’ beliefs about Sharing Media Literacy Education Information with other students

If Yes to question 12, do you share media literacy education information with another student?

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
8	Share Media Literacy	Yes	93	23.4%
		No	306	76.6%
		Total	399	100

Despite the benefits, the willingness to share media literacy knowledge is low, with only 23.4 per cent of respondents doing so. A significant majority, with 76.6 per cent has not shared their knowledge. This points to a gap in peer education or awareness dissemination that could be addressed through institutional initiatives or programs. The findings reveal that although awareness and perceived effectiveness of media literacy are high among students of Ajayi Crowther University, peer-to-peer dissemination of media literacy knowledge remains limited. The result highlights a potential gap between individual understanding and collaborative knowledge sharing, indicating the need for institutional or peer-led initiatives to encourage students to share media literacy education with others.

Table Ten: Media Literacy education can enhance better evaluation of Information

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
10	Better Information Evaluation	Strongly Agree	53	13.3%
		Agree	211	52.8%
		Disagree	65	16.2%

		Strongly Disagree	70	17.7%
		Total	399	100

The evaluation of media literacy’s role in improving information assessment skills also shows a majority in support. While 52.8 per cent agree and 13.3 per cent strongly agree, a combined 33.9 per cent either disagree or strongly disagree, indicating some level of scepticism or lack of confidence in its application. The findings indicate that more than two-thirds of the respondents believe media literacy education improves individuals’ ability to critically evaluate information. This suggests a strong recognition of the role of media literacy in helping audiences assess the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of media content, especially in an era characterised by information overload and misinformation. However, the substantial minority who disagreed highlights the need for more effective media literacy programmes and wider awareness of their practical benefits.

Table Eleven: Students with media literacy education or knowledge are better assets to society

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
11	Media Literacy Beneficial	Strongly Agree	55	13.7%
		Agree	223	55.8%
		Disagree	66	16.6%
		Strongly Disagree	56	14.0%
		Total	399	100

Similarly, when asked whether media literacy is beneficial overall, 55.8 per cent agree and 13.7 per cent strongly agree. However, a notable minority remain unconvinced, with 16.6 per cent disagreeing and 14.0 per cent strongly disagreeing. The findings reveal that more than two-thirds of the respondents acknowledge the benefits of media literacy. This underscores the importance of media literacy education in empowering individuals with critical thinking skills, enhancing their understanding of media messages, and enabling informed decision-making. Nevertheless, the

presence of dissenting views suggests the need for increased sensitisation and more practical, context-driven media literacy initiatives.

Table Twelve: Media Literacy education is difficult to come by in Nigeria

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
12	Difficulty Accessing Media Literacy	Strongly Agree	116	29.0%
		Agree	169	42.3%
		Disagree	45	11.3%
		Strongly Disagree	69	17.4%
		Total	399	100

Lastly, the accessibility of media literacy emerges as a concern. A majority of respondents (71.3 per cent) either agree or strongly agree that they face difficulty accessing media literacy resources. In contrast, 28.7 per cent disagree with this view. This highlights a need for improved access to media literacy materials and training, particularly through institutional support or public education campaigns. This finding also suggests that although media literacy is widely regarded as beneficial, a major barrier lies in its accessibility. The high level of agreement indicates possible challenges such as limited availability of structured programmes, inadequate integration into formal education curricula, low public awareness, or insufficient institutional support. This difficulty in access may undermine the effectiveness of media literacy initiatives and limit their impact on improving critical media consumption. Overall, the result highlights the need for policymakers, educators, and media institutions to prioritise broader access to media literacy education.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study reveal critical insights into how media literacy education influences the development of critical thinking skills among students at Ajayi Crowther University (ACU), Oyo. These insights align with both theoretical foundations and empirical evidence drawn from existing scholarly work. These findings were also derived from four research questions guiding this study. The discussion integrates respondent feedback with relevant scholarly perspectives to provide a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon

The first research question in this study was aimed at ascertaining if Nigerian undergraduate is exposed to media literacy education. The findings reveal a high level of awareness among respondents, with the majority affirming their familiarity with media literacy, while only a few respondents reported no awareness. This overwhelming majority underscores the prevalence of media literacy education among the surveyed population, providing a robust basis for further analysis. It was also discovered that the mediums through which respondents became aware of media literacy were primarily social media, highlighting its pivotal role in disseminating information. Academic instructors contributed significantly, with a larger percentage of respondents citing lecturers as their source of awareness. Traditional media, such as radio and television, also played a critical role, albeit less prominently. These results suggest that digital platforms, particularly social media, are the primary conduits for media literacy awareness among Nigerian undergraduates, supplemented by academic and conventional media sources. This means that a strong exposure to media literacy education among Nigerian undergraduates, driven largely by social media and supported by academic and traditional media. This awareness lays a critical foundation for fostering media literacy skills, which are essential in navigating the complexities of modern information ecosystems. This finding underscores the study of Hobbs (2011), who emphasised the role of both formal and informal education in media literacy acquisition. The prominence of social media also aligns with Livingstone and Helsper's (2007) argument that informal digital platforms are increasingly important avenues for young people's media engagement and learning.

However, the second research question in this study was aimed at examining the role of media literacy education in improving critical thinking skills among Nigerian youth. The study's findings reveal a predominantly positive perception of media literacy, with the majority of the respondents deeming it "useful" and "very useful." Only a small minority dismissed its utility, while the remaining were undecided. This widespread acknowledgement underscores the perceived value of media literacy in contemporary education. Further reinforcing this view, the research highlights a strong relationship between media literacy and the enhancement of critical thinking. A significant majority of respondents "strongly agreed" that media literacy aids in developing critical thinking, with another larger percentage agreeing. This consensus suggests that media literacy is not merely an academic exercise but a practical means to cultivate cognitive skills essential for navigating an increasingly complex media landscape. Delving deeper, the study identifies the specific critical

thinking skills most impacted by media literacy. Inductive reasoning and evaluative skills were the most frequently cited, followed by analytical skills and deductive reasoning. These findings indicate that media literacy education encourages youth to engage in broader reasoning patterns and thoughtful evaluation of information, equipping them to discern biases, assess credibility, and draw informed conclusions. The finding, therefore, underscores the transformative potential of media literacy education in Nigeria. By fostering critical thinking skills—particularly inductive reasoning and evaluative abilities—media literacy empowers youth to engage with media content more discerningly. As such, integrating media literacy into educational curricula could play a vital role in preparing Nigerian youth to meet the challenges of the digital age. This finding is in agreement with Levinson's (2018) view that media literacy serves as a foundational skill in the digital era, essential for empowering individuals to make informed decisions. Furthermore, most respondents believe media literacy enhances critical thinking, with over 93 per cent either agreeing or strongly agreeing to this. This supports the position of Kellner and Share (2007), who argue that media literacy fosters inquiry, evaluation, and critical reasoning. The study further reveals the specific critical thinking skills gained through media literacy education. Respondents most commonly identified inductive and evaluative reasoning as benefits, which mirrors Ennis's (2011) conception of critical thinking as the ability to assess and interpret information through logical analysis. The application of these skills in real-world settings, such as discerning media bias and misinformation, is vital in a society where media content often lacks transparency or accountability. In terms of academic performance, more than 90 per cent of respondents believe media literacy education is effective or very effective. This supports findings by Adebayo (2020), who found a strong correlation between media literacy education and improved cognitive and academic outcomes among Nigerian university students. Media literacy is seen not only as a means to understand media but as a tool for academic enhancement and self-empowerment.

Meanwhile, the third research question in this study was aimed at assessing Nigerian students' ability to evaluate media on media literacy education. The findings revealed that media literacy education has emerged as a critical component of modern academic curricula, particularly in an era dominated by information overload and misinformation. The study also revealed that a majority of respondents consider media literacy "very effective" in enhancing academic performance, while an additional larger percentage deem it "effective." This overwhelming consensus underscores the relevance of media literacy as a tool for academic success. Only a small fraction of students found

it ineffective, with a negligible percentage remaining unsure. These results affirm the value of integrating media literacy into educational frameworks to bolster students' analytical and critical thinking skills. It was also discovered that students' ability to distinguish between facts and opinions is a fundamental skill in navigating today's complex media landscape, as the majority of the respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that media literacy enhances this ability. This finding is particularly significant, as the capacity to discern factual information from subjective viewpoints is essential for informed decision-making and civic engagement. Another critical aspect explored was the ability to identify fake news. The majority of the students confirmed that media literacy aids in spotting misinformation, a skill of paramount importance in combating the spread of false information. This statistic reflects the practical utility of media literacy in fostering a more discerning and informed student population. However, the study also uncovered a notable gap: only a few of the respondents reported sharing their media literacy knowledge with peers, while the majority had not done so. This disparity suggests a lack of peer-to-peer education or institutional mechanisms to encourage knowledge dissemination. Addressing this gap through targeted initiatives, such as workshops or student-led awareness campaigns, could amplify the reach and impact of media literacy education. This means that media literacy education is highly effective in equipping Nigerian students with essential skills for academic and real-world challenges. While its benefits are widely recognised, the low rate of knowledge sharing indicates an area for improvement. By fostering a culture of collaboration and awareness, educational institutions can further enhance the transformative potential of media literacy. This finding is in agreement with the study of Adebayo and Martins (2020), whose findings discovered that students exposed to media literacy training developed enhanced scepticism and critical awareness, improving their resilience to media manipulation. However, the study reveals a key challenge: only 23.4 per cent of respondents reported sharing media literacy knowledge with others. This suggests a gap in peer-to-peer dissemination, which is crucial for broader societal awareness. Okafor and Ogbodo (2019) note that for media literacy to be transformative, it must be collectively understood and practised, not just individually experienced. Hence, universities and educators must find ways to encourage communal learning and discussions about media literacy, possibly through student-led forums and peer mentorship initiatives.

Finally, the fourth research question in this study was aimed at exploring the relationship between media literacy education and the students' awareness of media misinformation. Media literacy

education has become a critical tool in addressing the challenges posed by misinformation in the digital age. The findings reveal that a majority of respondents recognise the value of media literacy in improving information evaluation skills. The majority of the respondents who are students of Ajayi Crowther University agree and strongly agree that media literacy enhances their ability to access information. However, some students disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting scepticism or a lack of confidence in its effectiveness. Similarly, when asked about the overall benefits of media literacy, the majority of the students agree and strongly agree, reinforcing its perceived importance. Yet, a notable minority remains unconvinced, highlighting a divide in opinion.

A significant concern emerges regarding accessibility, with the majority of respondents reporting difficulty accessing media literacy resources. This underscores a critical gap in the availability of media literacy education, pointing to the need for institutional and public initiatives to improve access. This means that, while media literacy education is widely regarded as beneficial for combating misinformation, its impact is hindered by accessibility issues and varying levels of confidence among students. Addressing these challenges is essential to maximising its potential in fostering a more informed and discerning public. This presents a challenge for Nigerian tertiary institutions. As highlighted by Aduloju (2019), without sufficient institutional support, curricular, technological, and pedagogical media literacy education risks being inconsistently applied or ineffectively delivered. Furthermore, while most students find media literacy beneficial, there remains a sizable minority (around 30 per cent) who are either indifferent or sceptical. This suggests that despite high awareness, the depth of understanding and appreciation of media literacy may vary. This aligns with Ejike (2018), who found that while many students could recognise the term “media literacy,” few understood its full implications or practised its principles consistently. The study also affirms key aspects of the **Critical Thinking Theory**, which posits that critical reflection and scepticism are central to logical reasoning and informed decision-making (Ennis, 2011). Media literacy programs at Ajayi Crowther University appear to reinforce this, helping students develop skills to question media narratives, detect bias, and engage in reasoned analysis skills increasingly necessary in Nigeria’s politicised and commercialised media environment. Additionally, the **Uses and Gratifications Theory** support the interpretation of findings related to media consumption habits. Students, as active media users, seek content that aligns with their informational and personal identity needs. Media literacy education, as indicated in the study,

appears to influence these choices, guiding students to be more discerning in their consumption, as suggested by Ruggiero (2000) and Katz et al. (1973).

In conclusion, the study shows that media literacy education positively impacts the development of critical thinking skills among students of Ajayi Crowther University. It enhances their ability to analyse, evaluate, and interpret media content while fostering academic performance and civic engagement. However, gaps in peer-dissemination and accessibility signal areas that require institutional intervention. As Nigeria continues to navigate an evolving media landscape, this study underscores the urgency for comprehensive media literacy integration across tertiary institutions to build an essential aware and participatory generation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of this study affirm that media literacy education is a valuable educational intervention with the capacity to significantly enhance critical thinking among Nigerian undergraduates. Students who have been exposed to media literacy programmes are better equipped to navigate the complexities of media messages, evaluate information sources, and make informed judgments. The study concludes that media literacy plays an essential role in shaping the cognitive and evaluative capacities of students. In a society increasingly affected by misinformation, political bias, and digital content manipulation, the skills acquired through media literacy are critical not only for academic success but also for responsible citizenship. The evidence from this research shows that Ajayi Crowther University students benefit from media literacy education, particularly in developing inductive, evaluative, and analytical reasoning skills. However, the study also underscores existing gaps. Limited peer-sharing, low dissemination of media literacy knowledge, and difficulty accessing relevant resources highlight the need for improved institutional strategies and broader implementation of media literacy initiatives. Addressing these issues would help ensure that the benefits of media literacy are more widely distributed and deeply embedded in the academic and social lives of the students. In conclusion, media literacy education contributes meaningfully to the development of well-informed, critically-minded individuals who are capable of engaging constructively with media and societal issues. Its role in fostering independent thought, academic excellence, and civic engagement cannot be overemphasised in the Nigerian context.

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Sustaining Puppet-Storytelling Tradition for Cultural Demonstration among Ethnic Nationalities in Nigeria

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Abstract

Puppet theatre is a rich cultural tradition among various ethnic groups in Nigeria. This tradition is gradually fading into oblivion amid the diverse challenges and realities of the 21st century. Extant literature has not paid close attention to the issue of its sustenance; thus, this chapter examined the preservation of puppet storytelling traditions in Nigeria as a practice that embodies and enshrines cultural values, ethics, mores, and belief systems essential for socio-cultural development. Culture Sustainability Theory (CST) was deployed, and findings revealed that sustaining puppet storytelling is not only about preserving culture but also about safeguarding values, morals, and creativity that cannot be allowed to go extinct. It was also found that puppet theatre is practised among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, mainly by the Tiv, Ibibio, Ogoni, Yoruba, and Kanuri. However, other ethnic groups practise masquerade traditions with figurines on the masks, but not in the real sense of puppeteering. Puppet theatre provides entertainment and education, raises awareness of critical social issues, and serves as a tool for conscientisation, attitudinal change, and the transmission of moral values from one generation to another. In addition, puppetry is an essential ingredient for socio-cultural and political development. However, it was observed that puppetry in Nigeria is marred by several challenges that threaten its existence, including a lack of patronage, competition from modern entertainment, limited development, and socio-religious changes. Furthermore, it was noted that the new media age presents several opportunities for puppetry in Nigeria to thrive, and that such opportunities can reposition the rich tradition for the better if judiciously used.

Keywords: *Puppetry, Culture sustainability, Modernisation, Storytelling tradition, Edutainment*

Introduction

It appears that puppet theatre is gradually losing relevance and the intensity of practice among several ethnic groups in Nigeria and across the African continent, rapidly becoming a historical reference point rather than a living tradition. The bulk of the present decline in puppet traditions is attributed to the shifting cultural realities brought about by the overbearing force of modernisation or globalisation. Despite increasing interest in cultural sustainability, there is a paucity of literary engagement with sustaining puppetry among various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. This situation is not, in any way, checkmating the excessive decline of the age-old tradition in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the decline in puppetry in Nigeria is gradually contributing to

the erosion of cultural mores and values and to identity crises, which is worrisome. It is against this backdrop that this chapter examines the preservation of puppet storytelling traditions in Nigeria as a practice that embodies and enshrines cultural values, ethics, mores, and belief systems essential to socio-cultural development. In light of this, this chapter re-evaluates the practice of puppet storytelling in various ethnic enclaves across Nigeria, examining its social and cultural significance in the contemporary context and the challenges and opportunities it faces.

The significance of this chapter is multifaceted. Aside from contributing to existing knowledge in the field of cultural sustainability, it will benefit various stakeholders, including researchers, Nigerian cultural agencies, policymakers in the Nigerian culture and tourism sector, and the industry itself. Cultural sustainability theory serves as the theoretical framework for this chapter. Both theories facilitate analysis of how stories are structured, the use of puppets as characters to enhance the narrative, and how audiences derive meaning from such performances through interpretation. Data generation will involve interviews and documentary observation.

Conceptualizing Puppetry

It will not be out of place to state that puppetry is an age-old tradition that is gradually fading into oblivion. The argument is that puppetry has served various entertainment purposes in the past and has been overtaken by newer media such as animation (2D and 3D) and digital puppetry. Further, the argument is that the traditional puppet is not sophisticated and hence cannot compete with new media technology. Counterargument tends to assert that just because conventional puppetry cannot compete with the new technology, it does not mean that it should cease to exist. Doing that would mean it would cease to serve the local audience with the moral and cultural relevance it is known for. The idea is that globalisation should not lead to the death of cultures; instead, it should provide an opportunity for other cultures to thrive effectively. Otherwise, the importance is lost and becomes rather unfriendly. However, the concept of puppetry has been discussed, defined and contextualised in different climes.

A puppet is an object that humans manipulate. This definition is rather broad and may harbour confusion. To narrow it down to specifics, puppets can be toys (plastic, paper, etc.), dolls, or puffed objects (animal or human form, etc.). Regling (2015) opines that Puppetry is an ancient art form that has existed across different world cultures, used to hold audiences spellbound through its storytelling, performance, and craftsmanship (Bell, 2009). Furthermore, Krugger (2020) avers that Puppetry involves manipulating inanimate objects, typically puppets, to tell stories or perform

skits. There are different types of puppetry: Glove puppet, Rod puppet, Shadow puppet, Paper puppet, Water puppet, etc.

Puppetry among Ethnic Nationalities in Nigeria

Nigeria is home to diverse puppet traditions, cutting across several ethnic groups, namely: Dogo-dogo (Kanuri), Kwagh-hir (Tiv), Gelede (Yoruba), Ekong (Ekon) (Ibibio), Ofiong (Efik), and Aninikpo (Ogoni) (Enem, 1981). These are the prominent traditions well known in Nigeria, but there may be others not as distinct as those mentioned above, which are subsumed in the masquerade traditions. It is noteworthy that masquerade performances in Nigeria often include puppetry, even though many may not perform it separately. This way, these may not be countered as a puppet tradition.

The ones mentioned above have a puppet performance separate from masquerades. The Kanuri people of Borno State are known for their Dogo-dogo puppetry, or Dabo-dabo, which involves using hand gloves to make expressions (Ellison, 1981). This is also known as a hand puppet or glove puppet. Idogho (2017) explains that Dabo-dabo are deployed to tell stories during major festivals and ceremonies. In practical terms, the *dabo-dabo*, also known as *dogo dogo* puppeteers, practice their art from village to village. Puppeteers could have as many assistants and drummers as possible, depending on the capacity of the crew. The work of the assistants and drummer is to assist the puppeteer with music and preparations for the act. Performances are usually thematised according to the mode of entertainment and the message to be conveyed.

Kwagh-hir: The Kwagh-hir, a popular theatre tradition of the Tiv people, involves puppet manipulation, masquerading, and other art forms such as dance and music, to tell moral stories and address social issues (Hagher, 1981). *Gelede*: The Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria and the Benin people also utilise puppet theatre in their Gelede masquerade, a form of appeasing negative feelings associated with "mothers" (Lawal, 1996). *Ekong (Ekon) and Ofiong*: The Ibibio people have a puppet theatre tradition known as Ekong (Ekon) and Ofiong, often featuring Ekon society performances by men dedicated to ancestral spirits (Benson, 2020; Sampson, 2018).

Aninikpo: The Ogoni people are known for their Aninikpo puppet theatre, also used for storytelling and entertainment. In many cases, their performances are either at night or during the day and may include more than 10 puppets, each playing a different role, to tell a story simultaneously. Such performances are accompanied by dancing, music, singing, and wrestling, enhancing the

performance. Members of the audience can comfortably sit around, treating themselves to palm wine and cola nut while the performance is underway.

Puppetry Tradition: Significance

It is important to note that, in addition to edutainment, puppetry is a fledgling art form and serves as a stage for social commentary (Mustapha, 2006). Puppeteers nose around for village gossip, happenings in virtually all aspects of society, and they use puppetry as a means of commenting on such events or happenings. Assert that one reason people gather to watch puppet performances is to get the gist of the latest trends in and around the community. Since it is difficult for people to go around and understand what is happening in society, they come to feast on news and such events from puppeteers who are good at gathering information and creatively delivering it to suit the interests of the audience they perform for. Storytelling adds to these performances. They share morals and delve into history about warriors, villains, myths, and fables. Through the rich storytelling traditions of puppet performance, several oral histories are passed down from generation to generation (Proschan, 1980). Such performances are thematically narrated to cover interesting areas, including political satire, where issues are brought to light for awareness and interrogation.

It is essential to sustain puppetry because, in the ethnic groups mentioned earlier, it is used to teach morals, virtues, and norms. In their performances, the rich cultural heritage of different ethnic groups is showcased. Some of the cultural heritage shown during the performance is only preserved by tradition. Thus, if such traditions are allowed to slip into oblivion, the preservatives are lost forever. Secondly, storytelling is carried out in different ways across various communities in Nigeria. The storytelling style of puppetry is dynamic and different from any other form. How the message is driven home can never be the same as other styles, like moonlight story traditions, etc. That is why we cannot allow puppetry to die away just like that. The level of creativity that a puppeteer must put into making an inanimate object take on actions, mannerisms, character and, sometimes, voice is unique and must be sustained.

Entertainment: Over the years, much has been achieved in puppetry. In the first instance, it has served as an entertainment medium. The puppet theatre of the Tiv people of Benue State attracts a large audience who come to enjoy the rich creative prowess of the puppeteer, just as we have musicians, dancers, comedians, acrobats, and songs. In most villages, puppet performers use the market, the village square and the king's courts to perform. Within the ambit of entertainment,

performance passes salient messages, informs people of events, both within and outside the village. This is often referred to as edutainment (the combination of education and entertainment in a performance). Rubin (1997) argues that puppetry among Nigerian ethnic groups primarily aims to entertain and educate, and often includes the use of masks, not just manipulated objects, as in the Western sense of puppetry.

Fostering unity: In many Nigerian communities, puppet theatre is like football. During a puppet performance, people from different climes come to watch under the same conditions. At that point, what matters to everyone is the entertainment. Thus, an event like this should be given the pride of place in the annals of creative endeavours. It is also important to note that during puppet performances in Tiv communities, people from different clans come together, which helps concretise relations and unity among villages and people.

Creating Awareness: Because of the appeal of puppet theatre, it has become a tool for awareness-raising, especially in rural areas, on issues such as agriculture, politics, relationships, child abuse, family crises, and marital challenges. In some climes, puppetry is deployed as a political instrument, often in the form of political satire, where government policies and activities are critiqued in a comic manner or with subtle denigration, without much fear of intimidation, especially when leaders are anti-people or anti-development. Thus, puppet theatre is applied to foster conscientisation, awareness, awakening and attitudinal change, which are essential for sustainable development.

Culture Sustainability as a Theoretical Framework

In the present dispensation, certain aspects of global society must be preserved. These include: economy, policies, and cultures. An attempt to allow for an erosion of these aspects can lead to a socio-cultural crisis of identity and stability. In other words, changing the culture and identity of a people is tantamount to underdevelopment from all angles. These scenarios perhaps heralded the need for sustainable development across fields such as the environment, the economy, agriculture, and culture.

Cultural sustainability is, however, crucial to this chapter, especially Cultural Sustainability Theory (CST). According to Hawkes (2001), devising a cultural framework is expedient for the protection of cultural resources and rights. UNESCO acknowledges culture as a fourth dimension of sustainable development, together with economy, environment and society. This acknowledgement emphasises the need to sustain cultural resources to achieve sustainable

development. It is important to note that numerous individuals, groups, and organisations have contributed to our understanding of the critical role culture plays in achieving sustainable development, promoting cultural preservation, and fostering sustainable practices across various aspects of society.

Cultural sustainability refers to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and practices, ensuring their continued vitality amid societal changes and external pressures. It is about safeguarding intangible assets, such as traditions, beliefs, and knowledge, as well as tangible assets, such as historic sites and artistic expressions. This involves actively engaging communities, valuing diverse cultural expressions, and ensuring that cultural practices are passed down to future generations. Cultural sustainability encompasses key aspects such as heritage preservation, cultural validity, community engagement, economic viability, and cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is crucial to the chapter's argument: that modernisation should pave the way for the recognition of diverse cultures, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and allow such cultures to thrive rather than overriding them, because it offers a more engaging and media-friendly alternative. The relevance of a cultural practice is not in its tendency to hybridise, but in its originality throughout generations. This applies to puppet traditions in various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Puppetry is one of such practices that must be preserved in Nigeria. Suppose masquerade traditions in various parts of Nigeria have survived modernisation without demanding change in practice. In that case, puppetry should be able to survive without going into oblivion as it is currently. Masquerade traditions abound among various ethnic groups in Nigeria, and a couple of masquerades incorporate puppets without puppeteers. Although the objects are figurines made of wood, clothing, plastic, and paper, they create the imagery of dolls or toys in different forms. However, without creative manipulation to create movement or animation, one cannot call them a puppet. As far as puppetry is concerned, there must be movement or animation.

Challenges Facing the Puppet Tradition in Nigeria

Scholars have argued that globalisation has contributed significantly to the erosion of values and to the decline of some African cultures and traditions. The argument revolves around the dominance of Eurocentric or globally acceptable cultures that threaten extant culture (Bell, 2009). This situation plays out in the Nigerian cultural space with very deafening calls for attention and, perhaps, action before certain forms disappear into oblivion (Ellison, 1981). It is pertinent to note

that when traditional cultures go into extinction, values, norms, mores, and ethics erode, affecting society on a larger scale.

Puppet players are older men who have not been able to pass down the knowledge to the new generation. The point here is that puppet practitioners are closely related to herbalists and charmers. Often, puppet show practitioners show up in special costumes, drawing some weird looks. These look to create fear in the younger generation, who see the practice as a fetish. Just like other fetish cultural practices,

Lack of Patronage and Support: Many traditional puppet shows in Nigeria travel from one place to another in search of an audience, especially a paying one, and to stage a performance and get a few bugs fixed. With economic hardship biting harder, traditional puppeteers move about for greener pastures without much success. This does not mean that all puppeteers are doing well; the number is relatively small. These practitioners do not get funding from the government or other institutions.

Competition from Modern Entertainment: The rise of cinema, television, and the internet has provided alternative forms of entertainment, diverting attention away from traditional performances. Youths who are supposed to continue the tradition are seeking white-collar jobs in big cities and would not want to pursue puppeteering, which is often considered a local tradition. Again, being that puppeteering is an intricate and creative skill, it requires apprenticeship and a reasonable time frame for apprentices to understand. Since it is not taught in school and other regular institutions, sending young people to learn the trade has become problematic. Apart from this, the puppet business is not seen as a modern creative venture like the rest, and it seems not to attract young people. Therefore, as the old puppeteers grow old in the trade and die, the skills and efficiency go with them, leaving no successors. This is a significant challenge that requires innovation and development.

Lack of Development: A significant challenge facing puppetry is a lack of development. Although it is an ancient art, it requires some development, especially in the present age, when other media compete for relevance. Thus, for practitioners to continue in the old tradition is not an issue; the new audience, familiar with new media, may have difficulty appreciating the old style of traditional puppetry. In this regard, many have argued that the lack of development limits the relevance of puppet art. It is expected that puppeteering will evolve alongside the new scripting trend, and

storytelling will reflect the contemporary world. Failure to adapt favourably may have been the reason for the dwindling appeal in recent times.

Religious and Societal Changes: It is pertinent to observe that, with adherence to religious creeds and the proliferation of religious institutions across Nigeria, certain cultural practices have been affected, oftentimes negatively. For instance, Islam decries the use of objects in human form. In the same vein, Christianity does not support figurines, as it connotes graven images (idol worship). This outlook, perhaps, contributes to the declining interest of many in the puppet traditions in rural areas of Nigeria. Again, puppetry is considered rooted in traditional beliefs or rituals. Therefore, it is kicked against by the aforementioned religious institutions. It is noteworthy that most traditional practices have given way due to the increasing activities of religious bodies in Nigeria and beyond. Thus, it threatens the core of cultural existence, especially in Africa. With this situation, it is expected that shortly, some of the traditional and cultural practices, which have defined various ethnic groups in Nigeria, will go into oblivion. The effect of this on the sustenance of the ethnic groups' language and identity would have been significantly altered, even in light of the insistence on culture as the fourth pillar of development.

Puppetry in the Contemporary Domain: Opportunities

The contemporary era is laced with opportunities for the art of puppetry to continue to develop. The new media have offered more opportunities for creative arts than ever before in the history of scientific development. Unfortunately, a large population of puppeteers in Nigeria are either illiterate or semi-illiterate and may not have the expertise or be ICT compliant. This situation limits the opportunities available through the new media. For instance, the world can now enjoy the rich cultural heritage of traditional puppetry on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. If young, creative skit makers and content creators have utilised social media to make great wealth (Obot, 2025), what stops puppeteers from creating amazing content for millions of teeming enthusiasts who daily crave unique content?

Recent complaints about the gradual decline of the puppet theatre are that young people are not showing interest in the practice because it is archaic and old-fashioned. With the emergence of the new media, the interest can be rekindled and nurtured to fruition. It requires close collaboration between creative agencies, saddled with the responsibilities of sustaining cultures. A national puppetry competition can be organised and sustained to boost widespread interest. New social media platforms can be created to showcase puppet theatres from diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria.

These, and many new ideas, can be floated by individuals, the government and culture-conscious agencies to preserve the dying puppet traditions in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Sustaining puppet storytelling tradition is not only for the preservation of culture but also for the values, morals, and level of creativity that cannot be allowed to go extinct. Puppet theatre is practised among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, but mainly by the Tiv, Ibibio, Ogoni, Yoruba, and Kanuri. However, other ethnic groups practice masquerade traditions with figurines on the masks, but not in the real sense of puppeteering. Puppet theatre provides entertainment, education, and raises awareness of important social issues, while serving as a tool for conscientisation, attitudinal change, and the transmission of moral values from one generation to another. Invariably, puppetry is an essential ingredient for socio-cultural and political development. Nevertheless, this rich tradition faces several challenges to its existence, including a lack of patronage, competition from modern entertainment, and socio-religious changes. The new media period presents several opportunities for puppetry in Nigeria to thrive, and such opportunities can reposition the rich tradition for the better if judiciously used.

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Signs as Metaphor and Metaphor as Sign: A Semiotic Analysis of *the Book of Amos*

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Abstract

Metaphor as a message in the communication process opens up new facets in understanding the unknown from the known within the semiotic or theosemiotic framework. The Biblical Book of Amos deploys natural, visual, and linguistic signs to instructively communicate Yahweh's warning and the inevitable consequences of unrighteousness among the Israelites. Extant works on the book Amos have been done from historical and exegetic perspectives with little attention paid to the theosemiotic messages and implications inherent in the book. This study, therefore, examined how God communicates warnings and the inevitability of judgment in the book of Amos with a view to identifying and analysing the structures and functions of signs and metaphors as divine communication strategies and their relevance to contemporary Nigerian society. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic classification of signs (icon, index and symbol), and Michael Raposa's theosemiotic hermeneutics, which emphasises the experiential mediation of signs in religious experience, served as the theoretical framework. The study adopted a qualitative interpretive design. Data were purposively selected from the visions and pronouncements in Amos. These perspectives provide a multidimensional understanding of the prophetic text as both an objective revelation and a subjective interpretive encounter. Findings revealed that signs and symbols such as the locust, basket of fruit, fire, and plumb line served as semiotic instruments of divine warning and a call for repentance. The book highlighted the inevitability of God's judgment for those who rejected His warnings and hope for forgiveness. All of these were crafted as prophetic messages in Amos.

Keywords: *Theo-semiotics, imageries and signs, warnings, Book of Amos, Prophetic Communication.*

Introduction

Studies on prophetic literature in the Bible have traditionally centred on historical and pure theological interpretations. However, biblical scholarship has increasingly extended its tent to investigating the fact that prophets are not just carriers of divine instructions and messages but are also interpreters of a complex sign system. The signs, metaphors, imagery and visions they employ

are communicative vehicles and devices through which God conveys warnings and redemptive options and possibilities.

The book of *Amos* is one of the earliest and richest examples of prophetic communication in the Old Testament, offering a profound critique of social injustice and religious hypocrisy in Ancient Israel. It chronicles the prophecies and teachings delivered by Prophet Amos to the kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II and King Uzziah of Judah. Amos, a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees, came from Tekoa and ministered during a period of prosperity and moral decay in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He was sent by God to deliver a message that is not only theologically deep but also rich in its use of signs and symbols. Amos employed the use of vivid signs of warnings to bring to light the nation's injustice, economic exploitation and spiritual decay. His prophecy came at a period of relative peace and prosperity, yet greatly known for systemic oppression, corruption and moral decadence. His prophetic messages were deeply semiotic in nature, combining verbal proclamation with symbolic visions to communicate divine intentions. Signs are fundamental elements in semiotics and human communication. Semiotics studies signs and symbols that are involved in the communication process, which allows the analysis of a metaphor from generation to interpretation. Signs, whether linguistic or extra-linguistic, point beyond themselves to reveal deeper layers of meaning, while metaphor functions as a discursive element that enables an apt understanding of abstract theological concepts through the use of concrete experiential ideas. In biblical texts, signs transcend mere linguistics or symbolic markers; they embody divine communication that serves as a mediator of God's intent. Amos's prophetic strategy relies heavily on the symbolic use of metaphors and imagery to convey God's impending judgment and the need for justice.

This study is anchored on the assumption that metaphor itself is a form of signification and that the use of signs in prophetic discourse often manifests metaphorically. Drawing on linguistic and semiotic theories, particularly Peircean classification of signs and Raposa's theosemiotic, this paper reveals the fact that signs and metaphorical elements in the book of *Amos* function as a mediator between the divine and human, highlighting the inseparability between metaphor and signs in prophetic discourse. In this sense, the signs and metaphors function not just as signs but as theosemiotic markers signalling warnings of impending judgment.

By analysing signs as metaphor and metaphor as signs in *the book of Amos*, this study contributes to the growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship, serving as a bridge between linguistics,

semiotics and biblical studies. It reveals the role of metaphorical signification and how linguistic structures are employed to encode, transmit and convey divine messages.

Statement of the Problem

The Book of Amos contains vivid prophetic messages in which signs and symbols are used to communicate warnings against social injustice, moral decadence, political corruption and religious hypocrisy in Ancient Israel. The language of *the book of Amos* is filled with vivid imagery, signs and metaphors that have been studied most times historically, literally rather than as distinctive elements of semiotic and linguistic meaning (Longman, 2021; Nogaski, 2020). Recent research in linguistics and semiotics laid emphasis on the fact that metaphors are not merely ornamental, but they are vital meaning-making mechanisms operating as signs that encode, mediate and communicate complex ideological and theological concepts. (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2021). Despite this shift, inadequate attention is still given to the interrogation of the reciprocal relationship between signs and metaphor within semiotic processes. There has also been growing attention on metaphor and its interrelation with signs. Scholars such as Uwaegbute (2023) engaged in methodological questions as it relates to biblical studies, but the specific intersection between linguistics, semiotics and prophetic metaphors has not been fully addressed.

This study, therefore, seeks to address the need for a linguistic and semiotic investigation that treats metaphors in the *book of Amos* as both signs and meaning markers. This is necessary because the integrative approach will aid scholarly understanding of how metaphors in prophetic texts, such as *the book of Amos*, can function linguistically as signs, shaping theological meanings, communicating divine intents and audiences' understanding.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the interrelation between signs and metaphors in *the book of Amos* by examining how metaphorical expressions act as semiotic signs and how signs are structured as metaphors within prophetic discourse using semiotic frameworks. The specific objectives are to:

1. identify the semiotic resources prominent in *the book of Amos*,
2. analyse the semiotic resources and their functions in the *book of Amos*.
3. examine these semiotic resources and their implications for contemporary Nigerian society.

Research Questions

1. What are the prominent semiotic resources in the book of *Amos*?

2. What semiotic resources are deployed in the book of *Amos*, and how do they function in constructing and communicating prophetic meanings?
3. What are the implications of the signs encoded in the semiotic resources of the book of *Amos* for the contemporary Nigerian society?

Literature Review

This literature review examines existing works on signs and metaphors with reference to prophetic texts. It also explores a theoretical framework from semiotics and cognitive linguistics. Furthermore, this review also considers studies that contextualise metaphor and signs in Nigerian scholarship, thereby situating *Amos* in the Nigerian academic discourse. Through the integration of these perspectives, the review provides a foundation for the understanding of the dual functions of language in *Amos* as metaphor within a semiotic framework, setting the stage for a linguistically informed investigation in prophetic communication.

Signs and Metaphors in Biblical Texts

In biblical scholarship, metaphorical language has been recognised as a central semiotic resource through which meaning is constructed and communicated. Brownsmith (2024) argued that metaphor in scripture functions as a complex cognitive and semiotic tool, enabling readers to understand complex and abstract theological concepts through the use of concrete imagery. Such works show that biblical metaphors like the “vine” and “light of the world” operate semiotically as signs to convey theological meaning within the structure of the narrative of the scripture. Within the context of religion and biblical studies, Nigerian researchers have explored metaphorical expressions in biblical and Christian discourse, highlighting the challenge of interpreting metaphors when literal readings predominate. For instance, Hundu (2025) carried out a study on the Gospel of John, examining how metaphors contribute to misunderstandings when readers fail to recognise their symbolic dimensions, illustrating how metaphor functions as a sign that bridges literal and figurative meaning in scripture. Nigerian research on metaphor in Christian sermons further reveals that metaphors in religious discourse reflect sociocultural ideologies and communicate moral and spiritual truths to local audiences (*Figures of Rhetoric in the Language of Nigerian Christian Sermons*, 2024). These studies reveal that metaphorical signs in biblical texts are embedded in cultural and interpretive practices that shape how communities understand divine messages.

Beyond explicitly biblical contexts, Nigerian studies on metaphor in language and cultural discourse contribute important insights into how metaphors function as signs in meaning construction. Omotayo (2023) carried out an analysis of conceptual metaphors in Nigerian Christian praise songs, demonstrating how metaphoric language encodes theological and cultural values in worship contexts, underscoring the semiotic richness of metaphor in religious communication. In the same vein, Igwedibia (2024) semiotic analysis of cultural signs in Nigerian contexts shows how signs acquire meaning through usage and interpretation within specific communities, supporting the idea that metaphorical signs in texts like Amos are culturally situated and interpretable within shared semiotic frameworks. While many Nigerian studies focus on metaphor in media, culture, or social discourse, their conceptual insights provide a foundation for analysing biblical metaphors as semiotic signs that operate in linguistic networks of meaning. Collectively, these studies show that metaphor and signification are interwoven processes: metaphors in biblical texts serve as semiotic signs that facilitate cognitive engagement with divine themes, and understanding these metaphors requires attention to both linguistic form and cultural interpretation.

Semiotics and Theosemiotics

Semiotics, as the study of signs and symbols, could be traced to the works of Ferdinand de Saussure (1983) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1955). It offers insights and a compelling framework for the construction and interpretation of language symbols and codes. According to Riera (2020), semiotics is understood as a triadic interaction between signs, context, and meaning. Frances (2021) reiterates that it is an interdisciplinary field that analyses how signs and symbols acquire meaning across cultures. Recent developments in semiotic theory have greatly enriched the study of religious texts and divine communication by moving beyond the structural model of sign systems to include ethical, ontological and communal dimensions. Semiotics is broadly understood as the study of signs and meaning-making processes. In theological discourse, this interpretive model has evolved into theosemiotics as first articulated by John Deely and further developed by Michael Raposa. Raposa (2020) articulated the concept of theosemiotics as a discipline which applies the insight of Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotics, depicting that divine communication functions through symbolic mediation, ritual contexts and prophetic discourse, enabling human communities to encounter transcendent meaning through interpretive engagement. (Raposa, 2020; Raposa, 2022). Theosemiotics, therefore, as an interdisciplinary field,

bridges the gap between semiotic theory and theology, suggesting that divine signs can operate not only as communicative elements but also as spiritual catalysts shaping moral orientation, ethical responsibility and collective consciousness (Madu, 2023; Iheanacho, 2024).

While classical semiotics is focused on how signs signify, theosemiotics adds layers of ontological and ethical implication: sign is a mediation between human encounter with the divine to shape self-understanding and communal forms of life. Taqiyuddin (2020) applied theosemiotics theory to analyse Islamic Dawah messages, showing how the signer and communicator, symbol use and the audience response constitute the sign process.

In African and Nigerian biblical scholarship, there has been growing recognition of the usefulness of semiotic approaches for interpreting biblical texts in ways that resonate with contemporary social realities. Nigerian scholars argue that prophetic texts employ culturally embedded signs that speak powerfully to issues of injustice, leadership failure, and moral decay—conditions that remain prevalent in many African societies (Adamo, 2021; Olojede, 2020). Semiotics thus provides a methodological bridge between the ancient biblical world and modern African contexts by highlighting how signs function communicatively across time and culture. According to Olatunji (2022), semiotic interpretation enables African readers to uncover layers of meaning in biblical texts that speak directly to lived social experiences, particularly in contexts marked by political instability and economic inequality.

The Biblical Book of Amos

Recent scholarship continues to treat the Book of Amos as a paradigmatic prophetic text for studying prophetic rhetoric, social criticism, and religious ethics. Contemporary scholars emphasise that Amos is not primarily a collection of abstract theology but a tightly woven, rhetorically forceful corpus in which oracles, visions, and indictments cohere around a sustained critique of social injustice, legal corruption, and ritual hypocrisy (Davis, 2022; Akintola, 2021). Where older scholarship often separated historical-critical description from ethical application, newer work tends to read Amos both as a historically situated product of eighth-century BCE Israel and as a literarily sophisticated tract that stages infectious rhetorical strategies designed to make audiences perceive social realities as theological problems (Davis, 2022).

Central to the Book of Amos is the idea that divine covenant demands ethical obedience. Amos positions social justice as a theological principle, arguing that ritual worship without righteous living is unacceptable to God. Israel's exploitation of the poor, perversion of justice, and religious

hypocrisy violate divine standards, leading to prophetic warnings of imminent judgment unless repentance occurs (Akintola, 2021). Thus, the concept of prophetic warning in Amos functions not merely as prediction but as a moral summons, a call to societal reformation grounded in covenant ethics. This conceptual focus situates Amos as a text where spiritual fidelity and social responsibility are inseparable (Idemudia, 2024).

A growing strand of scholarship in Africa and Nigeria has made particularly persuasive claims about the contemporary relevance of Amos. Several Nigerian scholars and clergy-scholars have argued that the socio-economic and religious conditions Amos denounces—elite accumulation, exploitation of the poor, judicial perversion, and sacrificial religiosity devoid of justice—bear an uncanny resemblance to systemic problems in many African states today (Akintola, 2021; Dogara, 2021; Opade, 2023). Akintola's close reading of Amos 5:21–24, for example, situates the prophetic critique of moral performance in explicit conversation with Nigerian church practices and public life, arguing that Amos provides a prophetic paradigm for clergy and lay leaders to press for social justice (Akintola, 2021). Dogara (2021) and Opade (2023) likewise read Amos as a resource for public theology, showing how the text's indictments can be translated into civic critique and pastoral praxis in contexts of corruption and unequal wealth distribution.

A conceptual feature that makes the book of Amos distinct is its use of symbolic vision, imageries and metaphors to communicate divine instruction and warnings. Metaphors and signs such as the locusts, fire, plumb line, and basket of summer fruit operate as divine signs that reveal Israel's moral decay and impending destruction (Smith, 2023). Within a semiotic and theological frame, these visions serve as divine communicative acts through which Yahweh discloses His moral expectations and decisions to His prophet, who then interprets them for the community. The symbolic imagery reinforces the conceptual theme that divine revelation often appears not as abstract doctrine but as visual, ethical, and rhetorical signs designed to provoke interpretation and response (Madu, 2023). Moreover, the Book of Amos conceptualises warnings and restoration as complementary elements of divine purpose. Although the dominant tone is one of warning and impending punishment, the final chapter introduces hope and covenant renewal, revealing that divine warnings aim not at annihilation but at purification and ultimate restoration of God's people (Iheanacho, 2024).

Finally, recent contributions caution against simplistic appropriation. While Amos is widely read as a prophetic mirror for contemporary governance failures, methodological reflections urge that

such use be hermeneutically disciplined—attending to historical distance, the book’s rhetorical conventions, and the theological particularities of covenant language (Davis, 2022; Raposa, 2020). Raposa’s theosemiotic perspective (2020) is often cited in this context as a corrective: treating Amos’ visions and oracles as semiotic acts helps interpreters preserve the text’s internal logic while responsibly discerning parallels for modern application.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic theory of signs and Michael Raposa’s theosemiotics, providing a robust framework for analysing metaphors and signs in the Book of Amos. These theories are particularly suitable because they provide a multidimensional analysis of linguistic, cognitive, and theological dimensions of prophetic discourse.

Charles Sanders Peirce’s Classification of Signs

Peirce (1931–1958) conceptualises a sign (or representamen) as something that stands for an object to an interpretant—the effect or understanding produced in a mind. His theory is triadic, consisting of representamen, referring to the form the sign takes (e.g., word, image, sound), Object depicting that which the sign refers to (e.g., divine justice, social corruption). And the Interpretant is the understanding or meaning derived from the sign by an interpreter. Peirce further classifies signs into three categories based on how they relate to their objects namely Icon which relates to sign in term of resemblance (e.g., a roaring lion in Amos symbolizing danger), Index relating to signification by causal or existential connection (e.g., a plumb line indicating judgment) and symbol referring to signs derived through convention, law, or learned association (e.g., the “basket of summer fruit” symbolizing impending doom). Peirce’s framework allows this study to systematically identify and categorise the metaphoric and semiotic resources in Amos, linking linguistic forms to their referents and cognitive effects. By doing so, metaphors are not just aesthetic or rhetorical devices—they become structured signs whose meanings can be analysed in a precise, semiotic-linguistic manner.

Michael Raposa’s Theosemiotics

Theosemiotics extends Peircean semiotics into the theological domain, focusing on divine communication through signs. The key principles in theosemiotics are divine intentionality. All signs in sacred texts are understood as purposeful vehicles of divine meaning. Interpretive

mediation, which reiterates the fact that human interpretation is essential; the interpretant is influenced by theological and contextual knowledge and the Integration of natural and supernatural signs. Signs may be material, linguistic, or spiritual, reflecting both observable reality and transcendent truths.

Raposa's approach is particularly considered suitable for analysing prophetic texts like Amos, as it emphasises the semiotic dimension of divine messages. It situates the metaphors and symbolic signs within a theological framework, recognising their role in communicating moral, social, and spiritual lessons to the audience.

The combination of Peirce's semiotic classification and Raposa's theosemiotics is highly complementary: Peirce's classification of signs provides a rigorous semiotic and cognitive-linguistic structure for categorising signs and analysing how metaphors function in language, while Raposa adds a theological and interpretive layer, recognising that in prophetic texts, signs are not only linguistic tools but also vehicles of divine communication. A combination of these two frameworks allows a holistic analysis where each metaphor in Amos can be identified as a type of sign (icon, index, symbol) through Peirce, interpreted for its theological meaning and moral implications using Raposa's theosemiotics.

This dual framework ensures that the study addresses both the linguistic semiotics of metaphors and their religious-theological significance. Thus, aligning to understand how signs and metaphors communicate divine messages in Amos.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design with a focus on textual and semiotic analysis guided by the principles of semiotic theory. Qualitative research is considered appropriate because the study aims to investigate and interpret signs and metaphors as complex semiotic resources in the book of Amos. This allows for an in-depth analysis of the linguistic, semiotic and theological functions of metaphors and signs in Amos. The book of Amos is chosen for this study because Amos is known for its rich use of metaphoric and symbolic language, and it is theologically and socially relevant. It is comprehensive, which allows for a systematic and thorough analysis. The population of the study is the biblical text of Amos, found in the Old Testament. The entire nine chapters of Amos and 146 verses serve as the textual sample for this study. But some selected verses that are rich metaphorically are selected and analysed, thus providing a comprehensive analysis of the semiotic and linguistic features of the text. Purposive sampling is considered

appropriate for this study because it allows for focus on relevant data, and it allows the researcher to select only the verses that are rich in metaphorical and semiotic content. It aids efficiency in analysis and helps alignment with the Amos 1:1-2:16- The Prophecies against the Nations research objectives. The selected verses are:

Amos 4: 7-Natural signs (withheld rain) as instruments of divine warning

Amos 5:18-24-Symbolic expressions of the analogy of the day of the Lord

Amos 7:1-9- Visions of locust, fire and plumb line

Amos 8:1-3-The basket of fruit as a sign of the end

Amos 9:1-10- The collapsing sanctuary as a final sign of warning

These selected texts represent the semiotic core of Amos's messages and are sufficient for in-depth interpretation.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The section presents the analysis of the metaphorical expressions and semiotic resources identified in the book of Amos using Peirce's classification of signs (icon, index and symbol) and Raposa's theosemiotics as the analytical framework. The analysis focused on how signs and metaphors function to convey divine, social and ethical messages and how relevant these signs are to the contemporary Nigerian society. The discussion of the findings integrates with existing literatures highlighting patterns, recurring themes and interplay between metaphor and signification.

Excerpt One

Amos 1:3-5

“Thus says the Lord: for three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron...”

This passage brims with vivid metaphors employing acts of violence and destruction that act as signs that the audience can relate to experientially. The metaphoric signs in the passage include: “Three transgressions... even four” “Threshing Gilead with iron sledges” “Fire sent upon the house of Hazael” “Breaking the gate bar of Damascus” “Cutting off the ruler and the sceptre-holder” “Exile to Kir”

These signs can be classified in to Iconic Sign (sign of resemblance)

Threshing Gilead with iron sledges: This sign is highly iconic because it resembles the physical act of threshing grain at the threshing field, but has metamorphosed in to violent image. It creates

a mental image of despair and devastation where the threshing of grain is transformed into a battering of a city, depicting inevitability.

Fire-consuming palaces: Fire visually mirrors destruction and devastation. It transforms luxury and power into ashes, an image of absolute devastation and destruction beyond repair. Even the palaces that are considered symbols of pride and power are not spared. These icons mirror the moral condition of Damascus and the consequences awaiting it.

Indexes (signs of causality): The indexical signs in Amos 1:3-5 present a vivid sequence of divine judgment where metaphors and signs are used to point to larger realities beyond themselves.

Fire sent by Yahweh indexing divine response to injustice as punishment, pointing back to sin. They point to Yahweh's active judgment. The flames from the fire are the resultant effect of divine actions, depicting that God is the reason behind the destruction.

Broken gate bars depicting defeat of military power and the loss of security. They are direct evidence of the city's conquest. They point to the failure of human defence and security confidence against the divine mandate.

Exile of the people: This is an index of divine punishment. They were forcefully removed from their homeland, depicting the link between sin and its effect. It reflects covenantal violation and divine judgment.

Symbols (Signs by Convention): The Prophet in Amos 1:3-5 employs the symbolic signs that convey the meaning through cultural, moral and covenantal conversation.

“Three... four transgressions”: This repeated phrase is a numerical symbol depicting fullness of sins and transgression. It shows that the transgression of the Israelites has reached its peak and cannot be ignored.

Gate bars: This symbolises security and authority. It invariably represents the collapse of these structures.

Sceptre-holder represents kingship and political authority. These symbolic signs depend on cultural and theological understanding to reflect how they carry evidence of meaning. The text in Amos 1:4-5 warns that rulers who misuse power are subject to divine corrections.

Theosemiotic Analysis

Michael Raposa's theosemiotics views divine revelation as a combination of signs through which God communicates meaning, warning, and moral demand within historical contexts. In relation to Amos 1:3-, it reveals that God is the Ultimate Sign-Giver who communicates to humans through

the use of signs. In Amos 1:3–5, Yahweh functions as the intentional communicator, using metaphoric language and prophetic speech as divine signs. Also, it shows that signs are a medium of moral communication. Raposa emphasises that divine signs are ethically charged; they demand interpretation and response. The violent threshing becomes a sign exposing moral corruption. The fire and exile function as corrective signs, calling attention to justice. Therefore, the signs in Amos are not arbitrary punishments, but meaning-laden warnings. In theosemiotics, meaning emerges through God’s intentionality, the mediation of the prophet and the audience’s interpretation. The signs from a theosemiotic operate at three levels, that is, the past, which refers to the violence already committed, talking of Israel’s inability to adhere to divine warnings, showing the prophet’s admonition for them to pay attention to the warnings being issued, and the future reflecting the effect of their lack of adherence to warnings. This aligns with Raposa’s idea that divine signs collapse time, making future consequences morally present.

Amos 1:3–5 presents a structured semiotic warning system, icons depicting violence and destruction, indexical signs pointing to divine causality and symbols encoded in theological and cultural meaning. Through a theosemiotic lens, the passage functions as divine communication aimed at moral accountability, revealing Yahweh as a God who speaks through historical events, symbolic language, and prophetic warning signs.

Excerpt Two

Amos 4: 6-11

“I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me, says the Lord

And I also withheld rain from you when there were still three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city...”

Amos 4:6–11 contains a series of signs that showcase divine warnings addressed to Israel. Unlike Amos, whose focus was on foreign nations, the message in Amos 4:6-11 was directed to confront God’s own people. Each verse recalls a past calamity sent by Yahweh, followed by the refrain “yet you did not return to me”, emphasizing Israel’s persistent nonchalant attitude to divine signs.

The metaphors and signs identified in the passage are: Cleanness of teeth (famine) – v 6, Withheld rain and drought – v.–8, Blight and mildew – vs.9, Locust devastation – v.9, Plague like that of Egypt – v.10. Each of these signs acts as a communicative element of warnings and not a mere judgment. The signs are semiotically classified into

Icons (Signs of Resemblance): The iconic signs in Amos 4:6-11 are:

Cleanness of teeth: This resembles hunger, absence of food, famine and poverty.

Withheld rain: This mirrors agricultural barrenness and lifelessness.

Blight, mildew, and locusts visually resemble decay, destruction, and loss.

The iconic signs reflect suffering, despair and devastation, making the warning concrete and experiential.

Indexes (Signs of Causality): The indexical signs that abound in the passage are:

Famine and drought point to divine displeasure linked to covenant violation.

Plagues and military defeat

Each of these signs points backwards to Israel's sin and looks forward to possible repentance

Symbols (Signs by Convention): In Amos 4:6-11, the symbolic signs that are inherent in the passage are:

Rain, which signifies divine blessing and life.

Egyptian plagues depicting judgment and reversal of salvation history.

Sodom and Gomorrah stand for ultimate judgment and moral collapse.

“A brand plucked from the fire” showing narrow escape and unmerited mercy. These symbols rely on Israel's shared theological memory.

Theosemiotic Analysis

Theosemiotics views divine revelation as God's self-communication through signs embedded in lived experience, especially signs that are ethically charged and demand interpretation. Applying this to Amos 4:6-11, it reveals the fact that God as Communicator through history. In the passage, Yahweh communicates not primarily through verbal speech but through natural events such as famine, drought, plague, and war. These events function as divine signs, intentionally placed within Israel's experience to provoke moral awareness. Signs are also viewed as invitations, revealing that divine signs do not coerce; they demand response and interpretation. The repeated refrain “yet you did not return to me” highlights Israel's failure not because the signs were unclear, but because the people refused to interpret them rightly. The signs were warnings meant to restore the relationship, not merely to punish. Furthermore, from a theosemiotic perspective, the progressive accumulation of signs intensifies their communicative force. Each calamity builds upon the previous one, increasing interpretive pressure. This is an indication of the fact that meaning emerges not from one sign alone, but from the network of signs. Amos 4:6–11 presents a dense

theosemiotic system of warnings portraying Yahweh as a persistent communicator, using historical crises as meaningful signs aimed at ethical transformation and restored relationship.

Excerpt Three

Amos 5:18–24

“Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light

As if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall and was bitten by a snake...”

The metaphorical signs in Amos 5:1-24 include:

The Day of the LORD as darkness, not light (vs. 18, 20)

Flight from danger only to meet another threat (vs. 19)

Divine rejection of festivals and sacrifices (vs. 21–22)

Silencing of songs and music (vs. 23)

These signs warn against religious hypocrisy and announce impending judgment. Semiotically, they can be classified into:

Icons — Signs of Resemblance: Iconic Signs in Amos 5:18–20

In Amos 5:18–20, the prophet employs iconic signs—images that resemble the reality they signify to convey divine judgment and the consequences of moral failure. These signs are visually and conceptually vivid, creating immediate cognitive and emotional resonance with the audience.

Darkness Instead of Light (Amos 5:18): The phrase “darkness instead of light” resembles the experience of sudden obscurity. It is not merely metaphorical; it evokes sensory and emotional understanding, allowing the audience to “feel” the absence of guidance and hope.

Man Fleeing from a Lion and Meeting a Bear (Amos 5:19)

The imagery of a man fleeing a lion only to encounter a bear resembles the experience of escalating danger and inescapable peril. The sequence mirrors real-life anxiety and tension, making the divine message concrete and apprehensible.

Snake Biting in the House (Amos 5:19)

A snake biting someone in their house evokes immediate fear and danger in a supposedly safe environment, resembling the real-life experience of betrayal or threat within familiar spaces.

Indexes — Signs of Causality:

In Amos 5:18–20, the prophet employs indexical signs—events or actions that point causally or existentially to a larger moral or divine reality. Unlike icons, which resemble their objects, indexical signs signal their objects through relational or causal connections, making them powerful indicators of divine judgment.

Dark Day of the Lord (Amos 5:18) “the dark day of the Lord” points directly to God’s impending judgment. The darkness is not merely descriptive; it signals the existential reality of divine intervention, indicating that God’s wrath will disrupt human expectations.

Rejected Sacrifices (Amos 5:22)

God’s rejection of sacrifices signals that rituals alone cannot substitute for righteous conduct. The act of offering sacrifices points causally to the emptiness of religious acts without moral obedience.

Silenced Songs (Amos 5:23)

The silencing of songs at religious festivals points to divine displeasure, causally connecting empty praise with God’s rejection. Music, a normal expression of worship, becomes an index of spiritual failure when disconnected from righteousness.

Creative Insights

The indexical signs in Amos 5:18–20 create a moral and theological map of consequences:

Symbols — Signs by Convention, as highlighted in Amos 5:18-24, are:

Day of the LORD symbolising divine reversals of what things used to be, it further depicts divine judgment

Festivals and offerings signifying Israel’s religious system.

Noise of songs, which is a symbol of superficial worship.

Theosemiotic Analysis

God communicates not only through words but through signs embedded in lived reality. In Amos 5:18–24, metaphors and imageries functions s divine warning signs that reveal God’s ethical priorities. It reflects that divine signs often supersede human assumptions. Israel expects the Day of the LORD to signify victory and light; God re-signifies it as darkness and danger. This reversal functions as a corrective sign, exposing misinterpretation rooted in injustice. Divine signs are invitational rather than coercive. Theosemiotic framework also recognises that signs lose meaning when severed from ethical truth. By saying that sacrifices and ritual actions cannot bail Israel out, it shows that religious signs without justice become semiotically empty. The rejection of worship is not divine absence but relational protest. God’s refusal to accept rituals functions as a sign of a

wounded relationship, aiming to restore moral alignment rather than annihilate the people. Amos 5:18–24 presents a powerful system of warning signs. Through a theosemiotic lens, the passage portrays God as a meaning-giving agent, using symbolic language and ethical demands to warn that justice and not ritual constitutes true covenant faithfulness.

Excerpt Four

Amos 7:1–9

“This is what the Lord GOD showed me: he was forming locust at the time the latter growth began to sprout (it was the latter growth after the king’s mowing).

When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, “O Lord GOD, forgive, I beg you! How can Jacob stand? He is so small...”

In Amos 7:1–9, the prophet presents a series of visions that communicate divine judgment through vivid imagery. These visions employ iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs, each serving as a semiotic vehicle for theological and moral instruction.

Iconic Signs

Iconic signs mirror the reality they signify, creating a visual and conceptual likeness that allows the audience to intuitively grasp God’s message.

Locusts (Amos 7:1–3)

The swarm of locusts resembles complete ecological devastation, mirroring the destruction they bring upon crops and livelihood. The imagery is immediate and tangible, creating a sensory experience for the audience.

Consuming Fire (Amos 7:4–6)

Fire resembles total annihilation, visually representing the destruction of both natural and social structures. It conveys the intensity and immediacy of divine wrath.

The Plumb Line (Amos 7:7–9)

The plumb line resembles moral alignment, a visual analogy to measure uprightness. Though simple, it creates a clear cognitive map: the nation is being measured against divine standards.

Destruction of High Places (Amos 7:9)

High places visually represent corrupt religious and social structures. Their destruction iconically mirrors the collapse of idolatrous or unjust systems.

Indexical Signs

Indexical signs point causally to reality, signalling divine action through relational or existential connections.

Agricultural Destruction

Points directly to the social and economic consequences of moral failure. Famine, crop loss, and ecological devastation signal divine disfavour.

Fire Reaching the Great Deep

This indicates that no human domain is beyond God's reach. Divine judgment penetrates even the deepest and most secure places, reinforcing moral accountability.

Plumb Line

It functions indexically, pointing to Israel's moral deviation; the visual tool is both metaphorical and causally connected to the reality of impending judgment.

Symbolic Signs

Symbolic signs depend on cultural or theological conventions, conveying meaning through shared understanding.

Locusts

This symbolically represents God's corrective authority, not just ecological damage. They signify divine intervention in human history.

Fire

Fire symbolises moral purification, divine wrath, and corrective action against social and religious corruption.

High Places

High places represent idolatry, ritual corruption, and false religious confidence. Their destruction signals God's rejection of superficial piety and establishes moral and covenantal accountability.

Theosemiotic Analysis

In Raposa's theosemiotics, divine revelation occurs through meaningful signs embedded in experience. In Amos 7:1–9, God intentionally shows Amos the visions; revelation is visual, symbolic, and interpretive, not merely verbal, stressing that divine signs are not deterministic. The first two visions (locusts and fire) are open signs—their outcomes change in response to Amos' intercession. This reveals a relational semiosis in which human response participates in meaning. The plumb line marks a theosemiotic shift. Unlike earlier signs, it is non-negotiable. God declares, "I will spare them no longer." It is a sign of finality. In Raposa's terms, the sign now functions as

a final interpretant: Israel has been measured and found deficient. Theosemiotic framework shows that divine signs are fundamentally ethical. The plumb line does not measure ritual performance but moral alignment, justice, righteousness, and covenant faithfulness. Judgment arises not from ignorance but from persistent refusal to realign. The progression of signs illustrates Raposa's idea that divine signs begin as invitations before they translate into warnings and end as judgments when consistently ignored. Thus, the visions trace the limits of mercy within moral responsibility. Through a theosemiotic lens, the passage portrays God as a communicative and relational judge, whose signs aim first at repentance but ultimately declare judgment when ethical disorder becomes irreversible.

Excerpt Five

Amos 8:1–3

*“This is what the Lord God showed me- a basket of summer fruit
He said,” Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit”
Then the LORD said to me, “The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass
them by...”*

Amos 8:1–3 presents one of the most arresting prophetic visions in the book: a seemingly benign image—a basket of summer fruit—is transformed into a chilling announcement of finality. The passage dramatises how ordinary objects become semiotic vessels of divine judgment, where metaphor functions not as ornament but as a revelatory force.

Iconic Signs

Iconic signs operate through resemblance, enabling the audience to grasp divine meaning through sensory and experiential likeness.

The Basket of Summer Fruit

The basket of summer fruit is iconic because it resembles ripeness, fullness, and seasonal completion. Visually, it evokes abundance and harvest; semiotically, it mirrors a condition that has reached its natural end.

Wailing Instead of Songs (Amos 8:3)

The reversal of joyful temple songs into wailing is iconically powerful because it resembles emotional inversion—celebration collapsing into grief.

The soundscape shifts from harmony to lamentation.

Worship becomes mourning.

This auditory image allows the audience to hear judgment, not merely understand it intellectually. The resemblance between grief and wailing makes the message visceral: joy cannot coexist with injustice.

Dead Bodies

The presence of dead bodies strewn in silence is an iconic sign of total devastation. Death here resembles the final collapse of social order and human dignity.

The image confronts the reader with stillness, absence, and rupture.

Life has ceased where it once flourished.

Theologically, this icon announces that divine judgment is not abstract—it leaves visible, corporeal traces in human history.

Indexical Signs

Indexical signs point to meaning through causal or existential connection, directly linking the sign and the resultant effect.

Ripe Fruit

Ripe fruit functions indexically by pointing to temporal inevitability. Ripeness is evidence that a process is complete.

It indicates that judgment is not arbitrary but causally linked to accumulated injustice.

The fruit's condition points beyond itself to a moral reality.

The fruit does not threaten; it testifies.

“The End Has Come”, Declared by Yahweh

The divine declaration is a direct index of irreversible judgment. It signals a decisive shift in divine-human relations. The utterance itself points to action already set in motion. Language becomes performative—what is spoken enacts reality.

Symbolic Signs

Symbolic signs derive meaning through cultural, religious, and theological conventions shared between the prophet and audience.

Summer Fruit

Summer fruit represents completion, fullness, and expiration. In Israel's agrarian consciousness, summer fruit signals the end of the agricultural cycle. It conventionally signifies abundance. In Amos, it is subverted to signify moral exhaustion and divine closure. Thus, blessing becomes indictment.

Temple Songs

Temple songs symbolise accepted worship and covenantal harmony. Their transformation into wailing signifies the collapse of ritual legitimacy. Worship divorced from justice loses its meaning, sacred sound becomes hollow noise. This symbol reinforces Amos's broader critique: ritual cannot mask moral failure.

Silence

Silence functions as one of the most profound symbols in the passage. It symbolises divine withdrawal, shock, and finality where prophetic speech once thundered, there is now absence.

Theosemiotic Analysis

From theosemiotic perspectives, God communicates through signs embedded in ordinary experience. The basket of fruit, which is an everyday object, becomes a divine sign, showing that revelation can emerge from the familiar. Earlier visions allowed interpretive openness through prophetic intercession. However, the sign yields a final interpretant: "I will never again pass by them." This marks a point where semiosis culminates in decisive meaning; the warning has become judgment. Raposa emphasises that divine signs are ethically saturated. The fruit is "ripe" not agriculturally but morally, meaning that Israel's exploitation, injustice, and religious hypocrisy have matured beyond correction. Temple songs turning into wailing illustrate semiotic reversal and a breakdown of semiosis. Worship no longer signifies communion; in the same vein, music no longer signifies praise. In Raposa's terms, the religious sign-system collapses because it no longer aligns with ethical reality. Furthermore, silence functions as a negative sign—not the absence of meaning, but the completion of meaning. God's communicative patience has ended; no further interpretation or appeal is invited. Through a theosemiotic lens, the passage portrays God as a communicator whose signs move from invitation to final declaration, warning that when ethical corruption fully ripens, judgment is no longer deferred.

Except Six

Amos 9:1–10

"I saw the LORD standing beside the altar, and he said: Strike the capitals until the threshold shakes and shatters them on the heads of all the people; and those who are left I will kill with the sword; flee away, not one of them shall escape"

Amos 9:1–10 brings the prophetic drama to its climactic intensity. Here, judgment is no longer mediated through warning alone; it is enacted, pursued, and executed. The passage is saturated with semiotic force, where vision, movement, and pursuit become signs of an inescapable divine presence. God is no longer distant—He is watching, advancing, and acting.

Iconic Signs

Iconic signs in this passage function through visual resemblance, allowing divine judgment to be grasped through sensory immediacy.

Eyes as Flames of Fire

The image of Yahweh's eyes burning like fire is powerfully iconic. Fire resembles penetration, intensity, and exposure.

Sweeping Gaze

The sweeping gaze of Yahweh iconically resembles total surveillance and relentless pursuit.

It moves across land and sea, height and depth.

No spatial refuge remains intact.

The resemblance communicates omnipresence in motion: divine judgment is mobile, intentional, and exhaustive.

Net Capturing the Exile

The net is iconically effective because it resembles entrapment and inevitability.

Once cast, escape is impossible.

Movement only tightens confinement.

The image dramatises exile not as chance displacement but as deliberate divine capture.

Sword Executing Judgment

The sword iconically resembles decisive violence and final authority.

It cuts, separates, and terminates.

It does not warn—it concludes.

Here, the sword embodies the finality of judgment, transforming abstract justice into visible execution.

Indexical Signs

Indexical signs point through causal and existential connections, linking divine intent directly to human consequence.

Flaming Eyes

Indexically, the flaming eyes point to active divine scrutiny. Their intensity signals that judgment is not pending—it is already underway. The gaze itself is evidence of action. Seeing becomes the first movement toward consequence.

Falling into the Net

Falling into the net is an existential index of inescapable consequence. The fall is not symbolic only; it is causal. Moral failure leads directly to capture. This indexically underscores Amos's theology: sin sets traps before judgment ever arrives.

Symbolic Signs

Symbolic signs in Amos 9:1–10 rely on religious and cultural conventions, transforming familiar objects into theological statements.

Altars

Altars symbolically represent worship, mediation, and divine encounter. Yet in this vision, the altar becomes a site of judgment rather than refuge.

Sacred space offers no immunity.

Ritual cannot shield injustice.

The shattered altar symbolises the collapse of false religiosity, exposing worship divorced from righteousness.

Fire

Fire symbolically conveys divine holiness, purification, and wrath.

It destroys, but it also reveals.

It signals God's refusal to coexist with moral corruption.

In Amos 9, fire is no longer corrective alone—it is decisive.

Net

Symbolically, the net represents total control and sovereign capture.

Nations that once hunted are now hunted.

Human mobility is overwhelmed by divine strategy.

The net symbolises the reversal of power: those who ensnared others are themselves ensnared.

Theosemiotic Analysis

Divine signs in theosemiotics are viewed as being embedded in historical and relational experience. In Amos 9:1–10, God's presence cannot be avoided, making every action and location a site of ethical accountability. The imagery (flames, net, sword) functions as communicative

warnings, not abstract threats. Yahweh's flaming eyes are not merely observational but moral evaluators, detecting injustice and sin. The sword and net signify consequences of unrepentant wrongdoing. God's proximity to the altar (v.1) underscores the relationship as the medium of semiosis: worship is meaningful only when aligned with justice. Worship not accepted by God and done in the way prescribed by Him triggers divine warning, highlighting the interpersonal ethics between God and Israel. Amos 9:10 underscores that even insiders ("sinners among my people") cannot evade scrutiny, reflecting the universality of ethical responsibility. Theosemiotically, the passage portrays God as a relational and communicative judge, whose warning signs integrate imagery, ethical evaluation, and covenantal expectation, culminating in a declaration that judgment is both inevitable and morally necessary.

Relevance of Metaphors and Signs in the Book of Amos to the Contemporary Nigerian Society

The book of Amos is embedded with signs and symbolic representations that are very relevant to the contemporary Nigerian Society. These tapestries of divine signs communicate God's displeasure towards a society that is trailed by extreme moral decadence and injustice. Viewing this from a semiotic lens and applying it to the Nigerian society reflects a similar scenario marred by political, moral and spiritual crisis. For instance, the use of cleanness of teeth and lack of bread in Amos 4:6-8 transcends its literal meaning of food scarcity to represents a profound spiritual and moral emptiness, the children of Israel suffered physical hunger due to their hypocrisy and injustice, there was also a famine of compassion and righteousness, perpetrated by the actions of those in the upper class in the society. Relating this to the contemporary Nigerian society, it manifests in perverse poverty, hunger and economic inequality despite the Nation's abundant resources.

Similarly, the sign of locust as used in Amos 7:1-9 serves as a metaphorical image for forces that consume the fruit of people's labour. The locust is an iconic sign representing destruction. In consonance with the Nigerian society, it aptly describes the devouring effects of corruption and insurgency that are devastating the Nigerian economy and society. Likewise, funds meant for the development of the country are swallowed by political bigots and elites at the expense of the citizens, leaving them impoverished and hopeless. The locust also finds its equivalent in the parasitic systems and individuals that drain Nigerians' collective wealth, leading to a recurring circle of hardship and underdevelopment (Adeleye,2021).

The sign of “Fire” in Amos 7:4-6 signifies purification through destruction. It sends a message that corruption and injustice inevitably attract consequences. Semiotically, fire operates as a symbolic sign of divine anger and social breakdown. In Nigeria, the frequent communal crisis, conflict, terrorism, kidnappings and clashes can be seen as contemporary indicators of fires consuming the moral and civic foundations of our nation. Also, Plumb line (Amos 7:7-9) is a sign that represents God’s standard of justice and divine measurement. In Nigeria, this can be seen in the rising call for transparency, good governance and moral accountability. The activities of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Electoral Tribunals are public outcry over electoral irregularities, economic crimes and mismanagement and can be regarded as a modern expression of the plumb line signalling a collective yearning for ethical alignment.

Finally, Amos' vision of the basket of summer fruit in Amos 8:1-2 represents a nation whose judgment has reached its peak. The fruit denotes the ripeness of sin and the urgency of divine judgment. In Nigeria, this image finds a parallel in the frustration of the populace, leading to unrest and expression of dissatisfaction. Events such as the #ENDSARS Protest of 2020 and the continuous wave of agitation, such as the #ENDBADGOVERNANCE Protest, can be interpreted as signs of the inevitability of judgment and the readiness of a nation that is ripe for reckoning, a point where accumulated injustice reaches its breaking point.

The signs of judgment in the Book of Amos are not just relics of ancient Israel's history, but they are active communicative codes that reappear in modern Nigeria. This underscores the fact that divine judgment is timeless. As the people of Israel faced judgment for neglecting the poor and oppressing the weak, Nigerian society, likewise marred by inequality, injustice, corruption and social unrest echo the same warning.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the selected passages from the Book of Amos reveals that prophetic discourse is semiotic in nature and metaphorical in function. The findings reveal that signs in Amos are not just ornamental devices but communicative elements and meaning making device. The Book of Amos deploys a coherent and progressive use of metaphors and symbolic signs through which divine warnings and ethical expectations are communicated. Across Amos 1:3–5; 4:6–11; 5:18–24; 7:1–9; 8:1–3; and 9:1–10, prophetic warnings are not just conveyed through verbal speech but through a dense network of semiotic signs that combine iconic signs, indexical causality, and

symbolic convention. This confirms the view that prophetic discourse in Amos functions as a semiotically structured form of moral communication, rather than as isolated oracles of doom.

From a semiotic perspective, the findings show that icons play a vital role in making ethical failure perceptible. Symbolic signs such as threshing with iron sledges, famine, drought, locust invasion, consuming fire, darkness, plumb lines, ripe fruit, and inescapable nets provide visual experiences that the audience can recognise and emotionally process. This aligns with semiotic scholarship that emphasises the power of iconicity in grounding meaning in real-life experiences (Santaella, 2022). In Amos, icons function as experiential warnings, enabling the audience to “see” the consequences of injustice before they fully unfold.

In addition to iconicity, the findings reveal that indexical signs show a clear cause-and-effect relationship between Israel’s ethical failure and divine response. Famine, drought, plague, military defeat, exile, and societal collapse consistently index covenantal violation and social injustice. The repetition of disasters in Amos 4:6–11, each followed by the refrain “yet you did not return to me,” reiterates the indexical logic that suffering is not random but points back to moral and relational breakdown. This confirms African biblical scholarship, which argues that prophetic warnings operate within a moral universe where actions produce discernible consequences (Madu, 2023; Ihenacho, 2024).

Furthermore, symbolic signs in Amos rely on Israel’s shared theological and cultural knowledge to communicate judgment and warning. Symbols such as the “Day of the LORD,” the plumb line, temple festivals, sacrifices, music, summer fruit, the altar, fire, sword, and the land itself function by convention rather than resemblance. These symbols depict covenantal meanings that would have been immediately intelligible to the original audience. For example, the plumb line in Amos 7:7–9 symbolises divine moral measurement, while the basket of summer fruit in Amos 8:1–3 symbolises finality through wordplay and seasonal expectation. This aligns with the claim that prophetic warnings are culturally embedded signs, not abstract theological concepts (Okele, 2021; Olatunji, 2022).

When interpreted through the lens of theosemiotics, particularly the framework proposed by Michael Raposa, the findings demonstrate that the signs of warning in Amos function as relational and ethical communication from God. Raposa’s theosemiotic approach emphasises that divine signs are not merely informational but invitational, calling for interpretation, response, and moral transformation. In Amos 4 and 7, this openness is evident in the possibility of repentance and the

efficacy of prophetic intercession. The disasters function as warnings rather than final judgments, indicating that divine semiosis remains open to reinterpretation and change.

However, the findings also reveal a significant theosemiotic shift in Amos 8:1–3 and 9:1–10, where signs no longer invite response but announce finality. The ripe fruit vision, the silencing of songs, mass death, and the inescapable reach of divine judgment signal what Raposa describes as the closure of interpretive possibility, a point at which signs yield a final interpretant. At this stage, divine communication no longer seeks repentance but declares judgment as ethically unavoidable. This progression highlights the balance between divine patience and moral accountability within prophetic semiosis.

Another key finding is the collapse of ritual semiosis in Amos 5:18–24. Festivals, sacrifices, and music that are normal signs of worship and divine favour are rejected by God because they are disconnected from justice and righteousness. From a theosemiotic perspective, this reveals that religious signs lose their meaning when severed from ethical reality. Worship without justice becomes semiotically empty, reinforcing the prophetic insistence that true devotion must be embodied in social practice (Frances, 2021; Opara, 2023). The findings further indicate that the Book of Amos presents divine warning as a meaning-laden communicative process. Icons make warning visible, indexes establish moral causality, and symbols encode covenantal meaning. Through these signs, God is portrayed as a persistent moral communicator who warns, invites, measures, and ultimately judges when ethical disorder becomes entrenched. This confirms that prophetic warnings in Amos function as a theosemiotic system aimed at ethical restoration, rather than mere predictions of destruction.

In contemporary applications, especially within the Nigerian socio-religious context, these findings remain highly relevant. The prophetic critique of injustice, corruption, and ritualised religiosity without ethical substance mirrors current societal challenges. The semiotic logic of Amos suggests that social crises may function as warning signs demanding moral reflection and transformation, rather than being dismissed as accidental misfortunes (Ihenacho, 2024; Madu, 2023).

The discussion of findings demonstrates that the metaphoric signs as a semiotic resource in Amos are complex, theologically rich, and ethically urgent. Interpreted through Peircean semiotics and Raposa's theosemiotics, these signs reveal a God who communicates through history, symbols, and lived experience, calling society toward justice, righteousness, and covenantal responsibility.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that the prophetic discourse of the book of Amos is fundamentally semiotic, with signs and metaphors operating as interconnected linguistic and theological resources for divine communication. Through a systematic linguistic analysis grounded in Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic classification of signs and Michael Raposa's theosemiotic framework, the study has demonstrated that metaphor in Amos functions not merely as decorative language but as an active signifying means through which moral judgment, covenantal expectations, and social critique are conveyed.

The findings reveal that iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs are strategically deployed across Amos's visions and prophecies to transform abstract theological realities into concrete experiential forms. In this way, metaphor becomes a site of moral encounter, while signs function as interpretive bridges between divine and human understanding. The study, therefore, affirms that signs in Amos are metaphorically charged, and metaphors themselves operate as semiotic acts.

Furthermore, the integration of Peircean semiotics with Raposa's theosemiotics has further shown the communicative intentionality behind prophetic signs. Divine signs in Amos are not passive representations but meaning-making instruments designed to provoke ethical awareness and communal accountability. Even where judgment appears inevitable, the signs retain a communicative function, exposing injustice and challenging misplaced religious confidence. This complementarity of linguistic structure and theological purpose underscores the suitability of a semiotic-linguistic approach to biblical texts.

In conclusion, viewing signs as metaphors and metaphors as signs provides a robust analytical lens for understanding prophetic communication in Amos. This approach not only deepens interpretive insight into the text but also affirms the enduring relevance of prophetic semiotics in engaging issues of justice, accountability, and ethical responsibility within both ancient and contemporary contexts.

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From Cradle to Grave: Yorùbá Court Poetry as a Quintessential Source of Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

This study attempts to discuss the way(s) through which Yorùbá Court Poetry (YCP) can be used as a source of lifelong learning, mainly because of its numerous characteristics and functionality. For instance, it contains much information about the cultural heritage of the Yorùbá people. Ironically, despite its multiple functions, previous work has focused on the genre's panegyric function. However, this study reveals that this genre of Yorùbá oral poetry can do so much more than praise. To do this, the study utilises the functionalist theory of Bronislaw Malinowski to analyse data from the palaces of the Aláàfin of Òyó, Qòni of Ifẹ and the Sùun of Ògbómòṣó. These data were obtained from interviews with the established palace poets of the monarchs. Findings from the research reveal that YCP has many functions that make it an archetypal source of lifelong learning. Thus, it recommends that the genre be publicised more, especially through new media, so that more people can access it and learn salient lessons. The study concludes by establishing the relevance of the study of YCP to the field of oral poetry and society in general.

Keywords: Yorùbá Court Poetry, Lifelong learning, Functionalism, Panegyric, Palaces

Introduction

This research is multidisciplinary because it merges aspects of Oral Literature and Education through ethnographic field-based research. It does this by analysing the characteristics and functions of YCP that make it a veritable source of lifelong learning. YCP refers to the chants, poems and songs composed by palace poets, queens, princes and princesses for the king. These chants contain salient lessons for individuals to learn. This is because it aligns with informal learning, which the Yorùbá pride themselves on. Thus, whatever affects one is liable to involve the entire community. This is why the Yorùbá say that: “*enì kan ló ñ bímọ, igba ojú ní ñ wò ó*”- which literally translates as “it is only a single individual that begets a child, but two hundred eyes look out for the child (where eyes are synecdoche for humans). In essence, the Yorùbá uphold informal learning, which Alan Roger describes as “...unlike formal and non-formal learning, which are spasmodic, situated in specific places and times, is ubiquitous, universal and continuous (35). Roger also asserts that “... informal learning includes all the unconscious influences on us

through our family and groups within our wider society, through our workplaces and leisure activities, through religion and sport, through our chosen music and peer pressures in such things as dress and eating habits” (35-36). Informal learning is, therefore, an everyday activity. This is also in line with Roger’s position that “... all our everyday activities and most of our socialisation rely on and create this informal learning” (36). The idea that learning takes place every day, everywhere and in every situation, sometimes even on the level of the subconscious, accentuates the idea that oral literature can be used as a medium for learning important lessons that are crucial to the development of a society. This is so because oral literature, by its nature, is also with us daily. For instance, *oríkì*, which can be regarded as the most prevalent Yorùbá oral poetry, is used on many occasions: children use it to appreciate their parents, parents use it to eulogise good children, etc. (Barber). There is no doubt that lifelong learning also aligns with the principles of informal learning. In the opinion of Alla (2024), lifelong learning is “the broad term for education that is conducted beyond school” (27). Thus, by aligning with informal learning, both oral literature and lifelong learning share a close affinity that this study seeks to investigate through an examination of the characteristics and functions of YCP.

Literature Review

Many scholarly works have been written on the use of genres of oral literature as sources of different aspects of lifelong learning. However, to the knowledge of this researcher, no one has discussed the use of YCP as a form of lifelong learning, especially through its characteristics and functionality. For instance, Avoseh (2024) discusses the use of proverbs as a source of a theoretical framework for lifelong learning in Africa. The study argues that indigenous African knowledge should be used alongside Western canons in the production of theories for adult education. Thus, it used proverbs from Ogu and Yorùbá to advocate for the use of African pedagogy in the development of adult education theories. This is outside our scope here, as this study focuses on the characteristics and functions of YCP as a source of lifelong learning.

Baluku et al. (2024) also note that oral literature is germane to the development of moral values in learners. The scholars opine that oral literature can be used to eradicate the moral decadence pervading 21st-century society. Thus, they advocate for the inclusion of different genres of oral literature in contexts of study and education. The study also proposes ways to address challenges that may arise from the inclusion of oral literature. In the opinion of Mpumuje et al. (2024), oral literature can help to enhance the language proficiency of learners. This is because genres of oral

literature are expected to be steeped in the use of the language of the tradition from which they emerged. Based on this, the study recommends teaching oral literature in schools to further develop learners' language proficiency.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the role of oral literature in education has been variously established. However, scholars have not really discussed the education that can be gained from aspects of oral literature. This study aims to fill this gap by analysing the characteristics and functions of YCP.

Methodology

This study utilised a field-based interview method of gathering data. From the totality of Yorùbá palaces, three palaces were selected based on: continuous practice of the court poetry tradition, existence of established palace poets, type of Yorùbá orthography, N.A. Fádípè's division of Yorùbá towns into the Òyó and Ifè groups in his book, *The Sociology of the Yorùbá*, and hierarchy amongst the Yorùbá monarchs. After the purposive sampling, the palaces of the Oṅni of Ifè, Aláàfin of Òyó, and Sṣòún of Ògbómòṣò were meticulously chosen as archetypes of the Yorùbá monarchs. This is because the three palaces first have dialects that are closer to what linguists have referred to as "standard Yorùbá" based on their conventional intelligibility. Thus, any Yorùbá speaker is likely to understand the Òyó Yorùbá dialect regardless of that speaker's own dialectal leanings. Second, these palaces have continued to uphold the tradition of CP despite the advent of modernisation and democracy, which have partly eroded the hitherto significant sovereignty of the Oba. Thus, the palace chanters of the Aláàfin of Òyó, Oṅni of Ifè and the Sṣòún of Ògbómòṣò were contacted and thereafter interviewed. After the interviews, they were required to chant the court poetry of their patrons. These chants and interviews were recorded in audio and video drds, the chants were transcribed from audio to text, then later translated from Yorùbá to English by expert translators for objectivity of data and to achieve a near-perfect translation of the data. These data were analysed qualitatively by the researcher to reveal their characteristics and functions. The interviews with the bards of the Oṅni and the Aláàfin (Akéwì Omíṣore Lateef Oyèwálé and Akéwì Ayòṣà Màyòwá) were conducted in the palaces of the monarchs, while the bard of the Sṣòún (Ààṛé Aluṣèkèrè Abdul Rauf Àkàno) was interviewed in his house beside the palace.

Results and Discussions

Characteristics and Functions of YCP

This section focuses on the functions and characteristics of YCP that make it a suitable source of lifelong learning. Some of these include:

Identification of the Features of Natural Phenomena

As an interesting genre, YCP also reveals the features of natural phenomena. These features are usually sacrosanct and hardly ever change. Thus, they are typically used to emphasise the permanence of the monarch’s majesty and superiority. It provides a rich knowledge of the nature of natural phenomena, thereby accentuating it as a form of education for the listener/audience. It also encourages people to think critically about the sublimity of nature in any form it appears. This is illustrated in the lines below:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Àràbà ò wó jéjé | 1. The silk cotton tree does not fall gently |
| 2. Apá èkútéelé ò káwùsá | 2. The house rat cannot crack the walnut |
| 3. Níbi yíyí kiri ló mọ | 3. It can only continue to roll it over |

The lines above literally illustrate the nature of the silk cotton tree, which is so huge that it cannot be easily felled, and the house rat that is (by nature) not capable of cracking a walnut. These illustrations enhance an individual’s knowledge of the nature of these natural phenomena, both flora and fauna. Symbolically, the silk cotton tree and the walnut refer to the monarch who, like the tree and the fruit, cannot be easily “conquered”, much as the tree cannot be felled easily and the house rat cannot crack the fruit. This highlights the poet’s portrayal of the monarch as a powerful individual who cannot be overthrown.

The features of the natural objects are also adopted by the monarch or ascribed to him. Examples of these abound in the chants collected during the fieldwork of this research, and some of them are presented below:

Table 1: Identification of the features of natural elements in YCP

Source: Summary of the researcher’s qualitative analysis

S/N	LOCATION	SAMPLE	DESCRIPTION	NATURAL PHENOMENON USED

1.	Canto 11-line 23	Àràbà ò wó jẹ́jẹ́- the silk cotton does not fall gently	Describes the invincible nature of the monarch	Uses the features of the silk cotton tree.
2.	Canto 25-line 5/6	5. Ní kùtùkùtù ni à ñ ká yèèpè- 5. It is at dawn that we harvest the nettle. 6. Èní ká Baba mi lósàn-án, olúwa rè ñ fẹ̀ iyọnu ni-6. Whoever harvests the nettle during the day seeks trouble.	Describes the fearsome/complex nature of the monarch as well as the need to do things punctually.	Uses the features of the nettle.
3.	Canto 26-line 13	13. Yàkàtà yakata kò jẹ́ a rídíi ìṣápá 13. The scattered nature of the Roselle plant does not make us know its secret.	Describes the monarch as a protector and guardian, just like the scattered nature of the Roselle plant protects it.	Uses the features of the Roselle plant.
4.	Canto 34-line 44/45	1. Pínńsín lọmọ erin-1. The calf is seemingly small 2. tí i fi ọlá yagi – 2. yet wields wealth to bring the tree branches down	Describes the bantam and stout features of the stalwart monarch.	Uses the features of the calf.

The table above reflects the way(s) in which the monarch appropriates features of natural objects (flora and fauna) and metaphorically utilised. This deepens the portrayal and description of the monarch. Natural objects have specific, important, vital features that make them distinct. By

appropriating these features for their patrons, the poets also foreground their unique characteristics while educating listeners about the features of these natural items.

Coronation Procedures

YCP also explains the coronation process of a new king. This is done to recount the process and make people familiar with it. It also ensures the perpetuity of the reverence accorded to the monarch, as the tough, detailed, and complicated process the monarchs have to go through before becoming one is revealed. This also enhances the description of the monarch's tenacity. An example is given in the lines below:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 23. Àràbà ò wó jéjé | 23. The silk cotton does not fall gently |
| 24. Bènbé n' hó gudu | 24. bènbé drums were Şòún ding
ferociously |
| 25. Lónaa Bàrà | 25. en route to the royal
mausoleum |
| 26. Ará Agódógbó | 26. the people of Agódógbó |
| 27. Wọ̀n ò gbọ̀dọ̀ lọ oko | 27. must not go to the farm |
| 28. Tàjàgà ààşè | 28. those of Àjàgà ààşè |
| 29. Wọ̀n ò gbọ̀dọ̀ rodò | 29. must not go to the river |

The lines above highlight the coronation process for a new king, who is expected to visit the royal mausoleum to pay homage to his predecessors buried there, thereby ratifying and completing the coronation. While on this journey, the people are expected to be indoors as the previous monarchs accept the new king, since they (the people) are not likely to see the dead kings. From the lines above, it can be deduced that the coronation procedures may not be given in detail because of the compact nature of poetry, which does not provide room for an extended narration like prose.

Another idea that is tangentially related to that of coronation, which is found in YCP, is the information on the governance of the community. In different instances, the people involved in the governance of the town/community are revealed on the lines of YCP, as it is expected that the king works in conjunction with chiefs, priests, and other individuals for the development of the community, as well as to uphold its traditions and cultures. Examples of this are provided below:

Table 2: Identification of lines describing governance composition in YCP

Source: researcher's qualitative analysis

S/N	LOCATION	SAMPLE	DESCRIPTION
1.	Canto 37 lines 132-135	<p>132.Şebí méjọ ni àgbà ijòyè tí n bẹ lápá ọ̀tún–132. There were eight elderly chiefs on the right</p> <p>133.Şebí méjọ ni àgbà ijòyè tí n bẹ ní ọ̀sì Ọ̀nì –133. And eight elderly chiefs are on the left, Ọ̀nì left.</p> <p>134.Àgbà ijòyè di m̀erindínlógún-134. That sums it up to sixteen elderly chiefs</p> <p>135.tí í bá Olúfẹ̀ gbimòràn-135. that perform the advisory role with the king</p>	Description of the number of chiefs involved in governance and advisory roles in Ifẹ .
2.	Canto 35 line 62-63	<p>62. Abóbakú n bẹ lálède Ọ̀yọ 62. There is Abobaku in Ọ̀yọ</p> <p>63. Onífọ̀, abóbakú dùn loyè 63. Onífọ̀, the Abóbakú is a very great chief</p> <p>64. Ijọ ikú abóbakú 64. The day Abobaku dies</p> <p>65. bóbó ní í kan bí i jogbo 65. is always as sour as poison</p>	Description of the Abobaku chief and his importance in Ọ̀yọ.

The identification of governance procedures and those involved in them further enhances the knowledge people can gain about different communities through YCP. This knowledge aids in the identification and distinguishing of one community from another based on their peculiarities and practices.

Yorùbá Beliefs and Cultural Practices

Culture is the totality of a people's way of life. It could be divided into tangible and intangible aspects. Tangible culture, also called material culture, comprises objects, goods, clothing, and household items. Intangible/non-material culture includes ideas, values, beliefs, social behaviour, etc. As a part of culture, the content of YCP encapsulates the beliefs of the Yorùbá, especially as it relates to the community whose YCP is being chanted. These beliefs are varied and multifaceted as they include different ideas and notions. One belief portrayed in the chants collected during this research's fieldwork is the people's hierarchical system. The Yorùbá people believe in the hierarchical structure of almost everything. The society is thus usually polarised along these hierarchies, which are well-established and entrenched. These hierarchies are upheld to a great extent, so it is unacceptable to disregard them. In the Yorùbá cosmology, hierarchies exist among humans, natural objects including plants and animals, issues, household objects, etc. Some of the instances of hierarchical ordering are provided below:

Table 3: Distribution of hierarchies in YCP

Source: Researcher's qualitative analysis

S/N	Location in Chants	Sample from Chants	Description
1.	Canto 5 line 102	102. Ògún ló níkòkò baba ìsáàsùn 102. Ògún owns the earthenware, father of all soup-pots	Hierarchy amongst household items
1.	Canto 9 lines 191-194	191. Oníkéké ojú ò gbòdò bù mu, 191. One with the three tribal marks must not drink from it, 192. Alábàjà ò gbòdò bu wẹ ẹşẹ 192. One with the Àbàjà tribal mark must not take it to wash his feet, 193. Sọbọro b'onílà nínú jé 193. A bare face saddened the person with a tribal mark,	Hierarchy of preference amongst facial marks

		194. Ni ó pọ̀n omi odò náà gbẹ 194. Was the one who fetched the river without remaining	
2.	Canto 13 line 206	206. Èmi ò rájá tó le mómọ ẹ̀kùn 206. I do not know a dog that can take the child of a leopard as a prisoner	Hierarchy amongst animals
3.	Canto 13 line 207	207. Owó lorí ọ̀rọ 207. Money is the most important of all discussions	Hierarchy amongst discussions/issues
4.	Canto 13 line 299	299. Láé láé lẹ̀ba tí jará oko lọ 299. The king has always been more honourable than the commoner	Hierarchy amongst humans
5.	Canto 13-line 300	300. Gbọgbọgbọ lẹwọ yóò jorí 300. just as the upwardly stretched hand will tower above the head	Hierarchy amongst parts of the body
6.	Canto 13 line 301	301. Gbọgbọgbọ lẹ̀gómọ yóò jọ̀pe 301. The palm fronds also rise above the palm tree	Hierarchy amongst parts of a tree

The table above depicts the hierarchy portrayed in the chants. It emphasises that hierarchical structures exist in all aspects of human life, especially among the Yorùbá. Thus, while the lower members of the hierarchical spectrum are enjoined to be kind, the upper level is admonished to be respectful and humble. Awareness of and adherence to this class stratification can create a peaceful, united community where everyone knows their place.

YCP also sometimes includes the cultural practices of the society, as well as the people's reactions to them. Tangible and intangible cultural practices such as drumming, dressing, facial marks, food, dancing, etc., are revealed/identified through YCP. Thus, the chants educate people about these practices, which encompass the totality of the people's way of life, and help properly identify and distinguish them from others. This is why they are also referred to as folk culture, because they represent the practices of a single society or community.

Some of the instances where cultural practices are described in the chants are given below:

Table 4: Description of cultural aspects in YCP

Source: Researcher's qualitative analysis

S/N	LOCATION	SAMPLE	CULTURE
1.	Canto 8 lines 167-168	167. Kò ga kò bẹrẹ 167. It's neither by standing nor by prostration 168. ni wọn n kí wọn n'Ífẹ Oòtẹní 168. is how they greet them in Ifẹ Oòtẹní,	Greeting
2.	Canto 8 lines 174-175	174. Ká fàrí apá kan 174. Shaving a side of the head 175. ní í mú'lé yín sún mi í lọ 175. exhausts my interest in going to your home	Dressing
3.	Canto 29 lines 18-23	2. Ó dé èyìnkùlẹ Ọsinlẹ ló di àbàtà 18. And reaches Ọsinlẹ's home to form a marshy place 3. Onípélẹ ò gbọdò mu 19. The water is off-limits to be drunk by a three-vertical-facial-mark bearer 4. Ìran akàbàjà kan kò gbọdò bù san ẹsẹ 20. The descendants of Àbàjà tribal mark bearer must not wash their legs with it. 5. Kìkídá onísòbòrọ ní ó mumi odò nàà gbẹ 21. The water of the river is for those without marks, until it dries up. 2. Sòbòrọ mi wùn mí di dandan kó máa bá alábẹ 22. Those who do not have a tribal mark must respect the tribal mark inscriber. 3. Ojúràbẹsá ni Onífẹ Ọ̀ni n jẹ 23. Onífẹ Ọ̀ni is the one who does not bear tribal marks	Facial marks (Ifẹ)

6.	Canto 46 lines 430-432	<p>430. Ògbómòṣó Ajílété 430. Ògbómòṣó Ajílété</p> <p>431. Ibi wón gbé n jẹkà 431. where they eat pounded yams</p> <p>432. kí wón tó mùko yangan 432. before they drink pap</p>	Food
7.	Canto 23 line 20	20. Èmi ò rí òòṣà tí n bání jà léyìn orí ẹnì 20. I have not seen a deity that fights for one except one's head	Beliefs (in the inner head/destiny)
8.	Canto 25 lines 1-3	<p>1. Bólántà a hun won 1. When wealth increases, they desire it</p> <p>2. Bọlá bá dojú dé, ọlá á máa sù wón-ón ṣe 2. When wealth declines, they tend to grow tired of being wealthy.</p> <p>3. Àkòyìsì ọlá kíí rọ 3. The decline in wealth isn't always good.</p>	Sayings (philosophy of life)
9.	Canto 36 lines 94-97	<p>94. Nítorí ẹnì bá b'Ọbá kú 94. because he who was buried with the king</p> <p>95. La mò ní Olókùn ẹṣin 95. is known as the horseman</p> <p>96. Èyàn tí kò bá b'Ọbá kú 96. he who wasn't buried with the king</p> <p>97. La mò ní Olókùn ẹran 97. is known as the goat man</p>	Burial rites
10.	Canto 37 lines 132-134	<p>132. Ṣebí méjọ ni àgbà ijòyè tí n bẹ ní òṣì Ọ̀nì 132. And eight elderly chiefs are by the left side of Ọ̀nì left.</p> <p>133. Àgbà ijòyè di méréndínlógún 133. That sums it up to sixteen elderly chiefs</p>	System of governance

		134. tí í bá Olúfè gbìmòràn 134. that perform the advisory role with the king	
11.	Canto 40 lines 228-231	228. Nítorí bí Oya bá pani, àpagbé 228. because if Oya kills someone, nothing can be done 229. Bí Sàngó bá pani, àpagbé 229. If Sango strikes someone to death, nothing can be done 230. Bí Ògún bá pani, àpagbé 230. If Ogun strangled someone to death, nothing can be done 231. Bí Sànpònná bá pani, àpagbé 231. If Sanponna strikes someone, nothing can be done	Beliefs (in gods)

As said earlier, cultural practices help to identify the peculiarities of the monarchs and their towns. This, thereafter, informs people of how to relate to them. For instance, the sample from canto 8 reveals how the Ifè people prefer to be greeted. In addition, the identified cases in cantos 29 and 41 in the table above reveal the people’s opinion about facial marks. It reveals that while the Ifè people do not acknowledge or revere people with facial marks, the Òyó people do. This fact distinguishes the people and shows their preferred cultural practice. This is why cultural practices are very significant and abound in the lines of YCP, which is itself a cultural practice. This makes it a good educational resource at any level.

It also portrays the Yorùbá belief system on gods, oracles, and other supernatural powers. The Yorùbá believe in a chthonic world of the unborn, living, and dead. The unborn are expected to choose their destiny (àkúnlèyàn) or get it selected for them (àyànmó) before coming to the land of the living through birth. The dead are expected to watch over the living. The belief in the supernatural in the form of gods and deities is also portrayed in YCP. This fact is illustrated in the lines below:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 88. O gbórí Ifá | 88. He consults the Ifa oracle |
| 89. O ránni sákogun | 89. And summons Akogun |

340. O n jenu wúyè wúyè	340. When he keeps muttering to himself
341. Ògùn ní n sà	341. He is chanting some incantations
342. O n lolo sùkùsùkù	342. When he is busy with the grinding stone
343. Ògùn ní n lò	343. He is preparing some charms
525. Wón dífá dífá	525. They made consultations upon consultations
526. Ọwọ wọn lu	526. Till they had a hole in their hands
527. Wón jatare tíí	527. They chewed the alligator pepper
528. Èèké wón papó	528. Till their cheeks became slack like pockets
529. Sùgùdù kan ò ran Àtándá mó	529. No charm was able to overpower Atanda
530. Àjé-kùnrin	530. A very tough wizard

The lines above illustrate the Yorùbá belief in the supernatural by making references to the Ifá oracle, incantations, and charms- items with which humans can seek the help of supernatural entities. This help could be in the form of seeking wealth, health, etc. In this instance, the monarch uses his relationship with the supernatural beings to seek protection from evil or devilish beings, whatever form they may take. After gaining this protection, he becomes indomitable and invincible. Hence, the lines portray Yorùbá belief in the existence of supernatural beings capable of both good and evil. The lines also communicate the power and help of the monarch to his enemies or detractors in a bid to try to dissuade them from trying to attack him. This could also help prevent or eradicate conflict, since people would rather be in his good graces than risk conflict with him because of his powers.

Though the Yorùbá believe in supernatural beings, like the Christians and Muslims, their belief is different from that of these other religious adherents. This is because in the Yorùbá belief system, there are many pantheons of gods, each with its own powers, worshippers, and jurisdiction. This is like the numerous gods worshipped by the Greeks. In Yorùbá cosmology, there are gods such as Ògún, Sàngó, Ọbàtálá, Ọya, Ọṣun, Yemoja, etc, who are expected to serve as helpers to the Supreme Being. Thus, they perform different functions, and people go through them for specific things. For instance, Yemoja is believed to be able to cure infertility. Thus, in

From the lines above, the Yorùbá believe so much in upholding one’s kinship ties that they call the individual who abuses kinship ties “mad/stupid” while the one who unites the family is regarded as “wise”.

History

There is no doubt that YCP usually contains a genealogy of a monarch and his town. It also traces the history of past monarchs who have occupied the position. In addition, it sometimes includes the personal biography of the monarchs themselves. Thus, it is indeed a source of history in its varying forms. In fact, Akintunde Akinyemi’s seminal book on YCP titled *Yorùbá Royal Poetry: a Socio-historical Exposition and Annotated Translation* used the chants from the YCP composed and sung by the wives of the Alààfin of Òyó called Yungba to do a genealogy of the community and noted that besides using stories, poetry can also be used to reveal the history of the town, people, and community for and in which it was composed. It should be noted that due to the nature of poetry, especially in terms of compactness, it does not have the luxury of space. Thus, historical incidents are merely alluded to and are usually not elaborately discussed. Instances of this abound in the chants collected during the fieldwork of this study, and examples are given below:

Table 5: Description of historical events in YCP

Source: Researcher’s qualitative analysis

S/N	LOCATION	SAMPLE	DESCRIPTION
1.	Canto 11 line 134/135	134. Àtìbà Olúkúewu 134. Àtìbà Olúkúewu 135. Ni orúkọ baba tó wá láti Ilẹ̀sà 135. is the name of the father that came from Ilẹ̀sà	Reveals the historical origin of Àtìbà
2.	Canto 13-line 305/307	305. Olújídé 305. Olújídé 306. Ó kó Kúrunmí tọmọtọmo 306. You imprisoned Kúrunmí along with his children 307. Àbọ̀ Ìjàiyè n ló sÁwáyè kábíáwó 307. when he returned from Ìjàiyè, he destroyed Áwáyè	Reveals the military exploits of the monarch and communities that were hitherto under the control of the monarch

3.	Canto 16 line 477-478	477. Ó mú baba délé Èkó 477. The father went to Lagos 478. Wolé nílé Núrù Oníwo 478. he stayed in the house of Núrù Oníwo	Reveals the places the monarch had once migrated to avoid challenges he was facing in his town.
4.	Canto 20-line 16	16. A-ti-Ìbàdàn-wá-joyè, bí ọmọ jógí oró 16. He who came from Ìbàdàn to be crowned, like the offspring of jógí oró	Reveals the previous location of the monarch (he was based at Ibadan before coming to become Şòún of Ogbómòşó
5.	Canto 25-line 9	9. Bí ò sí Adìgún Ewégbè mí, ogun ò bà kó'lorin 9. If there were no Adìgún Ewégbè mí, war would have waged Ìlorin.	Reveals the monarch's support for the people of Ilorin.

The table above shows the different instances in which history is alluded to in the chants. Some, like in canto 20 line 16, are even as short as a simple nominalisation where the history is used like a noun to refer to the king whose history is being told. In this instance, the monarch is referred to as “A-ti-Ìbàdàn-wá-joyè”, meaning “he who returns from Ibadan to become king”, thereby revealing his previous base or location. This suggests that a nominalisation can sometimes indicate the history of a monarch, his people, or a town.

The Yorùbá concept of hierarchy is also revealed in YCP. Despite being a communal society, individuals are expected to know their place and act accordingly. This does not diminish the relationship between the indigenous people. The classes of individuals in the society are the oba (king), àrẹ̀mọ (prince), ọmọ (child), iwọ̀fà (pawn), and ẹ̀rú (slave). This hierarchical order is revealed in the song below as the prince is cheered for reaching the pinnacle of human hierarchy.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 308. Olújídé ò léèkàn | 308. Olújídé, has no opposition that can defy him |
| 309. Àlào ò léèkàn o jù wọ̀n lọ | 309. Àlào, you have excelled and surpassed them |
| 310. Ò-şomọ-şàrẹ̀mọ | 310. You were a child and then a crown prince |

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 311. O tún jọba | 311. Then you became king |
| 312. Àlào ò léèkàn | 312. Àlào, you have become successful |
| 313. O jù wọn lọ | you surpassed them |

The lines below also illustrate the premium position elders are placed in the society, thus:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 288. Àgbà ò sí | 288. a town devoid of elders |
| 289. Ìlú ò gún | 289. Cannot be peaceful |
| 299. Láéláé lọba ti n jara oko lọ | 299. The king has always been more honourable than the commoner |
| 542. Òròmọdiẹ ò màwòdì òkè | 542. The chick may not be able to identify the kite |
| 543. Ìran baba ẹ ló màsá | 543. But its father's generation will be able to |

The people also maintain a good relationship with the gods and deities as they maintain customs and traditions. This is revealed through imagery in the lines below:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 352. Wọn dòrì ká kànga | 352. They tried to assail the well |
| 353. Şùgbọn kànga ò ẹ é bínú kó sí | 353. But it is difficult to jump into it in anger |
| 354. Wọn dòrì kÁdió | 354. They tried to assail Àdió |
| 355. Sugbon apa o kadio | 355. But they could not overcome Àdió |
| 356. Wọn ló bẹ Şàngó lówè si | 356. They invoked Sango to make an onslaught against him |
| 357. Şàngó ì í bọmọ rè jà | 357. But Sango cannot attack his children |
| 358. Eré ni baba omọ n bọmọ ẹ | 358. The father can only play with his child |

The last three lines of the excerpt above illustrate the relationships between gods and humans, and between parents and children. The relationship is expected to be very cordial and friendly. People are, thus, enjoined to maintain a good relationship with their gods to be saved from his anger and wrath. The lines also allude to the reign of Şàngó and his subsequent deification by reiterating that the Aláàfin and Şàngó are one of a kind, since Şàngó is considered the third Aláàfin of the Òyó Kingdom and is regarded as the father of succeeding monarchs of the kingdom. This is perhaps why Matory opines that “indeed, crowned in the Şàngó’s shrine by the same official who initiates

Ṣàngó possession priests, the Aláàfin himself is not only a descendant of Ṣàngó but also a “bride” of the god and “Ṣàngó himself” on earth” (98).

Conclusion

As an educational resource, the YCP can also enhance language acquisition and vocabulary development. This is because an individual can learn new words, proverbs, idioms, etc. from the chants. These can be deduced from the literary devices and non-causal language utilised in the chants. Thus, the poems can enrich an individual's use of language by helping them acquire the right words to use in conversations. This has become very poignant because many teenagers and young adults cannot speak Yorùbá correctly and clearly, often mixing it with other foreign languages like English, generally because they lack the vocabulary to express themselves appropriately. Situations such as this can be prevented when people build up their vocabulary through cultural activities like YCP.

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Resistance, Dominance and Power Structures: A Lexico-Syntactic Approach to Police Assaults on Journalists in Nigerian Newspaper Editorials

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Abstract

Police violence against journalists has been a bane of postcolonial democratic experiences, manifesting state repression against press freedom and transparency. Existing studies have largely documented physical assaults with less attention paid to how such incidents are lexico-syntactically represented in the editorial discourse of Nigerian newspapers. This study, therefore, investigated lexico-syntactic choices in editorial texts in Nigerian newspapers with a view to examining how language is used to resist, reinforce, or obscure dominant power structures.

*Fairclough’s (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), complemented with that of van Dijk’s (1998), serves as the theoretical framework, analysing editorial excerpts from *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust**

*Lexical choices such as evaluative adjectives, agent labels and syntactic structures of voice, modality, and agency assignment reflect and negotiate power relations, institutional ideologies, and press-state dynamics. *The Punch* adopts a confrontational stance, employing morally charged vocabulary, active voice, and high-modality expressions to resist state violence and legitimise journalistic authority. *The Guardian*, while critical, moderates its language, balancing critique with institutional respect and favouring reformist discourse. In contrast, *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* utilise passive constructions, euphemisms, and weak or cautious modality to obscure agency, minimize conflict, and maintain ideological alignment with state-tolerant or conservative discourses. It is demonstrated that editorial texts function as ideological instruments, subtly shaping public perception through linguistic framing.*

Lexico-syntactic choices are shown not merely as stylistic preferences but as strategic tools for negotiating authority, legitimacy, and resistance within Nigeria’s fraught media landscape. These underscore the

importance of language as a site of ideological struggle and call for greater media literacy, editorial accountability, and institutional support for press freedom in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Linguistic framing, Ideological alignment, Police assaults, Nigerian newspapers editorials*

Introduction

In contemporary democratic societies, the press plays a vital role as a watchdog, holding state institutions accountable and fostering informed citizen participation (McQuail, 2010). However, in many postcolonial contexts like Nigeria, the freedom of the press remains precarious, especially in situations involving the state's coercive apparatus. Journalists are frequently subjected to intimidation, arrests, and outright violence, particularly during protest coverage or political unrest (Committee to Protect Journalists [CPJ], 2023). These assaults are not merely physical violations; they also have a discursive dimension, reflecting how such incidents are reported and editorialised in the media. Editorial texts, unlike news reports, are inherently ideological. They serve as instruments through which newspapers express their institutional stance, interpret socio-political events, and influence public opinion (Richardson, 2007). Through lexical and syntactic choices - words selected and grammatical structures employed - editorials construct particular versions of reality, assigning blame, legitimising actions, or subtly resisting dominant narratives. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as developed by theorists such as Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1998), and Wodak (2001), provides a robust methodological framework for analysing these linguistic choices as vehicles of ideology and power.

Fairclough (1995) emphasises that language is not a neutral medium but a social practice that both reflects and shapes power relations. In this view, editorials are not just commentary; they are sites of ideological struggle. For instance, the use of active versus passive voice can significantly influence the attribution of agency in violent encounters between state actors and journalists (Fowler, 1991). A phrase like "Police assaulted journalists" clearly assigns blame, whereas "Journalists were assaulted" obscures agency and potentially absolves state actors of responsibility. Such syntactic constructions are not accidental but serve ideological functions - what van Dijk (2006) terms "discourse control" - where media discourse is used either to challenge or maintain the status quo.

Lexical choices are equally significant. Terms such as "brutal crackdown," "clashes," or "misunderstandings" do more than describe events; they construct social actors in morally loaded ways (Martin & White, 2005). When newspapers use negatively marked expressions like

“repressive” or “lawless” to describe police actions, they engage in what van Dijk (1998) refers to as “negative lexicalisation,” a discursive strategy often used to delegitimise dominant institutions. Conversely, the use of euphemisms or neutral terminology can indicate alignment with conservative state ideologies or a desire to maintain institutional legitimacy (Wodak, 2001).

In the Nigerian media landscape, ideological orientations differ across publications. While some newspapers like *The Punch* adopt overtly critical stances towards the state, others, such as *Daily Trust*, tend to frame events in more cautious or state-tolerant terms (Uche, 1989; Oso, 2012). This variation in editorial tone and language reflects broader struggles within the media to negotiate their role amidst state pressures, economic constraints, and normative responsibilities.

Despite the growing attention to media freedom in Nigeria, limited scholarly focus has been placed on the linguistic strategies newspapers use in editorialising police violence against journalists. Most existing literature emphasises media ownership, press freedom violations, or journalist safety (Akinfeleye, 2003), but seldom interrogates how subtle language features contribute to ideological positioning. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by analysing the lexico-syntactic choices in editorial texts reporting on police assaults on journalists, with a focus on how such choices enact, resist, or reinforce dominant power structures.

Through the lens of CDA, the study interrogates both the vocabulary and syntactic patterns employed by selected Nigerian newspapers, aiming to reveal how editorial discourse either challenges or accommodates state violence. By doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of media discourse as a site of ideological negotiation in Nigeria’s fragile democracy.

Statement of the Problem

In democratic societies, the press is expected to function as a critical watchdog, exposing abuse of power and amplifying public interest. However, in Nigeria, journalists often find themselves targets of state violence, particularly during political protests, elections, and other high-tension events. While physical assaults on journalists by police officers have been widely reported (CPJ, 2023; Amnesty International, 2020), less attention has been paid to how such incidents are *discursively constructed* in editorial texts across different media outlets.

Editorials, unlike objective news reporting, are ideologically saturated texts that reveal a newspaper’s stance on contentious issues (Richardson, 2007). Through specific lexical and syntactic choices, editorials can either assign blame, obscure agency, justify violence, or subtly resist hegemonic power structures (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006). Yet, existing scholarship

on media coverage of state violence in Nigeria has focused largely on press freedom violations, journalist safety, or political interference (Akinfeleye, 2003; Okoro and Wazizi, 2013), with limited focus on the *linguistic mechanisms* through which editorial discourse engages or disengages with state power.

Moreover, it remains underexplored how the **lexico-syntactic strategies** - such as the use of active/passive voice, evaluative language, modality, and agency construction - differ across media outlets with varying ideological orientations. Do some newspapers use language to resist dominant narratives of state legitimacy and impunity, while others legitimise or downplay police violence through linguistic minimisation or silence? What do these choices reveal about the press's role in contested political spaces?

Without a critical linguistic examination of editorial texts, scholarly and public understanding of media-state relations remains incomplete. There is a pressing need to interrogate the subtle ways language is deployed to either reinforce or resist state-sanctioned violence, particularly in a politically fragile democracy like Nigeria's. This study, therefore, addresses a significant research gap by analysing how editorial discourse linguistically constructs police assaults on journalists, and what these constructions imply about broader ideological alignments and power relations.

This study aims to critically examine the lexico-syntactic choices in Nigerian editorial texts reporting on police assaults on journalists, with a view to uncovering how language is used to subtly resist, reinforce, or obscure dominant power structures. The specific objectives are to:

1. identify and analyse the lexical choices employed in editorial texts to describe police actions and journalists involved in incidents of assault.
2. examine syntactic structures - such as voice (active/passive), agency construction, and modality - used in editorials to assign or obscure responsibility.
3. explore the ideological implications of these lexico-syntactic strategies in relation to how different newspapers position themselves toward state power and press freedom, emphasising how language in media discourse functions as a site of ideological negotiation in Nigeria's democratic context.

This study is significant for several reasons, both theoretical and practical. It contributes to the growing body of knowledge at the intersection of **language, media, and power**, particularly within the context of **postcolonial democracies** like Nigeria, where press freedom is often contested.

By applying the tools of **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**, this study deepens the understanding of how **lexico-syntactic structures** - including vocabulary, voice, agency, and modality - are used in editorial texts to subtly reflect or resist dominant ideologies. It builds on and extends the theoretical frameworks developed by scholars such as **Fairclough (1995)**, **van Dijk (1998, 2006)**, and **Wodak (2001)**, showing how discourse functions not only as a reflection of social reality but as a mechanism for its construction and contestation. The study also advances the CDA field by contextualising its application within the **Nigerian media landscape**, which remains underexplored in global discourse studies.

This research fills a noticeable gap in the literature on media discourse in Nigeria. By closely analysing editorial texts, the study reveals how newspapers negotiate their ideological positions through subtle linguistic strategies, offering new empirical insights into how the Nigerian press mediates power.

In a democratic society, the media have a moral and civic obligation to uphold truth, accountability, and justice. This study underscores the critical role of language in that process, helping media practitioners, editors, and journalists become more **aware of the ideological weight of their linguistic choices**. For civil society actors, policy makers, and media advocates, the findings may inform strategies to **promote more transparent, responsible, and courageous editorial practices** that support press freedom and democratic values.

For students and researchers in the fields of **applied linguistics, media studies, political communication, and discourse analysis**, this study serves as a model for combining linguistic theory with real-world social issues. It illustrates the practical value of CDA in analysing media texts and offers a replicable framework for studying power relations through language in other contexts.

In sum, the study is significant not only for its academic contributions but also for its implications for media accountability, democratic governance, and the role of discourse in shaping public consciousness around issues of **state violence, press freedom, and institutional responsibility**.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited to the lexico-syntactic analysis of editorial texts published by selected Nigerian newspapers in response to police assaults on journalists. The analysis focuses specifically on how language - through lexical choices (e.g., evaluative terms, naming strategies) and syntactic

structures (e.g., active/passive voice, agency, and modality) - is used to construct ideological positions concerning state violence and press freedom.

The study is confined to Nigeria, a context where issues of press freedom, police brutality, and state accountability remain highly contentious. It examines editorials from four major Nigerian newspapers with varying ideological leanings and editorial traditions:

- (i) The Punch
- (ii) The Guardian
- (iii) Vanguard
- (iv) Daily Trust

These newspapers were selected due to their national reach, political relevance, and contrasting editorial styles, making them suitable for comparative critical discourse analysis.

The study focuses on editorials published between 2019 and 2024, a five-year period that includes multiple incidents of police assaults on journalists, particularly during protests (e.g., #EndSARS), elections, and politically charged events. This timeframe allows for a focused yet sufficiently broad corpus that reflects ongoing media-state dynamics in Nigeria.

The analysis is restricted to editorial texts (not news reports, features, or opinion columns), as editorials represent the official institutional voice of newspapers. The study emphasises:

- (i) Lexical choices (e.g., adjectives, evaluative nouns, and ideologically loaded terms)
- (ii) Syntactic constructions (e.g., transitivity, agency, passive/active voice, and modality)
- (iii) Ideological implications derived from these linguistic choices

Exclusions

The study does not examine:

- (i) Broadcast or online-only media platforms
- (ii) Social media discourse
- (iii) News reporting or reader comments
- (iv) Visual or multimodal discourse (e.g., political cartoons or images)

This delimitation ensures analytical focus on how formal editorial discourse constructs meaning and ideological stance through language.

Literature Review

While numerous studies have documented the physical and institutional threats to press freedom (Akinfeleye, 2003; E Berlinger · 2022; NE Robinah · 2025; M Nord · 2024; M O'Leary-Cyr ·

2022), few have examined **how language itself becomes a tool of resistance or complicity** in the face of state violence. It is, therefore, necessary to draw on credible studies that relate to the present topic: Lexico-Syntactic choices in editorial texts on police assaults on journalists: subtle resistance of dominant power structures exemplified. It intends to cover what scholars have done related to editorial discourse, lexical/syntactic/ideological analyses, pointing to gaps your study can fill.

Discourse, Ideology, and Editorials in Nigerian Media

A number of Nigerian studies have analysed how newspapers use language in their editorials to frame social issues, express ideology, or shape public perceptions. “Language and Ideology in the Media: A Study of Nigerian Newspaper Editorials” by Olusegun O. Jegede (2015) uses the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework (Halliday, Eggins) to examine the ideational metafunction in selected Nigerian print media editorials. The study finds that different *process types* (transitive, relational, mental, etc.) are deployed to refer to authorities, citizens, and social values, revealing how ideology is embedded in the choice of process (who does what, who is affected).

Chukwu and Okpala’s (2023) “A Critical Discourse Analysis of Newspaper Editorials on Insecurities in Nigeria” investigates the evaluative adjectives, adverbs, generic phrases, idioms, and rhetorical devices used in editorials from *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *Punch*. The study shows how different newspapers adopt different language strategies to express attitudes toward insecurity. It touches on lexical choice and indirectly on syntactic constructions insofar as they affect evaluation. [Nigerian Journals Online](#)

Alfred’s (2021) paper, “Constructing Ideology through Modality in Newspaper Editorials on Security Challenges in Nigeria,” is closely relevant: it directly examines how modality markers in editorials reflect the ideological stance of newspapers when reporting on security issues. It uses editorials from several newspapers (including *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Trust*) and shows how modal verbs and modal expressions reveal nuances in certainty, obligation, and possibility, which in turn influence how the reader perceives the state's responsibility and threat.

BOP Serials+1

Osisanwo’s (2024) article, “Discourse of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in Newspaper Editorials on Insecurity in Nigeria,” examines how editorials use discourse strategies to polarise between ‘in-group’ (self) and ‘out-group’ (other). This includes how actors are presented, how agency is attributed or withheld, and how attitudes are constructed implicitly via discourse strategy. The study shows how

editors choose who acts and who suffers via lexical and syntactic means, to position perspectives ideologically.

Studies such as “Pragmatic Hedges in Editorials: A Focus on Vanguard, Guardian and Sun Newspaper Editorials in 2017” by Omo and Idegbekwe (2020) explore how hedging (lexical/syntactic strategy) is used to soften statements in editorials. Hedges are a kind of lexical choice with syntactic implications (e.g. modal verbs, adverbs) that can dilute commitment or express caution. Though it does not focus specifically on police assaults or state violence, its findings are directly relevant to understanding how newspapers might subtly resist or avoid fully condemning power structures via language.

From the literature, this study can make an original contribution, focusing specifically on editorials about police assaults on journalists, which merges issues of state violence and press freedom, a combination underexplored in Nigerian CDA literature.

It can also be relevant to conducting a fine-grained analysis of both lexical choices (evaluative adjectives, naming, labelling) and syntactic structures (voice, agency, modality, nominalisation), to see how they work ideologically.

Again, it can be useful in comparing across newspapers with different editorial practices/ideological leanings, to examine variation in subtle resistance, alignment, or neutrality.

Finally, it is usable in examining changes over time or around particular events (if your period allows), to see whether discourse intensifies, becomes more direct or more oblique depending on the political climate.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored primarily in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing especially on the works of Norman Fairclough (1995, 2001) and Teun A. van Dijk (1998, 2006). These scholars provide foundational theories for understanding how language functions not just as a communicative tool but as a social practice that both reflects and constructs power relations and ideology.

CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that investigates how discourse shapes and is shaped by social and political power dynamics (Fairclough, 1995). It assumes that language is never neutral but is used strategically to legitimise or challenge power, dominance, and inequality. The editorial texts analysed in this study are viewed as ideological artefacts that mediate the relationship

between the media, the state, and the public, especially around contentious issues such as police violence against journalists.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Fairclough, in his (1995) three-dimensional model, conceptualises discourse analysis as involving three interconnected dimensions:

- a. Text (the language itself, including lexico-syntactic features),
- b. Discursive Practice (production and interpretation of texts),
- c. Social Practice (the broader socio-political context and power relations).

This model helps explore how lexical choices (word selection) and syntactic structures (voice, modality, agency) in editorials reflect and reproduce ideological stances towards state violence and press freedom.

Van Dijk, in his 1998 and 2006 socio-cognition, emphasises the role of discourse in the construction of social cognition and ideology, analysing how language influences public perception and justifies or resists power structures. He introduces the concept of “ideological square” - highlighting positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation - and explores how lexicalisation and agency attribution can serve ideological functions such as delegitimising opponents or masking responsibility.

Lexico-Syntactic Features in CDA

In line with these theories, the study focuses on how lexical choices (such as evaluative adjectives, naming strategies, metaphor) and syntactic constructions (active vs passive voice, modality, agency, for instance) serve ideological purposes. As Fairclough (1992) and van Dijk (1998) highlight, such linguistic features do not merely convey information; they construct social realities by:

- (i) Assigning or obscuring agency and responsibility (e.g., “police attacked journalists” vs “a journalist was injured”),
- (ii) Framing actors and events in ways that either challenge or reinforce dominant power structures,
- (iii) Using modality to express degrees of certainty, obligation, or possibility, which influences the strength of ideological positions.

Language as Social Practice and Resistance

The study also draws on the notion that language can function as a form of subtle resistance against hegemonic power, especially in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian contexts (Fairclough, 2001). Editorials may use nuanced lexico-syntactic strategies—such as cautious modality, strategic nominalisation, or lexical minimisation—to navigate political risks while signalling opposition or critique. This aligns with the view of discourse as a site of ideological negotiation and struggle. By applying CDA’s theoretical lenses to the analysis of editorial texts, this study aims to reveal how Nigerian newspapers use language not only to report on police assaults on journalists but to position themselves ideologically in relation to state power and democratic values. The combined focus on lexico-syntactic choices allows a fine-grained exploration of how subtle forms of linguistic resistance or complicity are encoded in the discourse.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) principles with a focused examination of lexico-syntactic choices in editorial texts. It visually and conceptually maps how language features are used by newspapers to negotiate ideological positions around police assaults on journalists, revealing subtle forms of resistance or complicity within dominant power structures.

Key Concepts and Relationships

Concept/Variable	Description	Connection to Study
Editorial Texts	Official opinion pieces are published in newspapers that represent institutional viewpoints.	The primary data source for linguistic and ideological analysis.
Lexical Choices	Ideologically loaded words/phrases (e.g., “brutal,” “misconduct,” “victims”) are used to frame actors/events.	Provide evaluative meaning and shape the perception of the police, journalists, and the state.
Syntactic Structures	Grammatical constructions (active/passive voice, modality, agency assignment).	Influence attribution of responsibility, soften or emphasise blame, and express certainty/doubt.

Concept/Variable	Description	Connection to Study
Ideological Positioning	The stance the editorial takes—pro-press freedom, institutional loyalty, state tolerance, or neutrality.	The outcome of linguistic choices; shapes public understanding of events.
Power Relations and Resistance	Interaction between dominant state power and media resistance, negotiated through discourse.	Revealed through how language either legitimises state violence or challenges it.

Methodology

The conceptual framework directly informs the methodological approach of the study, as follows:

Data Collection

(i) Selection of Editorial Texts:

Editorials from Nigerian newspapers (*The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Trust*) covering police assaults on journalists form the corpus. These texts represent the institutional voices and are the unit of analysis where lexico-syntactic strategies manifest.

Analytical Focus

Lexical Analysis:

The study systematically identifies and categorises ideologically significant lexical choices such as evaluative adjectives, agent labels, and nouns/verbs that frame actors and events. This reflects the conceptual focus on lexical choices shaping ideological meaning.

Syntactic Analysis:

The study examines grammatical structures, that is, active vs passive voice, modality (modal verbs, adverbs), and agency construction, to uncover how responsibility is assigned or obscured, corresponding to the framework's emphasis on syntactic structures as vehicles for ideology.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Application

The study employs CDA principles (Fairclough, van Dijk, Wodak) to interpret how linguistic patterns relate to broader ideological positioning and power relations, moving beyond descriptive linguistic analysis to a critical evaluation of discourse as social practice.

Comparative Approach

- (i) By comparing multiple newspapers with distinct editorial leanings, the study traces how different ideological positions (pro-press, moderate, state-tolerant, neutral) influence lexico-syntactic strategies, fulfilling the conceptual framework's focus on ideological negotiation through discourse.

Interpretation and Synthesis

- (i) The final step interprets the results in light of the conceptual framework, highlighting how language constructs social realities of power and resistance in Nigeria's contested media landscape.

The Conceptual Framework provides the theoretical lens and analytic categories that guide the methodological design - from data selection, through linguistic coding of lexico-syntactic features, to critical interpretation of ideological stances and power relations in editorial discourse.

Analytical flow of social discourse

Editorial Texts → Lexico-Syntactic Features → Ideological Positioning
Lexical and Syntactic Choices → Meanings Encoding → Ideological Construct/Stances →
Dominant Power Structures → Public Perception

Glossary

1. Editorial Texts → Lexico-Syntactic Features
Editorials encode meanings through specific lexical and syntactic choices.
2. Lexico-Syntactic Features → Ideological Positioning
These linguistic features construct ideological stances regarding police assaults and media freedom.
3. Ideological Positioning → Power Relations
The editorial stance either resists or supports dominant power structures, influencing public perception and social discourse.

Analysis of Lexico-Syntactic Choices in Editorial Texts on Police Assaults on Journalists

This analysis explores how Nigerian newspapers employ **lexical and syntactic strategies** to ideologically position themselves regarding police violence against journalists. The study focuses on patterns in **lexical choices, voice (active/passive), and modality**, demonstrating subtle resistance or alignment with dominant power structures.

Lexical Choices and Evaluative Language

a. Describing the Police

(i) **The Punch:**

Uses strongly negative and morally charged terms such as “*brutal police officers,*” “*lawless security forces,*” and “*agents of impunity*” to delegitimise the police institution.
as exemplified in:

“The brutal police officers unleashed unprovoked violence on journalists covering the protest, demonstrating a flagrant disregard for press freedom.”

Here, “**brutal**” and “**unprovoked violence**” emphasise excessive and unjustified force, framing police as oppressive antagonists.

(ii) **The Guardian:**

Moderates criticism with terms like “*unprofessional conduct,*” “*questionable ethics,*” and “*misguided actions.*”

as exemplified in:

“The police displayed unprofessional conduct that undermines public trust and calls for urgent reforms.”

This lexical choice signals disapproval but maintains a professional tone, reflecting a ‘**technocratic ideology**’ emphasising reform over outright condemnation.

(iii) **Vanguard:**

Frequently uses euphemisms or neutral terms such as “*clashes,*” “*altercations,*” and “*incidents.*”

as exemplified in:

“There were clashes between security personnel and media operatives during the event, resulting in some injuries.”

The neutral terms dilute the political significance of the violence, aligning with ‘**ideological minimisation.**’

(iv) **Daily Trust:**

Often adopts softening language, suggesting complexity or shared fault with phrases like “*volatile events,*” “*misconduct may have occurred on both sides,*” and “*unrest.*”

as exemplified in:

“In the course of the unrest, some journalists may have provoked security personnel, complicating an already tense situation.”

This lexical framing diffuses responsibility and leans toward maintaining social order.

b. Labelling the Journalists

(i) **The Punch:**

Frames journalists positively as “*defenders of democracy,*” “*watchdogs of accountability,*” and “*victims of state repression.*”

as exemplified in:

“Journalists, as defenders of democracy, were targeted in an alarming assault on the freedom of the press.”

This elevates the moral status of journalists and casts the police actions as attacks on civic values.

(ii) **Daily Trust and Vanguard:**

Occasionally depict journalists are depicted as “*provocative,*” “*reckless,*” or “*unprofessional,*” especially following protest coverage.

as exemplified in (Daily Trust):

“Some media personnel’s provocative behaviour during the protests may have escalated tensions.”

Such lexical choices undermine journalistic authority and justify state actions.

Syntactic Structures and Agency Construction

a. Use of Passive vs Active Voice

(i) **The Punch:**

Consistently employs ‘**active voice,**’ assigning clear agency to police and security forces.

as exemplified in:

“Police officers brutalised journalists covering the demonstration.”

This construction directly attributes blame, highlighting state violence.

(ii) **Vanguard and Daily Trust:**

Often use ‘**passive voice**’ to obscure agents of violence.

as exemplified in (Vanguard):

“A journalist was injured during the protest.”

as exemplified in (Daily Trust):

“There were reports of media personnel being mishandled.”

The passive voice hides perpetrators, reflecting ‘**ideological silence**’ and reducing explicit state accountability.

(iii) **The Guardian:**

Uses a ‘**mix of active and passive voice**,’ balancing critique with institutional respect.

as exemplified in:

“Police officers engaged in questionable conduct, and some journalists were caught in the crossfire.”

This allows partial agency assignment while softening confrontational tones.

b. Modality and Expression of Certainty

(i) **The Punch:**

Uses ‘**high modality**’ verbs and expressions that convey certainty and obligation:

“must,” “should,” “cannot be tolerated.”

as exemplified in:

“The government must hold perpetrators accountable to uphold democratic values.”

This signals a confrontational and assertive editorial stance demanding action.

(ii) **The Guardian:**

Prefers ‘**moderate modality**’ such as “*should consider,*” “*may indicate,*” reflecting caution and persuasion.

as exemplified in:

“This may indicate systemic issues that should be addressed through reforms.”

The hedging softens claims, aligning with institutional diplomacy.

(iii) **Vanguard:**

Uses ‘**weak modality**’ with terms like “*could,*” “*might,*” “*allegedly.*”

as exemplified in:

“The clashes could have been avoided with better planning.”

This tentative language downplays severity and responsibility.

(iv) **Daily Trust:**

Employs ‘**cautious modality**’, often qualifying statements with “*reportedly,*”

“allegedly,” “may have.”

as exemplified in:

“Journalists reportedly engaged in actions that may have provoked the unrest.”

This approach reflects certainty and maintains neutrality or state tolerance.

Ideological Implications of Lexico-Syntactic Strategies

- (i) **The Punch** clearly constructs an oppositional discourse, **foregrounding police brutality** and elevating journalists as moral defenders, employing **active voice and strong evaluative language** to challenge state power.
- (ii) **The Guardian** balances criticism with institutional loyalty, adopting a **moderate tone** through lexical moderation and mixed syntactic choices, indicative of a reformist but non-confrontational stance.
- (iii) **Vanguard** maintains an ambiguous, neutral position, often **minimising ideological conflict** through euphemistic vocabulary and frequent use of passive voice, reflecting **ideological depoliticisation**.
- (iv) **Daily Trust** emphasises **social stability and order**, downplaying state violence and sometimes implicating journalists through cautious and diffusive language, consistent with a **conservative, state-tolerant ideology**.

Summary Table: Lexico-Syntactic and Ideological Strategies

Newspaper	Lexical Tone (Police)	Lexical Tone (Journalists)	Voice	Modality	Ideological Positioning
The Punch	“Brutal,” “Lawless,” “Impunity”	“Victims,” “Defenders of democracy”	Active voice dominant	High certainty (“must”)	Pro-press freedom, anti-state violence
The Guardian	“Unprofessional,” “Ethically questionable”	“Caught in crossfire,” neutral	Mix of active/passive	Moderate (“may,” “should”)	Moderate liberal, reformist
Vanguard	“Clashes,” “Altercations,” “Incidents”	“Unprofessional,” “Provocative”	Passive voice frequent	Weak modality (“could”)	Neutral, depoliticising
Daily Trust	“Unrest,” “Volatile events”	“Provocative,” “Reckless”	Passive and impersonal	Cautious (“reportedly”)	Conservative, state-tolerant

Discussion of the Lexico-Syntactic Analysis

The detailed examination of editorial texts from *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust* reveal significant variation in the linguistic strategies newspapers employ to construct narratives about police assaults on journalists. These choices - both at the lexical and syntactic levels - not only reflect differing ideological orientations but also perform crucial functions in negotiating the contested space between state power, media freedom, and public perception.

Lexical Choices as Ideological Markers

The study shows that lexical selection is a powerful tool through which newspapers either challenge or accommodate dominant power structures.

The *Punch*'s use of negatively charged, morally loaded terms such as "*brutal*," "*lawless*," and "*agents of impunity*" explicitly delegitimises the police and frames state security forces as oppressive agents. This aligns with a pro-press freedom, anti-authoritarian ideology that openly resists state violence and elevates journalists as "defenders of democracy" and victims. The lexical choices here are consistent with Fairclough's (1995) assertion that language can act as a site of ideological struggle, where editors choose vocabulary that openly confronts hegemonic narratives. In contrast, *The Guardian*'s more moderated lexicon (e.g., "*unprofessional*," "*misguided*," "*ethical breach*") reflects a cautious stance. The language critiques police misconduct but maintains institutional respect, signalling a 'liberal reformist ideology' that seeks change within existing frameworks. *The Guardian*'s lexical restraint can be interpreted as an attempt to influence reform through dialogue rather than confrontation, exemplifying van Dijk's (2006) notion of ideological moderation through discourse.

Vanguard's lexical neutrality and euphemism, through words like "*clashes*" and "*altercations*," serve to depoliticise the events. This aligns with Fairclough's (2001) idea of 'ideological minimisation', where language softens the impact of violence, thereby reducing political conflict. By avoiding explicit negative labelling of the police or journalists, *Vanguard* occupies an ambiguous ideological position, perhaps reflecting editorial caution in a politically sensitive environment.

Daily Trust's softening and diffusive lexical choices, which often imply shared fault or downplay severity, are indicative of a 'conservative, state-tolerant ideology' that prioritises social order and stability over explicit critique. Phrases like "*volatile events*" or "*misconduct may have occurred*"

on both sides” align with discourses that resist politicising the violence and instead frame it as unfortunate but understandable tensions.

Syntactic Strategies and Agency Attribution

Syntactic choices, particularly the use of voice and modality, reveal how newspapers manipulate the assignment or obscuration of responsibility, which is ideologically consequential.

Active voice in *The Punch*, “Police officers brutalised journalists,” for instance, provides clear agency, directly attributing violence to state actors. This syntactic transparency reinforces the confrontational ideological stance by leaving no ambiguity about who is responsible. It aligns with CDA’s principle that language shapes social reality, here highlighting state violence as deliberate and condemnable.

By contrast, *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust*’s frequent use of passive constructions like “A journalist was injured” effectively removes the agent, obscuring police responsibility and reducing the force of accusation. This is a clear example of Fairclough’s (1992) “ideological silence,” a discursive strategy that avoids naming perpetrators to protect institutional or state interests.

The Guardian’s mixed use of active and passive voice demonstrates a balancing act, assigning some agency to police misconduct while maintaining narrative distance by occasionally shifting to passive structures. This syntactic duality supports its ideological position of cautious critique, aligning with an institutionalist discourse that negotiates between loyalty and reform.

Modality: Degrees of Certainty and Stance

Modality further varies the ideological positioning of the editorials:

The Punch’s high modality verbs (“must,” “cannot be tolerated,” for example) convey epistemic certainty and moral obligation, emphasizing urgency and the need for accountability. This assertiveness is ideologically aligned with a proactive, rights-based discourse demanding state transparency and justice.

The Guardian’s moderate modality (“may indicate,” “should consider,” for example) reflects hedging and persuasion, which softens critique to appeal to institutional reformers and readers who prefer measured discourse. It reflects a ‘strategic use of modality’ to maintain credibility while signalling concern.

Vanguard and *Daily Trust*’s weak or cautious modality, characterised by words like “could,” “may,” and “reportedly,” conveys a tone of uncertainty or detachment. This modality aligns with

ideological positions that aim to minimise conflict or responsibility, thereby preserving social harmony or avoiding state antagonism.

Ideological Implications and Power Relations

Together, these lexico-syntactic choices illustrate how editorial discourse in Nigerian newspapers functions as a contested site of ideological negotiation:

The Punch embodies a discourse of resistance, actively exposing state violence and positioning itself as a defender of press freedom and democracy. Its linguistic transparency and confrontational stance exemplify subtle yet forceful resistance against dominant power structures.

The Guardian negotiates a middle path, balancing critique with institutional loyalty, reflecting a liberal-democratic ideal of reform within the system rather than outright opposition.

Vanguard's depoliticised language and syntactic strategies reflect a cautious editorial stance, aimed at avoiding direct confrontation with the state while still reporting events. This can be understood as a form of 'discursive neutrality' that arguably perpetuates hegemonic power by minimising explicit challenges to state authority.

Daily Trust's language reinforces conservative and state-tolerant ideologies, emphasising order and downplaying journalistic victimhood. This editorial positioning supports the status quo and discourages overt resistance through careful lexical and syntactic softening.

Broader Contextual Considerations

These linguistic strategies must be understood against Nigeria's complex socio-political environment, characterised by media repression, fragile democratic institutions, and contentious state-media relations (Ayoade, 2014; Oso and Onabajo, 2012). Newspapers operate within constraints of political pressure, legal threats, and economic dependency, which influence editorial freedom and language use (Okunna, 2012).

The subtlety of linguistic resistance - especially in lexico-syntactic choices - reflects the precarious position of the press, which must balance between speaking truth to power and avoiding censorship or reprisal (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006). The study demonstrates that even when confrontation is risky, editorial texts encode ideological resistance through language patterns, offering a "soft power" form of dissent.

By applying CDA to these linguistic features, the study illuminates how editorial texts act as sites of ideological contestation, where language becomes a tool for both resisting and reinforcing dominant power structures in Nigeria's contested democratic landscape.

Conclusion

This study has shown that lexico-syntactic choices in Nigerian editorial texts concerning police assaults on journalists are deeply ideological and serve as subtle forms of resistance or reinforcement of dominant power structures. Newspapers like *The Punch* employ explicit, confrontational language and syntactic transparency to hold state actors accountable and champion press freedom. Conversely, papers such as *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* use euphemistic language, passive constructions, and cautious modality to obscure agency and minimise conflict, aligning with more conservative or state-tolerant ideologies.

The analysis confirms that language is not a neutral medium but a critical tool through which power relations are negotiated, contested, and reproduced within Nigeria's complex political landscape. Editorial discourse thus functions as a site where struggles over authority, legitimacy, and democratic values unfold, often in patterned and implicit ways.

Understanding these linguistic mechanisms provides valuable insight into how media institutions position themselves in relation to state power and civil liberties, highlighting the need for critical media literacy and awareness of ideological framing in news consumption.

Recommendations

1. Editorial teams should be conscious of the ideological implications of their lexical and syntactic choices, striving for greater transparency and accountability in reporting police violence. Clearer attribution of agency and careful vocabulary can empower the press to resist state repression and advocate more effectively for journalists' rights.
2. For journalists and media organisations, training in Critical Discourse Analysis and media framing should be integrated into professional development to enhance journalists' awareness of how language shapes public perception and political discourse.
3. For policymakers and civil society, there should be stronger protections for press freedom and explicit condemnation of police violence against journalists. Policies encouraging responsible and courageous media coverage can strengthen democratic accountability.

4. Further studies could expand this analysis across other media genres and geographical contexts to better understand the broader dynamics of media discourse in contesting power structures.
5. Media literacy campaigns should educate readers, that is, the public, on recognising ideological framing and syntactic strategies that influence how news is presented, fostering critical consumption of media narratives.

In summary, fostering critical linguistic awareness among journalists, enforcing stronger protections for press freedom, and promoting media literacy among the public are essential to ensuring transparent reporting, resisting repression, and deepening democratic accountability in media discourse.

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