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THE STATUS OF ÒWÓRÒ: A DIALECT OF YORÙBÁ

Awoláoyè Sunday Oláyínká PhD

*Department of Yorùbá,
Adéyemi Federal University of Education, Oñdó
awolaoyesop@gmail.com*

&

Adéoyè Jeleel Adéwálé PhD

*Department of Linguistics and Nigeria Languages,
Èkìtì State University, Adó-Èkìtì
adeoyejelly@gmail.com*

Abstract

The spark for this study came from a question by a student in my ‘Dialects of Yorùbá’ course: Is Òwóró a Yorùbá dialect? Their curiosity drove me to explore Òwóró place in the Yorùbá linguistic landscape, a speech variety in Lókója Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria, to determine its classification as a dialect of Yorùbá. The study aims to examine the syntactic nature of Òwóró, contributing to its preservation and documentation. It further explores the influence of neighbouring languages on Òwóró. The study is grounded in dialectology, sociolinguistics, language contact, and Principles and Parameters theory, which guide the analysis of structural and social features of the variety. Using field-based data collection, including elicitation from native speakers, comparative phonological and lexical analysis, and sociolinguistic observation, the study provides comprehensive insight into the variety. Findings demonstrate that Òwóró, despite being recognized as a dialect of Yorùbá with approximately 80% lexical similarity, has received inadequate scholarly attention and exhibits some unique lexical patterns. It maintainscore Yoruba grammatical structures, operating with a Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) word order, confirming its status as a Yorùbá dialect. The study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical documentation of Òwóró, clarifying its relationship within the Yorùbá dialect continuum, and informing efforts in dialect promotion and sociolinguistic research.

Keywords: Dialect, Language documentation, Language preservation, Òwóró

Introduction

Scholars have pointed out the relevance of studying regional dialects with particular reference to the Yorùbá language as studying the regional dialects of the language gives the opportunity of documenting them for posterity (Awóbùlúyì 1992. P. 35). It also gives the opportunity of having a clearer understanding of obscure issues in the standard dialect. The scholar puts it thus:

Dialects deserved to be studied in their own right and thereby preserved in written record for posterity. And when, in addition to being what they are, they have the

further potential of helping to clarify issues or points that are likely otherwise to remain obscure in the standard variety of the language.

Awóbùlúyí's work highlighted the importance of studying Yorùbá dialects, particularly Ọwọ̀rọ̀, which lacks a written orthography. Despite sharing around 80% of lexical items with standard Yorùbá, the dialect's status has been questioned. This study aims to affirm Ọwọ̀rọ̀' s classification as a Yorùbá dialect, influenced by neighboring languages like Ebira Koto, Basange and Nupe. Akińkùnbé (1976), Oyèláràn (1976), Awóbùlúyì (1998), Ajónǵólò (2005). Using the Principle and Parameter Theory (Chomsky 1981), the study analyzes data demonstrating the impact of neighboring communities like Ebira Koto on Ọwọ̀rọ̀, evident in borrowed words like 'àṅgùlù' (vulture), 'gújíyá' (groundnut), 'dàṅgọ' (duck), 'ónu' (salt). The findings support the idea that language borrowing contribute to linguistic development. The study confirms Ọwọ̀rọ̀' s status as a Yorùbá dialect based on mutual intelligibility, SVO word order, tone system, and syntactic markers similar to standard Yorùbá. Additionally, Ọwọ̀rọ̀ exhibits syntactic re-ordering moving focused element to the periphery. These factors will be discussed in detail to support the scholarly classification of Ọwọ̀rọ̀ as a Yorùbá dialect.

Theoretical Framework

Our analysis draws on Dialectology, Sociolinguistics, Language Contact, and Principles and Parameters theories.

Dialectology Theory refers to the body of principles and frameworks within Dialectology that explain how and why language varies across different regions, social groups, and contexts. Sociolinguistic Theory refers to the set of principles and frameworks within Sociolinguistics that explain how language use varies according to social factors and how language both shapes and is shaped by society. Language Contact Theory refers to the set of principles that explain what happens when speakers of different languages or dialects interact regularly, leading to influence, borrowing, and structural changes in their languages. Language contact occurs when two or more linguistic groups interact through trade, migration, intermarriage, education, or politics, resulting in changes in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Principles and Parameters Theory is a framework within Generative Grammar that explains how all human languages share common underlying rules (principles) while differing in specific settings (Chomsky 1991, Haegeman 1991).

With these theories, the study analyzes data demonstrating the impact of neighboring communities like Ebira Koto on Ọwọ̀rọ̀, evident in borrowed words like 'àṅgùlù' (vulture), 'gújíyá' (groundnut), 'dàṅgọ' (duck), 'ónu' (salt) as evident in the analysis of this study.

Data Collection

The study adopts a qualitative research approach aimed at exploring and analyzing the status and realization of marker at the syntactic level of Òwòrò dialect. The research collects, analyses and interpret the data on the status of the Òwòrò dialect. The data for the research will be collected from Karara, the community in the heart of Òwòrò in Kogí State. The choice of the community is borne out of the fact that Karara is a remote area and the speech form of the people in the community has not been influenced by the standard dialect of Yorùbá or by other languages spoken in Kogí state. The researcher selected 5 language consultants who are between the ages of 50-70s. The choice of the age range was borne out of the fact that elderly people use their speech form frequently and have good mastery of it. The sentences were dictated to the speakers in standard Yorùbá, and the equivalent version of each sentence in Òwòrò from the speakers were recorded both in long hand and digital recorders to enhance proper interpretation and ease of reference

Studies in Yorùbá Dialectology

Dialectology, obviously, is the study of dialect and dialects (Chambers and Trudgill 1984). Pei (1966:68) refers to a dialect as:

A specific branch or form of a language spoken in a given geographical area differing sufficiently from the official standard or literary form of the language in one or the levels of the language (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and idiomatic use of words) to be viewed as a distinct entity, yet not sufficiently different from other dialects of the language to be regarded as a separate language.

Chambers and Trudgill (1984:1) also agree that dialects can be regarded as subdivision of a particular language. The definitions given by scholars have opened our mind to understand their views about what is 'dialect', and more importantly that it is erroneous to refer to a dialect as 'impure' or incorrect form of the standard form of language. Various scholars have carried out research work on different and interesting topics on dialects of Yorùbá both at phonological and syntactic levels. Those earlier studies affirmed the usefulness of dialectological studies as it was clearly stated in Awóbùlúyì (1992). It is not an overstatement to add here that studies in Yorùbá dialect have provided solution to some of the issues that have generated argument in the grammar of the Standard dialect. In the light of this, there are various linguists who have worked on grammar and other areas of Yorùbá dialects such as Délàṅò (1958), Akíṅkùṅbẹ́ (1976), Adétùgbọ́ (1967, 1982), Oyèláràn (1976), Chamber and Trudgill (1984), Fresco (1970), Awóbùlúyì (1992,) to mention a few.

On the classification of Yorùbá dialects into different groups, Délàṅò's (1958) work on the classification was based mainly on the names of the dialects in Yorùbá.

His classification goes thus:

- a. Èko-Àwóri Ègbádò
- b. Ègbá-Ìjẹ̀bú Rẹ̀mọ̀
- c. Ìjẹ̀bú-Òde-Ìjẹ̀bú-Rẹ̀mọ̀-Ìjẹ̀bú-Igbó-Ìkálẹ̀ (Òkìkìpupa)
- d. Ọ̀yọ̀-Ìbàdàn
- e. Ifẹ̀-Ìjẹ̀sà
- f. Ìjẹ̀sà-Èkìtì
- g. On̄dó-Òkìtìpupa
- h. Ọ̀wọ̀
- i. Itsekiri
- j. Bàdàgìrì-Àjàsẹ̀

Considering the classification of Délànò (1958) above, it is observed that the dialects found in group **b,c,g** and **h** are within the same geographical area of the Southeast Yorùbá (SEY), while **e** and **f** are in the Central Yorùbá (CY). The dialects in group **a** and **e** belong to the Southwest (SWY). The last group **j** was classified among the Southwest (SWY). It is in group **i** that we have the Itsekiri standing in isolation from other groups. Another very important observation from the classification above is that some dialects of Yorùbá were left out from the group especially the Northeast Yorùbá (NEY) such as Ìjùmú, Ìyàgbà, Ọ̀wọ̀rọ̀ and Owé. The reason for this is not far from the fact that Délànò did not consider the geographical area of those dialects in his grouping. Classification through geographical area criterion would have given him the opportunity to capture all those dialects

On the classification of Yorùbá dialect done by Adétùgbó (1967, 1982), classified into the following three groups:

- Northwest Yorùbá (NWY) includes Ọ̀yọ̀, Ìbàdàn, Ọ̀sun, Ègbá, Ọ̀gbómọ̀sọ̀, Šakí, Ìşeyìn
- Southeast Yorùbá (SEY) contains Ìjẹ̀bú, Ìkálẹ̀, On̄dó, Ọ̀wọ̀, Ọ̀kìtìpupa, Àkókó.
- Central Yorùbá (CY) are; Ifẹ̀, Ijẹ̀sà and Èkìtì.

Akínkùnbé (1976) work on Yorùbá dialects and their groupings are on Ìlájẹ̀, Ìkálẹ̀, Ìjọ̀-Àpọ̀ì, Ìjẹ̀sà, Irùn, Ukare (Ìkàré), Yàgbà, Gbẹ̀dẹ̀, Ìjùmú, Ikire, Tsabẹ̀, Ifẹ̀ (Togo) and SY. Her classifications are:

Northeast Yorùbá (NEY): Yàgbà, Ìjùmú, Ikiri, Gbẹ̀dẹ̀, Ọ̀wọ̀rọ̀, Ọ̀wọ̀.

- Southwest Yorùbá (SWY): Tsabẹ̀, Ifẹ̀ (Togo), Kétu.
- Central Yorùbá (CY): Ìjẹ̀sà, Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Èkìtì, Mòbà.
- Southeast Yorùbá (SEY): On̄dó, Ọ̀wọ̀, Ìjẹ̀bú, Ìkálẹ̀, Ìlájẹ̀.
- Northwest Yorùbá (NWY): Ọ̀yọ̀, Ègbá, Ọ̀sun, Ìbòlò, Àwóri.

In Oyèlárán (1976), Yorùbá dialects are classified into four groups namely:

- Northwest Yorùbá (NWY): Ọ̀yọ̀, Ìbàdàn, Ègbá, Šakí, Ifẹ̀-Togo Ìdàisà, Ijío, Ohori-Ifohin, Manigiri
- Southeast Yorùbá (SEY): On̄dó, Ọ̀wọ̀, Ìjẹ̀bú, Ìkálẹ̀, Ìlájẹ̀.
- Central Yorùbá (CY): Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀sà, Èkìtì.

- Northeast Yorùbá (NEY): Ìgbómìnà, Kàkàndà, Ìgbọ̀lọ, Búnú, Òwọ̀rò, Owé, Ègbè, Ìjùmú
Awóbùlúyì (1998) classifies Yorùbá dialects into five groups, based on the geographical area of each of the dialects spoken.
- Northwest Yorùbá (NWY): Èkó, Àwòrì, Ègbádò, Òyó, Òṣun, Òn̄kò, Ìbòlò, Ìgbómìnà
- Northeast Yorùbá (NEY): Iyàgbà, Ìjùmú, Òwọ̀rò, Owé
- Central Yorùbá (CY): Ifè, Ìjèsà, Èkìtì, Mòbà
- Southwest Yorùbá (SWY): Sààbè-Kétu (Ànàgò), Ifè (Tógò)
- Southeast Yorùbá (SEY): Ègbá, Ìjèbú, Ìlájẹ, Ìkálẹ̀, On̄dó, Òwò, Òbà-Ìkàré

Linguists have shown that language reflects different structures. A cursory look at the various dialectal grouping done by scholars as enumerated above shows that the differences among the dialects, especially the dialect of Yorùbá, can be found at phonological and syntactic levels. Awóbùlúyì (1998) did not only work on the grouping of the Yorùbá dialects, he went further to analyze the grammar of the grouped dialects. He discussed extensively on the dialects of Yorùbá starting from their names and their geographical areas. He also discussed about what the study of the dialects has thought us about the Standard Yorùbá. As a linguist, he analyzed the grammar of these dialects by comparing them with one another in order to show their linguistic variations and similarities. For instance, in the Southeast Yorùbá, where we have Ègbá, Ìjèbú, Ìkálẹ̀, On̄dó, the nasal vowel /ɛ̃n/ is common in their words. It features in words like:

1. a. Ègbá: ijòrèn. (SY): ijó yèn → ‘that day’
b. Ìkálẹ̀: bènren-én (SY): bẹ yèn → ‘like that’
c. Òwò: ọmakùnẹn. (SY): ọmọkùnrin → ‘male child’

It should be noted here that **iyen** is the only existing example of the manifestation of /ɛ̃n/ in Standard Yorùbá, /ɛ̃n/ is not attested in Òwọ̀rò dialect Awoláoyè, (2021). The Yorùbá language does not permit /u/ word initial. Awóbùlúyì (1998) in his findings reveals that all the dialects in the area with the exception of Ègbá permits /u/ word initial as against what operates in the standard Yorùbá. This same characteristic is also found in both Northeast Yorùbá (NEY) and Central Yorùbá (CY). The Northeast Yorùbá (NEY) is known for the use of consonant /h/ instead of /s/ used in the other dialects in words like:

2. a. Òwọ̀rò: ẹhìn (SY): ẹsẹ → ‘leg’
b. Ìjùmú: hùn (SY): sùn → ‘sleep’

Awóbùlúyì (1998.) further submits that structural ambiguity is identified in On̄dó, Ìlájẹ and Ìkálẹ̀ which does not exist in standard Yorùbá. It is the non-existence of such structural ambiguity that makes the monosyllabic low tone verbs change their tone from low to mid. For Example:

3. a. Mo fò díẹ̀ → ‘I jumped a little.’
b. Mo fo díẹ̀ → ‘I skipped some.’

In Onòdó, Ìkálẹ̀ and Ìlẹ̀jẹ̀ dialects where such structural ambiguity does not exist, the above pairs of semantically distinct utterances would be phonologically undifferentiated.

What one will hear is:

- c. Mo fò díẹ̀ → I jumped a little.
- d. Mo fò díẹ̀ → I skipped some

The speakers of the two dialects admit that in a situation like the two utterances above, they are forced to rely solely on contextual cues for distinguishing between the intended meanings of pairs of utterances of these kinds (Adétùgbó 1971, Shada 1988).

The issue on determining the syntactic status of focus construction in the standard Yorùbá also came up here. Awóbùlúyì (1998b) affirms that, “is not whether or not they display the features of sentences at all, but whether they behave like noun phrase also”. It said that such constructions regularly function as complement for the verb ‘*ṣe*’ as

- 6. a. Kì í ṣe Olú ní ó pa ajá ọ̀dẹ̀ ní oko
- b. ‘Olú isn’t the one that killed the hunter’s dog on the farm’

However, Bámgbósé (1990) disagrees with the claim that focus construction is a noun phrase as suggested by Awóbùlúyì (1998). He claims that it is a complete sentence because it gives a complete thought.

Another area of discussion on the influence of regional dialect on the standard dialect is on the issue of infinitive phrase. Infinitive phrase is the type of phrase that has two verbs, with a marker between them. It is the verb that follows the marker that is regarded as infinitive verb. Infinitive phrase makes use of the marker ‘to’ in a sentence like:

- 7. a. I want to go Mo fẹ́ ẹ́ lọ
- b. He wants to read Ó fẹ́ ẹ́ kàwé

The sources of infinitive marker in standard dialect had generated a lot of argument among the various linguists over the years. Crowther (1852), Bowen (1858), Bámgbósé (1975), Awóyalé (1983), all agreed that there is infinitive phrase in standard dialect. They also unanimously agreed that there is always a marker linking the two verbs. The high tone syllable (HTS) linking the two verbs are regarded as the infinitive marker. For Examples:

- 8. a. Ọ̀jò fẹ́ é rò Rain wants to fall
- b. Aṣọ sòro ó fọ Cloth is hard to wash
- c. Èrù nira á gbé Load is difficult to carry

The above underlined high tone syllable is regarded as the infinitive markers. Bámgbósé (1975, (1990) states that an infinitive verb is that which has affix, and the affix has been referred to as infinitive marker. Bámgbósé (1975) submits that prefixization may occur between the marker and the verb that follows it to form a word like:

- 9. a. Mo fẹ́ ẹ́ -lọ I want to go
- b. Ó wá á -sùn He came to sleep

Linguists like Marantz (1984), Abíódún (2000), Awóyalé (1983) stressed that scholars like Crowther (1852) and Rowland (1954) were also of the opinion that the marker is derived from gerund through the deletion of the reduplicated consonant and assimilation between [í] and the vowel at the end of the verb in examples such as:

10. a. Ó pé lílọ → Ó pé í lọ → Ó pé é lọ He lates to go
 b. Ó dùn jíjẹ → Ó dùn í jẹ → Ó dùn ún jẹ It's sweet to eat

Linguists like Bowen (1958), Crowther (1852), Awóbúlúyì (1970, 1978) are of the opinion that /i/ is the marker in the deep structure. For Examples:

11. a. Ilé soro í kọ ilé soro ó kọ House is hard to build
 b. Òjò fẹ́ í rò òjò fẹ́ é rò It's about to rain

The truth in the examples above according to the scholars is that it is assimilation that brings about the feature which this marker has at the surface level. However, the linguist failed to explain the source of the /i/ as the basis of the infinitive marker. It was Awóyalé (1983) that explains vividly on /i/ as the basis of the infinitive verb marker. He explained that the marker has its source from the deep structure as /i/, meaning that the marker is not derived but takes the feature of the verb or noun preceding it by way of assimilation. For Examples:

12. a. Mo fẹ́ í lọ mo fẹ́ é lọ I want to go
 b. Ó fẹ́ í kú wón fẹ́ é kú He wants to die

To support this argument, Awóyalé (1983) stated that the marker also features in Kwa language which has relationship with Yorùbá language. He also mentioned other languages where this marker also features like Ìgbò, Ìgalà, Itsekiri, Efik e.tc. The tree diagram below further illustrates the deep structure of example (12a) above

Ó fẹ́ í kú

Akínbòládé (2005) affirmed that /i/ is the basis of infinitive verb marker in Mòbà dialect which is a sub-dialect of Èkìtì. This linguistic variant is identified from that of other Èkìtì dialect where the marker is identified in gerund. Let consider the following examples:

13. a. Uşé re í şe işé wù ú şe He likes to work
 b. Ọmọ nira í bí ọmọ nira á bí It is difficult to bear children
 c. Ulé re Adé í kọ ilé wu Adé é kọ Adé likes to build house

From the examples above, it is clear that /i/ is identified as the infinitive marker in Mòbà dialect and it feature independently as a syllable. This further gives a better understanding of the source of infinitive verb marker as earlier stated by Awóyalé (ibid).

Another interesting finding in the area of syntax is expressed in Fábùnmi (2013) where he examines the various morpho-phonological and syntactic realization of negative markers of sixteen Yorùbá dialects and compare them with the 'Standard Yorùbá'. The study reveals that some dialects of Yorùbá manifest two syllables of

similar segment sound as negative marker contrary to single syllable negative marker like **kò** instandard dialect. A good example as claim by Fábùnmi is in Oṇdó dialect where we have negative marker like **éè** depending on the form of vowel proceeding the NP as in the examples below:

14. a. Èlú wee éè tó
How 2s-much Neg sell
'How much are you not selling it'
- b. Aa mi éè yá
Body my Neg well
'I am not well'

The structure of relative clause in the dialects such as Oṇdó, Ìgbómìnà, Òmùò, Mòpà and standard Yorùbá are identical in the sense that the relativized items are moved to the initial position of the relative clause construction and also accompanied by the relative markers (Akintóyè (2014)). The only difference is that the forms of relative markers in the dialect are different from what is obtainable in the standard dialect. For instance, the relative clause marker **yíí** is found in Oṇdó and Ìgbómìnà dialects (Awoláoyè (2011), Akintóyè (2014)). The example in (17a-b) below is from Oṇdó dialect.

15. a. Olú bí ọma
Olú bears child
'Olú gives birth to a child'
- b. Olú **yíí** ó bí ọma
Olú Rel Rsp bear child
'Olú that gave birth to a child'

Yíí can be said to be a relative marker because it occupies the position that other relative markers such as **tí** in the standard dialect. The fact that **yíí** is a qualifier in the standard dialect shows the linguistic variations that exist between the standard dialect and the regional dialects of Yorùbá, whereas **yíí** as a qualifier takes the form of **íí** in Oṇdó dialect as in the examples below:

16. a. Ọma íí e jẹun
Child Qual Prog eat
'The child is eating'
- b. Ọma íí mo in in kọ
Child Qual know song sing.
'This child knows how to sing'

A close look at what have been said of various work in Yorùbá dialectology clearly shows that the studies in dialectology has increased our understanding on the linguistic variations and similarities at the phonological and syntactic levels in the dialects of Yorùbá. This further attests to the claim of Awóbúlúyì (1992), Olúmúyìwá (1994) as earlier discussed.

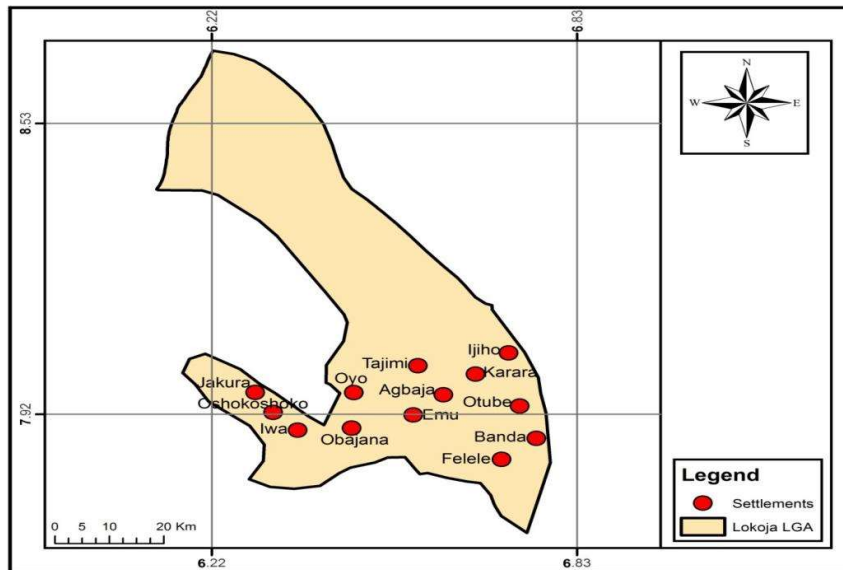
Ọwọ̀rọ̀ and its Speakers

The Ọwọ̀rọ̀ ethnic nationality represents a group of people around the Niger-Benue confluence. They speak a variety of Yorùbá dialect called Ọwọ̀rọ̀, the name by

which the people are also known. They are in Lókója Local Government Area of Kogi State. The research shows that a number of Ọwọ̀rọ̀ communities are on the Àgbajà Plateau. Among the towns and villages that speak Ọwọ̀rọ̀ dialect are: Àgbajà, Ọbajàná, Tájímù, Èmù, Jakùrá, Ọgbàbọ̀n, Ọ̀túnbẹ̀, Àdógbé, Okonobe, Igbónlá, Apomọ̀bà, Ijiho, Karara, Banda, Félẹ̀lẹ̀, Iwa, Oyo, Osokosoko (Ọláwuyì (1983),

Awoláoyè (2011), Àjàyí (2015)). See the figure 1 below:

Fig. 1:



Map of Lókója Local Government showing Ọwọ̀rọ̀ community. (Source: *Local Government Area of Kogi State*, Ọláwuyì, 1983)

Linguistically, Ọwọ̀rọ̀ is a dialect of Yorùbá (Oyèláràn (1976), Awóbùlúyì (1992), Adéníyì (2005), Ajónḡólò (2005)), similar to other dialects of Okun people that include Iyàgbà, Owé, Ijùmú, Bùnù in Kogí state. Virtually all Ọwọ̀rọ̀ speakers can fluently communicate in the standard dialect of Yorùbá. They can as well communicate to a greater extent with speakers of other Okun people. The truth is that Ọwọ̀rọ̀ and Okun are mutually intelligible. Apart from speaking Ọwọ̀rọ̀ dialect, those in the Eastern part like Àdajà, Igbónlá can also speak Igbirà Ọláwuyì, (1983), Awoláoyè, (2011). The reason for this cannot be far from the fact that Ọwọ̀rọ̀ people share boundaries with other people like: Nupé, Èbirà Kòtò, Bassange and Ìgalà. The various differences in the Ọwọ̀rọ̀ dialect and Standard Yorùbá could therefore be traced to borrowing from the aforementioned languages that share boundaries with Ọwọ̀rọ̀ people. Because they share boundaries, they share communal relationship in the area of commerce, culture, religion etc. The

following examples demonstrate the influence of other languages on Ọwọ̀rọ̀. We have the following words in Ọwọ̀rọ̀ and Èbìrà-Kòtò.

17.	Ọwọ̀rọ̀	Èbìrà-Kòtò	Standard Yorùbá	English
a	gújíyá	igúziyá	ẹ̀pà	groundnut
b	àlèmú	àlèmú	ọ̀sàn	orange
c	ẹ̀hìn	àhò	esẹ̀	leg
d	etọ̀	àtẹ̀	itọ̀	saliva
e	àpọ̀	apọ̀kọ̀	ata	pepper
f	ónu	ánú	iyọ̀	salt
g	wíjìyá	òrìjìyá	kànga	well
h	epín	epi	ẹ̀gúsí	mellon
i	hunwà	húsà	dára	good
j	ẹ̀dà	àdàbà	bàtà	shoe

The data in (17) above further prove the linguistic influence that the language of the neighboring communities may have on a particular language or dialect.

The Status of Ọwọ̀rọ̀ Dialect

From the generic relationship point of view and the facts of lexico-syntactic, this study treats Ọwọ̀rọ̀ doubtlessly a dialect of Yorùbá. It is clear that there are near eighty percent lexical matching between Ọwọ̀rọ̀ and Yorùbá. Such lexical items include noun, verb, preposition, conjunction etc.

Àdétùgbọ̀ (1987:207) refers to a dialect as “a subsystem within a language while a language is an aggregate of all the dialects within its specific area”. In this way, Yorùbá can be regarded as a language with different dialects.

Other linguists such as Chamber and Trudgill (1984:6), Awóbùlúyì (1998:1), Abíódún (2005) agree with the definition, that a dialect is “a sub-division or variant of a particular language that has a common characteristic and norms”. Yorùbá language is a language that has several dialects such as Ọ̀yọ̀, Ońdó, Ìjẹ̀sà, Èkítì, Ọ̀wọ̀, Àkúrẹ̀, Ìkálẹ̀, Ìlájẹ̀, Ifẹ̀, Ègbà, Ìjẹ̀bú, Àkókó, Owé, Yàgbà, Ìgbómìnà, Ìbòlò, Ìlòrín, Ọ̀wọ̀rọ̀ Adétùgbọ̀, (1967), Awóbùlúyì, (1992). It is interesting to note here that there are linguistic differences among the dialects mentioned above which distinguish one variety from another. The differences could be in form of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar or any other combination of these. It is noticed that words like [isu] ‘yam’, [ilé] ‘house’, [isẹ̀] ‘work’ in Ọ̀wọ̀rọ̀ also mean the same thing in the Standard Yorùbá.

We can also talk about mutual intelligibility, where we have some dialects that are intelligible to speakers of other dialects. Chamber and Trudgill (1978:3) submit that the problem of how we can distinguish between a language and dialect is to say that “a language is a collection of mutually intelligible dialects”. According to him, the definition has the benefits of characterizing dialect as subparts of a language and of providing a criterion for distinguishing between one language and another. Let us consider some of the words variations as spoken by different

speakers of Yorùbá language to confirm their similarities and differences as mentioned in this study.

See table 1 below:

S/ N	Standar d Yorùbá	Yorùb á Ìkálẹ̀	Yorùb á Okun	Yorùbá Èkìtì	Yorùb á Ọ̀wọ̀rọ̀	Yorùb á Oòndó	English Languag e
i.	Wá	bọ̀be	gha	Á	ghá	bọ̀ bé	Come
ii.	Apá	ọ̀wọ̀	apá	Aká	abiaka	Aká	Hand
iii.	Ewúré	ikégbè	èdegbe	Idérègb è	ikégbè	íkèègbè	Goat
iv.	Ilẹ̀kùn	ilẹ̀kùn	akùn	Ekù	òkúlẹ̀	Ilẹ̀kùn	Door
v.	Orí	ori	ówo	Erí	éwo	Ohího	Head
vi.	Ẹ̀rù	erù	àrù	Èrù	àrùbà	Ẹ̀ùù	Fear
vii.	Ẹ̀ní	enì	ánu	Ẹ̀ní	àíba	Ẹ̀ní	Mat
viii.	Àdá	ùpẹ̀kun	ada	Àdá	èpia	ùpẹ̀kun	Cutlass
ix.	Ìyẹ̀n	iyí	iwon	Unihin	tèebà	Ìyẹ̀n	That
x.	Irọ̀	urọ̀	obó	Urọ̀	obó	Uọ̀	Lie

Considering the data above, some similarities and differences are found in the lexical items presented above. It is noticed that some of the similarities found in the lexical items above further attests to the fact that there exists a sense of understanding among the dialects as presented in the data. But words like [èpia], [aíba], [òkúlẹ̀], [éwo] in Ọ̀wọ̀rọ̀ dialect may seems not be intelligible to speakers of other dialects. Such variation like that is considered by Chambers and Trudgill (1984:6) that:

If we travel from village to village, in a particular direction, we notice linguistic differences which distinguish one village from another. Sometimes these differences will be larger, sometimes smaller, but they will be cumulative. The further we get from our starting point, the larger the differences will become. The effect of this may therefore be, if the distance involved is large enough, that (if we arrange villages along our route in geographical order) while speakers from village A understand people from village B very well and those from village F quite well, they may understand village M speech only with considerable difficulty, and that of village Z not at all.

The fact about the submission above is that the geographical area of the town and villages speaking the various dialects has a lot to do with the linguistic differences

and similarities among the people. Ọwọ̀rọ̀ is considered in this study as a dialect of Yorùbá for the following reasons:

Yorùbá language operates a subject-verb-object (SVO) language, while Ọwọ̀rọ̀ also belong to a class of SVO and a tone dialect, with three pitch levels, High, Mid and Low (HML). As reported in the literature, most of Africa languages south of the Sahara are tone languages. Welmers (1973:78) notes that languages of Africa south of the Sahara are tonal” A tone language according to Pike (1948:3) “is a language having lexically significant, contrastive, but relative pitch on each syllable”. Like in the Standard Yorùbá, the tone bearing unit in Ọwọ̀rọ̀ is generally the syllable and the syllabic nasal as it is generally obtained in all the tone languages and they are marked thus:

high tone	[/]	as in [é]
low tone	[\]	as in [è]
mid tone	[]	as in [e]

Ọwọ̀rọ̀ dialect has no written orthography. This is to say that the dialect has not been reduced into writing. But we have in most cases used the orthography based on the Roman Alphabets from which many of the languages that used alphabetic symbols have drawn their orthography. We should also add that we followed the convention of orthography of both English and Yorùbá language to arrive at our graphic representation of Ọwọ̀rọ̀ dialect.

The existence of syntactic markers in the Standard Yorùbá as it manifests in Ọwọ̀rọ̀ dialect is another fact that further acclaimed Ọwọ̀rọ̀ as a dialect of Yorùbá. Such syntactic markers include, focus marker, relative clause markers, question markers, negative markers etc. Focus marker for example in Ọwọ̀rọ̀ dialect, focus items are moved to the initial position and the focus marker occurs immediately after the focus items.

18. Ọlá ra àtú (simple sentence)
Ọlá buys a cap
'Ọlá bought a cap'
19. Àtú kí Ọlá ra (object focused sentence)
Àtú foc Ọlá buy
'It was a cap Ọlá bought'
20. Ọlá ra filà (simple sentence Yorùbá)
Ọlá buys a cap
'Ọlá bought a cap'
21. Ọlá ni ó ra filà (subject focus Yorùbá)
Ọlá foc pron buy cap
'It was Ọlá who bought a cap'

Ọwọ̀rọ̀ dialect demonstrates a syntactic re-ordering that move the focus element to the left side. Sentence (18) is a simple sentence with the Ọwọ̀rọ̀ SVO patterns, while sentence (19) is the focused counterpart of (18), with the focused constituent being the object DP yielding a new OSV word order. The direct object of 'àtú' in (18) is moved to the left of the subject to give a focus interpretation. The Standard Yorùbá focus example in (21) has a similar syntactic process. This study

demonstrates that focus construction in Ọwọ̀rọ̀ has the same structure with that of the Standard Yorùbá.

Conclusion

With reference to the literature (Akínkùnbé 1976), (Oyèláràn 1976), (Awóbùlúyì 1998), (Ajónḡólò 2005), Ọwọ̀rọ̀ is a dialect of Yorùbá language grouped among the North East Yorùbá (NEY), and the Yorùbá language as well as Haúsá and Ìgbò are the major Nigerian languages. As earlier stated, Ọwọ̀rọ̀ speaking communities are located on the western part of the bank of River Niger by the Niger-Benue confluence. This study findings substantiate Ọwọ̀rọ̀' status as a Yorùbá dialect, demonstrating similarities in lexical items, syntactic features, and sentence structure, notably the subject-verb-object configuration.

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ASSERTIVE ACTING FOR RHETORICAL IDENTITY IN SELECTED 2024 AFRICAN PRESIDENTS' INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECHES

Isiaq Damilola Toriola

*Department of English and Literary Studies,
Osun State University, Osogbo
isiaq.toriola@pgc.uniosun.edu.ng*

Temitope Abiodun Balogun, Ph.D

*Department of English and Literary Studies,
Osun State University, Osogbo
Julianah.akindele@uniosun.edu.ng*

&

Julianah Ajoke Akindele, Ph.D.

*Department of English and Literary Studies,
Osun State University, Osogbo
Julianah.akindele@uniosun.edu.ng*

Abstract

Rhetorical identity through linguistic structures reveals how thought patterns are expressed to project a person's worldview. This study explores speaker's identity in African political discourse using act of Searle's Speech Acts Theory for the revelation of African presidents' identity in selected Independence Day speeches delivered in 2024. Assertives act of Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory is used to examine a corpus of ten Independence Day speeches of African presidents delivered in 2024 across the five regions of the continent. Mainly, this study displayed how African presidents deployed specific assertive act of Searle's (1969) Speech Act such as report, remind, affirm and assure in political discourse. A total of 19 extracts were culled from the 10 speeches. This study found out that African presidents have strategically made use of assertives acts to drive the Aristotle's appeal mechanism (ethos) to reshape their audience's established knowledge of their leadership. Significantly, the selected African presidents have deployed subtypes of assertive acts (report, remind, affirm and assure) as persuasive mechanisms which project social, national and political cohesion as veritable construction of democratic norms. This study has added to the understanding on African presidents' rhetorical identity, especially how their assertive statements in the selected texts facilitate leadership credibility.

Keywords: Africa; African presidents; Aristotle's Appeal mechanism; Assertive act; Rhetorical identity; Independence Day speeches

1.0 Introduction

In contemporary discourse, Independence Day speeches raises critical reflections on the extent of political and economic autonomy achieved since independence. In many African countries, Independence Day is used by political leaders to reinforce

legitimacy, reflect on development achievements, some critical socio-economic issues and mobilise support. Critics argue that such occasions have been co-opted by political elites for performative nationalism, often ignoring pressing issues such as poverty, corruption, and inequality (Mbembe, 2016; Akinola, 2021). This day has become norms in a general system of the world that this particular day is marked with celebrations and parades that honour history and achievement of a country after six (6) decades ago of its first instance. An Independence Day Speech is a delivery of speech using exemplifications, persuasive strategies and narration that showcases inclusive themes. As observed by Alo (2012), the Independence Day Speech contains high instances of persuasive strategies including greetings as opening, and modalities utilised by the political leader.

The essence of human language cannot be delimited to daily communication and interaction alone. Human language has strength to display power, energy and influence that can innovate and counteract its opinion. There are systemic patterns the human language relates with people and interactional stances in their society. Stoic ancient Greek philosophies believe that words create comprehension, feeling, and sensation (Roberston, 2024). It is interesting to note, words are used for certain befitting roles to procure a specific goal in speech-making. In state affairs, political discourse especially rhetoric, stretches the fundamental activities of democratic affairs. Kane and Patapan (2010), opine that “because public discussion and debate are essential in a democracy, and because leaders are obliged to rule the sovereign people by means of constant persuasion, rhetoric is absolutely central.” (p. 372). In the same vein, “Rhetoric facilitates the making and hearing of representation claims spanning subjects and audience... democracy requires a deliberative system with multiple components whose linkage often needs rhetorics.” (Dryzek, 2010, pp. 319-339). Thus, this is a very crucial aspect in democracy as it is the subject that advocates closer dialogue between leaders and sovereign people. Ultimately, the goal of political rhetoric is to seek effectiveness in political communication. Aristotle (1991, p.38) sees ethos as the following:

There is a persuasion through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way to make the speaker worthy of credence... And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person.

Rapp (2002, p.9) supports the above by claiming that ‘if the speaker appears to be credible, the audience will form the second order judgment that propositions put forward by the credible speaker are true or acceptable’. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the ethos of selected African presidents with a focus on how they deployed assertive acts of Searle (1969) Speech Act Theory in the selected Independence Day addresses delivered in 2024 to project rhetorical identity.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Scholars have extensively researched African Independence Day addresses within different fields of scholarship in linguistics. Early contributions to political rhetoric

focused on the rhetorical aspects of political conducts and affairs, leading to extensive research on the concept of political rhetoric. More recently, research on political rhetoric discusses terrorism (McGarty, 2011), political debate (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2011), Independence Day speeches (Alo, 2012), political campaigns and party marketing (Balogun, 2018; Muriith & Nabcy, 2022; Mulindi, 2023); international relations/diplomatic discourse (Rohid & Mahdi, 2018; Zhang, 2018) and so on. In the domain of primary linguistic levels and the broad field in linguistic analysis, there are research on socio-pragmatic analysis (Medubi and Amuda, 2016), semantics (Ugoala, 2017), stylistics (Agbo, Ngwoke and Ijem, 2019), lexico-syntactic analysis (Ogungbe, 2021), while they all had explored political rhetoric and Independence Day speeches in various aspects of linguistic analysis such as persuading practs, ethical implications and modalities, little attention has been paid to assertives acting of rhetorical identity of African presidents for identity reconstruction in the selected Independence Day Addresses delivered in 2024 across the five regions of Africa.

Thus, the specific objectives of this study are to: explore the subtypes of assertives act of Searle's Speech Act engaged in projecting rhetorical of the African presidents in the selected Independence Addresses; and to identify how these identified subtypes of assertives act of Searle's Speech Act have assisted in projecting rhetorical identity.

2.0 Literature review

Researchers have investigated African Independence Day speeches as a political discourse within their different scholarship. Amurudu and Oduola (2017) carry out a comparative study of critical discourse analysis of concession habits between Nigerian politicians and American politicians. They found that almost all concession speeches have reluctant acceptance and the speeches maintain same pattern. In their study, the rhetorical relations in presidential concession speeches of Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria and John Mahama of Ghana, Osisanwo and Chinaguh (2018) attempted the communicative functions and effects of rhetorical language in the concession speeches of these selected African presidents. They found that there was peaceful transition adopted by these presidents. The study, therefore, concludes that the democratic morals of these two African presidents should be promoted in Africa because the morals will bring democratic development in Africa.

Balogun (2018) explores communicative styles, intention and credibility of Nigerian presidential aspirants in the 2015 general elections picking insights from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics and Searle's model of Speech Acts. The study reaffirms the linguistic power of effective communicative strategies and styles of political stakeholders as linguistic structures have the strength to unveil the performance of a political office-seeker to the electorates. Also, Balogun (2018) investigates the roles of women in politics with specific focus on the

linguistic structures for their political goal to seek office post. The study redefines the role of woman in Nigerian politics by contributing towards how language use democratically builds developed society. Ugoala and Israel (2020) examines pragmatic strategy of practs used by Presidents Muhammadu Buhari and Nana Akufo-Addo on the coronavirus pandemic in their first public speeches. It was noted that the two presidents adopted practs to instruct, condemn, pacify, persuade, and warn. This means that pragmatic practs can also be used to flaunt achievements and give more cautions. They concluded that these pragmatic strategies were adopted to actualised most important point at issue in the speeches. In another study by Akano (2022) on Rhetoric and persuading practs in Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari's broadcasts on the covid-19 pandemic, it was shown that the President Muhammad Buhari (PMB henceforth) adopts 66 instances of rhetorical appeal tools with 31 instances of ethos, 10 instances of logos and 25 instances of pathos. The researcher affirms that the realised percentage of appeals instances indicate more focus on the ethical and emotional appeals in the address of PMB on the pandemic. The study concludes that rhetorical elements adopted in PMB's address on COVID-19 are carefully used to prove government's efforts to the curb of the pandemic.

Khaemba (2024) investigates the discursive practices used in the general election of August, 2022, in Kenya. The study shows that people of Kenya cast their votes for their candidates through the rhetorical power of the politicians seeking election and they do not vote independently rather by the power of words of contestants and the media. The study concludes that Kenyan politicians use self-serving biases language on the voters. Despite the plethora of studies that existed on political rhetoric and Independence Day speeches, no existed study of assertive act of rhetorical identity for identity reconstruction of African presidents in the selected Independence Day Addresses delivered in 2024 across the five regions of Africa. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the assertive acting of rhetorical identity for identity reconstruction in selected 2024 Independence Day Addresses of Africa presidents.

3.0 Theoretical framework

J. L. Austin was the scholar who first used the term *speech act* (Austin, 1962, p.52). He argues that we perform acts with utterances. Austin further expands the theory by deviating from the general knowledge of constative utterances and performative utterances. He avoids the bridge between these linguistic elements (constatives and performatives) because the two linguistic elements refer to both genuine and pseudo proposition. What is more, performative utterances are used to perform certain actions in statements. Meanwhile, Searle (1969) developed the speech act theory by expanding mainly the illocutionary acts. He developed five types of speech acts which are: commissives, representatives, directives, declarations, and expressives. The hierarchical chain of speech acts has been studied since 1962 by Austin to most noticeable authors like Searle (1969); Bach & Harnish (1979);

Akhimien (2007) among others to trace the functions of specific verbs, with a few differences in their taxonomy. This current study only engages the “assertive” since the major issue related to the space of this study is the ‘assertive’-

Searle (1969) developed ‘assertive’ as one of the five (5) speech acts. The assertive has been put closely to be a truth-content, belief expression and explicitness (Searle, 1969; Vanderveken, 1990; Sbisa, 2020). Assertives are quickly identifiable by the presence of verbs like recognise, acknowledge, praise, blame, insist, assure, certify, attest, swear, alarm, describe, inform, reveal, sustain, forecast, alert, report, deny, affirm, believe, conclude among others when explicitly captured in the utterance. This type of speech act by Searle (1969) mainly improves on what Austin (1962) put as expositives and verdictives

4.0 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method to examine the assertives acting of rhetorical identity of selected Independence Day Addresses of African presidents. This study adopts random sampling technique. Ten Independence Day Addresses delivered in 2024 were examined across the five regions of Africa. The choice of the year 2024 is to provide context for understanding post-2023 political narrative after the World Health Organisation (WHO) suspended the global health emergency phase of COVID-19 in 2023. Therefore, Independence Day speeches in 2024 function as post-crisis rhetorical instruments for African presidents. The selected countries across the five regions of Africa in this study are Western Africa (Nigeria and Ghana); Southern Africa (South Africa and Zimbabwe); Eastern Africa (Rwanda and Kenya); Northern Africa (Algeria and Western Sahara) and Central Africa (Central Africa Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo). The selected texts were culled from online news network of each country. The study adopted a service translation for some selected addresses that are not in English. Consequently, an Atlanta Public Schools (APS) translation service was adopted because of its provision of original English version of the source language. The service was to keep clarity of the expected messages from the selected Independence Day speeches. The Independence Day addresses were already valid and existing documents in the archive of each of the nations. Assertive Act as an aspect of Searle’s (1969) Speech Act Theory was deployed as the analytical tool for this study. In addition, the study earths the rhetorical identity of these African presidents in the selected texts through different assertives subtypes such as *report*, *remind*, *affirm* and *assure*.

5.0 Data presentation and analysis

Assertive speech act in the selected Independence Day speeches of African presidents

Assertives are the types of performative verbs that explicitly state what words do and how they fit the world we live in. Assertives are verbs which help to reveal the truth or falsehood of a proposition. As a result, the main function of the

assertives is to state facts or beliefs in utterances. Meanwhile, it is good to note that there are numerous instances of assertives and no specific numbers of these verbs. However, noticeably, Vanderveken (1990) have put forward about 37 instances of assertives (see Vanderveken, 1990, to access a more succinct list of these thirty-seven assertives verbs). There are numerous assertives in the selected Independence Day speeches delivered in 2024 by these selected African presidents to capture the rhetorical identity of the selected texts.

Assertive Act of Report

This is a subtype of assertive which is realised in the Searle's (1969) classification of Speech Act Theory. This subtype of assertive put the speaker or rhetor to report or state information about past events and actions while presenting these events or actions as verifiable and factual account of the past. A speaker uses this act to give recorded actions to the public to present outcomes or consequences of taken actions. African presidents use reporting as an instance of assertive to present speaker's identity through factual discourse.

- i. The decision to rotate the scene of the national celebrations around the country, instead of staging them only in Accra, the national capital, has, certainly, turned out to be a welcome, nation-building exercise, that helps to focus attention on a different region every year, and, at the same time, rallies the nation together. (Akufo-Addo, Ghana, 2024)
- ii. I also wish to report that during my recent visit to the US, we negotiated the renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, an instrument which has enhanced access to the US market for African exports, and catalysed the rapid growth of Kenyan exports, especially in the textile and apparel industry. (Ruto, Kenya, 2024)
- iii. At his inauguration here at the Union Buildings on the 10th of May 1994, President Nelson Mandela spoke of the realisation of our democratic breakthrough. He said that: "The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!" Let us stand together, united in purpose, to build a future where the promise of freedom rings true for every single South African. (Ramaphosa, South Africa, 2024)
- iv. The "Call to Action" initiative, which I launched last year, compels all Local Authorities to re-focus towards a people centred development thrust and quality service delivery. (Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe, 2024)
- v. It is in this spirit of responsibility and self-transcendence that, a few weeks ago, I held a frank and republican meeting with Mr Martin Fayulu, one of the leaders of the opposition. This gesture marks an important step toward a policy of reconciliation, mutual listening, and reciprocal respect – in service of the greatness of our Republic. (Tshilombo, Democratic Republic of Congo, 2024)

In the extract i above, President Akufo-Addo reports the effect and positive influence of their national rotational policy of the freedom day venue by reporting

that this decision “rallies the nation together”. This rhetorical pattern constructs that the speaker is a credible national leader by reporting what has led to the implementation of the new national policy and identifying the observable result of this policy. He presents himself as a unifier and the gateway to the national cohesion. In this process of deploying assertive of report, the speaker frames his identity as someone who prioritises equity and collective belongings. He strengthens his ethos by reporting the practical benefits already achieved by the movement. In the extract ii above by the Kenyan president, Mr President deploys the direct assertive act of report through the word ‘report’ in the phrase “I also wish to *report* that during my visit to the US, we negotiated the renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity” to present him as a committed leader to economic development through diplomatic engagement. He strengthens his ethos by constructing himself as a competent and internationally engaged statesman by reporting the success in their negotiation to boost the national progress. In extract iii above, President Ramaphosa, opens this extract with an instance of assertive act of report by giving the historical event of democratic breakthrough and its significance on the nation. President Ramaphosa reports the direct statement of Nelson Mandela who was attributed to be a father of democracy in Africa. Meanwhile, he uses this report to align his identity with that of Nelson Mandela by constructing democratic heritage. In extract iv above, the Zimbabwean president draws a connection to the past and present time by stating the fact that is known to the audience. The Zimbabwean president deploys an/the assertive act of report to project himself as a leader who is responsive to citizens and value reform. In extract v above, President Tshilombo uses the expression “I held a frank and republican meeting...” to give a factual statement about his direct engagement. He adopts a core assertive act of report through the clause “I held a frank and republican meeting...” Through his reporting act, President Tshilombo establishes an identity of a democratic and responsible leader. This assertive act of report used by President Tshilombo is expected to enhance the audience perspectives about Mr. President’s credibility and commitment to republican ideals.

Assertive Act of Remind

This is a subtype of assertive which is mainly seen in the Searle’s (1969) classification of Speech Act Theory. This subtype of Seale’s assertive puts the speaker to reassert the truth of an established or assumed account known to the audience by reintroducing this account back to the listener’s mind. African presidents use assertive act of reminding for re-establishing a common ground such as making historical references and persuasion to a shared-knowledge account.

- vi. Our host this year, the Eastern Region, was very much at the centre of the independence struggle of our country – it is home to three (3) members of the BIG SIX of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), the acknowledged founders of our nation, Joseph Boakye Danquah, Edward Akufo-Addo and William Ofori-Atta. Their love of politics would seem to have continued into succeeding generations

- with the son of one of them being the current president of our country. (Akufo- Addo, Ghana, 2024)
- vii. On this day, the sacred national flag of our beloved motherland, Zimbabwe was raised, and the Union Jack brought down, symbolising the end to the racist and brutal colonial rule. (Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe, 2024)
 - viii. Three decades ago, this building was the site of refuge and rescue. From the surrounding neighbourhoods, Rwandans flowed here for safety. And many were saved, thanks to the Rwandan Patriotic Army, an act that was repeated countless times, all across our country. (Kagame, Rwanda, 2024)
 - ix. Exactly 64 years ago, our founding fathers chose democracy as a form of government and launched the dream of a great country that would lead the rest of Africa out of poverty, ignorance, and underdevelopment, a beacon of hope to the rest of Africa and the world. (Tinubu, Nigeria, 2024)
 - x. The 62nd anniversary of our national independence that we celebrate these days represents the pinnacle of a series of historic stages that began with the Revolution of November 1954. (Abdelmadjid, Algeria, 2024)

In the first extract above under the assertive of remind, the Ghanaian president relies on a collective memory and the historical evidence which promotes the nationalist historiography. The speaker rides on the assertive act of remind by connecting the past which names the love of politics and political success of the Big Six of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) to the present. However, the speaker uses the present political space to remind the audience about their identity and connecting with that identity by saying “*with the son of one of them being the current president of our country*”. President Akkufo-Addo maintains his ethos with the assertive act of remind which construct his rhetorical identity as an independence hero who acquired his trait from the natural transmission of patriotic values from the past heroes, especially his father. This persuasive strategy reinforces both national pride and regional pride by guiding how the people see both history and their contemporary leadership. The second extract begins with ‘a commemorative reminder’ from the opening ‘*On this day*’ to remind the audience on the victory over the injustice experienced under the colonial rule. The speaker further took back the audience to the days of colonial rule by giving insight from the US vs THEM ideology. The speakers adopt this persuasive pattern to enhance his ethos by strengthen the emotional attachment of the citizens to the nation. Again, President Mnangagwa presents his rhetorical identity as a rightful heir and continuer of democracy values which is very necessary during the era of postcolonial tensions in Africa. President Mnangagwa could achieve this only because he linked the present-day identity from precolonial days to the postcolonial political movement.

Extract viii above uses the temporal marker '*Three decades ago*' to situate the audience to a reminder of a particular time in the history of the country. Lexical choices like '*three decades ago*', '*this building*' and '*site of refuge and rescue*' are solid rhetorical construction to portray a long-term national memory. The word '*our*' from the phrase '*our founding fathers*' mainly positions the speaker as shared-knowledge whenever he makes reference to same origin 'Nigeria'. However, this act of inclusiveness strengthens the speaker's ethos and end factions memory of the past. The temporal marker '*Exactly 64 years ago*' definitely serves as an assertive act of remind to portray a historical assertion placing the speaker as a knowledgeable individual about the history of the nation. The speaker proceeds to give the background of the practiced democracy with the lexical choices such as '*our founding fathers*', '*chose*', '*launched the dream*', '*would lead*' and '*a beacon of hope*' to remind the moral vision of democracy which was a deliberate soften moral driven decision. The speaker projects himself as a continuer of democratic patriotism by reminding the audience about the decisions of their founding fathers. This positioned the speaker by establishing his rhetorical identity as a pan-African voice and moral international glory. The last excerpt above also constructs the speaker as a narrator of history; meanwhile, the speaker is framed as an heir to the national growth of the nation and as the state man who establishes the current socio-political issues as the continuation of the struggle of the past heroes.

Assertive Act of Affirm

This is a subtype of assertive which is seen in the Searle's (1969) classification of Speech Act Theory. This subtype of Seale's assertive assist the speaker to re-state a proposition as the truth in response to clearing doubtful mind of the audience by reasserting the validity of a proposition back to the listener's mind. African presidents use assertive act of reaffirming a position to establish commitment to an established stance.

- xi. Today, we are no longer at the starting blocks of the race to progress; we have come a long way. In the course of our journey, we have made Kenya a strong State anchored by a people united by fierce patriotism, love for one another, a shared vision of progress and a public service with a high capacity to coordinate development and security. Additionally, our country is a thriving, competitive and diversified economy well into its transformational take-off, and a democracy which protects freedom, drives democracy, and places the people of Kenya at the front and centre, as the authors and beneficiaries of this nation's affairs. (Ruto, Kenya, 2024)
- xii. Fellow Nigerians, better days are ahead of us. The challenges of the moment must always make us believe in ourselves. We are Nigerians—resilient and tenacious. We always prevail and rise above our circumstances. (Tinubu, Nigeria, 2024)
- xiii. We have established a society founded on the rule of law and the premise of equality before the law. (Ramaphosa, South Africa, 2024)

- xiv. The Congo of today is no longer the Congo of fatalism and powerlessness. It is a nation determined to assert itself on the global stage, committed to restoring the dignity of every Congolese citizen, and resolved to ensure shared prosperity for all.(Tshilombo, Democratic Republic of Congo, 2024)
- xv. We must transform our resources into jobs and shared prosperity for all.(Faustin,Central African Republic, 2024)

Extract xi, the Kenyan president through different lexical choices such as ‘*Today*’, and ‘*we are no longer at the starting blocks of the race to progress*’ relies on ethos which affirms advancement and progress. The Kenyan president presents his rhetorical identity as a vision driven leader who invites the citizens to assume themselves as agents of the national development. Extract xii, the Nigerian president relies much on the contextual resources of future-orientated certainty and proposition that projects hope to the audience as truth to be welcomed and not debated. The statement ‘*better days are ahead of us*’ is a powerful statement that frames a strong act of affirmation. Through many lexical choices, the Nigerian president presents himself as a symbolic leader who gives an ethos of a leader capable of building a well systemic nation. The Nigerian president through an assertive act of affirmation tries to stabilise the national consciousness by constructing inclusiveness in the Nigeria’s shared spirit and future day. In the extract xii, Presidents Tinubu strengthens the assertive act of affirm force through the lexical choice ‘*we have established a society founded on the rule of law and the premise of equality before the law*’ to give a clear institutionalized reality. This situation and persuasive strategies construct President Tinubu an individual who maintains democratic values. Again, this power of ethos reassures the citizens and also reinforces trust in the established institutions in the government. President Tshilombo in extract xiv positions himself as an authoritative voice of a forward-looking Congo through the lexical choices such as “*a nation determined to assert itself on the global stage*”, “*committed to restoring the dignity of every Congolese citizen*” and ‘*resolved to ensure shared prosperity for all*’ to show Congolese citizens that they can be situated within the international power space. He continued in the same opinion to use lexical choices in the statement ‘*shared prosperity for all*’ to frame his identity as an economic vision leader. President Tshilombo through the lens of assertive act tries to affirm by saying ‘*must*’ which remains affirmation rather than directive.

Assertive Act of Assure

This is a subtype of assertive which is mainly realised in the Searle’s (1969) taxonomy of Speech Act Theory. This subtype of assertive puts the speaker or rhetor to commit to the truth of a proposition purposively to strengthening the listener’s confidence in the truth. Speaker uses this act to remove doubt and uncertainty in the audience mind. However, African presidents often find a brilliant

way to reassure their citizens at any/every moment they have the avenue to persuade the people.

- xvi. As your President, *I assure* you that we are committed to finding sustainable solutions to alleviate the suffering of our citizens. (Tinubu, Nigeria, 2024)
- xvii. The road ahead remains long, but *I am confident* that the spirit of 13 August will guide us toward lasting peace, inclusive development, and renewed hope. (Faustin, Central African Republic, 2024)
- xviii. I stand here, therefore, to urge our farmers and other agriculture sector entrepreneurs to work with renewed confidence, with *the assurance* that the fruit of their labour will meet demand in Kenya, East Africa, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the African Continental Free Trade Area. (Ruto, Kenya, 2024)
- xix. *I assure* you a rich legacy of bravery that will look into the future with hope and confidence in our own abilities as an independent and free people. (Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe, 2024)

In extract xvi above, President Tinubu commits himself to the reliability of a proposition through the deployment of the verb ‘*assure*’ in the first extract above to give an explicit performative assurance. He strengthens this force by making the statement “*As your president*” to foreground an institutional self-identification of his authority and his official role. The citizens are expected to give no skepticism about the speaker because this linguistic arrangement gives the source as a reliable source. President Tinubu through his deployment of this linguistic force is expected to appear to the citizens as a close leader and a competent hand to solve the problem of their nation. The president frames himself to be a problem-solver. In the same vein, President Tinubu in the extract xvi adopts the same explicit performative assurance through the verb ‘*assure*’ to frame that he takes the full responsibility of reliability of a proposition spelled out in the statement. In the extract xvii above, President Faustin utilises the implicit performative assurance because he does not directly or explicitly use the verb ‘*assure*’ but the clause ‘*I am confident that the spirit ...*’ commits him to a reliability of a proposition. Through the deployment of this persuasive strategy, he is expected to be pictured by the citizens as a visionary builder who will reassure the nation’s confidence. President Ruto in the extract xviii uses an explicit or direct assertive act in the statement “*with the assurance that the fruit of their labour will meet demand in Kenya*” to create a certainty to the audience about the reliability of a proposition. He frames his rhetorical identity as a credible leader who can facilitate the development of the nation and this is applicable to them all.

6.0 Conclusion

The subtypes of assertive acting for rhetorical identity of African presidents in the selected 2024 Independence Day addresses have been explored and analysed. It is identified that these African presidents projected their rhetorical identity through different subtypes of assertive act. Mainly, these African presidents have strategically adopted the identified subtypes of assertive act to rebrand their ethos. It can be deduced that African presidents evoke the identified assertive acts to construct rhetoric that concerted movements which improves their character in political atmosphere within and beyond Africa. The identified assertive acts in the selected texts of African presidents are assertive acts of *report*, *remind*, *affirm* and *assure*. These African presidents have strategically made use of assertive acts to drive Aristotle's appeal mechanism (*ethos*) to reshape their audience established knowledge of their leadership and credibility. Significantly, these African presidents have developed these subtypes of assertive acts for persuading their people to see social, national and political cohesion as construction of democratic norms. This study has added to the understanding on African presidents' rhetorical identity, especially how their assertive statements in the selected texts can facilitate leadership credibility.

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APPROACHES TO MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Suku Hyellamada Kenan Ph.D

*Department of Languages and Linguistics,
Gombe State University,
hyellawilbe@gmail.com.*

&

Aishatu Bello Umar

*School of Secondary Education Languages, Department of English Language,
Federal College of Education (Technical) Gombe.
aishatubu@gmail.com*

Abdullahi Usman Garko

*Department of languages and Linguistics
augarko@gsu.edu.ng*

&

Ibrahim Ruth Ishaku

*Department of General Studies,
Federal College of Horticulture Dadin-Kowa, Gombe State.
Email: ruthishakuibrahim@gmail.com*

Abstract

This paper examines the major approaches to multimodal analysis and their contributions to the study of visual communication. It explores how leading theoretical frameworks explain the processes through which visual texts generate meaning and influence interpretation. The study reviews and compares key perspectives, including the social semiotic model (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (O'Halloran, 2004), genre-based multimodal semiotics (Bateman, 2008), cognitive approaches to visual metaphor (Forceville, 1996, 2017), and multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Attention is given to how these approaches conceptualise representation, interaction, composition, cognition, genre, and ideology in visual meaning-making. Adopting a qualitative multimodal analytical design, the study applies selected frameworks to visual advertisements drawn from MTN and Airtel campaigns to demonstrate their analytical value. The analysis is guided primarily by Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic framework and Forceville's cognitive theory of visual metaphor, while insights from systemic functional, genre-based, and critical discourse perspectives support interpretation. Findings reveal that visual persuasion is achieved through the interaction of linguistic and visual resources, including images, layout, colour, and metaphorical structures that shape audience perception and construct social meanings. The study concludes that no single framework fully captures the complexity of visual communication; rather, an integrative approach that combines semiotic, cognitive, functional, and critical

perspectives provides a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary multimodal texts.

Keywords: critical discourse, cognitive visual metaphor, genre-based multimodal semiotics, multimodal analysis, social semiotics, systemic functional.

1.0 Introduction

In the twenty-first century, communication has become increasingly multimodal, with meaning constructed not solely through language but through the dynamic interplay of text, image, sound, gesture, and spatial design. Among these, the visual mode has attained particular prominence in shaping how information, emotion, and ideology are communicated in contemporary culture. From print advertisements and films to social media platforms and digital interfaces, images have evolved into powerful vehicles of persuasion, identity formation, and social positioning. Consequently, understanding how visual messages function demands analytical frameworks that transcend linguistic analysis to encompass the wider semiotic and multimodal resources through which meaning is constructed.

The field of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) has emerged as a critical response to this need, providing scholars and analysts with systematic tools to examine how different semiotic modes combine to create meaning in communicative events. Over the past three decades, multimodality has developed into a diverse and interdisciplinary domain, drawing from social semiotics, cognitive linguistics, systemic functional linguistics, media studies, and critical discourse analysis. Each of these traditions contributes unique perspectives to the understanding of visual communication as a meaning-making system: social semiotics foregrounds the cultural and communicative functions of signs; systemic approaches map the grammatical and intersemiotic organization of multimodal texts; cognitive approaches explore the mental and metaphorical processes underlying interpretation; and critical frameworks reveal the ideological and power-laden dimensions of visual discourse.

Despite the proliferation of multimodal research, there remains a pressing need for comparative clarity concerning the theoretical assumptions, analytical foci, and methodological orientations of the major approaches to multimodal analysis. While scholars generally agree that meaning is distributed across multiple modes, they differ in emphasis and scope. For instance, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) emphasize the social and communicative functions of semiotic resources within the social semiotic model. O'Halloran (2004) extends systemic functional linguistics to multimodal contexts, focusing on structural relationships between modes. Forceville (2017) applies a cognitive metaphor framework to examine conceptual mappings in visual media; and Machin and Mayr (2012) integrate multimodal analysis with critical discourse analysis to uncover ideology and power in visual representation.

Against this background, the aim of this paper is threefold. First, it seeks to review and compare key approaches to multimodal analysis as they pertain to visual communication. ~~Second~~, It aims to demonstrate the practical application of selected frameworks, specifically, the Social Semiotic Approach and the Cognitive Metaphor Approach, through an illustrative analysis of digital advertisements from MTN and Airtel, two leading Nigerian telecommunication brands. Finally, it discusses the broader implications of these approaches for future research in multimodal and visual communication studies.

By integrating theoretical discussion with applied illustration, this paper contributes to the growing dialogue on multimodal theory and practice. It argues that visual communication research benefits most from methodological pluralism, an openness to combining insights from semiotic, cognitive, and critical paradigms. Such an integrative stance is vital in an era of media convergence and digital hybridity, where the boundaries of communication are constantly reshaped by technological innovation and cultural transformation.

2.0 Theoretical Background

2.1 From Semiotics to Multimodality

The theoretical roots of multimodal analysis lie in semiotics, the study of signs and how they generate meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) defined the linguistic sign as a dual entity composed of the signifier (sound pattern or form) and the signified (concept). Meaning, for Saussure, emerges from the arbitrary relationship between these two elements and the structural differences within a language system. This view, grounded in structural linguistics, established the principle that meaning is relational rather than inherent.

In contrast, Charles Sanders Peirce (1931–1958) proposed a triadic model of the sign, comprising the representamen (form), the object (referent), and the interpretant (the sense made of the sign). Peirce's framework was more dynamic, allowing for the interpretive process of semiosis – the continuous production of meaning through signs. He also categorized signs into icons, indexes, and symbols, based on their mode of relation to the object they represent. These early models of semiotics established the foundation for later theories that conceptualized images, gestures, and other forms of representation as semiotic resources alongside language.

Semiotics, therefore, laid the groundwork for understanding how visual elements operate as signs in communicative processes. The field expanded in the twentieth century through the works of Eco (1976), Barthes (1977), and others who explored how meaning is constructed and naturalized in visual and cultural texts such as photographs, advertisements, and fashion. Barthes's distinction between denotation and connotation – the literal and associative meanings of an image –

remains particularly relevant to visual communication, offering a framework for interpreting the ideological underpinnings of media images.

2.2 Systemic Functional Linguistics and Meaning Functions

The transition from classical semiotics to multimodal analysis was significantly influenced by Michael Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which views language as a social semiotic system. Halliday proposed that all communication simultaneously realizes three metafunctions: the ideational (representation of experience), the interpersonal (enactment of social relations), and the textual (organization of information into coherent discourse). These metafunctions describe how meaning operates at multiple levels of communication – representational, social, and structural.

Halliday's model provided a functional understanding of meaning that extended beyond syntax or lexis to the purposes and contexts of communication. This orientation toward meaning as social action inspired the development of multimodal theories that apply similar principles to non-linguistic modes. In multimodal contexts, the metafunctions serve as an analytical foundation for exploring how images, gestures, and layouts contribute to meaning in ways analogous to linguistic grammar.

2.3 The Rise of Social Semiotics and Multimodal Theory

Building on Halliday's work, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) pioneered a social semiotic approach to multimodality, which treats all modes as culturally and socially shaped resources for communication. They argue that visual communication has its own grammar – a set of semiotic conventions that determine how meaning is encoded and interpreted. In *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (2006), they identify three metafunctional categories corresponding to Halliday's linguistic metafunctions: representational meaning (depicting participants and actions), interactive meaning (establishing relations between image and viewer), and compositional meaning (arranging elements into a coherent whole). This framework marked a paradigmatic shift from viewing language as the primary vehicle of meaning to recognizing multimodality as the norm in communication. Kress (2010) further contends that multimodality reflects the broader social turn in communication studies, emphasizing how meaning-making is shaped by the social, cultural, and technological contexts in which signs are produced and interpreted.

2.4 Defining Mode and Semiotic Resource

A central concept in multimodal theory is the distinction between mode and semiotic resource. According to Kress (2010), a mode is an organized set of semiotic resources, such as language, image, gesture, or sound, through which people communicate. Each mode has its own materiality, affordances, and limitations. For example, visual modes can represent spatial relations more effectively than language, while linguistic modes can express temporal and abstract concepts with greater precision. A semiotic resource, on the other hand, refers to

the specific means by which meaning is realized within a mode, such as colour, typography, camera angle, or gesture. These resources are not neutral; they are culturally shaped and historically developed, reflecting social practices and communicative needs. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) note, “signs are motivated” because their forms and meanings arise from social interests rather than arbitrary convention.

2.5 Meaning as Multimodal Integration

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) extends these theoretical principles by examining how multiple modes interact within a communicative event. Meaning is understood as intersemiotic, emerging from the interplay among modes rather than residing in any single one. For instance, in a television advertisement, linguistic text, voice-over narration, camera movement, music, and visual imagery all contribute to the overall meaning. The analytical challenge is to understand how these elements are coordinated to produce coherent and persuasive messages. O’Halloran (2011) describes this process as one of intersemiotic complementarity, where each mode fulfills a specific role while supporting or enhancing others. Similarly, Baldry and Thibault (2006) conceptualize multimodal texts as integrated meaning systems that require analytical tools capable of mapping cross-modal relations. This principle of multimodal integration has become foundational in contemporary visual communication studies, especially in the analysis of advertisements, films, and digital media, where modes operate simultaneously to engage viewers cognitively and emotionally.

In summary, the theoretical background of multimodal analysis emerges from the convergence of semiotics, systemic functional linguistics, and social semiotics. These traditions collectively emphasize that meaning is socially constructed, functionally motivated, and distributed across multiple semiotic modes. The rise of multimodal discourse analysis has transformed visual communication research by providing a systematic means to investigate how images, layouts, and other visual resources work in tandem with language to communicate social, cultural, and ideological meanings.

3.0 Major Approaches To Multimodal Analysis In Visual Communication

3.1 The Social Semiotic Approach (Kress & van Leeuwen)

The social semiotic approach developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) represents one of the most influential frameworks in multimodal discourse studies. Rooted in Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics and Peircean semiotics, this approach views communication as a social practice where signs are motivated by the interests and intentions of their creators. Meaning is thus not fixed but dynamically produced within cultural and situational contexts. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) propose that visual communication, like language, operates through three metafunctions that shape its grammar of meaning:

- i. Representational meaning refers to how images depict people, places, and things, either as narrative structures (involving action and vectors)

- or conceptual structures (depicting stable relationships, classifications, or attributes).
- ii. Interactive meaning concerns the relationship between the image and its viewers, realized through gaze (demand or offer), social distance (intimacy or detachment), and perspective (power relations between viewer and participant).
- iii. Compositional meaning deals with how visual elements are arranged to form a coherent whole, governed by information value (left/right, top/bottom positioning), salience (visual prominence), and framing (boundaries and separations between elements).

Through these metafunctions, the social semiotic model reveals how visual design communicates ideational content, constructs viewer relationships, and organizes meaning compositionally. For instance, in an advertisement, a direct gaze from a model may create a sense of engagement (interactive meaning), while the colour red might draw attention to the brand logo (compositional meaning).

The strength of this approach lies in its ability to integrate semiotic theory with practical analysis of real-world visuals such as advertisements, magazine covers, and digital interfaces. However, it has been critiqued for being descriptive rather than explanatory, offering tools for analysis but not always providing insights into the cognitive or ideological processes underlying visual meaning (Jewitt, 2016). Nevertheless, its accessibility and systematicity have made it foundational to multimodal research.

3.2 Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (O'Halloran)

Building on Halliday's linguistic theory, Kay O'Halloran (2004, 2011) developed Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA), which applies the metafunctional principles of SFL to multimodal data. O'Halloran's model examines how different semiotic modes, such as language, image, and mathematical symbolism, interact to produce meaning in complex communicative events.

This approach is characterized by analytical precision and methodological rigour. It employs detailed annotation systems to map intersemiotic relationships, focusing on how modes complement or extend each other's meaning potential. For instance, in educational materials or scientific texts, language may express abstract concepts while diagrams provide spatial and relational clarity. O'Halloran (2008) identifies three analytical dimensions within SF-MDA:

- i. The ideational metafunction, concerned with how multimodal ensembles represent experiences and processes.
- ii. The interpersonal metafunction, which examines evaluative and attitudinal meanings across modes.
- iii. The textual metafunction, which explores how multimodal elements achieve cohesion and coherence within a text.

A notable contribution of this framework is its computational and corpus-based dimension, which allows for the digital annotation and visualization of multimodal data (O'Halloran, et al, 2017). This has made SF-MDA particularly influential in educational, scientific, and digital communication research where multimodal complexity demands formalized methods.

The limitation of SF-MDA, however, lies in its high level of technicality, which can make it less accessible for analysts working with interpretive or critical approaches. Nonetheless, its systematic approach provides a robust foundation for empirical multimodal analysis.

3.3 Multimodal Semiotics and Genre-based Models (Bateman and Wildfeuer)

Another major framework is John Bateman's Genre and Multimodality (GeM) model (Bateman, 2008), which combines insights from semiotics, text linguistics, and genre theory to analyse the structure and organization of multimodal documents. Bateman's model conceptualizes multimodal artefacts as hierarchically organized systems that follow genre conventions and rhetorical structures. The GeM framework identifies multiple layers of organization:

- i. The document structure, which concerns physical layout and segmentation;
- ii. The layout structure, which governs spatial arrangement and design; and
- iii. The rhetorical structure, which captures relations between multimodal elements (e.g., elaboration, contrast, cause–effect).

This multi-level approach enables analysts to describe how images, text blocks, and layout devices work together to produce coherent multimodal texts. Wildfeuer (2014) extends this perspective to film analysis, emphasizing narrative coherence and inter-modal cohesion.

The genre-based approach is particularly effective for analysing digital media, web interfaces, comics, and print advertisements, where meaning depends on how visual and textual elements are organized according to genre expectations. Its major strength lies in its attention to formal structure and multimodal cohesion, but its limitation is that it may underemphasize ideological or cognitive aspects of meaning (Bateman, 2014).

3.4 Cognitive and Multimodal Metaphor Approaches (Forceville)

The cognitive approach to multimodality, developed primarily by Charles Forceville (1996, 2009, 2017), integrates insights from Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) into the study of visual and multimodal texts. This framework assumes that much of human thought is metaphorical, and that metaphors structure how we understand abstract concepts through more concrete experiences. In multimodal communication, metaphors are not limited to language but can also be expressed visually, aurally, or gesturally. For example, in advertising, an image of a car with wings may visually instantiate the conceptual

metaphor “A FAST CAR IS A BIRD.” Forceville distinguishes between monomodal metaphors, where the metaphor is realized within a single mode (e.g., visual), and multimodal metaphors, where different modes jointly realize source and target domains (e.g., a visual image and accompanying text).

This approach provides valuable insights into how viewers interpret meaning through cross-domain mappings between conceptual and perceptual structures. It has been applied widely in the analysis of advertising, political cartoons, and film, offering a psychologically grounded perspective on multimodal communication.

Its key strength lies in its attention to cognitive processes and audience interpretation, highlighting how multimodal messages evoke emotion and inference. However, critics argue that it sometimes neglects the socio-cultural and ideological contexts that influence metaphor interpretation (Machin, 2016). Despite this, the cognitive framework remains a crucial complement to social semiotic and critical approaches.

3.5 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Machin & Mayr)

The Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach, developed by David Machin (2007) and later refined with Andrea Mayr (2012), integrates multimodal analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how power, ideology, and social relations are encoded in visual and multimodal texts.

MCDA extends the principles of CDA, such as the analysis of dominance, hegemony, and social inequality, to include non-verbal semiotic modes. It examines how semiotic choices in visual design (e.g., gaze, modality, setting, colour, and typography) serve ideological purposes. For example, in political or corporate advertising, the use of low angles may signify authority, while certain colour schemes may connote national identity or cultural values.

Machin and Mayr (2012) argue that multimodal texts are never neutral: their design choices reflect institutional and cultural power relations. The analytical task of MCDA is thus to uncover the hidden ideologies embedded in visual representation and to link semiotic structures with broader socio-political discourses. A distinctive feature of this approach is its focus on semiotic resources as ideological strategies rather than mere aesthetic choices. MCDA has been widely applied to the analysis of news imagery, political campaigns, and corporate advertising, offering critical insights into how visual communication legitimizes authority and shapes public perception.

The strength of MCDA lies in its sociocultural depth and critical orientation, though it can be less precise in its methodological procedures compared to systemic or computational frameworks. Nevertheless, its critical lens ensures that multimodal research engages not only with form and function but also with issues of power, ideology, and representation. In summary, these five frameworks represent complementary yet distinct traditions in multimodal analysis. The social semiotic approach foregrounds communicative practice and cultural meaning; the

systemic functional model emphasizes structural mapping and metafunctional correspondence; the genre-based framework focuses on document structure and multimodal cohesion; the cognitive approach highlights conceptual and interpretive processes; and the critical approach exposes ideological and sociopolitical meanings. Together, they provide a comprehensive methodological toolkit for the study of visual communication.

4.0 Comparative Discussion of Multimodal Approaches

The five major approaches (social semiotic, systemic functional, genre-based, cognitive, and critical discourse), reflect the diverse epistemological orientations and analytical traditions that shape the field of multimodal studies. Each offers unique theoretical insights and methodological advantages, but they also differ significantly in scope, assumptions, and analytical focus. A comparative discussion therefore helps to clarify how these approaches can be positioned relative to one another, and how they might be integrated to produce a more comprehensive understanding of visual communication.

4.1 Epistemological Foundations and Theoretical Orientations

The first major point of divergence among these frameworks lies in their epistemological orientation, that is, the nature of knowledge they seek to produce and the assumptions they make about meaning-making. The social semiotic and systemic functional approaches are grounded in constructivist and functionalist paradigms. Both assume that meaning arises from the social use of semiotic resources and that communicative acts can be analyzed in terms of their functional organization (Halliday, 1978; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). These frameworks share a concern with how semiotic choices realize social and communicative functions rather than how they represent cognitive or mental processes.

In contrast, the cognitive approach is rooted in cognitive linguistics and psychology, focusing on the mental representations and conceptual mappings that underlie multimodal meaning (Forceville, 2009; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Here, meaning is viewed as the outcome of mental construal rather than social interaction. The genre-based model, on the other hand, adopts a structuralist orientation, seeking to describe how multimodal texts are organized according to genre conventions and textual hierarchies (Bateman, 2008). Meanwhile, the critical discourse approach is distinctly ideological and interpretivist, prioritizing power relations, ideology, and sociopolitical critique (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

4.2 Analytical Focus and Units of Analysis

Another key point of comparison concerns the unit of analysis and analytical focus. The social semiotic approach focuses on the semiotic resources available in a mode, such as, colour, gaze, framing, distance, and how they are deployed in context. It is a qualitative, interpretive model suitable for analysing individual images or short sequences. Systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (SF-MDA), by contrast, employs a more technical, clause-like segmentation of multimodal data, allowing for detailed intermodal mapping and computational

annotation. It seeks analytical consistency and replicability, which makes it especially valuable in large-scale or corpus-based multimodal research.

The genre-based approach uses the text or document as its unit of analysis, focusing on how visual and verbal components are arranged hierarchically to create coherent multimodal ensembles. This model is particularly suited to structured media, such as websites, manuals, and print layouts where genre conventions determine design choices. In cognitive approaches, the unit of analysis is the conceptual structure or mapping between source and target domains across modes. This allows analysts to explain how audiences infer meaning and experience affective or emotional responses through multimodal metaphor. Similarly, MCDA operates on the discourse or ideological formation as its primary unit, connecting visual signs to broader sociopolitical narratives. It moves beyond the immediate text to examine institutional authorship, power asymmetries, and representational politics.

Taken together, these distinctions show that while some frameworks privilege micro-level semiotic detail (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), others focus on macro-level discursive structures (e.g., Machin & Mayr, 2012). An integrative approach thus requires analysts to choose their level of granularity according to the research aim.

4.3 Methodological Complementarities and Integration

Despite their theoretical differences, these frameworks can be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Each captures a different dimension of multimodal meaning: the structural, functional, cognitive, and ideological. For instance, an advertisement could be analyzed using social semiotic principles to identify its compositional and interactive meanings, while cognitive metaphor theory could explain how the visual rhetoric engages conceptual associations. MCDA, in turn, could reveal the ideological work performed by those semiotic choices. Such integration allows for a multi-layered understanding of how images persuade, position, and naturalize social meanings. This multi-perspectival synthesis aligns with Jewitt's (2016) argument that multimodal research should be "methodologically plural," combining descriptive, interpretive, and critical lenses. It also echoes O'Halloran's (2011) call for intersemiotic complementarity, where different analytical tools capture distinct but interconnected facets of meaning.

However, integration requires theoretical coherence and methodological transparency. Analysts must clarify how frameworks are combined and ensure that the underlying assumptions are compatible. For example, cognitive and critical approaches may conflict in epistemology, one focusing on mental construal, the other on social power, but they can be linked through the shared concept of representation, which mediates between cognition and ideology (Machin, 2016).

4.4 Ideology, Representation, and Agency in Multimodal Communication

A crucial theme across these approaches is the question of representation and agency, who creates meaning, and to what effect. The social semiotic model views sign-makers as socially situated agents who select modes and signs according to

their interests (Kress, 2010). This introduces agency into the design process: producers choose resources to achieve communicative goals within cultural constraints. By contrast, the critical discourse approach shifts attention from individual agency to structural power. It argues that the available semiotic resources themselves are ideologically loaded – certain ways of seeing are privileged while others are marginalized (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The cognitive perspective offers a third angle, emphasizing how individuals construct meaning through embodied experience and metaphorical reasoning. Here, representation reflects cognitive patterns rather than explicit ideology.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that multimodal communication operates through a dynamic interplay between individual agency, cultural convention, and institutional power. A comprehensive multimodal analysis must therefore account for both the design choices of producers and the interpretive frameworks of audiences, as well as the discursive structures of power within which communication takes place.

4.5 Strengths, Limitations, and Research Implications

Each analytical framework in multimodal discourse studies brings distinctive strengths and limitations that shape the scope and depth of interpretation. The social semiotic approach, grounded in the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), provides a flexible and accessible framework for examining how meaning is constructed through semiotic resources such as image, colour, composition, and typography. Its major strength lies in its ability to uncover the socially and culturally situated nature of meaning-making practices. However, the approach has been criticized for being overly descriptive, with limited empirical validation and occasional neglect of systematic methodological procedures (Bateman, 2014).

In contrast, the Systemic Functional–Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) model offers greater rigour and systematicity, drawing upon Halliday's metafunctional principles to account for ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings across modes. While this model enhances analytical precision and reproducibility, it can become excessively technical, limiting its accessibility and interpretive depth, especially in analyses that demand cultural or ideological critique.

Similarly, genre-based multimodal models, influenced by Martin and Rose (2008), provide a coherent account of how different modes contribute to the overall cohesion and communicative purpose of a text. These frameworks are particularly valuable for studying pedagogical and institutional genres; however, they tend to overlook the ideological and socio-political dimensions that underpin meaning-making in media and advertising discourse.

Cognitive metaphor approaches, exemplified by Forceville's (1996, 2008) work, offer significant insights into how visual and multimodal metaphors reveal conceptual mappings between source and target domains. Such models highlight the cognitive processes underlying interpretation but may risk individualizing

meaning-making by downplaying the influence of cultural, social, and ideological contexts in shaping audience perception. In contrast, Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA), as advanced by Machin and Mayr (2012), places emphasis on the examination of power, ideology, and social inequality as manifested in multimodal texts. Its critical orientation allows researchers to interrogate how multimodal choices reproduce or challenge dominant ideologies. Yet, without sufficient semiotic grounding, CMDA can sometimes appear impressionistic, privileging ideological readings over detailed semiotic description.

Recognizing the complementarity of these approaches enables researchers to adopt an integrative framework that capitalizes on their respective strengths while mitigating their weaknesses. For instance, an analyst investigating corporate advertisements might employ Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic visual grammar to describe the semiotic organization and visual structure of the ads; incorporate Forceville's multimodal metaphor theory to interpret the underlying conceptual mappings that convey brand identity and emotional appeal; and finally, apply Machin and Mayr's critical multimodal discourse framework to uncover how visual and linguistic resources encode ideological meanings and reinforce corporate power relations. Such a triangulated analytical strategy not only enhances the interpretive richness of the study but also aligns descriptive precision with critical depth, yielding a more holistic understanding of multimodal communication.

The implication for multimodal research, therefore, is a move toward hybrid and integrative methodologies that balance analytical depth with socio-cognitive sensitivity. Such synthesis can bridge the gap between form and function, structure and ideology, and sign and cognition – a direction increasingly reflected in contemporary multimodal scholarship (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016). This comparative overview demonstrates that the study of multimodality in visual communication benefits from a multi-dimensional analytical lens. While each approach foregrounds a particular aspect of meaning, none alone can capture the full complexity of multimodal semiosis. The social semiotic and systemic models explain how meaning is structured and realized; the cognitive and genre-based models account for perception and organization; and critical models interrogate power and ideology.

An integrated approach that acknowledges these dimensions can therefore provide a more holistic understanding of how visual communication functions within cultural, cognitive, and ideological frameworks. Such synthesis is particularly valuable in analysing advertising discourse, where persuasion relies simultaneously on semiotic design, conceptual metaphor, emotional appeal, and ideological positioning.

4.6 Integrated Analysis of Social Semiotic and Cognitive Metaphor Frameworks in MTN and Airtel Campaigns:



The analysis of MTN's *Go M.A.D* (Make a Difference) and Airtel's *Data Is Life* campaigns demonstrates how social semiotic and cognitive metaphor frameworks can be integrated to uncover multilayered meanings in visual communication. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, the social semiotic analysis reveals how each brand mobilizes semiotic resources, such as, colour, gaze, composition, and typography, to construct distinct ideological positions. MTN's campaign emphasizes empowerment and progress through dynamic colour contrast, low-angle shots, and direct gaze, visually encoding action and aspiration. Airtel, conversely, adopts a relational aesthetic, using eye-level shots, domestic settings, and soft lighting to evoke emotional proximity and everyday realism. These semiotic choices show how visual design functions as a mode of social representation, articulating both brand identity and cultural ideology.

Integrating Forceville's (2017) cognitive metaphor framework expands this interpretation from representational to conceptual levels. MTN's metaphors – DATA IS POWER and CONNECTIVITY IS TRANSFORMATION – translate abstract technological functions into embodied experiences of strength, mobility, and progress, visually reinforced through light motifs and upward vectorial composition. Airtel's metaphors – DATA IS LIFE and DATA IS LOVE – construct connectivity as an existential and emotional necessity, symbolized through red palettes, heartbeat motifs, and close-up shots of affection. Through these multimodal metaphors, both brands naturalize digital technology as an essential part of human experience: MTN aligning it with socio-economic development, and Airtel with affective intimacy.

This integrated multimodal approach demonstrates the analytical complementarity of social semiotics and cognitive metaphor theory. While social semiotics elucidates how meaning is structured through visual form and compositional grammar, cognitive metaphor theory reveals how those meanings resonate conceptually and emotionally with viewers. The combined framework enables a holistic interpretation of how Nigerian telecom advertisements transform technical services into cultural narratives of empowerment, belonging, and progress. Methodologically, this synthesis advances multimodal discourse analysis as an interdisciplinary model – capable of decoding both the how (semiotic construction) and the why (cognitive and ideological resonance) of visual meaning in contemporary media.

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the major theoretical and methodological traditions that underpin multimodal discourse research, highlighting their distinctive contributions and potential intersections. The comparative analysis of the social semiotic, systemic functional, genre-based, cognitive, and critical discourse approaches demonstrates that visual communication is a complex, layered process in which meaning emerges through the dynamic interaction of semiotic, cognitive, and ideological systems. Each framework, whether emphasizing the social use of semiotic resources, the metafunctional organization of modes, the structural conventions of genre, the conceptual mappings of metaphor, or the ideological operations of discourse, offers a particular lens for understanding how images communicate.

However, the findings underscore that no single approach can fully account for the multidimensional nature of multimodal meaning-making. The social semiotic and systemic functional perspectives explain how visual forms structure and organize meaning; cognitive approaches reveal how those meanings resonate at conceptual and affective levels; and critical frameworks interrogate why such meanings matter within broader socio-political contexts. Together, these approaches reveal that visual communication operates simultaneously as a semiotic, cognitive, and ideological process.

Accordingly, the study advocates an integrative analytical paradigm, one that is both methodologically plural and theoretically coherent. By synthesizing the descriptive strengths of social semiotics, the systematic rigor of systemic functional analysis, the cognitive depth of metaphor theory, and the ideological sensitivity of critical discourse analysis, researchers can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of visual communication. This hybrid framework bridges the gap between form and function, cognition and culture, and design and ideology, providing a richer account of how visual texts construct, naturalize, and circulate meaning in contemporary media.

This paper contributes to advancing multimodal discourse analysis as an interdisciplinary field that not only explains how multimodal meanings are made, but also interrogates why they matter in shaping perception, identity, and power. It thus reaffirms the necessity of methodological integration for decoding the complex semiotic work of images in the digital and visual age.

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REFLECTIONS ON JESUS' PARABLE OF POUNDS (LUKE 19:11-27): IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Julius Olajide Ademola, Ph.D

*Department of Religions, Osun State University,
Osogbo, Nigeria
julius.ademola@uniosun.edu.ng*

Abstract

Nigeria is in a critical situation plagued with different challenges, including poverty, underdevelopment, economic stagnation, social disintegration, insecurity, and gross violation of human rights. The economic policies of the country have created a wide gap between the rich and the poor, as only a selected few is living a luxurious and comfortable life, while the majority of Nigerians are living a deprived and hard life in the country. This self-inflicted economic crisis, which is deteriorating by the day necessitates action, especially from the leaders of the country. Although different scholars have written extensively on different aspects of economic development, little or no attention is paid to the significance of Jesus' Parable of Pounds in the Gospel of Luke and its implications to Nigeria's situation, especially in the context of the religious diversity of the nation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to have a theological reflection on Jesus' Parable of Pounds in Luke 19:11-27, its implication on the sustainable economic development of Nigeria. A descriptive, hermeneutic, and exegetic approach was used in analysing the text and discover economic principles in the Bible for the economic development of the country. Findings reveal that theological and moral values that are significant to development have been eroded. The study concludes that biblical principle is sacrosanct to national development, and therefore recommends that the religious leaders should take an active role in fighting against exploitation, by promoting the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ in addressing issues of poverty and insecurity in the country.

Keywords: Accountability, Development, Lukan Theology, Parable of the Pound, Prosperity

Introduction

Nation-building is a task for all and sundry, which requires the participation of all with a common commitment and patriotism for the development. Though the degree of inclusivity may vary from one person to another depending on their ages and capabilities, every human being, whether young or old, has a role to play in the development of the nation. According to Abogunrin (2018), the development of the nation require the growth of every person in the country, irrespective of their ages, social status, and religious affiliations. The development of a person entails physical, moral, mental, spiritual, educational, psychological, and vocational development. All these aspects of the development of a human being cannot be

viewed independently of one another with regard to the overall development of a human being.

All three Synoptic Gospels; Matthew, Mark and Luke have record of Jesus Christ preaching and teaching people on various aspects of the concept of the Kingdom of God. According to Gaird (2016), modern biblical scholarship is unanimous in its judgment that "the main theme of Jesus' preaching and teaching is the Kingdom of God concept." Barclay (2015) asserts that Jesus used a parable as a means of teaching because "a parable always makes truth concrete." This paper therefore, attempts to create a link between the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:11-27 and national development in Nigeria, and how some of the principles of diligence, responsibility, and resourcefulness as contained in the parable can be used as a means of inculcating patriotism and nationalism among the people of Nigeria from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds (Achebe, 2019: 43-46).

The Text: Luke 19:11-27

11 Ἀκούοντων δὲ αὐτῶν ταῦτα προσθεῖς εἶπεν παραβολὴν διὰ τὸ ἐγγὺς εἶναι Ἰερουσαλὴμ αὐτόν καὶ δοκεῖν αὐτοῦς ὅτι παραχρήμα μέλλει ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναφαίνεσθαι. 12 εἶπεν οὖν Ἄνθρωπός τις εὐγενὴς ἐπορεύθη εἰς χώραν μακρὰν λαβεῖν ἑαυτῷ βασιλείαν καὶ ὑποστρέψαι. 13 καλέσας δὲ δέκα δούλους ἑαυτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς δέκα μνᾶς καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς Πραγματεύσασθε ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι. 14 οἱ δὲ πολῖται αὐτοῦ ἐμίσουν αὐτόν καὶ ἀπέστειλαν πρεσβείαν ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ λέγοντες οὐ θέλομεν τούτον βασιλεύσαι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς 15 καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐπανελθεῖν αὐτόν λαβόντα τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ εἶπεν φωνηθῆναι αὐτῷ τοὺς δούλους τούτους οἷς δεδώκει τὸ ἀργύριον ἵνα γνοί τί διεπραγματεύσαντο. 16 παρεγενετο δὲ ὁ πρῶτος λέγων κυριε ἡ μνα σου δέκα προσηργάσατο μνας. 17 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ εὐγε ἀγαθε δούλε, οτι ἐν Ἐλαχίστῳ πιστος ἐγένου ἴσθι ἐξουσίαν ἔχων ἐπάνω δέκα πόλεων 18 καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ δεῦτερος λέγων Ἡ μνά σου, κύριε, ἐποίησεν πέντε μνᾶς. 19 εἶπεν δὲ καὶ τούτῳ καὶ σύ ἐπάνω γίνου πέντε πόλεων. 20 καὶ ὁ ἕτερος ἦλθεν λέγων, κυριε, ἰδοὺ ἡ μνα σου ἣν εἶχου ἀποκειμένην ἐν σουδαρίῳ 21 ἐφοβούμην γάρ σε, ὅτι ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρὸς εἰ αἰρείς ὁ οὐκ ἐθήκας καὶ θερίζεις ὁ οὐκ ἐσπείρας. 22 λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἐκ τοῦ στοματος σου κρινω σε, πονηρὲ δουλε ἡδεῖς ὅτι ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρὸς εἰμι αἴρων ὁ οὐκ ἐθήκα καὶ θερίζων ὁ οὐκ ἐσπείρα; 23 καὶ διὰ τί οὐκ ἔδωκας μου τὸ ἀργύριον ἐπὶ τράπεζαν; κἀγὼ λθὼν σὺν τόκῳ ἂν αὐτὸ ἐπραξα 24 καὶ τοῖς παρεστῶσιν εἶπέν Ἀρατε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὴν μναν καὶ δότετὰ τὰς δέκα μνᾶς ἔχοντι 25 καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ κύριε, ἔχει δέκα μνας 26 λέγω ἰμὴν ὅτι παντὶ τῷ ἔχοντί δοθήσεται, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὁ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται. 27 πλὴν τοὺς ἐχθροὺς μου τουτους τους μὴ θελήσαντας με βασιλεύσαι ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἀγαγετε ὥδε καὶ κατασφαξατε αὐτοὺς ἐμπροσθέν μου!

11 As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. 12 So he said, “A nobleman went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return. 13 He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten pounds, and said to them, ‘Do business with these until I come back.’ 14 But the citizens of his country hatred him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to rule over us.’ 15 When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered these slaves, to whom he had given the money, to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by trading. 16 The first came forward and said, ‘Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds.’ 17 He said to him, ‘Well done, good slave! because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.’” 18 Then the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your pounds have made five pounds.’ 19 He said to him, ‘And you, rule over five cities.’ 20 Then the other came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it in a piece of cloth, 21 for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ 22 He said to him, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.’ 24 He said to the bystanders, Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds.’ 25 (And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten pounds!’) 26 ‘I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 27 But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them- bring them here and slaughter them in my presences.

Exegesis of the Parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:11-27)

The introduction in verse 11; provides a narrative and theological framework for understanding the parable which follows. In the Lukan narrative, Jesus highlights the reality of salvation as “today” (“today,” vv. 5, 9). This actually makes the reader ponder on the timing of the arrival of the kingdom of God, as highlighted in the preceding passages in 17:11-21. In the larger historical context, Jesus and his disciples are getting closer to Jerusalem, which holds great promise and expectation for the arrival of Jesus. Significantly, Jesus take a look backward at the proper eschatological attitude which has been discussed previously in the Gospel of Luke. He affirms the certainty of the coming of *ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* (“the kingdom of God”) and instead highlights the proper attitude in anticipation of it. Jesus highlight the proper attitude of people concerning the nobleman (the heir apparent). The theme of kingship and royalty dominates the parable.

This section refers to Jesus' impending coming to Jerusalem (9:51-19:48), besides offering a theological explanation for it. It refers to events that were to occur in reference to Jesus' rejection, death, and subsequent continuation of his mission in Acts (Ackroyal, Cleaney & Parker, 2012: 84). This is significant since the disciples did not understand Jesus' mission. His mission did not imply glory in Jerusalem but rejection. This parable, therefore, prepared them for what would happen to Jesus in Jerusalem. The parable assured them that Jesus' death instead of glory fulfilled God's purpose. The parable assured them of glory since it was a test of loyalty and commitment to God (Adebayo, 2017: 202-208).

This parable, similar to many of the narrative parables in Luke's gospel, finds its power both in its authenticity and association with the events in the narrative. The section in verse 11 refers to a significant association between events in the parable and events in which it is found. The parable cannot be seen as an allegory since it would have been difficult to associate Jesus with the nobleman, since the nobleman had been harsh and exploitative to his subjects (v. 22-23), a quality that did not define Jesus. The parable, therefore, cannot be seen as an anti-Semitic parable since it equates "the citizens who hated him" with the Jews (Barclay, 2015: 43). Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus uses realistic stories or narratives to communicate important truths regarding God, the kingdom, and true discipleship, and does so in a way that does not depend on allegorical meaning (11:5-8, 16:19-31, 18:1-8). The realistic nature of this particular parable is verified by its similarity to the story of Archelaus, a king of Judea, who went to Rome in 4 B.C. to confirm his kingdom, encountered resistance from his subjects, and later punished them after his return, as told by Josephus. This is verified by the imagery of the kingdom and its authority as it is told in the Parable of the Pounds.

Within the context of Luke's Gospel, the Parable of the Pounds teaches that the kingdom of God, which includes the marginalized (18:15-43), also includes judgment for those rejecting God's kingdom. From another viewpoint, as verified by the themes of royal authority, as presented in the Gospel of Luke in chapters 1 and 2, and again in chapter 18, verses 35-43, and yet again after this parable, it is impossible to read the Parable of the Pounds and not recognize its reference and interpretation of the narrative that has been presented in the Gospel of Luke. The reference of the kingdom and its authority, as represented by the king in the Parable of the Pounds, who establishes his kingdom, is an analogy for Jesus. While it is true that Jesus is of royal descent, a son of David and God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:27, 32-35, 2:4), it is also true that there is a great difference in definition as presented by Luke regarding the kingdom and its authority in the world and the kingdom of Jesus as presented throughout the Gospel of Luke. The kingdom of Jesus, as presented throughout the Gospel of Luke, is in direct contrast to the way the world views authority, harshness, and exploitation.

According to Ryrie (2024), the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus in the parable can be viewed as unfair to people whose lives revolve around wealth, status, and the legalistic attitude that alienates them from the poor. The parable of the nobleman raises some serious questions: Is the servant who reveals the master's harshness a hero or a fool? Is the nobleman a rightful king and heir, and is the kingdom the kingdom of God? These uncomfortable questions in the parable invite the reader to make a personal decision on where he/she stands. Similar to Luke 18:1 and 18:9, the meaning of the parable is only limited to the context in which it is found in the narrative frame. In the absence of the narrative frame, the parable in verses 12-27 has a number of possible meanings. However, in the context in which it is found in the gospel of Luke, the meaning is limited. The 'they' in verse 11, who thought that 'the kingdom of God was to appear immediately,' is a reference to all of Jesus' followers, including the disciples, in the crowd in Jericho. Their expectation is a reflection of their Messianic expectation and expectation of the reception awaiting Jesus in Jerusalem (Boobyer, 2018: 34).

This connection of the parable to the preceding story is reinforced by Jesus' preceding statement that salvation is now accomplished through his work. Some readers of this section might understand Jesus' statement as an indication that God's kingdom in its fullness is now going to appear. The emphasis that Jerusalem is the end of Jesus' work on earth and of God's purpose is strongly brought out by Luke. The relationship of Jesus' work in Jerusalem to the full appearance of God's kingdom is of greatest theological significance. The disciples accompanying Jesus and traveling with him would have believed that Israel's end-time hopes were on the point of being fulfilled. The "kingdom of God" is God's eschatological kingdom of peace and justice, and "the appearance of it" is its full and ultimate fulfillment (Cassey, 2024: 98).

As far as verses 12-14 are concerned, the use of the word "so" by Luke is intended to emphasize what "because" verse 11 has already made clear, namely, that the meaning of this parable is to be sought in its context. The main character in this parable is a nobleman, i.e., a man of royal descent and claim to power. The noble descent and status of this main character of the parable would have conferred status and power in society. The act of the main character of the parable going into a distant land in pursuit of a kingdom would have been easily understood by the people of Luke's time, as they lived in a time of Roman occupation and were aware of the fact that the kings and rulers of the occupied territories had to go to Rome in pursuit of kingdoms. This is in sharp contrast to what was expected in verse 11, namely, that the kingdom of God would come at once. The slaves of the nobleman in the parable represent people who have been entrusted with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the nobleman. The slaves in the ancient world often managed the business of buying and selling goods, providing loans, and conducting business in general. In fact, slaves were often successful by the time they acquired their freedom in the ancient world. The command to "do business" (v. 13) implies

business activity, possibly even exploitative business activity in pursuit of profit. The money placed in the hands of the slaves is also noteworthy, as it is one mina, or four months' wages of a laborer, for each of the slaves (Dairo, 2018:73). Together with the servants of the nobleman, the latter also has enemies. Hatred is a political term used here rather than an emotional one. Hatred is opposition to the king's rule. The citizens hated the king because of their petition against him: "Do not let him reign over us" (14). The text did not indicate why there is hatred between the citizens and the king. In the whole narrative of Luke, it is quite obvious why there is hatred against the kingdom of Jesus. It is because of his radical message of acceptance of the marginalized people in society. It is because of his interpretation of the will of God as indicated in the Jewish scriptures of Israel (Davids, 2019: 123-125).

In verses 15-23, despite the resistance of his opponents, the nobleman successfully returns, having been officially appointed as ruler. Upon his return, an accounting begins—an evaluation that comprises the majority of the parable. He calls his slaves, who were given a mina each and were tasked with making the most of the given amount. Out of the ten slaves who were equally responsible, the first two slaves were praised for their obedience and rewarded for their loyalty. These slaves were faithful in "a very small matter," similar to what was mentioned in Luke 16:10. Faithfulness in small matters by these slaves symbolized discipleship and thus qualified them to share in their master's rule—echoing the promise of coregency with Christ in 22:28-30. In Luke 12:35-48, Jesus teaches about slaves who were faithful in their task and were blessed by their master when he came back. In the report of the second servant, "your pound has made five more," the verb "to make" was used, which is often used in connection with fruitful discipleship and obedience to God's will. In contrast, however, the third servant does not obey his master's command (Olasebikan, 2023: 77).

Due to his fear, instead of putting his mina to work, he hides it. The servant defends his action by stating that his master is a deceitful person, harsh and exploitative master since "he reaps where he has not sown and gathers where he does not scatter" (Matthew 25:26-27). The master does not dispute his servant's accusations but merely repeats his servant's words. The master is possibly acknowledging his servant's perceptions. The master reprimands his servant for failing to put his mina to work since "Even the one who had received one mina would be put out and would have recovered it. But as for that wicked servant, throw that servant outside into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:29). The master possibly believes that even making interest, as commanded by Jewish law, is better than failing to put his mina to work, as noted by (Dube, 2001: 112).

In verses 24-27, the ending of the parable is on judgment, both for the unfaithful servant and for people who openly reject the nobleman's command. The unfaithful

servant's disobedience is important since it occurs within a master-servant relationship where there is verbal compliance. The servant refers to his master as "Lord," showing his obligation to his master. The servant, however, shows his disobedience by failing to put his mina to work. The severity of his master's verdict, however, is subject for questioning, but the crowd, as narrated in Matthew 25:25, protests against what is unjust. Nevertheless, there is no question with regard to the guiding principle for judgment. The word "more" does not only imply "more wealth," but also "more involvement and participation in the ruler's authority," symbolizing "reward and responsibility in God's kingdom." The word "these enemies of mine" in Matthew 25:27 does not imply the unfaithful servant but rather the rebellious citizens who did not support the nobleman's rule. The word "hatred" is similar to what is narrated in 1:71, where it refers to political rebellion. The coming of a kingdom and then another is a guarantee for judgment on those who remain loyal to the former kingdom (Gaird, 2016: 204-211).

The Nexus between Jesus' Teaching on Pounds (Luke 19:11–27) and National Development

National development implies the formation of a new nation where no nation existed before, or the development of a nation in a new way that it can reflect the true essence of a nation. Dairo opines that for a nation to be developed, there must be a main designer of the nation, a visionary leader who not only has a clear understanding of what a nation should be in theory, but he must also be able to execute his ideas in practice. It also implies that the leader must be able to recognise that true leadership means his own involvement and participation in the execution of plans. When leaders become selfish and forget the great goals that brought them to the office, success becomes a distant dream, and their dream, as in the case of the builders of Babel, becomes a futile dream. The most important resource in the development of a country is the people, human beings, who were created to be free, intelligent, and have a purpose in life (Green, 2022: 65).

This freedom means having the chance to develop these in-built talents in a greater way after being introduced to the chance to pursue knowledge. This freedom in a country or a nation can be taken away in the interest of the common goal of all, as in the case of a small country or nation, but in the case of a country like Nigeria, which was forcefully made into a nation by the colonial masters by uniting different kinds of people, there has to be a sense of national unity created. This country has been facing the challenge of creating a sense of national unity among the people of different backgrounds after the colonial masters left the country (Lightfoot, 2016: 205-209). The people have to be made aware of the importance of living in harmony with one another, taking the leadership roles, and creating a sense of national consciousness which is above every other ethnic consciousness, whether it be the Hausa, the Igbo, or the Yoruba, and develop a sense of national unity where they can see themselves as one people working together towards a common goal, as in the case of working towards "the peace of Jerusalem." This process of

creating a national awakening has its birth, growth, and finally attains a unified status (Maxwell, 2016: 58-61).

In addition, Paul the Apostle metaphorically used the word building to explain the way of living of a Christian, which equally applies to nation-building in Nigeria. He says, “As a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, and another builds on it... For no one can lay any foundation other than Jesus Christ.” The Christian, therefore, has to build himself spiritually, but he equally has to build his nation on an eternal foundation, which is Christ. Relating this to the nation-building of Nigeria, eternal building materials, therefore, mean prayer, righteousness, honesty, discipline, and patriotism. Corruption, lawlessness, apathy, and compromising attitudes, on the other hand, mean wood, hay, and stubble, which hinder the development of a nation (Hodgson, 2015: 112).

The Christian’s Duty of Prayer One of the primary duties for Christians in building the nation is to engage in prayer. This has been emphasized by Paul in his letter to Timothy in chapter 2, verses 1-2, where he exhorted Christians to pray for all men, especially for rulers, that all may live in peace and godliness. Even in situations where rulers are oppressive and unjust to their subjects, Christians are exhorted to pray for them. This has also been emphasized by Jesus in Matthew 5:44, which says, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Christians who fail in their duty to pray are guilty of disobedience.

According to Abogunrin (2018), it is not politicians and activists who heal the nation, but the children of God who are called by His name. Perhaps the decline in morality among Nigerians may be attributed to the failure of Christians to fulfill their spiritual duty in this area. When Christians take their duty to pray seriously, anything can be achieved. This is one of the most powerful building materials for building the nation. Jesus taught about righteousness, stewardship, accountability, and service to others through a parable in Luke 19:11-27, and all these are crucial to the development of the country. Just as the nobleman’s servants made good use of the talents and opportunity given to them, Christians and leaders at large should make good use of their talents and opportunity to actualize righteousness, justice, and unity, and as a result, develop a country that will be established on eternal values and God’s will (Kato, 2015: 24)

Findings

This section presents the major findings of the study as follows:

- i. Poverty, stagnation and underdevelopment in Nigeria was the result of violation of theological and biblical principles guiding social development
- ii. Fragrant disobedience to the principles of fundamental human right by leaders hamper of national development
- iii. Moral values that are significant to national development have been eroded.

- iv. Righteousness, integrity and patriotism that enhance community development are no longer feasible

Conclusion

In conclusion, national development is a personal responsibility and a collective responsibility of all patriotic citizens in a nation. Although Jesus' Parable of the Pounds in Luke 19:11-27 did not specifically target political leaders and administrators in charge of managing a nation's affairs, it nonetheless espouses universal principles of morality, ethics, and administration that are applicable to national development. The principles of integrity, diligence, accountability, and productivity that were exemplified in the management of the pounds are the same principles that can build a nation towards prosperity. Any nation that does not adopt the biblical ethics espoused by Jesus' Parable of the Pounds will undoubtedly live a life of chaos, corruption, economic instability, and ethical degeneration. On the contrary, a nation that espouses integrity, diligence, accountability, and productivity in all its affairs will undoubtedly prosper and become a shining example among all the developed nations of the world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- a. **Patriotism and Responsibility:** Every citizen should be genuinely patriotic in playing his or her responsibility towards national development with honesty of purpose, diligence in work, and righteousness in all affairs.
- b. **Adoption of Biblical Ethics:** Biblical ethics that were espoused by Jesus' Parable of the Pounds; truthfulness, loyalty, trustworthiness, and competence should be adopted as a way of life by all citizens in a nation.
- c. **Reward for Integrity:** The government should establish a system that rewards hard work, integrity, and accountability among government officials and workers.
- d. **Promotion of Patriotism:** Patriotism should not only be preached or proclaimed; it should be promoted by the government through various government measures such as rewarding citizens who exhibit integrity, loyalty, diligence in all affairs.

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ASSESSING SHARĪ'AH-COMPLIANT PENSION FUNDS (FUND VI) SCHEME AMONG YORUBA MUSLIMS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

Oyekolade Sodiq Oyesanya, Ph.D

*Department of Religious Studies,
College of Humanities,
Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun,
PMB 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria
oyesanyaos@tasued.edu.ng*

&

Toyeeb Oluwadamilare Bakare

*Department of Religious Studies,
College of Humanities,
Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun,
PMB 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria*

Abstract

The Nigerian pension system remains exclusionary for Muslims due to Sharī'ah constraints and the persistence of non-compliant conventional schemes. The National Pension Commission's (Pencom's) Fund VI represents a remarkable reform, yet empirical evidence of its effectiveness remains scarce. This study, therefore, assessed perception, level of participation, challenges, and prospects of Fund VI using Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State as case studies in order to evaluate its effectiveness as a vehicle for ethical financial inclusion. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire administered to 400 employees in the public and private sectors, of which 397 responses were valid. Similarly, structured interviews were conducted with ten purposively selected stakeholders, including Pension Fund Administrators, Islamic scholars, and PenCom officials. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were employed for quantitative and qualitative data. Findings revealed that the awareness level of Fund VI was increasing, though participation remained low. Also, respondents showed positive perceptions of the ethical integrity and the Sharī'ah compliance. Challenges identified included limited Sharī'ah-compliant investment channels and weak regulatory enforcement mechanisms. The study contributed to the contemporary discourse on Islamic finance and public pension systems by providing the potential of Sharī'ah-compliant pension schemes in the promotion of ethical financial inclusion and further enhancing confidence in Nigeria's pension scheme among religiously pluralistic populations. The study recommended that the National Pension Commission should strengthen awareness campaigns and advocacy to improve the level of participation; enforce compliance among Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) to ensure full implementation of Fund VI with a view to addressing the limited availability of Sharī'ah-compliant investment initiatives.

Keywords: Financial Inclusion; Fund VI; Islamic Finance; Ogun State; *Shari'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds

Introduction

Pension systems are recognised globally as critical instruments for guaranteeing and maintaining the financial well-being of individuals during retirement. A pension is believed to be a retirement plan that provides a steady income to individuals after leaving active service, usually funded through joint contributions from employers and employees (Blake, 2021). These contributions are designed to accumulate capital and engender returns, thereby ensuring a dignified standard of living in later years. Modern pension funds have become the main institutional investors. They direct long-term savings into productive sectors, particularly infrastructure, real estate, and sovereign bonds, thereby facilitating capital formation, financial stability, and sustainable economic growth (OECD, 2022; Beetsma & Romp, 2021; IMF, 2021). The long-term investment strategies will reduce exposure to market volatility, while allowing pension funds to engender economic growth over time.

Historically, pension systems predate ancient civilisations, particularly Greece and Rome, where military pensions supported retired soldiers (Blake, 2021), while contemporary pension systems emerged with the German model introduced by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1889, later serving as a model for global reforms (OECD, 2020). Throughout the 21st century, structured models, especially defined benefit (DB) and defined contribution (DC) schemes, were institutionalised (KPMG, 2022). In Africa, pensions developed largely after independence, shaped by colonial experiences and national development policies, yet remain constrained by low coverage, limited investment opportunities, and weak regulatory frameworks (Oduro, 2023). Globally, pension funds now represent a major component of the financial system, with assets in the 22 largest markets exceeding USD 56 trillion as of 2023, predominantly allocated to equities (40–45%), fixed income (30–35%), and alternative investments (15–20%), nearly 60% of assets held in the United States (Willis Towers Watson, 2023). In Africa, assets have grown to approximately USD 60 billion, a 12% year-on-year increase, but only about 10% of the workforce participates in formal schemes (African Development Bank, 2023; World Bank, 2023), with disparities across countries as South Africa has a mature pension market, while Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal continue to face underdeveloped structures and limited inclusivity (OECD, 2023; Oduro, 2023).

In Nigeria, pension reforms have gained significant momentum with the enactment of the Pension Reform Act (PRA) in 2004, which introduced the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). This scheme transitioned the pension system from a defined benefit model to a mandatory defined contribution structure, aiming to secure the retirement future of Nigerian workers through individual savings and regulatory oversight by the National Pension Commission (PenCom) (Nwankwo et al., 2022). The PRA ensures transparency, accountability, and safety of pension assets by delineating roles between Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) and

Custodians. This reform has led to a significant growth in pension assets, reaching approximately ₦14 trillion (USD 37 billion) by December 2023 (National Pension Commission, 2023). Further advancements include the digitisation of pension services, which enhances user accessibility and contributes to operational efficiency (Ogunleye, 2022).

Despite recent pension reforms, conventional pension funds in Nigeria operate predominantly through interest-bearing instruments and financial mechanisms that contravene core Islamic financial principles, particularly the prohibition of *ribā* (interest), *gharar* (excessive uncertainty), and investments in non-*ḥalāl* sectors (Ali & Ahmed, 2022; Zaman et al., 2023). Consequently, devout Muslims seeking compliance with principles of the *Sharīʿah* find conventional pension schemes religiously incompatible. In response to this ethical and religious gap, Nigeria introduced the *Sharīʿah*-compliant Pension Fund VI in 2022, a scheme structured in accordance with Islamic finance principles and spearheaded by the National Pension Commission (PenCom) in collaboration with Islamic financial institutions, allowing contributors to channel their retirement savings into *Sharīʿah*-compliant instruments, including *ṣukūk* (Islamic bonds), real estate, and equities of permissible companies (Sadiq & Dada, 2023). Beyond serving Muslim contributors, such funds are designed to promote financial inclusion, deepen the Islamic finance ecosystem, and advance broader objectives of socio-economic justice (Khan, 2020). However, despite the normative appeal and policy significance of Fund VI, its penetration remains insufficiently examined, with existing studies indicating gaps in awareness, uptake, and confidence in the scheme's *Sharīʿah* compliance and operational effectiveness (Mustapha, 2023).

This study, therefore, critically assessed the *Sharīʿah*-compliant Pension Fund VI among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State. It interrogates the levels of awareness, participation, compliance with *Sharīʿah* principles, and operational challenges of the fund. This study argues that although the introduction of the *Sharīʿah*-compliant Pension Fund VI represents a significant policy innovation in Nigeria's pension system, its effectiveness among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State is constrained by limited awareness, low participation, and structural and regulatory challenges that must be addressed for it to function as a viable instrument of ethical retirement planning and financial inclusion.

Despite the policy significance of the *Sharīʿah*-compliant Pension Fund VI, there is a notable lack of empirical studies examining its awareness, participation level, *Sharīʿah* compliance, and operational effectiveness among Muslim populations in Nigeria. Existing scholarship on pension reforms largely focuses on conventional schemes, while studies on Islamic finance in Nigeria rarely interrogate pension funds as instruments of retirement security. This gap is particularly evident with respect to Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State, whose demographic significance and religious sensibilities make them a critical group for evaluating the practical viability of *Sharīʿah*-compliant pension initiatives.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the operational effectiveness and *Sharī'ah* compliance of the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds (Fund VI) Scheme among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State, Nigeria. Other objectives were to:

- i. evaluate the level of awareness of the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds (FUND VI) Scheme among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State, Nigeria;
- ii. analyse the participation level of Yoruba Muslims in the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds (FUND VI) Scheme in Ogun State, Nigeria;
- iii. assess the conformity of the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds (FUND VI) Scheme with the principles of *Sharī'ah* among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State, Nigeria;
- iv. identify the challenges confronting the implementation of the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds (FUND VI) Scheme among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State, Nigeria;
- v. explore the prospects of the implementation of the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds (FUND VI) Scheme among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State, Nigeria; and
- vi. offer research-based suggestions for improving the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds (FUND VI) Scheme among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Methodology of the Study

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine awareness, participation, and compliance with the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Fund VI among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State. The quantitative strand employed a structured questionnaire, the *Sharī'ah-Compliant Pension Funds Scheme Questionnaire (SCPFSQ)*, consisting of closed and open-ended items measured on a four-point Likert-type scale, which gathered data from a stratified random sample of 400 respondents selected across principal demographic strata, including age, educational background, income level, and occupational sector, to ensure representativeness. The qualitative strand comprised semi-structured interviews with ten purposively selected participants, including Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs), Islamic finance scholars, and regulatory officials from the National Pension Commission (PenCom), providing nuanced perspectives into the regulatory, operational, and theological dimensions of the fund, particularly from the standpoint of implementation and religious conformity.

The SCPFSQ was validated through expert review and consultation with scholars in research methodology and Islamic finance from the Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling Psychology at Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, ensuring construct, face, and content validity, while reliability was assessed via a pilot test with twenty participants in Epe, Lagos State, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.501 to 0.766, indicating acceptable internal consistency for the main study. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including means and frequencies to

determine patterns, correlations, and levels of significance between variables such as awareness, socio-economic background, and participation in Fund VI, while thematic analysis was employed for the qualitative data to identify recurring narratives and latent themes regarding the challenges, compliance, and operational performance of the fund.

Review of Related Literature

A. Concept of Pension and Pension Funds Administration

The concept of pension has become a critical pillar of socio-economic planning and welfare systems globally, with scholars providing nuanced but occasionally limited conceptualisations. According to Altman (2005), a pension is a financial plan that is designed and structured to provide income after retirement. It replaces earnings from active employment, and emphasises income continuity as a mechanism for mitigating economic vulnerability and preventing poverty among retirees. This suggests that Altman (2005) considers pensions primarily as mechanisms for income replacement in old age, essentialising their role in sustaining living standards after retirement. However, his definition is largely restricted to conventional pension schemes, especially defined benefit (DB) and defined contribution (DC), with little attention given to the other hybrid models, emerging pension innovations, or the evolving complexities of pension fund management.

Furthermore, Blake (2006) contends that pensions are efficient mechanisms that may deliver predictable and stable income flows in retirement with a view to ensuring financial security. However, his proposition seems to generalise pension systems without sufficient sensitivity to individual-level variables, including income differentials, career history, or health status. Also, Blake's (2006) framework ineffectively integrates the influence of emerging digital technologies, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations, and evolving regulatory dynamics that increasingly shape contemporary pension systems.

Meanwhile, Shoven's (2007) definition introduces the theory of essentiality, prioritising retirees' living standards. He considers pensions as economic buffers that provide sustainable income flows during retirement and prevent dependence on family or public welfare. While Shoven's (2007) contribution to the literature on pension schemes reflects remarkable perspectives into the structure and function of pension systems, it remains limited by a lack of sensitivity to regional and institutional differences in pension model delivery. His argument does not sufficiently engage with differences in regulatory jurisdictions, investment strategies, fund performance dynamics, or cross-national pension governance frameworks.

Drawing on these limitations, the present study adopts a more focused conceptualisation of a pension as a contributory retirement plan that is funded through regular contributions from employees and/or employers and invested to

generate post-retirement income. This definition deliberately excludes non-contributory and purely defined-benefit schemes in which financing and coverage are provided directly by the state or sponsoring institutions without sustained employee contributions. Within this framework, contributory pension systems, which include defined-benefit, defined-contribution, and state-managed social pension arrangements, are understood as institutional mechanisms that promote economic stability and engender intergenerational equity (ILO, 2020; OECD, 2022).

Pension funds may be seen as collective investment schemes that pool and manage contributors' savings to provide retirement income to beneficiaries. They operate under professional asset management and regulatory oversight, and play remarkable roles in economic development, capital market deepening, and social stability. Thus, Doe (2017) considers pension funds as institutional investors responsible for managing employees' savings, underscoring their far-reaching implications for corporate governance and financial market stability. Also, Smith (2018) complements this perspective by contending that pension funds are long-term financial intermediaries that channel accumulated savings into productive investments, thereby facilitating capital accumulation and supporting national economic growth.

In the light of this social protection paradigm, Rodriguez (2019) explains pension funds as mechanisms for shielding retirees from poverty and income instability. He analyses their functions as socio-economic stabilisers, particularly within welfare-oriented states. However, Ali (2020), from a regulatory standpoint, defines pension funds as entities operating within stringent legal and fiduciary frameworks which are designed to ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainability in pension asset administration. He emphasises the centrality of regulatory compliance to institutional viability. Brown (2021), extending the discourse into behavioural finance, introduces behavioural dimensions to pension fund management. He explores how psychological factors, particularly risk aversion and herding behaviour, could influence investment strategies, thereby broadening analytical understanding of pension fund operations beyond purely structural and regulatory concerns.

This study defines pension funds as institutional investment vehicles that aggregate and manage retirement contributions from employees and/or employers to generate returns for future disbursement. These funds may assume various structures, including DB, DC, hybrid, occupational, public, and *Sharī'ah*-compliant schemes, with investment strategies spanning equities, bonds, real estate, and ethical instruments (OECD, 2023; Zulkhibri, 2021). Their role is not only to secure retirement income but also to contribute to capital market stability, economic growth, and corporate accountability. Effective pension fund administration, therefore, necessitates sound governance, diversified asset allocation, legal compliance, and adaptive strategies to navigate demographic shifts, financial

volatility, and evolving regulatory landscapes (Beetsma & Romp, 2021; Nwankwo et al., 2022).

B. Pension Funds Administration in Nigeria

The administration of pension funds in Nigeria has evolved significantly over the decades, reflecting both the nation's socio-economic transitions and responses to systemic inefficiencies. The history of the pension system in Nigeria may be traced to the colonial period with the promulgation of the Pension Ordinance of 1951, which formally established a non-contributory Defined Benefit (DB) scheme for civil servants. Under this legal framework, the government shouldered full responsibility for post-retirement payments, with benefits determined by final salary and years of service (Balogun, 2006). Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the scheme was expanded to cover a broader segment of public employees. However, structural inefficiencies gradually eroded the system's credibility and effectiveness. These included underfunding, corruption, delayed payments, and administrative ineptitude (Balogun, 2021).

The enactment of the Pension Reform Act (PRA) of 2004, in response to enduring structural deficiencies within Nigeria's pension system, indicates a remarkable development in the country's retirement landscape. The Act birthed the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), replacing the old pay-as-you-go (defined benefit - DB) model with a fully funded, contribution-based system administered by private entities. Under the new CPS administration, both employers and employees are required to contribute designated proportions of an employee's monthly earnings into a Retirement Savings Account (RSA). This is managed by licensed and accredited Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs), while regulatory oversight resides in the National Pension Commission to ensure transparency, compliance, and sustainability (Nwankwo et al., 2022). This structural overhaul has remarkably strengthened governance and accountability in pension administration, with a process further consolidated by the 2014 amendment of the Pension Reform Act. The amendment not only increases the minimum contribution rate from 15% to 18% of monthly earnings, comprising 10% from employers and 8% from employees, but also extends the coverage of the scheme to informal sector participants. It further strengthened enforcement mechanisms against non-compliant employers (PenCom, 2023).

Arising from the 2014 reform, the Micro Pension Plan (MPP) was explicitly designed to integrate self-employed individuals and informal sector workers into the pension system. The MPP provides flexible contribution arrangements to broaden pension coverage. This became inevitable as more than 80% of the national labour force was believed to be operating outside the formal sector. Despite incremental growth, the scheme continues to encounter unprecedented challenges. These include limited public awareness, technological access constraints, and residual scepticism towards government-managed financial instruments (National Pension Commission, 2023).

Meanwhile, regarding fund security and asset management, Pension Fund Administrators do not assume direct custody of pension contributions; rather, these assets are held by Pension Fund Custodians (PFCs), who execute transactions solely at the instruction of PFAs. This functional separation is designed to enhance transparency and mitigate fiduciary risk. Nevertheless, several persistent challenges still constrain the effectiveness and efficiency of the CPS. First instance, the informal sector enrolment remains low, as inadequate public education and entrenched trust deficits hinder the adoption of the MPP. Also, investment practices remain conservative, with PFAs predominantly required to invest in low-risk instruments, especially government securities. While this strategy safeguards capital, it simultaneously curtails returns, particularly under inflationary pressures. Additionally, employer non-compliance remains a concern as numerous private-sector organisations underreport salaries or fail to remit employee deductions, despite statutory penalties. Weak enforcement mechanisms further exacerbate this non-compliance, revealing vulnerabilities within the ostensibly reformed system (Bakare, 2025).

The Nigerian pension system, according to Bakare (2025), operates within a multi-tiered institutional framework. It encompasses a range of interdependent stakeholders; the National Pension Commission (PenCom) is positioned at the apex as the principal regulatory authority. PenCom's statutory duties and functions include licensing, supervising, and auditing Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) and Pension Fund Custodians (PFCs), as well as formulating policies to safeguard contributors' interests and ensure investor protection. Whereas Pension Fund Administrators are licensed entities responsible for managing individual Retirement Savings Accounts (RSAs). The duties of this body include making investment decisions within prescribed regulatory parameters, maintaining direct engagement with employers and employees, and providing regular account statements to contributors (National Pension Commission, 2023).

In contrast, Bakare (2025) explains that Pension Fund Custodians serve as independent custodians of pension assets, executing investment instructions issued by PFAs while restricting direct access to funds to promote transparency, accountability, and fiduciary integrity. On the other hand, employers play pivotal roles in sustaining the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) (Bakare, 2025). They are statutorily required to deduct and remit employees' monthly pension contributions to the designated PFAs. Employer compliance is, therefore, critical to the effective operation and long-term viability of the scheme. Employees, for their part, bear responsibility for selecting their PFAs, contributing through payroll deductions, monitoring their RSA statements, and accessing benefits upon retirement or under other contingencies.

Furthermore, professional oversight is provided by Investment Portfolio Managers, who implement PFAs' investment strategies in accordance with PenCom's extant and regulatory guidelines. This mandate is to optimise returns while maintaining investments within acceptable risk thresholds. The *Shari'ah*-compliant funds,

especially Fund VI, place on Investment Portfolio Managers additional responsibility of ensuring that all investment activities strictly avoid *ribā*, *gharar*, and prohibited sectors, thereby conforming fund management with Islamic financial ethics and principles.

C. Islam and Pensions: Concept, Principles, Administration, Prospects and Challenges in Nigeria

The Islamic finance industry, in response to these socio-economic transformations and the growing need to reconcile modern retirement planning with *Shari'ah* principles, has responded to these developments through innovations that integrate faith-based ethics with long-term financial security, notably through the emergence of *Shari'ah*-compliant pension funds. These funds are designed for individuals who may wish to avoid conventional pension schemes due to interest-based and prohibited elements. They are structured around *Shari'ah*-compliant contracts and ethical investment screening criteria. The funds systematically exclude entities that are engaged in alcohol, tobacco, gambling, and conventional financial services; utilise instruments, especially *muḍārabah* and *murābaḥah* (cost-plus financing), which generate returns through trade and partnership rather than guaranteed interest (Usmani, 2019; Abdullah, 2022).

Globally, demand for *Shari'ah*-compliant pension funds has expanded significantly, particularly in Muslim-majority regions. These include the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Southeast Asia, and other parts of Africa. Malaysia, for instance, has made remarkable progress in the integration of *Shari'ah*-compliant pension schemes into national frameworks. The Employees Provident Fund has demonstrated the feasibility of embedding Islamic pension models within public policy (Thompson, 2020). Beyond these religious factors, the funds appeal to a broader constituency through their conformity with ethical and socially responsible investment principles, thereby attracting both Muslim and non-Muslim investors (Ali, 2022; Ahmed, 2021).

The case for *Shari'ah*-compliant pension schemes is particularly compelling in Nigeria, given the country's huge Muslim population and the challenges that characterise conventional pension arrangements. The National Pension Commission (PenCom) responded timely by introducing Fund VI under the Multi-Fund Structure of the Contributory Pension Scheme. It was established in 2017 and designed specifically to accommodate Muslims previously excluded from pension participation due to *Shari'ah* concerns (PenCom, 2017; Sanusi & Abdulkadir, 2020). The fund sidesteps interest-based instruments, invests exclusively in *Shari'ah*-approved sectors, and operates under the guidance of a dedicated *Shari'ah* Advisory Committee. Contributors may transfer from their conventional Retirement Savings Accounts (RSAs) to Fund VI in order to enhance inclusivity within the national pension framework (Usman & Taofeeq, 2021).

The legal and institutional foundations of Fund VI are based on the Pension Reform Act of 2014. The Act provides the regulatory basis for specialised pension funds

in Nigeria and reflects a deliberate policy shift towards religion-sensitive financial inclusion. Fund VI further promotes ethical investment by directing pension assets into development-oriented sectors, including infrastructure, agriculture, real estate, and healthcare. These sectors are believed to offer *ḥalāl* returns while contributing to national socio-economic transformation (Musa, 2019; Suleiman & Yusuf, 2020).

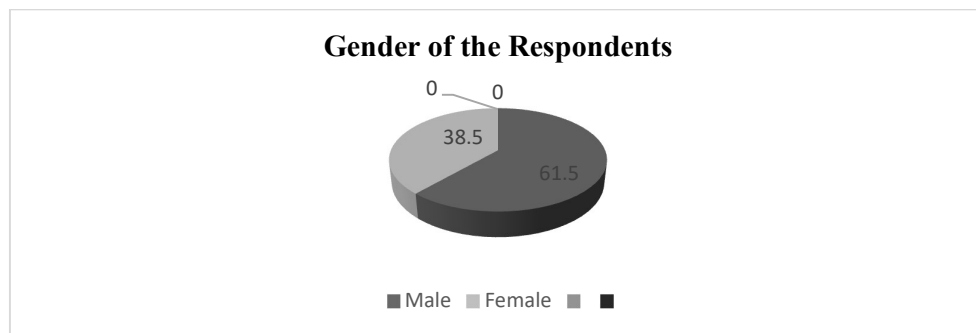
Despite these developments, the implementation of *Sharīʿah*-compliant pension funds in Nigeria faces persistent challenges, including weak Islamic finance-specific regulatory frameworks, low public awareness, competition from conventional funds, restrictive investment options, and a shortage of skilled professionals (Ojo, 2023; Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2023; Ismail, 2023). Additional constraints such as economic volatility, divergent *Sharīʿah* interpretations, and limited financial literacy further impede the effective expansion of Fund VI and similar initiatives.

Nevertheless, prospects for *Sharīʿah*-compliant pension schemes in Nigeria remain strong. The country's large and growing Muslim population constitutes a substantial potential market (Pew Research Center, 2023), while government initiatives such as the Nigerian Capital Market Master Plan provide an enabling framework for the expansion of Islamic finance (Suleiman, 2023). Moreover, the global shift towards ethical investment and fintech-driven financial innovation offers opportunities to enhance accessibility, transparency, and performance. Strategic collaboration with international Islamic financial institutions, alongside sustained domestic efforts in public education and capacity building, could significantly accelerate the integration of *Sharīʿah*-compliant pensions into Nigeria's broader financial ecosystem (Abdulaziz, 2023).

Results and Discussion of Findings

A. Demographic Data

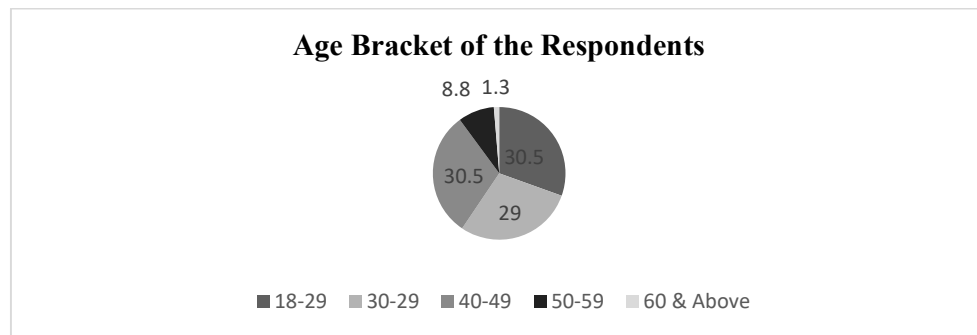
Figure 1: *Distribution of Respondents by Gender*



The chart shows that 61.5% of the respondents are male, while 38.5% are female. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are male, suggesting that men were more represented in the study. The implication is that gender may influence awareness, perception, and participation in the *Sharīʿah*-Compliant Pension Funds.

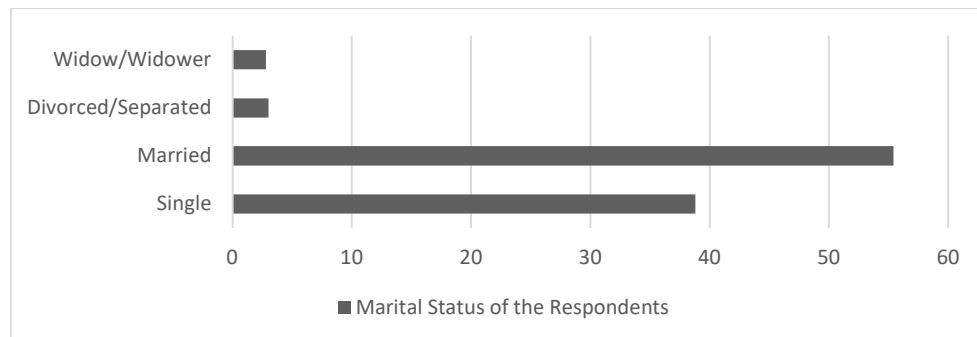
(FUND VI) Scheme, and that targeted efforts may be needed to enhance female engagement and representation in such financial programmes.

Figure 2: *Distribution of Respondents by Age*



The chart shows that 30.5% of the respondents are aged 18–29 years, 29.0% are aged 30–39 years, another 30.5% fall within the 40–49 years category, 8.8% are between 50–59 years, and only 1.3% are aged 60 years and above. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are within the economically active age range of 18 to 49 years. The implication is that the study reflects the views of those most likely to engage in long-term financial planning, such as pension schemes, and who still have sufficient working years to contribute meaningfully to the Sharī‘ah-Compliant Pension Funds (FUND VI) Scheme.

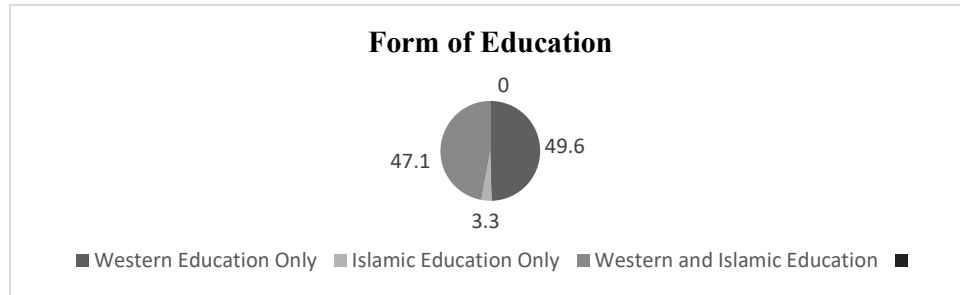
Figure 3: *Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status*



The chart reveals that 55% of the respondents are married, 39% are single, while only 3% are divorced/separated, and another 3% are widowed. This indicates that the majority of the participants are in marital unions, suggesting a stable family structure among the respondents. The high percentage of married individuals may influence the study's findings, particularly if marital status affects perspectives, responsibilities, or socio-economic behaviours. The relatively low representation of divorced/separated and widowed individuals implies limited perspectives from these groups, which may affect the comprehensiveness of conclusions drawn about experiences across all marital categories.

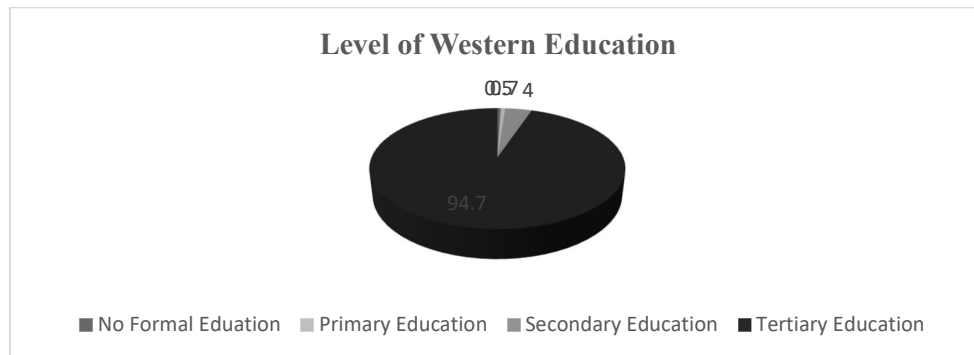
Figure 4: *Distribution of Respondents by Educational Attainment*

i. Form of Education



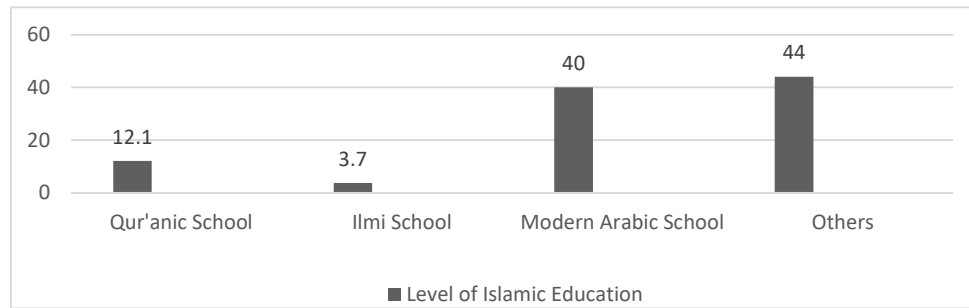
The chart illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their level of education. A majority, 49.6%, had only a Western education, closely followed by 47.1% who had both a Western and an Islamic education. A small minority, 3.3%, had only an Islamic education. This indicates that almost all respondents had access to a Western education in some form, either exclusively or alongside Islamic education. The minimal representation of respondents with solely Islamic education suggests limited reliance on traditional Islamic schooling alone and highlights the dominance of Western-oriented educational exposure among the participants, which may shape their worldview, career choices, and socio-religious attitudes.

ii. Level of Western Education



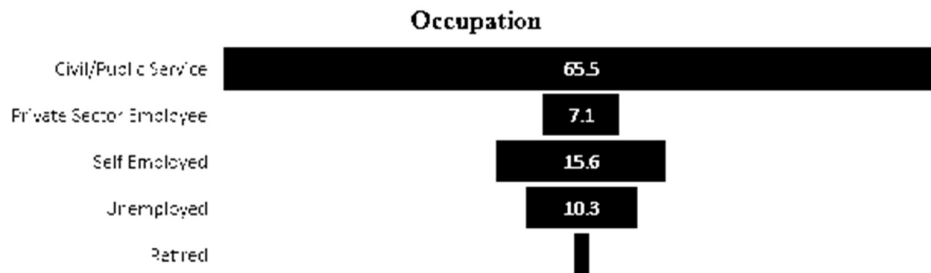
The chart on the level of western education among respondents shows that a vast majority, 94.7%, possess tertiary education. This is followed by 4% with secondary education, while only 0.7% and 0.5% have primary education and no formal education respectively. The data clearly indicates a highly educated sample population, with over nine out of ten respondents having attained education beyond the secondary level. This strong academic profile may enhance the reliability and depth of their responses, especially in matters requiring critical engagement, and suggests a population well-positioned to understand and influence socio-economic or policy-related issues.

iii. Level of Islamic Education



The chart reveals that the majority of respondents fall under the “Others” category (44%), indicating limited or informal Islamic education, which raises concerns about their understanding of Sharī‘ah-compliant financial products like Fund VI. A substantial 40% have attended Modern Arabic Schools, suggesting a significant portion possess a blend of religious and secular knowledge that could support informed participation in Islamic pension schemes. Meanwhile, 12.1% have only Qur’anic school education, providing them with basic religious literacy but likely insufficient exposure to Islamic financial jurisprudence, while a mere 3.7% attended Ilmi schools, reflecting a very low representation of those with advanced classical Islamic scholarship. These statistics imply a critical need for targeted Islamic financial literacy campaigns, particularly directed at those with limited formal religious education, to enhance awareness, foster understanding, and improve participation in Sharī‘ah-compliant pension schemes in Nigeria.

Figure 5: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation



The chart illustrates the occupational distribution of respondents, revealing that a dominant majority (65.5%) are employed in the civil or public service sector, which implies a higher likelihood of exposure to formal pension schemes, including Fund VI. This is followed by 15.6% who are self-employed, representing a significant group traditionally underserved by conventional pension systems, thereby underscoring the relevance of Micro Pension Plans and Sharī‘ah-compliant schemes for this category. Private-sector employees account for 7.1%, suggesting limited representation, while the unemployed constitute 10.3%, reflecting a group with potential interest in understanding pension systems for future engagement.

The percentage of retired participants within the study sample is negligible. It indicates that the data primarily reflect the perspectives and experiences of active workforce members. This result underscores that the effective implementation and adoption of Fund VI are largely contingent upon strategies that specifically target civil servants and self-employed individuals.

B. Evaluative Metrics for Awareness, Participation, Sharī'ah Integrity, and Strategic Implementation

Table 1: *A Comprehensive Synthesis of the FUND VI Scheme: Evaluative Metrics for Awareness, Participation, Sharī'ah Integrity, and Strategic Implementation*

Thematic Dimension	S/N	Main Performance Indicator (Question Item)	Positive Perception (SA + A)	Negative Perception (D + SD)
I. Awareness & Visibility	1	Foundational brand recognition of the word Fund VI Pension Scheme.	74.30%	25.70%
	3	Receipt of sufficient and comprehensive information regarding the scheme.	48.40%	51.60%
	4	Recognition of Fund VI as a specialised fund structured for Sharī'ah compliance.	69.50%	30.50%
II. Participation Dynamics	9	Current status of active subscription/participation in the Fund VI Scheme.	43.80%	56.20%
	10	Ease of navigation in the enrollment process (User-friendliness).	42.80%	57.20%
	11	Direct realisation of benefits from the Fund VI Scheme.	39.30%	60.70%
III. Sharī'ah Conformity	12	Fundamental belief in the scheme's overall conformity with Islamic Law.	71.00%	29.00%

	15	Assurance that all investments remain free from <i>ribā</i> , <i>gharar</i> , and <i>maysir</i> .	67.80%	32.20%
	16	Rigorous exclusion of alcohol, tobacco, and other <i>harām</i> sectors from the portfolio.	68.80%	31.20%
IV. Barriers & Hurdles	19	Degree to which administrative complexity poses a barrier to implementation.	71.80%	28.20%
	20	Influence of the “Awareness Deficit” as a primary challenge to adoption.	77.10%	22.90%
	22	Role of misconceptions about Islamic Finance in hindering wider participation.	68.00%	32.00%
V. Prospects & Growth	25	Perceived growth potential of the scheme within the regional market.	73.80%	26.20%
	30	Identification of Fintech integration as a primary gateway to future efficiency.	64.80%	35.20%
	33	Strategic importance of Religious/Community leaders in mobilisation efforts.	76.10%	23.90%
VI. Improvement Pathways	35	Demand for the organisation of targeted educational and outreach programmes.	78.80%	21.20%
	36	Necessity of simplifying the administrative and enrollment protocols.	74.10%	25.90%
	37	Desire for the expansion of available Shari’ah-compliant investment outlets.	73.30%	26.70%

Source: **Oyesanya & Bakare (2025)**

Table 1 shows that the Fund VI Scheme enjoys a high level of basic visibility, as 74.3% of respondents recognise the name of the scheme, while 69.5% identify it as a *Shari'ah*-compliant pension arrangement. However, only 48.4% believe that they have received sufficient information about the scheme, compared to 51.6% who feel inadequately informed, indicating that awareness remains largely superficial rather than comprehensive. Participation is also relatively weak, as only 43.8% of respondents are actively subscribed to the scheme, whereas 56.2% are not participants. Similarly, only 42.8% consider the enrollment process user-friendly, while 57.2% perceive it as difficult, and just 39.3% report having directly benefited from the scheme compared to 60.7% who have not experienced any direct benefit. In spite of these limitations, perceptions of *Shari'ah* conformity remain strongly positive, with 71.0% expressing confidence in the scheme's compliance with Islamic law, 67.8% affirming that its investments are free from *ribā*, *gharar*, and *maysir*, and 68.8% acknowledging the exclusion of alcohol, tobacco, and other prohibited sectors from its portfolio. The table further indicates that 71.8% regard administrative complexity as a major obstacle, 77.1% identify lack of awareness as the principal challenge to adoption, and 68.0% believe that misconceptions about Islamic finance hinder wider participation. Nonetheless, future prospects are viewed positively, with 73.8% perceiving strong growth potential for the scheme, 64.8% identifying fintech integration as important for future efficiency, and 76.1% emphasising the role of religious and community leaders in mobilisation efforts. Consequently, respondents strongly support improvement measures, as 78.8% call for targeted educational and outreach programmes, 74.1% advocate for simplified administrative and enrollment procedures, and 73.3% demand a broader range of *Shari'ah*-compliant investment opportunities within the scheme.

C. Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that awareness of the Fund VI Scheme among the target population was not only moderate but also largely superficial. This is because approximately 74% of respondents reported having heard of Fund VI, and nearly 69% acknowledged its Islamic foundations and *Shari'ah*-compliant investment requirements. However, fewer than half (48.4%) indicated that they had received sufficient information regarding the scheme's operational and investment features. The qualitative evidence supports these observations, indicating that many Muslims had only passive or informal exposure to the scheme, primarily through religious gatherings, social media platforms, and casual conversations, rather than through formal educational programmes.

This partial awareness corroborates the submission of Mustapha (2023) and Olayemi and Hassan (2022), who contended that Islamic financial literacy in Nigeria remained low and that passive exposure alone would not translate into functional understanding or meaningful participation. The implication is that, although Fund VI enjoys nominal recognition, this visibility has yet to translate into informed engagement. It further emphasised the need for targeted awareness

campaigns and advocacy utilising mosques, Islamic gatherings, Islamic scholars, and the media.

Participation in Fund VI was observed to be relatively low, with only 43.8% of respondents actively enrolled and 42.8% reporting that the enrolment process was straightforward. While a majority (76.9%) subscribed to some form of Pension Fund Administrator plan, a substantial percentage had not migrated to the *Sharī'ah*-compliant alternative due to administrative complexity, insufficient guidance, and limited customer support. Results from structured interviews reinforced these patterns. They reflected bureaucratic bottlenecks, inconsistent communication from PFAs, and inadequate digital infrastructure as major impediments to enrolment and migration to Fund VI.

The findings affirm the conclusion of Abdulaziz (2023) and Lawal and Yusuf (2022), who found that operational inefficiencies and cumbersome procedures hindered active participation, even when financial products are consistent with religious and ethical preferences. The data further revealed a critical gap between nominal awareness and actionable engagement, showing that awareness alone was insufficient to drive participation unless it was accompanied by streamlined processes, proactive advisory services, and effective digital facilitation.

A substantial majority of respondents, between 65% and 71%, affirmed that Fund VI conforms to Islamic financial precepts, particularly the prohibition of *ribā*, *gharar*, and *maysir*, compliance with *Sharī'ah* screening processes, and exclusion of *harām* sectors, including alcohol and tobacco. Respondents also expressed confidence in the *Sharī'ah* Supervisory Boards overseeing the fund, perceiving them as credible authorities responsible for ensuring ethical investment. The qualitative data corroborated this finding. It revealed the spiritual and ethical assurance that Fund VI provided to contributors. Nonetheless, a minority of respondents conveyed residual scepticism, stemming from limited disclosure of *Sharī'ah* audit reports and unclear communication regarding compliance monitoring. This opinion echoes Hassan and Huda's (2022) submission that transparency gaps could undermine stakeholder confidence. This implies that while the perceived religious legitimacy of Fund VI was strong, enhanced public disclosure and active engagement were required to consolidate trust and promote wider adoption.

The study identified several challenges hindering the effective implementation of Fund VI. Recurrent concerns included limited awareness, administrative complexity, regulatory ambiguity, and insufficient *Sharī'ah*-compliant investment opportunities. Divergent jurisprudential interpretations within Islamic finance were also identified to have complicated standardisation and trust, fostering hesitancy among potential contributors. Responses from interviews revealed further operational impediments, particularly unclear guidance from PFAs, inadequate digital infrastructure, and inconsistent enforcement of *Sharī'ah* compliance. These impediments indicate structural, perceptual, and market-related

constraints. This result corroborated the observations of Ojo (2023) and Adebayo (2022), who argued that institutional fragmentation and regulatory insufficiency inhibited the scalability of Islamic financial products in Nigeria. The outcome further underscores the imperative for comprehensive reforms, capacity-building, and community engagement to address these barriers and enhance the adoption and effectiveness of the scheme.

Despite the challenges, the findings revealed prospects for the growth and mainstreaming of Fund VI among Yoruba Muslims. Respondents expressed optimism regarding the scheme's potential. They highlighted factors such as the global rise of ethical finance, increasing financial literacy, fintech integration, and community mobilisation through religious leaders. Other opportunities identified included blockchain-based transparency, smart contract automation, and tailored educational initiatives as the main drivers for improving accessibility, trust, and operational efficiency. Furthermore, respondents strongly endorsed the role of Imāms, scholars, and Islamic organisations in promoting Fund VI. They reflect the importance of culturally embedded communication strategies in encouraging adoption. These prospects suggest that, with strategic interventions encompassing technological innovation, regulatory clarity, public sensitisation, and *Sharī'ah*-compliant investment expansion, Fund VI could achieve sustainable growth, deepen retirement inclusion, and provide ethical financial security for the Yoruba Muslim population in Ogun State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the *Sharī'ah*-Compliant Pension Funds, the Fund VI Scheme, among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State, Nigeria. It focused on awareness, participation, *Sharī'ah* compliance, and the socio-institutional dynamics shaping its adoption. The study contributed to the intersection of the *Sharī'ah* and the administration of the pension scheme in Nigeria's semi-urban Muslim area that has remained underexplored in existing literature on Islamic pensions. Through a triangulation of methodology that combines quantitative survey data with qualitative methods from pension fund administrators, Islamic scholars, and regulatory officials, the study showed that both structural and perceptual factors influenced the operationalisation of Fund VI. It extended the discourse beyond the normative *Sharī'ah* compliance to include experiences and institutional realities.

Results showed that while Fund VI enjoyed nominal recognition and a high degree of perceived *Sharī'ah* legitimacy, awareness and active participation remained constrained by administrative, informational, and market-related impediments. Although respondents largely affirmed the scheme's conformity with Islamic principles, lingering scepticism persisted due to limited disclosure of *Sharī'ah* audit outcomes, a shallow pool of *ḥalāl* investment opportunities, bureaucratic complexities, regulatory ambiguities, and divergent jurisprudential interpretations. Meanwhile, the study identified strong prospects for expansion, driven by remarkable ethical finance consciousness, fintech-enabled efficiency, community-based mobilisation through Imāms and Islamic scholars, and gradual

improvements in financial literacy. This implies that faith-based pension schemes could meaningfully engender inclusive financial participation in Nigeria when religious legitimacy is complemented by regulatory clarity, operational transparency, market depth, and sustained public education.

Consequently, the study recommended that PenCom, in collaboration with Islamic financial institutions and community mosques, should prioritise structured public enlightenment programmes and advocacy to address the low awareness and widespread misconceptions about *Shari'ah*-compliant pension schemes among Yoruba Muslims. Pension Fund Administrators managing Fund VI should undergo mandatory periodic training in Islamic finance to address identified gaps in technical competence related to *Shari'ah*-compliant investment management. Also, PFAs administering Fund VI should establish internal *Shari'ah* Advisory Boards and make them public to ensure compliance, transparency, and credibility in response to concerns about *Shari'ah* authenticity and trust deficits. PenCom should strengthen the regulatory framework by introducing enforceable *Shari'ah*-specific guidelines to address regulatory ambiguities and inconsistencies in the governance of Islamic pension products. The extension of *Shari'ah*-compliant micro-pension schemes to artisans, traders, and small-scale entrepreneurs should respond to the exclusion of informal-sector participants identified in the study.

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POLITICAL PARTY ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA: THE IMPERATIVE OF A UNIFIED PARTY MANIFESTO

Oluwafisayo Olamiposi Falowo

*Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Osun State University, Osogbo
falowofisayo@yahoo.com*

Leke Kayode Onabanjo

*Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Osun State University, Osogbo
&*

Oluwakayode Ebenezer Folusho

*Department of Accounting, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Osun State University, Osogbo*

Abstract

Since the return to democracy in 1999, the administration of political parties in Nigeria has deviated from the principle and legacy bequeathed by the founding fathers of Nigeria. Political parties have operated without a common party agenda, ideology and manifesto; rather candidates have pursued their agenda with total disregard for the party vision and action plan. This study therefore, examined the administration of political parties in Nigeria with a focus on the need to formulate a unified party manifesto. The study adopted a qualitative research design. This allowed the use of secondary data information gathered through online materials, academic journals and text books. This is necessary to allow access to historical documentations through which facts can be gleaned. Finding revealed that the operation of political parties in the Fourth Republic were repleted with lack of uniform manifesto and ideology. It also discovered that rather than pursuing unified party manifesto, each of the political parties operate different manifestoes in line with candidate's vision and orientation, which does not present the political party as a cohesive unit. The study concluded that political parties in Nigeria must embrace a united front in confronting the myriads of challenges confronting the country, by adopting a unified manifesto. The study recommended that political parties should set up mechanisms to monitor compliance with party manifesto across all levels of party structure.

Keywords: manifesto, political party, administration, party cohesion, party discipline

Introduction

Since 1999 Nigeria's transition to democratic governance which marked the genesis of the Fourth Republic, the nature and quality of party politics has undergone a transformation, with political parties no longer being driven by ideology (Babalola, 2024). This according to some scholars is attributed to the prolonged military dictatorship which undermined the democratic culture that formerly defined politics (Olanrewaju, 2015; Babalola, 2024).

This prevailing culture of politics which has redefined the nature of politics and party administration in the fourth republic is inconsistent with the legacy bequeathed by the founding fathers of the Nation. Political party administration in the First Republic (1960 –1966), was predominantly shaped by conservative ideology with clearly spelt out manifestoes which endeared the electorate to the parties, (Northern People’s Congress, NPC), pragmatic socialism (National Council of Nigerian Citizens, NCNC), and democratic socialism (Action Group, AG) (Awa, 1974; Ayoade, 1985).

This pattern of party administration was revived in the Second Republic (1979-1983) because many of the political elites of the First Republic dominated the political space. During the Second Republic, the electorates were deeply conversant with the manifestoes and ideological leanings of the political parties. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowos Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) earned popularity with its manifesto, termed four cardinal points which were implemented across all levels of governance where it held power. Iyanda (2023) argues that a manifesto is akin to entering into a social contract between political parties and the electorate. These documents serve as a means for candidates to acquire the consent and votes of the voters.

Similarly, the same culture of party administration was discernible in the Third Republic. During the two-party system of the aborted Third Republic (1992–1993), the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was positioned slightly towards the left end of the ideological spectrum, while the National Republican Convention (NRC) leaned slightly towards the right (Babalola, 2024). This culture of ideological leanings along party lines had been sustained until the advent of the Fourth Republic, where political parties cannot be clearly differentiated along the spectrum of ideological orientations.

A corollary to ideology is the party manifesto. Political party administration in the fourth republic has abandoned the culture of implementation of party manifesto. In the fourth republic, party manifesto operates as the vision and programmes of candidates contesting elections rather than a clearly articulated policy directive of the party embraced by all levels of party structure, thereby creating fragmented manifestoes instead of a unified manifesto for the parties. Despite the fact that Chief Awolowo did not emerge victorious at the federal elections in 1979, this did not deter maximum commitment to the implementation of the manifestoes and programmes of the Unity Party of Nigeria at the subnational levels.

A party’s ideology and manifesto is its primary differentiator (Awa, 1974; Hill & Leighley, 1993; Ostrowski, 2023). Political parties deepen democracy and development by pursuing public policy measures and programme to advance the public welfare in line with their manifestos and ideologies. This paradigm appears to be absent in the contemporary political space. Political parties in the fourth republic lay claim to party manifestoes which hardly permeate all levels of political structure within party operational mechanisms. This culture is a departure from the

ideals of party administration and the legacy bequeathed by the founding fathers of Nigeria.

This study therefore examines the administration of political parties in Nigeria, with the extent to which party manifestoes are unified, internalised and implemented across all levels of party structures.

Methodology

The paper focused on qualitative research design. As a result, the work relied on data from relevant books, journals, magazines, the internet and newspapers to provide more insights on political party administration in Nigeria. This is necessary to allow access to historical documentations through which facts can be gleaned. This method affords the opportunity of eliciting in-depth knowledge on how party administration in Nigeria has evolved with its dynamics from the period of independence to the fourth republic. The study specifically collated data from academic literature and other relevant materials that focused on party administration in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The work is hinged on party coherence theory or also known as party discipline. This theory takes its origin from the Westminster model, where party is an obligation of the members of parliament to vote along party lines. Some of the proponents of this theory include Angelo Panebianco and Giovanni Sartori. This theory is particularly relevant to Nigeria because there is lack of cohesion in party administration, and especially in the pursuit of party agenda. According to Cox and McCubbins (2005), they argued the rationale behind cohesion theory is motivated by the desire to protect the party 'brand' in the eyes of the electorate, and that "a party's reputation depends significantly on its record of accomplishment." The accomplishment of the foregoing requires that party discipline is enforced.

Kam (2014) explains that coherence theory is applied in two closely related yet distinct senses. First, the discipline is adherence of the party members at large to an agreed system of political norms and rules, second it is an obligation of the members of parliament to vote along their party dictates. The deviations might be countered by consequences that are designed to ensure the relative cohesion of members of the respective party group (Marland, 2020).

The party must always appear united in every aspect of its correspondence with the electorate to maintain its integrity. Kam (2009) argues, dissent from the party line "sends a signal of disunity and disorganization to voters. In other words, party members at levels must represent belief, the vision, policy and agenda of the party in the interest of the party. This shared ideology is an essential and important part of party cohesion, and reinforcing the given shared ideology through methods such as party discipline is crucial to the ruling party's survival in government.

The theory also stipulates the consequence of failing to adhere to party dictates. Guay (2024) emphasizes that breaking party discipline in both formal and informal

settings may result in a number of consequences. Punishment for members who break party discipline largely varies on a case-to-case basis, but members may find themselves in a variety of positions from being internally demoted in the party to being expelled from the party itself.

The application of this theory stems from the perspective of the essence and role of the political party. According to Ayoade (1991) “political parties are a united body of men and women who subscribe to certain programme and political methodology of implementation”. The primary goal of a political party is to capture state power (Duverger 1951; Dahl 1966; Key 1964; and Michels 1962). Arising from this, the application of the theory implied that members of the political party must fully adhere to the programme and vision of the party.

The culture of party administration in the Fourth Republic appears to deviate from the norm of party cohesion and discipline. The prevailing order among political parties in Nigeria since 1999, especially as it affects manifesto is a contradiction of the ideal of party existence and operation. Theorists of political party maintain the consensus that political parties are united by men and women who subscribe to common ideology, vision and manifesto. This is very much unlike the operation of political parties in the Fourth Republic where the implementation of manifestoes is not unified. Political actors operating within political parties operate on fragmented manifestoes rather than a common manifesto that represent the policy direction of the party. This is essential as it aligns the goal of the party on a common path of development for the country.

Political Party Administration in the First Republic

This work focuses on party administration from post-independence to the contemporary era. This approach was adopted because the political parties prior to independence had a common overriding agenda which is decolonization. This does not imply they do not possess manifestoes that define their development agenda for the country, but their prime agenda was independence of Nigeria. As a result, this work focused on administration of political parties in Nigeria following the attainment of independence.

At independence Nigeria had three major political parties which dominated politics of the First Republic with ethnic coloration and regional affiliation. The parties included the National Council Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) formerly National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, Action Group (AG) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). Several other parties emerged in subsequent years. One of the most prominent was the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU). Others included Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). These parties maintained a measure of discipline and cohesion in their administration.

Babalola (2024) argue that political parties in the pre-independent and immediate post-independent periods were ideologically driven. Many of these political parties were known for their conservative approach to development. The NCNC was noted

for its pragmatic socialism, which aim to promote the principles of fellowship, freedom, and opportunity for all, as well as the equality of all persons, communities, and nations (Awa, 1974)

The AG led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo strongly averred democratic socialism as its ideology. This was generally embraced by the members of the party. The leaders of the party maintained that democratic socialism aimed to guarantee equal opportunity for all Nigerians by adopting programmes that sought to provide economic opportunities for the populace and national greatness (Ayoade, 1985). The NPC favoured welfarism as reflected in its slogan of “life more abundant” and “freedom for all”. (Dudley, 1982). The party prioritized the safeguarding of workers’ interests and the enhancement of the overall standard of living for the population.

The approach to party administration in the first republic is synonymous with wit the ideals of party cohesion and application of discipline in its administrative procedure. Perhaps, this administrative orientation is often credited to the charisma and influence of the leaders of the political parties.

The Second Republic

After 13 years of uninterrupted military rule, the country returned to another era of democratic experience from 1979 to 1983 when it was terminated by a military junta. The Second Republic began with the establishment of a democratically elected government in 1979. The democratic space saw the involvement in the electoral process of five major political parties. The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), which emerged as a reincarnation of the AG and led by Chief Awolowo, and the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which was a coalition of the remnants of the defunct NPC and factions of all the other former political parties (Abba & Babalola, 2017).

The other three political parties that were involved in the fray were Nigerian People’s Party (NPP), led by Dr Azikiwe, which originated from the dissolved NCNC, the People’s Redemption Party (PRP), a reincarnate of NEPU, led by Mallam Aminu Kano, and the Great Nigerian People’s Party (GNPP), headed by Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri. The NPN maintained a characteristic similarity with the NPC as a conservative party judging from its ideology with leaning towards the centre-right. The party expressed its intention not to alter the class structure of the Nigerian society, with a strong dedication to safeguarding traditional institutions (Dudley, 1982& Kurfi, 1983).

The UPN which was an offshoot of the defunct positioned towards the centre-left, with socialist and welfare- oriented policies such as the provision of free education and healthcare (Babalola, 2024). The PRP, which Dudley (1982, p. 196) describes a ‘residual party’ due to its composition primarily consisting of persons who have been unable to align themselves with the principles of other political parties provided a platform for left wing politicians. The NPP and the GNPP expressed similar ideological stance with proposed programmes that aimed to operate within

the framework of a mixed economy (Dudley, 1982). The PRP provided a platform for leftwing politicians. Affiliation with the party was motivated by a deep-rooted dedication to a specific set of ideas.

Just like the parties that operated in the first republic, the Second Republic politicians and political parties sustained the culture of party cohesion and uniform party programme across of levels of leadership and structure. The UPN was famous for the implementation of the party's manifestoes across all levels leadership where it held political power. Similarly for the other political parties that existed in the second republic

Third Republic

The Third Republic which spanned between 1989 and 1993 was directly under the supervision of the military, which was unlike the previous democratic dispensation that operated under a free democratic space. Ologbenla (2007) states that the creation of two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republic Party (NRC) by General Babangida distorted the multi-party process. Despite the gagged democratic atmosphere, the Parties of the aborted third republic may also be described as ideologically driven. For example, the SDP was characterized as having a slightly left-leaning ideological stance, whereas the NRC was positioned somewhat to the right on the political spectrum or 'a little to the left' and 'a little to the right' respectively (Abba & Babalola, 2017).

Fourth Republic

The return to civilian rule in 1999 signaled the resurgence of a multiparty system in the country, with several political parties engaging in electoral politics. Prominent among these parties were the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the All People's Party (APP), and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1998. The PDP remains the only surviving party among the three dominant parties established to contest the 1999 elections (Babalola, 2024). The next section focuses on political party administration from 1999 to the present era.

PDP Administration, 1999-2015 (Federal and State levels)

Following the expiration of the tenure of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration in 2007, the Umar MusaYar Adua took the reins of government with the 7-point agenda manifesto. This became the vision and the blue print for the administration. According to Ebi (2022), the Yar'Adua administration's primary policy emphasis, commonly known as the 7-point agenda, included Power and Energy, Food Security, Wealth Innovation, Transportation Sector, Land Reforms, Security, and Education. The agenda became the working document of the administration.

This agenda of the central government led by the PDP did not find harmony and resonance with other PDP controlled states. For instance, in Akwa Ibom, a PDP controlled state in 2007, the then Governor, Godswill Akpabio had the Uncommon Transformation agenda. Nkereuwem (2021) notes that the manifesto of Governor Akpabio focused on good governance, servant leadership and a 'revolution' against

unjust ethnic, economic and socio-political structures that stand on the path of development and progress of Akwa Ibom. The manifesto also includes welfarist policy, approaching development with anger and politics of inclusivity.

In Enugu State, the then Governor Sullivan Chime focused on the 4-point agenda, which centered on key areas for development, often summarized in his subsequent administration as: infrastructure development (standard roads and infrastructure), reforming governance, providing security and justice. This manifesto anchored his 2007 election campaign (Vanguard, 2007). In Katsina State, which is the home state of the PDP presidential candidate, Umar Yar Adua, the Governorship candidate Ibrahim Shehu Shema operated a different manifesto from the Presidential candidate. The manifesto focused on fiscal discipline, infrastructural development, and human capital empowerment. According to the then PDP state chairman, Rabiu Gambo Bakori, the manifesto of Shema is a continuation of the programme of his predecessor, which is often described as a continuation of the "Umaru Musa Yar Adua legacy" (Muazu, 2014).

The foregoing and many other cases can be advanced to justify the argument on lack of uniform manifesto and rather fragmented manifestoes within PDP across different levels of governance. The probable reasons is attributed to the fact that the PDP as a political party lacks cohesion on developmental agenda for the country, which often reinforce the frequently observed shortcoming in the political space the lack of ideology.

After the death of President Umar Musa Yar Adua, his Vice President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was sworn in as the President of Nigeria in replacement of the late President. Many of the Governors continued with their manifestos of the first term (2007) and 2011 election. President Goodluck Jonathan did not toe the line of his predecessor, rather he launched an ambitious manifesto tagged transformation agenda. This was a different programme from the Yar Adua 7-point agenda (Ogala, 2013)

APC Administration, 2015-2023 (Federal and State levels)

This lacuna is not only traceable to the PDP, as this cut across many of the parties. Following the end of the PDP's reign in power in Nigeria's body polity, the APC which took over from the PDP did not run its affair differently. Ashindorbe and Danjibo (2022) stated that nine years since its formation and after almost eight years as the governing party, the APC has shown that it is different only in name from the party it succeeded. Virtually all the ills against the PDP administration and its eventual ouster from power assail the governing APC (Ayoade, 2019).

Under the APC, with the emergence of President Muhamadu Buhari, the party campaigned with the manifesto of "Change". According to Amali (2024), the Change Agenda, was anchored on three-point Agenda and policy directions namely, to secure the nation (Security}; resuscitate the economy and finally to fight corruption head on. These three point-agenda where the vocal points in the

manifesto of the APC throughout the campaign period till the party defeated the sitting PDP government in February Nigerian general election 2015.

This change mantra did not resonate with the other APC candidates at the subnational. For instance, Governor Ajimobi's manifesto in 2015 during his inaugural speech centered on the promise of "the power to do good" and the transformation of Oyo State from a "big village to a modern city". The key focus is infrastructural revolution and urban renewal, security and peace, economic re-engineering, ajumose governance (welfare), education and human capital (Premium Times, 2015).

In Katsina, Bello Masari's 2015 governorship campaign in Katsina State, under the All Progressives Congress (APC), was anchored on the "Restoration Agenda," aimed at revitalizing key sectors of the state after years of PDP rule. The major focus of his manifesto is restoring the honour, dignity, and integrity of the people of Katsina State, promising to revive public institutions. The key pillars of the restoration agenda are education, agriculture, health and water supply, security and good governance (Nation, 2015).

In Plateau State, the candidate of the APC did not harmonize his manifesto with that of the Presidential candidate of his party. Governor Lalong continued to protect and maintain his Three Pillar Policy of Peace, Security and Good governance, Infrastructural Development and Sustainable Economic Rebirth (Nanmwa, 2015). This was the practice with so many candidates at the subnational carrying the banner of the APC. This trend of fragmented manifesto and lack coherence continued with the APC leading up to the 2023 general elections.

During the 2023 elections, the current president decided to fashion a different programme from that of his predecessor. Tinubu's campaign policy document tagged "Renewed hope: Action Plan for a Better Nigeria" was unveiled at the State House Banquet Hall, alongside the inauguration of the APC Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) by Buhari. In the manifesto, aside from phasing out fuel subsidy, Tinubu promised to accelerate full implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act and implement additional favourable policies to attract investment in deepwater assets within six months (Akinwale, 2022).

This manifesto and campaign differ from many of the APC candidates contesting elections at the subnational. In Lagos, the Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu continued with his THEME agenda for Greater Lagos. In a report by the Leadership newspaper in 2023, the Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu urged residents of the state to continue to support his administration in its quest to deliver more dividends of democracy in line with THEME's developmental agenda for Greater Lagos to Lagosians. In addition, the Governor promised to add gender equality, social inclusion and youth development to his second term development agenda.

In Edo state, the APC campaign train led by Senator Monday Okphebo as the Governorship candidate unveiled a five point agenda to turn around the state and

restore the lost glory. The manifesto covers security, infrastructure, healthcare, food sufficiency, and education. According to the Governorship candidate, the citizens of Edo are the priority of the State Government, while he promised to carefully implement the programmes in the five point agenda.

The APC gubernatorial candidate in Kaduna formulated a campaign agenda titled SUSTAIN. According to the agenda, SUSTAIN will strengthen safety and security, upgrade infrastructure, strengthen institutions, enhance trade and investment. In addition, the manifesto covers investment in human capital and nurturing of citizens engagement. The agenda is expected to be the compass for the APC administration in Kaduna (Vanguard, 2023).

This section under the Fourth Republic examined the empirical evidences of lack of unified manifesto among political parties in Nigeria, especially the leading parties which are examined as the reference cases for this study. Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, the tradition bequeathed by the progenitors of politics in Nigeria has been vacated for personal political agenda. Political party administration in the Fourth Republic has deviated from the ideal pattern of party cohesion synonymous with the First and Second Republic; rather the political actors are engaged in actualizing their self-interests. Babalola (2024) states that political parties formed after 1999 lack a clear sense of what they stand for, as they were formed, not by individuals with similar ideologies but by individuals only interested in enriching themselves.

This dearth of ideological identity in the Fourth Republic is a common feature of all the political parties and it's a reflection of the quality, character and consciousness of the current operators in the political space. Since the actors in the political consider it a herculean task to align themselves under a common principle of the ideals and philosophy of political parties, with clearly spelt out programme of action that defines the path of direction to the attainment of developmental objectives, it implies that the polity is probably bereft of character that understood the rationale behind Nation-building.

Imperative of A Unified Manifesto

The manifesto is an action plan that guides the course of action in a political party. It is a programme that permeates all levels and structure within a political party. According to Nwinya (2015), a manifesto is generally taken to be a written statement in which a political party says what its aims and policies are. As the definitions goes, it is the policy of the political party and not the policy of candidates of the political party where any candidate can formulate programmes of action according to whims and practices without recourse to the philosophy and development agenda of the political party. Such action and practice does not exemplify cohesion within the party. It represents a party with fragmented plans of development. It is important to rally party members behind the policy programme of the party.

After a clearly spelt out manifesto is adopted and it is embraced by all members and at all levels of the political party. There is a need to persist along the line of implementation and execution. This persistence and consistency create an impression and philosophical leaning of the political party. Abonyi (2005) argues that manifesto is stepped down ideology, which constitutes the big and long-term programme of party. By such practice, political parties will organically create an ideological framework for party identity. This implies that the question that has often exposed the weakness inherent in the operation of political parties in Nigeria, which is lack of ideology would have been considerably addressed.

Through a consistency of pattern, a culture is evolved. Political party must begin to influence the political culture in the country through its discipline and organization within the party internal politics. According to Chukwumerije (2009) political parties are both the producers and conveyor belts of political values. It requires the persistence of ideologically committed political parties to articulate these values and through their consistency transform them into integral components of our democratic culture. The democratic space is currently suffused with practices that undermine the potentials of the development of the polity. Political parties must take the lead as we attempt to build a decent and respected democratic atmosphere.

At the current stage our development; the problems bedeviling Nigeria are the problems of poverty, unemployment, insecurity, endemic corruption, severe infrastructural decay, and a reliance on oil that hampers economic diversification (Elaigwu, 2015). The problems are almost the same from the North to the South and from the East to the West. Therefore, what is required is a coordinated policy action to tackle this problem headlong and not fragment of ideas and scattered implementation approach. With a unified party manifesto, the political party is able to systematically take on the current challenges of the country and confront it from a multidimensional approach. Chief Obafemi Awolowos UPN remains a reference point as a development paradigm for the country. The four cardinal point of the UPN was simultaneously implemented in the UPN controlled states in Nigeria. And after over 40 years of the second republic, the legacies are still enduring.

One of the commendations of the Obasanjo Government is the attempt to bring broad planning back to the forefront of Nigeria's political economy (Blum, 2020). This is due to the introduction of the NEEDS document with collaborative implementation framework at both the state and a local government levels. The NEEDS policy had some setback in implementation which affected its objectives. In as much as there were setbacks there were also gains with the implementation of the policy. An IMF report had it that the implementation of NEEDS contributed to strong macroeconomic stability, including GDP growth averaging nearly 7% during the period of its implementation (IMF, 2005). This is one of the highest growth rates the country attained in the recent time. This is a proof that a well-coordinated programme of action faithfully monitored and implemented is an antidote to myriads of development challenges confronting the country.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the operation of political parties in Nigeria must be conducted in compliance with the principle guiding the existence of political parties. Political parties are association of people who subscribed to a common principle, beliefs and conviction. This should guide the actions and inactions of such members at the assumption of power. The programme of action of the political party must be respected by all levels authority of the political party irrespective of individual's genuine convictions.

Recommendations

1. The study therefore recommended that political parties in Nigeria should operate a unified party manifesto, so as to confront the challenges of the country from multi-pronged approach. This implies that all effort at the federal, State and the Local level will be simultaneously addressing similar problems at the same time
2. The study also recommends that there is a need for political parties to set up mechanism to monitor discipline and coherence among party faithful. This is necessary to ensure there is compliance with party stance and philosophy
3. Lastly, there is a need to regularly engage the electorate to build trust by aligning party actions with the manifesto. This will further erase the trust deficit between the government and the governed in Nigeria.

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SACRED COEXISTENCE AND NARRATIVE ORDER IN *PARADISE*: AN AFRICAN-ABRAHAMICA READING

Agene Stella Ugbede

*Department of English and Literary Studies
Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria
stellaiyeagene@gmail.com*

Abba A. Abba

*Department of English and Literary Studies
Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria
abba.abba@fulokoja.edu.ng*

&

Barnabas Oluwatoyin

*Department of English and Literary Studies
Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria
oluwabar@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Syncretism, hybridity and identity negotiation are some of the common frameworks that have been used to conduct critical scholarship on religion in African literature which explains encounter between African Indigenous religion and Abrahamic religion. This framework though productive, it presents religious polarity as unstable or incomplete. This paper advances the idea of African-Abrahamica as a critical vocabulary of reading religious coexistence as a genre of African fiction with Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* as its primary text. The study takes the form of a qualitative textual analysis and close reading as its methodological basis and explores the relationship between Islam and African indigenous cosmologies in the social and moral world of the novel. The results indicate that the images of shrines, amulets, spirits, Quranic practices and the call on common Adamic ancestors are not presented as contradictory but as interconnected modes of meaning that structure everyday's life rather than depicting religious difference as a problem to be resolved. *Paradise* presents coexistence through its narrative form and social imagination. This article argues that African-Abrahamica provides a new interpretive tool for reading literary representations of lived religious pluralism beyond binaries such as tradition and modernity, orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Consequently, it contributes to debates in African literary studies, religion and postcolonial cultural studies.

Keywords: African-Abrahamica; Religion; African Literature, Coexistence; Gurnah.

Introduction

The models used to interpret religion in the African literary narratives mostly focus on cultural mixture, transition and negotiation. Although these approaches have been fruitful, particularly the approaches that relate to postcolonial theories of

hybridity, they tend to give a circumscription to analyses by viewing religious plurality as a state of unrest instead of as a principle of organisation of narrative meaning. As a result, the texts of African multiple systems of sacred reading are subject to the primary reading of the revelation of historical experience or cultural mediation, as opposed to the mediation of belief systems which can and do influence narrative logic and character experience. Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* is the interesting location to reevaluate this tendency. The novel lies within the web of trade, migration and imperial expansion in the Swahili coast and in the world it creates; there is no division of Islamic life with native spiritual rites and practices. Current criticism has been inclined to give more importance to economic circulation themes, mobility and ethical ambiguity to the background of the situations (Sabby, 2024). However, these readings do not give appropriate emphasis to the level of how the sacred practices shape the perception, power and narrative causality in the text.

This paper posits that *Paradise* enacts an ordered sacred space where there are various systems of religious beliefs that are held together through a common imaginative space. These systems do not usually come across as being discontinuous or in-between, but instead they can be intelligible to characters that span across cultural and spiritual divides. This coexistence does not come easy. The disequilibrium of religious power, the opposition between religious orthodoxy and local rites of passage and the powerlessness of people like Yusuf in systems of trade and servitude reveal that religious plurality may result in friction and disparities as well. These examples make reading anything that would view coexistence as harmonious or integrative across the board, difficult.

African-Abrahamica is the proposed conceptual framework in this article to explain African narrative worlds religious representation, taking into consideration both the coherence and conflict. African-Abrahamica refers to a form of narrative structuring where Abrahamic and African native cosmologies collectively educate moral judgment, social interaction and development of events, without necessarily depending on their difference. This paradigm breaks with paradigms that put primacy on mixture or transition by prefiguring coexistence as a structuring condition, but is sensitive to the boundaries and inconsistencies within it.

By closely reading Gurnah's *Paradise*, the article illustrates how religious rituals contribute to character action and narrative construction in a manner that makes religion a part of the inner-logic of the text. By so doing, it contextualizes African-Abrahamica as a vocabulary to rethink not only the work of Gurnah but also the work of African and trans-regional literary and cultural studies more generally, as a configuration of spiritual plurality appears in both the work of Chinua Achebe and Ben Okri, although to varying extents of conflict, accommodation and ontological tension.

Review of Scholarship on Religious Coexistence in Gurnah's *Paradise*

The *Paradise*, is set against a backdrop of historical stratification of the Swahili coast, characterized by trans-regional trade, Islamic expansion, inland, caravan economies and native spiritual continuities, which existed before and survived the colonial encroachment. Though the concept of mobility and commerce is often used as a prism to read the novel, the writing structure is clearly influenced by the presence of religion as a perception-organising, moral-reasoning, and existential-orientation-structuring force. Religion here is not merely thematic material; but a structuring situation of narrative reality (Hodapp, 2023).

This tendency is made difficult by historical scholarship. Isichei (1995) shows that African interactions with Islam and Christianity have not been determined by discontinuity, but continuity and accommodation, and that indigenous cosmologies are not replaced by new religious meanings, but continues to be constructive frameworks that receive new religious meanings. In their application to literary texts, however, such historical lessons are often refracted into the form of critical models which put more emphasis on flux and negotiation at the expense of coherence and durability. Criticism of the fiction of Gurnah has greatly increased, especially after his Nobel Prize in Literature in 2021.

Much of this criticism places *Paradise* in the context of Indian Ocean mobility, trade, servitude and vulnerability to ethical issues. Quayson (1995) interprets the work by Gurnah by way of moral economies of dependency and movement with a foreground of how social relations are structured by the movement of spatial circulation. In this context, religion is likely to emerge as a constituent of the cultural fabric of Swahili society as opposed to being the main issue of analysis. Equally, Krishnan (2023) places Gurnah in the context of global and postcolonial narratives, and dwells on the concepts of belonging, hospitality, and narrative ethics. Although he recognizes Islamic codes of morality in the *Paradise*, Krishnan considers religion to be one component in a number of concepts that define character consciousness and not as a set of consistent sacred codes. The native religious activities: cult sites, spirits, ritual taboos are generally interpreted as ethnographic elaboration or a symbolic residue and not as active narrative powers.

Previous interpretations of Gurnah's *Paradise* also have viewed the novel in terms of a paradigm of historical change and cultural discontinuity. Islam has been construed in regard to business, power and discipline, specifically in the figure of Aziz and the caravan economy and the native cosmologies are brought into the fringes of Islam as hangover or pre-Islamic remnants. These readings implicitly support critical suppositions that the plurality of religion must be syncretic or transitional, and there is little room to allow other interpretations that acknowledge coexistence as a stable story.

The parallels with other African texts also provide the additional support of the necessity of a more sophisticated system. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is characterized by the conflict and rupture in the experience of the Igbo religion and

Christianity (Okeke et al., 2017) and is a predetermined foreground of the disruptive aspects of religious plurality. In contrast, in Okri's *The Famished Road*, there are overlapping spiritual realities which exist in a more fluid and yet tension-filled cosmology with boundaries between material and metaphysical worlds that are permeable (Quayson, 1995). It is in these texts that African literature can be seen to comfort a variety of modes of religious interaction, starting with conflict and ending with coexistence and ontological ambiguity.

The fact that there is still a critical difference in readings of the Gurnah's *Paradise* in which religion is still under-theorized as a structuring principle is an indicator that there is a need to employ a different conceptual vocabulary. This paper suggests the African-Abrahamica as a model of explaining the state of religious coexistence as being stable but in a dynamic state of narrative structure. Instead of prioritizing mixture or transition, African-Abrahamica prefigures how Abrahamic and indigenous cosmologies act on each other to influence ethical arguments, social dynamics and plot development, being mindful of the conflicts and imbalances such co-existence implies.

By redefining the role of religion in the work of narrative, such as this way of making religion central to the narrative structure shifts the analysis of what religion is to how it works, how it organises the fiction world, and how it shapes the moral horizons as well as offering the terms by which characters perceive themselves as part of a larger metaphysical environment.

Theorising Sacred Realism and African-Abrahamica in Gurnah's *Paradise*

This paper follows Sacred Realism as a theoretical position orientation and not a theory that is institutionalised or fixed. In place of suggesting a strict structure, Sacred Realism is more like a form of critical focus which allows a more subtle conception of the functioning of religious presence in the realist narrative. It gives a point of view through which to consider the operation of the sacred not in the peripheries of the text, but as a force of internal structuring, as a formative force in the motivation of character and the maintenance of coherence in the narrative. Fundamentally, Sacred Realism goes against a long-held belief in literary studies, namely, that realism is secular in nature, and that the meaning of religion must always be marginal. In these suppositions, the sacred tends to be diminished to metaphorical, superstitious or symbolic remnant. In opposition to this trend, Sacred Realism is the belief that the religious meaning can be completely integrated into the imaginative and moral construction of realist fiction (Moore-Jumonville, 2018). Reading through Sacred Realism then is to alter the analytical focus towards presence to function. Instead of posing the question whether religion is present in a text, the emphasis is placed on how it works, how it imposes a pattern of perception, how it sets the pattern of judgement of morals, and how it shapes the decision-making in the day-to-day life. Religious practices are not considered idolatrous surplus and decoration, but as normalized tools of meaning-making. This disposition is in line with wider theoretical explanations of realism which lay stress on the ethical saturation of life in common. According to Auerbach (1953),

realism can be characterized by its ability to depict serious and problematic elements of the daily life. This would reposition the ordinary as a place of richness and importance and it is now possible to appreciate that the sacred meaning can be constituted in commonplace activities not as something special. Sacred Realism is also reminiscent of philosophical explanations of belief as being socially anchored. Social imaginaries are a concept that was developed by Charles Taylor to refer to how people conceptualize their social being, their collective structures that make practices significant (Klassen 2018). This view brings out the religious meaning that lives on because of the practiced moral structures and social rites. In the context of narrative worlds, it means that religion is a normal sense making process and it is not an extraordinary or disruptive process.

Simultaneously, the Sacred Realism has to be placed in context of the prevailing postcolonial theories especially that of Homi K. Bhabha. The idea of hybridity introduced by Bhabha explains the “third space” in which new places could be constructed in the process of negotiation and ambivalence (Patterson, 2004). This model has played a key role in the interpretation of the interaction of cultures and the fruitful conflicts of colonial encounter. Nonetheless, it may be less prepared to explain the forms of coexistence as having a habitual and internally coherent nature due to its focus on liminality and negotiation. Sacred Realism is not opposed to hybridity but replaces the analysis emphasis. Whereas hybridity sheds light on the instances of friction and re-articulation, Sacred Realism takes care of the fact that plural systems of meaning can already be implicit in the everyday life. Such structures are thus complementary: the tension is prefigured by hybridity, and the tension can be resolved in the patterned coexistence that is described by Sacred Realism.

In this perspective, Sacred Realism can be effectively used to analyse the Gurnah’s *Paradise*. In the novel, the world is depicted whereby religious practices are interwoven in everyday life. The prayer of the Quran, the codes of Islamic ethics, the native shrines, the amulets of protection, and presence of the spirits are all overlapping reactions to the repetitive human situations of fear, duty and survival. Meanwhile, such co-existence is not totally smooth. There are instances of the imbalance of spiritual power, the lack of morality about characters like Aziz, and vulnerability of Yusuf in the structures of commerce and slavery that show there are asymmetries. The Sacred Realism has been able to accommodate these tensions by noting that coherence does not exclude conflict, but it is rather a part of a greater narrative framework (Al-Hamdi, 2024).

The different spiritual practices are interchanged among the characters, and not necessarily is there an indication of contradiction, implying some sort of religious literacy that goes beyond single adherence. The practices do exist in a common metaphysical space with each dealing with various aspects of experience. Sacred Realism interprets this as structural. Based on this introduction, African-Abrahamica is the main idea of intervention in the article. The methodological prism is given by Sacred Realism, the particular pattern of religious coexistence,

as it is manifested in African literary life, is called African-Abrahamica. It outlines a situation where Abrahamic and indigenous cosmologies are co-present systems influencing the ethical life and narrative formation.

Notably, when it comes to African-Abrahamica, fusion is not the meaning. Instead, it highlights coexistence without erasure and multiplicity without the instability needed, and is sensitive to tensions and asymmetries that are the product of historical processes like trade and migration. The possibility of reading *Paradise* as a story of organised coexistence granted by Sacred Realism and African-Abrahamica makes it possible to explain the tensions inherent even in the religious plurality as neither transitional nor incomplete without explaining the tensions inherent in the latter.

In this regard, Sacred Realism does not refute but enhances the main contribution of the article. It gives the conceptual support required to see religion as an inner and structuring aspect of narrative, whereas African-Abrahamica details the functioning of that organisation in a historically-located African setting. The two of them allow a long-term reading of *Paradise* as a story of divine coexistence that disrupts the interpretations which tend to view religious plurality in the main in the context of transition, rupture or incompleteness. Such a synthesis allows one to transcend the shortcomings of current paradigms, to anticipate an alternative critical possibility: the African literary texts are not a simple expression of a religious experience, but are actually remaking that experience into fixed and significant patterns of life.

Sacred Coexistence as Narrative order in *Paradise*

Paradise is a narrative that constructs East Africa as a place where several sacred systems exist, without competing with one another, but exists as systems of interaction. The Islamic faith, the native ritual practices, shrines, spirits and talismans work in unison to influence the ethical judgment, relationship in the community, and causality in the narratives. These systems are not indicators of the clash of religions or the shift of historical periods, but a logical divine order, which is a part of daily activities of life. Religion in the novel is not a doctrine but is lived cosmology, an imaginative framework by which the characters perceive danger, necessity and survival. This story structure indicates what Irele (2001) recognizes as the centrality of the sacred imagination in African literature where religion serves as an integrated worldview that influences perception and sense of morality but not as a system of belief.

As Irele points out, the novel shows that such a worldview is not fixed but is dynamically maintained by practice, memory and through shared involvement. The meaning which is sacred does not just come to us out of the blue; it is something which is constantly performed, re-performed and modified as the rhythms of everyday life play out (Irele, 2001). This divine pluralism is lodged in the interiors of the novel, and can be theorised as the African-Abrahamica, a story logic where the Abrahamic and indigenous religious constructs play in a common moral

universe. With this setup, there is no opposition to epistemology based on religious practices, and there is no hierarchy of authenticity or legitimacy of religious practices. Rather, they co-exist as pragmatic reactions to vulnerability, uncertainty and risk in ethics. *Paradise* is in line with the fact that according to Mbiti (1990), the African religious life is essentially integrative and does not require a break and exclusivity. Most notoriously, Mbiti makes it clear that religion in African situations is not a section of life but the entirety of life, a formula which finds an immediate echo in the narrative space of the novel. The role of religion in the novel is not the identity of a community which separates and sets strict boundaries. Instead, it offers a common grammar that approaches ethical duty, spiritual threat, and social responsibility to negotiate and comprehend.

The interactions that Yusuf has with the sacred depict this integrative logic both in material and narrative aspects. The symbols of shrines, amulets, ritual directions and prayers are not the remnants of a dying belief system. They are functional devices in the narrative world and are a determinant of action as well as moral judgment, both immediate and consequential. As the porters are told “The prayer is for you and your journey. The spirit of this shrine is Pembe” (155), the story is one of an Islamic invocation and a native ritual symbolism. Colour, texture and substance are used as vehicles of holy efficacy where each object has a meaning that is known in the collective cultural knowledge. The shrine spirit is not put out of the prayer and the invocation of the spirit does not take away the power of the prayer. However, they are both mobilised as complementary protection sources. Divine power in this case is not rivalrous.

The same reason is used in making ritual decisions. The shrine is presented as an acceptable moral action to danger when a character says, “The shrine. We can make a sacrifice there [sic]” (115). Neither superstition nor irrationality but a culturally intelligible type of moral action. There is no need of any explanation since the shrine is already a part of a collective moral universe. These instances are the best examples of what Graham Furniss (2000) refers to as “normalization of Islam in African cultural production”, in which the Qur’anic practice is internalized in the local cosmologies, instead of being foisted on them as a unique system. Islamic practice in *Paradise* exists in the framework of indigenous metaphysical patterns, and not opposition to them, forming a stratified semantics where diverse types of sacred knowledge are switched in response to the situation. Qur’an prayer does not nullify shrine worship but rather, they are known to be effective in negotiating uncertainty. This co-existence brings about narrative coherence as opposed to confusion. The fact that there is no overt conflict in the doctrines in itself is a lot, showing that plurality is made normalized but not problematised.

The moral and narrative role of the practices is consistent with the idea of Sacred Realism by Noël Valis (2010) that views the practice of religion in literature as a structuring narrative power as opposed to the metaphorical decoration. The role of ritual in the novel controls behaviour, manages ethical behaviour and influences community reaction to threat. The fact that sacred practice constitutes results of

narrative not because it is imposed upon it, is that it constitutes the way of structuring how characters make judgments about causality and responsibility. Religion thus serves to provide infrastructure as opposed to atmosphere. This convergence of materials can also be depicted by the fact that Yusuf would come across the hirizo which was said to be “an amulet which was to contain words of prayers” (152). The object unites the Qur’anic textuality and native talismanic practice to create a type of sacred power that is based on material presence. The extension of meaning is achieved by the involvement of the body but not abstract faith. The efficacy of the amulet is presumed, and this strengthens the Sacred Realism where belief has no symbolic meaning, but is operational. African narrative forms are often able to maintain multiple belief systems without disrupting the narrative coherence as Quayson notes. This merging in *Paradise* brings about stability and not tension.

It is also African-Abrahamica that is manifested in the common origin and moral reasonability. In these statements, when a character says, “We are their brothers, from the blood of the same Adam who fathered all of us” (100), Abrahamic genealogy is set into motion as ethical argument and not doctrine. Adam serves as an icon of universal kinship, and facilitates moral duty between differences. Relational responsibility is created through the appeal as opposed to religious hierarchy. At the narrative theory level, Bhabha hybridity is only applicable to a certain extent (Bhabha, 1994). Although hybridity justifies cultural negotiation, coexistence is not just liminal but it is organised and maintained through practice as shown in *Paradise*. Sacred plurality in the novel is thus not a transitional one but a lasting one and is found within narrative order.

These strategies make Gurnah portray religion as something that cannot be separated by the narrative causality, ethical logic and imaginative sight. Sacred coexistence does not work as a background but as an underpinning principle to organise the world of the text. Both African-Abrahamica and Sacred Realism shed light on how religious pluralism does not operate as a transitional and incomplete process; rather as coherent and generative in the African literary imagination.

Material Sacred and Ritual African-Abrahamica

The sacred in *Paradise* is not just a matter of faith but it is also a matter of objects and ritualized embodiment of the sacred. Shrines, amulets, ritual cloth, oil, herbal use, Qur’anic inscriptions and talismanic objects are narrative tools that order ethical thought, character activity, and facilitate spiritual power. Nevertheless, these objects are not functioning within a coherent system in a similar manner; their meaning varies according to the context, social status and interpretive power. Instead of the passive cultural artefacts, there are dynamic actors in what can be termed as the material economy of the sacred in African-Abrahamica. But this coherence is not even: the Islamic and the indigenous cosmologies find points of convergence in places of practice and points of divergence where they converge in the place of practice and diverge in the place of interpretation, hierarchy and moral

judgment. The sacred is not thus smooth assimilation but constructive co-existence with internal conflict.

This embodied African-Abrahamic material theology is based on practices of embodiment: practice of touch, movement, bodily discipline, and interaction with the environment and not a belief system. But embodiment does not negate contradiction, on the contrary it is the place where various sacred logics are negotiated, and are at times harmonized and at times put in silent conflict. This conflict is acutely depicted when there is crisis. As a violent storm descends on the caravan, Gurnah writes “the porters groaned God’s name and wailed for mercy,” and Mohammed Abdalla replies: “Why should God be kind to ignorant animals like thee and me? Why not sing a song, to send off the bad magic”? (89). It is not a straightforward opposition of Islam to indigenous belief that is a scene in the passage. Instead, it displays an interpretive power struggle and spiritual effectiveness when put to the test.

There are Islamic invocation and counter-magic, but not everyone in the play is accorded equal moral status. The scene thus makes any presupposition of the easy intelligibility problematic: sacred plurality in this case is a site of judgment, hierarchy and struggle as well. The story maintains co-existence, and not unity. The storm is also an anticipation of unsteadiness of human agency in the face of the environment. Ritual speech is a means of survival and not control. Addressing God or counter-magic can never solve crisis but offers alternative paradigms of coping with it. Efficacy of sacred language is thus performative, and it is doubtful and controversial in the social context.

The same thing can be identified in the material ritual practice in the daily life, convergence and differentiation. Hamid tells Yusuf: “Do not forget to drop in oil in your ear once in a week to keep off insects and worms laying their eggs in your ear” (90). Although this seems to be simply a matter of hygiene, it also shows how the care of the body in the novel is incorporated in more general moral and environmental reasoning. But instead of the complete fusion of the sacred and pragmatic registers, the story demonstrates an overlap of the two but not their identity. The body turns into a location of stratified meaning, in which, survival practices can take on the haze of spirituality, yet, at the same time, they are still required to keep the body alive. African-Abrahamic hence does not work as fusion but is a co-presence of functional overlap.

Another way in which Islamic and indigenous cosmologies are depicted in *Paradise* is based on embodied experience as opposed to abstract doctrine. Mbiti is right in saying that religion cannot exist outside lived existence; a mode of knowing the universe and the role of humanity in it, but it has to be made complicated. In *Paradise*, this totality does not reside in a homogenous form, but it is unequally distributed among the social actors and situations. Yusuf, in his statement that; “I’ve discovered that I can summon a good jinn by rubbing it, and he will do whatever I command” (168), is also another indication of this instability.

The jinni, in the Islamic cosmology is reconstituted in the touch, but this refiguring brings about issues of authority and knowledge: what is considered to be legitimate sacred knowledge is not predetermined but negotiated through experience, learning and misrecognition. The fact that Islam tends to blend with the local traditions as observed by Furniss is still applicable, however, in this story, the process is not always stable and mutual. It is both intelligible and ambiguous and of particular importance when characters differ in their perspective on the boundaries of spiritual control and moral legitimacy.

In these instances, the role of sacred objects and rituals is that of a node of narrative meaning, though not necessarily of constancy as to result. They are the driving force behind action and the framework of interpretation, but are frequently subject to controversy or asymmetrical appreciation. In *Paradise* religion then plays a role as a unified infrastructure less than as a field of sacred practices that is in tension. Items like oil, cloth, talismans and spoken incantations are flowed in this domain, yet they do not have a fixed meaning; they are constantly redefined in terms of circumstance and power. The idea of Sacred Realism as proposed by Valis (2010) is beneficial in as much as it prefigures religion as a narrative, but not as an ornament. *Paradise* however, makes this model more complex by demonstrating that sacred structure is not necessarily fixed; it is usually bargained out in the uncertainty, discord, and partial understanding.

By this, African-Abrahamica becomes not a smooth synthesis but a well-organised yet unstable ecology of sacred coexistence, in which the material practice, the belief and the narrative causality converge, but do not fully project out to a unified state.

Liminal Sacred African-Abrahamica Ethical Horizons

Paradise not only universalises the concept of African-Abrahamica as transcending localized ritual practice to include universal kinship, ethical negotiation and moral accountability. Religion in the text is functioning as a moral cosmos that is shared where the Islamic, Christian and indigenous imaginaries intertwined without necessarily settling into a doctrinal harmony. Nevertheless, this intersection is not homogenous and conflict free, it is an ambiguous, imbalanced phenomenon that is interpreted situationally. Sacred plurality in the novel is not thus the mere organising of ritual action. It also brings about ethical ambiguity, interpretive conflict and conflicting moralities. The belief systems are resources of reasoning, but may not be absolute but contingent authority.

This moral turmoil is revealed in religious commentary moments. When Kalasinga talks about the translation of the Quran, Hamid says “It was home made spirits talking there. I hope God realizes he’s a heathen and a madman” (76). This is an ironic and sceptical statement which does not completely reject the sacred. Rather, it shows the miring of spiritual interpretation in the humour, doubt and moral judgement. The term home-made spirits is a collapse that gets rid of the differences between revelation and native spiritual agency but in such a manner that does not

create synthesis, but ambiguity. Moral witness of God implies not dogmatic truth but moral ambiguity: divine power is envisaged as something that is to interpret human lack of knowledge and not merely to reign over it.

Sacred coherence is also enhanced by mythical geographies. The eschatological imagery of Islam and the indigenous structures of myths are put into the same imaginative space in the description of “the Fountain of Life... guarded by ghouls and snakes as huge as islands” (68). But this convergence is not a disinterested convergence. It is an indication of a world where sacred knowledge is superimposed, uneven, and to some extent in competition with each other as opposed to having been completely integrated. Sacred space in the novel is thus not unitary, but is plural and stratified and it is up to the characters to work with uncertainty, to be wary and part-believe, which is to be in a tentative state of being.

This complexity is also put on stage in domestic space. The fact that “a bronze statue of Ganesh, a small painting of Jesus Christ the Redeemer and a miniature copy of the Koran” (65), are in the same place, places several religious traditions in the same physical space. Although this arrangement is a hint towards coexistence, it is not to be understood as an uninterrupted syncretism. Rather, it is a practical closeness as a result of experience, as opposed to theological reconciliation. These objects are not a part of a singular system of belief; instead, they are present in a space in which meaning is negotiated in everyday use, habit and attentive selectivity. There are sacred symbols that have their own identities though they may be physically near to each other.

This ethical ambiguity is further extended with spiritual perception; Yusuf’s perception of “shadows flit among the rocks” and “unseen watchers” (170). The consciousness of shadows that move in and out among the rocks and unseen spectators develops a liminal sacred space whereby moral behaviour is determined by forms of visibility which are not certain. These watchers are not demarcated, categorized or stabilized in a single cosmological system. Their uncertainty brings about moral awareness as opposed to dogma. In this case, the sacred plays a role of belief system but rather as a domain of interpretive pressure, which influences restraint, caution and responsibility without dispelling the uncertainty.

Throughout these episodes, African-Abrahamica is not a cohesive system but rather a well-organised arena of contacting and even volatile sacred reasonings. Religious plurality in the *Paradise* defines the morality of the judgment and story flow but in a negotiation, ambiguity and unequal power. Read through the notion of Sacred Realism, religion in the novel is not merely decoration in symbols but a part of a narrative order. But this order is not pre-determined; it is always created during the interpretation, practice and situational making of sense.

Conclusion

Paradise shows that African-Abrahamica is not merely a descriptive term of a religious mixture but a literary state of affairs where there are activated but disproportionate forces of several sacred systems existing simultaneously in the

narrative life. The novel reveals the influence of religious plurality on the reasoning of ethical arguments and storyline development through the experiences of Yusuf with ritual objects, domestic sacred spaces, ancestral imaginaries, and spiritual presences. But this plurality is not a stable and homogenised one. It is characterised by uncertainty, interpretive conflict and the changing of power. Sacred practices are considered to be moral and imaginative resources that are open to continual negotiation and not fixed. In the light of Sacred Realism, religion in the novel is revealed in the form of constitutive of the narrative structure, but not a harmonized system. Rather, it is a living science where the ethical judgment, spiritual sight and social relationships are continuously restructured. African-Abrahamic can thus provide a conceptual frame of African literature which prefigures a sacred coexistence as ordered, but unstable, generative yet contested, and ethically productive, without being completely resolved.

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RELIGIOUS VICIOUSNESS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERALITY IN THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL COHESION IN NIGERIA

Yetunde Akinnawo

Department of Religions

Osun State University, Ikire Campus, Nigeria

akinnawoabolaji@gmail.com

&

J. K Ayantayo

*Professor of Religious Ethics, Sociology of Religion, and Religious Factor in Security,
Peace, and Conflict Discourse*

Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan

ayantayokehinde@gmail.com

Abstract

Nigeria's profound religiosity creates a fundamental paradox in which religion serves as both a source of communal solidarity and a catalyst for violent fragmentation. This paradox has created a dialectical tension between religious viciousness (extremism, exclusivist soteriology, identity-based violence) and religious liberality (pluralist tolerance), thereby destabilising interfaith coexistence. It has also heightened the salience of religious identity, precipitating viciousness over liberality in multi-religious communities and deepening deficits in bridging social capital. It has given rise to a progressive erosion of social cohesion through the instrumentalisation of faith for political and material ends. Since social cohesion is a pathway to economic prosperity, communal well-being, and societal cooperative resilience to injustice, crime and crises, all of which are necessary for national development, it is essential to study the effect of the coexistence of religious viciousness and religious liberality on social cohesion in the Nigerian context. Theoretically, it draws on Conflict Theory and Social Capital Theory to construct a multi-scalar framework that illuminates the macro-structural conditions and the micro-sociological dynamics of their coexistence in Nigerian society about social integration. The study adopts a qualitative methodology grounded in a systematic review of the literature, government security reports, and ethnographic accounts of interfaith relations. The study concludes that durable national stability demands social cohesion grounded not in religious sentiment but in the shared civic identity of Nigerian citizenship. Thus, it recommends a coordinated policy architecture spanning institutional reform, educational transformation, constitutional enforcement, and digital governance.

Keywords: Religious Viciousness, Religious Liberality, Social Cohesion, Interfaith Relations, Nigeria

Introduction

The concept of social cohesion—understood as the composite of mutual trust, shared national identity, and a disposition towards collective action—is profoundly shaped by how competing religious orientations mediate inter-group relations.

Religion is a foundational axis of Nigerian society, pervading politics, economics, and social interaction with a depth that distinguishes Nigeria as one of the most religious nations in the contemporary world. According to Oloyede (2014), the nation is "a diverse and religious country" where religion is extensively politicised and significantly influences social relationships. Umeh (2013) also notes that Nigerians inherently "live religion and think religiously," with faith functioning as a comprehensive framework for their worldview, influencing everything from family choices to political involvement. Within a constitutionally secular yet profoundly religious polity, Nigeria's pluralistic identity is defined by the overlapping presence of Islam, Christianity, and African Traditional Religion (ATR), each commanding substantial, largely devout followers. As Kukah (2022) observes, religion in Nigeria is not a private or compartmentalised affair but rather a "totalising experience," shaping the terms of public discourse and calibrating the boundaries of social belonging.

Nigerian religiosity has engendered a dual social reality: "religious viciousness" and "religious liberality". These two orientations stand in fundamental tension, and their interplay constitutes the central problematic of this inquiry. The concept of social cohesion—understood as the composite of mutual trust, shared national identity, and a disposition towards collective action—is profoundly shaped by how these competing religious orientations mediate inter-group relations. Scholarly attention has increasingly converged on the structural conditions that transform theological devotion into political violence. Ibrahim (2015: 42) argues that when the state fails to ensure equitable resource distribution, "religion is frequently weaponised as a tool for aggressive competition," displacing spiritual devotion with a vicious contest for survival. This suggests that religious viciousness is not merely a theological aberration but a symptom of deeper structural pathologies within the Nigerian polity. This paper employs a qualitative methodology to systematically map these dynamics. It identifies critical lacunae in prevailing social cohesion policies and offers recommendations to cultivate inter-religious harmony through educational reform, sustained dialogue, legal clarification, and institutional innovation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily grounded in Conflict Theory, which views society as a struggle between groups competing for power, influence and resources. Marx argued that religion can be mobilised to promote group interests and preserve social divisions (Marx, 1844/1970). In the Nigerian context, the theory explains how religious viciousness, in the form of intolerance, extremism and sectarianism, can create intergroup tensions, promote hostility and undermine social cohesion. Conflict Theory therefore offers a useful framework for understanding how religious differences can contribute to social fragmentation and instability in a multi-religious society.

The Social Capital Theory is adopted as a supporting theory to complement the conflict perspective. According to Putnam (2000), social cohesion rests on

networks of trust, reciprocity and cooperation between individuals and groups. The theory distinguishes bonding social capital, which builds solidarity within a group, from bridging social capital, which promotes cooperation between different groups (Putnam, 2000). This paper views religious liberality as a source of bridging social capital, as it fosters interfaith dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect, which in turn enhance social cohesion. By contrast, religious viciousness may create bonding social capital within a religious community, but it may also generate suspicion, exclusion and hostility towards outsiders, thereby eroding broader social cohesion. Together, the two theories explain how religious attitudes and practices can undermine or reinforce social cohesion in Nigeria.

Religious Viciousness

Religious viciousness denotes the instrumentalisation of religious identity and scriptural authority to justify hostility, discrimination, and violence against people of other religions. While Oyeleye and Bello (2022) trace its aetiology to the "narrow-mindedness and extremism of religious devotees," this characterisation risks obscuring the deeper structural and political determinants at work. Nor (2025) offers a more structurally grounded account, attributing viciousness to the exclusivist soteriological claims that animate both Christianity and Islam: each asserts a divine mandate for universal conversion and salvation, thereby positing its deity as the singular locus of truth. This rivalry over the pathway to salvation furnishes the doctrinal raw material for social and political hostility that periodically erupts. Ayantayo (2018) conceptualises the outcome as theological capture—a process whereby religious practitioners "kidnap" the concept of God to legitimise violence and social fragmentation through narrow scriptural interpretation that privileges in-group loyalty over universal ethics. According to Kukah (2021), the political corollary is "politicised spirituality": the mobilisation of religious identity to secure access to state resources and power, which serves as the proximate driver of sectarian riots, insurgent movements, and hate speech.

The institutional ramifications of viciousness extend well beyond communal violence. At the constitutional level, Ibrahim (2019) posits exclusivist soteriology as a centrifugal force undermining the secularity of the Nigerian state. When religious actors campaign to align penal codes and personal law with specific doctrinal requirements, the resulting "legal friction" (Suberu, 2021) alienates other faiths through condescension and corrodes the civic neutrality that democratic coexistence requires. This tension is most starkly crystallised in the adoption of the Sharia penal code across twelve Northern states from 1999 onward. Cases attracting sentences of stoning or amputation—though frequently overturned on appeal—represent what Ezeilo (2021) calls a "clash of jurisdictions" that diminishes the universality of human rights within the Nigerian legal order. In the educational domain, religious intolerance has similarly transformed spaces of learning into arenas of sectarian conflict. A visible example is institutional contestations over the use of the hijab (Oyeleye and Bello, 2022).

Furthermore, viciousness has produced what the Middle Belt literature terms "faith-based enclaves" (Tyoden, 2022), geographically segregated settlements in which inter-group cohesion has collapsed. The North-East has served as the epicentre of extremist movements such as Boko Haram, whose "puritanical and violent interpretation of theology" (Suleiman, 2023) disrupts social structures, while the North-West—particularly Kaduna and Plateau States—has experienced recurrent cycles of communal violence at the intersection of land-tenure disputes and religious identity. In the electoral domain, the tendency to evaluate candidates on confessional rather than competence grounds produces a governance paradigm. The Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket adopted by the All Progressives Congress in 2023 exemplified this dynamic, prompting the Christian Association of Nigeria to characterise it as a "clear disregard for Nigeria's religious dynamics" (Odalonu and Aghahowa, 2025) and reigniting perennial anxieties about Islamisation among religious minorities in Nigerian states (Yusuf et al., 2025).

Religious Liberality

Religious liberality is operationalised as the theological and socio-cultural acknowledgement of the religious 'others' who thereby constitute the structural counterweight to viciousness. Its most instructive empirical manifestation is Yoruba-land in the Southwest, where Laitin's (1986) canonical account identifies a cultural hegemony in which religious affiliation is subordinated to ethnic and family identity. Individuals are constituted primarily as community members and only secondarily as adherents of a particular faith. This structural arrangement effectively pre-empts the "othering" dynamics that catalyse sectarian hostility elsewhere. Nor (2025) advances a complementary argument regarding African Traditional Religion (ATR), whose communal orientation, absence of a centralised scriptural canon, and rejection of a singular "only true path" dogma position it as an inherently harmonious model of pluralist coexistence—a structural contrast to the exclusivist missionary faiths. Adamolekun (2013) frames religious freedom and tolerance as "catalysts for stability," situating liberality not as the passive absence of conflict but as a proactive commitment to pluralism.

Religious liberality is a pluralist orientation evident in the peaceful coexistence of multi-faith families, communities, and institutions across significant swathes of the country. In Putnam's (2000) typology, liberality generates "bridging" social capital, the inter-group ties indispensable to democratic citizenship, in direct contrast to the "bonding" capital that viciousness produces. In Nigeria, this bridging is most visible in the Southwest, where multi-religious household composition is normative: Christians, Muslims, and ATR adherents routinely share domestic space, celebrate one another's festivals, and navigate doctrinal differences through dialogue. Balogun and Obosi (2018) identify Yoruba cultural identity as the operative adhesive, providing a supra-religious basis for solidarity that prevents factional "othering". Oyetoro and Talabi (2023) provide empirical corroboration from Ojo, Lagos, demonstrating that religious tolerance in this region actively promotes national integration and economic productivity, while Olukotun (2023)

characterises interfaith marriages and joint business ventures as "structural stabilisers" within the national social fabric.

At the level of political governance, liberality fosters what Jega (2021) terms a "theology of "engagement". This is a disposition among liberal religious actors to regard the secular state as a neutral arbiter of citizens' rights rather than as a competitor for ultimate allegiance. This orientation is constitutive of the inter-faith democratic compact, without which a multi-religious polity cannot endure. Interfaith councils, such as the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), enact this orientation by de-escalating sectarian tensions through sensitive scriptural reinterpretation that foregrounds mercy and civic responsibility, thereby maintaining what Sanusi (2020) regards as the "thin" social cohesion sufficient to prevent the complete collapse of the national social order.

Social Cohesion in Nigeria

Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) define social cohesion as a multidimensional construct denoting the "quality of collective togetherness," comprising three interrelated dimensions: the quality of social relations, identification with the territorial political unit, and orientation towards the common good. In the Nigerian context, all three dimensions face sustained structural pressure. Allen and Nyiayaana (2023) document measurable declines across each, evidenced by a growing unwillingness to collaborate across identity lines and a widespread erosion of faith in national institutions. Aluko (2022) operationalises cohesion for the Nigerian setting through three composite indicators—inter-ethnic trust, a meaningful sense of belonging to the Nigerian state, and willingness to act cooperatively for the common good—while Ojo (2024) repositions cohesion as a dynamic rather than a static condition, one whose trajectory is shaped by economic equity, political inclusion, and the quality of religious relations. This dynamic framing carries a critical policy implication: social cohesion can be deliberately cultivated or degraded, and religious viciousness and liberality are among the most powerful levers shaping it.

Effects of Religious Viciousness on Social Cohesion in Nigeria

Religious viciousness corrodes social cohesion across four interrelated levels. Psychologically, rising inter-religious tensions erode civic trust and the shared national identity that undergirds collective action. Wachukwu (2024: 561) documents a marked decline in confidence in a unified Nigerian identity as radicalisation intensifies, while the NHRC and Kukah (2025) report that extremist violence creates an "atmosphere of fear and distrust" that renders inter-faith collaboration functionally impossible and, by doing so, dissolves the social contract as citizens retreat into parochial confessional identities.

At the level of capital formation, religious violence converts bridging social capital into bonding social capital, deepening intra-sectarian solidarity while destroying inter-group ties essential to national cohesion. Studies in the North-East and Plateau States show that intolerance "hinders proper development and sustainable

peace" (Atoi and Babale, 2021), leading to irreplaceable losses of human and material capital, mass internal displacement, and the collapse of local trade networks. Amadi (2024) identifies the downstream consequence as a "psychology of fear" that deters foreign investment and depresses economic growth, making religious hostility a structural impediment to development rather than merely a security concern.

Moreover, viciousness has generated residential segregation in cities such as Kaduna and Jos, where Christians and Muslims increasingly inhabit separate "safe zones" (Amadi, 2024). This physical separation forecloses the social benefits of diversity, curtails freedom of movement, and diminishes residents' capacity to leverage collective talents and resources—thereby threatening, as Akinnawo and Akande (2022) observe, not only present development trajectories but also the preservation of prior societal achievements. At the governance level, viciousness displaces competence-based democratic competition with confessional loyalty, producing a zero-sum paradigm in which the state functions as a prize for inter-religious contest rather than a neutral arbiter. Usman (2023) locates the structural root of this failure in the state's inability to construct a civic identity capable of transcending religious loyalty—a vacuum readily exploited by extremist ideologues.

Effects of Religious Liberality on Social Cohesion

Where viciousness corrodes, liberality restores. At the relational level, Kii and Olunlade (2025) document that liberality promotes cross-group "human cooperation and solidarity," which constitute Putnam's bridging social capital. The "web of affiliation" produced by multi-faith domestic arrangements in the Southwest serves as an empirically documented deterrent to large-scale religious violence (Adebanwi, 2020), yielding measurable social peace dividends. This bridging capital extends into economic life through interfaith marriages and joint business ventures Olukotun's (2023) "structural stabilisers" and into civic life through the "altruism, volunteerism, and social justice initiatives" (CARI 2024) that liberal religious communities foster across confessional boundaries.

At the governance level, liberal religious leaders mobilise their moral authority as mediators during political crises, enacting Jega's (2021) "theology of engagement." This disposition to regard the secular state as a legitimate neutral arbiter rather than a theological competitor is constitutive of the inter-faith democratic compact. Liberality further enables the progressive reinterpretation of sacred texts to affirm human rights, including gender equality and minority protection, whose institutional realisation is essential to a cohesive modern democracy.

The Influence of Social Cohesion on Religious Viciousness and Liberality

The causal relationship between social cohesion and religious orientation is reciprocal rather than unidirectional. High social cohesion substantially weakens the structural preconditions for radicalisation: when citizens identify primarily with a shared national identity, the appeal of exclusivist religious mobilisation

diminishes. Okonjo (2021) shows that in cohesive neighbourhoods, residents are measurably more likely to protect neighbours of different faiths during crises; this evidence indicates that cohesion acts as a prophylactic against the conversion of theological difference into communal violence. Bello (2024) sharpens this insight by observing that intensified economic cooperation across faith lines makes "religious liberality a pragmatic necessity rather than just a moral ideal," thereby revealing that religious orientations are embedded in, and therefore transformable by, material social relations.

In cohesive communities, shared values of inclusivity render individuals less susceptible to extremist infiltration and better equipped to detect early signs of radicalisation (IMCTC, 2025). The comparative regional picture confirms this dynamic: where governance failures and the collapse of the social contract have created institutional vacuums, religious extremist formations have filled them; where indigenous governance systems retain operational vitality, religious organisations have successfully promoted peace-building even under significant socio-economic pressure (Okafor, 2021, cited in AJPO, 2026). Discourse analysis of Nigerian sermons further reveals that when religious leaders foreground national cohesion, they deploy "inclusive language and moral framing" that redirects believers from insular devotion towards engagement with collective national challenges (Udoh, 2025). Oyebanjo and Oyebanjo also affirm that religious leaders strategically employ appeals to common values and social harmony to encourage peaceful coexistence. These points demonstrate that the relationship between cohesion and liberality is not merely structural but actively cultivable through deliberate communicative practice.

Towards a Cohesive Nigeria: Policy Imperatives for Managing Religious Viciousness and Liberality

The foregoing analysis makes clear that the challenge of religious viciousness and the cultivation of religious liberality in Nigeria are not merely theological problems amenable to moral exhortation; they are structural problems that demand structural solutions. Addressing them requires a coherent, multi-pronged policy architecture spanning institutional design, educational philosophy, constitutional governance, and the regulation of public discourse.

The most fundamental requirement is to institutionalise social cohesion as a governing priority rather than an occasional rhetorical aspiration. The Nigerian state must establish dedicated social cohesion research and monitoring units at the federal, state, and local government levels, each mandated to rigorously evaluate all public policies through the lens of social cohesion theory. This structural embedding is indispensable because cohesion-eroding consequences of apparently neutral policies—in areas such as resource allocation, appointments, and zoning—are rarely identified until the damage is done. Equally important is the transition from episodic "interfaith summits," which generate goodwill without accountability, to permanent, institutionalised local committees charged with continuous monitoring of inter-religious relations and the proactive de-escalation

of tensions at the grassroots level. It is at the community level, not the national podium, that the early warning signs of radicalisation first appear and where preventive intervention is most effective. Nigeria's current governance architecture is conspicuously deficient in precisely this early-warning and conflict-prevention capacity; remedying that deficiency is the precondition for all other policy interventions.

Structural reform of the educational system constitutes the second pillar of any serious policy response. Education is the most powerful long-term instrument available to the state for reshaping citizens' normative dispositions, yet it has been grievously underutilised in Nigeria's management of religious diversity. Curricula across all levels - primary, secondary, and tertiary should be redesigned around what may be termed "essencism": a pedagogical philosophy that draws students' attention to the shared moral cores of Nigeria's religious traditions rather than fixating on doctrinal divergences. The comparative ethics of compassion, justice, and communal responsibility are not the exclusive property of any single faith; foregrounding them pedagogically would cultivate, from an early stage in civic formation, the disposition towards religious literacy and inter-faith respect that social cohesion requires. A citizenry educated to recognise what its religious traditions share is considerably less susceptible to the demagogic exploitation of their differences.

The third imperative concerns the legal and constitutional framework within which religious identity is permitted to operate in public life. Nigeria's constitutional commitment to secularism provides the normative foundation for religious pluralism, but its practical enforcement has been inconsistent and frequently compromised by political expediency. The state must take deliberate institutional action to ensure that no religious identity infringes the religious rights of others, with particular vigilance for the vulnerability of minority faith communities. This requires, among other things, a rigorous and transparent refinement of the Federal Character Principle - the constitutional provision designed to ensure equitable representation across Nigeria's diverse constituencies to guarantee that its application in practice is genuinely inclusive and participatory rather than a mechanism through which majoritarian interests capture the apparatus of the state under the guise of demographic representation. When citizens perceive constitutional protections as selectively enforced along religious lines, the credibility of the state as a neutral arbiter is fatally undermined, and the retreat into confessional identity politics becomes, for many, a rational response.

The fourth imperative addresses the quality and governance of religious public discourse, both in traditional civic spaces and on digital platforms. Religious leaders and communities across all major faiths bear a special responsibility in this domain, given the moral authority they command over large constituencies. They should be actively encouraged—through civil society engagement, interfaith councils, and, where appropriate, state facilitation—to articulate their traditions' moral teachings in ways affirmatively grounded in equity, balance, and respect for

the dignity of the religious other: neither defensive in the face of theological challenge nor aggressive in the face of difference. This is not a call for doctrinal compromise but for communicative responsibility. Simultaneously, the state must develop and implement regulatory frameworks to curb the proliferation of religious hate speech on social media platforms, which has become one of the most potent accelerants of inter-religious tension in contemporary Nigeria. Such frameworks must be designed with equal care for the protection of legitimate free expression, recognising that the suppression of speech is itself a resource that can be, and historically has been, weaponised against religious minorities.

Taken together, these four imperatives constitute a coherent and mutually reinforcing policy agenda. Institutional reform provides the structural scaffolding; educational transformation builds the civic culture; constitutional clarity establishes the legal boundaries; and the governance of discourse shapes the normative environment in which religious identity is publicly performed. No single intervention is sufficient on its own—religious viciousness is too deeply embedded in Nigeria's structural inequalities and political economy to yield to any single policy lever. But pursued in concert, these imperatives offer the Nigerian state and its civil society partners the most credible pathway to converting religion from a source of fragmentation into the instrument of cohesion it has the latent capacity to be.

Conclusion

The future trajectory of social cohesion in Nigeria depends on the deliberate suppression of religious viciousness and the equally deliberate cultivation of religious openness. The fabric of national unity is currently defined by a high-stakes competition between the "exclusive narratives" propagated by extremist groups and the "inclusive heritage" embodied in Nigeria's rich traditions of interfaith kinship and pluralist coexistence. As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, this competition is not merely theological but structural: it is sustained by state failure, resource inequality, and the absence of robust institutional mechanisms for early warning and conflict prevention deficiencies that the proposed social cohesion monitoring units and permanent interfaith committees are specifically designed to address.

For Nigeria to achieve durable stability, it must engineer a decisive transition from a condition in which religion produces "unrest and polarity" to one in which it functions as a "catalyst for stability." That transition, as the policy imperatives make clear, runs through educational reform that instils essentialism from an early age, constitutional enforcement that protects minority faiths from majoritarian capture, and the responsible governance of religious discourse in both civic and digital spaces. For social cohesion, Nigeria must be grounded not in religious sentiment but in the shared civic identity of Nigerian citizenship, built from the grassroots upward, fostering genuine belonging regardless of confessional affiliation and held together by institutions strong enough to make that belonging credible.

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UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF TOUR GUIDE ON VISITORS SATISFACTION AT ADO-AWAYE, OYO STATE

Emmanuel Tobi Abidakun

*Department of Tourism Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Culture,
Osun State University, Osun State, Nigeria
emmanuel.abidakun@uniosun.edu.ng*

Marvellous Olufemi Akande,

*Department of Tourism Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Culture,
Osun State University, Osun State, Nigeria.*

&

Kelvin Oluwatosin Adewale

*Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism Management,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
kelvinkyle71@gmail.com*

Abstract

Tour guides are among the most critical human elements in the tourism experience, their importance lies not just in transferring factual information, but in shaping the visitor's perception of the destination itself. The research investigated how visitors perceive the quality and impact of guided tours at Ado-Awaye Suspended Lake. A quantitative approach was used with a descriptive quantitative survey, data collected from 174 respondents. Results showed that most visitors were that most visitors were men (74.7%), educated and single, and 70.1% were not repeating visitors. All the visitors experienced guided tour, and rated their experience good and they possess good knowledge of the site. Results further showed the satisfaction of visitors with the tour guide services, especially in areas such as communication, friendliness, and site knowledge as efficient and recommendable. However, some challenges were noted, including the need for better guide presentation and engagement and confidence level of tour guides. The test of relationship shows there is significant relationship between tour guide performance and tourist satisfaction with tour guide services and tourist perception of tour guide ($P < 0.05$). The study recommends improved guide training, clearer communication, and structured feedback systems to enhance the visitor experience and satisfaction.

Keywords: Ado-Awaye, Suspended Lake, Tour Guide, Visitor Satisfaction, Tourism, Repeating visit

Introduction

Tour guides are among the most critical human elements in the tourism experience, serving as interpreters, facilitators, and intermediaries between destinations and visitors (Moreno-Melgarejo *et al.*, 2020). While mountainous regions serve as global repositories for a vast array of tourism attractions; consequently, mountain-based activities are estimated to constitute approximately 15% to 20% of the global tourism industry (Silva *et al.*, 2014; Olaniyi & Bada, 2020). High-quality

interpretation and information sharing are essential for elevating the guest experience. Improvements in these areas directly correlate with heightened demand for services and a significant boost in tourist patronage (Abidakun & Tunde-Ajayi, 2021). The importance of the tour guide lies not just in transferring factual information, but in shaping the visitor's perception of the destination itself (El-sharkawy, 2014). Satisfaction in tourism is fundamentally defined by the interplay between pre-consumption expectations and the empirical reality of the visit (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019).

Visitor satisfaction is a critical determinant of a tourist destination's success, influencing repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Chang, 2014). While research in this area has yielded inconsistent results, the consensus remains that satisfaction is achieved when performance outweighs expectation, whereas a performance deficit leads to dissatisfaction (Huang *et al.*, 2010; Abidakun & Tunde-Ajayi, 2021). As noted by Lhendup and Panda (2020), this level of fulfillment is best quantified by examining a tourist's willingness to recommend the destination, their desire for repeat visitation, and their overall assessment of front-line service providers like tour guides (Gesimba, 2024).

The World Federation of Tourist Guides Association (WFTGA, 2003) defines a tour guide as an individual who provides guided services in a visitor's preferred language while interpreting the cultural and natural heritage of a specific area. Such professionals typically hold area-specific qualifications recognized or issued by relevant governing bodies. Beyond this foundational definition, El-sharkawy (2014) in his study emphasized that a guide's specialized knowledge, skills, and interpersonal abilities are critical determinants of participant satisfaction. Because guides maintain continuous and intensive contact with their groups, they possess the unique capacity to transform standard itinerary items into extraordinary experiences. Consequently, they bear the primary responsibility for ensuring sustained visitors' satisfaction throughout the entire duration of the tour.

Ado-Awaye Suspended Lake is one of the only two Suspended Lakes in the whole world (Akande, 2017). The Suspended Lake is located in Oyo State and this ought to make it an instant destination choice for tourists (Adetola & Ofili, 2022). The tour guiding service is one of the critical services provided by tour operators and destination management of the site. It is considered essential for tourist satisfaction and experience in package tours (Cetinkaya & Oter, 2016). Enhancing tour guide performance based on empirical findings can lead to improved visitor satisfaction, increased visitation rates, and economic benefits for the local community. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate and evaluate the impact of tour guides on visitor satisfaction at Ado Awaye, providing insights that can inform policy and practice in tour guide management and offering insights into the specific dynamics of tour guide-visitor interactions at cultural heritage sites in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a quantitative approach using a descriptive quantitative survey. The target population includes all visitors to the Ado-Awaye suspended lake attraction during the time of data collection. While there is no exact published figure on the number of tourists visiting the site yearly, site officials and local tourism stakeholders estimated that the number of visitors ranged between 150 to 300 individuals per year, especially during holidays and festive periods. The population includes both domestic and international tourists, men and women, across different age categories, and with varying levels of education and travel experience. They represented individuals who had direct interactions with tour guides at Ado-Awaye Lake, making their feedback relevant for assessing satisfaction levels. The sample size for the total population size of 304 was 174. This was according to the sample size of Taro Yamane (1967) equation adopted by Orga and Dalhatu (2024), at a margin error of 5 per cent and confidence level of 95 per cent. The respondents were selected using non-probability sample, convenient or accidental sampling technique. Questionnaires administered were analyzed using descriptive statistics; these will include frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations presented in tables and charts. Inferential statistics includes chi-square for test of relationship.

Results and Discussion

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The results showed that most visitors were men (74.7%). This is common because adventure and outdoor tourism often attracts more men than women (Abidakun & Tunde-Ajayi, 2021). Many visitors were young adults aged 21–35 (63.8%), which agrees with studies showing younger people travel more for fun and exploration (UNWTO, 2023). Most of them were single (70.7%), which means they had fewer family commitments and more freedom to travel (Cohen and Cohen, 2012). Many visitors had tertiary education (76.4%), and educated people are often more interested in nature and cultural tourism (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019). Business owners (40.2%) and civil servants (35.1%) made up most of the visitors, showing that the lake is popular among working people. A key result was that 70.1% of visitors were not visiting for the first time. Repeat visitors often mean they liked their past experience and were satisfied with the place (Taiwo *et al.*, 2025)

Table 1: Socio-characteristics of participants

Variable	Frequency (174)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	44	25.3%
Male	130	74.7%
Age		
10-20	5	2.9%
21-35	111	63.8%
36-45	54	31.0%
46 and above	4	2.3%
Marital Status		
Single	123	70.7%
Married	51	29.3%
Divorced	0	0%
Educational qualification		
Primary Education	6	3.4%
Secondary Education	25	14.4%
Tertiary	133	76.4%
No Formal Education	10	5.7%
Occupation		
Student	43	24.7%
Civil Servant	61	35.1%
Business Owner	70	40.2%
Other	0	0%
Is this your first visit to Iya Lake?		
Yes	52	29.9%
No	122	70.1%

Tourist Perception of Tour Guide at Iya Lake

Figure 1 revealed that all the respondents (100%) experienced a guided tour during their visit.

Figure 2 revealed all of the respondents claimed tour guided is needed at Iyake Lake (100%).

Figure 3 revealed that majority of the respondents prefer their tour with the tour guide (96.6%), while 3.4% prefer their tour personally.

Figure 4 revealed that majority of the respondents rated the tour guide good (50.6%), 29.9% rated very good, 10.3% were neutral, 6.9% rated poor and 2.3% rated tour guide very poor.

Table 2 revealed the tourist perception of tour guide. The variables were subjected to mean scores and the mean value ranged from 2.25 to 1.57. “Tour guide is necessary at Iyake Lake” and “Visitors should not be allowed to go on a tour to Iya Lake” had highest mean value of 2.25 while “The tour guide was audible enough” had the lowest mean value of 1.57.

Discussion

Cetinkaya and Oter, (2016) noted that tourists often value tour guides as “the face of the destination,” meaning their performance strongly influences how visitors feel about a place. These results suggest that tour guides at Iyake Lake are meeting visitor expectations and play a strong role in shaping positive experiences.

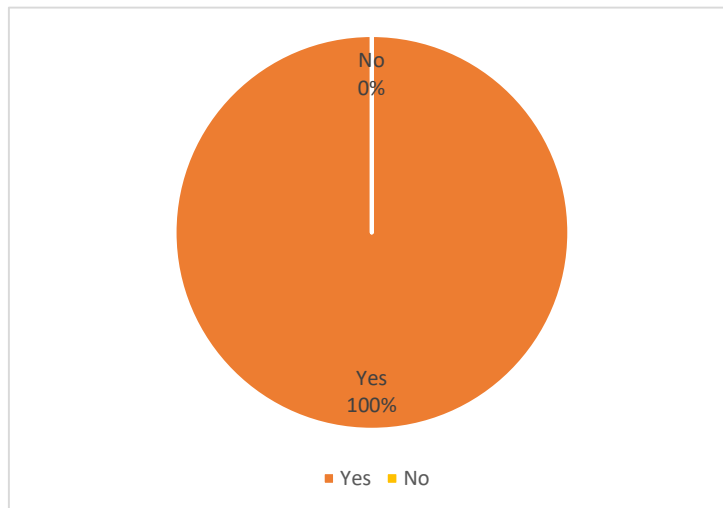


Figure 1. Guided tour experience

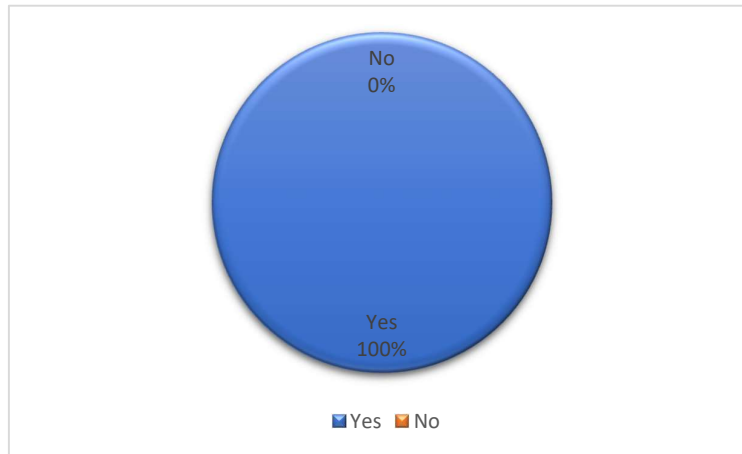


Figure 2. The need for guided tour at Iyake Lake

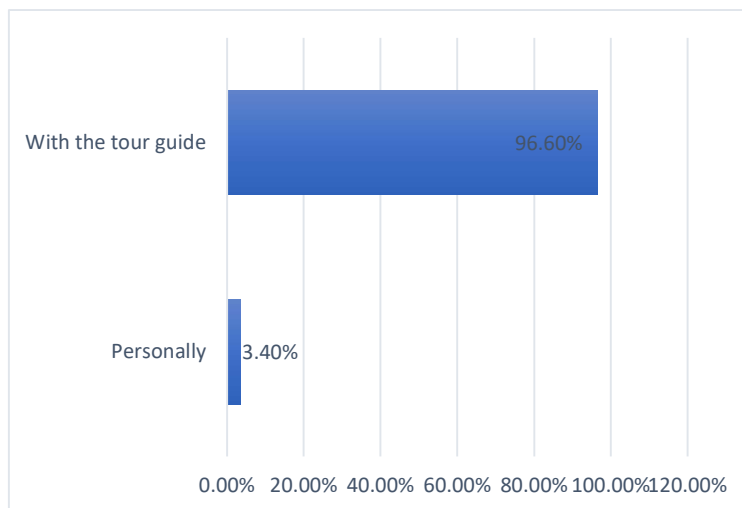


Figure 3. Preference for Tour Experience

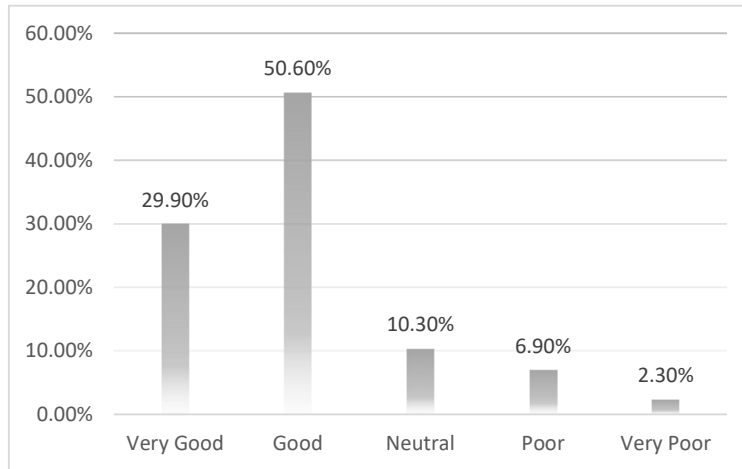


Figure 4. Performance of tour guide

Table 2: Tourist Perception of Tour Guide

Variables	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
Tour guide is necessary at Iyake Lake	40 (23.0%)	81 (46.6%)	33 (19.0%)	10 (5.7%)	10 (5.7%)	2.25	1.06
Visitors should not be allowed to go on a tour to Iya Lake	12 (6.9%)	16 (9.2%)	7 (4.0%)	108 (62.1%)	31 (17.8%)	2.25	1.07
The tour guide is presentable and well-coordinated	86 (49.4%)	47 (27.0%)	18 (10.3%)	11 (6.3%)	12 (6.9%)	1.94	1.22
The tour guide is interesting and lively	52 (29.9%)	94 (54.0%)	16 (9.2%)	7 (4.0%)	5 (2.9%)	1.96	0.90
The tour guide has good communication skills	107 (61.5%)	34 (19.5%)	15 (8.6%)	10 (5.7%)	8 (4.6%)	1.72	1.13
The tour guide was audible enough	115 (66.1%)	35 (20.1%)	7 (4.0%)	17 (9.8%)	0 (0%)	1.57	0.96

The tour guide was able to answer questions effectively	115 (66.1 %)	34 (19.5 %)	7 (4.0%)	11 (6.3%)	7 (4.0%)	1.63	1.09
The tour guide contributed positively to my perception of Iyake Lake	109 (62.6 %)	48 (27.6 %)	0 (0%)	10 (5.7%)	7 (4.0%)	1.61	1.04

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree, A- Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Tourist Satisfaction with Tour Guide at Iya Lake

This section provides findings on visitors' satisfaction with the tour guide services at Iyake Lake. It focuses on whether tourists were satisfied, their level of satisfaction, and which aspects of the tour they valued the most. Understanding visitor satisfaction is important because it shows how tour guide services influence the overall experience and perception of the destination.

Figure 5 revealed that majority of the respondents (93.7%) were satisfied with the tour guide services while 6.3% were not.

Figure 6 revealed the level of satisfaction, 89.1% were very satisfied, 4.3% were somewhat satisfied, while 6.3% were not satisfied with the tour guide services.

Figure 7 revealed the services mostly used, Introduction Aspect (64.4%), Iyalake Explanation (29.9%), Engagement Ability (3.4%), Mode of Communication (2.3%).

Table 3 revealed the tourist satisfaction with tour guide services. The variables were subjected to mean scores and the mean value ranged from 1.89 to 1.40. "The tour guide demonstrated a good knowledge of the Iyake lake" had highest mean value of 1.89 while "The tour guide communicated clearly and effectively throughout the tour" had the lowest mean value of 1.40.

Discussion

This suggests that while guides are delivering good explanations and initial briefings, there may be room to improve interactive engagement and communication styles during tours. These findings support earlier studies that emphasized the link between quality guiding services and tourist satisfaction. El-sharkawy (2014), found that a professional guide not only shares knowledge but also creates memorable experiences that influence repeat visits. Similarly, Weiler and Black (2014), highlighted that well-prepared introductions and accurate information delivery positively shape tourists' perceptions of a site. The results show that tourists at Iyake Lake are highly satisfied with tour guide services, particularly in terms of introductions and information delivery. However, improving interaction and communication styles during tours could further enhance visitor experiences and encourage repeat visits.

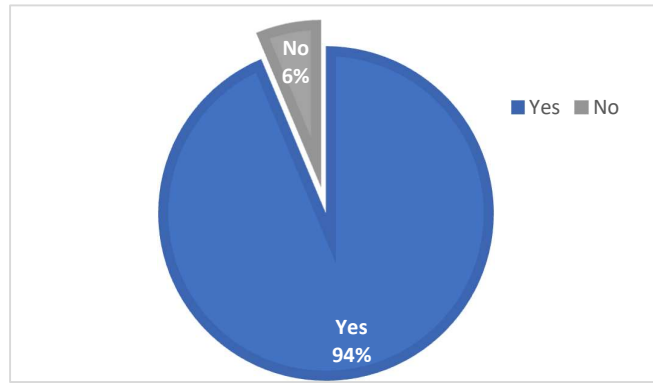


Figure 5. Satisfaction with tour guide services

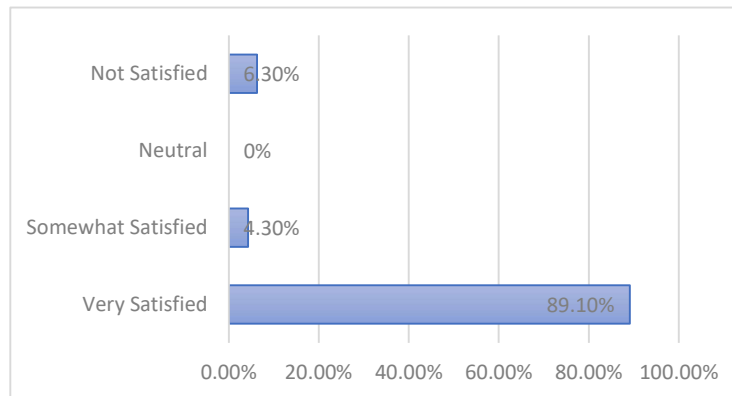


Figure 6. Level of satisfaction

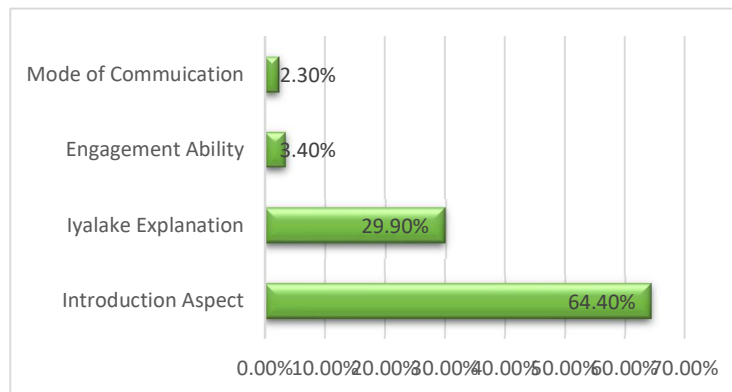


Figure 7. Services rendered by tour guide

Table 3: Tourist Satisfaction with Tour Guide Services

Influencing factors	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
The tour guide demonstrated a good knowledge of the Iyake lake.	91 (52.3%)	54 (31.0%)	6 (3.4%)	4 (2.3%)	19 (10.9%)	1.89	1.28
The tour guide communicated clearly and effectively throughout the tour	121 (69.5%)	42 (24.1%)	6 (3.4%)	5 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	1.40	0.70
The tour guide was friendly and approachable	79 (45.4%)	72 (41.4%)	18 (10.3%)	5 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	1.71	0.77
The tour guide engaged the visitors with interesting facts and stories	128 (73.6%)	33 (19.0%)	0 (0%)	10 (5.7%)	3 (1.7%)	1.43	0.90
The tour guide was well-organized and managed the tour efficiently.	107 (61.5%)	42 (24.1%)	12 (6.9%)	13 (7.5%)	0 (0%)	1.60	0.91
The tour guide helped to make the visit more enjoyable and engaging	83 (47.7%)	74 (42.5%)	12 (6.9%)	5 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	1.65	0.74

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree, A- Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Influence of Tour Guides on Visitor Satisfaction

Tour guides play a key role in shaping visitors' experiences at tourist sites. Their knowledge, behaviour, and communication skills can greatly affect how visitors enjoy and remember their visit. This section explores how tour guides at Iyake Lake influence the overall satisfaction of visitors. It looks at visitors' views on the

professionalism, efficiency, and helpfulness of the guides, and how these factors impact their enjoyment and willingness to recommend the site to others.

Figure 8 revealed that majority of the strongly agrees (54.6%) that the tour guide possess quality and professional service.

Figure 9 revealed the efficiency, 47.7% rated very efficient, 31.0% rated efficient, while 7.5% rated not efficient and 13.8% were neutral.

Figure 10 revealed majority of the respondents (81.6%) would recommend the tour guide to others.

Table 4 revealed the tourist satisfaction with tour guide services. The variables were subjected to mean scores and the mean value ranged from 1.99 to 1.60. “I can recommend Iyake lake to others because of the tour guide” had highest mean value of 1.99 while “I enjoyed my tour mostly due to the guided tour” and “The tour guide helped me better understand Iya Lake” had the lowest mean value of 1.60.

Discussion

This shows that visitors generally view the guides as competent and professional in carrying out their duties. High levels of professionalism among tour guides are important because they create a positive visitor experience and help build trust in the destination (Weiler & Black, 2014). Professionalism also ensures that visitors feel safe, informed, and engaged during their tours. The results from this study are consistent with the work of Chang (2014), who found that professional guiding services significantly increase visitor satisfaction and willingness to revisit.

Table 4 aligns with previous studies showing that effective tour guiding enhances perceived value and satisfaction among tourists. Moreover, 56.3% strongly agreed they would recommend Iyake Lake to others due to the tour guide, demonstrating the strong influence guides have on positive word-of-mouth and repeat visitation (Huang *et al.*, 2010). However, the presence of neutral and disagreement responses indicates some variation in visitor perceptions, which could relate to individual expectations or tour experiences.

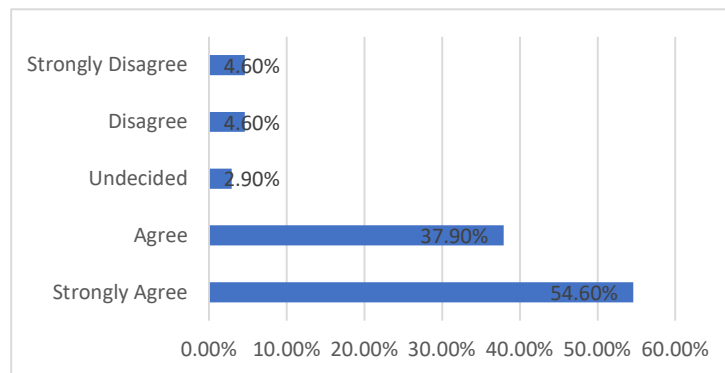


Figure 8. Quality of tour guide

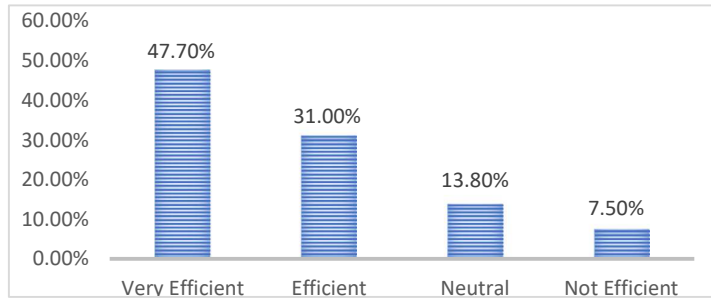


Figure 9. Efficiency of the tour guide services

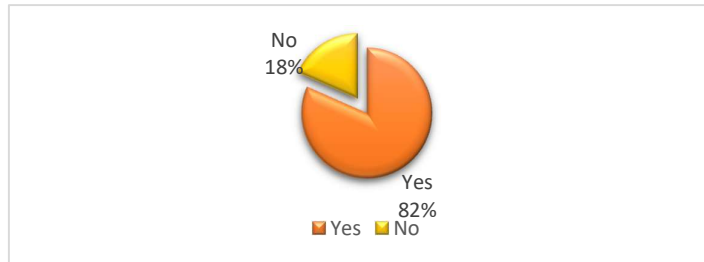


Figure 10. Recommendation of tour guide

Table 4: Influence of Tour Guide on Visitor Satisfaction

Influencing factors	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
I enjoyed my tour mostly due to the guided tour.	118 (67.8%)	32 (18.4%)	0 (0%)	24 (13.8%)	0 (0%)	1.60	1.04
I am more satisfied with my visit because of the tour guide	82 (47.1%)	68 (39.1%)	0 (0%)	24 (13.8%)	0 (0%)	1.80	1.00
I can recommend Iyake lake to others because of the tour guide	98 (56.3%)	17 (9.8%)	28 (16.1%)	24 (13.8%)	7 (4.0%)	1.99	1.28
I had value for my money due to the guided tour	103 (59.2%)	32 (18.4%)	30 (17.2%)	9 (5.2%)	0 (0%)	1.68	0.94

The tour guide made the tour more interesting.	107 (61.5%)	30 (17.2%)	28 (16.1%)	9 (5.2%)	0 (0%)	1.65	0.93
The tour guide helped me better understand Iya Lake	117 (67.2%)	20 (11.5%)	27 (15.5%)	10 (5.7%)	0 (0%)	1.60	0.95

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree, A- Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Factors that Influence Visitor's Satisfaction

Understanding the factors that influence Visitor Satisfaction helps to identify areas where tour guides can improve to make visits more enjoyable and memorable for tourists. The findings were based on visitors' opinions gathered during the survey.

Table 5 revealed the factors that influence visitor's satisfaction. The variables were subjected to mean scores and the mean value ranged from 2.16 to 1.58. "Tour guide should be present at the start of the presentation" and "Tour guide should be more confident" had highest mean value of 2.16 while "Tour guides should be more presentable" had the lowest mean value of 1.58.

Table 5: Factors in Tour Guide Performance that Influence Visitors Satisfaction

Influencing factors	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
Tour guides should be more presentable.	118 (67.8%)	20 (11.5%)	27 (15.5%)	9 (5.2%)	0 (0%)	1.58	0.93
Tour guides should have more crowd control	104 (59.8%)	34 (19.5%)	27 (15.5%)	9 (5.2%)	0 (0%)	1.66	0.92
Tour guides should use good language	107 (61.5%)	28 (16.1%)	27 (15.5%)	9 (5.2%)	3 (1.7%)	1.70	1.02
Tour guide should be present at the start of	93 (53.4%)	20 (11.5%)	27 (15.5%)	9 (5.2%)	25 (14.4%)	2.16	1.48

the presentation							
Tour guide should be more confident.	71 (40.8%)	46 (26.4%)	27 (15.5%)	18 (10.3%)	12 (6.9%)	2.16	1.26
Tour guide should be more audible.	69 (39.7%)	93 (53.4%)	0 (0%)	12 (16.9%)	0 (0%)	1.74	0.78
Tour guides should be more engaging with tourists.	85 (48.9%)	77 (44.3%)	0 (0%)	12 (6.9%)	0 (0%)	1.65	0.80
Tour guides should be more interesting and livelier	65 (37.4%)	87 (50.0%)	7 (4.0%)	9 (5.2%)	6 (3.4%)	1.87	0.96

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree, A- Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Hypotheses Testing

Relationship between tour guide performance and tourist satisfaction with tour guide services

Table 7 below revealed that there is a significant relationship between tour guide performance and tourist satisfaction with tour guide services (P=0.001).

Relationship between tourist satisfaction with tour guide services and tourist perception of tour guide

Table 8 below revealed that there is a significant relationship between tourist satisfaction with tour guide services and tourist perception of tour guide (P=0.000).

Table 7: Relationship between tour guide performance and tourist satisfaction with tour guide services

Variables	Chi Square (χ^2)	Sig. Value	Decision
Relationship between tour guide performance and tourist satisfaction with tour guide services	13.628	0.001	Significant

*P<0.05

Table 8: Relationship between tourist satisfaction with tour guide services and tourist perception of tour guide

Variables	Chi- square (χ^2)	Sig. Value	Decision
Relationship between tourist satisfaction with tour guide services and tourist perception of tour guide	13.109	0.000	Significant

**P<0.01, *P<0.05

Discussion of Key Findings

The findings from this study provide strong evidence that tour guides play a major role in shaping visitors' satisfaction at Iyake Lake. Several important patterns emerged from the data. First, almost all visitors (100%) reported participating in a guided tour and agreed that having a tour guide is necessary. This supports the idea that guided tours help improve visitor experiences at natural attractions. As argued by Binti *et al.* (2022), the tour guide serves as the face of the tourism experience and significantly influences how visitors perceive a site. In terms of guide performance, most respondents rated the tour guide as "very good" or "good," showing that the guide's role was appreciated. This aligns with the work of Gesimba (2024), who found that effective communication, confidence, and friendliness of guides are key to visitor satisfaction. In our study, many visitors praised the guide's communication skills, friendliness, and ability to make the tour lively and educational. Furthermore, satisfaction levels were very high, with 93.7% of respondents saying they were satisfied, and 89.1% stating they were "very satisfied." Visitors were particularly impressed with the introduction given at the beginning of the tour and the explanation of Iyake Lake.

According to El-sharkawy (2014), when guides provide clear and engaging commentary, visitors are more likely to report a sense of enjoyment and deeper connection with the place visited. The influence of the guide also extended to broader visitor outcomes. Many respondents stated they enjoyed their visit mainly

because of the guided tour, and over 80% said they would recommend the guide to others. Factors such as presentability, crowd control, and language use were identified as areas that influence visitor satisfaction. Respondents showed that they value not only what the guide says but also how they conduct themselves.

Conclusion

This study shows that tour guides play a very important role in improving the experience of visitors at Iyake Lake. The lake, being a unique natural and cultural attraction in Nigeria, offers a lot for tourists to enjoy. Without proper guidance and clear explanations, many visitors may not fully understand the history, meaning, and beauty of the site. Most tourists agreed that the presence of a good tour guide made their visit more fun, meaningful, and enjoyable. Tour guides helped them learn new things about the lake, feel more comfortable during the tour, and enjoy every part of the journey. The way the guides spoke, how they related with visitors, and how organized they were all played a big part in how satisfied people felt. The study also found that there are still some things to improve; in such that tour guides should be livelier and engaging. These are areas that, if worked on, will help raise the quality of service and make the experience even better for visitors.

A tour guide is not just someone who shows the way. At Iyake Lake, the guide is also a storyteller, a host, and a key part of what makes the visit memorable. Giving more attention to how tour guides are trained and how they interact with visitors will help promote tourism and attract more people to this special site.

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THE HISTORICAL NEXUS BETWEEN ISLAM, CULTURE AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN *OJUDE-ObA* FESTIVAL IN IJEBU- ODE: AN ASSESSMENT OF OLADITI AND FAHM'S WORKS

Jamiu Muhammad Busari (Ph.D., PGDE)

*Department of Religions (Islamic Studies Unit), Faculty of Humanities,
Osun State University, Ikire Campus, Osogbo Nigeria.
jamiu.busari@uniosun.edu.ng*

Abdurrazaq Ballo Abdulganiy

*Department of Religions (Islamic Studies Unit), Faculty of Humanities,
Osun State University, Ikire Campus, Osogbo Nigeria.
abdurrazaq.abdulganiy@uniosun.edu.ng*

Abstract

The writings of Oladiti and Fahm on the historical convergence of Islam and native Yoruba culture within the Ojude-Oba Festival, an annual festival in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria, are critically evaluated in this study. Scholarly interpretations of the festival's religious and cultural synthesis continue to differ, despite its evolution from a localised Muslim devotion to a nationally recognised cultural show. In order to comprehend how Islamic identity and Yoruba customs have negotiated co-existence; this assessment contends that Oladiti and Fahm provide complementary but different analytical frameworks. Fahm argues that Islamic customs were indigenised without undermining pre-existing communal structures, highlighting the festival's significance as an example of Yoruba socio-cultural resilience. On the other hand, Oladiti emphasises a historical-sociological viewpoint, using the celebration as an example of interfaith diplomacy in which Ijebu Muslims developed royal patronage by publicly demonstrating their allegiance on 'Eid al-adhā, thereby incorporating Islamic holidays into the chieftaincy system's political structure. Whether the event symbolises the 'Islamisation' of Yoruba kingship rites or the 'Yorubanisation' of Islamic festival traditions is a key conflict found in their works. This study concludes that Oladiti and Fahm together shed light on the Ojude-Oba Festival as a vibrant syncretic third space that is neither wholly Islamic nor wholly pre-Islamic Yoruba. It affirms that cultural performance becomes a means of negotiating political loyalty, religious identity and communal engagement without limit, while Oladiti and Fahm's writings collectively offer a complex historical context for comprehending how religious and cultural pluralism can coexist in modern-day Nigeria without requiring mutual exclusivity.

Keywords: Culture, Historical Nexus, Islam, *Ojude-Oba* Festival, Peaceful Co-existence

Introduction

Culture, according to Marvin (1980:10), is seen as the learned repertory of thoughts and actions exhibited by the members of a social group. Precisely, Otite and Ogionwo (2016:86) evaluated the culture as the complex whole of man's

acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs and technology, which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation. In lieu of this, Arowolo (2010:1) affirmed in his views that Africans and, indeed, Nigerians are blessed with distinct but interwoven cultures before the implantation of alien cultures upon the populace by the imperialistic Europeans and the itinerant Arabs through the vehicles of colonisation, missionary work and slave trade. These assertions, without mincing words, are synonymous with the cultural values of the *Ijebus*, a sub-ethnic group of Yoruba people of Southern Nigeria (Ogunkoya, 1956:48-58; Oduwobi, 2006:145-160; Oduwobi, 2023:113-117).

Though the *Ijebu* are acknowledged Yoruba who are culturally inclined and speak a distinct Ijebu dialect across Ijebuland of Ogun State and parts of Lagos State (such as the people of Epe and Ikorodu), the introduction and development of Islam in their spiritual, cultural and economic development for over one and a half centuries can never be overemphasised (Abdul, 1964; Abdul, 1967). This is manifested in their way of life, especially with the development of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, an annual religious-cultural display and carnival which has attracted world attention for decades because of its uniqueness. The *Ojude-Oba* festival is an annual multi-coloured and multifarious cultural festival which is celebrated at the frontage of the paramount king of *Ijebu-Ode* on the third day of Muslims' *Eid al-Adhā* festival, known as *Odun Ileya* in Yorubaland. The festival has no fixed day in the Gregorian calendar but is occasionally celebrated during *Dhul-Hijjah*, the twelfth month of the Muslim *Hijri* lunar calendar. This carnival-like festival is being celebrated by all Ijebu sons and daughters, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, among them are arrays of visitors across the world gracing the occasion, and it had developed into one of the most sought-after annual Yoruba cultural events in Nigeria.

There is a plethora works such as Adetoun (2003), Olojede (2025) Kukoyi *et al.*, (2018) and newspaper columns published on the origin and cultural development of the Ijebu people and the *Ojude-Oba* festival (for example, *Tribuneonline*, 2018). However, the works of Oladiti Akeem Abiodun (2010:122-133) and Fahm AbdulGafar Olawale (2015:1-11) are two recent research papers which established the nexus between Islam and the cultural celebration of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, highlighting its historical origin and spiritual, cultural, economic and value-based not only to *Ijebus* but also to all Yoruba people of Nigeria. Therefore, this paper examines the historical nexus between Islam and culture as inherent in the *Ojude-Oba* festival. In concise terms, the study analytically discusses the interaction between culture and religion among Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria, traces the advent, practice and development of Islam among the Ijebu people, engages in content analysis of Oladiti and Fahm's published papers and historically traces the nexus between Islam and the *Ojude-Oba* festival. The paper concludes by enunciating the socio-religious significance of *Ojude-Oba* to Muslims and non-Muslims and how *Ojude-Oba* Festival can be utilised as a mechanism for interfaith and cultural dialogue in 21st-century Nigeria.

Culture and Religious Practices among Yoruba People

According to Mudashiru (2017: 128), ‘religion and ethnicity are core aspects of identity formation across the African continent’, while in all facets, the West Africans are not an exemption in exhibiting culture, ethnicity and belief. In this regard, the Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria are highly cultured and gregarious Africans. They have been among Africa’s most culturally enlightened and religiously sophisticated ethnic groups for centuries (Isola, 2010). Genealogically, as postulated by various ethnographers, anthropologists and historians, the Yoruba is linked as descendants to *Lamurudu*, the purported progenitor of *Oduduwa* (Busari, 2024:46; Olojede, 2011:342-356; Agai, 2015:430-432). The group is largely inhabiting the southwestern region of Nigeria and sparsely occupying some areas in Kwara and Kogi States of North-Central Nigeria. The Yoruba are also found in some cities and towns in the West African sub-region such as Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast Republics as well as other enclaves in the Americas and Caribbean such as Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Brazil and Jamaica, among others (Agai, 2015:428; Busari, 2024:47). In Nigeria, the Yoruba people are predominantly inhabited in the southwestern states of Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti and Lagos. There are sub-ethnic groups among the Yoruba with distinct dialects, which include the people of *Ijebu*, *Oyo*, *Ekiti*, *Egba*, *Igbomina*, *Oke-ogun*, *Awori*, *Ondo*, *Akoko*, *Ikale*, *Ilaje* and so on.

The Yoruba culture and religious belief are interwoven in *Isese* (tradition), which has survived centuries of change with the interruption of various alien Western and Eastern cultures. In Yoruba religious theology, *Olodumare* (the Supreme Being) is the ultimate source of all creations and the regulator of all movements and activities in the universe. This Yoruba Supreme Being is also viewed as remote and could not be directly worshipped; hence, deities (*Orisa*) are chosen as intermediaries. (Bewaji, 1998:1-2; Adetoro, 2022:2).

Therefore, from time immemorial, these *Orisa*, numbering between two hundred and a thousand, invariably constitute pantheons that serve as the foundation of Yoruba religious practice. They include *Orunmila*, *Obatala*, *Sango*, *Osun*, *Ogun*, *Esu*, *Yemoja* and others (Peel, 2008). Furthermore, in belief, Yorubas also believe in the concept of “*Ori*”, which literally means “Head”. This, as venerated by Yorubas, means one’s spiritual consciousness and personal destiny. It is believed that everyone chooses his destiny before birth in the court of *Olodumare*, while success in life depends on proper designation with one’s *Ori* through good character and righteous living as legislated by the Supreme Being (Balogun, 2007; Ademuleya, 2007; Adeyemi, 2020). Also, in Yorubaland, there are various sacred religious practices and rituals such as *Ifa* divination (ref.) as well as festivals and communal worships of gods and goddesses which include the *Olojo* festival, the *Obatala* festival, the *Osun-Osogbo* festival and *Isese* day.

In culture, the Yoruba are also unique in dressing, food, architectural design, occupations, marriage, naming ceremonies and drums, among others (Aladesami, 2019:148-149). However, the advent of Islam and Christianity, respectively, has

partially retarded the growth of Yoruba religious practices and culture. This, according to Peel, raises questions about the future of Yoruba culture and indigenous religious practice which, through syncretism and accommodation of alien religious practices and cultures, has endangered Yoruba heritage with no measure (Peel, 2008). Therefore, as Peel (2016) affirmed, the effects of Islam and Christianity on Yoruba religious practices and culture can never be underestimated, as could be seen in Yoruba cultural diffusion and religious practices for centuries.

Content Analysis of Oladiti and Fahm's Works

There are existing studies on Ijebuland, its people, culture, economy and the advent of Islam among them for decades (see Abdul, 1967; Ayandele, 1992, Osiyale, 2018). Also, myriads of works are on the *Ojude-Oba* festival and its evolution to date (see Adetoun, 2003; Akande, 2022: 36-49). Therefore, these works are not isolated literary works about Ijebu people and the *Ojude-Oba* festival, but our interest lies in their uniqueness and affirmation of the nexus of Islam with the festival and as one of the most cited, read and open-access articles in the last one and a half decades.

Akeem Abiodun Oladiti's work titled "*A Historical Analysis of Ojude-Oba Festival in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria*" is a chapter in a book published in a compendium (*Facts, Fiction, and African Creative Imagination*) edited by Toyin Falola and Fallou Ngom and was published in 2010 by *Routledge*, an imprint of *Taylor and Francis Group* of the United Kingdom. The 12-page work is the 7th paper under Part II of the collection, which extensively discusses the origin of the *Ojude-Oba* festival (pp.122-123), the ethnogenesis of the Ijebu-Ode people within the Yoruba lineage, the introduction of Islam among them (pp.123-125) and the socio-significance of the *Ojude-Oba* festival (pp.126-128). It also chronicled the status and the developmental changes of the festival under the colonial and post-colonial periods (pp. 128-131). The paper is an exploratory *cum* historiographical literary adventure about the *Ojude-Oba* festival, which exposed the significance of the occasion to the world.

Pic 1: (*Ojude-Oba* Arena)



Source: <https://guardian.ng/life/culture-lifestyle/in-pictures-yoruba-culture-shines-at-ojude-oba-2025-festival/>

On the other hand, the paper of Fahm AbdulGafar Olawale titled “*Ijebu-Ode’s Ojude-Oba Festival: Cultural and Spiritual Significance*” is a journal article published in 2015 by *Sage Open*, an outlet of Sage Publication Company Incorporation, a renowned academic publisher and open access publication outfit based in New York City in the USA. The 11-page work, which is colourfully embellished with 19 self-explanatory pictorial figures depicting various aspects of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, is an artistic literary beauty written by a scholar who specialises in Islamic cultural history. It enunciates the ethnogenesis and anthropology of the Yoruba and the Ijebu Kingdom within Ogun and Lagos States, Nigeria (pp. 1-3), and the emergence of Islam in Ijebuland, which comprises Ijebu-Ode, Ijebu-Igbo and other Ijebu settlements (pp. 3-4). It also chronicled the background of the *Ojude-Oba* festival (p. 3) and the festival itself based on its glitz and colours as one of the highest-ranked cultural festivals in Nigeria (pp. 3-5), where the author explored the festival's artistic beauty (p. 5), dressing (pp. 5-6), music and musical instruments (pp. 6-7), family emblems and banners depicting various lineages (p. 7), the decorated stallion horses (pp. 7-8) and the mock war which is displayed to eulogise the bravery of the Ijebu at war with the sound of dane guns and various kinds of hunters’ guns to the amusement of all spectators (p. 8). In a spectacular fashion, the author reeled out the spiritual significance of the festival from Islamic perspectives because of its annexation with the celebration of *Odun Ileya*, a festival globally celebrated by Muslims in the 11th month of the Islamic lunar calendar (p. 9).

The Nexus of Islam and Culture in *Ojude-Oba* Festival

Islam, one of the prominent monotheistic religions of the world (Celene, 2022:1-51), was introduced to Yorubaland centuries before the advent of Christianity and had unprecedented impacts on the socio-religious life of the people (Amidu, 1995:427-450). This is known historically through a popular maxim among the Yoruba which reads, “*Aye labafa, Aye labamale, Osan gangan nigbagbo woledé – Ifa is primordial, Islam is primaeval and Christianity crept in the noon of culture*” (Gbadamosi, 1978:37; Tijani, 2018:8-9). Gbadamosi (2001:115) opined that the introduction of Islam into Yorubaland was unannounced and unplanned, while its introduction was peaceful, personal and leisurely. Therefore, among the foremost converts to Islam from the Yoruba traditional religion are the Ijebu people who are residents in various Ijebu enclaves in both Ogun and Lagos States, such as *Ijebu-Ode, Ijebu-Igbo, Ijebu-Ife, Epe, Ijebu-Mushin, Ijebu-Ayepe, Ikorodu, Ijebu-Awa, Ago-Iwoye, Odogbolu* and other prominent Ijebu settlements.

In his own report, Fahm believed that Islam came to Ijebuland around 1879 during the reign of *Awujale Afidipote* (d. 1885) through a slave servant from Ilorin who was known as Ali, or through Epe, which had had earlier contact with Islam, or through a trader from *Gbogunja* in *Isale Iwade* named Ali Akayinode, who came in contact with some Muslims from Ilorin during his numerous travels outside Ijebu-Ode (Fahm, 2015:2-3). Also, Oladiti subscribed to the reports of Gbadamosi, who posited that Islam was spread to Ijebu-Ode in the early nineteenth century

(circa 1879) during the latter part of the reign of *Awujale* Ademuyewo Fidipote (1852-1885) through the activities of Hausa kolanut traders and some itinerant Muslim preachers from Hausa-Fulani land (Oladiti, 2010:124). Today, a large number of Ijebus profess and practise the Islamic faith because the religion, since its incursion into Ijebuland, has played numerous important roles in its economic, peaceful coexistence, cultural and religious development.

For over fourteen centuries, the imprint of Islam and its culture are always felt wherever the religion is embraced (Bassam, 2001:1-271). According to Opeloye (2011:2), the attitude of Islam is that of accommodation and rejection in principles, where it accommodates local cultures that are compatible with Islamic tenets and rejects other indigenous cultures which undermine its belief system. In all facets, the impacts of Islam on Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria can never be overemphasised culturally, legally, educationally and linguistically because the religion has antecedents of indoctrinating its adherents (Busari, 2024: 46-58). This was the case of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, which has become a household festival among the people of Ijebuland with an indelible Islamic trademark in its annual celebration.

According to Oladiti (p. 3), the festival began when Balogun Kuku, one of the leading personalities in the community, accepted Islam. In appreciation, he gathered his friends, families, and well-wishers on the third day of *Odun Ileya* to pay homage to the paramount king of Ijebuland for giving them the opportunity to practise their religion peacefully without intimidation. In another account, Oladiti also reported that the festival was said to have started when *Imām* Tunwatoba, the then Chief *Imām* of Ijebu-Ode, led his friends and family members to pay homage to his friend, who was also the *Awujale* of Ijebuland, Oba Fidipote, during *Odun Ileya* as a form of gratitude to the king for being instrumental to the freedom enjoyed by the Muslims in the community to practise their faith in a peaceful atmosphere.

Pic 2 (*Presence of Muslim Scholar
inIslamic Regalia*)



Source:

<https://medium.com/@showlatefilmsproduction/ojude-oba-nigerias-dazzling-festival-of-royal-homage-and-unity-837856b73261>

In Fahm's chronicles (p. 3), the origin of the *Ojude Oba* festival is linked to two Muslim personalities of Ijebu descent. Firstly, it was reported that Balogun Kuku of Ijebu Ode, a popular Muslim personality among the Ijebus after accepting Islam, gathered his friends and family to pay homage to the then *Awujale*, the paramount king of Ijebu-Ode, as a sign of appreciation for given them freedom to practise Islam. Also, in other narration as reported by Fahm (p. 3), it was believed that the festival was at the instance of *Imām* Tunwatoba, the then Chief *Imām* of Ijebu Ode, who gathered family, Muslim faithful and friends to pay homage to *Awujale* Fidipote during *Odun Ileya*, showing their appreciation to him for being instrumental to the freedom the Muslims enjoyed in his domain to practise their religion.

As the two authors agreed (Oladiti, 2010:125-126; Fahm, 2015:3), the visitations of the Muslim community to the then *Awujale* and the prayers offered for the monarch to enjoy a long life, good health, and the progress and prosperity of Ijebuland institutionalised the commemoration of *Ojude-Oba*, which has grown in leaps and bounds to assume the status of a flagship Islamo-cultural festival among the Ijebus and Yorubas of Southwest Nigeria. Glaringly, from the inception till today, the celebration of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, despite its transformation in decades, has not been devoid of Islamic heritage. The Muslims' celebration of *Odun Ileya* is unabatedly important to the festival, and the status quo would remain till eternity.

Socio-Religious Significances of *Ojude-Oba* to Muslims and non-Muslims

Although it is evidently observed that the *Ojude-Oba* festival has been blown out of Islamic tenets as people are seen celebrating it with various un-Islamic acts such as exposure of nudity, promiscuous mixing of both genders, lavish spending, playing of blaring music of different genres, drinking of alcoholic drinks and so on, the facts remain that it has an affinity to the Yoruba Muslim celebration of *Odun Ileya*. The festival, in the view of Fahm, has traditional, cultural, religious, social, and military significance (p. 3) and also showcases some of the unique features of the Ijebu community especially in their high taste for colourful community, and expensive apparels, costumes and foods (p. 1). In the view of Oladiti (pp. 127-128), *Ojude-Oba* festival spectacularly showcases the popularity of Islam among the *Ijebus*; highlights the importance of continuity between the Ijebu community as a whole and Islam as a religion, merrymaking adventures and the display of artistic and cultural prowess of the Ijebus; breaks down barriers between the poor and the rich during the festival; and enhances traders to make fabulous sales of their products and commodities during the period.

Today, the festival, which is now officially held in a mini-stadium at the frontage of *Awujale* Palace with colourful fanfare and procession, attracts several multimillion-naira sponsorship deals while the whole town is colourfully decorated to commemorate the festival. It has also become an event on the calendar of the Ogun State Government which is attended by the sitting state governor,

government functionaries, visitors from other states in Nigeria and beyond, traditional rulers, business moguls, political gladiators and other dignitaries.

***Ojude-Oba* Festival as a Nexus of Culture, Interfaith and Socialisation in the 21st Century**

The *Ojude-Oba* festival in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, is an enduring counter-narrative in Nigeria, a country often marked by ethno-political divisions and religious tensions (Iyamba & Olanrewaju, 2025: 76-93; Salawu, 2010: 345-353; Ukiwo, 2003: 115–138). Though the *Ojude-Oba* festival began as a localised Muslim thanksgiving rite, the festival's metamorphosis provides important insights into how indigenous organisations can promote social cohesion, resolve religious conflicts, and introduce Nigerian culture to the world in the twenty-first century.

It is noteworthy to mention that the diplomatic engagement between religious minority Muslims accepting conventional authority in return for protection created a model for interfaith harmony that would turn out to be surprisingly resilient for over a century. (Oladiti, 2010; Fahm, 2015). At first, the celebration was only for Muslims, because of the animosity for British colonial forces and their faith after the 1892 *Imagbon* War, where Christians were persecuted (Oduwobi & Adedina, 2025:119-122), and they seized going to *Ojude-Oba* until *Oba* Ademolu Fesogbade's reign in 1925, nearly half a century after the Muslim community started attending. The festival changed from being a sectarian commemoration to a truly inclusive celebration as a result of the progressive acceptance of other faiths.

Furthermore, in the application of religious pluralism, *Ojude-Oba* operationalises interfaith discourse through shared cultural performance, which sets it apart from abstract pleas for religious tolerance. Sociologically, the festival has evolved to include people of all religious backgrounds, with traditional worshippers and Christians now joining Muslims in honouring the *Awujale*. The festival's time, which is set to the Islamic calendar, does not exclude non-Muslims; rather, it establishes a common temporal framework that allows many religious communities to express shared identities. This inclusivity is not just symbolic but structural (Olojede, 2025).

This multicultural spirit is reflected in the festival's programming. Muslims, Christians, and followers of traditional religions move in unison during the *regberegbe* (age-grade groupings) procession (Diyaolu *et al.*, 2023: 3-4). Their coordinated *aso-ebi* (family outfits) signify solidarity rather than division. Members of several religions participate in horsey performances by the Balogun families (traditional warrior lineages), whose military regalia and horseback-riding prowess allude to a pre-colonial past that cuts across religious divides (Oladiti, 2010; Fahm, 2015).

Pics. 3 and 4 (*Aso-ebi Display and Regberegbe Procession at Ojude-Oba Festival*)



Source: <https://orire.com/article/ojude-oba-festival-and-the-preservation-of-the-ijebu-yoruba-identity>

The *Awujale* institution, led by the reigning Oba, is positioned as “custodian of culture, not custodian of religion” in the Yoruba monarchical tradition. This distinction allows the throne to act as a neutral ground where religious distinctions are bracketed in favour of common cultural identity. The *Awujale*, who is revered by Muslims, Christians, and traditionalists alike, serves as an example of leadership that upholds a shared political and cultural citizenship while respecting religious plurality. Nigeria today, where religious and political identities have dangerously merged, can learn from this example. Traditional institutions can serve as “*mediation spaces*” that defuse religious rivalry, as seen by the *Awujale's* ability to bless Muslim and Christian organisations with equal solemnity.

Pic 5. (*The Late Awujale, Oba Sikiru Adetona at the Ojude-Oba Festival*)



Source: <https://punchng.com/awujale-absent-at-2025-ojude-oba-festival/>

The most prominent interfaith conversations during the event take place through embodied cultural activities rather than formal speaking. Attendees of all faiths rejoice when cultural performers, horse riders and different groups enter the arena.

The same aesthetic overshadows religious differences when Christian and Muslim ladies synchronise their *gele* (headwraps) and *iro* and *buba* (traditional wrappers and shirts). The celebration defies Nigeria's prevailing tales of religious incompatibility by performing a syncretism in which the *Ifa* oracle is consulted alongside Islamic prayers and Christian blessings.

In the same vein, the fervent adoption of *Ojude-Oba* by Nigerian youth has been one of the biggest changes in the festival's history in the twenty-first century. The event has evolved into a testing ground for what cultural analysts refer to as "cultural intelligence": the capacity to comprehend, adapt, and innovate within one's cultural context, which contradicts the stories of cultural abandonment among younger generations. A generation that is not scared to modify tradition for a worldwide audience is reflected in the elaborate headwraps, well-planned *regberegbe* parades, and viral social media events.

The festival has evolved from a local event into a global content moment thanks to high-definition photography and videography which are vividly rendered on all social media platforms. Images of youths sporting sunglasses and tattoos, riding an adorned horse, went viral on *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *X* (formerly *Twitter*), bringing *Ojude-Oba* to millions of people worldwide. Diaspora kids who might not have otherwise been able to attend the festival can now do so thanks to its digital amplification.

Pcs. 6 and 7 (*Youths Displaying Cultural Artistry at the Ojude-Oba Festival as Captured on Social Media Platforms in 2025*)



Source: <https://medium.com/@showlatefilmsproduction/ojude-oba-nigerias-dazzling-festival-of-royal-homage-and-unity-837856b73261>

Furthermore, *Ojude Oba*'s interfaith and cultural conversations are more than just symbolic; they have real economic benefits that encourage societal togetherness even more. The festival could then be referred to the event as a "virtuous circle" where social cooperation is reinforced by economic gain. The festival has grown to be a major factor in local trade and tourism. Attendees fly in from within and outside Nigeria such as Lagos, Abuja, London, and even Toronto; and hotels in Ijebu-Ode and surrounding towns are booked up weeks in advance. Demand for small enterprises like jewellers, shoemakers, food vendors, fashion designers, and transporters spikes dramatically (Kukoyi, 2018; Ogunbukola, 2024:1-11; Agbabiaka, 2023:598-616).

In the same vein, corporate sponsorship is one aspect of the economic impact that goes beyond direct sales. For example, *Globacom*, popularly known as "Glo", one of the foremost telecom providers in Nigeria, has been the festival's primary sponsor for 20 years running, positioning it as a marketing platform and funding its infrastructure and prize packages (*Tribune*, 2025; *Punch*, 2025). This corporate engagement shows how business interests can coincide with heritage protection and is an example of a public-private partnership in cultural preservation. The corporate dedication to *Ojude-Oba* has shown that Glo's sponsorship is an unusual repositioning of the event to satisfy changing societal, economic, and global demands rather than only being about brand leverage, cultural revitalisation, and the restoration of tradition in a static form. (Diyaolu *et al.*, 2023:12-13). Internationally, through cultural diplomacy, *Ojude-Oba* has evolved from a local gem to a global phenomenon in the twenty-first century with impacts on the host community. Global tourism boards, documentary filmmakers, fashion magazines, travel influencers, and heritage tourists have all expressed interest in the festival. *Ojude Oba* is quietly becoming Nigeria's most exportable cultural product, where travel packages are sold out months in advance, and foreign missions now work with Nigeria's tourism board to promote the festival internationally (Kukoyi *et al.*, 2017:1-9).

However, notwithstanding its achievements, the *Ojude Oba* Festival has serious obstacles that jeopardise its potential as a template for interfaith communication. These include infrastructure deficiencies. The dilapidated roads in Ogun State leading to Ijebu-Ode are still pothole-filled, causing traffic nightmares and general misery for travellers despite the festival's yearly inflow of visitors. Also, overcrowding issues have arisen due to the festival's increasing popularity. The location was so crowded during the 2025 edition that some people passed out from the heat and crowding. First responders raced to revive those who were impacted, primarily children and the elderly, while frustrated, thousands of people were left trapped outside after being unable to enter the main arena. In lieu of this, security agencies, including the Nigerian Police, military personnel, Civil Defence, and private task forces, had their hands full managing the crowd, which was infiltrated by street urchins and unruly elements to breach the security checks and wreak havoc on innocent participants. (Diyaolu *et al.*, 2023:13).

Although the event has effectively demonstrated interfaith harmony locally, it is unclear if this approach can be expanded to resolve national disputes in Nigeria, a country with genuine and occasionally violent religious strife. The relative success of the celebration could be influenced by particular Ijebu circumstances, such as a robust traditional monarchy, a history of economic success and religious tolerance that is difficult to duplicate elsewhere. In 21st-century Nigeria, the Ijebu traditional institutions present themselves as cultural stewards rather than supporters of any one religion, acting as powerful mediators of religious plurality. The fact that Muslims, Christians, and traditionalists all honour the *Awujale* shows how

indigenous authority structures can reduce religious rivalry. From the foregoing, *Ojude-Oba* serves as proof that peaceful cohabitation is achievable in Nigeria, despite the country's ongoing struggles with religious and ethnic divisions. This is achieved by creating shared cultural spaces where differences can be bracketed in favour of shared identity rather than by eradicating religious differences. The festival's transformation from a local tribute to a worldwide spectacle in the twenty-first century shows that, with the right support, cultural discourse can become a powerful force for both international recognition and national integration.

Conclusion

This paper assessed the published articles of Oladiti Akeem and Fahm AbdulGafar on the historiography, religious and socio-economic significance of the *Ojude-Oba* festival. It was made clear that there is an irrefutable nexus between Islam and the institutionalisation of the festival, which has continued to be a meeting point of Islamic faith and culture and the culture of the Ijebu people for almost two centuries. The peaceful atmosphere in which the festival is celebrated among the Ijebus – Muslims, non-Muslims and traditional religious practitioners – as reported in the reviewed papers and other works is a testimony of unalloyed peaceful co-existence and social development that had existed among the *Ijebus*, which has made them foremost religious and economic entrepreneurs in Nigeria and beyond. This paper then called on the Yorubas and Nigerians at large to emulate the *Ijebus* in their display of faith, cultural festivals and entrepreneurship in a multi-religious society.

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STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC DETERMINANTS OF THE ENDSARS PROTEST IN NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION

Olakunle Adeboye Shokoya

*Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Sciences,
Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria
shokoyaolakunle99@gmail.com*

&

Olayinka Akanle

*Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Sciences,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria*

Abstract

The EndSARS protest is a social movement that started from the youth of Nigeria, who were disenchanted with the rampant police brutality, corruption in the police force, and the overall socioeconomic morbidities of the Nigerian state. Previous research has looked at the protest through the lens of police misconduct, digital mobilisation and youth activism, but there is little focus on the multiple structural and systemic causes that all contributed to the development of the protest. This study is an examination of the structural and systemic factors behind the EndSARS protest in Nigeria, specifically on policing, political and economic factors. The study adopts a perspective based on the Relative Deprivation Theory which suggests that EndSARS protests were not only a response to police brutality but an amalgamation of long-standing grievances stemming from institutional failures, marginalisation and loss of faith in the government. A mixed methods research design was used, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, namely structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. A total of 359 questionnaires were administered, six key informant interviews were conducted, and six in-depth interviews were conducted with relevant participants in Lagos State which is the central location of the protest. The study identified factors in policing as the key reasons for the protest, with the main grievances being police brutality and SARS extortion. The study also revealed that the lack of good governance, corruption, unemployment and hardship in the economy were all factors that contributed to the general discontent that underpinned mobilisation. The study finds that a broad movement towards reform in policing, governance and socioeconomic inclusion is necessary to deal with future social unrest.

Keywords: Endsars, Governance, Police Brutality, Political, Protest, Youth

Introduction

Interpersonal relations between citizens and police are an essential aspect of democratic governance and state legitimacy. The police function in democratic societies to uphold law and order, protect life and property and preserve the rights of citizens within the framework of the rule of law (Tyler, 2006; Jackson et al.,

2012). The legitimacy, accountability, and procedural justice of police are seen as key dimensions of police institutional effectiveness that lead citizens to cooperate with police agencies (Tyler, 2006; Bradford et al., 2014). But if policing institutions come to be associated with corruption, abuse of power, and human rights violations, people lose trust in the police, tensions rise, and citizens may resort to collective action to vent their grievances (Tankebe, 2009; Aborisade & Gbahabo, 2021).

The issue of police misconduct has been a concern in Nigeria for decades and has been extensively documented by scholars, human rights groups, and civil society organisations (Alemika, 1988; Human Rights Watch, 2010; Amnesty International, 2020). The Nigerian Police Force has been noted for its corrupt practices, brutal and extortionist operations, unlawful arrest, torture and extra-judicial killings (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2010; Aborisade & Gbahabo, 2021). These concerns came to the fore in connection with the work of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which was created in 1992 to tackle armed robbery, kidnapping and violent crime (Amnesty International, 2020). Although the major motivation for establishing SARS was a perceived increase in insecurity, there were many reports of it conducting widespread human rights abuses, particularly against young Nigerians, who were frequently profiled according to their appearance, use of smartphones, laptops or perceived affluence (Amnesty International, 2020; Aborisade & Gbahabo, 2021). These practices engendered significant resentment among citizens and fostered a sense of insecurity, as the institution meant to provide security became a source of insecurity (Tankebe, 2009; Aborisade & Gbahabo, 2021).

The EndSARS protest that started in October 2020 was a culmination of years of public discontent with police brutality and institutional impunity. The protest, sparked by the SARS operatives' killing of a young man in Delta state, quickly morphed into a pan-Nigerian movement demanding the dismantling of SARS and reforms in the Nigerian security sector (Amnesty International, 2020; Nwangwu et al., 2022). The movement was notable in its scale and geographical reach, but also because it was mostly youth-led and decentralised, with social media platforms, including X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp playing a key role in mobilising and coordinating the movement (Iwilade, 2022; Chilwa & Ifukor, 2022). Digital activism enabled the mobilisation of local grievances, resource mobilisation, protest coordination, and the attraction of international attention, moving the protests into the global social movement stream (Iwilade, 2022; Chilwa & Ifukor, 2022).

While police brutality was the immediate cause of the protests, several scholars have suggested that the EndSARS movement was an outgrowth of entrenched issues and systemic problems in Nigeria's society (Nwangwu et al., 2022; Obadare, 2023). The protest was sparked by longstanding governance issues, high youth

unemployment, extreme poverty, social injustice, corruption, insecurity, and loss of public confidence in government institutions (Agbibo, 2015; Lewis, 2007; World Bank, 2023). The reintroduction of democratic governance to Nigeria in 1999 brought hope for political accountability, economic development, and better living standards (Osaghae, 1998; Agbaje & Adejumo, 2006). Nevertheless, despite 21 years of uninterrupted democratic government, deep pockets of socioeconomic deprivation, poor infrastructure, poor public service delivery, and limited opportunities for meaningful political engagement remain among the country's population (World Bank, 2023; Afrobarometer, 2022). This has therefore led to heightened disillusionment with governance outcomes, especially among the youth, who make up a large percentage of Nigeria's population (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2021).

In Nigeria, unemployment, underemployment, and economic insecurity have disproportionately affected youths (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021; UNDP, 2021). Feelings of marginalisation and exclusion have been driven by the lack of economic opportunities to accommodate a fast-growing youth population (World Bank, 2023). Relative deprivation theory states that collective action is more likely when individuals perceive a large disparity between their expectations and social and economic realities (Walker & Smith, 2002). In the same way, political process theory holds that social movements emerge when citizens feel that existing political institutions are not adequately addressing their grievances (Tarrow, 2011; McAdam, 1999). The EndSARS protest was a blend of the two theoretical approaches, as protesters reacted to police brutality and to a series of grievances linked to economic problems, governance inadequacies, and injustice in institutional processes (Nwangwu et al., 2022; Obadare, 2023).

Moreover, corruption has been one of the most endemic problems that governance and development in Nigeria have been facing (Joseph, 1987; Agbibo, 2015). A variety of studies have shown that corruption negatively impacts state institutions, impedes service delivery, undermines public trust in government, and adds to social inequalities (Lewis, 2007; Transparency International, 2023). The EndSARS movement had significant backing from various groups in society due to public perceptions of corruption in political and security institutions (Nwangwu et al., 2022). As protests continued, the demands shifted progressively from the police to good governance, accountability, economic justice, and respect for human rights (Amnesty International, 2020; Iwilade, 2022). The shift indicated that the movement was more about structural issues and had nothing to do with SARS activities.

While there have been numerous publications on the EndSARS movement, research has largely focused on social media activism, youth mobilisation, police reform, and state responses to the movement (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2022; Iwilade, 2022; Nwangwu et al., 2022). Although these studies have deepened our

understanding of the dynamics and outcomes of the movement, there has been scant empirical focus on the interplay of political, policing and economic factors that all played a role in its development. Furthermore, many of the research studies that have been conducted so far have been mainly secondary data sources, media reports, and content analysis, leading to a need for empirical investigations that would capture the perspectives of citizens, as well as the viewpoints of key stakeholders on the structural and systemic causes of the protest.

To bridge this gap, this study explored the various factors that contributed to large-scale social mobilisation during the EndSARS protest. Without understanding the root causes of social unrest, future expressions of public discontent may arise, threatening social unity and democratic consolidation. Therefore, this study examined the structural and systemic determinants of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria. This study utilised both quantitative & qualitative data to empirically analyse the structural/systemic factors that stimulated the EndSARS demonstration in Nigeria.

To achieve this aim, the study seeks to:

- i. examine the political factors that led to the EndSARS protest.
- ii. explore the policing factors that influenced the EndSARS protest.
- iii. ascertain the economic factors that led to the EndSARS protest.

Literature Review

Historically, social protest has been a vehicle for marginalised groups to protest against what they see as unfairness, seek accountability, and discuss their interactions with political institutions. At a global level, modern movements of protest have been increasingly emerging in response to structural inequalities, economic exclusion, a lack of trust in institutions, and discontent with governance systems. In a study of protest movements worldwide from 2006 to 2013, Ortiz et al. (2013) noted that many protests in developing countries were in response to neoliberal economic policies such as austerity, deregulation, the weakening of social welfare states, and the privatisation of public services. Their research shows that contemporary protest can not only be a response to a particular event but part and parcel of a longstanding grievance, stemming from a wider socio-political context. Likewise, in Rao's (2010) analysis, protest movements in developing societies have often been in response to policies recommended by international financial institutions, especially if they are seen as harming citizens' welfare and making life more unequal for them. Protests are, therefore, a way for citizens to voice their discontent with the state, demand better public services, criticise corruption, and demand greater accountability from political institutions (Ortiz et al., 2013).

In Africa, protests have been influenced by poor governance, democratic deficits, corruption, and the curtailment of citizens' political participation. According to Ochi and Mark (2021), many of the protests in Africa are responses to longstanding

grievances against political systems that have increasingly resorted to both constitutional and unconstitutional methods to hold onto power, thereby creating a very restricted space for citizens to influence political processes. The EndSARS protest has been one of the most important moments of Nigeria's modern democratic history, if not the most. The movement, which was started to protest police brutality by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) against the youths of its operations with allegations of the killings in October 2020, quickly expanded to demand political accountability, social justice, institutional reform and economic inclusion (Amnesty International, 2020; Nwangwu et al., 2022). Although SARS abuses were the immediate cause of the protests, the scholarly debates surrounding the protests increasingly go beyond a discussion of police abuse to a broader and more complex discussion. Instead, the protests signified broader structural and systemic tensions within Nigeria's political, economic, and security systems (Obadare, 2023; Iwilade, 2022). Therefore, it is important to examine the historical context of policing in Nigeria, governance failures, economic marginalisation, and the predominant issue of the state's legitimacy, which informed citizens' grievances and mobilisation as a pretext for the EndSARS movement.

Researchers on EndSARS have noted that the movement was a decentralised, youth-led, and digitally coordinated social movement that posed a threat to traditional political mobilisation strategies in Nigeria (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2022; Iwilade, 2022). The EndSARS protest was different from traditional protests involving political parties and civil society organisations; instead, this movement relied heavily on social media platforms to mobilise participants, spread information, organise activities, and garner global attention. Through this digital character, citizens, especially the young ones of Nigeria, were freed from the traditional political structures, thereby establishing a place to voice grievances, an alternative place for them. But scholars warn that social media was not the main driver of the movement; rather, it was a means to amplify existing frustrations stemming from institutional failures (Iwilade, 2022).

The EndSARS protest in Nigeria is a modern-day case of how several structural factors can combine to produce a large-scale collective protest movement. While the immediate cause of the protest was the killings and human rights abuses allegedly perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian Police, scholars believe that the protest was an outgrowth of the various grievances over the Nigerian State and the Nigerian Institutions (Ochi & Mark, 2021; Adetola, 2022). Initially formed as a special police squad to tackle violent crimes, SARS was linked to torture, unlawful detention, extortion, extrajudicial killings and abuse of power, especially against young Nigerians (Amnesty International, 2020). The number of incidents of harassment and intimidation of citizens by SARS officers also made citizens feel that the very security institution that was meant to keep them safe had become a cause of insecurity. The important thing is that the protest was not only about police reform but had grown to encompass issues of

governance, corruption, economic woes and institutional failure, as highlighted by Ochi & Mark (2021) and Adetola (2022).

The policing aspect of the EndSARS protest illustrates the security institutions' problems in Nigeria; their roots date back to the era of the Armed Forces. A history of human rights abuses by security agencies in Nigeria has been associated with the colonial and military traditions of policing, in which security agencies were created primarily to serve the interests of the state rather than those of citizens (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000). Amnesty International (2015) reported several incidents of human rights violations by Nigerian security forces, such as claims of rape, torture, unlawful detention, and excessive use of force by the military. Likewise, Nkasi (2020) asserts that Nigerian security agencies have been used as tools of state control by terrorising demonstrators, harassing journalists and silencing dissenters. Overall, these patterns suggest that the SARS-related incidents of police brutality were not an isolated incident of institutional failure, but rather were part of a larger issue of accountability, citizen protection and the state-citizen relationship.

One of the key aspects that fuelled public rage during the EndSARS protests was the government institutions' lack of accountability and the absence of real police reforms. However, while successive Nigerian governments have made numerous promises to reform the Nigerian police, most of these pledges have not led to a significant improvement in police behaviour and accountability mechanisms (Adetola, 2022). Amnesty International (2020) noted that there was limited evidence of prosecutions of SARS officers whose actions were alleged to infringe on human rights, despite the Anti-Torture Act being enacted in 2017. Further, the repeated announcement that SARS was being dissolved, coupled with no real institutional change, added to the public's lack of trust in government actions and confirmed the impression that these actions were more symbolic than substantive (Ochi & Mark, 2021). The ongoing protests following the government's announcement of SARS's disbandment, therefore, show that the protests have morphed into broader disaffection with the entire governance structure in Nigeria. In addition to policing issues, the literature also highlights two key structural issues to account for the EndSARS protest: economic hardship and youth marginalisation. Various socioeconomic problems have been recorded in Nigeria, including unemployment, poverty, poor infrastructure, poor social services, and unequal opportunities (Omoju & Abraham, 2014). Youth Nigerians who make up a large part of the country's population are disproportionately affected by these challenges, which persist despite their significant contribution to the country's population, limited opportunities for employment and economic security (Yusuf & Benisheikh, 2021). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020) reported rising unemployment rates in Nigeria, with millions of the population said to be unemployed or underemployed. The high unemployment rate among youths has

led young Nigerians to feel frustrated, excluded, and hopeless, creating a conducive environment for youths to mobilise in groups (Yusuf & Benisheikh, 2021).

The political factors that motivated the EndSARS movement have been the subject of much academic research. In a democracy, people are expected to have ways to voice their grievances and influence public policy (Diamond, 1999). Many studies, however, have indicated that Nigeria's democratic institutions have failed to deliver on citizens' expectations since Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999 (Osaghae 1998; Lewis 2007). Yet, public confidence in government institutions is low, with many perceiving corruption, elite capture, and a lack of accountability within them (Afrobarometer, 2022). In the current context, Joseph's (1987) notion of prebendalism retains its significance regarding the nature of the political use of the office in allocating resources and patronage networks, and its failure to serve the collective good. These governance practices lead to citizen alienation and to the lack of legitimacy of government institutions. Agbiboa (2015) suggests that poor governance in Nigeria has led to the disintegration of the relationship between the state and society, and that citizens are generally discontent with the inability of political institutions to resolve their problems. The EndSARS protest, then, therefore, was not just about policing but about a lack of democratic accountability and government responsiveness.

The economy closely relates to these political challenges, as it has influenced youth experiences in Nigeria. Unemployment, poverty, inequality and economic exclusion are generally regarded as important factors contributing to social unrest and protest participation (UNDP, 2021; World Bank, 2023). Nigeria has one of the largest youth populations in the world, but many young people face challenges in employment, entrepreneurship, and economic mobility (NBS, 2021). According to the United Nations Development Programme (2021), youth unemployment and underemployment have played a major role in the frustrations and sense of exclusion among young Nigerians. This can be explained by the relative deprivation theory, which holds that people become discontented when they believe their life opportunities do not meet their expectations (Walker & Smith, 2002). The limited economic opportunities, poor governance, and structural inequalities in Nigeria are impeding the educational attainment and aspirations of many youths (World Bank, 2023). The EndSARS protest, therefore, became an opportunity to collectively express these frustrations. If economic grievances were a significant factor in supporting the protests, this was evident in the broad participation of young people in the movement.

Social media and digital activism was one of the important elements that enabled mobilisation during the protest. While digital mobilisation was an essential part of the movement's success, several scholars warn against giving social media the credit for the protests. Iwilade (2022) emphasises that social media was used as a mobilisation platform but not as its origin for collective action. The issues that led

to participation were mostly structural, ranging from police violence to economic deprivation and governance shortcomings. Therefore, digital activism must be seen as a tool for expressing protesters' frustrations, not as the cause of the protests. In addition to the nature of mobilisation, literature has also examined the effects of the protest. The EndSARS movement sparked debates on police reforms, accountability, the political consciousness of youth, citizens, and the state. The government announced the dissolution of SARS, but scholars argue that the action was largely symbolic, as big systemic changes were limited (Amnesty International, 2020; Aborisade & Gbahabo, 2021). Moreover, the protest revealed the erosion of the legitimacy of State institutions and brought to the fore the willingness of Nigerian youths to oppose and question the government's authority and demand accountability (Obadare, 2023). The protest's consequences also brought to the fore the themes of democratic responsiveness, state repression, and the future of youth activism in Nigeria.

However, most of the existing literature has addressed the causes of EndSARS as separate issues, mainly concentrating on police brutality, corruption and unemployment. These explanations are significant, but they offer little insight into how each element came together to engender collective action. The current research is a contribution to the literature by investigating the structural and systemic causes of EndSARS through an integrated approach to policing, political, and economic aspects. This study is unlike other studies that examined digital activism or police misconduct; it was empirical and examined the convergence of several grievances to produce one of the largest protest movements in Nigeria.

Empirical research on EndSARS activism also bolsters the view that many interconnected factors played a role in the movement's genesis. The survey-based analysis and indicators of political participation conducted by Nwangwu et al. (2022) revealed that participation in the protests was highly correlated with complaints of governance problems, feelings of injustice, and calls for institutional accountability. Likewise, Iwilade (2022) discovered that the shift was a response to broader issues of citizenship, political inclusion and democratic responsiveness. Chiluwa and Ifukor (2022), in their discourse analysis of social media content, noted that within a short time, the conversation shifted to corruption, unemployment, insecurity, and political reform, in addition to police brutality. This was shown by Aborisade and Gbahabo (2021), who found that exposure to police abuse had a significant effect in fostering mistrust of state institutions and the adoption of collective action. In addition, Obadare (2023) posits that the protest movement was intergenerational, posing a threat to the existing political framework, and also exposed the rising demand of young Nigerians for accountability from politicians.

Although these have been valuable achievements, there are some gaps in the current literature. First, many studies concentrate on 'social media activism' and

'digital mobilisation', leaving answers to key questions about the wider structural conditions that facilitated the protests to the margins or even unaddressed (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2022; Iwilade, 2022). Second, there is a lack of studies examining the interplay between political and economic factors, policing failures, and the subsequent mobilisation beyond police brutality (Amnesty International 2020; Aborisade & Gbahabo 2021). Third, the studies conducted were limited to secondary data, media reports, documentary analysis, and online data, thereby limiting direct access to citizens' perceptions and experiences (Nwangwu et al., 2022). Fourth, although emerging evidence suggests that these factors are interrelated in various ways, there is little empirical integration of political, policing, and economic determinants within a single analytical framework.

In this light, there seems to be a lack of literature that centres on the total analysis of the structural and systemic factors of the EndSARS protest. Most existing research has examined one aspect of the movement, such as police brutality, youth activism, social media mobilisation, or governance issues, but has not empirically examined how political, policing, and economic factors contributed to the formation of the protests. Moreover, very little research has been conducted using a mixed-method approach to integrate quantitative evidence with the qualitative insights of citizens and key stakeholders. This study aims to fill this gap by empirically examining the political, policing, and economic factors that led to the EndSARS action in Nigeria. This study combines elements of questionnaire survey, in-depth interview, and Key Informant Interview, thereby enabling it to provide a holistic picture of the structural and systemic backdrop that propelled one of the most important social movements of the democratic dispensation in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the premise of Gurr's (1970) Relative Deprivation theory. The theory posits that Collective protest is theorised in terms of people's feelings of disconnect between what they expect their society to be like and what it is. Gurr (1970) states that when these feeling of frustration and deprivation lead to collective dissatisfaction, particularly when members believe that current institutions are unable to solve the problems. This is because EndSars protesters were reacting not just to police brutality but to other forms of exclusion, joblessness, corruption, insecurity, and failure in governance. The theory thus offers an account of how grievances were built up and how they became collectively mobilised.

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study was a descriptive, analytical, and cross-sectional design, which is an empirical study of the structural and systemic determinants of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria. This design was suitable for this study, as it aimed to describe and analyse the political, policing,, and economic

factors that led to the emergence of the protest at a specific time, as well as to capture the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A mixed-methods research methodology was used, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques to provide an overall picture of the phenomenon. In social research, where complex social realities need to be quantified and measured numerically while also explored for meanings, experiences, and explanations, mixed-methods designs are especially useful (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The study used a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, with a quantitative component following a qualitative component. The qualitative part of the survey,, including In-depth Interview (IDI) and Key Informant Interview (KII), was first conducted to gain a glimpse of the factors that led to the EndSARS protest, with the aim of obtaining a contextual understanding of the protest. Results from the qualitative phase helped develop and improve the structured questionnaire for the quantitative phase. It allowed the study to identify themes that emerged from all participants' experiences and then determine how common those experiences are in a larger population (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The sequential approach was considered suitable because social movements like EndSARS have many determinants that cannot be explored using only measurable variables (Bryman, 2016).

The reason Lagos State was purposively chosen for the study was that it is the epicentre of the EndSARS protest,, which featured the largest demonstrations, public mobilisations, and the most interactions between protesters and state authorities (Iwilade, 2022). Lagos was chosen for the study because it gave us an ideal environment to examine the impact of political, policing, and socioeconomic conditions on the movement's participation. The study population consisted of people who were aware of, witnessed, or were involved in the EndSARS protests, and key stakeholders with institutional and professional knowledge of the issue.

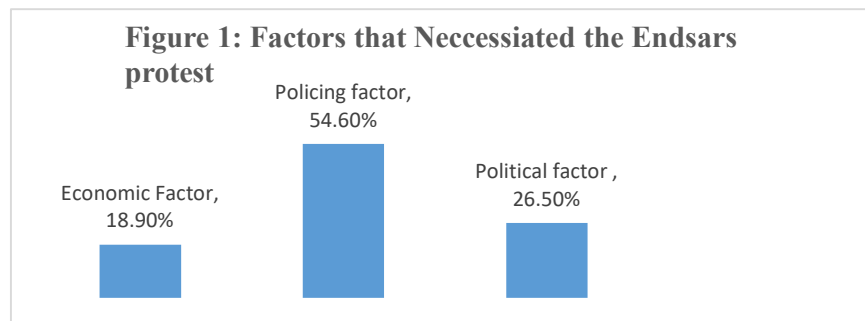
The sampling procedure used to select the participants was a multi-stage sampling. The first step was a conscious decision to select Lagos State because it has played a prominent role in the protest. In the second stage, one Local Government Area (LGA) was selected from each of the three senatorial districts using a simple random sampling technique. Therefore, the Local Government Areas of Ikorodu, Eti-Osa and Ikeja were chosen. The last step was to use systematic and simple random sampling of individuals who responded to the questionnaires to increase representativeness and minimise selection bias (Babbie, 2020). A purposive sampling method was used for the qualitative part of the project to select participants who could provide detailed accounts of the causes, experiences, and implications of the protest (Patton, 2015).

Three instruments were used to collect the data: structured questionnaires, IDIs and KIIs. In total, 359 questionnaires were administered to respondents across the

selected LGAs, and six IDIs and six KIIs were conducted with participants selected for their direct experience, knowledge, and expertise of the EndSARS movement. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data from IDIs and KIIs were analysed thematically. They used thematic analysis for the following reasons: it is a systematic approach for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings of both strands broadened the validity and depth of interpretation using methodological triangulation as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018). All ethical issues, such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, were respected throughout the research process.

Results And Discussions

Factors that led to the Endsars protest



The figure above that policing was the major factor that led to the EndSARS protest. Figure 1 depicts that the major factor that necessiated the EndSARS protest was policing factors (54.6%).

Table 4 Political Factors that influenced the Endsars protest

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Political factor that propelled the Endsars protest		
Bad governance	188	52.4
Government Corruption	56	15.6
Inadequate lack of social amenities	27	7.5
Political interference	41	11.4
Unstable political system	47	13.1
Total	359	100.0

Source: Field work

The table 4 depict that bad governance (52.4%) was the major political factor that propelled the protest. The findings from the interviews showed that there was

corruption and bad governance were part of the factors that led to the Endsars protest even though the protest was not politically motivated. However, findings of this study showed that the major political parties tried to hijack and politicise the protest at some point.

Emerging from one of the respondents:

“There were no political demands made by youths, don't forget that these were desperate youths, they were not members of any political platform. The End SARS was mainly an hashtag, was mainly the hashtag that became, that became the convergence vehicle of people who were host to police brutality in our country, for me as a, a witness participant and as a lawyer who has the opportunity of defending you know, End SARS cases in tribunals the judicial panels across our country, no political demands were made on the streets of our country, no political demands made at judicial panels at I had opportunity of participating as a lawyer in Oka, in Anambra State, Enugu, Owerri, to some level in you know, in Port Harcourt, I never had the opportunity of flee sleeping presence in Port Harcourt but I have lawyers from my law firm who went to Port Harcourt to defend Ends SARS cases, it's not true, the whole question of politicisation became an issue that friends of these government you know used, you see look, when you want to hang a dog you know, you hang a, you hang a band around his neck and, and that was what the regime tried to you know but it failed spectacularly”

(Kii/ Male/ Human right Activist/ Lawyer)

Another respondent corroborated the above:

“I doubt if there is anything political in it, I think you know, the way the country is when issues like that occur, the political office holder sees opposition at the other end of it, so asking me there is nothing political there, because I was involved and I can say I never saw anything political there”.

(Idi/Male/Student/Lekki)

The Endsars protest was also influenced by the failure of governance in delivery good governance and the institutionalized decay and the discontent with government.

One of the respondents stated that:

“you would agree with me that Nigeria is an underdeveloped country and our government has failed

us and due to the failure of the government to provide the basic the basic need of the people in the society, so the people see the endsars as a medium, as a veritable tool, as an instrument as a platform to express their grievance to let the government understand their yearning and how the government has failed them, which led to the ENDSARS”

(Kii/Male/Youth Leader/Journalist/ Ikorodu)

Another respondent opined that:

“There are several factors of which most the highest of them, the most prominent of them is discontent, you know once the people get so discontent or distrusting of the government to the point where things that they've been complaining about over the years have continued without any remorse without any sign that anything is going to be better, people get despondent and there will be hitching to have the entirely system collapse so that they can start a fresh. is about police brutality, it's about discontent, it's about government lack of transparency and accountability as far as the prosecution of the culture of impunity is concerned within the police institution, but of course because of that impunity, because remember, police themselves are not, they didn't fall from the sky, they are not alien, they are a members of our society and because impunity is a culture in Nigeria as a whole, so whether you are in custom, you are road safety or whatever, you will exhibit that impunity, the uniform you are wearing will make it and amplify impunity and also the citizenry who wear no uniform the moment they have an opportunity to show that they are a force they will do worse than the people in government and that was exactly what played out during the End SARS protest, so it was a mixture of discontent to the government and a lot of other vices that also do that”

(KII/Male/Member Lagos state Endsars panel of Enquiry/ Police reform Advocate/ Eti-Osa)

Table 5 Policing factor that propelled the Endsars protest

Deficiencies in the operation of SARS	29	8.1
Extra judicial killing	15	4.2
Lack of political will to prose	33	9.2
Police brutality	144	40.1
Poor Reward system for police o	7	1.9
Rising Insecurity	22	6.1
SARS Extortion	109	30.4
Total	359	100.0

Source: Field work

In terms of policing factors, police brutality (40.1%) and SARS extortion (30.4%) were the two notable policing factors that propelled the protest. The study findings from the interviews show that the EndSARS protest was a protest that was mainly influenced by police brutality and extortion.

Emerging from one of the respondents:

“From the police angle I would say that the youth who are at the receiving end, they have experienced a lot from the police angle, a lot that I mean here, I am talking about the police brutality, I'm talking about the extortion, I'm talking about the poor relationship between the police and the youth in the society, and on that basis, the youth take advantage of the endsars protest as a means to express their yearnings, as a way to let government understand how they felt about the poor attitude of the police in the society, that is police angle”.

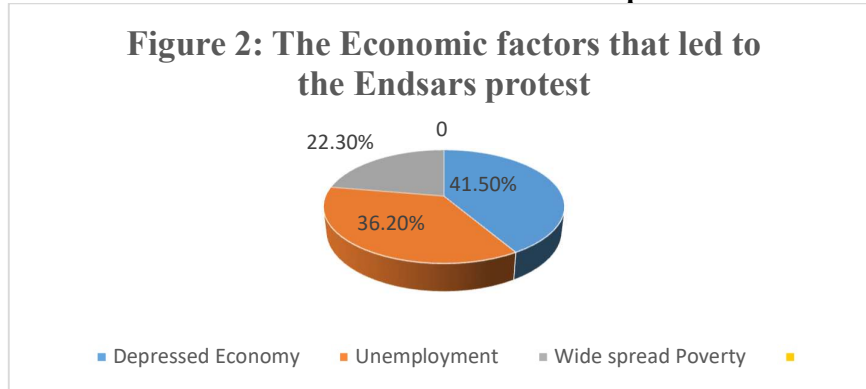
(Kii/Male/Youth Leader/Journalist/ Ikorodu)

Another respondent posits that:

“it's a movement about ending police brutality in our country, the victimization of those arrested by the police, those who have the opportunities of reengaging with the law at the level of law enforcement and the rights that abridged in the cause of engaging with the law, that level of law you know, law enforcement, when Nigerian youths went into the streets in 2020 it was basically to protest police brutality because increasingly for many years we have had Nigerians albeit youths arrested by the, by the police not arraign and just disappearing in that tolls or holes that police stations had become, had become in our country so when the youths walked into the streets in 2020 they were forced by the circumstances that they are, that they found themselves”

(Kii/ Male/ Human right Activist/ Lawyer)

Economic Factors that necessitated the Endsars protest



Source: Field Survey

The study shows that 41.5% and 36.2% affirmed that depressed economy and unemployment are the two notable economic factors that propelled the Endsars protest. The qualitative study revealed that the poor state of the nation's economy and the high rate of unemployment and poverty in the country also played a part in the protest.

Emerging from one respondent:

“Economic factor in the sense that generally the state of the economy is not palatable, it wasn't palatable at a time, we were just recovering more or less recovering from COVID lockdown, most of the palliative were not in place, people lock them down somewhere for their own, for their own purposes and where people were been, people were been directed to where those things were lockdown and they were going to burgle the place, steal it back from those who stole it from them, so, of course that on one end begin to speak to economy and politically issues, and the fact that ASUU strike was on as at that time, student were at home, they were doing nothing and then, there were hunger in the land, and there was anger in the land, so when you put all these things together, it begins to create an emotional explosive situation which begin to create a theatre of the absurd for the people, so with that, if there is an agenda that you can back with money they will be volunteers, willing able volunteers, willing to participate in such things, so it actually facilitated the fact that there was money back protest or happening in the name of End SARS that is also very popular, it was easy to mobilize people”

(KII/Male/Member Lagos state Endsars panel of Enquiry/ Police reform Advocate/Eti-Osa)

Another Respondent opined that:

“well, from my own point of view I feel it’s because of the rate of unemployment in and the corruption in the country so far is quite alarming and another thing is the way our politician is treating us is very bad, you'd see them come out with so many campaigns promises and at the end of the day it's a different thing entirely , I feel this whole thing made the whole system to be a bit difficult and the youth are quite unhappy, because imagine you going to school, spending more than years in school and at the end of the day you come about and there is nothing to show for it at all. So there is nothing to show for it, so there is nobody in his right sense that won't be angry or be upset about this whole thing, so I guess that is what actually”.

(IDI/Male/Self-employed/Obalende)

Black lives matter protest and the Endsars protest

The findings from this study showed that the Black Lives Matter protest in the United States has no bearing on the End SARS protest in Nigeria. Despite both protest groups fighting against institutional injustice, the study could not pinpoint a direct link between the two causes. EndSARS protest was about police brutality, while Blacklives matter was about racial injustice.

Emerging from one respondent:

“That's the mistake a lot of people make, the first End SARS protest made was in 2017 and I think that way before the Black Lives Matter protest, if I'm, if I'm not mistaken, so that happened in 2017, but unfortunately not a lot of people came out, there was an End SARS protest, I spoke at that event and I think I was even the only lady who spoke at that event, and, the Polices at the end of the day, they had so many other protest supporting them, and that they had protesters in their camp so I do not think that that Black Lives Matters protest was of influence on the issues of Police ahh at the End SARS protest, it it was something that had come to a place where people were tired, people were actually pushed to the wall”.

(Kii/Female/Human Right Activist/Trader)

Table 6: Cross tabulation of Factors that necessitated the Endsars protest and Educational qualification

		Educational qualification								Total
		HND/Deg	Master	ND/NCE	No formal education	PhD	Primary	Professional	SSCE	
Economic factors	Count	38	5	6	0	0	0	1	18	68
	%	17.9%	12.5%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	29.0%	18.9%
Policing factors	Count	113	29	17	1	2	1	0	33	196
	%	53.3%	72.5%	43.6%	100.0%	66.7%	100.0%	0.0%	53.2%	54.6%
Political factors	Count	61	6	16	0	1	0	0	11	95
	%	28.8%	15.0%	41.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	17.7%	26.5%
Total	Count	212	40	39	1	3	1	1	62	359
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	59.1%	11.1%	10.9%	0.3%	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%	17.3%	100.0%

It is shown that a larger proportion of the respondents 54% indicated that policing is the factor that necessitated the EndSARS protest. This connotes that issues such as police brutality, SARS extortion and human rights abuses by men of the police force fuelled the protest. Also, regarding education, the majority of the respondents 59.1% are HND/Degree holders, which makes them very enlightened and knowledgeable. Further cross tabulation between Factors that necessitated the protest and educational qualification revealed that among the HND/Degree holders, policing factors (53.3%) propelled the protest, 72.5% of the Master's holders claimed that it is policing factors, 43.6% of the ND/NCE holders stated that it is policing factor while 53.2% of the SSCE holders also stated that policing factors caused the protest.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study showed that the protest to end SARS was not a single-issue protest but rather a confluence of policing issues, political grievances, and socioeconomic problems. The quantitative results, however, show that the most significant factor influencing the protest was policing (54.6% of respondents' answers). This finding corroborates extant literature on the immediate provocation of EndSARS as police brutality, abuse of power and institutional impunity in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2020; Ochi & Mark, 2021). The salience of policing factors indicates that, in the end, the protests evolved into calls for broader governance reforms, but they were rooted in citizens' negative experiences with policing institutions.

In particular, it was found that police brutality (40.1%) and SARS extortion (30.4%) were the most salient policing problems influencing the protest. This discovery resonates with Aborisade and Gbahabo's (2021) assertion that Nigerian youths have had several encounters with law enforcement officers in the past involving harassment, unlawful detention, extortion, excessive use of force, etc. Likewise, Amnesty International (2020) noted that SARS operations were linked to human rights abuses, such as torture and extrajudicial practices, across the board. The qualitative results also support this conclusion since the respondents highlighted that the EndSARS movement allowed young Nigerians to voice their pent-up frustrations over the years of negative relationships with the police. This implies that the protest is not only a response to one incident but the result of a long-term failure of the policing institution.

The study, however, shows that policing issues had to be addressed within a broader context of political and institutional deficiencies. The study revealed that the most important political factor affecting the protest was bad governance (52.4%), followed by corruption (15.6%), unstable political systems (13.1%) and political interference (11.4%). This discovery aligns with Adetola's (2022) assertion that EndSARS reflected Nigerians' underlying grievances with Nigeria's governance system and its failure to address their concerns. Likewise, Ochi and Mark (2021) indicate that the protest was a result of the government's inefficiency, corruption and deficient accountability structures. The interview results also show that there was no sense of a political agenda, party allegiance, or opposition politics among the participants, but rather a reaction to governance failures. This is crucial because it debunks attempts to portray EndSARS as a politically orchestrated protest. Instead, the results indicate that political factors played an indirect role via institutional shortcomings and loss of public confidence.

The study's results on economic determinants also reinforce past literature that has focused on the impact of socioeconomic difficulties on collective grievances. The results indicate that the most important economic factors associated with the protest were depressed economic conditions (41.5%) and unemployment (36.2%). This aligns with Yusuf and Benisheikh's (2021) proposal that youths in Nigeria face a significant challenge: limited opportunities to improve their social status, and the high rates of unemployment or underemployment. The qualitative results also reflect an increase in economic frustration during COVID-19 due to the hardships of lockdowns, unemployment, and the government's perceived lack of sensitivity. This confirms the premise of the relative deprivation theory, which holds that collective protest is more likely when people feel a discrepancy between what they want and the socioeconomic conditions they face (Walker & Smith, 2002).

An important aspect of this is that the Black Lives Matter movement did not directly influence the EndSARS movement, thereby adding a dimension to the

uniqueness of the Nigerian protest. Both movements were focused on institutional injustice and police brutality, but the EndSARS was believed to have come from years of pent-up discontent instead of outside pressure. This finding contradicts the belief that all protest movements in Africa are extensions of movements elsewhere in the world and reinforces Iwilade's (2022) argument that the EndSARS movement was about the experience of citizenship, exclusion, and state failure. The challenges were still Nigeria-specific, despite the facilitation of visibility and mobilisation through digital platforms.

Additionally, cross-tabulation revealed that the protest's major motivator reported by respondents was largely the same across educational categories. This is important as it indicates that perceptions of police misconduct transcend educational and social classes and are not exclusive to one group. Another reason for the high proportion of HND/Degree-qualified respondents (59.1%) is the high level of participation of educated Nigerian youths who, though educated, are still facing insecurity, unemployment, and institutional frustration in Nigeria. This is consistent with Adetola (2022), who posited that most EndSARS supporters were educated youths frustrated by failures and limited opportunities in the system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria was not just a response to a single incident, but a reflection of structural and systemic issues and challenges. All prior studies had focused extensively on police brutality as the immediate trigger of the protest. However, this study shows how the movement emerged through broadly interconnected police, political, and economic factors that combined to form the basis for citizen mobilization. While police brutality, SARS extortion and human rights abuses were the immediate causes of the protest, the findings show a struggle to articulate a political grievance and to situate the protests within the larger context of socioeconomic struggles.

The study thus concludes that the EndSARS movement was an aggregate response to entrenched institutional weaknesses and shortcomings, especially in the security system, including cases of impunity, excessive force, and lack of accountability. Economic problems were a major factor in the development of the protest. There was general frustration and marginalisation due to high unemployment, poverty, economic difficulties and few opportunities for young Nigerians. These socio-economic factors exacerbated the grievances and created a broad platform for the support of the EndSARS movement. Hence, the protest was the result of a systemic set of conditions, in which failures of policing, failures of governance, and economic exclusion reinforced one another. The Relative Deprivation Theory offers complementary explanations of how accumulated grievances, institutional failures, and political opportunities had their way of transforming individual frustrations into collective struggles. Incorporating these theoretical frameworks with mixed methods empirical evidence adds more depth to the literature regarding

the structural and systemic foundations of the #Endsars protest and pushes beyond only explanations from the police brutality angle or media narratives. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that the Nigerian government should adopt police reform in the country that engages accountability, trains officers further on human rights, and creates mechanisms for independent civilian oversight, while ensuring all criminal complaints against officers are investigated promptly and offenders prosecuted. In addressing the root causes of civil disturbance, the government will also better the governance of Nigeria, check corruption, provision better livelihood opportunities for the growing youth population, and create institutional platforms for meaningful citizen engagement, thus providing legitimate avenues for grievances to be expressed and reducing the likelihood of mass protests in the future

Additionally, government bodies need to build sustainable structures to engage citizens and to listen to and respond to their concerns before they inevitably become a broad-based protest movement. To avoid further crises like EndSARS, it is necessary to address the structural causes of citizens' discontent, rather than just the immediate causes of public unrest. The government must cease victimising and oppressing young people; instead, it should provide employment opportunities and empower the youth. The Nigerian government should adopt police reform in the country that engages accountability, trains officers further on human rights, and creates mechanisms for independent civilian oversight, while ensuring all criminal complaints against officers are investigated promptly and offenders prosecuted. In addressing the root causes of civil disturbance, the government will also better the governance of Nigeria, check corruption, provision better livelihood opportunities for the growing youth population, and create institutional platforms for meaningful citizen engagement, thus providing legitimate avenues for grievances to be expressed and reducing the likelihood of mass protests in the future.

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SENSING CAPABILITIES AND PROCUREMENT PERFORMANCE IN THE NIGERIAN CEMENT INDUSTRY

Favour Iretomiwa Remi-Aworemi

*Department of Business Administration,
Osun State University, Nigeria
favour.remi-aworemi@uniosun.edu.ng*

&

Akeem O. Salami

*Department of Entrepreneurial Studies,
Osun State University, Nigeria
akeem.salami@uniosun.edu.ng*

Abstract

Sensing capabilities occupy a central position in dynamic capabilities theory, yet their disaggregated effects on procurement performance in emerging market industrial contexts remain poorly understood. This study examines how three distinct sensing dimensions, market sensing, technological sensing, and competitor monitoring, independently influence procurement performance in the Nigerian cement manufacturing industry. Grounded in Dynamic Capabilities Theory and the Resource-Based View, the study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional design, administering structured questionnaires to 385 employees across three major cement producers in Nigeria. Data were analysed using Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling in IBM SPSS AMOS 23, with bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals computed across 5,000 resamples. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity across all constructs. Model fit was excellent, with CMIN/DF = 0.990, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = 0.000, and GFI = 0.960. Structural results revealed that competitor monitoring exerted a strong and positive effect on procurement performance ($\beta = 0.849$, $p < .001$), confirming its status as the dominant sensing driver in this context. Technological sensing showed a statistically significant but negative relationship ($\beta = -0.194$, $p = .003$), interpreted as evidence of a capability awareness-action gap in digitally transitioning procurement environments. Market sensing produced no significant direct effect ($\beta = -0.028$, $p = .681$). These findings challenge the assumption that sensing dimensions yield uniformly positive performance returns, and suggest that in oligopolistic industrial markets with shared supplier pools, competitive intelligence routines generate disproportionate procurement performance advantages. Theoretical, managerial, and policy implications are discussed.

Keywords: Sensing capabilities, procurement performance, dynamic capabilities, market sensing, technological sensing, competitors monitoring

1. Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed a decisive shift in strategic management scholarship away from static resource endowments toward the firm's capacity to adapt, renew, and reconfigure its competences in response to environmental change (Teece, et al., 1997; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). This reorientation is encapsulated in the sensing capabilities framework, which posits that sustained performance advantage derives not merely from what a firm possesses but from how effectively it integrates, builds, and reshapes its internal and external competences (Adegoke et al., 2024; Teece, 2007; Mikalef et al., 2020; Adegoke et al., 2024). In volatile industrial environments, the capacity to sense market signals, interpret emerging threats, and respond proactively distinguishes high-performing firms from their lagging counterparts.

Global procurement performance face compounding risks, ranging from commodity price volatility and geopolitical disruptions to infrastructural deficits and regulatory uncertainty (Manhart et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2024). Firms in developed economies have leveraged digital and sensing capabilities to achieve supply chain resilience and responsiveness; however, the translation of these capabilities into performance outcomes in emerging market contexts remains empirically contested (Dubey et al., 2023; Bag et al., 2020; Chidiogo et al., 2026). In Africa, and particularly in Nigeria, firms confront unique challenges that amplify environmental dynamism, including institutional voids, energy price instability, foreign exchange exposure, and congested logistics corridors, conditions that fundamentally alter how capabilities generate performance outcomes (Ojeleye et al., 2020; Mazadu, 2025).

The Nigerian cement industry represents a strategic research context for several reasons. The sector is capital-intensive, energy-dependent, and operationally exposed to volatile input markets for limestone, coal, gas, and imported machinery components (Adegoke et al., 2024; Afolabi et al., 2025). Procurement, as the upstream function responsible for securing these inputs, is particularly sensitive to supply disruptions, supplier concentration, and currency risk (Shaibu & Njoku, 2024; Disu, 2025). Despite the sector's economic significance, empirical investigations linking specific dynamic capability dimensions to procurement performance outcomes within this industry remain scarce. This study addresses that gap by examining how three microfoundations of sensing capabilities, namely market sensing, technological sensing, and competitor monitoring, influence procurement performance among cement manufacturers in Nigeria. The study is guided by three research questions: What is the effect of market sensing on procurement performance? How does technological sensing affect procurement performance? And what is the effect of competitor monitoring on procurement performance? Corresponding hypotheses posit that each sensing dimension exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on procurement performance adopting CB-SEM to survey data collected from three major cement producers, the study

generates micro-level empirical evidence on the sensing-procurement performance nexus in an underrepresented African industrial setting. The findings contribute to the dynamic capabilities literature by demonstrating that sensing capabilities are not monolithic but exert differentiated effects on procurement outcomes, and that competitor monitoring constitutes the most consequential sensing dimension in conditions of highly competitive and institutional uncertainty.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Sensing Capabilities

Sensing capabilities refer to the firm's organised capacity to scan, interpret, and respond to signals from its external environment, encompassing market conditions, technological trajectories, and competitive dynamics. Within the sensing capabilities framework, sensing represents the earliest stage of strategic adaptation, enabling organisations to recognise environmental shifts before they materially affect performance (Teece, 2007; Mikalef et al., 2020). Contemporary scholarship distinguishes sensing from ad hoc environmental awareness, framing it instead as a structured capability embedded in managerial routines, information systems, and inter-organisational relationships (Wong et al., 2023).

Empirical evidence supports a positive relationship between sensing capabilities and organisational competitiveness. Sajuyigbe et al. (2021) demonstrate that firms with strong strategic agility capabilities, grounded in environmental sensing, achieve superior competitive outcomes. In procurement performance contexts, firms with well-developed sensing capabilities detect early signals of supplier disruptions, demand fluctuations, and logistical constraints, thereby supporting timely and proactive procurement decisions (Jiang et al., 2024; Achumie et al., 2024). For Nigerian cement manufacturers, whose procurement environments are characterised by energy price instability and imported input exposure, sensing capabilities provide the anticipatory intelligence needed to stabilise sourcing decisions and mitigate supply risk (Adamu, 2025). This study conceptualises sensing capabilities through three interrelated but analytically distinct microfoundations: market sensing, technological sensing, and competitor monitoring. Each dimension captures a different facet of the firm's scanning and interpretive capacity, and each is expected to generate distinct effects on procurement performance.

2.1.2 Market Sensing

Market sensing denotes the firm's capacity to systematically gather, analyse, and interpret information about customers, suppliers, input markets, and broader demand conditions. In procurement contexts, market sensing enables firms to anticipate shifts in raw material prices, detect emerging supplier risks, and identify alternative sourcing options before supply shortfalls materialise (Jiang et al., 2024; Agrawal et al., 2024). Firms that invest in market intelligence systems, supplier market surveillance, and commodity price monitoring are better positioned to

negotiate favourable procurement terms and maintain supply continuity under conditions of price volatility. Within the Nigerian cement industry, market sensing is particularly valuable because key inputs such as coal, gas, limestone, and imported clinker are subject to both global commodity price movements and domestic currency fluctuations. Firms that maintain robust market sensing routines can adjust procurement strategies proactively, buffer against price shocks, and reduce the incidence of supply interruptions that propagate downstream into production and distribution performance.

2.1.3 Technological Sensing

Technological sensing refers to the firm's ability to monitor, evaluate, and selectively adopt relevant technological developments that bear on its operational processes and supply chain activities. In procurement, technological sensing enables firms to identify digital tools for supplier evaluation, demand forecasting, inventory optimisation, and procurement process automation (Mikalef et al., 2020; Dubey et al., 2023). Firms with strong technological sensing capabilities can leverage information systems to improve procurement accuracy, reduce transaction costs, and strengthen supplier monitoring. In the Nigerian cement sector, technological sensing encompasses the capacity to evaluate and deploy enterprise resource planning systems, predictive analytics tools, and digital procurement platforms that reduce reliance on manual processes susceptible to error and delay. As digitalization increasingly mediates supply chain performance outcomes (Jiang et al., 2024), firms that sense and assimilate relevant technologies earlier than competitors gain measurable advantages in procurement responsiveness and cost management.

2.1.4 Competitor Monitoring

Competitor monitoring captures the firm's systematic observation and interpretation of competitor strategies, sourcing behaviours, supplier relationships, and market positioning. In procurement contexts, monitoring competitor sourcing activities provides early warning signals of impending supply shortages, supplier switching patterns, and pricing strategy shifts that may affect input availability and cost (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Kareem & Kummitha, 2020). Firms that track competitor procurement behaviour are better equipped to pre-empt supplier lock-outs, anticipate input price escalation, and secure preferential supplier terms ahead of competitor demand spikes. Within Nigeria's oligopolistic cement market, dominated by Dangote, BUA, and Lafarge, competitor monitoring assumes strategic importance because actions by major players in securing energy contracts, clinker supplies, or logistics capacity have direct implications for rivals' procurement options. Firms that systematically monitor competitor sourcing patterns are positioned to respond more effectively to supply market shifts, thereby maintaining procurement performance under competitive pressure.

2.1.5 Procurement Performance

Procurement performance refers to the effectiveness and efficiency with which an organisation sources, acquires, and manages the flow of materials, components, and services required to sustain uninterrupted production and supply chain

operations (Chidiogo et al., 2026). Contemporary supply chain literature frames procurement performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing cost efficiency, delivery reliability, quality consistency, sourcing flexibility, and supply risk management (Jiang et al., 2024; Dubey et al., 2023). Procurement is increasingly recognised as a strategic upstream capability whose performance outcomes shape downstream operational efficiency, inventory reliability, and customer satisfaction. Within the Nigerian cement manufacturing context, procurement performance is shaped by distinctive environmental features including dependence on volatile energy inputs, exposure to foreign exchange risk through imported materials, domestic supplier concentration, and customs clearance delays on imported machinery components (Ojeleye et al., 2020; Shaibu & Njoku, 2024). Superior procurement performance in this setting manifests as consistent raw material availability, competitive input costs, reliable supplier relationships, and reduced production interruptions. Conversely, procurement underperformance generates material shortages, elevated production costs, compromised output quality, and weakened competitive positioning.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Dynamic Capabilities Theory, foundationally articulated by Teece, et al. (1997) and subsequently elaborated by Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) and Teece (2007), reframes competitive advantage as a function of the firm's purposeful capacity to sense environmental changes, seize emerging opportunities, and reconfigure its asset base. The theory is particularly relevant in turbulent environments where static resource stocks rapidly depreciate in value, and where adaptive capacity becomes the primary differentiator of sustained performance (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015; Dubey et al., 2023). For the purposes of this study, sensing capabilities are operationalised as direct microfoundations of Dynamic Capabilities Theory, reflecting the firm's organised routines for environmental scanning and intelligence interpretation. The theory generates two key predictions that guide this study: first, sensing capabilities reduce procurement uncertainty by enabling proactive supplier management and sourcing adjustment; second, the value of sensing is contingent on environmental dynamism, such that its performance effects are most pronounced in volatile markets (Mikalef et al., 2020). The Nigerian cement industry, characterised by compounding input market volatility and institutional complexity, represents precisely the high-turbulence context in which Dynamic Capabilities Theory predicts its strongest explanatory power.

2.2.2 Resource-Based View

The Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984) provides a complementary theoretical lens by explaining why firms operating within the same industry exhibit persistent performance heterogeneity. The theory attributes differential performance to firm-specific resource endowments that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Applied to the procurement domain, RBV positions procurement capabilities, including supplier relationship capital, negotiation expertise, and market intelligence systems, as strategic resources that

generate cost and reliability advantages not easily replicated by competitors (Saeed et al., 2022). Whereas Dynamic Capabilities Theory explains how resources are built and reconfigured, RBV explains what resources firms possess and why those endowments generate differential procurement performance. The integration of both frameworks in this study provides a theoretically coherent basis for understanding why some Nigerian cement manufacturers consistently achieve superior procurement outcomes despite operating within the same institutional and competitive environment.

2.3 Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

Empirical evidence on the relationship between sensing capabilities and supply chain performance has accumulated across diverse industrial contexts, though the Nigerian cement industry remains largely unexplored. Esator et al. (2025) demonstrate, using a sample of 498 MSMEs in Lagos State and multiple regression analysis, that sensing capabilities significantly influence organisational performance (Adj R squared = 0.540; $p < 0.05$), confirming the broad applicability of sensing in the Nigerian business environment. Sajuyigbe et al. (2021) further establish that strategic agility rooted in sensing leads to superior procurement performance among Nigerian manufacturing firms.

On market sensing specifically, Jiang et al. (2024) find that firms with robust market intelligence capabilities achieve superior supply chain responsiveness and procurement cost efficiency. Agrawal et al. (2024) demonstrate that supply chain visibility, a function of sustained market sensing, directly improves procurement decision accuracy and supplier delivery reliability. In volatile commodity markets analogous to Nigeria's cement input markets, market sensing capability reduces the information asymmetry between buyers and suppliers, enabling procurement functions to maintain cost and reliability standards despite external turbulence. Based on this evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed: *H1: Market sensing has a positive and significant effect on procurement performance.*

Regarding technological sensing, Mikalef et al. (2020) establish that firms with stronger technology sensing and analytics capabilities demonstrate superior operational and procurement outcomes, mediated by dynamic capability deployment. Dubey et al. (2023) further show that digital procurement capabilities, grounded in technological sensing, improve supply chain resilience and responsiveness. As procurement processes in the cement industry become increasingly mediated by enterprise systems and digital platforms, the capacity to identify and adopt relevant technologies constitutes a critical antecedent of procurement performance. Accordingly: *H2: Technological sensing has a positive and significant effect on procurement performance.*

On competitor monitoring, Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) identify competitive intelligence as a foundational dynamic capability that enables firms to anticipate and respond to rival strategic moves. Kareem and Kummitha (2020) empirically demonstrate that supply chain dynamic capabilities, inclusive of competitive

intelligence routines, enhance procurement and operational performance. In the concentrated Nigerian cement market, where a small number of large producers compete intensely for limited energy contracts and supplier relationships, competitor monitoring enables procurement functions to pre-empt supply disruptions and secure preferential terms. Therefore: *H3: Competitor monitoring has a positive and significant effect on procurement performance.*

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, descriptive survey research design to examine the effect of sensing capabilities on procurement performance among cement manufacturing firms in Nigeria. The target population comprised all management and operational staff across three strategically selected cement manufacturing plants, namely Dangote Cement Plc at Obajana in Kogi State, Lafarge Africa Plc at Ewekoro in Ogun State, and BUA Cement Plc at Okpella in Edo State, representing Nigeria's three dominant producers whose combined output accounts for the substantial majority of domestic cement supply. The aggregate workforce across the three plants, as reported in their 2023 audited annual reports, totalled 42,155 employees, distributed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Population Distribution by Company

Company	Plant Location	Workforce	Percent (%)
Dangote Cement Plc	Obajana, Kogi State	39,000	92.5
Lafarge Africa Plc	Ewekoro, Ogun State	1,455	3.45
BUA Cement Plc	Okpella, Edo State	1,700	4.03
Total		42,155	100

Source: Compiled from 2023 Audited Annual Reports via the Nigerian Stock Exchange (2024).

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, which, for a population of 42,155 at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, specifies a minimum sample of 381 respondents. This study targeted 385 respondents to account for potential non-response, applying proportionate stratified random sampling across the three firms to ensure representativeness by company. Data were collected through structured, closed-ended questionnaire administered in both physical and electronic platforms over a six-week period. The questionnaire was organised into three sections: Section A captured seven demographic variables including gender, age group, highest educational qualification, employment level, years of experience in the current organisation, years of experience in the cement industry, and functional department; Section B measured the independent variable, sensing capabilities, using fifteen items across three five-item subscales for market sensing, technological sensing, and competitor monitoring, adapted from Mikalef et al. (2020) and Teece (2007); and Section C assessed procurement performance using five items adapted from Agrawal et al. (2024) and Kareem and Kummitha (2020), covering cost efficiency, supplier relationship quality, disruption minimisation, quality consistency, and delivery

reliability, all rated on a five-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire structure is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Questionnaire Structure

Section	Content	No. of Items	Scale Type
A	Socio-Demographic Information	7	Categorical
B	Market Sensing (MS1-MS5)	5	5-pt Likert
	Technological Sensing (TS1-TS5)	5	5-pt Likert
	Competitor Monitoring (CM1-CM5)	5	5-pt Likert
C	Procurement Performance (PPC1-PPC5)	5	5-pt Likert
Total		27	

Source: Researcher's Design (2026).

Content validity was established by adapting items from validated scales with strong prior reliability coefficients, namely the sensing capabilities scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87, Mikalef et al., 2020) and the procurement performance scale (Cronbach's alpha range = 0.79 to 0.88, Kareem and Kummitha, 2020). A panel of three subject matter experts reviewed the adapted items for contextual appropriateness within the Nigerian cement sector. Data analysis proceeded in two stages using IBM AMOS 23. The first stage assessed the measurement model through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), evaluating internal consistency via Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), convergent validity through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and standardised factor loadings, and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The second stage tested the structural model using Maximum Likelihood estimation, with Bootstrap resampling (5,000 samples) employed to generate bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for all structural paths. Normality diagnostics confirmed that all univariate skewness values fell within the acceptable range of plus or minus 2.0 and kurtosis values within plus or minus 7.0, and the multivariate kurtosis Mardia coefficient of 0.335 (c.r. = 0.111) indicated no severe violation of multivariate normality assumptions, supporting the use of Maximum Likelihood estimation. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, who were fully briefed on the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Anonymity of responses was explicitly guaranteed, with participants assured that data would be reported solely in aggregate form and used exclusively for academic research purposes.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics and Respondent Profile

A total of 385 questionnaires were administered and retrieved, yielding a 100% response rate attributable to the combination of physical and electronic administration with structured follow-up. Table 3 presents the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 3
Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 385)

Feature	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	218	56.6
	Female	167	43.4
	Total	385	100.0
Age Group	18-29 years	62	16.1
	30-39 years	148	38.4
	40-49 years	121	31.4
	50-59 years	47	12.2
	60+ years	7	1.8
	Total	385	100.0
Education	Secondary/SSCE	29	7.5
	Diploma/NCE	51	13.2
	Bachelor's Degree	196	50.9
	Master's Degree	96	24.9
	Doctorate	13	3.4
	Total	385	100.0
Employment Level	Operational/Junior	124	32.2
	Supervisory/Middle Mgt	183	47.5
	Senior Mgt/Executive	78	20.3
	Total	385	100.0
Years in Org.	Less than 1 year	18	4.7
	1-3 years	72	18.7
	4-6 years	109	28.3
	7-10 years	116	30.1
	More than 10 years	70	18.2
	Total	385	100.0
Years in Cement	Less than 1 year	11	2.9
	1-3 years	58	15.1
	4-6 years	97	25.2
	7-10 years	128	33.2
	More than 10 years	91	23.6
	Total	385	100.0
Department	Procurement/Supply Chain	131	34.0
	Production/Operations	98	25.5
	Warehousing/Logistics	62	16.1
	Quality Control	41	10.6
	Maintenance	33	8.6
	Others	20	5.2
	Total	385	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The respondent sample was predominantly male (56.6%), with the majority aged between 30 and 49 years (69.8%), reflecting the typical demographic profile of the cement manufacturing workforce. Over half of respondents (50.9%) held bachelor's degrees, and 24.9% held postgraduate qualifications, indicating a reasonably educated respondent base capable of engaging meaningfully with the survey constructs. Approximately 78.6% of respondents possessed more than four years of experience within the cement industry, lending credibility to their perceptions of procurement performance and sensing practices. The largest departmental representation was from Procurement and Supply Chain (34.0%) and Production and Operations (25.5%), which are the functions most directly implicated in the study variables.

4.1.2 Measurement Model Assessment

Prior to testing the structural paths, the measurement model was evaluated against standard criteria for internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Table 4 reports construct-level reliability and convergent validity statistics derived from the CB-SEM output.

Table 4
Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

Construct	Items	Standardised Loadings (Range)	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Market Sensing (MS)	5	0.685 - 0.830	0.873	0.876	0.587
Technological Sensing (TS)	5	0.704 - 0.795	0.856	0.858	0.548
Competitor Monitoring (CM)	5	0.563 - 0.766	0.871	0.873	0.580
Procurement Performance (PPC)	5	0.563 - 0.813	0.813	0.817	0.472

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. All factor loadings exceeded 0.50 and were significant at $p < .001$. Loadings derived from IBM SPSS AMOS (Maximum Likelihood estimation with 5,000 bootstrap resamples).

Source: Authors' Field Data (2026).

All constructs demonstrated Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978), with coefficients ranging from 0.813 for procurement performance to 0.873 for market sensing. Composite Reliability values above 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency and all surpassed 0.80, satisfying the widely adopted criterion of Hair et al. (2019). Standardised factor loadings ranged from 0.563 to 0.830, each exceeding the 0.50 floor that CFA research treats as acceptable evidence of item-level convergence. AVE values for market sensing (0.587), technological sensing (0.548), and competitor monitoring (0.580) met or exceeded the 0.50 benchmark. The AVE for procurement performance (0.472) fell marginally short; however, as Hair et al. (2019) note, when the Composite Reliability of a construct comfortably exceeds 0.70 and all

constituent loadings are statistically significant, a slightly sub-threshold AVE does not constitute a meaningful threat to convergent validity. The CR of 0.817 for procurement performance satisfies this condition. Table 5 presents item-level standardised loadings.

Table 5
Standardised Factor Loadings of Measurement Items

Construct	Item	Standardised Loading
Market Sensing	MS1	0.830
	MS2	0.794
	MS3	0.775
	MS4	0.690
	MS5	0.685
Technological Sensing	TS1	0.795
	TS2	0.741
	TS3	0.730
	TS4	0.704
	TS5	0.713
Competitor Monitoring	CM1	0.766
	CM2	0.731
	CM3	0.744
	CM4	0.737
	CM5	0.689
Procurement Performance	PPC1	0.813
	PPC2	0.768
	PPC3	0.744
	PPC4	0.737
	PPC5	0.689

Note: All loadings are statistically significant at $p < .001$. (bias-corrected bootstrap, 5,000 resamples).

Source: Authors' Field Data (2026).

4.1.3 Discriminant Validity

Table 6
Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Construct	MS	TS	CM	PPC
Market Sensing (MS)	0.766			
Technological Sensing (TS)	0.189	0.740		
Competitor Monitoring (CM)	0.546	0.553	0.762	
Procurement Performance (PPC)	0.411	0.468	0.583	0.687

Note: Diagonal elements (bold) are the square roots of AVE; off-diagonal elements are inter-construct correlations. Correlations for MS-TS = 0.189, TS-CM = 0.553, MS-CM = 0.546 are sourced from the standardised covariance matrix.

Source: Authors' Field Data (2026).

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied across all construct pairs. Each diagonal value exceeded the corresponding off-diagonal correlations in its row and column. The highest inter-construct correlation was between competitor

monitoring and procurement performance (0.583), yet this fell below the AVE square roots of both constructs (0.762 and 0.687, respectively). Market sensing and competitor monitoring shared a correlation of 0.546, whilst market sensing and technological sensing were more modestly correlated (0.189). These patterns confirm that whilst the sensing dimensions share some conceptual terrain, they are empirically distinct constructs whose variance is predominantly explained by their own items rather than by shared overlap with other latent variables.

4.1.4 Model Fit Assessment

Table 7

Assessment of Model Fit Indices

Fit Index		Recommended Threshold	Obtained Value	Assessment
Chi-square (CMIN/DF)	/ df	≤ 3.0	0.990 (162.298/164)	Acceptable
GFI		≥ 0.90	0.960	Acceptable
AGFI		≥ 0.90	0.949	Acceptable
CFI		≥ 0.95	1.000	Acceptable
TLI		≥ 0.95	1.001	Acceptable
IFI		≥ 0.95	1.000	Acceptable
RMR		≤ 0.08	0.034	Acceptable
RMSEA		≤ 0.08	0.000	Acceptable
PCLOSE		> 0.05	1.000	Acceptable

Note: GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; IFI = Incremental Fit Index; RMR = Root Mean Square Residual; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; PCLOSE = *p*-value for close fit test.

Source: Authors' Field Data (2026).

The hypothesised model produced excellent fit across all evaluated indices. The chi-square to degrees-of-freedom ratio of 0.990 (chi-square = 162.298, df = 164, $p = .523$) fell comfortably below the 3.0 ceiling, signalling close correspondence between the model-implied and sample covariance matrices. Absolute fit indices corroborated this assessment: the GFI of 0.960 and AGFI of 0.949 both cleared the 0.90 threshold (Hu & Bentler, 1999), whilst the RMR of 0.034 indicated negligible average residual covariance. The RMSEA of 0.000 with a PCLOSE of 1.000 offered the strongest endorsement of close fit. Incremental fit indices were similarly unequivocal: the CFI, TLI, and IFI all met or exceeded 0.95, with the TLI registering a marginal overshoot at 1.001, which is an artefact of very low model parsimony cost relative to the baseline. Collectively, the fit profile indicates that the measurement and structural architecture proposed in the hypotheses is a sound representation of the observed data structure.

4.1.5 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Table 8

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Hyp.	Path		Std. Beta	Unstd. Beta	SE	CR	p	95% CI	Decision
H1	MS → PPC		-0.028	-0.032	0.073	-0.441	.681	[-0.185, 0.112]	Not Supported
H2	TS → PPC		-0.194	-0.215	0.073	-2.964	.003	[-0.381, -0.064]	Not Supported
H3	CM → PPC		0.849	1.211	0.155	7.789	< .001	[0.933, 1.551]	Supported

Note: Std. Beta = standardised regression weight; Unstd. B = unstandardised regression weight; SE = standard error; CR = critical ratio (z-ratio equivalent); CI = bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (5,000 resamples); MS = Market Sensing; TS = Technological Sensing; CM = Competitor Monitoring; PPC = Procurement Performance. Significance assessed at $\alpha = .05$.

Source: Authors' Field Data (2026).

The structural path from market sensing to procurement performance produced ($B = -0.032$, $SE = 0.073$, $CR = -0.441$, $p = .681$, $\beta = -0.028$). The bias-corrected 95 percent bootstrap confidence interval of $[-0.185, 0.112]$ spans zero, indicating that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at any conventional significance level. H1, which posited a positive and significant effect of market sensing on procurement performance, is therefore not supported in this sample. Whilst market sensing is a theoretically plausible predictor of procurement outcomes, the data yield no statistical evidence for a direct path of this nature in the Nigerian cement context. Technological sensing showed a statistically significant path to procurement performance ($B = -0.215$, $SE = 0.073$, $CR = -2.964$, $p = .003$; $\beta = -0.194$), with a bootstrap confidence interval of $[-0.381, -0.064]$ that excludes zero. The relationship is, however, in the negative direction, contrary to the positive relationship hypothesised in H2. The path is statistically credible but substantively counterintuitive, suggesting that as technological sensing scores increase in this sample, perceived procurement performance declines. H2 is therefore not supported in the hypothesised direction. This unexpected finding is discussed in the section that follows. The path from competitor monitoring to procurement performance was positive, strong, and highly significant ($B = 1.211$, $SE = 0.155$, $CR = 7.798$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.849$). The bootstrap confidence interval of $[0.933, 1.551]$ is entirely above zero, and the probability value remained at $p = .001$ across both ML estimation and bootstrap resampling. Competitor monitoring is by a considerable margin the dominant structural predictor in the model, accounting for a standardised effect size nearly four times that of the only other significant predictor. H3 is supported.

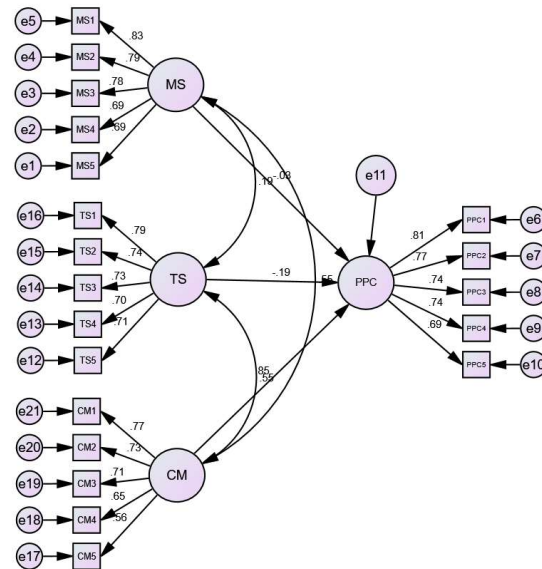


Figure 1. AMOS SEM Diagram

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The structural results confirm three symmetrically positive paths, the AMOS CB-SEM analysis reveals marked heterogeneity: competitor monitoring exerts an overwhelming positive influence on procurement performance, technological sensing exerts a statistically significant but negative influence, and market sensing contributes no discernible direct effect. Each finding warrants substantive interpretation, particularly in the specific institutional setting of the Nigerian cement manufacturing industry.

The non-significance of market sensing (H1 rejected) does not necessarily mean that monitoring supplier markets or commodity price trajectories is inconsequential. Rather, it suggests that in a highly concentrated industry with a small number of dominant input suppliers and near-identical raw material requirements across firms, market signals are widely accessible and symmetrically distributed. Under conditions of shared market exposure, the incremental advantage from one firm's market sensing routines over another's is attenuated. This interpretation is consistent with Teece's (2007) argument that sensing capabilities generate performance advantages only when the intelligence gathered is not readily replicable by competitors. Where all three major cement producers operate in the same regulatory environment, face the same foreign exchange constraints on clinker imports, and draw on overlapping supplier networks, market intelligence may be a baseline competence rather than a source of differentiation. The finding also aligns with observations by Pham et al. (2025) that supply chain sensing effects on performance are moderated by environmental dynamism: in relatively stable input market configurations, the performance payoff from additional sensing investment diminishes.

The significant but negative coefficient for technological sensing (H2) is the most theoretically provocative finding in this study. Several explanations merit consideration. First, it is possible that firms with higher technological sensing scores are those most actively aware of the performance gaps between their current digital procurement systems and available best-practice technologies, producing a paradox in which heightened awareness of technological shortcomings registers as lower perceived procurement performance. This interpretation is consistent with research on the 'capability awareness gap' in digital transformation contexts, where organisations in the early stages of technology scanning frequently report lower satisfaction with existing operational performance (Dubey et al., 2023). Second, multicollinearity effects within the structural model may be distorting individual path estimates: the inter-construct correlations between technological sensing and competitor monitoring (0.553) and between market sensing and competitor monitoring (0.546) are both moderate to high, and when competitor monitoring is entered into the same equation at a dominant coefficient of 0.849, the variance that technological sensing might otherwise explain is substantially absorbed. This is a well-documented estimation challenge in structural models with correlated predictors (Hair et al., 2019). Third, in the Nigerian cement manufacturing environment, where digital procurement infrastructure remains underdeveloped relative to global benchmarks, firms investing in systematic technology scanning may simultaneously be acknowledging operational constraints that suppress procurement performance perceptions in the short run. Agrawal et al. (2024) document a comparable pattern in emerging market supply chains, where technology adoption aspiration precedes measurable performance improvement by a lag period that cross-sectional designs cannot capture. These alternative explanations cannot be adjudicated within the present data, but they suggest that the negative path coefficient should be treated as a productive empirical anomaly rather than a refutation of technological sensing as a supply chain construct.

The dominant finding of this study is the magnitude and statistical robustness of the competitor monitoring effect on procurement performance ($\beta = 0.849$, $p < .001$). This coefficient is of a size rarely encountered in structural models of supply chain capability effects, suggesting that competitor monitoring is not merely one dimension of sensing capability among three, but the primary mechanism through which sensing generates procurement value in an oligopolistic industrial context. The logic of this finding draws directly from the concentrated market structure of the Nigerian cement sector. With three major producers sharing overlapping supplier bases, competing for the same energy contracts, and drawing on similar raw material procurement channels, the sourcing decisions of rivals carry direct informational value. A firm that monitors when a competitor has locked in a long-term coal supply contract knows, by implication, that the remaining spot market supply has contracted; one that tracks a competitor's shift toward alternative energy sources can anticipate both the procurement opportunity this creates and the price signals it generates in shared energy markets. This is precisely the form of

competitive intelligence that Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) describe as generative of dynamic capability advantage: not generic environmental scanning, but targeted competitor-specific intelligence that translates into concrete procurement adjustments. Kareem and Kummitha (2020) demonstrate a compatible finding in their examination of supply chain dynamic capabilities in African industrial contexts, where competitive monitoring routines showed stronger performance effects than market or technology sensing in industries with concentrated supplier pools. The present study extends that observation to a specific, empirically tractable sectoral context with validated measurement scales and CB-SEM-tested causal paths.

Taken together, the findings revise the theoretical proposition that sensing capabilities exert uniformly positive and equivalent effects on supply chain outcomes. Within the Nigerian cement sector, the dominant source of sensing-derived procurement advantage lies not in broad market awareness or technology evaluation, but in deliberate, structured competitor intelligence. This has implications for how dynamic capabilities theory is applied in oligopolistic emerging market settings, where the institutional context shapes which sensing dimension generates the greatest performance returns (Mikalef et al., 2020; Esator et al., 2025).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined how three dimensions of organisational sensing capability, namely market sensing, technological sensing, and competitor monitoring, relate to procurement performance in Nigerian cement manufacturing. These findings revise the assumption, common in aggregate dynamic capabilities research, that all sensing dimensions yield proportionate and positive performance returns. Within a concentrated industrial market where rival firms share supplier bases and input procurement channels, competitor monitoring is the sensing capability that most directly translates into procurement performance advantage, whilst market sensing appears not to generate incremental differentiation beyond what the industry as a whole already achieves. The negative technological sensing result is interpreted as consistent with a capability awareness-action gap in firms undergoing early-stage digital procurement transitions, and invites further longitudinal investigation.

The study contributes the first disaggregated, SEM-validated empirical account of sensing capability effects on procurement performance in the Nigerian cement sector, and extends dynamic capabilities theory by demonstrating that the institutional specificity of oligopolistic emerging markets shapes the relative performance relevance of different sensing dimensions in ways that aggregate constructs cannot capture.

Based on the empirical findings, the following recommendations are offered;

- i. Cement manufacturing firms operating in Nigeria should formalise competitor monitoring as a structured procurement intelligence function.

- ii. Procurement departments should establish clear milestones for converting technology scanning activities into deployed digital tools.
- iii. Market sensing routines should be repositioned from reactive price tracking toward predictive sourcing analytics that model the implications of commodity price trajectories, foreign exchange fluctuations, and supplier concentration shifts.
- iv. Industry associations such as the Cement Producers Association of Nigeria should consider developing a collective supply market intelligence platform that pools non-competitively sensitive procurement data.

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